

"It is Robin Hood's Day": the Greenwood  
Hero in the English Spring Festival.

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1988

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In a sermon delivered before Edward VI on April 12th 1549, Bishop Hugh Latimer remembered with evident disgust how he had once had to give way to Robin Hood. Some time in the years 1535-1539<sup>1</sup>, he came travelling past a village somewhere near London; the next day being a holiday, he decided to preach a sermon there, but he found to his chagrin that the church was locked. At length a parishioner came and told him:

Syr, thys ys a busye day with us, we cannot heare you;  
it is Robyn Hoodes daye. The parishe are gone abroad  
to gather for Robyn Hoode, I pray you let [i.e. prevent]  
them not. 2

That the villagers should "prefer Robyn Hode to Goddes worde" was to Latimer "a wepyng matter, a heavy matter".<sup>3</sup> We may not share this sombre view of the situation, but we must agree with the good Bishop of Worcester that the outlaw had come to dominate the Tudor May game to such an extent that it might well deserve to be called "Robyn Hoodes daye".

The Robin Hood May game and folk drama of this period have often been treated as a development of the medieval narrative outlaw tradition, but there have been few attempts to study the Robin Hood game in the wider context of the history of the May game. One consequence of this is that, whereas we know a good deal about the effect of May customs on the development of the outlaw tradition, it is still very imperfectly understood how the introduction of the personae of the Robin Hood tradition enhanced the development of drama in the May game.

The present paper will attempt to analyze the interplay between the semi-dramatic festival custom and the narrative tradition, which resulted in the creation of drama proper of a thoroughly popular and secular nature. The emphasis on the fusion of the two traditions will necessitate first an analysis of the much neglected early development of the English May game, and thereafter an overview of the early Robin Hood tradition and the way in which it merged with the festival tradition. We can then examine the three surviving early Robin Hood plays, Robin Hood and the Knight, Robin Hood and the Potter, and Robin

Hood and the Friar, the most immediate and tangible outcome of this creative process.

The scarcity of medieval non-religious drama texts along with doubts as to whether the May game was generally of a dramatic nature have, I think, led many drama scholars and students to concentrate over-exclusively on liturgical drama and mystery plays. Thus Glynne Wickham, writing two substantial volumes on Early English Stages, has found no reason for discussing the Robin Hood plays and May games of "village amateurs".<sup>4</sup> It is hoped that the discussion which follows will persuade the reader that Robin Hood May games do after all merit our careful attention, from the point of view of the social historian as well as from that of the drama scholar.

#### English May and summer games, c.1250-c.1450.

The sources for a discussion of May games and related summer festivals are considerably less plentiful before the middle of the 15th century than in the Tudor period. It is well-nigh impossible to arrive at useful conclusions about the early game without taking an occasional glance at later evidence. Yet even if we have to take such liberties, we must try to come to grips with the early material, in order to understand the basis from which the more complex Tudor May game developed.

May customs are first mentioned in a letter of 1235-53, in which Robert Grosseteste, Archbishop of Lincoln, instructs the archdeacons of his diocese to keep clerics from attending or performing "ludos quos vocant Inductionem Maii sive Autumpni".<sup>5</sup> Slightly earlier perhaps, in 1240, Walter de Cantilupe, Bishop of Worcester, had ordered the local clergy not to suffer any "ludos fieri de rege et regina".<sup>6</sup> According to E.K. Chambers the latter type of play or game

is not indeed necessarily to be identified with the Inductio Maii, for the harvest feast or Inductio Autumni of Bishop Grosseteste had also its 'king' and 'queen' and so too had some of the feasts in the winter cycle, notably Twelfth night. <sup>7</sup>

Certainly there were other early mock-kings, such as the "rex fabae" ("bean king" or king of Epiphany), who was rewarded on January 1 1316 by Edward II, and the "kyng of Crestemesse",

whose parading through the streets of Norwich caused a riot in 1443.<sup>8</sup> Yet mock-queens or kings and queens together never appear to have been very common outside of May or summer games and harvest feasts.<sup>9</sup> Cantilupe's phraseology clearly implies a type of game in which a king and queen appear together; so even if the facts do not force the conclusion upon us, it still seems very likely that a king and queen led the "Inductionem Maii" in the mid-thirteenth century. I shall return to this later.<sup>10</sup>

It would probably be rash to argue from the silence of earlier sources that the two zealous ecclesiastics were confronting a new evil. At least since 1214, "choree vel turpes et inhonesti ludi qui ad lasciviam invitent in cimiteriis vel ecclesiis" had been prohibited by ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>11</sup> Thus the Statutes of Norwich (1240-43) forbid games ("ludi"), wrestling, dancing girls and "luxuriosa carmina" in churchyards.<sup>12</sup> These are pastimes of the most universal sort, and it is perhaps barely worth noting that they are often found in May games. Yet it is certainly suggestive to find an occasional troop of May revellers prancing on consecrated ground more than three centuries later.<sup>13</sup>

Disappointingly little is known about May customs in the first two centuries after they were first prohibited. Chaucer, in the Knight's Tale, has Theseus ride to a grove, singing and making a garland of green leaves "for to doon his observaunce to May".<sup>14</sup> As the May imagery is more elaborate in Chaucer's tale than in its source, Boccaccio's Teseida, we must infer that the poet expected it to strike a chord with his audience.<sup>15</sup> Evidence for May game drama in the period comes from King's Lynn, Norfolk, where "ludentes" were paid for a performance on May Day 1370.<sup>16</sup> Exeter had a May play by 1419.<sup>17</sup> In Abingdon, Berkshire, the Fraternity of the Holy Cross celebrated its annual feast day, May 3, and according to a later summary of their records, the feast in 1445 consisted of a sumptuous dinner followed by:

Pageantes and playes and May games to captivat the senses of the zelous beholders, and to allure the people to the greater liberalitee. For they did not make theyre feastes without profit.<sup>18</sup>

An early mention of the May pole occurs in the churchwardens' accounts of St Mary's Stamford (Lincs.), where it figures in 1428 as the "schafft".<sup>19</sup>

These scraps of evidence yield little insight into the structure of the May game, but they indicate the variety of auspices under which it could be held. The Stamford game must have been arranged

and sponsored by the parish community, for the upkeep of the May pole was on the parish budget. The play in Exeter was financed by the corporation, and as the players were probably professionals, it may not have been a folk "ludus" of the king-and-queen type.<sup>20</sup> In Abingdon the game was part of a festive cornucopia offered by a local fraternity. To this we must add the Dutch treat held by the sheriffs of London and their brethren "vpon Mayes daye" at Bishop's Wood, Stepney, sometime in the period 1424-30.<sup>21</sup> For this occasion Lydgate wrote The Mumming at Bishopswood, a conventional spring "balade", which must have been recited as part of the entertainment.<sup>22</sup>

Such diversity presupposes vigorous development in the festival tradition in the preceding centuries. It is odd indeed that this should have left so few traces in the older Middle Ages, and none at all in the hundred years after Cantilupe's and Grosseteste's prohibitions. Yet this dearth may be more apparent than real. There are quite a few references to summer games in the works of 14th cent. authors, e.g. Robert of Brunne, Langland, Chaucer and Wyclif.<sup>23</sup> Few of these are at all helpful as to the structure of the game, but we have a fairly good description of a summer game at Wistow (West Riding, now North Yorkshire) on the Sunday before Midsummer in 1469.<sup>24</sup> Someone there committed an unknown crime which occasioned a legal case, and surviving testimonies allow us a glimpse at the "ludum estivalem vulgariter vocatum Somergame".<sup>25</sup> A young man and woman had been elected king and queen. A procession with "mimo sive histrione cum sambuca" brought them to a barn called "lez Somerhouse", lying opposite the churchyard. Here the couple entertained about a hundred local youths from noon and well into the evening. We know nothing about these entertainments, except that Margaret More, the queen, "continue permansit ludo ipso ascultando et jocundam se faciendo in eodem honeste." A seneschal, a guard and two soldiers were in attendance upon the "royalty".

Let us return for a moment to Grosseteste's letter. I have argued that king-and-queen plays or games may already have been part of the May games in the middle of the 13th century.<sup>26</sup> It is quite likely that Grosseteste's "Inductionem" refers to a procession as well as a play. A version of the Life of St. Anne of 1400-20 describes a procession of singing children coming home from the wood as: "Euen like a somyr play".<sup>27</sup> The children hold green branches in their hands and are led by the young Jesus, who we may thus think of as king of summer as well as of heaven without being

accused of levity. There are many later references to the custom of bringing in the May or summer. The object of these processions was to fetch in greenery with which to deck out the May pole.<sup>28</sup> Symbolically the ceremony introduced (cf. Lat. "inducere") the fertile season, but more concretely the participants brought home (Cf. "inducere") mays, as the greenery was often called.<sup>29</sup> The "Inductionem Maii" of c. 1250 must surely have been a similar procession; later harvest feasts involved the bringing home of the "last sheaf", which symbolized autumn, hence probably the inductio autumni.<sup>30</sup> That Grosseteste probably referred to a procession does not preclude the assumption that a king-and-queen play may also have been involved. The Wistow game (procession + king-and-queen play) is described as "ludum" and as "game", but we have also seen a literary source compare a procession alone to a summer play. With such vague terminology it is best not to be too literal.

The Wistow game took place near Midsummer and it is likely that summer games were originally connected with St John the Baptist's Day (June 24).<sup>31</sup> Even so, with this feast following soon after the very similar May festival, it is natural that some confusion should have arisen.<sup>32</sup> The May game was never exclusively connected with May 1 or even with the month of May. In fact, the London merchant Henry Machyn noted in his diary that a May game was held in London on the twenty-fourth of June 1559.<sup>33</sup> That we often have to do with two different names for the same festival seems virtually certain. There is a relative abundance of references to summer games in the 14th century, but very few to May games, and similarly, in 15th cent. Yorkshire a handful of notices of summer games, but none of May games.<sup>34</sup> This suggests fluctuating terminology and continuity of tradition, rather than vice versa.

Before turning to the Tudor May game, let us pause for a moment to take stock of our findings. It will readily be admitted that few hard facts have been discovered as to the nature of the game. However, we can say with tolerable certainty that a procession and a king-and-queen play formed the core of the festival from its first appearance in the records. There is evidence of steady growth and differentiation of May customs throughout the later Middle Ages. This was accompanied by -perhaps the result of- a trend which is particularly germane to a discussion of the Tudor May game; May celebrations developed from the "underground" phenomenon prohibited by mid-thirteenth

cent. ecclesiastics into a source of income to local bodies, such as the Abingdon Fraternity of the Holy Cross in the mid-fifteenth century.

One question has hardly been touched upon: is there anything in the medieval May game which we would call drama? This of course depends on our definition of "drama". Faced with the ambiguity of medieval dramatic terminology drama scholars have generally worked from broad, and often implicit, definitions. E.K. Chambers very sensibly speaks of

[...] impersonation, which, at any rate when accompanied with dialogue, amounts to drama,  
[...]

and of imitation which

[...] is a fundamental instinct of humanity. It shows itself already in the seasonal ludi of the folk, who call the leaders of their revels kings and queens.

If the latter type of imitation can be regarded as a form of impersonation, it is perhaps justifiable to regard the king-and-queen play as a form of drama. However, we have no certain indication of dialogue in these plays.

The Tudor May game: royal pageantry and parish festival.

The evidence leaves little doubt that the period from c. 1470 to c. 1600 was the hey-day of the May game. Certainly more evidence is likely to have survived from these years than from the Middle Ages, but a look at the structure and auspices of the Tudor May game will suggest that the growth was very real indeed.

The present stage of research does not allow any really valid statements as to the geographical distribution of the game. Robin Hood games are in evidence at half a hundred localities;<sup>37</sup> the number of references to May kings, queens, poles etc. is no doubt much greater than this, but no comprehensive collection has been made. However, we can say of the May game, as David Wiles has said of the Robin Hood variety, that by the early 16th century "the custom may be observed from Aberdeen to Cornwall".<sup>38</sup> It should be noted, though, that evidence from the North of England is very scanty.<sup>39</sup>

An eloquent example that May celebrations were no longer the exclusive concern of village louts is afforded by Henry VIII's



"mayinge" in 1515. On May Day the king and a large retinue rode out to Shooter's Hill in Kent, where they were met by 200 royal archers dressed as Robin Hood and his men. "Robin Hood" directed a lavish archery display, in which his men shot simultaneously, and

their arrowes whisteled by craft of the head,  
so that the noyes was straunge and great, and  
muche pleased the kyng [...]

40

Afterwards the king and queen were served a repast of venison -"outlawes brekefastes"- in an arbour made of bows. The event was rounded off by pageants with giants, and the ladies May and Flora in a chariot.

While the first lady may be a more refined version of the May queen, the lady Flora is a classical intruder who has no place in popular tradition. She belongs in the tradition of royal pageantry. Yet Robin Hood, archery and the arbour are genuinely popular elements,<sup>41</sup> so although on a much grander scale, this "mayinge" was in many respects like what could have been seen in English villages. The show must have suggested itself to the royal guards, for Henry VIII was an eager patron of the longbow.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, in January 1510, the king and twelve noblemen had entered the queen's chamber disguised as Robin Hood's men, and performed "certayn daunces and pastime [sic]".<sup>43</sup> Although the chronicler Edward Hall adds that the queen and her ladies were "abashed" at this "straunge sight",<sup>44</sup> we should not see this disguising as an unprecedented faux pas, for there had also been some sort of "mayings" at the court of Henry VII.<sup>45</sup> However, compared to the previously mentioned May Day dinner of the Sheriffs of London in the 1420's,<sup>46</sup> these royal "mayings" seem refreshingly wanton. I shall later discuss a famous instance of knightly patronage of Robin Hood plays.<sup>47</sup>

London of course also had May games without royal participation. Giants, stock characters of the period's pageantry, are often featured in these games, but there does not seem to have been any kings or queens of May. Probably the election of such mock-rulers was better suited for smaller places with a more well-integrated community.<sup>48</sup> To most Londoners, perhaps, the May game was a spectacle rather than an activity.

Throughout the period, the festival tradition was most vital in the villages and towns of the South. According to M.A. Nelson, the Tudor May game typically consisted of the election of king and queen, setting up the May pole, "plays about folk heroes", "various athletic competitions" and "shows like the morris dance",<sup>49</sup> Apart from the

folk hero plays and the morris, which will be discussed below, there would thus appear to have been few changes from the medieval game.

Yet certainly the Tudor May game has its distinctive characteristics, as to purpose as well as to form. Innumerable churchwardens' account books of the period contain entries relating to May festivals, Robin Hood plays, king games and Whitsun ales. They appear there, together with expenses on laths and plaster, because such events had come to be regarded as an efficient means of replenishing slender parish funds. Thus, in Peterborough, 1508-33, the festival profits were kept in a "may box" and accounted for annually as part of the church revenue.<sup>50</sup> In 1514, the "may monney" was spent on constructing or repairing a bridge.<sup>51</sup> At Croscombe (Somerset), profits from the Robin Hood game ("Roben Hod's revel") were handed over to the churchwardens as early as 1475.<sup>52</sup> Similar examples could be quoted from the accounts of scores of English parishes. We have seen that the May game was already arranged under parish auspices in Stamford, Lincs., in 1428;<sup>53</sup> the Tudor situation must therefore have been the product of a long, but largely uncharted development. I have met with no attempt to explain how these entertainments became integrated in parish economy. However, the origin of this mode of fund raising must lie in the old custom of holding "scot-ales" or "church ales".

Phillip Stubbes gives an excellent account of the organization of these ales in his Anatomie of Abuses (1583). The churchwardens gather malt from the parishioners and brew ale from it, which is then sold under a feast in the church "or some other place assigned to that purpose."<sup>54</sup> Even Stubbes, a rank Puritan, cannot quite conceal that the surplus is put to a decent use:

For they repaire their Churches and Chappels with it; they buy bookes for seruice, cuppes for the celebration of the Sacrament, surplusses for Sir John, and such other necessaries; And they maintaine other extraordinarie charges in the parishes besydes.<sup>55</sup>

The Council of Lambeth had prohibited the announcement of scot-ales already in 1206.<sup>56</sup> There is early evidence that these took place in "locis sacris";<sup>57</sup> the meaning of "scot-ale" must be "an ale at which a scot or tax is raised".<sup>58</sup> So "scot-ale" should no doubt be seen as an early name for the church ale. E.K. Chambers knew that the church ale was an old institution, yet he found that:

In many places, even during the Middle Ages, and still more afterwards, the summer feast dropped out or degenerated. It became a mere beer-swilling, an 'ale'. And so we find in the sixteenth century a 'king-ale' or a 'Robin Hood's ale,' and in modern times a 'Whitsun-ale,' [...]<sup>59</sup>

However, church ales were a stock feature of Tudor May games. Thus in Reading, Berks., Robin Hood's collection of cash and victuals for the May game in 1503 yielded, inter alia, ten bushels of malt, which can only have been for an ale.<sup>60</sup> The Kingston-upon-Thames accounts for 1524 have this entry:

Rec<sup>d</sup> at the church-ale and Robynhode all things:  
deducted [£] 3 lo 6                      61

In Ashburton (Devon), church ales were one of the mainstays of parish economy.<sup>62</sup> They were held every year in the period 1489-1580, except for the years 1549-1552. Two "wardens of the drawyng of the ale", or "Whitson wardens", prepared the ale, which was consumed "at the Feast of 'Pethecost' [sic] according to custom", in a "church house" used for such festive purposes.<sup>63</sup> In 1526, the parish paid for a brand new tunic for "Robyn Whode";<sup>64</sup> it is hard not to picture him flaunting this at the Whitsun ale.

There is nothing "degenerate" about these festivals. The church ales at Ashburton were very well-organized, not a "mere beer-swilling!"

We must conclude then that far from being the last drink-sodden remnant of the "summer feast", the parish ale was in fact a well-established means of fund-raising, which must have drawn into its orbit such folk entertainments as Robin Hood games and May games, and thereby given them a place in parish economy. These auspices, with their economic incentive, proved very favourable, for the games became widely disseminated, in geographical as well as social terms.

Robin Hood: from outlaw chief to proxy May king.

The survey of the Tudor Robin Hood game has focused on auspices and organization, but it will also have brought out clearly the extent to which the outlaw had come to dominate the parish spring festival. There is little evidence of Robin Hood as a character in May games before the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Any attempt to establish the outline of the process that brought the outlaw into the May game must therefore remain largely conjectural. However, I believe it is possible to show that a widespread predilection for disguise, together with some characteristics of the early Robin Hood tradition, should be held responsible for turning the outlaw into a proxy king of May. This will be the main object of the following discussion of the question. But we must also review the widely accepted theory that Robin Hood became associated with the May game as a consequence of his being confused

with the male half of the French pastoral couple, Robin et Marion.

There is nothing unlikely about the amalgamation of the Robin Hood tradition and May customs. Robin Hood was an extremely popular hero of the greenwood, and the May game, with its "bringing in" of sprigs and trees from the wood, is a clear expression of an idealized view of the greenwood. Indeed Robin fits so well into the symbolic context of the May game that he has been thought to have originated there. The May game is then seen as a fertility rite with Robin as the central deity or wood sprite.<sup>65</sup>

Against this view it has been argued that the ballads are older than the Robin Hood games, and that their portrayal of the hero makes him more likely to have been a historical robber.<sup>66</sup>

None of the medieval ballads - A Gest of Robyn Hode, Robin Hood and the Monk and Robin Hood and the Potter<sup>67</sup> are likely to have been written much before the beginning of the 15th century.<sup>68</sup> The first mention of the outlaw as a literary character occurs in the B-version of Langland's Piers Plowman (c. 1377), where Sloth boasts his knowledge of "rymes of Robyn Hood".<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, it has recently been shown that a play about Robin Hood was performed before the Mayor of Exeter as early as 1427.<sup>70</sup> It is thus no longer so certain that the surviving ballads antedate the plays. Yet there can be no doubt that Robin Hood originated as an outlaw; this is strongly suggested by a recent find.

In a document of 1262 an outlaw is nick-named "Robehod" [sic], but we know from other contemporary documents that his real name was "Willelmus filius Roberti le Fevere".<sup>71</sup> It would appear, then, that the clerk who wrote the document knew something about a legendary outlaw called Robin Hood.

It is doubtful whether the surviving medieval tales of Robin Hood are a faithful index to the earliest tradition, but they are the only sources that can provide us with a detailed picture of the medieval Robin Hood figure. They show us Robin as a sturdy yeoman and a master archer, who has been outlawed for some unstated reason. His companions are Little John, Much the Miller's son and Will Scarlok. The outlaws prey on rich ecclesiastics, and their chief enemy is, of course, the "hye shherif of Notyngham",<sup>72</sup> against whom they lead a constant war of ruses. Robin loves the Virgin and his King, and he "dyde pore men moch god".<sup>73</sup>

The qualities of good yeomanry and marksmanship, and anticlericalism hand in hand with devoutness, combined in a charitable outlaw of the greenwood, go a long way towards explaining the great popularity of the figure; but they do not tell us how Robin Hood found his way

into the spring game. It is possible that ballads were sung as accompaniment to the dances of the May game. However, this is not very likely, for the oldest ballads were all but certainly meant to be recited, not sung.<sup>74</sup>

It is highly likely that Robin Hood owes his presence in the May game to a popular predilection for impersonation and disguise. The tournament is a good example of an occasion where disguise was indulged in without any apparent connection with the action of the event. On May 28 1309

fu<sup>it</sup> magnum hastiludium apud Stebenheth<sup>e</sup>, de quo dominus Egidius Argentein dicebatur rex de Vertbois; et ipse, cum suis complicibus, fu<sup>it</sup> contra omnes venientes 75

When this Giles Argentine was disguised as "King of the Greenwood", we should not necessarily think that he impersonated Robin Hood, for the outlaw was never given this title in any of the medieval tales. It is, however, almost certain that Argentine carried in his mind some general image of the forest outlaw. Real criminals of the period sometimes consciously manipulated the romance view of the greenwood robber. Thus, in 1336 Adam of Ravensworth sent a threatening letter to the parson of Huntington (Yorks.), in which he styled himself "Lyonel, roi de la route de raveners" (i.e. "king of the rout of robbers").<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the letter was addressed from "nostre chastiel de Bise, en la Tour de Vert'" (i.e. "our castle of the wind, in the Tower of the Greenwood"). The letter was written in deliberate imitation of the style of royal writs. Adam de Ravensworth was thus apparently posing as "King of the Greenwood". Gamelyn, the hero of a romance of c. 1350, was "crowned king of outlaws".<sup>77</sup>

This has implications for the problem of Robin Hood's involvement with the May games. There seems to have been an early precedent for regarding outlaw leaders as kings of the greenwood, and even if Robin was not, like Gamelyn, a crowned king of outlaws, the jump from king of the greenwood to king of May cannot have been a terribly long one.

There were also features in the May game which, as it were, made it receptive to the outlaw tradition. Thomas Warton suggested an interesting hypothesis, which was elaborated upon by Chambers, who noted that Robin Hood and Maid Marian are "inseparable" in the May game, although Marian is never found in any of the older ballads.

Moreover Marian is not an English but a French name, and [...] Robin and Marion are the typical shepherd and shepherdess of the French pastourelles and of Adan [sic] de la Hale's dramatic jeu founded upon these. I suggest then, that the names were introduced by the minstrels into

English and transferred from the French  
fetes du mai to the lord and lady of the  
corresponding English May-game. 78

Robin Hood started as the hero of popular songs, but became confused with the French Robin and thus entered the May game. Maid Marian/Marion, on the other hand, came to be Robin Hood's partner in the games and later stepped out of them to enter the (narrative) mainstream of the Robin Hood tradition.

This hypothesis is appealingly simple, and it may seem to gain strength from the appearance of the pastoral couple in Anglo-Norman poetry. In La Desputoison du Vin et de l'Jaue (c. 1300), the Wine of Auxerre claims to be so strong that:

Par ma force fas chiez doloir,  
Et de Robin et de Marion. [full stop!]  
Chanter par mainte region;  
Je faiz gent triper et saillir. 79

The couple is also mentioned (twice) in Gower's Mirroure de l'Omme (c. 1376).<sup>80</sup> These three are the only references to them in the whole body of literature written in medieval England. They are never mentioned in any vernacular work. Maid Marian, eo nomine, does not appear until c. 1513, when she is mentioned together with Robin Hood in one of Alexander Barclay's Eclogues. Here one of the characters says:

Yet would I gladly heare nowe some mery fit  
Of Mayde Marion, or els of Robin Hood 81

That the two are mentioned together indicates that they were connected in some way, but "or els" would seem to indicate that this connection was as yet not very close.<sup>82</sup> About this time Marian also begins to appear in the May games of a few parishes.<sup>83</sup> However, the couple can hardly be described as "inseparable" for Marian often appears without Robin in the morris dance.<sup>84</sup> The evidence for Robin Hood's appearance in the morris dance is thoroughly slight. The churchwardens' accounts of Kingston-upon-Thames for 1509 have this entry:

For 2 payre of glovys for Robin Hode and mayde  
Maryan [£] 0 0 3 85

This is the first piece of evidence indicating a closer connection between the two. I would suggest that Marian's origin lies in the morris dance. We must therefore briefly survey the first evidence of this dance in England.

There were at least three varieties of morris dance in the Tudor period, a procession, a ring dance and a solo jig.<sup>86</sup> A famous stained glass window from Betley Old Hall, Staffordshire, depicts a morris with a May pole and 11 characters: a crowned lady, a friar, a hobby-horse, a musician, a fool and six additional dancers.<sup>87</sup> Most of the characters

are frozen in the antic gestures of the dance, but the lady stands still. This is a morris of the ring-dance type, which is depicted in several continental drawings of the 15th century.<sup>88</sup> This dance has a lady standing in the centre with the dancers cavorting around her. The lady gives a love token to the dancer who proves most irresistible. The Betley lady holds a flower in her left hand, no doubt such a prize. This type of morris was apparently the oldest form in England.<sup>89</sup> The first known English performance was made before Henry VII in 1494.<sup>90</sup> It was danced at the Scottish court soon after 1500.<sup>90</sup> The earliest mention of the name of the dance occurs in a will of 1458, where the bequests include a silver drinking cup on which is sculpted a "moreys daunce".<sup>91</sup> These late references do not support the hypothesis that the morris had its origin in a native folk ritual; taken together the courtly contexts and the classy silverware strongly suggest a recently imported upper-class fashion. As the continental evidence is mainly of the fifteenth century, there is no good reason to believe that the dance came to England much before this period.

Maid Marian nearly always appears in conjunction with morris dancers.<sup>92</sup> "Morris" certainly means "moorish".<sup>93</sup> Maid Marian is sometimes styled "mowren" or "Morion", and dancers in May games could be called "maymarrions".<sup>94</sup> I would suggest, then, that "Maid Marian" means "Maid Morion", i.e. "Moorish Maid"; she was the only woman in a men's dance thought to be moorish.<sup>95</sup>

The absence of references to Maid Marian before 1500, and the accretion of them after, become more intelligible, if she owed her presence to the introduction of the morris.

Marian persistently appears in the company of a friar; when she at length found her way into the Robin Hood ballads, she was still trailing him with her, but as we shall soon see, he had taken over the name of another monk.<sup>96</sup>

Nothing indicates that the French pastoral couple had a popular vogue in England; their appearance in Anglo-Norman poems, especially in Gower, may merely reflect their popularity in France; and as Maid Marian seems to be a late addition to the May game, she is unlikely to have had anything to do with Robin Hood's introduction into the game. The latter should more likely be seen as the consequence of the coexistence of an early tradition for impersonation and a possibly widespread tendency to romanticize the outlaw and life in the forest. The May game was a very eclectic affair; in fact, popularity or notoriety was enough to suggest anybody as a character in the game. In the early 19th century the May game featured such characters as Nelson, Wellington and Napoleon.<sup>97</sup>

## Robin Hood drama in the May game

Charles Read Baskervill observed, no doubt rightly, that

plays of Robin Hood [are] a feature of the May game which seems to represent the final stage of its development into formal drama. <sup>98</sup>

I have argued above that Robin Hood owed his presence in the May game to a popular penchant for impersonation and disguise;<sup>99</sup> and it does not seem likely that his first hesitant steps there were made in a performance which we would call drama proper. It is impossible to say with any certainty when Robin Hood drama first emerged in this context, but something more than mere disguise must have been involved in the performance made before the mayor of Exeter in 1427;<sup>100</sup> chances are that what he watched was rather like the earliest of the surviving Tudor Robin Hood plays. We must now analyze these plays, as they are the precious remnants of a once flourishing popular tradition. They are of considerable interest in themselves, and they may help us put into perspective some of the conclusions reached so far.

The first play comes from an MS of c. 1475; it has no title, but later editors have called it either Robin Hood and the Sheriff or Robin Hood and the Knight.<sup>101</sup> The text is a fragment, and it contains no speech attributions or stage directions. However, it has long been known that the play's plot is derived from a version of the ballad Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne;<sup>102</sup> this has to some extent facilitated the task of editing the play.

In the opening scene a knight promises the sheriff that he will capture Robin Hood for "golde and fee". The sheriff leaves and Robin enters; upon the knight's challenge the two engage in a series of athletic competitions: an archery match, stone throwing, casting the axle-tree (a plebeian version of throwing the bar),<sup>103</sup> and a wrestling bout; as might be expected the outlaw has "the maystry" in all of these competitions. Robin fights the knight, kills him and dons his clothes and hood, and chops off his head to carry it with him. The scene now changes. Two anonymous characters, possibly Little John and Will Scarlet,<sup>104</sup> watch the other outlaws fight the sheriff and his men. The outlaws, including "Frere Tuke", are vanquished by the sheriff's posse and imprisoned. Here the fragment ends, but if the remainder of the play followed the ballad, we must assume that Robin, having escaped capture, enters in disguise to set his men free.



The two other plays, Robin Hood and the Friar and Robin Hood and the Potter, were printed as one play appended to William Copland's edition of A Mery Geste of Robyn Hooode, published sometime in the period 1548-1569.<sup>105</sup> In the first of these Robin tells his men how he has been robbed by "a stoute frere". Little John promises to capture the rascal, "Fryer Tucke", who now enters, uttering the words:

Deus hic, deus hic, god be here  
Is not this a holy worde for a frere 106

There follows a long swaggering rigmarole, in which Tuck informs the audience that he has come to test Robin Hood's prowess. After much repartee, Robin forces the friar to carry him over a stream, but as in all later versions of this incident the friar dumps the outlaw into the stream. Robin and the friar summon their men, and a fight ensues. Robin offers his antagonist "golde and fee" if he will join the outlaws. Although Tuck does not say so in so many words, he apparently accepts the offer, for he gladly receives the "lady free" who is part of the deal:

Here is an huckle duckle/ An inch above the buckle.  
She is a trul of trust, / To serve a frier at his lust,  
A prycker, a prauncer, a terer of sheses [i.e. sheets],  
A wagger of ballockes when other men slepes. 107

The play ends with Tuck's announcement that he and his lady will "daunce in the myre for veri pure joye." 108

The play of Robin Hood and the Potter follows immediately after this. Robin tells his men about a potter who has used the way for seven years without ever paying "one penny passage". Robin wagers £ 20 that he will make the potter disgorge. The potter's boy Jack arrives, and is accosted by Robin, who smashes his crockery and calls his master a cuckold. The potter arrives and a fight at "sword and buckeler" follows; Robin is hard pressed, and when Little John steps in to help him,<sup>109</sup> the play stops in medias res: "Thus endeth the play of Robyn Hode". Copland clearly printed the play from a fragment.

These plays pose several interesting questions. Are they representative of what could have been watched at ordinary parish May games, or do they represent a conscious attempt to introduce drama into the context of a folk festival which was itself only infrequently dramatic? What is their relation to the ballads, and more generally, what can they tell us of the way in which Robin Hood entered the May game?

According to Chambers, the three plays "are of the nature of interludes" and they were no doubt written by "some clerk or minstrel" for the delectation of the villagers.<sup>110</sup> They are therefore not folk

drama proper; they were written for and not by the folk. There is some truth in this view with regard to the two later plays, but the playlet of c. 1475 can hardly be described as other than truly popular. A look at the auspices of this play can do much to clear up the question.

In a well-known letter of April 16th 1473 Sir John Paston wrote to his brother, and mentioned his having been deserted by a servant named W. Wood:

I have kepyd hym thys iij yere to pleye Seynt Jorge  
and Robynhod and the shryff off Notyngham, and now  
when I wolde have good horse he is goon into Bernys-  
dale, and I wythowt a kepere. 111

The MS fragment of the play of c. 1475 belonged to the eighteenth cent. antiquary Peter le Neve, who also owned the Paston papers, it is therefore possible that Sir John's groom wrote and/or acted in this very play.<sup>112</sup> That this was so has sometimes been made out as a near certainty, but we would do well to remember, with J.C.Holt, that le Neve "collected much miscellaneous material",<sup>113</sup> and there can therefore be no certainty that the play originated in the Paston household. However, if, like Chambers, Child and many others, we accept the attribution to W.Wood, it follows that the play is as "folkish" as we could reasonably wish for. It is hard to contrive a definition of the "folk" that would leave out horse grooms.

There is certainly nothing in the text of the play that indicates that it was written by a clerk or a minstrel. The dialogue, 42 brief lines, only serves as a weak support for the athletic contests, on which the interest clearly focuses. This emphasis of combat is a feature which the play shares with later "mummers' plays" as well as with contemporary St George's Plays. Thus, in 1471 the Gild of St George at Norwich decided that, as was by then established custom,

the George shall goo [in] procession and make  
a conflicte with the dragon and kepe his astate 114

The play is little more than a series of such "conflicts"; it has been said that in the May game, a medley of popular pastimes, it is hard to decide whether the word "play" refers to drama or to athletic competitions;<sup>115</sup> the playlet combines both forms of "play", and in this it is certainly true to the eclectic nature of the May game. No doubt the text is representative of the May game drama of the period. There is not even the slightest attempt at characterization, only action, and this is there for its own sake: no dramatic rationale could justify Robin's stone throwing and archery competitions with a mortal enemy, who is beheaded a few minutes later.

The two later plays are somewhat more sophisticated. Robin Hood and the Friar runs to almost three times the length of the earlier playlet, and the characters are much more verbose. Tuck manages in his first 24 lines to state his intention of testing the outlaw's strength, while at the same time he reveals himself as a jovial braggart, possessed of many endearing qualities, if not a very religious man. The potter in the third play is a sturdy and independent craftsman, who does not go out of his way to please anybody; he entertains the commonplace conviction that Jack, his son or servant, is through and through a sluggard, and when accused of being a cuckold, he makes the shrewd rejoinder:

I swere by God and Seynt John,  
Wyfe had I never none 116

Even though these plays are far less ambitious, there is certainly much in them to remind one of such Tudor interludes as Youth and Gammer Gurton's Needle. They range somewhere inbetween the folk drama innocent of artistic aspirations and the fully-fledged drama of the Tudor stage.

It is certain that the three plays take their plots from the ballads of Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne, Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar and Robin Hood and the Potter.<sup>117</sup> Ballads are eminently suited for dramatic adaptation. Confrontations are usually between a few persons, and characterization and plot development are effected chiefly by dialogue. Although the two first-mentioned ballads only survive in MSS of c. 1650,<sup>118</sup> and were thus written down a century after the two latest plays were printed, it is not difficult to find evidence in them that some versions of the same stories formed the bases of the plays. In the ballad of the Curtal Friar, the friar summons "halfe a hundred good bandoggs" to fight with Robin and his men;<sup>119</sup> in the play of the Friar, Robin, while fighting with his antagonist, blows his horn to summon a "hounde", but it is his men who come to the rescue.<sup>120</sup> The friar, in turn, is relieved, not by a pack of fierce mastiffs, but by two men answering to the canine names of "Cut" and "Bause".<sup>121</sup> The similarity of plot is so great that there can be no doubt that ballad and play are related; it is easy to see why someone dramatizing the ballad should change the band of dogs into the more manageable men; on the other hand it is hard to see why the men should transmogrify into dogs, if the play came before the ballad. The play must therefore be an adaptation of the ballad.<sup>122</sup>

The ballad of the Potter is in an MS of c. 1500 and the corresponding play was printed half a century later. In the ballad the potter is introduced thus:

'Yonder comet a prod potter,' seyde Roben,  
'That long hayt hantyd this wey;  
He was never so cortheys a man  
On peny of pawage to pay 123

In the play he informs the audience and his men that:

With a proude potter I met;  
And a rose garlande on his head,  
The floures of it shone marvaylous freshe.  
This seven yere and more he hath used this waye,  
Yet was he never so curteyse a potter  
As one penny passage to paye. 124

There are three points of interest here. Firstly, if we delete "seyde Roben" in the first quote, the passage would fit naturally in a play; the ballads suggest themselves for dramatic adaptation. Secondly, although some changes have been made in the dramatic text, it is clear from the verbal parallels that the dramatist must have used some version of the ballad as his source. Thirdly, the potter's rose garland is one of the features of these plays which indicate their connection with the May game tradition; the garland, not an emblem of the potter's trade, must have been worn, like Theseus did in Chaucer's tale, to do "observaunce to May".<sup>125</sup>

Friar Tuck, who is a character in the play of 1475 and in the play of the Friar, is also to a large extent a product of the May game. For when the latter play ends with the friar and his lady dancing "in the myre for veri pure joye", there can be no doubt that we should identify them with the friar and lady of the morris dance.<sup>126</sup> Somehow the figure of this friar had become blended with the memory of a historical criminal active in Surrey and Sussex in the period 1417-1429 or later. Robert Stafford, chaplain of Lindfield, Sussex, the leader of a band of criminals, had, according to a contemporary writ,<sup>127</sup> assumed "the unusual name, in common parlance, of Frere Tuk". The name was obviously new to contemporaries, and we should probably think of the Lindfield chaplain as the original Friar Tuck.<sup>128</sup> The ballad of Guy of Gisborne does not feature any friar, and the Curtal Friar of the ballad is never called Tuck in the text, although the mid-seventeenth century scribe has added the title "Robine Hood and Ffryer Tucke".<sup>129</sup> Tuck's appearance in the plays, and his absence in later versions of the ballads on which they were based, may suggest that as the fame of the historical criminal spread, he came to be identified with the morris friar of the May game, without the medium of tales. In turn, this character of mixed origins became identified with the Curtal Friar of the ballad. The modern Friar Tuck would thus seem to be an amalgamation of three different friars.

The Friar, the lady and their dance, together with the multiple combat scenes make it clear that the plays were indeed "verye proper to be played in Mayegames"<sup>130</sup>. There can be no serious doubt as to the authenticity of the first play; the text is no more than a few jottings to aid the memory of an actor. The two later plays, although more sophisticated, are quite in the spirit of the May game. Furthermore there is evidence to suggest that such interlude-like plays were often staged in the middle of the sixteenth century. In 1535, Richard Morison proposed the prohibition of "playes of Robyn hoode, mayde Marian, freer Tuck [...] and the shiref of Notyng-ham". Instead there were to be plays about

'the abhomynation and wickednes of the bisshop of Rome, monkes, ffreers, nonnes, and suche like, and [...] thobedience' due to the King 131

Certainly the Robin Hood plays which Morison wanted to replace with didactic interludes must have been secular pieces with some dialogue and a reasonably well-developed plot. It is hard to imagine religious and didactic plays without substantial dialogue, and Morison's idea seems more natural if we assume that the plays which he wanted to abolish were essentially like those with which he wanted to replace them, except of course for the moral and religious contents.

The king and queen of May had a function in a ritual, ceremony or game, but they were not characters. Robin Hood, like Little John to a lesser extent, was a characterizable figure with a relatively high degree of individuality, with whome specific attributes and activities were connected, e.g. archery, swordsmanship, robbing and the playing of pranks. Robin brought with him the opportunity for impersonation, without which drama proper is impossible. Whether or not the first pieces of Robin Hood drama were dramatizations of "rhymes" or tales, the simplicity of plot and the reliance on dialogue in the older ballads made it highly likely that in the Tudor period such drama should tend to consist in "adaptations for the stage". The scenes of knock-about comedy and rustic combat betray these plays' indebtedness to the spring festival tradition. The plays are a hybrid of two of the most vital popular traditions of the Middle Ages.

#### Conclusion, or aftermath.

This survey of the fusion of the Robin Hood tradition and May game customs has not touched upon the origins of the May game; whatever they

are, they should be sought on the continent, and if there was a mythological rationale behind them, there is no suggestion that this is relevant to a discussion of the game in the medieval and early modern period.<sup>132</sup> The post-medieval Robin Hood mummers' plays have also been ignored, since nothing suggests that they were more than a late development of the May game drama.<sup>133</sup>

The paper has highlighted the development of the May game from the king-and-queen plays and cavortings in churchyards prohibited by 13th cent. ecclesiastics to the very diversified medley of entertainments of the Tudor period, when the custom had become widely disseminated in geographical as well as social terms. Somewhere around the middle of this period, around 1400, or earlier perhaps, Robin Hood and stories connected with him entered the world of popular spring festivals, and thus provided the opportunity for impersonation and the matter for primitive plots.

It is hard to say how long Robin Hood drama flourished in the May game. There is no doubt some truth in the widely held view that the May game eventually succumbed to Puritan pressures.<sup>134</sup> The kill-joys certainly succeeded in exiling the game from its role in parish economy, for after c. 1600 references to May kings and Robin Hoods are rarely found in churchwardens' accounts. The pastiche May games included in the works of such Elizabethan playwrights as Robert Greene, George Peele, and Anthony Munday & Henry Chettle<sup>135</sup> have a distinctly nostalgic flavour.

However, it is very likely that a search through early modern, diaries, itineraries, chapbooks and newspapers will show the May game to have been more resilient than is often assumed. But there is no doubt that to a large extent the game returned to the underground life which it had led during the earlier Middle Ages.

One unexpected reference to late Robin Hood games comes from the Dane Willum Worm, who accompanied Eric Rosenkrantz and Peter Reedts on a diplomatic mission to England during the Commonwealth. In his "Iter Anglicam" he remembers that on June 21st 1652, at Enstone in Oxfordshire

celebrabat ibi etiam cohors rustica festivitatem  
aliquam, in cujus gratiam ludos instituerant, quos  
suâ lingua Rabbenhut vocabant. .<sup>136</sup>

Notes.

1. For the date see M.A.Nelson, The Robin Hood Tradition in the English Renaissance. (Salzburg Studies in English Literature. Elizabethan & Renaissance Studies, vol. 14.) (Salzburg, 1973), p. 68.
2. Quoted in [Joseph Ritson], Robin Hood: A Collection of all the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads, now Extant, Relative to that Celebrated English Outlaw: [...] (London, 1795. 2 vols.), vol. I, p. xcv.
3. Ibid.
4. Vol. I, p. 271. Publ. by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1963. (First publ. 1959.)
5. F.M.Powicke and C.R.Cheney, eds. Councils & Synods with other Documents relating to the English Church. II. A.D.1205-1313. Part I. 1205-1265. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1964.), p. 480. Date between June 1235 and Oct. 1253: "There seems to be no means of establishing the date." (Ibid., p.479.) E.K. Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, vol. I. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1903), p. 91 n2, dates it: "About 1244".
6. Councils & Synods, pt. I, p. 313.
7. Chambers, op. cit., vol. I, p. 172.
8. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 261 n7 (contd. from p. 260), 261.
9. Chambers, ibid., p. 261, mentions a "queen" on St Catherine's Day (Nov. 23) in Peterborough. Yule and his wife at York are rightly seen as symbolic personages rather than king and queen (ibid., p. 261 n3.) For the suggestion that "bean kings" had queens, see C.R.Baskervill, "Dramatic Aspects of Medieval Folk Festivals in England", Studies in Philology, vol. 17 (1920), (pp. 19-87), pp. 36-37. For harvest lords and ladies, see Christina Hole, English Traditional Customs. (London and Sydney: B.T.Batsford, 1975), pp. 90-91.
10. See below pp. 4-5.
11. Councils & Synods, pt. I, p. 35. A similar prohibition from 1197 specifically mentions "spectacula" at Christmas, see Ian Lancashire, ed., Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain: A Chronological Topography to 1558. (Studies in Early English Drama, vol. I.) (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1984), entry No. 422. (References to this work will be to: "DTRB" followed by entry No.) Other prohibitions in the period 1213-c.1255 are not specific as to occasion, see DTRB Nos. 208, 582, 870, 1148; and Councils & Synods, pt. I, pp. 93, 135, 174, 195, 204, 274, 297, 321, 351, 353, 412-413, 432, 444, 461, 519, 601, 647, 649.
12. Councils & Synods, pt. I, p. 353.
13. See for instance C.Kerry, A History of the Municipal Church of St. Lawrence, Reading. (Publ. by auth. Reading, 1883), p. 228. Also see F.J.Furnivall, ed. Phillip Stubbes's Anatomy of the Abuses in England in Shakspeare's Youth, A.D.1583. (The New Shakspeare Society, Series VI, Nos. 4,6 (=pt. I), 12 (=pt.II) (1877-1882), pp. 147, 304-305.
14. Canterbury Tales, l. A1500. A.W.Pollard et al., eds. The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. (London: Macmillan, 1932.), p. 21.

15. See the interesting discussion by L.K. Stock, "The Two Mayings in Chaucer's Knight's Tale: Convention and Invention", Journal of English and Germanic Philology, vol. 85 (1986), pp. 206-221.
16. John Wasson, "Professional Actors in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance", Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England, vol. I (1984), (pp. 1-11), pp. 3, 10 n11.
17. DTRB No. 661.
18. Thomas Hearne, ed. Liber Niger Scaccarii. E Codice [...] nunc primus edidit Tho. Hearnus. (Oxford, 1728. 2 vols.), vol. II, p. 599.
19. Anon. Notes and Queries, Seventh Series, vol. 4 (1887), p. 119.
20. Wasson, art. cit. (See n.16 above), p. 3.
21. For the date, see DTRB No. 1414.
22. Text in H.N. MacCracken, ed. The Minor Poems of John Lydgate. Part II. (Early English Text Society, Original Series, vol. 192) (1934, repr. 1961), pp. 668-671.
23. See F.J. Furnivall, ed. Robert of Brunne's "Handlyng Synne," A.D. 1303, [...] (Early Eng. Text Soc., Orig. Ser., vols. 119, 123) (1901-1903), vol. I, p. 156. W.W. Skeat, ed. The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman [...] (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1923. 10th rev. edn. repr. 1968), p. 57. (B-version, Passus V l. 413), also see note on p. 142. Canterbury Tales l. D648. (edn. cited above in n13; p. 163.) F.D. Matthew, ed. The English Works of Wyclif hitherto unprinted. (Early Eng. Text Soc., Orig. Ser., vol. 74) (1880), p. 246.
24. The following account is based on R.E. Parker, "Some Records of the "Somyr Play"", Studies in Honor of John C. Hodges and Alwin Thaler, ed R.B. Davis and J.L. Lievsay. (Tennessee Studies in Literature. Special Number) (University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 1961), pp. 19-26.
25. Ibid., p. 20.
26. See above p. 3.
27. R.E. Parker, art. cit., p. 20.
28. The custom seems to be referred to in M.D. Harris, ed. The Coventry Leet Book or Mayor's Register, [...] (Early Eng. Text Soc., vols. 134, 135, 138, 146.) (2 vols. 1907-1913), vol. I, p. 233, vol. II, pp. 445-446, 455, 457-459, 697. For this, see D. Wiles, The Early Plays of Robin Hood. (D.S. Brewer. Cambridge, 1981), p. 19. Also see A.K. Donald, ed. The Poems of Alexander Scott. (Early Eng. Text. Soc., Extra Ser., vol. 85) (1902), p. 16. F.J. Furnivall, ed. Phillip Stubbes's Anatomy of the Abuses in England (cited in n13 above), p. 314.
29. See for instance Mai Fossenius, Majgren Majträd Majstång: En Etnologisk-Kulturhistorisk Studie. C.W.K. Gleerup, Lund, 1951; pp. 62, 62 n9.
30. For the harvest feast, see C. Hole referred to in note 9 above.
31. See R.E. Parker, art. cit. (n. 24 above), p. 22.
32. See C.R. Baskervill, art. cit. (n. 9 above), pp. 45 & n. 89, 53 & n. 122.
33. See F.J. Child, ed. The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, vol. III, pt. V, p. 44 (1888). (Repr. Dover Publications, New York, 1965, vol. III, p. 44.)



34. For 14th cent. references to summer games, see n. 23 and p. 4 above. For references to May games, see pp. 3-4 and n. 14, 16 above. For evidence of Yorks. summer games, see R.E. Parker, art. cit. (see n. 24 above), pp. 20-23; A.F. Johnson and M. Rogerson, eds. York. (Records of Early English Drama.) Manchester University Press, 1979. (2 vols.), vol. I, p. 219; DTRB No. 818. For the late evidence for Yorks. May games, see Johnson & Rogerson, York, vol. I, pp. 358, 393; and DTRB No. 398.
35. E.K. Chambers, English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1945.), p. 1.
36. Ibid., p. 2.
37. See DTRB, s.v. "Robin Hood". For a reference not included there, see Joseph Hunter, The Great Hero of the Ancient Minstrelsy of England, "Robin Hood." [...] (London, J.R. Smith, 1852.), p. 57. Also see below p. 20 and n. 136.
38. Wiles, op. cit., p. 2. (see n. 28 above.)
39. For York; see n. 34 above; [Chester: L.M. Clopper, ed. Chester (Records of Early English Drama.) (Manchester University Press, 1979), p. 336; Lancashire: DTRB Nos. 420, 820, 1169. No evidence of May games in other northern counties. Most of the Scottish record evidence is in A.J. Mill, Mediæval Plays in Scotland. (St Andrews University Publications, vol. XXIV.) (William Blackwood, Edinburgh and London, 1927), pp. 137-286 passim, and see ibid., pp. 21-26.
40. Edward Hall, "Hen. VIII.", "fo. lvi, b.", quoted in Ritson, Robin Hood, vol. I, p. xcix. (see n. 2 above).
41. For arbours or bowers in rural May games, see Ritson, op. cit., vol. I, p. ci (n. 2 above); Stubbes's Anatomy of the Abuses (n. 13 above), p. 147; Wiles, op. cit. (n. 28 above), p. 17; Nelson, The Robin Hood Tradition (n. 1 above), pp. 66-67.
42. See for instance Robert Hardy, Longbow: A Social and Military History (Patrick Stephens, Cambridge, 1976), p. 130.
43. Edward Hall cited by Ritson (n. 2 above), vol. I, p. xcix.
44. Ibid.
45. See DTRB No. 957.
46. See p. 4 and n. 21 above.
47. See below p. 16.
48. This is also suggested by Nelson (n. 1 above), pp. 53-54.
49. Ibid., p. 61.
50. W.T. Mellows, ed. Peterborough Local Administration, Parochial Government before the Reformation [...] (Publications of the Northamptonshire Record Society, vol. IX) (1939), pp. 91, 93, 94, 95, 97, 124.
51. Ibid., pp. 93, 94.
52. See E. Hobhouse, ed. Church-Wardens' Accounts of Croscombe, Pilton, Yatton, Tintinhull, Morebath, and St. Michael's, Bath, Ranging from A.D. 1349 to 1560 (Somerset Record Society, [vol. 4], 1890), p. 4, and also ibid., pp. xiv, 1, 2, 9-12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 38.
53. See above p. 3 and n. 19.
54. Phillip Stubbes, op. cit. (n. 13 above), p. 150.
55. Ibid., p. 151.

56. E.K. Chambers, Mediaeval Stage (see n. 5 above), vol. I, p. 179 n. 9. Chambers does not state that the council of Lambeth prohibited scot-ales, but it must have done so, for such prohibitions were repeated ad nauseam by later councils, see Councils & Synods (cited n. 5 above), pp. 36, 64, 93, 174, 195, 203, 214, 232, 274, 311, 366, 416, 432, 444, 480, 519, 560, 604.
57. Councils & Synods (see n. 5 above), p. 432.
58. E.K. Chambers, Mediaeval Stage, vol. I, p. 179 n9.
59. Ibid., vol. I, p. 179.
60. See Kerry, op. cit. (see n. 13 above), p. 227.
61. Ritson, op. cit. (see n. 2 above), vol. I, p. cv.
62. See A. Hanham, ed. Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-1580 (Devon & Cornwall Record Society, New Series, vol. 15), p. viii. (Publ. 1970.)
63. Ibid., pp. 135, 162, 167, and passim.
64. Ibid., p. 78, also see pp. xi, 109.
65. One of the first to express such views was Thomas Wright, Essays on Subjects Connected with the Literature, Popular Superstitions, and History of England in the Middle Ages (London, 1846) (2 vols.), vol. I, pp. 164-211; see especially pp. 208-211.
66. J.C. Holt, Robin Hood (Thames and Hudson, London, 1982) is the best treatment of the question of the historicity of Robin Hood; the most recent contribution to the debate is John Bellamy, Robin Hood: An Historical Enquiry (Croom Helm, London & Sydney, 1985.)
67. Texts printed in Child, op. cit. (see n. 33 above), vol. III, pp. 56-78, 97-101, 109-113; the most reliable edns. are in R.B. Dobson & J. Taylor, Rymes of Robyn Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw (Heinemann, London, 1976), pp. 79-112, 115-122, 125-132.
68. The earliest suggested date of publication for A Gest is the third quarter of the 14th cent., see Bellamy, op. cit., p. 97. David Parker, "Popular Protest in 'A Gest of Robyn Hode'", Modern Language Quarterly, vol. 32 (1971), pp. 3-20, suggests a date as late as 1461-1495 (p. 18). No dates have been suggested for the other texts; they survive in MSS of c.1450 and c.1500 respectively.
69. Passus V, l. 402; edn. cited above (see n. 23), p. 57.
70. Wiles, op. cit. (see n. 28 above), pp. 43, 64.
71. David Crook, "Some Further Evidence Concerning the Dating of the Origins of the Legend of Robin Hood", English Historical Review, vol. XCIX (1984), pp. 530-534. I quote from p. 534.
72. A Gest of Robyn Hode st. 15, Dobson & Taylor, op. cit. (see n. 67 above), p. 80
73. Same, st. 456, ibid., p. 112.
74. See David C. Fowler, A Literary History of the Popular Ballad. (Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., 1968), especially ch. 3: "Rymes of Robyn Hood" (pp. 65-93.)
75. William Stubbs, ed. Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I. and Edward II. (Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores [...]), vol. 76, pts. 1,2), vol. I, p. 157. This from Annales Londonienses. For a similar passage in Annales Paulini, see ibid., p. 267. For various mentions of the Argentines, see ibid., vol. I, pp. 69, 76, 157, 230, 231; vol. II, pp. 46, 203-205, 299-300. (Publ. 1882-1883.)

76. The original text of this letter is quoted from E.L.G. Stones, "The Folvilles of Ashby-Folville, Leicestershire, and their Associates in Crime, 1326-1347", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series, vol. 7, (pp. 117-136), pp. 134-135. Translation follows the translated quotes given in Holt. op. cit. (see n. 66 above), p. 58. (Stones's art. publ. 1957)
77. Text of the Tale of Gamelyn is most conveniently accessible in Donald B. Sands, ed. Middle English Verse Romances (Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York, etc., 1966), pp. 154-181. I quote l. 695 (p. 175); also see l. 660 (p. 174.)
78. Chambers, Mediaeval Stage, vol. I, pp. 175-176.
79. Wright, Thomas, ed. The Latin Poems commonly attributed to Walter Mapes. (Camden Society, vol. 17) (London, 1841), p. 300. Also see Richard Axton, European Drama of the Early Middle Ages (Hutchinson University Library: London, 1974) (English and European Literature. Series ed. John Lawlor), p. 143.
80. Cf. J.B. Bessinger, Jr., "Robin Hood: Folklore and Historiography, 1377-1500", Tennessee Studies in Language and Literature, vol. 11 (1966), (pp. 61-69), p. 68 n9.
81. Beatrice White, ed., The Eclogues of Alexander Barclay. (Early English Text. Soc., Original Ser., vol. 175.) (London, 1928; repr. 1961), p. 166.
82. Also F.J. Child, op. cit., vol. III, p. 46 n. (see n. 33 above); Dobson & Taylor (see above n. 67), p. 41.
83. Kingston-upon-Thames, see Ritson (cited above n. 2), vol. I, p. civ; Wiles (cited n. 28 above), p. 69. St Lawrence, Reading, see C. Kerry, op. cit. (n. 13 above), p. 226.
84. See DTRB Nos. 400, 801, 1370, and N.E.D., s.v. "Maid Marian".
85. Ritson, op. cit., vol. I, p. civ.
86. See Michael Heaney, "A New Theory of Morris Origins: A Review Article", Folklore, vol. 96 (1985) (pp. 29-37), p. 29.
87. See the plate in Holt, op. cit. (n. 66 above), p. 134
88. Annette Jung has kindly supplied me with a copy of her unpublished paper "William Dunbar and the Morris Dancers", in which are reproduced many such illustrations.
89. Wiles, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
90. Cf. Annette Jung's paper.
91. N.E.D., s.v. "Morris-dance".
92. See for instance M.A. Nelson, op. cit. (see n. 1 above), pp. 57, 60.
93. See for instance Chambers, Mediaeval Stage, op. cit., vol. I, p. 199. (See n. 5 above.)
94. See Ritson, op. cit., vol. I, p. cv and p. cv n65. Also see N.E.D., s.v. "May" (sb. 3) 5<sup>u</sup>; and ibid., s.v. "Maid Marian".
95. Something similar is suggested by Wiles, op. cit., p. 22.
96. See below p. 18.
97. See William E. Simeone, "The May Games and the Robin Hood Legend", Journal of American Folklore, vol. 64 (1951) (pp. 265-274), p. 274 n39.

98. Art. cit. (see n. 9 above), p. 44.
99. See pp. 11 above.
100. See p. 10 and n. 70 above.
101. The play was first printed in Notes and Queries, First Series, vol. XII (1855), p. 321. I have used the edn. in Dobson & Taylor (see n. 67 above), pp. 203-207, and that in George Parfitt, ed. "Early Robin Hood Plays: Two Fragments and a Bibliography", Renaissance and Modern Studies, vol. XXII (1978), Special Number: Popular Theatre, (pp. 5-12), pp. 5-6.
102. This was first noted by Child, op. cit. (see n. 33 above), vol. III, p. 90.
103. See an article by "R.W." in Notes and Queries, vol. 177 (1939), pp. 475-476, entitled "Exaltre" [sic].
104. This is suggested in Dobson & Taylor (see n. 67 above), p. 206 and n.1.
105. For the date, see ibid., p. 208. Edns. of the plays, ibid., pp. 208-214, 215-219; also in Parfitt (see n. 101 above), pp. 6-11.
106. Dobson & Taylor (see n. 67 above), p. 210.
107. Ibid., p. 214.
108. Ibid.
109. See the facsimile edn., The Play of Robin Hood (Old English Drama: Students' Facsimile Edition. (1914), sig. I 2v. (This edn. has no further bibliographical identification.)
110. Chambers, Mediaeval Stage (see n. 5 above), vol. I, p. 178.
111. Quoted by J.C.Holt (see n. 66 above), p. 142.
112. This was first suggested by Child (see n. 33 above), vol. III, p. 90 n.
113. Robin Hood (see n. 66 above), p. 192, col. 1, n. 13.
114. M.Grace, ed. Records of the Guild of St. George in Norwich, 1389-1547: A Transcript with an Introduction (Norfolk Record Soc., vol. IX), p. 67.
115. The Revels History of Drama in English. Vol. II: 1500-1576, (gen. ed. T.W.Craik) (Methuen: London & New York, 1980), p. 146.
116. Dobson & Taylor (see n. 67 above), p. 218.
117. See the very good discussion of the relationship of plays to ballads in J.M.Steadman, "Dramatization of the Robin Hood Ballads", Modern Philology, vol. 17 (1919), pp. 9-23.
118. The Percy Folio MS., for which see the good discussion in Fowler (n. 74), especially pp. 132-182.
119. Dobson & Taylor (n. 67), p. 161.
120. Ibid., p. 213.
121. Ibid.
122. See for instance M.A.Nelson (n. 1), pp. 48-49.
123. Dobson & Taylor (n. 67), p. 126.
124. Ibid., p. 216.
125. See p. 3 and n. 14 above.

126. Also see for instance M.A.Nelson (n. 1 above), p. 62.
127. J.C.Holt (n. 66 above), p. 59.
128. Ibid. Also see Dobson & Taylor (n. 67), p. 41 & n. 2.
129. J.C.Holt (n. 66), p. 191 n. 3 (cols. 1-2.)
130. The plays are described thus in Copland's edn. See the facsimile edn. (n. 109 above), sig. h 2v.
131. DTRB No. 283.
132. Mai Fossenius's dissertation (seen. 29 above) is, to my mind, the best discussion of the origins and early history of the May game.
133. The surviving texts of such plays are late. For instance The Kempsford Mumming Play, written down in 1868, is thought to be of 18th cent. origin, see the edn. in Wiles (n. 28), pp. 91-93. For a chapbook text of a Robin Hood mummers' play originally published c. 1840, see M.J.Preston, M.G.Smith & P.S.Smith, "The Lost Chapbooks", Folklore vol. 88 (1977), pp. 160-174.
134. Thus for instance C.A.Burland writes in Echoes of Magic: A Study of Seasonal Festivals through the Ages (Rowman and Littlefield: Totowa, New Jersey, 1972), p. 52: "The Puritans managed to crush most of the ancient ceremony of Maying. It was totally opposite to their sober hatred."
135. The May game scenes from the plays of these dramatists are conveniently assembled in Wiles (n. 28), pp. 80-90.
136. Wilhelmus Worm, "Iter Anglicum Anno MDCLIII Die II Maii Inceptum et Die XXX Augusti Absolutum cum in Comitatu Nobilissimorum Dominorum Domini Erici Rosenkrantsii et Domini Petri Reedtsii Regis Daniæ ad Rempublicam Anglicanam Legatorum essem". MS Ny kgl. S. 2163 4<sup>o</sup>, Royal Library, Copenhagen, fol. 21 r. (Formerly University Library, Copenhagen, MS Hist. 4to. 39.) The MS was first noted in The Fourty-Fifth Annual Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records (London, 1885), "Appendix II", pp. 61-62, where the outlaw's name is given as: "Rabbenhüt". The MS, in excellent condition and written in a very clear hand, has no umlaut above the last vowel.

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