“Whan they were clothed in Lyncolne grene”: Dressing a Gentrifying Robin Hood

Jove DiFiore Gleason

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Advised by Dr. Courtney Rydel

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I pledge my word of honor that I have abided by the Washington College Honor Code while completing this assignment.

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INTRODUCTION

> Robyn hid in scherewod stod
>
> hodud and hathud hosut and schod
>
> ffour And thyunti arowus he bar In hit honus.
>
> *Lincoln Cathedral MS 132*

That is one of the earliest fragments of a ballad of Robin Hood in its entirety. Despite its length, it is a fascinating text for a number of reasons. First of all, it is from a schoolbook, a student's copied writing exercise.[1] This implies that it is either a true fragment of a larger work or that it draws on a preexisting cultural understanding of the figure "Robyn." It is not entirely clear when exactly Robin Hood was first invented. As far back as 1296, Robin Hood existed in one form or another. There is a record from a 1296 tax roll of a Sussex man by the name of Gilbert Robynhod, as well as others scattered across Huntingdonshire, Hampshire, Suffolk, Essex, Sussex, and Berkshire.[2] Given the number of Robynhods and derivations thereof that come explicitly from prowess in archery, it is safe to say that there were also certain associations that already existed with the name.[3]

While the modern audience may picture Errol Flynn or a cartoon fox in green tights and a Peter Pan-esque hat, the clothing of Robin Hood is an element that has been (as shown by the Lincoln Cathedral fragment) crucial to his character, and yet it is often quite malleable between interpretations. Certainly, what a modern Hollywood costume designer and a serf from the 1400s

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[1] Christopher Cannon, From Literacy to Literature: England 1300–1400, (Oxford University Press, 2016): 80

2 Stephen H. Rigby, "The Medieval Legend of Robin Hood: The English Sources" from Historians on Robin Hood: The Outlaw's Legend in the Later Middle Ages, ed. Stephen H. Rigby: 23

3 Anne Curry, "Weapons and Warfare" from Historians on Robin Hood: The Outlaw's Legend in the Later Middle Ages, ed. Stephen H. Rigby: 302

would wear to represent the famous folk hero would not be the same. Even still, what he is described as wearing in medieval and early modern texts are not as unified a picture as one would assume. We will never know what exactly the earliest Robin Hood stories were like. May Day plays give us a general idea, but most that survive come from a period that also gives us surviving recorded ballads. Outside of the ballads, we have reactions from contemporary naysayers, often complaining of the stories' portrayals of raunchiness and laziness, though on occasion, rioting and law-breaking more in accordance with our modern image of the fictional bandit.[4]

What is so interesting, then, about the Lincoln Cathedral fragment is what we can tell about what was already established in the character of Robin Hood from as far back as we have records. You have, first and foremost, Sherwood Forest as the setting. You have Robin as an archer as established by his holding of arrows. But taking up the middle of the fragment is a description of his clothing. He stands "hodud and hathud hosut and schod," describing him as wearing a hat and hood, as well as hose and shoes. In the manuscript, a nearly identical version of the text appears, written in Latin. The greatest difference between the two versions being that in the Latin, Robin is "de metore capiciatus et capellatus" or, "hooded and hatted as a reaper," reaper as in farmer.[5] While Robin Hood's connections to Sherwood Forest tend to appear in even the most unfaithful adaptations of his story, as does his archery, the clothing elements so clearly laid out in this earliest ballad are not so lucky.

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[4] Rigby, "The Medieval Legend of Robin Hood: The English Sources": 16–17, A.J. Pollard, "Authority and Social Order" from *Imagining Robin Hood: The Late-Medieval Stories in Historical Context*: 173–174

[5] Cannon: 80

It is no secret that the narrative of Robin Hood has drastically shifted from its earliest forms to now, but the same was true between the medieval and early modern periods as well. It is a process Stephen A. Knight and Thomas Ohlgren refer to as gentrification, and it begins quite early in the history of the character as the audience for the stories expanded out of town May Day plays and into royal courts.[6] When examining this shift, that crucial yet so easily overlooked element of Robin Hood, his ensemble, follows the same trend towards the high-class as the character's politics. From the simple reaper's hood that gives him his name shifting into the iconic hat that is now synonymous with him, one can track his change from man of the people to lord fallen on hard times by how his clothing is described.[7] This project will explore the gentrification of the Robin Hood stories through the use of clothing in the anonymous ballad *A Gest of Robyn Hode* and the Sir Anthony Munday play *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington*, two of the most significant Robin Hood stories from the medieval and early modern periods.

[6] Stephen A. Knight, Thomas Ohlgren, "Introduction" from *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*

[7] In his most famous film appearance, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) starring Errol Flynn, Robin Hood is a Saxon noble pushing back against Norman rule. In his most recent (as of time of writing) major film appearance, *Robin Hood* (2018) starring Taron Egerton and Jamie Foxx, he once again is a noble, this time pushing back against the idea of the Crusades. The most mainstream modern Robin Hood where he is a simple yeoman fighting for the people is the Disney version from 1973, and even then, it is never explicitly stated one way or the other.

THE LANGUAGE OF CLOTHING

> Cowdest thou shote as well in a bowe,
>
> To grene wode thou shuldest with me,
>
> And two times in the yere thy clothinge
>
> Chaunged shulde be[.]
>
> *A Gest of Robyn Hode, lines 676–680*

For the vast majority of human history, social class has been easily gleaned by clothing. While clothing was in part dictated by income level, which determined what one had access to, in many instances the ability to determine social class by clothing was also by design. For instance, throughout the Middle Ages and across Europe, sumptuary laws—prohibitive, largely symbolic laws controlling consumption of a commodity—regulated everything from material to style, precluding even the more fiscally fortunate among the lower classes from rising visually above their station.[8] One such sumptuary law from 1377 forbade anyone under the rank of knight or lady from "use peleure en des draps," or, the use of fur in their clothing.[9] Another from 1363 forbade "craftsmen and people called yeomen" from wearing "cloth for their clothing or shoes of a price higher than 40s. for the whole cloth by way of purchase or otherwise" as well as "precious stones, cloth of silk, nor silver, no belt, knife, brooch, ring, garter, or clasps, ribbons, chains, bracelets, seals or other things of gold or silver, or any manner of apparel embroidered,

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[8] Laurel Wilson, "Common Threads: A Reappraisal of Medieval European Sumptuary Law" from Western Michigan University's *The Medieval Globe*: *vol. 2, no. 2 (2016) Legal Worlds and Legal Encounters*, ed. Elizabeth Lambourn: 142–143

[9] Louise Sylvester et al, "Sumptuary Regulation, Statutes and Rolls of Parliament" from *Medieval Dress and Textiles in Britain: A Multilingual Sourcebook*: 199

[10]enamelled or of silk."[11] This act also saw restrictions on what "carters, ploughmen, drivers of plows, oxherds, cowherds, shepherds, swineherds, dairymaids and all other keepers of beasts, threshers of corn and all manner of people of the estate of groom attending to animal husbandry, and all other people who do not have forty shillings in goods, nor property to the value of forty shillings" could wear, including a prohibition of men stuffing their doublets with cotton and wool to achieve the fashionable silhouette of the day, and the type of cloth available to them being limited to "blanket and russet of twelve pence for the ell."[12] The lines of medieval social hierarchy stretched broadly across professions, such as those listed in the 1363 law, and as the feudal system began to disintegrate due to factors ranging from the number of laborers in the lower classes being significantly reduced by plague, and the emergence of a middle class as those such as merchants gained increasing amounts of capital. Thus, spelling out who exactly these laws were targeted at not only served to legally imply that craftsmen and yeomen were as low, disposable, and weak as more traditional agricultural laborers, but to force them into a visual similarity as well.

However, sumptuary laws were hard to enforce and largely unpopular, with laws such as the one from 1363 being repealed shortly after their passage. They primarily served to make those passing the laws feel powerful and in control, especially as the feudal system began crumbling and the restrictions on the power of the monarchy became more numerous. This futility did not mean the societal forces behind sumptuary laws were limited to the government, as can be seen from the contemporary moralizing in tales like William of Wadington's *Le*

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[10] Sylvester et al: 205

[11] Sylvester et al: 205

[12] Sylvester et al, "Introduction" from *Medieval Dress…*: 4

Manuel des Pechie, containing such passages as:[13]"A clerk who is fashionable beyond his rank is a standard-bearer for the devil. But now through debauchery they concern themselves entirely with novelty. May God correct clerks who behave like noblemen!"[14] Social pressures and conventions were as present as legal restrictions.

The politics of clothing were not limited to signifiers of rank, and, especially in the later Middle Ages, clothing was used to represent allegiance. A noble employer was expected to provide clothing to his retainers, and financial records from the period show repeated purchases of hoods, livery, dressings for beds, and everyday wear for their employees.[15] Heraldry became popular in the later Middle Ages and served as an easy visual marker of who worked for whom through livery and livery badges. In the court of Richard II, for example, the king's cousin (and future usurper) Henry of Bolingbroke wore the king's white hart on his own Lancastrian red to signify his support and supplication towards the increasingly paranoid king.[16]

Another important aspect of the language of clothing was color. As seen above, colors were an important aspect of heraldry, but they also had their own symbolic meanings. In some instances, color symbology has remained the same. Green, for instance, represented nature then just as much as it does now. It was the color of lordly huntsmen and their yeomen valets, usually paired with red (a color associated with power and nobility).[17] But more often than not, modern conceptions of color connotations do not apply. In his *De sacro sancti altari mysterio*, Pope

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[14] Sylvester et al, "Moral and Satirical Works" from *Medieval Dress…*: 139

[15] Sylvester et al, "Accounts" from *Medieval Dress…*: 58–59, 71–75, 78–79

[16] Helen Castor, "1389–1393: This Little World" from *The Eagle and the Hart: The Tragedy of Richard II and Henry IV*: 171

[17] Micheal Pastoureau, "A Dangerous Color: 14th to 16th Centuries" from *Green: The History of a Color*: 111

Innocent III declared green the color of hope in eternal life and decreed it was to be the everyday color worn by the clergy, as it was "a middle color between white, red and black."[18] As it was a chemically unstable color to mix in dye, green was also associated with symbolically unstable things: luck, fortune, destiny, love, beauty, youth, and danger.[19] For this reason—as well as bankrupt persons and debtors being made to wear green cap to visually declare them as such—even before the American dollar bill existed, green was a color of money.20 The chemical instability also meant that it was generally an unwise financial decision for the wealthy to spend a great deal on green fabrics (the shade was likely to change after a few washes), giving green clothing an association with the lower classes.[21] The association with green and the masses extended back to the Romans and Byzantines, where, in the color-coded chariot races, blue was the color of the team favored by the upper crust—*factio vanata,* or the *venetiani*—and green, the hoi palloi—*factio prasina*, or the *prasiniani*.[22]

Some aspects of medieval dress were consistent across class lines. Headwear was an omnipresent part of the medieval outfit and, like their hairstyles, men wore the same type of hats and hoods regardless of social status. The class distinction was in the styling—while protection from the elements necessitates a warm garment like a *bardocucullus*, the amount of time spent in one was determined by the work one did.[23] A lord or noble spending most of their time indoors was able to shirk comfort for fashionability, and in the later Middle Ages the headwear for men, wealthy and noble men in particular, became increasingly elaborate and skewed towards the hat

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[18] Pastoureau, "An Uncertain Color: From the Beginning to the Year 1000" from *Green…*: 42

[19] Pastoureau, "A Courtly Color" from *Green…*: 84

[20] Pastoureau, "A Dangerous Color: 14th to 16th Centuries" from *Green…*: 124

[21] Pastoureau: 116

[22] Pastoureau, "An Uncertain Color: From the Beginning to the Year 1000" from *Green…*: 42

[23] Hilda Amphlett, "Thirteenth Century" from *Hats: A History of Fashion in Headwear*: 26–27

rather than the hood.[24] The ability to play with the style of one's hood's *liripipe* (a long strip of fabric that dangled off the back of the hood which gained popularity in the 1300s) was also dictated by class, and its length was regulated by sumptuary law.25 In terms of hoods and cloaks, stylistically the difference is minute outside of the quality of the materials used and the quantity. Being able to have a cape and a cloak as different clothing items rather than a cloak with a hood that would be repeatedly sewn on and cut off depending on time of year was dictated on one's ability to afford the distinction.[26] Overall, less material and less layers led to a garment of worse quality, and that difference in quality determined the biggest distinction stylistically when it comes to all types of medieval attire, from *cotes* and *kirtles* to doublets and hoods.

Cloth was one of the largest industries in medieval and early modern England, if not the largest.27 Every garment and scrap of cloth was crafted with enormous amounts of labor regardless of individual quality, and as the country and much of Europe shifted away from feudalism, it gained an even greater emphasis in England's economy as the country began industrializing.28 To ignore the sartorial symbolism present in Robin Hood is to ignore large parts of the language the tales are told through. Modern audiences watching something like 1991's *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* and the *Robin Hood*s from 2010 and 2018 can look at the choice to put Kevin Costner, Russel Crowe, and Taron Egerton in black and leather and understand such costuming choices come from a desire from the filmmakers to make their

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[24] Amphlett, "Fourteenth Century" from *Hats…*: 34–40

[25] Sylvester et al, "Sumptuary…" from *Medieval Dress…*: 228–229

[26] Sylvester et al, "Moral and Satirical Works" from *Medieval Dress…*: 156–159

[27] Diana R. Uhlman, "...A Dyere…" from *Chaucer's Pilgrims: An Historical Guide to the Pilgrims in the Canterbury Tales*, ed. Laura C. and Robert T. Lambdin: 181

[28] Gwendolyn Morgan, "...A Webbe…" from *Chaucer's Pilgrims: An Historical Guide to the Pilgrims in the Canterbury Tales*, ed. Laura C. and Robert T. Lambdin: 173–178

versions of the character seem "cool" to a modern eye.29 In the same way, medieval and early modern audiences would read the described costuming in *Gest* and *Downfall* and be able to glean the purpose behind the green and the hat and the hood. It's an oversight to strip medieval and early modern audiences of their ability to understand the cultural language of clothing of their day the way we can, and it does a disservice to the storytellers of the past to presume them unable to utilize the same tricks authors and creators in the modern era can. In ignoring the sartorial language present from the very beginning of Robin Hood and the way that it shifts and evolves through the centuries, an important facet of the way the ballads and plays are told is lost.

[29] In all three versions, the primary colors of Robin Hood are black and blue, and green barely appears at all. The 2018 *Robin Hood* in particular attempts to modernize the visual language of the characters' clothing to a degree the others do not attempt, to the point where there is little effort made to make the costuming appear medieval at all. The three films exist in the cultural zeitgeist primarily through derision of these choices. An as of yet unreleased (at time of writing) adaptation starring Hugh Jackman's promotional photos and posters suggest that it will be following a similar path.

THE ROBIN OF THE MIDDLE AGES

> Lythe and listin, gentilmen,
>
> That be of frebore blode;
>
> I shall you tel of a gode yeman,
>
> His name was Robyn Hode.
>
> *A Gest of Robyn Hode, lines 1–4*

Unquestionably, the most influential Robin Hood story to come from the Middle Ages is *A Gest of Robyn Hode*. Iconic elements of the Robin Hood mythos are established in *Gest*, such as Robin's code of conduct, as well as plot beats that tend to appear in most adaptations: an archery contest as a trap for the hero, facing off against the Sheriff of Nottingham, the death of Robin at the hands of the Prioress, the king of England in disguise appearing to pardon everyone in the end. Most of the important characters are there as well: Robin, Little John, Much the Miller's son, the Sheriff of Nottingham, the king of England, and one of, if not the first, appearances of Will Scarlet, with the notable omissions of Maid Marion and Friar Tuck (both of whom were, at the moment, still stuck in the May Day plays) and Prince John, who would be omnipresent in later stories.30 To a modern audience, Robin Hood and his adventures are set firmly in the reign of Richard I the Lionheart and find their villain in his scheming brother John Lackland, but the Robin Hood tales of the Middle Ages do not have such a concrete temporal setting. In *Gest*, the king is stated to be Edward, not Richard, and which Edward he is supposed to be is left ambiguous. Andrew Spencer even argues that he was not meant to be any particular Edward at all, and that the name serves as a generic, quintessentially English name for a stock

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[30] A.J. Pollard, "Crime, Violence, and the Law" from *Imagining Robin Hood: The Late-Medieval Stories in Historical Context*: 88

king.[31] Even setting aside when *Gest* is supposed to take place, when it was written is also up in the air. Stephen H. Rigby has argued that the specific use of livery in *Gest*—used in the story as an identifier and retaining justices by robe and fee—helps date the story in the 1340s, but other critics argue for the reign of Edward III instead.[32] Rigby's argument is plausible, and helps substantiate the importance of clothing in the play.

Gest opens in Sherwood, with Robin and his band looking for someone to have as a guest for dinner and then to steal from. Robin lays out his rules of who he will and will not rob:

> no husbonde…
>
> That tilleth with his ploughe
>
> ……
>
> [or] gode yeman
>
> That walketh by grene wode shawe,
>
> Ne no knyght ne no squyer
>
> That wol be a gode felawe.[33]

The way that the small farmer is referred to mirrors the language of the 1377 sumptuary law, which serves as an example of the kind of language around class and profession current in the 14th century. In contrast, the law's reference to yeomen is more opaque: "people called yeomen" belies no specific task or purpose the way farmer, thresher, or plowman does. The term

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[31] Andrew Spencer, "Kingship" from *Historians on Robin Hood: The Outlaw's Legend in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Stephen H. Rigby. On the omnipresence of royal medieval Edwards, the Middle Ages had five King Edwards, and even that ignores the Saxon kings Edward the Martyr, Edward the Confessor, and Edward the Elder from before the Norman Conquest, who are not counted in the numbered King Edwards. There were also a not insignificant number of Prince Edwards who never made it to the throne, like the famous Edward the Black Prince and his eldest son who died as a toddler, also named Edward. In total, as of time of writing, there have been eleven King Edwards of England.

[32] Stephen H. Rigby, "Dating *A Gest of Robyn Hode*" from *Historians on Robin Hood: The Outlaw's Legend in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Stephen H. Rigby: 69–73

[33] *A Gest of Robyn Hode*: 49–56

yeomen—how Robin himself is described in the opening of *Gest*—is a broad social category; the only thing clear about it is that it is decidedly not a noble one. Across the myriad of medieval Robin Hood ballads, the term is used interchangeably to mean a man in service (historically a valet), a young man, and a man of virtue.[34] The vagueness of the term serves to make Robin an everyman, as by lack of definition outside of the term, he could hypothetically be anyone. His defense of men like himself in the same loosely defined social class can be read as a type of class solidarity against the ignoble nobility and corrupt protected clergy: "'Be he erle, or ani baron, / Abbot, or ani knyght."[35]

The "knyght" that the Merry Men do end up finding, the down on his luck Rychard at the Lee, shows his destitution visually. The ballad states:

> All dreri was his semblaunce,
>
> And lytell was his pryde;
>
> His one fote in the styrop stode,
>
> That othere wavyd beside.
>
> His hode hanged in his iyn two;
>
> He rode in symple aray,
>
> A soriar man than he was one
>
> Rode never in somer day.[36]

[34] Louisa Foroughi, "Yeoman Status and Yeoman Service" from *Historians on Robin Hood: The Outlaw's Legend in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Stephen H. Rigby: 124–125

[35] *Gest*: 73–74

[36] *Gest*: 85–92

Rychard at the Lee's hood is mentioned again when he first meets Robin, with Rychard doffing it and kneeling as a show of respect. Already the class dynamics in the tale are being flipped from what they would have been historically. As a knight, it should be Rychard being kneeled to and Robin removing his hood. But in *Gest*, Robin, clearly and repeatedly declared to be a yeomen, is treated with respect by real lords. This role reversal is repeated in Rychard and Robin's interactions, with Robin granting Rychard food, money, and solutions to his problems, as if he is the lord providing for a vassal. He even provides Rychard clothing, specifically a livery, and *Robin's* livery no less. The act is not just a kindness: providing livery and maintenance, which Robin does for Rychard, is how medieval lords and knights built bands of retainers, and it was a crime if those who did not have the right to do so, like Robin Hood, did so.37 Again Robin acts the lord, and his possession of "'many a riche aray; / Ther is no marchaunt in mery Englond / So ryche, I dare well say'" is in direct opposition to Rychard, who has only ten shillings to his name.38 Once again, Robin's actions serve as a counterpoint to contemporary sumptuary legislation. Rychard and Robin's visual appearances suggest the opposite of their social class as much as their actions do. Rychard is only able to appear as a knight, appearing to be a part of his proper class, through the intervention of Robin, a yeoman.

Like many medieval stories, *Gest*'s plot hinges on hidden identity and disguise. Early in the tale, corrupt members of the clergy passing through Sherwood wear clothing that do not match their station in an attempt to trick Robin Hood into not stealing from them, something the king and his retinue will mimic in a later fytte.39 The clergymen do so by putting on "symple

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[37] Stephen A. Knight, Thomas Ohlgren, footnote from *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*: 279

[38] *Gest*: 282–284

[39] *Gest*: 1481–1492, 387–388

wedes / That ye brought fro the see"—clothing bought from overseas—which is an explicit defiance of a sumptuary law passed under Edward III in 1337 that banned the import of clothing and fabrics. While that law was repealed in 1362, if one uses Rigby's dating of *Gest* as being written in the 1340s, it falls in the window where the law was active.[40] It stands to reason that making the clergymen wear foreign goods in defiance of this law is meant to further code them as villainous. The clergymen break another clothing-related law when they accept "cloth and fee" from Rychard at the Lee—meaning the acceptance of money and clothing in payment for a legal service—a practice banned in 1305–06 by Edward I (who considered such an act a conspiracy), and doubly so in 1346 by Edward III (who declared that judges, like those assisting the clergymen, were only allowed to accept such payment from the king).[41] Robin Hood might break these laws, but he is an outlaw and not a churchman.

The relationship between *Gest* and sumptuary law is further complicated by a passage a little farther down. In an attempt to repay what he owes to the clergymen, Rychard encounters a wrestling contest where the prize is, among other things, "A payre of gloves, [and] a rede golde rynge."[42] The winner of the wrestling contest is a foreigner and a yeomen, and Rychard acts to protect him from a mob of his competitors, which serves to show Rychard's good quality and the kindness that makes him worthy of Robin's investment despite his nobleness. The prizes of gloves and a golden ring are notable in their seeming opposition to the foreign yeomen's station. A previously mentioned sumptuary law banned yeomen from wearing either rings or other items made of gold, and while gloves were not legally banned from the lower classes, they were loaded

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[40] Louise Sylvester et al, "Sumptuary Regulation, Statutes and Rolls of Parliament" from *Medieval Dress and Textiles in Britain: A Multilingual Sourcebook*: 198

[41] Knight and Ohlgren, footnote from *...Outlaw Tales*: 426

[42] *Gest*: 545

with complicated inter-class meaning. While every class wore gloves, mittens were more common among those who had to physically labor, as they were easier to make and many of the tasks lower class laborers performed did not require dexterity of fingers.[43] Like hats, gloves were expected to be removed in the presence of one's betters as a show of deference, and the politics of keeping one's gloves on or not were loaded with meaning.[44] The typical prize for the type of wrestling contest that Rychard encounters was also notably not as rich, (just a ram, rather than the finery and some other animals that are described in *Gest*), which implies a deeper meaning in the choice to up the ante.[45] Rychard defends the foreign yeoman's right to possess the ring and the gloves, and more broadly his access to the trappings of the upper class that were legally and socially barred from yeomen. If a yeomen is expected to remove his gloves in the presence of someone like a knight, the choice for a knight to defend a yeomen's right to keep his gloves is one that serves as a decidedly political one. The fact that once again sumptuary law is being broken seems like it should contradict the message of the clergymen doing the same, but representationally, the clergymen's use of foreign cloth is to deceive, while the possession of the ring by the yeomen is a reward for his skill.

The third fytte of *Gest* begins as a comedic side adventure of Little John that ties into the larger narrative more thematically than plot-wise but serves as a way of emphasizing the visual power and authority of Robin Hood. Little John pretends to join the service of the Sheriff of Nottingham, and, after finding him to be a poor employer, steals everything in his house that is not bolted down and convinces the Sheriff's cook to become a Merry Man. To the Sheriff, Little

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[43] Annamarieke Willemsen, "Taking Up the Glove: Finds, Uses and Meanings of Gloves, Mittens and Gauntlets in Western Europe, c. AD 1300–1700" from *Post-Medieval Archaeology 49/1 (2015)*: 29

[44] Willemsen: 29–30

[45] Knight and Ohlgren, footnote from *…Outlaw Tales*: 548

John claims his name is Reynold Greenleaf (the spelling of which fluctuates). The "Greenleaf" of course harkens to his home in Sherwood Forest, but the green aspect of Greenleaf is notable in the fact the color is associated with the forest itself, but with Robin Hood specifically. Robin gives Rychard green clothing to wear, and later in the fytte Little John makes coy references to seeing a green hart, which the audience is meant to gather is Robin. Green is unquestionably the color of Robin Hood, and this association comes up again and again. The specific shade of green is explicit as well: Lincoln green, a dye made in nearby Lincoln. Like most English dyes of the period, it was likely made by "woading" it first, a process of dying the cloth with woad dye to make the later colors more permanent.[46] Outside of this, it is impossible to know what else went into this iconic shade, as there are no surviving recipes from Lincoln from the Middle Ages.[47] The choice to make Lincoln green Robin's distinctive hue can be tied to a number of factors. One, it was quite a famous and renowned shade of green at the time, and distinctively English at a time when quality cloth was more associated with Flemish dyers, and outside of raw wool, England was not particularly known for sartorial excellence.[48] Two, Lincoln green was reputedly a blue-green, meaning the woading was either particularly strong or otherwise played a major factor in its coloration. A common phrase in *Gest* is "green-wode," referencing the green wood (the forest) that Robin calls home. "Wode" and "woad" are homophones, and thus the choice of

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[46] Diana R. Uhlman, "...A Dyere…" from *Chaucer's Pilgrims: An Historical Guide to the Pilgrims in the Canterbury Tales*, ed. Laura C. and Robert T. Lambdin: 182

[47] Nancy M. McKenna, "Medieval Textiles" from the University of Arizona's *Complex Weavers' Issue 29*: 1–6. There are a plethora of claims about the creation of Lincoln green, often claiming weld as an element of some sort. Despite their numerousness, there are no proper citations on any of these claims, and therefore they cannot be verified even without McKenna's disproving note that there are no surviving recipes. Ultimately, the claims about woad being an element are assumptive based on broader dyeing trends, the recorded quality of the shade of green in terms of longevity (something that underdying with woad assists with), and the reported blue-green hue of Lincoln green.

[48] Gwendolyn Morgan, "...A Webbe…" from *Chaucer's Pilgrims: An Historical Guide to the Pilgrims in the Canterbury Tales*, ed. Laura C. and Robert T. Lambdin: 171

this specific, woad-heavy shade of green as Robin's ties him closer to his home base of Sherwood and the relative anarchy of the natural world.

In the third fytte, after fighting the Sheriff of Nottingham's cook for an hour, Little John is impressed by his skills and offers him a place in the Merry Men—with the promise of clothing. In the Middle Ages, it was expected for employers to provide all the clothing and cloths for their retainers, everything from shirts and hose to bedsheets.[49] While proper livery was one way of identifying retainers, the everyday wear of servants, for example, was dictated by what was provided for them by their employers and thus could also serve a similar function. Little John promises the cook, "two times in the yere thy clothinge / Chaunged shulde be," before he even mentions the fee and food he would receive for his service.[50] When Robin Hood and Little John reveal the trick they have played on the Sheriff, in exchange for his life they make the Sheriff strip—

> To drawe of his hosen and his shone,
>
> His kirtell, and his cote of pie,
> That was fured well and fine,
> And toke hym a grene mantel,
> To lap his body therin.[51]

—taking the Sheriff's own clothes and colors and leaving him with nothing but a green cloak to ward off the elements, fully leaving him at Robin's mercy. To add insult to injury, Robin takes this time to have Little John and the cook don their livery, that "They shulde lye in that same

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[49] Sylvester et al, "Accounts" from *Medieval Dress and Textiles in Britain: A Multilingual Sourcebook*: 58–125

[50] *Gest*: 679–680

[51] *Gest*: 771–776

sute," and "That the sherif myght them see,"[52] making it clear to the Sheriff who the cook and Little John work for. Even when, in the fourth fytte, Little John is annoyed with Robin and his orders, he still carries out Robin's orders and does so "Under a mantel of grene."[53] This narrative flourish implies, by virtue of emphasizing his attire and its color, that despite his irritation, Little John remains loyal.

The fourth fytte contains an interesting collection of loaded clothing-based character moments. Little John picks up a Benedictine abbot, and when the abbot resits and is rude, Little John declares, "'And evyll thryfte on thy hede…Ryght under thy hattes bonde.'"[54] It's odd to mention the abbot's hat given "evyll thryfte on thy hede" is a complete curse on its own, but the inclusion makes more sense when the abbot is brought to meet Robin Hood and, in contrast:

> Robyn dyde adowne his hode,
>
> The monke whan that he se;
>
> The monke was not so curteyse,
>
> His hode then let he be."[55]

Robin gives the abbot the chance to make up for his rudeness to Little John, and yet the abbot refuses. In doing so, he doesn't release the "evyll thryfte" on his head, cursed under his hatband by Little John, through his lack of courtesy. When Robin decides to muster a show of force against the abbot, he blows a horn and summons a group of 140 retainers: "And everych of them a good mantell / Of scarlet and of raye."[56] The scarlet and stripes might appear to be a departure

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[52] *Gest*: 779–780

[53] *Gest*: 844

[54] *Gest*: 877–878

[55] *Gest*: 901–904

[56] *Gest*: 917–918

from Robin's usual colors, but it serves a few purposes. The first is the quality of the material, which is stated explicitly. As noted previously, high quality cloth was the exclusive remit of the wealthy, and not just because it was what they could afford, meaning this serves as another flouting of sumptuary law. The red and striped mantles Robin's men wear harken to the colors Rychard at the Lee has been shown to wear, red and white. Thus to the abbot, these colors signify the fact that Robin has a knight like Rychard on his payroll, or that he has managed to claim a knight's men for his own. Rychard's colors would be known to the abbot, as the abbot is the one that has been cheating him out of his money. But the red and striped mantles also call to mind the colors that noble huntsmen and their valets wore, especially in concert with the action of blowing a horn. What color the red is striped with is left unsaid (given who the men work for it is easy to guess), but all of these meanings combined project the impression of nobility upon Robin. The sartorial trappings of the upper classes are given to a yeomen, someone who should not have access to it but does by virtue of the consent of his peers and not his bloodline.

In contrast to Robin's authority from the people, King Edward's authority is entirely from his bloodline, and his role in *Gest* is complex and multi-faceted. Like the clergymen in previous fyttes, Edward disguises himself to enter Sherwood and track Robin down:

> Full hastly our kynge was dyght,
> So were his knyghtes fyve,
> Everych of them in monkes wede,
> And hasted them thyder blyve.
>
> Our kynge was grete above his cole,
> A brode hat on his crowne,

Ryght as he were abbot-lyke,

They rode up into the towne.

Styf botes our kynge had on,

Forsoth as I you say;

He rode syngynge to grene wode,

The covent was clothed in graye.[57]

While notably he is not mentioned to be wearing foreign cloth like the clergymen from before, his clothing is nevertheless richly layered in meaning. Edward wears both hood and hat, something not uncommon with certain types of hats (Robin Hood in the Lincoln Cathedral fragment does the same), but the lack of fashionability in the pairing goes far in conveying the intended lower classness of his attire. The impression is additionally emphasized by the fact that both the hat and hood are explicitly described as covering his crown. The gray color of the cloth Edward and his knights wear does similar work, as undyed cloth tends to appear in shades of gray, and while in the Middle Ages people across every class wore color, the more vibrant the color the more expensive/higher class it was, and there is no vibrant shade of gray. The mention of Edward's "styf botes" is interesting in that it can be read as a tell of his true class status despite the rest of his array. Stiffness implies newness or a larger amount of material, and both connote a level of capital that would be inaccessible to the lower classes, something that *Gest's* audience would know and understand. Robin's later proclamations of loyalty to the king can thus be recontextualized as intentionally flattering the not-so-disguised Edward rather than something heartfelt.

[57] *Gest*: 1481–1491

"'Haste thou ony grene cloth,'" asks Edward at the beginning of the eighth fytte, "That thou wylte sell nowe to me?"[58] At the end of the previous fytte, Edward offers Robin and his men a full pardon and a place in his court. And yet, opening fytte eight, it's Edward who wants himself and his men to be bedecked in Robin's colors. Edward makes even more of a production of it than just donning Robin's colors:

> The kynge kest of his cole then,
> A grene garment he dyde on,
> And every knyght had so, iwys,
> Another hode full sone.
>
> Whan they were clothed in Lyncolne grene,
> They keste away theyr graye:
> "Now we shall to Notyngham,"
> All thus our kynge gan say.[59]

Robin, the king, and their respective men then parade to Nottingham in a theatrical display of unity. It's a compliment to pardons and offered positions in Edward's court, a show of allegiance. But as with Rychard at the Lee, the proper hierarchy of power is flipped on its head.

Gest is representative of broader trends in Robin Hood stories of the time. Whereas England's other medieval literary juggernaut, King Arthur, has many surviving manuscripts, tales, and ballads from the period, most of the Robin Hood work of the time was spread through plays and oral tradition. That's because King Arthur tales were for and by the upper crust. The

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[58] *Gest*: 1669–1670

[59] *Gest*: 1681–1688

heroes were high born, as were their patrons. While it's been debated just how revolutionary Robin Hood tales really are, it's impossible to deny that stories like *Gest* take every opportunity to poke at the social order, invert it, and question it. From the hoods on their heads to the boots on their feet, every character in *Gest* is dressed in a way that allows for social critique, be it of the clergy, the nobility, or even at times the monarchy. Robin Hood is a yeomen whose existence as a wise, talented leader, wealthy, kind, and chosen by those he leads and not through heredity is a fundamental threat to the status quo of the Middle Ages. As remarked by Stephen A. Knight and Thomas Ohlgren, "The existence of an outlaw always implies there is something wrong with the law."[60]

[60] Stephen A. Knight, Thomas Ohlgren, "General Introduction" from *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*

THE ROBIN OF THE RENAISSANCE

> To Scotland bend my course; but all the woddes
>
> Are full of outlawes that in Kendall greene
>
> Followe the outlawed Earle of Huntington.
>
> Well, I will cloath myselfe in such a sute[.]
>
> *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington, by Sir Anthony Munday, lines 2073–2075*

Much has been said about 1598 play *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington,* most of it negative. Jeffery Singman has called it "artistically uninspired" and an attempt to "exploit a story so popular that it could not fail to generate an audience, regardless of the actual quality of the text."[61] John C. Meagher, an editor of the play and its sequel, *The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington*[62]referred to them as "probably typical of modestly successful products of late sixteenth-century hackwork."63 The play is, however, an important bridge from the Robin Hood of the Middle Ages to the Robin Hood of today. While not the first writer to imagine the outlaw as a former noble, it's Munday who popularizes the idea.[64] The characters of Maid Marion and Friar Tuck finally make appearances, and the story is set in the reign of Richard I with Prince John as the primary antagonist. It is equally as influential as *Gest*, if substantially worse in terms of quality, and is a landmark work in the gentrification of Robin Hood. While Tuck and Marion were present in some of the early Robin Hood May Day plays, the inclusion of

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[61] Jeffery L. Singman, "Munday's Unruly Earl" from *Playing Robin Hood*: 64, ed. Lois Potter

[63] Singman: 64

[64] Liz Oakley-Brown, "Framing Robin Hood: Temporarily and Textuality in Anthony Munday's Huntington plays" from *Robin Hood: Medieval and Post-Medieval*: 88, ed. Helen Phillips

a traditional love interest like Maid Marion replacing Robin's medieval devotion to the Virgin Mary (as seen in *Gest*, for example), and Friar Tuck as a buffoonish character serving as a treacherous double agent (if for the side of the heroes) show a shift in the intended audience for the stories.

A lot of ink has been spilled over which social class was the targeted audience for Robin Hood in the Middle Ages, but the early modern *Downfall* had a clear audience in mind: royalty. Munday wrote for a theatre company competing with his contemporary, William Shakespeare. He sets his play, or rather, the frame narrative of the play, at the court of Henry VIII, and the politics of the piece clearly flatter the current monarch, Elizabeth I, and her then-deceased Robin Hood-loving father. The play opens with two prominent courtiers of Henry VIII discussing the play they're going to perform for the king ("These two howers it pleas'd his Majesty"), and later Munday even takes time to write a meta aside to the audience that compliments Henry, claiming he gave Munday explicit, posthumous authorization his work: "His Majestie himselfe survaid the plat, / And bad me boldly write it, it was good."[65] The fingerprints of the play's intended audience are all over the narrative and messaging, which can be seen even in the seemingly small change of Robin's signature color. Munday doesn't invent Robin wearing Kendal over Lincoln green wholecloth—it's the shade he wears in the medieval ballad *A Mery Geste*—but the choice of the less commonly depicted shade of green is one that falls along Tudor political lines.[66] While known for its quality cloth and dye in the Middle Ages, Lincoln was also a major metropolitan area, one of the largest in medieval England, and the broader shire possessed one of

[65] Anthony Munday, "The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington" from *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*: 9, 2219–2220

[66] Stephen A. Knight, Thomas Ohlgren, footnote from *Downfall:* 1290

the largest diocese.67 Like those of other religious hubs, Lincoln's friaries and monasteries, of which there were many, would rent out their surrounding lands to business which converted them into local markets.[68] Thus the economy of Lincoln, which was dominated by the cloth and dye trade, was inexorably tied to the Church. When Henry VIII all but declared war on said Church and began dissolving monasteries and friaries, the Church fought back, Lincoln more publicly than most. 1536–37 saw rebellions from all over England and into Wales, kicked off by a demonstration in Lincoln, and the five week Pilgrimage of Grace that started in Lincolnshire and ended in Lincoln proper.[69] Likely because of this, Henry's Chief Minister, Thomas Cromwell, singled out Lincoln's monasteries and friaries for dissolution almost as soon as the Lincolnshire risings were put down in 1537.[70] By contrast, Kendal not only lacked such political baggage but was given its charter of incorporation by Elizabeth I herself in 1575.[71] All of this would have been known by Munday, who was the son of a draper and was deeply entrenched in the politics of the period.[72]

The clothing the characters in *Downfall* were costumed in would have been visualized on stage, but that does not mean the text itself is bereft of references to the character's clothing. The Merry Men wearing Kendal green is one such case, but as early as line 23 the characters in the frame narrative mention not only wearing (a yet undisclosed shade of) green, but emphasize the

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[67] James G. Clark, "A Regular World" from *The Dissolution of the Monasteries: A New History*: 133

[68] Clark: 111–115

[69] Clark, "The Challenge of Conformity" from *Monasteries…*: 284

[70] Clark, "Punysshid, Subprest and Put Downe" from *Monasteries…*: 366–367

[71] Cornelius Nicholson, "The Corporation" from *The annals of Kendal: being a historical and descriptive account of Kendal and the neighbourhood: with biographical sketches of many eminent personages connected with the town*: 171

[72] Stephen A. Knight, Thomas Ohlgren, "Introduction to the Munday Plays" from *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*

importance of it to the play-within-a-play characters they are portraying ("Why I play Little John / And came on purpose with this greene sute").[73] The choice of green as the color of Robin Hood, regardless of shade, is a holdover from the medieval imagining of the character, and its associative meaning is complicated in *Downfall*. While green is exclusively used for Robin and the Merry Men in *Gest*, in *Downfall*, the wrinkle appears in the fact that Robin's steward, Warman, is repeatedly called a Judas. While his character is never stated to be wearing one color or another, the association with Judas implies greenness. In both the medieval and early modern era, yellow and green were the colors of the famous traitor.[74] In part, this was due to green dye being notoriously unstable and thus associated with treachery. It is impossible to know what color Warman's actor wore in performances of *Downfall*, but given the chromatic associations with Judas, it is easy to extrapolate a complication with otherwise unified associative coloring of Robin and the Merry Men.

Color and shade are not the only changes in terms of politics between *Gest* and *Downfall*. The yeoman Robin from the Middle Ages is replaced with a nobleman named a much more respectable Robert, and he is heavily influenced by his newfound class status. Upon receiving the news of his outlawry, Robin's stage directions note that he "[*Flings away his napkin, hat, and sitteth downe.*"75 The class meanings of hats have already been discussed, and here, as "Robert" is removed from the sphere of the nobility and cast from the traditional social hierarchy, he physically removes a signifier of his previous class. Inter-class politics are an

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[73] Munday: 23–24

[74] Micheal Pastoureau, "A Courtly Color" and "A Dangerous Color: 14th to 16th Centuries" from *Green: The History of a Color*: 53, 89

[75] Munday: 172. Some stage directions such as the one quoted are written in the play with open brackets. This has been replicated when it appears in quotes and is not an error.

overwhelming feature in Robin's rebuke of Warman when Warman betrays him. When Robin is dressing down his disloyal steward, he declares:

> You have dishonoured mee, I worshipt you.
>
> You from a paltry pen and inkhorne clarke,
>
> Bearing a buckram satchell at your belt.[76]

He claims Warman has acted poorly for his station, the station which he then repeatedly mentions. He notes Warman's previous job as a clerk while simultaneously degrading the idea of it. The reference to the buckram satchel is an example of this insistence upon class difference: buckram is a cheap material, linen, and of poor quality, whereas in contrast someone of Earl Robin's class would have had a leather satchel.[77] Robin is seemingly more disgusted with Warman's attempts to rise above his station than his disloyalty. In concert with the inclusion of Warman's class-dictated attire, one can draw a parallel between the language in *Downfall* and that of medieval social sumptuary pressures. Two hundred years later, the demand for those of a certain class to both act and dress according to their station persists, the difference being that now it's Robin Hood being used as the moral cudgel for obeying sumptuary rules instead of defying them.

In *Downfall*, clothing serves as a way of reinforcing the gender roles of early modern English society as much as anything else. For one, given *Downfall* is an early modern play, all of the characters would be played by men and thus clothing would be one of the main indicators of the character's gender. The women in *Downfall* disguise themselves as much as the men. Jinny, along with Friar Tuck, dresses and acts as a peddler to covertly pass a warning to Robin Hood,

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[76] Munday: 347–349

[77] Knight and Ohlgren, footnote from *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*: 349

and Marian and the queen mother swap clothing so that Marian can escape Prince John's clutches and flee to Sherwood with Robin.[78] The latter instance is the most complex deception in the entire play: the queen is attempting to trick Robin into running away with her as she is in love with him, and Marian, guessing the queen's tricks, tells Robin of the scheme in advance without the queen mother knowing. Both of the disguise plots serve as reinforcements of contemporary gender roles and ideas of womanhood. Jinny as a character exists only as a target of lust from Much the Miller's son and Friar Tuck, and as an accessory in the disguise scheme devised by Tuck. The queen mother is ruled by her lust, as was expected and feared of women in both the medieval and modern periods. The real queen mother, Elenor of Aquataine, was derided in her time and in Munday's as power hungry and mannish for her serving as regent while her son, Richard, was off fighting in the crusades. The schemes of *Downfall*'s fictional queen mother, namely the use of disguise to trick not only Robin and her son but her co-conspirator Marian, play into ideas of women as duplicitous snakes.[79] Her failure to scheme effectively serves to undermine the real woman for presuming to access the masculine sphere, and having her do so because she's lovesick is another way to rob her of her personal agency. Maid Marian falls closer along proper gender ideals for noble women, in contrast to the expectations of commoner women as seen in Jinny. The emphasis put on Marion's virginity (she is literally *Maid* Marian after all) allows her to also serve as flattery of the virgin queen Elizabeth I and take over the position the Virgin Mary—whom the protestant church placed less emphasis on than the Catholic—had previously enjoyed in the Robin Hood ballads of the Middle Ages.

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[78] Munday: 1409–1410, 398–429

[79] Erin Ann Roland-Leone, "Women undone: The mutilation and murder of women in the Jacobean drama" from *Lehigh University ProQuest Dissertations & Theses*: 4, 12

Warman's wife, too, though not a character in disguise, serves to reinforce traditional hierarchy. Her failings are class based; neither her nor her husband are high born, and whereas Warman's failures to properly reflect his ill-gotten higher status sartorially have already been noted, his wife is almost entirely defined by her class. Warman, for one, is more of a character, and thus allowed more time to exist outside of a brief description of his clothing. Greater emphasis is also put on his actions: the fact he isn't grateful to the earl of Huntington despite his generosity is as shamed as his betrayal. His wife, on the other hand, does not serve as a narrative foil to the protagonist, but as a comedic side character. Her speech is written to be intentionally incorrect, showing her "true" class despite her rising in the social hierarchy, and just as much as her failure to speak like the lady she attempts to present herself as, she also fails to dress the part. The stage directions for her character entrance read: "*[Enter Justice Warmans wife, odly attyred.*"[80] *Gest* might have allowed for characters to transgress the social hierarchy for at least the appearance of class mobility, but in *Downfall*, the attempt to do the same is mocked in the case of Warman's wife, and in the case of Warman himself, outright villainized. There are no women in *Gest,* but the way that the women of *Downfall* use disguise serves only to reinforce their social position, whereas similar uses of disguise in *Gest* do just the opposite. There are the good women and the bad women—the good working in their proper class and acting in the interests of men, and the bad defying their proper class and gender roles and working for themselves.

Most starkly, the greatest transgression of class and gender is perpetrated by a man, the bishop of Ely, who is narratively punished for his actions against Robin Hood and Little John by dressing as a woman, a lower-class woman at that, and throwing himself at their mercy. Even

[80] Munday: 457

before he comes on stage, Ely is described again and again as a "monster," though "bearded witch" is thrown out too in the same breath as a desire to whip "her."[81] While largely graftable onto ideas of gender in the present day, the early modern conceptions of gender do not entirely correspond one to one with our own. "Boy" was as much a gender category as "woman" or "man," and in part defined through the state of beardlessness. In some ways, it was closer to the category of woman because of it.[82] Gender presentation was also thought of differently to now, with early modern sex characteristics not limited to genitalia but including things like beards and even prosthetics like codpieces.[83] Thus, the idea of a woman with a beard was a transgression beyond simply a boy dressing as a woman: it was an enormous breach of the proper gender norms. Beards were so important to the presentation of a male gender that Ely is unwilling to shave his despite the demonstrated in-play repercussion of appearing as a bearded woman. If one of the main symbols of masculinity was acquired by a woman, what could she even be considered? The claims of monstrosity and witchiness answer that: a bearded woman is not considered to be fully human. Though Robin forgives Ely for his trespasses, the narrative still enacts a punishment by stripping Ely of his humanity, if only briefly. The other villainous figures in the play, Prince John and Warman, do not suffer such a fate. As befitting his royal status, Prince John receives little more than a slap on the wrist. Warman may become viciously socially ostracized and entertain suicide, but he still remains a man and not "a monster! A woman with a bearde, / a man in a petticote! A monster, a monster!"[84]

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[81] Munday: 1100–1110

[82] Ezra Horbury, from *Transgender Reassessments of the Cross-Dressed Page in Shakespeare, Philaster, and The Honest Man's Fortune*: 117–118

[83] Horbury: 103

[84] Munday: 1122–1123

Clearly, disguise as a plot contrivance is prevalent through both medieval and early modern narratives, and it serves as a point of similarity between *Gest* and *Downfall*. Unlike in *Gest*, however, in *Downfall* disguise is used less as a way to evade detection, but as a way to gain access to certain areas, often to Robin himself. Edward in *Gest* dresses as an abbot to pass through Sherwood under Robin's nose, Prince John dresses as one of Robin's own men to get close enough to him to apprehend the outlaw, but in both instances neither royal is ultimately successful. Also unlike in *Gest* where Edward is given away by the quality of his clothing, *Downfall*'s Prince John is revealed instead by his failure to understand the specific language around the clothing he's donned. When he meets Scathlock, one of Robin's lieutenants, Scathlock is initially not suspicious of him:

> My name is Scathlocke, man, and if thou be
> No other than thy garments shewe to mee,
> Thou art my fellowe, though I knowe thee not.[85]

The implication is that, visually, Prince John had been able to perfectly mimic the look of a Merry Man. It's Prince John's claims that "My noble master, Earle of Huntington, / Did give mee both my fee and liverie" that make his deception apparent.[86] Robin's retainers are made to swear an oath that in part bids them to call him Robin Hood, not his former noble title. Scathlock argues in direct opposition to *Gest* that the outlawed Robin doesn't have the funds to give his men fee and livery.[87] The medieval yeomen in the prior text turned expectations of wealth on their head with the amount of money and goods he possessed, juxtaposed to the noble and destitute knight Rychard at the Lee, but here the noble version of the character has exactly the

[85] Munday: 2520–2522

[86] Munday: 2525–2526

[87] Munday: 2529–2535

amount of money expected of his station as both a noble and an outlaw. The act of giving fee and livery, something available only to the nobility, is denied to this version of the character when he is no longer noble. That means that unlike the Robin Hood of the Middle Ages, early modern Robin does not break the law.

This change serves as a microcosm of a broader trend in the early modern Munday Robin—this version of the outlaw never actually commits any crimes, not even the poaching that the medieval Robin did to such an extent that the king took notice and personally stepped in. As noted by Jefferey Singman, his actions are "more along the lines of aristocratic pastoralism than principled resistance against unjust authority."[88] The only exception to the noncriminal, largely passive Robin Hood is his freeing Scarlet and Scathlock from execution, and this liberation is done, of course, in disguise. Even still, his attempt to free the brothers in disguise is an attempt to do so legally—albeit through trickery against the Sheriff of Nottingham (Robin's false former steward Warman)—and the Sheriff and his men flee when Robin's true identity is revealed.[89] Robin himself doesn't even take part in the brief skirmish that occurs. Further, the act of freeing the brothers is less criminal and more true and noble justice being enacted. The more self-serving law breaking that is intermingled with medieval Robin's good deeds is gone, replaced with noble chivalry. If, as Ohlgren and Knight claim, an outlaw is an inherent critique of the system by virtue of their existence, the message of *Downfall* is that the system's problems are contained exclusively in the ill-behavior of individual characters.

Downfall can be largely defined by its overwhelming commitment to monarchism. Despite the fact that the primary antagonist of the play is a prince, and the queen mother is

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[88] Singman: 70

[89] Munday: 996–999

similarly not portrayed in a flattering light, they serve primarily to lionize the true king, Richard I. There is a defense implicit through *Downfall* that argues that the problem with monarchy is not the system itself but bad actors like Prince John and the queen mother. Richard spends most of the play outside of England, crusading or captured, allowing for Prince John to scheme and attempt to seize power. While said and shown to be beloved, Richard does little in the story itself. When Prince John refuses to pay Richard's ransom, it's the people who give what they can to free him:

> Olde wives tooke silver buckles from their belts,
> Young maids the gilt pins that tuckt up their traines,
> Children their prettie whistles from their neckes,
> And every man what he did most esteeme,
> Crying to souldiours, "Weare these gifts of ours."[90]

The guilt pins and silver buckles would have been illegal for the lower classes to possess in the medieval period, and while legal by the early modern period, they still represent a shifting of class dynamics. While *Downfall* is set in the high Middle Ages, it was written outside of it. By the Tudor era, the emergence of the middle class, which had already begun developing with increased international trade, was kicked into high gear with the end of medieval feudalism. Classes were less defined than they had ever been, and the existence of the commons' finery demonstrates that. Given the implication that the silver buckles and gilt pins are the only bits of finery that the common people gifting them possess, here the masses have such a love for Richard that they are willing to give away signifiers of their newfound wealth and relative

[90] Munday: 1846–1852

prosperity in defense of the monarchy, and by extension, the traditional social hierarchy. Richard's escape from captivity is similarly made possible through the lower classes' gifts:

> Richard about his right hand wound a scarfe
> (God quit her for it) given him by a maide,
> With endlesse good may that good deede be paid,
> And thrust that arme downe the devowring throat
> Of the fierce Lyon, and withdrawing it,
> Drewe out the strong heart of the monstrous beast,
> And left the senselesse bodie on the ground.[91]

Repeatedly, Richard's subjects are shown sacrificing their scant possessions for him while receiving nothing in return other than Richard's presence and dominion over them. Rather, the smallfolk's actions are shown to be largely what's expected of them. Their repeated shows of devotion and their sacrifice are them acting out their expected societal role.

Robin is treated similarly in the narrative, a parallel scene of gift giving from the commons occurs only a few lines before the one for Richard:

> Good George a Greene at Bradford was our friend,
> And wanton Wakefields Pinner lov'd us well.
> At Barnsley dwels a Potter tough and strong,
> That never brookt we brethren should have wrong.
> The Nunnes of Farnsfield, pretty nunnes they bee,
> Gave napkins, shirts, and bands to him and mee.
> Bateman of Kendall, gave us Kendall greene,

[91] Munday: 2056–2062

> And Sharpe of Leedes, sharpe arrowes for us made:
>
> At Rotheram dwelt our bowyer, God him blisse.
>
> Jackson he hight; his bowes did never misse.
>
> This for our good, our scathe let Scathlocke tell,
>
> In merry Mansfield, how it once befell.[92]

While less magnificent than the gifts given for Richard, the more practical show of support in gear and clothing still mimic the show of allegiance given for the "true" king and creates a deeper connection between Robin and Richard before the brief scene at the end where the two interact. The specific characters and groups doing the gifting are primarily references to medieval ballads, Robin Hood and not, or as in the case of the Nuns of Farnsfield and Sharpe of Leeds, show a unity in the general area of Sherwood. Kendal, on the other hand, is located in the north of England in the modern-day ceremonial county of Cumbria. This is in opposition to Lincoln in Lincolnshire, which is located directly east of Nottinghamshire, where Sherwood Forest is. Once again, the inclusion of Kendal green over Lincoln is a clear and pointed political move. Nevertheless, the gifts given to both Richard and Robin are met with nothing in return, and in the case of Robin, the juxtaposition in this is stark between the early modern and medieval iterations of the character. *Gest* emphasizes Robin's generosity, his care for the people of England. While Robin is threatening to the clergy and upper classes who pass through Sherwood, those who prove themselves to be good and true are heartily rewarded. The lordly *Downfall* Robin does no such thing, and it is his retainers and servants who are the ones—quite literally—giving those in need the clothes off their back.[93] Those shown to be active in pushing the story

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[92] Munday: 1284–1295

[93] Munday: 2489–2490, 2501–2503

along are either the lower classes acting within their expected societal roles or explicitly villainous. To quote Knight and Ohlgren, "In terms of action, the fighting outlaw has become as passive as King Arthur at his most nobly inactive."[94]

Richard's entrance proper into the story is heralded by his gifting to Little John a "massie chain," or large, heavy livery collar.[95] The livery collar was another form of livery, as the name suggests, but by far the most prestigious kind, if ahistoric for the reign of Richard I.[96] Unsurprisingly, the visual language of the livery collar was heavy with meaning. The composition and material of the collar was dictated by the gifter's esteem for the giftee as well as the giftee's rank, with knights and above generally sporting collars of gold by tradition as well as sumptuary law.[97] Little John's collar is gold, and he is thus promoted, fittingly, to the rank of squire, as well as given a resplendent fee to match his livery.[98] While in *Gest*, the offering of fee and livery is performed illegally by Robin Hood, in *Downfall* the act is only done by the king. Little John's loyalty to Robin cannot be rewarded properly by the poor former earl of Huntington, but it *can* be rewarded by the king, so long as it means that Little John's loyalty is given to the king rather than Robin. The livery collar was not something that could easily be dispersed by those without great funds. Some belonging to Henry VIII were so valuable that they were stored in the secret royal jewel house in the Tower of London.[99] They were symbols of royal regard and favor, and what's more, royal ownership—the dog collars of the time bear a

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[94] Stephen A. Knight, Thomas Ohlgren, "Introduction to the Munday Plays" from *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*

[95] Munday: 2665

[96] Matthew Ward, from *The Livery Collar: Politics and Identity in Fifteenth-Century England*: 34

[97] Ward: 38–39

[98] Oakley-Brown: 89, Munday: 2660–2672

[99] Ward: 37–38

striking resemblance to livery collars. Little John's entrance wearing it says that he is no longer Robin's man, but the king's.

Robin's capitulation to the authority of the king in *Downfall* continues as Richard approaches. Robin calls for "Much, [to] fetch a richer garment for my father" and for the "Lords, yeomen, maids, [to] in decent order stand."[100] The medieval Robin Hood tradition saw the forest and Robin's domain as a place of Robin's authority and the twisting of traditional authoritative hierarchies. Even when King Edward entered Sherwood in *Gest*, he deferred to Robin's authority and was at his mercy. In *Downfall*, as soon as Richard enters Sherwood, Robin quickly attempts to make his collection of allies and followers appear presentable and proper, which includes deferring to the expected social presentation. Fitzwater, the father of Maid Marion, cannot appear in front of the king in shabby attire, since he is the father of a lady, even one hiding out in the woods, and the father-in-law of an earl, even an outlawed one. Richard's entrance procession starts with Robin's men, or rather, Robin's former men. As noted by the stage directions: "Enter first, bare-heade, Little John and Scarlet[.]"[101] Rychard at the Lee doffed his cap to Robin in *Gest,* and Edward removed his cowl hood when donning Robin's livery, but here, the social language of head covering and respect is as it should be. When Richard finally does appear, "crowned, clad in green," the color is no longer the green of Robin Hood, but Richard's green.[102] Like he gives up his men, his authority, and his freedom from the social constraints of the society he lives in, the Robin Hood of *Downfall* loses his most iconic attribute, now taken by the king.

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[100] Munday: 2682, 2696

[101] Munday: 2699–2700

[102] Munday: 2699–2700

CONCLUSION

> This youth that leads yon virgin by the hand
>
> (As doth the Sunne, the morning richly clad)
>
> Is our Earle Robert, or your Robin Hoode,
>
> That in those daies was Earle of Huntington.
>
> *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington, by Sir Anthony Munday, lines 86–89*

Politically, *A Gest of Robyn Hode* and *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* couldn't be more different, both tailored to appeal to wildly different audiences. Their use of clothing elucidates that difference perfectly well, closely tied to their respective treatment of authority. "Robyn Hode" in *Downfall* may often act as though he is a lord, and he may even dress as one, but he is a yeoman through and through. Even when pardoned by the king and given a noble position in the king's household, he quickly grows bored in the king's service and flees once again to the green wood to return to outlawry and yeomanship. Laurel Wilson states that sumptuary laws "...[illustrate] lawmakers' conceptions of an ideal society."[103] Recalling Knight and Ohlgren's analysis of existence of the outlaw as an inherent critique of the law, one can then extrapolate that the breaking of sumptuary laws like "Robyn" does often and with gusto is a rebuff of the ideal society dreamt up by those lawmakers. The fact that sumptuary legislation was nigh impossible to enforce and was broadly unpopular gives Robin's dismissal of these laws the quality of a vox populi.

Medieval Robin's depiction is built on similar such sentiments: he is an archer because, unlike with a sword or lance, this weapon required no knightly training, served a practical

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[103] Laurel Wilson, "Sumptuary Law as a Historical Resource" from *Common Threads: A Reappraisal of Medieval European Sumptuary Law*: 143

hunting purpose, and bows and arrows were cheap to produce.[104] There were so many lower class archers that medieval English warfare became increasingly dependent on and defined by them.[105] The English archer became an emblem of cross-class unity—even in *Gest* both Robin and King Edward are skilled archers, and bond over a shooting contest—and as time passed, the common roots of the archer diffused into something more generically English.[106] It is notable, however, that while a medieval archer would have worn jack of plate and a helm (like a bascinet, kettle hat, or an iron skull cap), neither Robin nor his Merry Men are depicted in either, in *Gest*, other medieval ballads, or even *Downfall*.[107]

It's disingenuous to pretend that Robin Hood—in his medieval or early modern form—was ever meant to be truly historically accurate. While these authors draw from the sartorial language of the day to color their texts, there are a number of things that are either unknown to Munday and the anonymous author of *Gest* or are intentionally ignored. Sherwood at the time of *Gest* and certainly *Downfall* would not have been a verdant wonderland; deforestation was as present a force in the medieval and early modern periods as it is today, though on a vastly different scale.[108] The Sheriff of *Gest* has powers and authority that a sheriff operating in the mid to late 1300s would not have; his wealth and abilities fall more in line of that with a lord.[109] The politics, court structures, and even some sumptuary references (such as the use of a livery collar) in *Downfall* are that of the Tudor period and not the reign of Richard I.

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[104] Curry: 304–305

[105] Curry: 304–305

[106] Curry: 306

[107] Curry: 321

[108] A.J. Pollard, "A Greenwood Far Away" from *Imagining Robin Hood: The Late-Medieval Stories in Historical Context*: 58

[109] Pollard, "Crime, Violence, and the Law" from *Imagining Robin Hood…*: 106–107

The way these anachronisms function in their respective stories varies wildly, however. *Gest*'s Sherwood is a place of magical escape and mystery. It's the seat of Robin's power, and it calls to mind real medieval outlaws that used the forests of England as escapes from the law, such as William Beckwith in the 14th century and the likely namesake for Friar Tuck in the early 15th.[110] The Sheriff serves as a veiled critique of lordship, using a stock character that appears in earlier ballads (and presumably some May Day plays) as a guise for criticism of a larger system. In *Downfall*, on the other hand, the anachronisms serve an opposing purpose. The forest is a demotion for the earl of Huntington, not an escape from the system; why would the earl want to escape the system anyhow? Robin's ceding of the forest and his authority in *Downfall* to the king, is a mirror to the consistent historical claiming of previously public forests for the crown.[111] While *Downfall* is set in the golden age of the sheriff, the Sheriff of Nottingham exercises far less power than he does in *Gest*. The critique is a safer one: even taking into consideration the vast unpopularity of sheriffs as a whole through the medieval and early modern periods, casting the sheriff as Warman, the disloyal steward, falls along the similar "bad apples" approach of monarchical critique by which the actions of Prince John can be dismissed as not criticizing the whole system.[112] Making the king Richard the Lionheart and then making the political structure more similar to Tudor politics serves as a way to claim one of the most popular and beloved monarchs of the Middle Ages for the Tudors. The ambiguity of *Gest*'s Edward does the opposite, denying the Plantagenets the boon of a positive association with Robin Hood.

Despite its importance in the story, the clothing worn in the ballads and plays has not received the attention of elements such as Robin Hood being an archer, the choice of king, and

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[110] Pollard, "A Greenwood Far Away" and "Crime, Violence, and the Law" from *Imagining Robin Hood…*: 62, 89

[111] Pollard, "A Greenwood Far Away" from *Imagining Robin Hood…*: 60

[112] Pollard, "Crime, Violence, and the Law" from *Imagining Robin Hood…*: 106

the role of the sheriff, which have been explored heavily in the past. The dress of Robin, his allies, and his enemies is as crucial an element to the narratives spun by Munday and the anonymous ballad writers as any other. Poaching, for instance, the most ubiquitous of Robin's crimes in *Gest* as well as subsequent Robin Hood adaptations such as Errol Flynn's *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and one that is conspicuously absent from *Downfall,* is an obviously political act. It was an act of killing an animal (deer in both *Gest* and the Errol Flynn film) that legally belonged to royalty or lords, which was disproportionately punished based on the class of the perpetrator—"the gentleman's sport and the common man's fair game," as A. J. Pollard called it.[113] Richard III's reign was infamous for the amount of poaching that occurred during it, and the crime faced a major crackdown under Henry VII.[114] Thus despite *Downfall* taking place ostensibly during Richard I's reign, the Tudors would be flattered by Robin Hood's abstaining from poaching as a show of Tudor proficiency over the previous regime. Other related poaching crackdowns, such as those of 1390 under Richard II, were accompanied by slew of other regulations tied to labor, legislation on royal activities, and sumptuary law.[115] All social control is fundamentally related, and ignoring an albeit largely unsuccessful but ubiquitous arm of it, sumptuary legislation and societal pressures around clothing, is an error.

Once, Robin Hood was an archer because being an archer was a quick way to convey social class. Once, Robin Hood took Sherwood Forest as a base of operations because it was a place outside of societal normal and hierarchies. Once, Robin Hood was clothed in Lincoln green. Each of these elements have become progressively watered down until they exist entirely

[113] Pollard: 84–85

[114] Pollard: 86–87

[115] Pollard: 88

divorced from their original meanings. Even still, until now, it has been the green, the clothing it appears on, and the gear it is paired with that were repeatedly and conspicuously ignored.

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