

RESEARCH

Shakespeare and Robin Hood: Silence and Noyes

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"To re-enter the greenwood after twenty years is a somewhat daunting task. Obviously one should not march determinedly over the same old track, yet must avoid getting lost in new mazes" (Gray in Potter, ed., 21). With Douglas Gray's sage words and advice on my mind, I will start by reopening an issue broached twenty three years ago in my PhD dissertation (1996): Shakespeare's scanty references to Robin Hood and his legendary outlaw circle. I will then change scenes, from the Elizabethan to the late Edwardian-early Georgian age, and briefly present Alfred Noyes's *Sherwood, or Robin Hood and the Three Kings*, a play first published in the US in 1911 and in Britain in 1926.

Keywords: Alfred Noyes; *Sherwood*; William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*; Anthony Munday's Huntington Plays

To re-enter the greenwood after twenty years is a somewhat daunting task. Obviously one should not march determinedly over the same old track, yet must avoid getting lost in new mazes. (Gray in Potter, ed., 21)

To Professor Maria Zulmira Castanheira (NOVA FCSH)

With Douglas Gray's sage words and advice on my mind, I shall start by reopening an issue broached twenty-three years ago (1996) in my PhD dissertation (Alarcão, *Príncipe*): Shakespeare's scanty references to Robin Hood and his outlaw circle. Notwithstanding three other minor allusions,¹ pride of place must lie with *As You Like It*, performed by the Chamberlain's Men sometime between 1598 and 1600 and first printed in the 1623 Folio (Harbage, ed., 70–71).² As one may recall, Robin is mentioned in a dialogue between Charles and Oliver *a propos* the old Duke, whose lands he had been deprived of by Frederick, his younger brother. When Oliver asks Charles where would the Duke live, the latter replies:

They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world. (Act I, Scene I in Shakespeare, ed. Sybil Thorndike, 221)

A deconstruction of this quote might start with D. J. Palmer's remark that

(...) a legend of Merry England is merged with the classical myth of the Golden Age, and even in the word "flock"³ there is a hint of pastoral associations. Yet this is only by report, as the repetition of 'they say' reminds us. Hearsay distances reality, and is itself the way in which legends come into being. (184)

¹ See *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act IV, Scene I, in the context of Valentine's interception in a forest by a band of robbers (Shakespeare, ed. Sybil Thorndike, 45–46); the dialogue between Falstaff and Mistress Quickly in *Henry IV, Part I*, Act III, Scene III (*Ibidem* 423) and finally Judge Silence's aside in *Henry IV, Part II*, Act V, Scene III (*Ibidem* 462). According to *Annals of English Drama*, the date limits of the first performances were, respectively, c.1590–1598 (Harbage, ed., 58–59), c.1596–1598 (*Ibidem* 64–65) and c.1597–c.1598 (*Ibidem*), but the dates may vary: Stephen Knight, for example, suggests 1592–1593, 1597 and c.1600 (*Complete Study* 285–287).

² Once again different authors suggest different dates for the first performance: c.1599 (Harvey, ed., 44), 1599 (Thorndike 59 and 65, n.4), c.1600 (Knight, *Complete Study* 287), etc.

³ The verb reappears in Noyes, Act I, Scene I, 5.

Moreover, this is plainly an analogical and collateral reference; Robin Hood is not mentioned *per se*, let alone included as a character in this—or indeed any other!—Shakespearean play. The idyllic image of peace and harmony, of carefree and pleasant life in natural surroundings, also conveyed through speeches like the Duke's and songs like "Under the greenwood tree",⁴ sung by Amiens,⁵ can be linked with the modes and conventions of pastoral literature (and ultimately utopianism, justifying a meteoric reference to Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, 1516),⁶ as well as that celebrated classical⁷ and Renaissance *locus amoenus*, Arcadia.⁸ But, apart from the legendary home of Greek gods in central Peloponnese, where on Earth is Arcadia? In more general and academic terms, where, when and how can dream-worlds and neverlands be located? In some unchartable mytholiterary geography alone? In (a) timeless space? In (a) spaceless time? As Laurence Lerner claims,

(...) the Golden Age has to be seen as a myth only. Then it can retain its power over us, a power it must lose if we tarnish it with verifiable fact, locating it at some unspecified distance from a present we dislike. The only thing we can specify about the distance is that it is immeasurable because unchangeable. Every generation is equidistant from Arcadia. (246)

With regard to *As You Like It*, even bearing in mind that Charles mentions the forest of Arden, not Sherwood, the analogy remains a fragile one: for indeed, can a medieval forest, with its wild animals, dangers, hardships and rough life in general,⁹ be real(istica)ly perceived and/or depicted as a new Garden of Eden welcoming any(one's) Fall into outlawry? Not to mention that, as legends have it, Robin was allegedly a noble robber (when it comes to the sixteenth century tradition, both senses of the word "noble" could apply),¹⁰ a skillful archer and an inveterate deer hunter, rather than a more or less idle and musically gifted shepherd....

That said, the legendary image of Robin Hood as a trickster, someone who enjoyed playing his pranks on the wicked sheriff of Nottingham and Prince John, as well as on proud Norman barons, wealthy bishops and fat abbots, led some nineteenth-century scholars to suggest a connection with Robin Goodfellow/Puck, "that shrewd and knavish sprite (...), that merry wanderer of the night (...)" (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II, Scene I in Shakespeare, ed. Sybil Thorndike, 178). With due respect to mythological, anthropological and folklore studies, I believe this will hardly stand when set against the earliest, or oldest surviving, traditional ballads (fifteenth century), which, despite all the baffling philological and historical problems they present, depict a real human being, rather than some forest elf or woodland sprite. As F. J. Child (1825–1896) put it, "I cannot admit that even the shadow of a case has been made out by those who would attach a mythical character (...) to Robin Hood (...)" (III, 48), adding in a footnote: "The reasoning (...) has been signally loose and incautious; still the general conclusion finds ready acceptance with mythologists (...) and deductions are made with the steadiness of a geometer" (*Ibidem*).

Shakespeare's laconism on Robin Hood can be contrasted with a plethora of statements made throughout the Tudor period by British chroniclers (John Major,¹¹ Richard Grafton,¹² William Warner,¹³ John Stow¹⁴ ...) and

⁴ "Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,/hath not old custom made this life more sweet/Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods/More free from peril than the envious court? (...) this our life, exempt from public haunt,/Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,/Sermons in stones, and good in every thing. I would not change it." (Act II, Scene I in Shakespeare, ed. Sybil Thorndike, 225).

⁵ "Under the greenwood tree/Who loves to lie with me,/And turn his merry note/unto the sweet bird's throat,/Come hither, come hither: Here shall he see/No enemy/But winter and rough weather." (Act II, Scene V in *ibidem* 228).

⁶ "During the Renaissance period the expression of a longing for this Arcadian world was worked out in greater detail. But it is probably not entirely a coincidence that, as the mythopoetic attractions of pastoral happiness diminish, so Utopia begins to acquire a particular interest for people." (Cuddon 490)

⁷ Mostly shaped and cultivated by Theocritus (c.316–c.260 BC?) in *Idylls* and Virgil (70–19 BC) in *Eclogues* (42–37 BC).

⁸ Irrespective of genres, mention should be made of, at least, Jacopo Sannazaro (1450–1530), *Arcadia* (1504), Torquato Tasso (1544–1595), *Aminta* (1581) and Battista Guarini (1538–1612), *Il Pastore Fido* (1585) or, in England, Edmund Spenser (1552?–1599), *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579), Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586), *Arcadia* (1590) and John Fletcher (1579–1625), *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608). For further examples, see Cuddon 486–492.

⁹ "The idyllic early summer of the 'feyre forest' stanza, introducing the fantasy greenwood, throws its quasi-magic protection round this dream world, against a harsh real-life background of punitive Forest Laws, a general expectation of injustice in ecclesiastical and secular jurisdictions, precarious livelihoods, the dangers of medieval far-from-merry outlawry (...), and the historical operations of late medieval gentry gangs and private armies, using 'maintenance', protection rackets, and theft to oppress localities." (Phillips 92)

¹⁰ "By the late sixteenth century the character traits of the outlaw hero were quite favorably fixed, and the suggestion that he had been an earl had taken root (...)." (Nelson 42)

¹¹ 1469–1550. Author of *History of Great Britain* (1521).

¹² c.1507–1573. Author of *Abridgement or Annales of the Chronicles of this Realm of England* (1569).

¹³ c.1558–1609. Author of *Albion's England* (1586, reed. 1612).

¹⁴ 1525?–1605. Author of *Annales, or, A General Chronicle of England. Begun by ----- : Continued and Augmented with matters foreign and domestic, Ancient and Modern, unto the end of the present year, 1631* (1580).

playwrights (George Peele,¹⁵ Robert Greene¹⁶...), not to mention other plays¹⁷ and broadside ballads,¹⁸ extant and lost, sermons,¹⁹ proverbs and sayings²⁰ and the first anonymous biography of the English outlaw.²¹ But the main contrast that can be drawn at the end of the Elizabethan period would oppose the Bard's (almost) 'silence' – so to speak – to Anthony Munday's and Henry Chettle's plays, *The Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntington*²² and *The Death of Robert Earl of Huntington*,²³ both ascribed by Philip Henslowe (?–1616) to 1597–98,²⁴ acted sometime between February and March 1598 and first published in 1601 (Harbage, ed., 66–67). The critics still disagree on whether *Downfall* was written by Munday alone and then revised by Chettle or written from scratch by both authors (as seems to have been the case with *Death*),²⁵ as well as whether or not *Death* should be seen as the continuation of *Downfall* and hence a second part of one single play on the misfortunes of the dispossessed earl. These questions, however relevant, must rank second when compared with the importance of the plays themselves, acknowledged by most critics;²⁶ Dobson and Taylor, for example, regard them as “unquestionably the most influential of all pieces of dramatic writing about Robin Hood and the only extant Elizabethan plays in which the outlaw's career is treated at length” (44).

An article published long ago by A. H. Thorndike (1902) explores the issue of a possible rivalry between the two main dramatic companies of the late Elizabethan period—the Chamberlain's Men²⁷ and the Admiral's Men²⁸—with whom Shakespeare and Munday were respectively involved.²⁹ As can be seen,

¹⁵ 1558?–1597? Author of *Edward I* (1593), first performed between 1590 and 1593 by the Queen's Men (Harbage, ed., 54–55); according to Harbage, this was “the chief company before the rise of the Admiral's Men and the Chamberlain's Men” (*Ibidem* 301).

¹⁶ 1560?–1592. Probable author of *George a Green, the Pinner of Wakefield* (1599); see Harbage, ed., 54–55.

¹⁷ *A pastoral plesant comedie of Robin Hood and Little John*, registered, according to the *Stationers' Registers*, on 14th May 1594; mentioned as *Robin Hood and Little John* in Harbage, ed., 60–61. Also lost is *Robin Hood's Pennyworths*, by William Haughton (c.1575–1605); according to Harbage, the play was performed from 20 December 1600 to 13 January 1601 by the Admiral's Men (*Ibidem*: 80–81). *Robin Hood's Pennyworths* is mentioned by Philip Henslowe, in his famous *Diary* (apud Dobson e Taylor, eds., 43, n.4). Henslowe would also be involved in the career of Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights and poets like, for example, Anthony Munday (1553–1633), Henry Chettle (c.1560–1607) and Michael Drayton (c.1563–1631). All things considered, we could not agree more with Helen Phillips, to whom “The sixteenth-century Robin Hood is, more than any period's, a performative Robin Hood” (89).

Finally, a few words on the anonymous comedy *Look(e) About You*, contemporary with Munday's plays and which presents Robin as the young Earl of Huntington (see Alarcão, *Príncipe* 260–261). Sometimes ascribed to Chettle or Thomas Dekker (c.1572–1632), *Look(e) About You* was first performed by the Admiral's Men sometime between c.1598 and 1600 and printed in 1600 (Harbage, ed., 70–71).

¹⁸ *A ballett of Wakefylde and a grene* (registered 1557–1558) and *Ballett of Robyn Hod* (registered 1562–1563), both lost.

¹⁹ See the sermon delivered by Hugh Latimer (c.1485–1555) before Edward VI on 12th April 1549 (*Apud* Alarcão, *Príncipe* 195–196, n.42).

²⁰ For instance, Sir Philip Sidney, who, in *An Apology for Poetry* (written in 1580, though only printed in 1595), criticizes thus all those who attack the (bad) poets: “they [the critics] cry out with an open mouth as if they outshot Robin Hood, that Plato banished them [the poets] out of his commonwealth” (Sidney, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, 123 and note, 198–199).

²¹ This text (c.1600), usually known as Sloane Life, is included in the Sloane Ms., fos. 46–48v, kept at the British Library.

²² The full title, with its original spelling, is as follows: *The Downfall of Robert Earle of Huntington, afterward called Robin Hood of merrie Sherwodde; with his love to chaste Matilda, the Lord Fitzwaters Daughter, afterwarde his faire Maide Marian. Acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Nottingham, Lord high Admirall of England, his servants*. Imprinted at London for William Leake. 1601. 4°. Henceforth identified as *Downfall*, the edition used is Hazlitt, ed., VIII, 93–207.

²³ *The Death of Robert Earle of Huntington. Otherwise called Robin Hood of merrie Sherwodde; with the lamentable Tragedie of chaste Matilda, his faire maide Marian, poisoned at Durmowe by King Iohn. Acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Nottingham, Lord high Admirall of England, his servants*. Imprinted at London for William Leake. 1601. 4°. Henceforth identified as *Death*, the edition used is Hazlitt, ed., VIII, 209–327.

²⁴ Or 1598–99, according to Knight, *Complete Study* 286.

²⁵ Besides this possibility of a joint or co-authorship, one must bear in mind the occasional presentation of Robin as earl of Huntingdon (not Huntington, as in Hazlitt's edition). This is an old bugbear, but one likely to raise difficulties to historical and genealogical research. J. C. Holt clarifies things, claiming “It seems that Stukeley [William Stukeley, 1687–1765] was primarily responsible for converting Huntington to Huntingdon. The change was probably of little significance since both spellings are recorded for the place name Huntington, although not apparently for Huntingdon itself” (192, n.8).

²⁶ See also Ward and Waller, eds., cap. XIII, especially 312–328, Wiles 49–50, Holt 162 and Dobson and Taylor, eds., 44–45 and 220–230.

²⁷ The activity of this company spans the period from 1594 to 1603; its patrons were Henry and George Carey, both holding the title of Lord Chamberlain (Harbage, ed, 297).

²⁸ In activity from 1585 to 1603; its patron was Charles Howard (1536–1624), 2nd Baron Howard of Effingham, High Admiral of England and Earl of Nottingham (*Ibidem*).

²⁹ Notwithstanding the fact that both companies may have targeted distinct publics, as Ronald Bayne argued in Ward and Waller, eds., 309–310. In Bayne's words, “We must not assume that the typical Elizabethan cared only for Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. There was a large public to whom inferior plays appealed, and for whose tastes Henslowe's group of writers very largely catered” (321) and “The Elizabethan drama was essentially popular. The lesser Elizabethan drama was popular in a double sense, as being that large part of the total output which appealed to the tastes of those who were not capable of rising to the imaginative and intellectual standards of Shakespeare and Jonson” (334).

Harbage dates from 1598 the first performances of *Downfall* and *Death* by the Admiral's Men, whose director was the above mentioned Philip Henslowe, also the owner and manager of The Rose theatre. Considering the rivalry between the Admiral's Men and the Chamberlain's Men (the latter associated with Shakespeare), as well as the probability that *As You Like It* was performed for the first time already **after** *Downfall* and *Death* (see above, n. 2), Thorndike suggests that Shakespeare's reference, brief as it is, may have been meant as a response to Munday and Chettle (65–66 and 69).³⁰ This point is endorsed, among others,³¹ by Stephen Knight, one of the leading cultural critics of the Robin Hood legend;³² so whether or not the sequence of dates is purely coincidental, Thorndike's reasoning remains an attractive one, calling for further research on the channels of sponsorship, production and competition going on (and behind) the late Tudor stage.³³

Below is an example that illustrates such networks: as the full titles of *Downfall* and *Death* make clear, the plays owe an inspirational debt to a poem printed in 1594, *Matilda, the Faire and Chaste Daughter of Lord R. Fitzwater*. Its author was Michael Drayton (1563–1631), better known as a poet than as a playwright. Nevertheless, Drayton was also a member of the professional circle of Philip Henslowe (whose patron was the Earl of *Nottingham*), and he would later include Robin Hood in *Poly-Olbion*, a national and poetical celebration of local worthies, organized by counties and written between 1612 (or 1613) and 1622. The passage is too long to be transcribed here, but, as might be expected, Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest are mentioned in the Nottinghamshire section.³⁴

Let us change scenes, from the Elizabethan to the late Edwardian-early Georgian age, a period uncovered both in my doctoral thesis (1996) and in the ensuing book (Alarcão, *Príncipe*). Alfred Noyes (1880–1958), whose poem "Sherwood" was recently discussed (Alarcão, *Sherwood*), wrote also a play entitled *Sherwood, or Robin Hood and the Three Kings*,³⁵ first published in the United States in 1911 and in Britain in 1926. Noyes's play has been examined by Lois Potter, scanning the main (inter)textual influences and hints, like those of the medieval and early modern traditional ballads (*A Gest of Robin Hood, Robin Hood's Death*, etc.), Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), Thomas Love Peacock's *Maid Marian* (1822) or Alfred Tennyson's *The Foresters* (1892).³⁶ But we must, obviously, focus on Shakespeare and recall that Walter Jerrold described *Sherwood* as "a kind of tragic *Midsummer Night's Dream*" (qtd. in Potter 169)... Be that as it may, the fact is that the voice of the Bard, although it can be heard, "faint and far away",³⁷ in Noyes's play,³⁸ still comes across as 'silenced' by the much stronger influence of Munday and Chettle.

In order to prove the point, suffice it to say that although Oberon, Titania and Puck/Robin Goodfellow feature in both Shakespeare's and Noyes's scripts,³⁹ the overall atmosphere of love tricks, spells and delusions

³⁰ Classified as "History" in Harbage, ed., 67.

³¹ "As *You Like It* was probably written to compete with a play about romantic forest life and Robin Hood produced by the Admiral's men" (Nelson 1).

³² "The Chamberlain's Men were rivals to the Admiral's troupe, and it is hardly surprising that their resident playwright Shakespeare produced a forest exile play to answer these (...) activities; it is a moot point whether it was their recent vulgarization of the hero or Shakespeare's own desire for a more exotic form of authority in exile that led him to shape *As You Like It* (...)" (Knight, *Complete Study* 133) and "while the Admiral's Men were doing good business with Robin Hood plays, the Lord Chamberlain's men's star writer, William Shakespeare, responded with *As You Like It*" (Knight, *Mythic Biography* 62).

³³ On Shakespeare, *Downfall* and *Death a propos* Robin Hood, see Alarcão, *Príncipe* 210–261 *passim*.

³⁴ In Song XXVI; see Drayton, ed. John Buxton, II, vv. 286–360 and 682–684.

³⁵ The three kings alluded to in the title are not the biblical Magi, but Richard (1189–1199), John (1199–1216) and presumably Oberon, presented in the *dramatis personae* as King of the Fairies; apart from several allusions to scenes of the Bible, the Christian framework is, however, patent in the reference made by Oberon to "(...) a great King, out beyond the world,/(...) who one day will come home/Clothed with the clouds of Heaven from His Crusade" (Noyes, Act V, Scene II, 169).

³⁶ For further examples, see Potter 172–173.

³⁷ Part of a verse in Alfred Noyes's "Song of Sherwood"; see Dobson and J. Taylor, eds., 200–202, <www.genius.com/Alfred-noyes-song-of-sherwood-annotated> and/or <www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpK-iDIegtI>.

³⁸ Compare, for instance, Falstaff's speech's "let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon; (...)" (*Henry IV, Part I, Act I, Scene II*, in Shakespeare, ed. Sybil Thorndike, 406) to Shadow-of-a-Leaf's "Come in, my jolly minions of the moon, (...)" (*Henry IV, Part I, Act I, Scene II*, 17) and Much's "we night-walking minions,/We gentlemen of the moon, (...)" (*Ibidem*, II, I, 48).

³⁹ Stephen Knight mentions F. R. Goodyer's "Fairy Extravaganza" of 1868, entitled *Once Upon a Time or A Midsummer Night's Dream in Merrie Sherwood*, featuring Oberon and Titania (*Mythic Biography* 148); both characters also appear in Tennyson's *The Foresters* (Act II, Scene II in Tennyson 764–766), unfavourably compared by Sir Henry Newbolt with Noyes's poem "Sherwood" (213–214). Finally, Ben Jonson (1572–1637) wrote *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*, a mask acted at court in January 1611 (Harbage, ed., 98–99), and a play left unfinished by his death: *The Sad Shepherd: or, A Tale of Robin-Hood*, first acted in 1637 (*Ibidem* 136–137). On *The Sad Shepherd*, an example of English pastoralism which also includes Puck as a character, and its relationship with *Downfall* and *Death*, see Uéno and Alarcão, *Príncipe* 276–278.

in *Midsummer Night's Dream*⁴⁰ is totally absent from *Sherwood*.⁴¹ Coexisting invisibly with the outlaws' forest, Noyes's "Dreamland" (Act I, Scene 1, 15) consists of a fairy kingdom ruled over by Oberon and Titania; a magic realm whose ivory gates, thanks to the good deeds of Robin Hood, open up at night to the poor, the needy and the oppressed, allowing in turn the woodland spirits to go out and revel in the forest glades.⁴² Throughout the play, Marian's fool—Shadow-of-a-Leaf, a character who is said to have fairy blood; who, as Little John puts it, "flits like Moonshine thro' the forest (...)" (Act I, Scene 1, 13) and whose name may recall those of Shakespeare's Pease-blossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustard-seed—⁴³ acts as a mediator between the human world and that of the fairies.⁴⁴ According to Lois Potter, this coexistence is "the most important and distinctive aspect of the play" (173). In fact, one may argue that, in *Sherwood*, Alfred Noyes has given a fresh and imaginative twist to Shakespeare's fairies. However, whether that makes the Bard's involvement with the Robin Hood legend or the echoes of his voice on Noyes any stronger is debatable.

Conversely, and irrespective of other literary influences like those mentioned above, the amount of information taken by Noyes from *Downfall* and *Death* (particularly the former) is a more substantial one. Consider, for instance, Robin's title and condition as Earl of Huntingdon;⁴⁵ Queen Elinor's crush for Robin and Prince/King John's lust for Matilda/Marian; her status as daughter of Lord Fitzwater (Munday) or Fitzwalter (Noyes); the nameless sheriff of Nottingham's former condition as a servant of Earl Robert, just like Munday's Warman; the inclusion of Warman himself and Jenny as Marian's maid and Much the Miller's son's love; the rescue of Will Scarlet⁴⁶ from the gallows; and, finally, the outlaws' code of conduct. Sometimes we, as readers, end up with the uncomfortable feeling that Noyes borders on plagiarism... (See Appendixes).

All things considered, it is hard to avoid concluding that Shakespeare was not very interested in, nor involved with, the Robin Hood legend. Perhaps he did not take it seriously, thus echoing views voiced by clergymen and theologians in the late medieval and early modern periods.⁴⁷ Stephen Knight goes as far as to mention, in rather harsh terms, "Shakespeare's entirely negative contribution to the outlaw myth" (*Complete Study* 134). He thereby dismisses *As You Like It* as "a non-Robin Hood play, a negative response to the emergence of the theatrical and gentrified version of the outlaw hero" (*Mythic Biography* 62). But the fact that, unlike the Chamberlain's Men, the Admiral's had, through their patron, an **effective** connection with Nottingham (a place which, incidentally, seems to have gained ground over Barnsdale from the seventeenth century onwards),⁴⁸ may also provide us a key (or, at least, a clue) to a reevaluation of Shakespeare's 'silence' towards a 'matter of Sherwood' appropriated by a rival company.

⁴⁰ See the dialogue between a fairy and Puck in Act II, Scene I in Shakespeare, ed. Sybil Thorndike, 178. This comedy was first performed between 1594 and 1598 by the Chamberlain's Men (Harbage, ed., 60–61).

⁴¹ In fact, Puck's first appearance only takes place in Act IV, Scene II, 114ff.

⁴² "TITANIA

Yet one night more the gates of fairyland/Are opened by a mortal's kindly deed. (...) Yet one night more/
Dear Robin Hood has opened the gates wide/And (...) poor weary souls can enter in.

OBERON

Yet one night more we woodland elves may steal/Out thro' the gates. (...)

TITANIA

Only love/And love's kind sacrifice can open them./For when a mortal hurts himself to help/Another, then he thrusts the gates
wide open/Between his world and ours" (Act I, Scene 1, 14–15).

⁴³ Their appearance in *Midsummer Night's Dream* is, however, limited to Act III, Scene I (Shakespeare, ed. Sybil Thorndike, 182–184). Lois Potter (169) provides the information that Peaseblossom and Mustardseed reappear in Noyes's poem *The Flower of Old Japan* (1903), but I have not checked this.

⁴⁴ Shadow-of-a-Leaf's hybrid nature and functional role allows him to have access to future events and information, but, as debated at the fairy court, these can only be revealed to mortals in their dreams; verbal communication would imply the closure of the ivory gates and perpetual banishment from fairyland (Act II, Scene I, 67–68 and 70 and Act IV, Scene II, 120). That is precisely what happens at the end of the play: having released Robin Hood from captivity in Prince John's Dark Tower, Shadow-of-a-Leaf sacrifices himself in order that Robin and Marian may cross the gates after their deaths at the murderous hands of Queen Elinor.

⁴⁵ Not Huntington, as in *Downfall* and *Death*; see above, n. 25.

⁴⁶ In *Downfall*, the brothers Scarlet and Scathelock, a division apparently invented by Munday. The original source for the episode seems to have been the ballad *Robin Hood Rescuing Three Squires*.

⁴⁷ Thus, for instance, Walter Bower, Abbot of Inchcolm (1385–1449), who, in the 1440s, took up John Fordun's *Scotichronicon* (13th century), John Rastell (c.1475–1536), *Interlude of the Four Elements* (c. 1520) and William Tyndale (c.1494–1536), *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (c.1528); see Alarcão 45–46, 194–195, n. 39 and 40.

⁴⁸ To J. C. Holt, "this later preponderance of Nottingham over Barnsdale was inevitable. Nottingham was a county town. Wentbridge was a hamlet; (...) Quite apart from its commercial advantages, Nottingham was far more widely known. The result is plainly imprinted in the later ballads. (...) Barnsdale could not compete and was almost lost to view. It was a predominantly Nottinghamshire legend which was handed down from the seventeenth century" (179).

Appendix

A) Anthony Munday (and Henry Chettle?):

First, no man must presume to call our master
 By name of Earl, Lord, Baron, Knight, or Squire;
 But simply by the name of Robin Hood. (...)
 Next, 'tis agreed, if thereto she agree,
 That fair Matilda henceforth change her name,
 And while it is the chance of Robin Hood
 To live in Sherwood a poor outlaw's life,
 She by Maid Marian's name be only call'd. (...)
 Thirdly, no yeoman, following Robin Hood
 In Sherwood, shall [ab]use widow, wife, or maid;
 But by true labour lustful thoughts expel. (...)
 Fourthly, no passenger with whom ye meet
 Shall ye let pass, till he with Robin feast;
 Except a post, a carrier, or such folk
 As use with food to serve the market towns. (...)
 Fifthly, you never shall the poor man wrong,
 Nor spare a priest, a usurer, or a clerk. (...)
 Lastly, you shall defend with all your power
 Maids, widows, orphans, and distressed men.
 (*Downfall*, Act III, Scene II in Hazlitt, ed., VIII, 153–154).

A') Alfred Noyes:

First, shall no man
 Presume to call our Robin Hood or any
 By name of Earl, lord, baron, knight or squire,
 But simply by their names as men and brothers:
 Second, that Lady Marian while she shares
 Our outlaw life in Sherwood shall be called
 Simply Maid Marian. Thirdly, we that follow
 Robin, shall never in thought or word or deed
 Do harm to widow, wife or maid; [but hold,
 Each, for his mother's or sister's or sweetheart's sake,
 The glory of manhood, a sacred thing,
 A star twixt earth and heaven.]⁴⁹ Fourth, whomsoever
 Ye meet in Sherwood ye shall bring to dine
 With Robin, [saving carriers, posts and folk
 That ride with food to serve the market towns
 Or any, indeed, that serve their fellow men.]
 Fifth, you shall never do the poor man wrong,
 Nor spare a priest or usurer. You shall take
 The waste wealth of the rich to help the poor,
 [The baron's gold to stock the widow's cupboard,]
 The naked ye shall clothe, the hungry feed,
 And lastly shall defend with all your power
 All that are trampled under by the world,
 The old, the sick and all men in distress.
 (*Sherwood*, Act II, Scene I, 63–64)

B) Anthony Munday (and Henry Chettle?):

Marian, thou seest, though courtly pleasures want,
 Yet country sport in Sherwood is not scant:

⁴⁹ Passages between square brackets were to be omitted in acting, as explained in a footnote (3).

For the soul-ravishing, delicious sound
 Of instrumental music we have found
 The winged quiristers with divers notes
 Sent from their quaint recording pretty throats,
 On every branch that compasseth our bow'r,
 Without command contenting us each hour
 For arras hangings and rich tapestry
 We have sweet nature's best embroidery.
 For thy steel glass, wherein thou wont'st to look,
 Thy crystal eyes gaze in a crystal brook.
 At court a flower or two did deck thy head,
 Now with whole garlands is it circled.
 For what in wealth we want, we have in flowers,
 And what we lose in halls, we find in bowers.
 (*Downfall*, Act III, Scene II in Hazlitt, ed., VIII, 154–155).

B') Alfred Noyes:

Come, you shall see how what we lack in halls
 We find in bowers. Look how from every branch
 Such tapestries as kings could never buy
 Wave in the starlight. You'll be waked [sic] at dawn
 By feathered choirs whose notes were taught in heaven.
 (*Sherwood*, Act II, Scene I, 64)

C) Anthony Munday (and Henry Chettle?):

WAR.[MAN] Your honour thinks not ill of me, I hope.
 ROB.[IN] H.[OOD] Judas speaks first, with 'Master, is it I?
 (*Downfall*, Act I, Scene III in Hazlitt, ed., VIII, 118).

C') Alfred Noyes:

ROBIN
 Which of you will betray me to the King?

THE FORESTER
 Do you ask *me*, sir?

ROBIN
 Judas answered first,

With 'Master, is it I?
 (*Sherwood*, Act V, Scene I, 147)

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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