Deception and Impersonation in the Robin Hood Tradition:

A Comparison of Medieval and Nineteenth-Century Approaches

by

Lucas Mikael Darche Aykroyd
B.A., University of Victoria, 1996

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of English

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

[redacted]

Dr. Elizabeth F. Archibald, Supervisor (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. Margot K. Louis, Departmental Member (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. Timothy S. Haskett, Outside Member (Department of History)

[redacted]

Dr. John G. Fitch, External Examiner (Department of Greek and Roman Studies)

ABSTRACT

Deception and impersonation are constant themes in the Robin Hood tradition. However, medieval and nineteenth-century approaches to these themes are different. In medieval English ballads, trickery by the outlaw hero and his supporters embodies a subversive attitude toward hierarchical authority, depicted as corrupt and unjust to gratify a plebeian yeoman audience. Acts of deception furnish anti-authoritarian commentary on political, economic, and religious issues. But from 1500 to 1800, a change occurs. Deception and impersonation in ballads and plays become conventional attributes of the outlaw persona. Marketed to a broader audience, Robin's character is increasingly submissive to hierarchical authority, and his deceptions are not relevant to contemporary social concerns. In the nineteenth century, Robin is a fun-loving gentleman in fancy dress. Novels and plays portray him as a romantic, conservative, patriotic hero who plays tricks for entertainment. This transformation of Robin Hood is among the most remarkable threads in his legend.

[redacted]

Dr. Elizabeth F. Archibald, Supervisor (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. Margot K. Louis, Departmental Member (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. Timothy S. Haskett, Outside Member (Department of History)

[redacted]

Dr. John G. Fitch, External Examiner (Department of Greek and Roman Studies)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

The linked themes of deception and impersonation have played a key role in the literary tradition of Robin Hood since its medieval inception. Especially in the earliest works, it is not just that the legendary English outlaw's reputation as a popular hero relies heavily on his talent for fooling his enemies. In such representative ballads as the seminal A Gest of Robyn Hode, "Robin Hood and the Monk," "Robin Hood and the Potter," and "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," as well as in the play fragment Robin Hood and the Sheriff, both Robin and those who support him use deception and impersonation for more than merely avoiding danger or gaining material benefits. People who become Robin's supporters seem to gain from him the ability to be effective tricksters, fabricating cunning stories and wearing disguises with skill similar to that of Robin himself. And such trickery often furnishes ironic or subversive commentary on the conventions of medieval English society. Robin's subversiveness is not aimed at overthrowing or reforming society's institutions, but often calls into question the validity of the authority exercised at the intermediate levels of the social hierarchy. The corruption of society is emphasized in order to justify Robin's lawbreaking. In turn, as I shall argue, the subversive narrative represents a way to fulfill the revenge fantasies of the popular audience that can be inferred from the anti-authoritarian content of these few surviving works.

Choosing a disguise becomes a means for Robin and his supporters to sustain personal honor through the power of anonymity, or to cause a disruption, however momentary, in the hierarchical structure of their society. On the other hand, going undisguised can represent an assertion of manly pride, or even a bold statement of faith in the ultimate triumph of a divinely ordained hierarchy that transcends the political, economic, and social troubles of England in the Middle Ages. But when unimaginative villains try to use deception or impersonation for their own corrupt purposes, their tactics inevitably rebound upon them, which indicates that trickery in these texts is viewed as

rightfully the exclusive preserve of freedom-loving, subversive individuals. In all these cases, deception and impersonation are not inserted into the text simply to indulge the medieval "passion for disguises" (Keen 131), nor are they included just for "practical joke" humor (Wiles 45) or as "simple stratagems" (Holt 35) to keep the story moving along.

Yet if trickery by Robin and his supporters enhances his profile as "the hero as a focus for resisting authority" (Knight 45) in the medieval period, this ability to fool others starts to become little more than a conventional attribute of the outlaw persona in the following three hundred years. That trend reflects the increasingly evident difficulty of adapting the shadowy protagonist of medieval lore in a way that makes him relevant to changing contemporary social concerns. The period of 1500 to 1800 thus marks a transitional phase in the portrayal of Robin Hood in literature, as he becomes less and less subversive. Despite the greater number and variety of creative works about the outlaw, deception and impersonation often become matters of simple expediency or of mockery of readily available targets like Catholicism in these texts, unlike their medieval predecessors. Salient examples among ballads of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries include "Robin Hood and Allen a Dale," "Robin Hood and the Bishop," "Robin Hood's Golden Prize," "Robin Hood's Delight," and "Robin Hood and Maid Marian." Among the plays, George a Green and Anthony Munday's The Downfall of Robert Hood, Earle of Huntingdon adequately illustrate how Robin's trickery becomes increasingly secondary to his submission to hierarchical authority throughout this long period.

After the medieval period, decreased emphasis on Robin's propensity for violence and increased stress on his mischievous, playful streak point to the desire of the profit-oriented publishing industry to make Robin more palatable to a broader audience, including the upper strata of society, as general literacy rose and tales of Robin Hood were more frequently circulated in the form of broadside ballads and Robin Hood Garlands. The emergence of a new urban theatre culture and greater centralization of power also contributed to a more conservative portrayal of Robin on the stage. In any case, the

majority of these texts are static echoes of the medieval works; they rarely reshape the source material to reflect current social concerns, and often reduce the medieval stories to bland merriment. As R.B. Dobson and J. Taylor put it, the "imaginative poverty...which overtook the legend of the greenwood during the course of the eighteenth century" (183) also characterizes many Robin Hood texts from the late 1500s onward. The essential link between this period and the nineteenth-century image of the outlaw is the gradual reduction of Robin from a master of subversive disguise and an agent of social criticism to a fun-loving gentleman in fancy dress by 1800.

Nineteenth-century novels, poetry, and drama bring an air of gentrified nostalgia to the Robin Hood tradition. This shift influences their portrayal of deception and impersonation. These works, though often inspired by medieval sources, lack the insistence of the originals on dress and grooming as essential markers of the individual's social status. Hence, when Robin and his friends get disguised to fool their opponents in such works as Walter Scott's Ivanhoe, Thomas Love Peacock's Maid Marian, Howard Pyle's The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood, or The Foresters by Alfred Lord Tennyson, they seem to relish the humorous anonymity their costumes provide almost as much as the practical benefits of wearing them. Notably, novels and plays--having gained wide popularity and no longer viewed as elitist genres in this period--provide most of the examples of deception and impersonation in the nineteenth century, rather than poems that might resemble the original ballads. This change reflects how far the legend can be said to have diverged from its roots.

New elements brought into the Robin Hood legend to satisfy nineteenth-century social expectations are not conducive to any potential subversive effects. Robin is now almost always a dispossessed nobleman; he is more of a defender of the legitimate social order than he would be as a humble yeoman--and even if he is a yeoman, he tends to stand up for that social order anyway. Accordingly, his indulgences in trickery are frequently for comic or burlesque effect. If not, he tends to assume the aura of the handsome,

mysterious stranger. Robin's consistent talent for deception and impersonation is only related occasionally to one major innovation of this period, namely, the notion that an ongoing conflict existed between Normans and Saxons in medieval times; this notion has more to do with growing nineteenth-century English nationalism than historical fact. His noble love for Maid Marian, another motif firmly established in this period, is likewise only linked to deception and impersonation in terms of masquerade love-play. It is the "romantic interest in the medieval past...concerned more with atmosphere than accuracy" (Holt 186) which transforms deception and impersonation into mere ornamental features of conventional Robin Hood scenarios. Overall, the literary quality of nineteenth-century treatments of Robin Hood is generally higher than during the previous three hundred years. But the outlaw's character and social impact are no longer defined by deception and impersonation as was the case in the medieval period.

This thesis examines deception and impersonation in the Robin Hood tradition in terms of a comparison of medieval and nineteenth-century approaches because that framework best facilitates the drawing of a clear distinction between today's popular image of the outlaw and what he originally represented. As Stephen Knight observes, "most of this [twentieth] century's widely known [Robin Hood] material depends simply on a repopularization of the literary texts from the nineteenth century" (9). But it would be difficult to comprehend the two periods in isolation, which is why the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries also merit consideration. These intervening years demonstrate how the form, if not the real substance, of the ballad tradition was at first retained, although Robin was gradually coopted by the established powers and transformed into a wrongfully treated gentleman, whose outlawry would not require his trickery to represent seditious longings, but could simply be part of a kind of merry, play-acting persona. Often it is said that the original medieval ballads are "hardly the stuff of which great literature is made" (Saul 225), and consequently they are dismissed as "apparently lightweight verse-stories" (Knight 45). But at their best they are taut and

evocative, filled with an intense longing for retributive social justice. Their social implications transcend their simple appearance. In the beginning, deception and impersonation played a far more significant role in the subversive thrust of the ballads than most critics have acknowledged.

Chapter One

Robin as Medieval Subversive: Hoodwinking a Corrupt Society, Upholding the Divinely Ordained Hierarchy

From the earliest recorded mention of Robin Hood in William Langland's Piers Plowman (c. 1377) onward, a tone of dissent against the institutions of the medieval English establishment pervades literary representations of the outlaw before 1500. In the lines in question, the personification of Sloth says, "I kan noght parfitly my Paternoster as the preest it syngeth,/But I kan rymes of Robyn hood and Randolf Erl of Chestre" (qtd. in Holt 16). Sloth is no hero in the context of a poem that promotes spiritual advancement. But the point is that Robin is identified here with forces that run counter to conventionally accepted social behavior. Deception and impersonation by Robin and his supporters in the ballads reflect an unwillingness to embrace the dominant political, economic, and legal structures of a society portrayed as corrupt and unjust. For purposes of literary analysis in relation to social rank, determining the actual levels of corruption and injustice in medieval England is less important than deciding to whose tastes and prejudices the ballads catered. As Peter Haworth notes, "Whatever attitude we take to the historical question [of the authenticity of Robin Hood and the situations portrayed in connection with him], it does not influence the quality of the ballads as poetry" (36); nor, one might add, does it come to grips with the issue of what the audience of the ballads saw as their main grievances against society. After all, social problems that appear major in the ballads may not have been that extensive in reality, if those who wrote the ballads were simply selecting targets against which they knew their audience would readily react. But then, to develop a clear picture of how these texts make deception and impersonation a vehicle for subversive commentary, an answer to an important question must be found: who represented the audience for the ballads?

Attempting to define the term "yeoman," which is applied repeatedly both to Robin and those listening to his exploits, is the key issue. It should be noted in advance that this is a controversial question, and there are a number of different viewpoints, none of which has emerged as utterly authoritative. These range from Rodney Hilton's argument that Robin was the hero of the fourteenth-century peasantry to J.C. Holt's belief that the yeomen in question were employed in courtly houses. To work toward an answer, it is useful to consult the medieval texts in Dobson and Taylor's anthology Rymes of Robin Hood, which is the primary source for ballads in this thesis, as well as F.J. Child's English and Scottish Popular Ballads, which is also used as a source for ballads. In A Gest of Robyn Hode, Robin is described as a "gode yeman" (Gest 79), and he counsels his men to do no harm to any of his kind; in "Robin Hood and the Monk," Much the Miller's son advises Robin to take along "twelve of thi wyght yemen" ("Monk" 115) as protection on a trip to nearby Nottingham; and a specific invitation is issued at the start of "Robin Hood and the Potter": "Herkens, god yemens.../On of the best that yever bare bou',/Hes name was Roben Hode" ("Potter" 125). As a "yeoman hero for a yeoman audience" (Dobson and Taylor 34), there is no doubt that this fifteenth-century Robin ranks below the aristocracy, unlike later texts that fancifully make him a dispossessed noble of King Richard I. While Hilton's view of Robin as being on the same level as the peasants involved in the great revolt of 1381 has lost favor in recent years, Holt has gained support from fellow historian Maurice Keen (who reevaluated his own stance on the question in the introduction to the 1977 revised edition of his The Outlaws of Medieval Legend) for attempting to establish that Robin emerges from the rank of men who served as retainers in the households of medieval magnates. Although conceding that yeomen could be defined either as prosperous free farmers or as farmers who "would not be easy to distinguish from the general ruck of the rural population from which his family might recently have emerged" (119), Holt insists that Robin's usual mode of dress and his weaponry, as well as his apparent grasp of household courtesies in matters of money and

food, place him solidly in the "context of the feudal household" (125). However, this conclusion is not without difficulties.

Far from acknowledging the validity of the rules and regulations that governed lordly medieval households, Robin is a greenwood rebel. His use of deception and impersonation is an unequivocal departure from what would ideally be the "systematically organized" (Hollister 243) structure of society that had prevailed since the Norman Conquest. In general, the official voices of late medieval society did not encourage social mobility. In some cases, marriage served as a means of mobility. And burgeoning trade in cloth, sheep wool, or other such commodities did permit lower-ranking merchants to gain some status. But for the most part, the line between the high-bred and the low-bred was kept in sharp focus by clerical and political authorities. One commentator notes that "men were thought to be fixed in their position in life by divine ordnance [sic], from King to Lords, Lords to Knights and Squires, Squires to the common people..., and the working man was constantly being urged to remain content with 'the station to which it had pleased God to call him'" (Hoyle 26). Moreover, the sumptuary laws of 1363 defined who was allowed to wear particular types of clothing: "Earls and barons were clearly distinguished from knights, and knights from 'gentlemen,' 'yeomen' and 'husbandmen'" (Briggs 94). Such distinctions would only start to break down significantly in the Tudor period. Yet in the medieval period, when Robin dresses up as a potter, or a knight, or someone else who does not belong to his own rank and station, he blurs existing social distinctions and throws them into question. And doing so in a text such as the Gest, which "advocates massive theft from the church, civic insurrection against and murder of a properly appointed sheriff, breach of legitimate agreement with a king" (Knight 81) and so on, is doubly subversive. If, as Holt suggests, Robin emerges from the category of household servitors, it seems contradictory that such men would enjoy listening to tales about an outlaw who, despite his stated intention of not molesting good yeomen, might rob and murder men like themselves if he for some reason deemed them not to be good--perhaps

seeing them as willing agents of oppressive knights. Also, if Robin was viewed "within a frame of reference made up of riot, resistance to lawful officials, release of lawfully arrested wrongdoers" (Holt 152) and so on, toleration or acceptance of such narratives by the lords in their own households would be equally doubtful, given the well-documented high rate of criminal activity in late medieval England and the threat that it posed to the lives and belongings of the gentry. Even the fact that many nobles, such as the Folvilles and the Coterels, ran their own private gangs could not mitigate the danger posed by someone like Robin Hood who stood deliberately outside their sphere of influence; it was one thing for nobles to take the law into their own hands (and they would be more tolerant of their fellow nobles who did so), but another for those of lower social rank. Barbara Hanawalt confirms that "England in the Middle Ages had the reputation of being the most violent country in Europe" (45), and also notes that homicide was "much more common and more acceptable in the Middle Ages" (272). Household servitors aspiring to emulate their masters would hardly clamor for tales of a man who would directly and violently threaten their own interests if they succeeded in acquiring greater social status. (See Appendix for further clarification of the position I have adopted on the controversial yeoman question.)

Therefore, it appears more reasonable that the yeomen mentioned in the ballads represent an audience which was substantially closer in social rank to the peasantry than to the gentry, although enjoying the rights of free men. While being "a cut above the ordinary peasant husbandmen" (Keen xvii), such yeomen would not mix socially with nobles. Dobson and Taylor state that "most of the available evidence suggests that in the fifteenth century it was Robin's appeal to a popular rather than aristocratic or gentle audience which ensured his survival" (36). The audience's willingness to enjoy Robin's subversive acts of deception and impersonation would be heightened by the hero's being "an exponent of the class that was to hear about him" (Bryant 82) and a "projection of their own wishful thinking, doing the things that they would never dare to do" (Bellamy

87). Robin, as some sort of former free landowner who has become a criminal, is afforded the liberty to take revenge upon those who oppress the tillers of the land and other honest folk. And in the ballads, one of the main ways he takes revenge is through his use of deception and impersonation.

At this point, a brief introduction to the structure and content of the ballads is in order. The term "ballad" itself is a subject of controversy, as it is not known for certain whether the ballads were originally sung to melodies in the way we would expect of a ballad today or merely recited as oral poetry. Allusions in the ballads to "speaking," "talking," or direct addresses to the audience have been interpreted by some critics to indicate that at least the earliest ballads were spoken (Fowler 67). In either case, there is little doubt that initially the primary means of transmitting these texts was oral rather than written. A second controversy stems from the question of how to date the early ballads with precision; while this thesis does not examine that concern in detail, it should be said that nearly all critics acknowledge that the five medieval texts that I will explore below are truly pre-1500 (Knight 45-47). Structurally, the ballads mostly take the form of common measure, being quatrains with four stresses and eight syllables in the first and third lines and three stresses and six syllables in the second and fourth lines. It is generally assumed that they were composed and performed by "itinerant minstrels [serving] a comparatively wide audience" (Dobson and Taylor 10). Even though this thesis privileges the notion of a medieval Robin Hood audience consisting principally of yeomen, that does not mean the minstrels would have bypassed the rich homes of the gentry. However, they might well have chosen to downplay their Robin Hood repertoire when visiting there, as professional musicians throughout history have adapted to the tastes and needs of their audience to avoid giving offense. Noteworthy in the Robin Hood ballads is the total absence of vulgar sexual innuendo, for instance, which did appear in bawdy medieval tavern songs. That particular omission may indicate that the ballads were heard by people of all ages.

The narrative content of the ballads generally follows a simple formula involving four steps. First, Robin Hood and his men are introduced in a forest setting. Second, some of them set out and meet another character, who is challenged and has an exchange with them. Third, a crisis develops from this meeting, which requires the outlaws to use deception and impersonation to achieve a solution. Fourth, with fitting revenge taken upon those who exercise authority unjustly, the outlaws return to their forest abode. While the majority of the ballads fit such action into a framework of sixty to ninety quatrains, A Gest of Robyn Hode spans 456 stanzas, which makes it the closest thing to an epic in the entire medieval literature of Robin Hood. Its survival in many editions of the sixteenth and seventeenth century provides "obvious proofs of its influence" as a seminal text (Dobson and Taylor 72).

In the Gest, each of the eight fyttes, or sections, of the poem (c. 1400-1460) can be viewed as having some bearing on the issues of deception and impersonation. There is evidence to suggest the poem is a "compilation of pre-existing ballads," or, more creatively, a "reworking on a larger scale of the known materials of the tradition" (Knight 75). But regardless of which method of composition was used, it does not affect the consistency of the Gest's portrayal of deception. As mentioned at the outset, the choice of whether to get disguised and fool somebody or to refrain from doing so is always significant. And even though Robin himself does not get disguised in the Gest, he does impart his mastery of trickery to his friends. In this and other medieval ballads, Robin stands outside the law. He is free, but he is also vulnerable. He cannot expect mercy if he is captured by agents of the establishment. So when he decides to confront such people directly, it is a reflection either of his own self-confidence in dealing with a particular individual or of his belief that he will be saved by a higher power such as the Virgin Mary. When he decides to fool others, there is invariably an element of subversive commentary in what he does.

The first fytte of the Gest involves neither deception nor impersonation directly, but the undisguised way Robin handles his encounter with the knight of "dreri" appearance and "lytell...pride" (Gest 80) embodies a moral judgment in itself. There is a symmetry to these opening passages, reminiscent of a musical call-and-response pattern. Before sending out his men to fetch a member of the gentry to dine with them on this day, Robin offers three stanzas' worth of advice on who should not be harmed--including small farmers, the aforementioned good yeomen, and any knight or squire "[t]hat wol be a gode felawe" (80)--while authorizing abuse of the high clergy and the sheriff of Nottingham. He shows general contempt for the churchmen, moving one to conclude that no form of subterfuge would be off limits against them: "'These bisshoppes and these archebishoppes,/Ye shall them bete and binde'" (80).

But it is different when Little John and the others assigned to watch the road meet the knight. At this point, the poem seems to respond to Robin's opening homily on outlaw morality by conveniently providing a knightly character who fits the description of a "gode felawe." The men recognize an implicit sympathy in this forlorn figure (identified later in the text as Sir Richard of the Lea), who is on the verge of having to forfeit his lands to the abbot of St. Mary's Abbey. Little John does not hesitate to approach him, does not resort to intimidation tactics, and does not weave an elaborate story to lure the knight into the greenwood. Instead, he addresses the man at once as "gentyll knight" (80). When the knight asks who his master is, Little John's answer is straightforward: "'Robyn Hode'" (80). The knight's response, though implausible in a realistic setting, makes explicit the sympathy between himself and the outlaws: "'He is a gode yoman,' sayde the knyght,/'Of hym I have herde moche gode'" (80). In the moral framework of the poem, by now the knight has already established his credentials as a fine fellow who does not intend to oppress his social inferiors. When Robin later asks him to prove he has "no more but ten shelynges" in his purse (81), it is a mere formality. Robin does not even specify dire consequences for lying, but tells the knight right from the start that he will help him out if

the man really lacks wealth. Robin's final decision to equip the knight and lend him four hundred pounds feels like the natural conclusion to the call-and-response pattern of this fytte. Robin has put into action the precepts he outlined to his men in the beginning. With an honest man such as Sir Richard of the Lea, openness is the only policy.

Of course, making such a loan goes well beyond normal openness in social relations, particularly as medieval yeomen seldom would have four hundred pounds to give away. As noted previously, no attempt to deceive Sir Richard is involved here, so what occurs says much about Robin's powerful status. Robin transcends social categories by possessing the wealth usually associated with the nobility but also being able to make a noble defer to him by accepting wealth from him. Although Robin makes the loan very courteously, no doubt the yeoman audience would have relished the fantasy of seeing a social superior indebted to one of their kind. Robin is not bound by conventional restrictions. He takes pride in being a yeoman, and is willing to champion the cause of downtrodden fellow yeomen. But he is not an ordinary yeoman; he is a fantasy hero. A full explanation of how he gained such great wealth and instilled such good discipline in his band of outlaws (who do not protest when the loan is made) is unnecessary in this context.

Another objection might be that Robin's desire to reinstate Sir Richard in his ancestral estates suggests a concern for maintaining the status quo, which would seem incongruous if he defines himself as operating separately from the standard social hierarchy. However, Knight aptly observes that Sir Richard "is not valued in his own right, [but rather] through his affiliation with the outlaws" (77). The knight has the same clerical enemies as the outlaws. Also, the outlaws could empathize with him to a certain extent about having lost his lands. Admittedly, Sir Richard would own much more property than they would. But one must keep in mind that they call themselves yeomen, and one identifying mark of the yeoman was his ownership of land. So when Robin goes

out of his way to befriend Sir Richard, he views the knight first and foremost as an unfortunate fellow victim of a society that is corrupt in many areas.

In the second fytte, Sir Richard's newly forged alliance with Robin affords him the moral liberty, in the context of the poem, to practise deception upon the corrupt abbot who would deprive him of his lands. Ideally, the abbot should exemplify Christian mercy in line with his high office in the Church: "But become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). But he is nothing like that; instead, the abbot invites his crony, the high justice, to toast his success when the knight claims he cannot pay: "'Not one peny', sayd the knyght,/'By God that maked me'" (Gest 86). As the abbot proceeds to vilify the seemingly debt-swamped Sir Richard as a "false knyght" (87), it is ironic that he indicts himself as a symbol of the avarice of religious orders. Yet one should be cautious about drawing broader historical conclusions from this scenario: was it simply that abbots in general were corrupt and greedy?

R.N. Swanson's Church and Society in Late Medieval England offers a balanced assessment of the situation. Swanson confirms that "the visible contrast between Christian precept and clerical practice was unavoidable, and affected the relationship between the church and its encompassing society" (192); hence the rationale for the creator of the Gest to appeal to the prejudices of yeomen burdened not only by standard tithing but also by rampant simony. But at the same time, Swanson notes the difficulty of determining "how far lay opposition to clerical wealth was principled, and how far motivated by jealousy and greed, a desire to replace one set of landowners by another" (193). Such opposition would pose in itself a subversive questioning of the rightfulness of the place the Church held in temporal society. By telling the abbot a provocative lie at the start of the conversation (to the effect that he cannot pay his debts), Sir Richard takes his cue from Robin's subversive trickery and casts doubt on the justice of the Church's stewardship of

earthly goods. He is rewarded for doing so, since he walks out of the abbey a happy, debt-free man.

The third fytte shifts to a secondary narrative featuring Little John, whose service to Sir Richard on Robin's orders puts him in a position to deceive the Sheriff of Nottingham with a trick that represents a subversive commentary on economic inequities in medieval England. After being transferred to the Sheriff's service when he wins an archery contest, Little John (using the alias of "Reynald Greenleaf," which combines overtones of trickery associated with the fox and the wood sprite) compounds mischief by not only luring the Sheriff's cook off to the outlaws' forest abode but also telling the Sheriff he has discovered some unusual deer out there: "'Yonder I sawe a ryght fair harte,/His coloure is of grene,/Seven score of dere upon a herde/Be with hym all bydene'" (Gest 92). As soon as these words are uttered, the audience gets a sense of "the joke [that will be] played to the full" (Keen 106).

But there is more to the situation than mere joking. In this part of the Gest, the Sheriff is repeatedly described as the "proude sheryf" (92). Although technically the legitimate arm of the law, he is "regarded as the anti-hero" (Saul 225). Some have concluded that this must mean "the courts of common law were so corrupt that the conventional values of society were inverted" at this time in history (225), but such an inversion might equally be ascribed to the poet's intent to make the Sheriff look bad and please yeomen who saw themselves as persecuted. So the Sheriff seems to prey on the deer just as he does on the populace. While the poor starve, he enjoys rich meat. He is used to meeting no resistance from his prey. But in this case, the deer bite back in an ironic reversal of roles. Captured and forced to dine with the outlaws, the Sheriff faces a shocking loss of his position in the social hierarchy when Robin announces plans to keep him twelve months in the forest and teach him "[a]n outlawe for to be" (Gest 93). When the Sheriff lies that he will be Robin's "best frende" henceforth if he is let go (93), a new motif of deception is brought into the poem: it is the notion that deception and

impersonation are the rightful tools of the oppressed, but villains who try to employ such tools corruptly and unimaginatively will see their devices rebound upon themselves. And indeed, the Sheriff attempts treachery against Robin not much later, as will be seen.

In the fourth fytte, Robin shows how he deals with those who claim to represent heaven's will but do not live up to the lofty standards they promote. When Robin's men intercept a group of monks from St. Mary's Abbey, Little John tells them his master is Robin Hood just as openly as he informed Sir Richard. However, the foremost monk's response is a precursor of how things will unfold; instead of praising Robin, the monk offers condemnation: "'He is a stronge thefe,' said the monke,/Of hym herd I never good'" (95). Such words actually characterize the general clerical attitude toward tales of Robin Hood in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, as the writer of Dives and Pauper reveals by classifying "a song of Robin Hood" alongside "some ribaldry" (qtd. in Coulton 188). Here, the monk's statement eliminates any chance for the kind of rapport Sir Richard and Robin achieved. So when Robin questions the monk about how much money the group has, the outlaw chief goes on to point out the consequences of there being more than the mere "twenty marke" (96) the monk claims to have. Robin made no threats about taking all of Sir Richard's money, because he sensed the knight's honesty. But in this case, the monk foolishly lies. He is supposed to be honest and pious, but being dishonest instead results in his forfeiting eight hundred-plus marks.

Yet although Robin and his men show no compunction about taking the money, the pious way they do it represents a "courteous interpretation of the monk's duplicity" (Fowler 79). Little John announces to Robin: "'Syr,...the monk is trewe ynowe,/Our Lady hath doubled your cast [the original loan of four hundred pounds to the knight]'" (Gest 97). Robin's hearty concurrence with this statement reveals the limits to his subversiveness. In subverting social conventions, Robin does not try to overturn society's institutions, but neither does he make a concerted effort to reform them; rather, he causes disruptions in society's accepted patterns of conduct which pose questions about their

validity. His approach to life embodies "aspects of dissent to established power," but at the highest level it "can also be complicit with...institutions of authority" (Knight 15). In this case, he emerges as a remarkably ardent devotee of the Virgin Mary. In fact, earlier on he even accepts Mary as Sir Richard's surety when he will not accept "God that dyed on tree" (Gest 83). Therefore, while Robin's religious beliefs may not be entirely orthodox, he puts faith in an invisible spiritual hierarchy, which amplifies the "more devout" (Hodgart 130) aspect of the poem. He is no blasphemer. He believes that ultimately things will turn out well if one submits to the divine will. As one might guess, the only human figure worthy of similar devotion in Robin's eyes is the rightful king of England.

Not surprisingly, the corrupt Sheriff of Nottingham receives no respect in the fifth fytte. Like the monks, he suffers for trying to practise deception unimaginatively, but also for breaking his oath to Robin not to molest the outlaws. Although the narrative portion of the text does not establish that the Sheriff deliberately set out to trap the outlaws by sponsoring a prestigious archery contest in Nottingham, Robin's own words on being discovered at the contest tend to support that conclusion: "'Wo worth the, treason!' sayd Robin" (Gest 100). It is a shabby trick for the Sheriff to have lured Robin to Nottingham with the prize of a golden arrow, and the outlaw will not let such evil go unpunished. Though Holt fails to acknowledge the socially subversive dimension of Robin, he puts Robin's philosophy neatly: "He makes his world conform to the principles which are supposed to underlie it" (10). One of those principles is that both deception and impersonation should not be employed merely as a crude "bait and switch" tactic to get what one wants. Instead, the way one uses these tools should manifest an ironic or humorous sensibility that comments on some aspect of society. In most cases, there should also be a certain sense of panache or underlying humor in trickery performed for good purposes. Failing to adhere to this part of the Robin Hood code dooms the Sheriff, for "no trickery or injustice is too *despicable* for him to stomach" (Keen 149; italics mine).

In the sixth fytte, the Sheriff worsens the manner of his doom by insisting on attacking Sir Richard for harboring escaped outlaws. The knight has already proved himself a loyal friend of Robin by returning to pay his debt and, when that proves unnecessary, giving the outlaws bows and arrows. By now, an opposition of good deceivers (Robin and supporters like the knight) versus bad deceivers (the Sheriff, monks, and similar types) is clearly delineated. Pursuing the Sheriff to set Sir Richard free, Robin has blood on his mind: there is no need for deception as he goes out to fight. Yet he sanctifies his murderous intentions by swearing vengeance oaths to God five times before he comes to Nottingham (Gest 103-104). Given the terse style of the quatrains, such repetition indicates the poet's eagerness to have his audience recognize that God is on Robin's side. The moral structure of the Gest adroitly justifies the brutal way that Robin takes revenge upon the Sheriff by shooting and decapitating him. What is of principal relevance to the issue of deception and impersonation, though, is Robin's simple explanation of why he committed the murder: "There myght no man to the truste/The whyles thou were a lyve" (104). Some might object that the same accusation of untrustworthiness could be levied against the tricky outlaw leader. But the major difference is that the Sheriff has malevolently attempted to destroy Robin by taking advantage of the outlaw's great love for archery, whereas Robin's tricks often permit others to show their true colors and reap reward or punishment based on their response. The Sheriff's deception is thoroughly ill-intentioned, and hence his fate is deserved.

The seventh fytte discusses the King's personal investigation of the doings of Robin and the outlaws, and it reinforces the concept of a valid use of deception and impersonation. Admittedly, the King does not come to Nottingham with kindly intentions toward Robin; his royal confiscation of friendly Sir Richard's lands discounts that possibility. But the King's interest in Robin himself is rooted more in curiosity than in vengefulness, which is a step in the right direction. He talks about wanting to lay "eyen" on the famous criminal (105), not about killing him. Also, after spending six months in

Nottingham, he follows the guidance of a local forester who always refers to "good Robyn" (106). That the King does not respond by calling Robin evil points to a further mellowing of his attitude. So when the King finally disguises himself as an abbot and goes into the forest, he is well-positioned to join Sir Richard as an honorary good deceiver as he encounters the "great brotherhood of good yeomen" (Keen 148). The King brings relief from on high to such men, who have suffered in the "endless feud against the corrupt representatives of the law" (155). Though Robin does not recognize the King at once, he seems to sense goodwill as he greets this most unusual abbot. No intent to "bete and bynde" (Gest 80) the newcomer is mentioned. The King's truthful disclosure that he has "forty pounde" is an important opening move toward the final revelation of his identity (106). And claiming to love the King earns him Robin's respect at once; likewise, his making "good chere" at the feast and his participation in giving buffets represent the King's affection for the outlaws (107).

Most significantly, the King's actions subvert the conventional role of the abbot whom he is portraying, as well as that of his own kingly office. The author's decision to have the disguised King enjoy association with the outlaws in their social setting has a strong relation to the concept of the "different estates of men" in medieval times (Keen 154). This is more than what Dobson and Taylor dub "a lively variation on the familiar medieval theme...of the disguised monarch among his subjects" (78), for these are no ordinary subjects but outlaws. For onlookers in everyday life, the differences between the social ranks to which people belonged were indicated, not by the invisible boundaries of blood and property holdings, but by clothing. When someone saw a man in the garb of a noble (or a priest or a peasant), it could be assumed that the man had an "obligation to discharge his proper duties...[and] privileges which [his] function gave [him" (155). To the medieval mind, the structure of society as ordained by God rested on such distinctions.

But here, the King is not behaving like a proper abbot: he says nothing whatsoever of spiritual matters to Robin. He is not even behaving like the stereotypical

corrupt abbot: he tells the truth, shows no greed, and does not oppose the outlaws in any way. Certainly he is not behaving as one would formally expect the King to do, being a "living [institution]" (Myers 345) whose duty to defend the realm was matched only by his duty to defend the faith. So again the author appeals to the biases of his yeoman audience by toying with the categories into which medieval society placed people. Although such manipulations would be disturbing if kept up for too long, a brief blurring of the social distinctions does offer hope, however illusory, to yeomen that the King is really on the side of the lowlier ones whose grievances are exacerbated by the intermediate authorities. Yet the blurring is subversive, for in theory such a thing should never happen. Relativism and medieval social structure are an uneasy fit.

The ultimate subversive deception takes place in the eighth fytte, where the now-undisguised King takes the extraordinary step of donning the "grene cloth" (Gest 109) of the outlaws and having his knights do likewise before they all ride into Nottingham together. Not surprisingly, their approach terrifies citizens who believe they are about to be attacked by bandits. Several explanations for this scenario are possible. The text does not state whether the King and his knights are wearing their usual outfits underneath their clerical disguises when they first enter the forest, as is usually the case in later adaptations; if not, perhaps they just need a change of clothes and thus have accepted Robin's gift. Keen surmises that here the King is consciously honoring Robin: "To wear another man's badge or his livery was the highest compliment a lord or ruler could pay to him" (137). That reading is supported to some extent by Robin's response, "Another day ye wyll me clothe...ayenst the Yole" (109), which suggests that the King will give him livery at Christmas after accepting him into royal service. But from the conventional point of view, it seems most unlikely that the King would wear outlaw clothing and terrify his Nottingham subjects under any circumstances, especially right after pardoning Robin and his men for crimes with which their clothing would be visibly associated. And the claims

of D.C. Fowler and Francis Child that the King just dresses up "[f]or sport" (Fowler 74) or "for a jest" (Child 50) are not substantiated anywhere in the text.

This episode marks another instance of narratorial manipulation to satisfy the yeoman audience. Having the King ride alongside Robin impersonating an outlaw is the perfect sanction to all the outlaws' previous illegal and violent exploits. Though retaining fealty to the monarch as the highest value in the temporal world of medieval England, this episode effectively says it is all right to deceive and attack the subordinate municipal and clerical authorities, because the King will pardon you in the end if you shoot well and say you will obey him. It momentarily throws into doubt the integrity of the social order by having the King associate so freely with outlaws. Additionally, questions of economic relationships are raised by the fact that the king buys cloth from Robin, rather than demanding it as his royal due: who is the master and who is the servant here? The royal entrance into Nottingham is among the most intriguing episodes in the entire Robin Hood canon as far as deception and impersonation are concerned.

Robin's final trick in the Gest reflects his inability to be fettered by the temporal social system, regardless of his love for the King. Tired of expensive court living, he tells the King that he wishes to visit the chapel he erected in the forest to Mary Magdalene, "that good outlaw of the New Testament" (Knight 80). Once again, the outlaw's desire to show he has heaven on his side is evident. The King warns him not to be gone more than a week. But when Robin returns to Barnsdale, he ends up reassembling his band of outlaws and remaining there for the last twenty-two years of his life.

Here, the laconic flavor of the narrative makes it problematic to determine whether Robin really meant to fool the King from the start. He bears no personal grudge against the King, even though he dreads royal wrath after escaping. Yet there is no mention of Robin's actually visiting the chapel of Mary Magdalene, which suggests trickery. Some might conclude that the "mery mornynge" atmosphere and the presence of "byrdes mery syngynge" (Gest 111) influence Robin so that he "cannot bring himself to go back to

court" (Dobson and Taylor 78). But such an interpretation seems to project the nature-revering ethic of nineteenth-century Romanticism on to the text. Certainly Robin's arrival in the forest signals "his re-entry into a fully natural order" (Knight 80), but just because he takes pleasure in the sights and sounds of his old home does not mean that the immediate visceral experience has seduced him into breaking his promise to the King. Rather, his earlier statement at court, "Yf I dwele lenger with the kynge,/Sorowe wyll me sloo" (Gest 111), points to a premeditated plot to get away to where he can be happy. More importantly, he wants to reclaim his independence. His escape is a vindication of yeoman liberty, the prized quality that set a free landholder apart from peasants who may have resembled him in other ways. In fact, the escape adds credence to the notion that Robin Hood represents the interests of independent free landholders rather those of retainers in the households of the nobility, as Holt asserts. Liberty is upheld even at the cost of offending the beloved King, which makes Robin's final trick subversive. All that can take away his freedom is treachery by corrupt lower authorities, as shown by his death at the hands of the Prioress of Kirklees. That is the last ironic reversal for Robin in the Gest, who has proven himself an unrivalled practitioner of all types of deception and impersonation by the end.

The earliest surviving Robin Hood ballad is "Robin Hood and the Monk," which was dubbed "very perfection in its kind" by Francis Child even though part of the text is missing (95). Deception and impersonation are involved in its depiction of Robin's acrimonious relationship with the earthly representatives of religion, as it contrasts clerical misbehavior with the eternal benevolence of heaven. Robin's faith in heaven is what motivates him to eschew disguise when he decides to attend church by himself in Nottingham one May morning. Knight feels that Robin puts himself in danger by "having broken by his rashness the bond of security with John and his men" (53), for he refuses to take a group along and parts company with his second-in-command after a quarrel. But Robin shows no fear. He is, after all, a devotee of Mary, and his destination is Saint

Mary's church; he has no doubt that she and God will "bryng hym out save agayn" ("Monk" 116). Robin enters Nottingham under the auspices of a phrase which informs much of the ballad's approach to deception and impersonation: "Sertenly withouten layn" (116). To understand this phrase properly, a reasonable definition of the term "layn" in this phrase must be obtained.

Fowler argues that fifteenth-century minstrelsy often introduced a "structural weakness" (10) into its ballads, a weak second line in a quatrain, included only to complete a rhyme scheme. He specifically classifies "Sertenly withouten layn" among such fillers: "It does not advance the story, it adds nothing to the emotional impact, and in fact it says nothing except 'I'll tell you no lie'" (11). Albert B. Friedman essentially shares that opinion (326). Yet both Fowler and Friedman fail to give adequate consideration to the context in which the phrase is used. Dobson and Taylor provide a more convincing definition, stating in a footnote that "layn" means "disguise" (121). And while Webster's Third New International Dictionary and the Oxford English Dictionary define "layn" (spelled "layne" in the former and "lain" in the latter") as possibly meaning such things as "to conceal, to deny, to hide, or to be silent about," they also both include the noun "disguise" as an alternative definition. The Middle English Dictionary refers specifically to this ballad among other examples from medieval texts that use the term "lein," and it offers "concealment" as a possible definition. Also, "Sertenly withouten layn" is in no way grammatically attributed to the voice narrating the tale (which clashes with Fowler's argument); instead, the phrase describes Robin's appearance: "Whan Robyn came to Notyngham/Sertenly without layn" (116). Hence, reading "layn" as literally meaning "disguise" works better for both occurrences of the word in "Robin Hood and the Monk."

Immediately after stanza 17 mentions that Robin is "withouten layn" ("Monk" 116), stanza 18 describes how everybody in the church recognizes him when he is inside: "Alle that ever were the church within/Beheld wel Robyn Hode" (116). Additionally, stanza 19 notes how the treacherous monk recognizes him at once: "Fful sone he knew

gode Robyn,/As sone as he hym se" (116). These two instances of recognition clearly indicate that Robin's being undisguised is a key issue here. Since the start of the ballad, he has made a point of lowering his physical defenses as far as possible. He believes he does not need to employ trickery since heavenly guidance will ultimately save him, even if there are some obstacles to overcome in the meantime.

Robin's attitude appears in stark contrast to that of the monk, who rushes out of the church to fetch the Sheriff and seek the outlaw's arrest. Even though everybody else in the church has apparently seen Robin, the monk is the only one who feels the need to cut short his devotions. His motivations for treacherously betraying Robin are not based on Christian doctrine either. When he is urging the Sheriff to catch Robin, he does not emphasize that Robin has violated Biblical morality by stealing, nor does he selflessly point out the danger that the outlaw might pose to others by being inside the walls of Nottingham. Instead, the monk's motivations are both materialistic and vengeful: "He robbyt me onys of a hundred pound/Hit shalle never out of my mynde" ("Monk" 117). He is quite willing to see the sanctity of the church disrupted by the Sheriff's men just so he can revenge himself on Robin, because he has been brooding about the money he lost. Since monks were supposed to take vows of poverty, he should not even have been in a position to lose a hundred pounds.

A subversive attitude enters "Robin Hood and the Monk" after Robin is captured by the Sheriff. This attitude is encapsulated in the way the outlaws receive the news of their master's fate (which is not described directly in the text, as this is where the missing portion occurs). On the one hand, Little John and the others show the same commendable faith in Mary as Robin does. John says he believes that Mary will not let Robin die: "He has servyd Our Lady many a day,/And yet wil, securly" (118). From the Church's standpoint, faith in Mary thus expressed would not be wrong. On the other hand, the outlaws not only have faith in the spiritual realm, but also take physical action against one of the Church's earthly representatives, the monk, which poses a direct challenge to

clerical authority. A History of the Modern World by R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton cites Thomas Aquinas's "emphasis on the superior reality of abstractions that enabled men in the Middle Ages to believe steadfastly in the church while freely attacking individual churchmen" (42). One has only to examine Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales to see how churchmen such as the Monk and Friar were frequently satirized in medieval literature. However, literary or verbal attacks are not the same as physical attacks. There were legal penalties for attacking members of the clergy physically, for that was viewed as sacrilege: "In England...the church continued to preserve throughout the Middle Ages a jurisdiction to punish this form of sacrilege" (Rodes 55). The jurisdiction was inscribed in the canons of the Second Lateran Council of 1139. The secular authorities also protected the clergy. Conventionally, respecting the persons of the representatives of the Church would be seen as necessary to maintain the structure of the "great religious community" in society (37), which kept the people focused on the salvation of their souls and the eternal rewards of heaven.

Here, what is truly subversive is that John and Much the Miller's son go out to intercept the monk, deceive him, and seize his letters to the King as an affirmation of their religious faith. They take it upon themselves to act as the tools Mary uses to rescue her faithful adherent, Robin Hood. Indeed, Mary's assistance counteracts (and is not impeded by) Robin's irresponsibility in quarreling with John. Unless one dismisses the ballad's insistence on Mary's saving power as mere rhetoric--and the text offers no justification for doing so--one is compelled to the conclusion that "Robin Hood and the Monk" depicts heaven as using outlaws to attack one of its own shepherds. However misguided the monk might be, killing him goes well beyond the boundaries of conventional social satire.

On catching up with the monk, Little John and Much secure his confidence by pretending to be victims themselves of Robin's thievery. Yet, since they are acting as Mary's agents, the ballad justifies such impersonation. They have right on their side. Their subsequent brutal slaying of the monk (as well as his young companion, a page) and

theft of his letters is also justifiable in the same way as Robin's killing the Sheriff in the Gest. The monk's unimaginative, corrupt attempt to entrap Robin by treacherous means has backfired on him. In this subversive scenario, his negative trickery merits punishment.

As Holt puts it, the rest of the ballad consists of similar "crude moral comment" (29). An audience-pleasing fantasy is constructed in which the outlaw yeomen are invulnerable. Generous rewards await Little John and Much as they pursue their course of deception and impersonation. It is reminiscent of the medieval fabliau, in which rule-breakers are rewarded for turning social values upside-down, while conventionally respectable figures are made ridiculous. For kneeling before the King with letters in hand and coolly telling him the original messenger "dyed after the way" ("Monk" 120), the two outlaws are rewarded with twenty pounds, the status of yeomen of the crown, and the right to visit the Sheriff in order to bring Robin out of prison and back to court. For fabricating a new deception for the Sheriff's benefit--in this case they say the monk has not come because the King has made him "abot of Westmynster" (120)--the two outlaws enjoy a fine meal at the Sheriff's expense, and then have easy access to the prison to release Robin. Along the way, they casually murder the jailer after telling him Robin has gotten out of his cell, but suffer no punishment for this bloody deed. And when the King finally hears of Robin's escape, he elects not to pursue the matter further, but instead tells the Sheriff how commendable Little John's loyalty to the outlaw chief is.

The conclusion of the tale lays special emphasis on the power of deception and impersonation, as the King directly acknowledges outlaw cunning: "'Speke no more of this mater,' seid oure kyng,/But John has begyled us alle'" ("Monk" 122). In particular, the way Robin's men pose as "[members] of the legal apparatus" (Knight 64) in this ballad is subversive. Knight observes that this motif of impersonation has "an underlying socio-political force, a sense of carnivalization and reversal of authority [which is]...distinctly radical in its potential" (64). The ballad keeps the issues of deception and impersonation to the forefront. The success of all the outlaws' trickery validates Robin's unflinching faith

in the Virgin, while at the same time it authorizes his men to disobey the authority of the Church, the law, and even--though not disrespectfully--the monarchy.

Usually deemed the second oldest Robin Hood ballad in existence, "Robin Hood and the Potter" employs deception and impersonation to comment subversively on economic issues, as well as on the standard target of Sheriff-inspired oppression. While deception and impersonation do appear in the works previously discussed, Dobson and Taylor point out that this ballad "provides the first clear expression of the motif of the greenwood hero in disguise" (125). This is the first case where Robin personally dons a costume in order to deceive. His use of disguise does much to make "Robin Hood and the Potter" a "well-focused account of resistance to contemporary authorities" (Knight 54).

Robin's decision to go disguised to Nottingham is taken on the spur of the moment, but it is not a purposeless whim. He gets his chance when he sees a "prod potter" approaching who has previously refused to pay any toll to the outlaws when coming this way ("Potter" 126) . Wagering Little John that he can defeat the tough potter in hand-to-hand combat, Robin tries his luck and is defeated himself. The potter goes on to reproach Robin for discourteously impeding a fellow "pore yeman" from travelling in peace and quiet (127). Robin acknowledges the justice of that criticism and promises not to harass the potter again, as his own reputation as a champion of "god yeme[n]ry" is at stake (127). Robin's apology also implies that his ensuing actions will advocate in some way the values that he and the potter should ideally share as free men. Indeed, right away he proposes that they should trade outfits as a token of "ffelischepe" (127). Invoking the "helpe of Howr Ladey" as usual (127), Robin is off to Nottingham with a potter's garb and wares, and a statement to make about the urban economy.

That statement emerges concretely in Robin's reckless approach to selling the potter's pots. Yelling "Pottys, gret chepe!" (128), he makes a great splash among the housewives at the market, since he does not care about anything except getting rid of the pots as fast as possible. That is why he prices them down from five pence to three pence.

It is true that he gains admission to the Sheriff's house by giving his last five pots to the Sheriff's wife for free. But there is no hint that he came to Nottingham with the idea of entering the Sheriff's house, nor could he have known that the wife would have been at the market that day. It is a convenient bonus to be able to infiltrate his enemy's home, but being dressed as a potter would not normally result in such luck. Therefore, it is not justifiable to conclude that Robin's crazy pot-selling has any purpose beyond what can be deduced from his decision to undertake the activity in the first place.

The outlaw chief subverts the basic tenets of commercial activity with his total disregard for making profits or outdoing any rival potters who might be at the market. Stanzas 34 and 35 emphasize his divergence from the norm, as they include comments from onlookers such as "he had be no potter long" and "Ynder potter schall never the [thrive]" (128). Those comments have nothing to do with the quality of the pots he has supposedly created as a potter; rather, they indicate that people think he does not see that the purpose of being at market is to make money. But Robin's values include freedom, humor, generosity, imagination, and daring. When he needs money, he steals it quickly and easily from wayfarers through the forest. He does not submit to the drudgery of bargaining with customers, keeping inventory, and so forth. And he is the hero. He represents, as Knight puts it, "a sense that there is a natural social and economic order, and set against it is a new oppressive formation where people are not grouped collectively, where they count coins rather than show largesse" (56). By impersonating a potter and selling pots recklessly, Robin suggests to onlookers that they can aim for something better, something more fulfilling than the shackles of urban commerce. But if everyone did so, it would lead to the collapse of the economic infrastructure, which was such a vital key to "a flourishing urban life [throughout] western Europe" (Rowling 49). Robin's subversion is limited only by the fact that he leaves it entirely up to the people whether they choose to respond to his display of liberty or not.

After mocking the economic restrictions of the town, Robin turns his attention to the rich, oppressive Sheriff. His intent is to show that the Sheriff's concept of how to use money, arms, and jurisdictional power is deficient, corrupt, and not to be respected. Invited by the Sheriff's wife to dine at their home, the disguised Robin manages to get a second invitation to participate in a great archery contest after the meal. When the Sheriff offers him what is purportedly the best bow available, Robin ridicules it as "ryght weke gere" ("Potter" 129). The Sheriff, despite his powerful position, cannot even furnish himself with decent weaponry, which reflects poorly on his judgment as a leader in society. Then, when the counterfeit potter has won the contest and mentioned that he knows Robin Hood, the Sheriff commits the gaffe that will lead to his humiliation by telling Robin: "'Y had lever nar a hundred ponde...That the ffals owtelawe stod be me'" (130).

One might elect, as Holt does, to minimize the import of the situation, dubbing Robin's disguise "a joke" or a "dramatic device" to keep the plot moving (35). There is no doubt that the yeoman audience would have found the scene funny. But Holt's interpretation treats Robin and the Sheriff as two fictional characters in isolation, without giving adequate consideration to the forces they represent. As a legally constituted authority, the Sheriff should uphold royal justice as his first priority. Instead, his reference to a "hundred ponde" places his desire to capture Robin in the context of his own greed for material wealth. Even though his conversation with the counterfeit potter appears to indicate that Robin's shooting prowess is widely known, the Sheriff has no idea that he might be talking to Robin himself--or even that this potter might be an ally of the outlaws if he knows Robin so well. Robin has chosen an excellent disguise, for it is hard to guess that a potter would turn out to be a great archer. But the Sheriff is stupid. That reflects badly on the office he holds.

By contrast, Robin manifests his quick intelligence by deceiving the Sheriff and creating wordplays that indicate his acquaintanceship with Robin Hood without actually saying, "I am Robin Hood": "And to morow, or we het bred, Roben Hode well we se"

("Potter" 130). Not only does he make free of the Sheriff's food and weaponry, but he also charms the Sheriff's wife by adding a gold ring to the pots he gave her earlier: "'Gramarsey,' seyde the weyffe" (130). Knight even speculates that Robin's generosity toward the woman "suggests a certain sexual symbolism lurking around the outlaw figure" (56), although no tangible evidence of a liaison or even attraction between the two can be verified from the text. Whatever the truth, Robin's blend of deception and impersonation marks him as having mastery over the Sheriff in every sphere. In turn, Robin's mastery implies subversively that living beyond the law is more fulfilling and more profitable than enforcing the dictates of a mercenary-minded society that does not know how to use its assets to best advantage.

The denouement of Robin's potter impersonation is quite similar to the end of the third fytte of the Gest. But this time it is Robin instead of Little John who leads the Sheriff into the forest and blows a horn to summon his men. Also, the nature of the joke on the Sheriff is altered. In the former case, the Sheriff thinks he is going to see unusual deer and ends up surrounded by outlaws instead. The reversal of fortune provides the humor as well as the threat to the Sheriff's social standing. In this case, the humor stems from the Sheriff's getting exactly what he asked for. He finds to his surprise that Robin has been stringing him along. It is worth noting the terms that Robin uses to describe his catch when Little John asks how the pot-selling went: "Y haffe browt the screffe of Notynggam/Ffor all howre chaffare" (131). As Dobson and Taylor state, "howre chaffare" means "as merchandise for us all" (131, footnote). Thus, Robin resorts to the language of commerce to sum up what he has gained by ensnaring the Sheriff. It is an appropriate choice, because the narrative reveals that the Sheriff is thinking about his plight in the same financial terms that he previously used to describe his desire to sight Robin: "The screffe had lever nar a hundred ponde/He had [never sene Roben Hode]" (131). The Sheriff is greedy and preoccupied with money, but he has to surrender his goods to Robin, who shows no financial aspirations in the ballad.

These contrasting examples throw into question the validity of the commercial basis of medieval society. While people conducting business in the town are forever grubbing after money, forest-dwelling Robin enjoys greater personal and financial liberty. He is in a position in the end to send the Sheriff home with a "wheyt palffrey" for his wife, and to give the potter "ten ponde" to overcompensate for the loss of the cheaply sold pots (132). Robin's use of deception and impersonation in "Robin Hood and the Potter" projects the message that conventional respect for the rules of the marketplace and the rules of the judicial authority is superfluous. Enjoying the freedom to move across social categories takes precedence.

"Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" provides further affirmation of Robin's freedom to toy with social boundaries, albeit this time in more violent fashion. Though it is not possible to date this abrupt, harsh ballad with complete certainty, its language and structure and other "archaic features" give it the appearance of being contemporaneous with the early "Robin Hood and the Monk" (Dobson and Taylor 140). Like the other ballads discussed so far, deception and impersonation constitute central elements in its narrative. Here, the corrupt establishment headed locally by the Sheriff becomes guilty of transgressing the code of "god yemenry" by falsifying yeoman standards in an attempt to hunt Robin down. In a clash of good deceivers and bad deceivers, Robin's independent spirit and tricky resourcefulness must lead him to take rightful vengeance on those who try to kill him in an unimaginative manner.

The sight of a non-outlaw in a weird costume ignites the plot of "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne." As Little John and Robin walk through the forest discussing the latter's strange dream of being captured and beaten by two yeomen, they spot someone described as a "wight yeoman," fully armed and wearing a "capull hyde," or horse-hide ("Gisborne" 141). This bizarre spectacle prompts an animated discussion between Robin and John. John's first remark seems to reflect his discomfort at seeing someone else in disguise here in their forest: "I will goe to yond wight yeoman,/To know his meaning trulye" (141).

Disguises have meaning, and in John's view the stranger is making a statement with his outlandish garb. It is a challenge to the outlaws' view of themselves as the real masters of deception and impersonation, and that means no good.

But the text only really comes to grips with the issue of impersonation about fifteen stanzas later. Before that, Robin and John quarrel about who should approach the stranger, and they end up parting company. Little John goes off to Barnsdale Forest and is captured by a troop of the Sheriff's men hunting for outlaws. This sequence seems like crude action-oriented filler, though, in comparison to the mythic overtones of the confrontation between Robin and the eerie figure in horse-hide starting in stanza 23.

Robin's impersonation in this passage is of an indirect variety. At no time does he deny he is Robin Hood, nor is he dressed up as someone else. Rather, he avoids admitting his identity when he has the opportunity to do so. For a good while, he thus gives Guy of Gisborne the impression that he is not Robin Hood. In fact, Robin treats the guarding of his identity like a matter of personal honor, sensing that his anonymity gives him a certain power over the intruder. Guy does the same, but he has an evil and underhanded purpose. Their initial exchange of greetings appears quite pedestrian, as both men say: "'Good morrow, good fellow'" (143). But it is noteworthy that neither of them volunteers his name. Doing so would seem customary, especially as Guy is foreign to these parts. From the start, the two men engage in a psychological power struggle, which their repetitious, platitudinous exchanges of "good fellow" cannot entirely disguise.

Guy's combination of weaponry and horse-hide makes him seem like a monster of mythology, an implacable, nearly subhuman force lurking behind a disguise. Surely his appearance relates back to Robin's being attacked by yeomen in his dream. But Robin takes his first step toward breaking out of the nightmare when Guy reveals why he is in the forest: "'I seeke an outlaw,' quoth Sir Guye,/'Men call him Robin Hood'" (143). As when the Sheriff sought out Robin in "Robin Hood and the Potter," Guy puts his motivation for capturing Robin in economic terms that hint at his greed, for he states: "'I

had rather meet with him upon a day/Then forty pound of golde'" (143). As Knight observes (57), Guy is despicable because he is a bounty hunter in the pay of the Sheriff. Robin has no doubt about how to treat such a man.

In the moral framework of this ballad, the reprehensibility of Guy's conduct is amplified by his being "Sir Guy" (143). If one refers back to the Gest to consult Robin's philosophy, Guy is not at all the "gode yeman/That walketh by grene wode shawe" (Gest 80), though he has pretended to be. Though having some kind of noble background, he does not intend to be a "gode felawe" (80). Treachery and backstabbing are his stock in trade. Knight puts it thus: "Guy seems to represent a false forester, one who acts on his own, seeks money and, through his costume appears to use deception in some way" (58). The way Guy employs disguise is evil. Also tainted is his attempt to usurp what is the prerogative of Robin and his friends--namely, the crossing of social boundaries--by descending from knight to yeoman.

Not all critics have agreed that Guy's deception involves pretending to be of a lower social rank. Wiles claims that "'Sir Guy'...is a mere yeoman, but he...acts with the prospect of receiving a knighthood if successful" (46). Keen's summary of the tale calls Guy "a forester who was [Robin's] old enemy" (119). But neither interpretation finds solid support in the text. It is true that Guy is described as a yeoman several times, but that description just indicates the disguise he has adopted in relation to Robin, who is a real yeoman; Guy's being called a "yeoman" is a classic case of illusion dominating reality, and when the Sheriff once refers to him as a "wighty yeoman" (145), it is to acknowledge the supposed efficacy of his masquerade. The text says nothing about Guy receiving a knighthood, but does later include the Sheriff's comment that Guy could have received a "knight's ffee" ("Gisborne" 145) for capturing Robin Hood. A knight's fee, or fief, was originally construed as a "hereditary [estate]" in the period after the Norman Conquest (Arnold 295), but later the term became more loosely defined, as such estates could be split up into multiple fractions. While the Sheriff would have had access to higher-ranking

officials who could have granted a knighthood, he would not have had the authority to bestow such an honor himself. It seems more likely that Guy is a knight from the very start, and is simply being told that he could have been awarded more property by capturing Robin. And any attempt to pass Guy off as a forester ignores the fact that this "villain knight" (Knight 61) is unironically called "Sir Guy" over and over again, a title which could only belong to a member of the gentry.

Guy maintains his yeoman facade effectively as he and the still-unrevealed Robin decide to try their luck at archery together. But the growing tension between them is reflected in the way Robin regularly outshoots his foe, which in turn foreshadows Robin's victory in their upcoming fight. The first clash of wills occurs when Guy decides to break down the walls of anonymity that their respective impersonations have built up: "'Tell me thy name, good ffellow,' quoth Guy" (143). Yet Robin parries him neatly, taking the upper hand in this verbal duel as he sustains his personal honor by not being the first to confess: "'Nay, by my faith,' quoth good Robin,/'Till thou have told me thine'" (143). The style of this confrontation alludes indirectly to the folklore belief that names represent a source of power, and that once one knows the true name of another, one can command him to do one's bidding. Guy loses out, as he reveals his name and "many a curst turne" that he has done to others (144). In contrast, Robin gets to show his disdain for Guy after proclaiming his own identity: "By thee I set right nought" (144). The battle lines are drawn in Robin's favor.

Once again, it is the Virgin whose power Robin invokes when it looks as if he is about to lose the fight to Guy. Calling upon his "deere Lady" (144), he professes his faith in the divinely ordained hierarchy as he kills Guy, a representative of the corrupt temporal hierarchy in his locale. What Robin does next is gruesome, but it is not gratuitous or meaningless. Rather, it is Robin's tangible commentary on Guy's illegitimate use of deception and impersonation. By decapitating Guy and "[nicking] Sir Guy in the face" (144), he vividly reinforces for his own benefit his negative assessment of Guy: "Thou

hast beene traytor all thy liffe" (144). One should note that Guy's horse-hide outfit clothes a man from "topp to toe" (144), and some modern versions of this story portray the horse's head as part of the costume. So Guy has treacherously attempted full-fledged disguise in posing as a yeoman to kill Robin. Guy's disguise is bestial and ugly, which reveals his less-than-human qualities; in contrast, Robin can be disguised in other medieval texts as a common man and manifest a kind of personal greatness nonetheless. Robin defaces Guy as if to say: "You had no right to hide your face, and this is what you get in return." He is de-identifying him by cutting him up, redisguising him as a person who will never be able to be identified again. It is an ironic gesture that comments by extension on the corruption in society which breeds such bounty hunters.

Robin takes up impersonation in earnest in the conclusion of the ballad, as he goes forth to make the Sheriff pay for instigating a bad deception. Dressing up in dead Sir Guy's clothes completes his conquest over the evil that the knight personally represents. But Robin still needs to rescue Little John, thereby doing his faithful follower a good turn and spiting the Sheriff at the same time. The "text in its present state [does not] explain how Robin...could have known of Little John's capture and the need to rescue him" (Dobson and Taylor 140), which moved Child to the conclusion that this ballad has experienced "considerable derangement" (Child 90) since its original composition. There is another possibility, though. The ballad seems to credit Robin with prophetic foresight, for, as noted earlier, he has dreamed of being in danger from enemies just before he meets Guy. If he has some type of second sight here, then it is not inconsistent that he somehow senses John's peril without receiving news directly.

In any case, the way Robin ends up tricking the Sheriff is not just for the practical purpose of freeing John. It also comments negatively on the values that the Sheriff and his henchmen espouse. When the Sheriff asks the false Sir Guy what reward he will take for slaying Robin Hood, Robin emphatically rejects monetary compensation even though the Sheriff has not said anything about money: "'I'le none of thy gold,' sayes Robin

Hood,/'Nor I'le none of itt have'" ("Gisborne" 145). Robin is no pauper, as the previously discussed ballads attest, but he does not center his life on money as the Sheriff and Guy do. Rather, he shows "contempt for financial concerns" (Knight 58). Robin compounds the irony of his actions by asking permission to strike John as his reward. That is what he has just done to Guy, but whereas Robin's drawing his "Iryrsh kniffe" previously signified the defeat of his enemy, in this case it means the opposite--John's salvation ("Gisborne" 145). When the Sheriff responds by calling Robin a "madman" (145), it seals his fate. By adding insult to treachery, the Sheriff unavoidably makes himself the subject of revenge fantasy fulfillment for the yeoman audience. Showing his confidence in divine support for what is to come, Little John praises Christ for his imminent release: "'Now shall I be loset,' quoth Litle John,/'With Christs might in heaven'" (145). When he stands free beside Robin, grabs Guy's spare bow, and shoots down the Sheriff, the grim ending consequently assumes the air of a righteous judgment. Robin and his friends have been attacked treacherously, but they have responded with their own subversive brand of trickery to thwart the scheming of the corrupt authorities and exercise the "principle of retributive justice" (Keen 217).

The play fragment Robin Hood and the Sheriff provides some useful insight on the issues of deception and impersonation as portrayed in "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," since it contains the same general plot as the ballad. It is remarkable for being the "solitary surviving text of a genuinely medieval Robin Hood play" (Dobson and Taylor 203). We know there were many Robin Hood plays in the period, since "over fifty [written references to Robin Hood in performance] occur by 1537" (Knight 100), but this is the only one that has survived. The obscurities of this fragment, written in a fifteenth-century hand on a piece of paper with a gentleman's financial accounts on the other side, prompted Dobson and Taylor to attempt a reconstruction of the run-on format of the dialogue, putting it into a more conventional dramatic mode. The title Robin Hood and the Sheriff is unofficial as well. But this reconstruction nowhere transgresses the

plausible. As accurately as one could wish, it offers a glimpse of Robin adopting the guise of his enemy, probably to seek revenge on his other foes.

With dialogue in brief rhyming couplets, the play opens with a knight agreeing to "take" Robin in exchange for "golde and fee" from the Sheriff ("Sheriff" 205). The bounty hunter is identified as a knight here, which would tend to support the notion that Guy is really a knight rather than a yeoman in "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne." Immediately afterwards, the knight meets Robin and they decide to compete against each other in a variety of sports. Perhaps the knight hopes to dominate Robin psychologically by beating him at sports before trying to kill him. However, the competition proves Robin is the better man, and the sports must have appealed to the audience. The dialogue is straightforward and action-oriented, consisting solely of challenges and responses: "Have at the pryke!" cries the knight during archery, and Robin answers triumphantly, "And y cleve the styke" (206). Only when Robin has bested the knight at shooting, stone throwing, and wrestling do deception and impersonation emerge as significant issues.

The knight decides he has had enough of fooling around and goes at Robin, who agrees to fight "at ottraunce" (206). Robin kills the knight, and then follows the same sort of procedure as with Guy of Gisborne. He cuts off the knight's head as a symbol of the victory he describes aloud to himself: "Now I have the maystry here" (206). Robin takes it upon himself to execute Guy as a traitor to the qualities of good yeomanry which the outlaw chief values. The decapitation also represents the knight's loss of power and vision, as well as the primitive transferring of those qualities to Robin. Impersonation follows with Robin's statement: "This knyghtys clothis wolle I were" (206). Regrettably for the coherence of the fragment, the disguised Robin does not appear again after this episode. The scene shifts abruptly to a couple of Robin's followers watching a battle between the Sheriff and his men and a group of outlaws. The Sheriff wins and captures every outlaw in sight, and that is the end of the fragment. Still, based on "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" and the general direction of the narrative, Dobson and Taylor

surmise the following about the actual end of the play: "In the sequel the disguised Robin Hood enters and rescues his men--no doubt after yet another fight" (207). If there is indeed more action to come, this seems the most plausible explanation. It is in harmony with the pattern of resisting corrupt authoritarian oppression through deception and impersonation that "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" demonstrates.

Deception and impersonation are consistently linked to resistance to unjust authority in medieval Robin Hood texts. Texts like A Gest of Robyn Hode, "Robin Hood and the Monk," "Robin Hood and the Potter," "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," and Robin Hood and the Sheriff indicate that Robin and the supporters he inspires do not employ such tactics exclusively to save their own skins or to amass wealth. Rather, their trickery is foregrounded prominently in order to comment subversively or ironically on conventional medieval English society. The ballad writers' depiction of society as corrupt and unjust is what justifies Robin's pattern of lawbreaking. Keen states: "The law's object is ultimately to uphold social justice, and to the middle ages social justice meant a hierarchical social system" (155). But Robin subverts that understanding by bowing to no one except those at the top of the temporal and spiritual hierarchies, such as the King and the Virgin Mary. Otherwise, he places his love of unfettered freedom, generosity, and daring in opposition to "'statutory' forces of state, church, and emergent mercantilism" (Knight 60). His victories proclaim the possibility of an unorthodox way of being in the world, of avenging the perceived oppression of the yeoman audience to whom the ballads primarily appealed. By toying with social categories, preserving personal honor through anonymity--or, when called for, being undisguised and straightforward to assert manly pride in tandem with faith in the ultimate triumph of divine providence--Robin and his supporters stand in contrast to villains who use deception and impersonation unimaginatively and for evil ends. Bad deceivers are portrayed as getting what they deserve when their trickery comes back to haunt them, often resulting in their destruction.

These scenarios do not feature deception and impersonation solely for humorous or dramatic effect.

But the end of the Middle Ages sees a change in this pattern. In texts of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Robin Hood becomes yesterday's trickster. Although these texts superficially mirror the medieval source material, they no longer use outlaw deception and impersonation to represent subversive social commentary. As the next chapter will show, surveying the transition in the portrayal of Robin Hood from 1500 to 1800 is essential in order to understand how the onetime subversive was fully coopted by the established powers in the nineteenth century.

Chapter Two

Robin as Yesterday's Trickster: The Decline of Outlaw Deception and Impersonation as Social Commentary 1500-1800

To develop an understanding of the decline of outlaw deception and impersonation as social commentary from 1500 to 1800, it is useful to note Dobson and Taylor's remarks on this trend. They note that the rise of the mass-produced printed popular ballad in response to increasing literacy among the population, along with a post-Reformation mentality that placed Robin Hood solidly in England's Catholic past, led to there being "little room for any development in the character of Robin Hood and his men--or indeed of the social or political situations within which they found themselves" (49-50). The broadening of the audience beyond the original medieval core of yeomen also resulted in an increasingly conservative portrayal of Robin on the stage during this 300-year period, catering to the tastes of the "middle class [which] became more numerous in the sixteenth century" (Palmer and Colton 122). Both in ballads and in plays, Robin loses much of the subversive vigor he displayed in the medieval period, which also tends to make him a less interesting character from a literary standpoint. Most of the attacks he makes on a corrupt society are obviously targeted against corrupt Catholic figures or institutions; the Sheriff has become a stock villain. Robin and his followers no longer indulge in deception and impersonation that could be seen as shaking up current, contemporary social categories or definitions. Such alterations to the earlier tradition can be attributed in part to Robin's popular appeal being harnessed by the emergent mass press that dispensed commercially viable tales to the increasingly literate public. With "chroniclers and commentators who acknowledged and respected centralized power and valued an urbanized 'elevated' culture" now largely controlling depictions of outlaw trickery (Knight 88), it is not surprising that they would make deception and impersonation mere conventional attributes of new tales of Robin Hood to avoid offending the status quo.

Specifically, the broadside ballad can be pinpointed as the major vehicle for facilitating the change in the way deception and impersonation figure in the tradition. Broadside ballads consisted of songs printed on a single sheet. Their subject matter was naturally not limited to Robin Hood, and it is also true that not one "extant Robin Hood printed ballad text can be dated to the sixteenth century" (Dobson and Taylor 47). And there are some difficulties in dating the texts that remain, though not to the same extent as with their medieval predecessors; some material preserved from the seventeenth century may have originated in the sixteenth century, for instance. Yet numerous references in bookseller catalogues, religious sermons, and other texts verify that broadside ballads were in wide circulation at this time, thanks to advances in the publishing innovations of Gutenberg and Caxton. Sold in the streets, the broadside ballads flourished commercially in late Elizabethan England. But these suffered from being mere reworkings by hack poets of older material, forced to conform to the meter and melodies of a handful of standard street minstrel tunes--although there were a number of interesting differences in these reworkings, which will be discussed shortly. Generally employing the form, if not the real substance, of the medieval ballads, these watered-down, less subversive creations were now in fact cheap popular songs, even though the printed format did not dictate that they had to be sung. Although not particularly creative, they were popular: "If the growing interest in these stories lay among newly literate country yeomen and tradesfolk in the towns, this is what ballad-mongers and printers considered that they wanted to hear and read" (Holt 166), and the stories were also becoming harmless enough to suit upper-class tastes. The supplanting of the broadside format by the Robin Hood Garlands from the seventeenth century onward--these were chapbooks with eighty to one hundred pages--simply consolidated the static nature of the tradition at this time: "Indeed the most remarkable feature of the innumerable Robin Hood Garlands between the 1660s and 1830s is their sustained conservatism" (Dobson and Taylor 52), both literarily and in terms of what people expected to receive when they purchased a collection of Robin Hood

ballads; until the early eighteenth century, there were sixteen ballads in the standard Robin Hood Garland. Since the format of the later ballads was so close to that of the original ones, it may have been difficult for literary observers during these centuries to fully grasp the change in Robin's original character from a subversive deceiver to a merry jokester content to accept the status quo.

The seventeenth-century broadside "Robin and Allen a Dale" is an ideal example of how Robin's approach to deception and impersonation in this period differs from the ironic subversion of his medieval exploits. Holt rightly calls it a "light story" and a "prim romance" (165). Although it includes the "two traditional Robin Hood motifs of his successful 'disguising' (this time as a 'bold harper') and subsequent discomfiting of a bishop" (Dobson and Taylor 172), both internal and external factors militate against its being considered a suitable companion piece to the Gest or "Robin Hood and the Monk." Written in English that is clearly more modern than the medieval ballads, the narrative is simple. One day Robin sees a young man dressed in "scarlet fine and gay" ("Allen" 173), singing happily as he walks by the forest. The next day the young man looks sad and forlorn. Intercepted by Robin's followers, he is brought before Robin, who asks him politely if he has "any money to spare" (173). Robin learns that this Allen a Dale has just a little money and a ring which he intended to give to his chosen bride, who is being forced instead to marry a rich old knight. When the outlaw chief decides to help out poor Allen by employing his talent for disguise, his motivation is worth noting. Robin enters the fray in the cause of "true love" (174), a phrase which he repeats three times. He is there to help Allen realize romantic aspirations. His initial intentions have nothing to do with beating and binding church officials who are to oversee the forced marriage, nor does he mention potential plans to humiliate the bride's father (who is not being a "gode felawe" by making his daughter marry someone she does not love). All this is much more in the tradition of courtly love and romance than in the tradition which the medieval Robin Hood ballads established.

Moreover, when Robin infiltrates the church where the wedding is to take place, the impersonation he chooses does not make any kind of statement about the legitimacy of forced marriage or the oppressive economic factors that may lead to such a union. Posing as a harper is just an expedient way to get into the building without being challenged. It also offers him the chance to deliver a good punch-line. When he comes in, he says, "'You shall have no musick/...Till the bride and the bridegroom I see'" (174); his blowing of his horn to bring in his men and stop the wedding is the music he furnishes as promised, only in a different way from what the presiding bishop anticipates. It is a simple, superficial, but humorous "bait and switch" tactic, unlike the tactics of the medieval Robin Hood.

When it is time for Allen a Dale to marry the bride he loves, it might seem that Robin's substitution of Little John for the real bishop represents an attack on the authority of the Church. Robin does make a mockery of clerical pomp and ceremony, allowing Little John to run through the marriage vows "seven times" (175) instead of the regular three. But it is evident that his mockery is directed against the Catholic Church, rather than the Church of England established in 1534, and that makes a difference, considering the predominantly Protestant English audience for this and other ballads of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Robin is never presented in a specifically Anglican context in the ballads. So if mockery is directed against the Catholic Church in this historical context, it can no longer be viewed as socially subversive. While Knight does not specifically classify "Robin Hood and Allen a Dale" among the "small but well-remembered group of later ballads [that feature Robin indulging in]...the pleasure of humiliating the Catholic hierarchy" (93), it fits admirably. Here, Robin is yesterday's trickster.

Although "Robin Hood and the Bishop" sees the outlaw chief placing himself in greater peril than in "Robin Hood and Allen a Dale," it too shows Robin using deception and impersonation simply to get away from his Catholic enemies and then to have some fun at their expense. He has no apparent plans when he goes walking through the forest

one day and spots a Bishop who wants to capture him. He just runs into an old woman's house to avoid being taken and hanged. Switching clothes with her affords some burlesque humor. So does the old woman's raunchy suggestion when the Bishop has made off with her, thinking she is Robin Hood, and is about to discover that she is not: "Lift up my leg and see" ("Bishop" 192). When Robin captures the Bishop, takes his five hundred pounds, ties him to a tree, and forces him to "sing a mass" (192), the target of this heavy-handed ridicule is the Catholic Church once again. As Knight aptly observes, this ballad does not aim for the "detailed discussion of oppression that leads to church wealth, as in the Gest, but rather merely to humiliate the Catholic establishment" (93)--an establishment now rejected as the leading religion of the land. Hence, Robin's trickery provides a good laugh at the way things used to be. The trickery does not subvert current social norms, but instead represents indirectly "a fiscal form of gentrification at the expense of the church--the sort of thing that almost all local [English] landowners actually engaged in during the mid-sixteenth century, and justified in religious terms through cultural processes like these ballads" (Knight 93). A similar process occurs in Laurence Price's 1656 ballad "Robin Hood's Golden Prize," where Robin disguises himself as a Catholic friar with "hood, gown, beads and crucifix" ("Prize" 209). Here, he does seem to have the specific objective of catching priests, and he does so. He deprives two priests of five hundred gold pieces after they lie that they are penniless, forcing them to pray for money and then sending them off with a lecture on proper moral behavior. It is important to recall that these tales of Robin Hood are concerned exclusively with affairs in England, for the only way a story like this could have been viewed as relevant to contemporary life was that England did have Catholic enemies to confront in France, Spain, and elsewhere.

Deception and impersonation are rendered virtually pointless in another ballad, "Robin Hood's Delight," which can be dated back to the 1670s at least. Here, Robin, Little John, and Will Scarlock meet three keepers of King Henry's deer in the forest. Challenging them, Robin makes a point of telling them who he is out of sheer

braggadocio: "You meet with bold Robin Hood" ("Delight" 169). But the keepers tell him nothing more than that they are keepers. The outlaws and the keepers fight till the outlaws get tired, and then Robin asks permission to blow "one blast on [his] bugle-horn" (169), which would presumably summon reinforcements. When the keepers deny his request, he presses them for their identities: "Let me but know your names" (169). Again denied by the keepers, Robin does not persist in his inquiries. There is no sense of the power of naming which can be discerned in "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne." Robin is not really concerned with sustaining personal honor through the power of anonymity or other similar issues here. He just wants to have fun. If that were not the case, he would surely not elect to call off the fight and invite everyone to head into Nottingham to drink wine for the next three days. It is a bizarre conclusion to the tale, which suggests the keepers are also not really concerned with much except having fun; if the spirit of the medieval ballads was retained here, the keepers would arrest Robin and arrange to have him hanged. Robin's decision to invite them to join him in revelry underscores the fact that deception and impersonation have extremely limited subversive value in this period, especially since Robin does not press the issue when these representatives of hierarchical authority treat him so arrogantly.

A final example of the diminished significance of deception and impersonation in Robin Hood tales in the 1500-1800 period is "Robin Hood and Maid Marian." It takes the conservative, romantic tone of "Robin Hood and Allen a Dale" to new extremes. As with the previous ballads, it is preserved in the form of a seventeenth-century broadside. While Dobson and Taylor's criticism that it has a "complete lack of any literary merit" may be a little harsh, as the story is quite atmospheric, their following observation is pertinent to the question of the literary treatment of Robin's trickery here: "[I]t seems highly unlikely that the author of this ballad was relying on any popular tradition" (176). This observation is borne out by the presence of Marian, who figures infrequently in the ballads of the seventeenth century and was scarcely present in the earlier literature, save for her fleeting

appearances in references to the May Games held in villages across England. In fact, Dobson and Taylor claim that Marian "clearly owes her association with Robin Hood entirely to their joint participation in the May festivities" (41).

"Robin Hood and Maid Marian" itself has no obvious source; hence, there is some justification for regarding it as a indicator of the direction in which the portrayal of deception and impersonation for Robin Hood was going at this point in time. The concerns of the ballad are purely romantic: "With kisses sweet their red lips meet" ("Maid" 177). The plot is marred by a total disregard for cause and effect. Robin (here gentrified as the Earl of Huntington, which anticipates the standard nineteenth-century portrayal) is suddenly forced to leave his beloved Marian due only to fortune's "bearing these lovers a spight" (177). Equally unexplained are the disguises that Marian and Robin subsequently adopt. Marian dresses herself "like a page" when searching the forest for Robin (177), which vaguely recalls the female disguise motif featured in Philip Sidney's Arcadia, Edmund Spenser's Faerie Queene, and various theatrical performances of the period. Her disguise could be viewed as a sloppy popular echo of that motif. Heroines disguising themselves and going to war either to be with their true loves or out of financial need were common in popular literature at this time. But subversion of gender categories by what has been categorized as the "masculine-spirited woman" (Shepherd 39) does not emerge as a real issue in this slight ballad. Being disguised as a male page simply makes it easier for Marian to move through the forest and may help to maintain her personal safety. She is remarkably willing to fight Robin when she meets him. All that is said of Robin's disguise is that "hee himself had disguis'd" ("Maid" 177). After a long, hard fight, Robin extends an invitation to his anonymous opponent to join his band, seeing that this person has satisfied the "generic requirements for joining the outlaws" (Knight 85). The rest of the ballad consists of happy reunions and happily-ever-afters.

It becomes obvious that Robin and Marian's adopting disguises is merely a dramatic device to create momentary tension between the lovers before achieving a

satisfying resolution. The level of narrative sophistication is comparable to a Harlequin romance. Keeping in mind that the audience for Robin Hood tales was expanding beyond yeomen with social grievances, Dobson and Taylor's analysis of the commercial impulse behind the material is particularly incisive: "[I]t must be always be remembered that the very simplicity, repetitiveness and banality of the broadside...are exactly those qualities most needed to create a continuously appealing popular fictional world" (50). Selling the ballads to housewives, petty tradesmen, or ladies-in-waiting would be that much easier if Robin's acts of deception and impersonation were presented as those of a romantic lover or jolly trickster, rather than as those of a tough, scheming yeoman who posed a threat to the social order.

Similarly, commercial considerations played a significant role in shaping the portrayal of outlaw deception and impersonation in the theatre from 1500 to 1800. As we have seen, there were plenty of Robin Hood plays in the Middle Ages, although only references to the vast majority of these have survived. But Robin Hood was still viewed as a popular, colorful subject after the medieval period. As with the post-medieval ballads, however, the increasing dominance of urban culture had its effects on new treatments of the legend. Plays catered more and more often to conservative values in this period. The fact that Robin Hood plays were even performed before royalty is another "interesting demonstration of the way in which the greatest of English outlaws was transformed into a supporter of the *status quo*" (Dobson and Taylor 238), if one considers such examples as the 1661 performance of Robin Hood and his Crew of Soldiers, which celebrated the Restoration of King Charles II. It was after an outbreak of plague in the early 1590s closed London theatres briefly that Robin Hood began to be frequently portrayed on the stages of the capital city. But again, as with the post-medieval ballads, his trickery was no longer depicted as undermining the social order. That would have been risky for playwrights whose works were often subject to government monitoring and censorship; theatres could be closed for performing seditious material. Instead, as Knight

observes, "the use of highly popular material [about Robin Hood] in a newly conservative context was an elegant manoeuvre for companies eager to please both the lucrative mass audience and also the powerful few who controlled the theatre" (115). The new plays are distinctly different from the medieval play fragment Robin Hood and the Sheriff, for their use of deception and impersonation tends to bring out that Robin and his followers are not primarily violent and subversive, but more mischievous and playful. A more acceptable, tame representation of Robin Hood could be seen as helping to make his character more submissive to hierarchical authority. Two plays from around the year 1600 are particularly representative of these trends, as the following examination will show.

In George a Green, which "certainly has its origin around the year 1600" (Knight 119), Robin's subordination is not only political but also dramatic. He has very little scope to use trickery, since he is not even the main character in the play. That honor belongs to the aforesaid George, who is essentially the same person as the protagonist of the contemporaneous ballad "The Jolly Pinder of Wakefield." The play is set during the reign of Edward IV, and centers on a rebellion in the north of England. While George has the opportunity to demonstrate his mastery with the quarterstaff and show his prowess as a romantic lover, Robin only enters as a foil to the pinder (an archaic term for "pound-keeper") comparatively late in the narrative. He initially opposes George, not because the other man has contributed to socio-economic oppression in any way or even slighted the good name of yeomanry, but because Maid Marian is upset that George and his sweetheart are outstripping Robin and herself in fame: "[W]hensoever I doe walke abroad,/I heare no songs but all of George a Greene,/Bettress his faire Lemman passeth me./And this my Robin gaules my very soule" ("Green" l. 929-932). This concern of Marian's is trivial compared to the longing for retributive social justice that motivated Robin during the medieval period. Yet Marian's threats to withhold affection from Robin are all that impel him to seek out George; otherwise, Robin says he is perfectly content to let George enjoy his reputation as the hero of the day (l. 933-934). The lovers' squabble

suffices to prompt a minor piece of deception on Robin's part. When Robin, Little John, and Will Scarlet find George and provoke him to fight, Robin does not respond to the obvious invitation to reveal his identity when George says: "Were ye as good as Robin Hood, and his three mery men,/Ile drive you backe the same way that ye came" (l. 1060-1061).

The key difference between Robin's omitting to give his name here and in a medieval text such as "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" is that his motivations are far less aggressive. There is no sense of a real desire for vengeance or of a need to conquer a kind of subhuman force of evil. Robin is simply going through the motions of a conventional fight. After he and his companions are defeated by George, he is utterly amicable. Right away he offers George, not just the usual membership in the outlaw band, but also material rewards which suggest a closer identification with middle-class values: "Two liveries will I give thee everie yeere,/And fortie crownes shall be thy fee" (l. 1087-1088). Then Robin reveals his name without any ceremony at all (l. 1090). Fully divested of his anonymity, he is now also prepared to plead for clemency and kneel before King Edward as soon as the monarch comes on stage: "And good my Lord, a pardon for poore Robin,/And for us all a pardon, good King Edward" (l. 1202-1203). As Robin is accepted back into the joys of royal approval, it becomes clear that deception and impersonation are secondary characteristics of this tale. Robin is "securely contained by the forces of both state hierarchy and dramatic power" (Knight 116), and he is no longer free within the narrative to practise the art of trickery which liberated him from external coercion in the past.

Anthony Munday's 1598 play The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntingdon provides an example of the large-scale assimilation of Robin into a gentrified social context (that is, a context in which Robin is construed as having an aristocratic background, although the term "gentrified" can cover the level of society just below the leading nobility as well). The play also demonstrates the effects of that assimilation on the

outlaw's use of deception and impersonation. Though not a literary masterpiece, the Downfall marks an important innovation in the Robin Hood tradition for two main reasons: "[Munday] is the first-known dramatist to express the tradition of a noble Robin firmly set in a context which associated him with Richard I and [Prince] John, and he is the first-known writer of any kind to give him the title of earl of Huntington" (Holt 162). In the 1521 book History of Greater Britain, the Scottish historian John Major had claimed that a historical Robin Hood had lived during the late twelfth-century reign of Richard I, an arbitrary claim without reference to earlier sources--but one which would be accepted unquestioningly by some later scholars like Joseph Ritson, who produced an influential 1795 anthology of Robin Hood tales. Munday's elaborate expansion on Major's dating of Robin gives the play the problems of a dispossessed nobleman to deal with, rather than concerns linked to yeoman dissent; this dramatic situation became even more popular in the nineteenth century as part of the "relocating of the hero away from sociopolitical resistance" (Knight 122) and has since become standard fare. At this early stage in the noble Robin Hood tradition, Munday seems to have become confused about his dramatic objectives, in light of "what seems to be a certain carelessness or temporary uncertainty on the part of the playwright" (Meagher 11); that is, he tends to abandon one of the longstanding strengths of tales of Robin Hood by failing to delineate his heroes and villains with absolute clarity. Knight comments on the botching of a classic good-evil dichotomy in the narratives of the Downfall and its lesser companion play, The Death of Robert Hood, Earle of Huntingdon, where Robin dies too early on to be of any consequence: "They do not...make Prince John the demon of the story, and they hardly concern themselves at all with any actions by Robin Hood" (121). Given that Munday is not striving for a modern kind of moral ambiguity, his storyline is weakened by such tendencies, and Robin simply emerges as a trickster of marginal vitality.

In the Downfall, Robin's use of disguise early on is a matter of simple expediency. It is also devoid of the creative spark that gave his trickery a multi-dimensional

subversiveness in medieval texts such as "Robin Hood and the Potter." When the Earl learns that his foe the Prior of York (who is also Robin's uncle), along with Robin's traitorous steward, has succeeded in getting him outlawed, he determines to flee from the betrothal feast celebrating his engagement to Matilda (dubbed Maid Marian once they have made their escape to the forest). To do so, he gets disguised as a "citizen" (Downfall 152). This rather vague description does nothing whatsoever to clarify either what Robin looks like or any implicit comment that his costume might make on his situation. Also, the disguise has no particular effect on his behavior. It is just convenient for him not to be recognized, a function which the disguise seems to serve reasonably well.

The lack of direction behind the occurrences of deception and impersonation in this play is borne out later in the action, when the tide has turned against Prince John's attempt to usurp power from his just-returned brother Richard. Oddly, John decides that fleeing to the greenwood while dressed as an outlaw would be a good way to escape punishment: "Well, I will cloath my selfe in such a sute,/And by that means as well scape all pursuite" (240). He does a poor job of impersonating, as his speech betrays him as an impostor to the first outlaw he meets. But even more oddly, John's use of disguise does not ultimately confirm him as a full-fledged villain, as it does with Sir Guy in the medieval ballad "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne." In fact, Knight dubs Prince John "quite a positive figure" (127). After acquitting himself well in a fight with the outlaws, he is acclaimed as a "proper man" (Downfall 270), and no one has any intention of hurting him even when his true identity comes to light. Subsequently, Robin is assiduous in declaring his loyalty to the throne and the concept of hierarchical power in lines such as "Prince John, I would not for the wide worlds wealth/Incense his Majestie" (272) or "The trumpet, sounds, the king is now at hand:/Lords, yeomen, maids, in decent order stand" (275). The fact that Robin makes such comments right after the removal of John's disguise and the revelation of the Prince's true identity says much about the play's attitude toward deception and impersonation: these are harmless tools to be used by anyone who wishes

and then set aside when the stabilizing influence of the true king of England asserts itself. The Downfall finally emerges as a pillar of conservative opinion, far removed from the anti-authoritarian subversiveness conveyed by outlaw deception and impersonation in medieval texts.

The two plays discussed above are admittedly drawn from a limited period around the year 1600. Yet they adequately illustrate the general trends in the depiction of outlaw trickery during the three centuries under consideration. George a Green represents the taming of the original vigorous and violent medieval subject matter, whereas the Downfall represents an early form of the imposition of "an aristocratic strain on what remained an essentially plebeian legend" well through the eighteenth century (Dobson and Taylor 46). Robin Hood did remain both a prominent and popular figure in the theatre for the next two hundred years. Other plays about Robin Hood were produced by such notables as Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton, but their rather passive treatments of the hero and his penchant for trickery did not argue for titles like The Sad Shepherd: A Tale of Robin Hood and Poly-Olbion to be numbered among the authors' best works. Outlaw trickery and disguise make even less frequent and significant appearances in the limp comic operas of the 1700s. Works such as Robin Hood, An Opera or Robin Hood, or Sherwood Forest remain neglected today even by the most ardent students of literary minutiae, since in this period "the dynamic tradition of Robin Hood performance had almost run into the sand of theatrical convention" (Knight 152). This is not to say that arbitrarily trying to create subversive commentary by displaying acts of deception and impersonation would have revived Robin Hood as a dramatic figure in the fullest sense of the word. But treating this vital thread in the Robin Hood tradition in such an inconsequential manner did rob the stage of a truly dynamic hero whose feats of trickery could be regarded as socially relevant to his own era and historically revealing for later readers.

Even though this thesis focuses primarily on medieval and nineteenth-century approaches to the portrayal of deception and impersonation, it is important to understand

the changes that occurred in the Robin Hood tradition between 1500 and 1800. The point of surveying these three centuries is to demonstrate that trickery by Robin and his supporters ceases to function as subversive social commentary during the period. This change in turn lays the foundation for Robin to be almost universally represented as a dispossessed aristocrat or at least as playful and unthreatening by the nineteenth century. Such representations mark a clear break with the plebeian, yeoman-pleasing, and subversive medieval roots of the tradition. Creative and political stagnation in the Robin Hood texts go hand in hand from 1500 to 1800, as the plots no longer make use of trickery that throws into question contemporary societal norms, except when criticizing the practises of early Catholic England. Instances of deception or impersonation in this period prove to be mere expedient devices used by characters to help themselves escape or to have some fun at the expense of an obvious target like the Catholic Church--sometimes deception and impersonation are rendered virtually meaningless except as dramatic devices, as in ballads like "Robin Hood and Maid Marian" and "Robin Hood's Delight." Other ballads such as "Robin Hood and Allen a Dale," "Robin Hood and the Bishop," and "Robin Hood's Golden Prize," lack the radical overtones of their medieval predecessors, as they plod through a generic series of familiar adventures toned down so as to not offend establishment values. New Robin Hood plays in the period such as George a Green and The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntingdon are equally unimaginative. They downplay the vigorous spirit of innovation and transcendence of social categories that characterized Robin's trickery in his appearances before 1500. The trickery in which he and those around him now take part is less violent, more playful, and generally more palatable to a broader audience, including the middle and upper classes. This shift in tone can be credited to the emergence of a new urban theatre culture in England, as well as to an increased centralization of power which restricted displays of radicalism. The shift can be also credited to the rise of a mass press in response to higher levels of literacy, which

produced broadside ballads and Robin Hood Garlands that located the legend safely in a conservative literary and social context.

The long transition into that conservative context would produce a completely different Robin Hood by the nineteenth century, one who seems much more familiar to a modern reader reared on nineteenth-century adaptations for children and Errol Flynn's star turn in the 1938 movie The Adventures of Robin Hood. In terms of deception and impersonation, the new Robin Hood could be characterized as a fun-loving gentleman sporting fancy dress. While the literary quality of creative writing about Robin Hood tends to be higher in the nineteenth century than in the three preceding centuries, Robin's approach to trickery is made devoid of subversive social implications. The new medievalism of the nineteenth century altered both the form and the substance of the depiction of deception and impersonation in Robin Hood literature. The static conservatism of 1500 to 1800 would give way to a remodelling process designed to make Robin Hood's acts of deception conform to nineteenth-century expectations regarding the medieval period in which his adventures were set.

Chapter Three

Robin in the Nineteenth Century: The Fun-Loving Gentleman

Sports Fancy Dress

Treatments of deception and impersonation in the Robin Hood tradition of the nineteenth century cannot be understood apart from the forces then reshaping British and European culture and society as a whole. The air of gentrified nostalgia which colours depictions of the outlaw in this period stemmed directly from the emergence in society of a new philosophy of looking at the world as the 1800s dawned, namely, through the twin prisms of nationalism and Romanticism. England developed a strong sense of itself as one nation with distinctive national characteristics, rather than adhering to the regional loyalties that had previously had greater influence. Nationalistic pride was reflected in art, architecture, politics, philosophy, literature, and other areas. And the figure of Robin Hood promised to furnish a historical touchstone of all that was best, hardiest, and most heroic in the English character. Accordingly, authors such as Sir Walter Scott and Alfred Lord Tennyson adapted the outlaw's character to present just such a patriotic image. This patriotism was conservative; else, why invoke a character who "lived" in a long-distant era as a model whose virtues were to be emulated? But it meant that Robin could not be subversive, for he had to be a defender of the virtues upon which English glory had always been founded. Hence, he could not employ deception and impersonation to comment critically on a hierarchical society as he did in the medieval period; that is, except when his attacks were on institutions such as Catholicism which England had left behind.

When Robin and his supporters get disguised to deceive their foes in novels and plays such as Scott's Ivanhoe, Thomas Love Peacock's Maid Marian, Howard Pyle's The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood, and Tennyson's The Foresters, their actions are generally informed by a romantic sensibility. Robin embodies many qualities such as humor and daring which marked the free individual glorified by Romantic thinkers.

Additionally, the inclination of "the romantic generation [to look back upon the Middle Ages] with respect and even nostalgia" (Palmer and Colton 464) cast Robin as an ideal hero: a lover of justice, a popular figure, a stout defender of merry old England. But in light of their distance from the source material, the authors reshaping Robin for a nineteenth-century audience allow themselves the liberty, for example, of diminishing the significance that clothing held for medieval people as an indicator of social status. Robin and his followers seem to amuse themselves by using deception and impersonation, having fun with the anonymity a disguise can provide or delighting in their acting skills. Robin is permitted to play tricks, but these are comic tricks, non-threatening tricks. In some cases the trickery can even be said to support the existing social order, rather than highlighting its deficiencies. Robin does not really wish to undermine the stable social foundations on which his beloved homeland rests. That is particularly true when, as in Maid Marian and The Foresters, Robin is construed as a dispossessed member of the nobility. Not only does his position (when he is occupying it) afford him privileges, but he also has a responsibility to his men and his compatriots to regain that position and administer it in justice and wisdom.

So for the most part, Robin becomes a fun-loving gentleman sporting fancy dress, or some amalgam of those elements. He represents a consolidation of many of the elements that emerged tentatively from 1500 to 1800, combined with the unique aspects of the nineteenth-century outlook. When involved with trickery or disguise, Robin has less of a sharp sense of personal honor (as in "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne") than a notion of the socially appropriate thing that a gentlemanly character ought to do. He is not anti-authoritarian or subversive. He is a romantic hero, a dashing stranger, a Boy Scout in Lincoln green who stands up for the true English-blooded Saxons. He sets the hearts of Norman oppressors pounding with fear and Maid Marian's heart with love. Deception and impersonation are part of Robin's conventional repertoire. But he can do perfectly well without them if need be.

This portrait of Robin Hood is most clearly expounded in novels and plays of the nineteenth century. That is why this chapter focuses on those two types of literature. There was a substantial amount of Robin-inspired poetry during the period as well. However, most of what was produced has no bearing on the issues of deception and impersonation, in sharp contrast to the key role that trickery played in the medieval ballads. The precociously gifted John Keats and his friends and acquaintances were among those who tried hardest to adapt Robin Hood to the mode of Romantic poetry. Mostly, their efforts, ranging from Keats' brief lament "Robin Hood" to Leigh Hunt's flawed cycle "Ballads of Robin Hood," only succeeded in consolidating Robin as a hero of the past. He emerges as someone to be looked back on with fondness and admiration, but lacking the wide-ranging focus and cynical resolve which would enable him to deal effectively with modern times. To early Romantics, Robin seemed one of those men suited to a "ruder, but simpler, less complicated way of life than that which the present offered or the future promised" (Wright xvii). In their poetry, the essence of Robin is crystallized and yet frozen in a pastoral landscape where he moves in slow-motion, shooting his bow and distributing gifts of mercy. Here, trickery would be out of place, as its humorous aspect might mar the carefully constructed atmosphere of nostalgia. So as nineteenth-century Robin Hood poetry does not involve deception and impersonation to any significant extent, it falls outside the concerns of this thesis.

As Knight points out, there were also difficulties for those who would attempt to adapt Robin Hood to the comparatively new literary genre of the historical novel. These difficulties stemmed from the nineteenth-century concept of how a novel should be constructed; that is, it should consist of a "lengthy narrative...that foregrounds and also develops in depth [an] individual figure" (Knight 172). None of the literary modes in which Robin had previously been represented--ballads and plays--had demanded that he spend much time in introspection or other forms of self-awareness. But introspection and changing in response to events in one's life were precisely what the novel demanded of its

characters. Lacking any previously established sense from other fictional settings of how Robin might be expected to think and feel, it is not surprising that Robin's "entry into the [novel form would be] both sideways and uncertain" (172). This marginal position would also affect the depiction of deception and impersonation by Robin Hood and his followers in the nineteenth-century novel.

Sir Walter Scott is widely regarded as the father of the historical novel. He was also the first writer to depict Robin Hood in a novel, albeit not as the main character. Born in 1771, Scott was the son of an Edinburgh solicitor and had trained as a lawyer himself before writing such popular romantic and historical poems as The Lay of the Last Minstrel and The Lady of the Lake. He essentially gave up poetry in 1813, finding that his works were being outsold by those of Byron, which, as a "literary capitalist" (Crawford 12), he did not appreciate. He turned instead to creating his lavishly detailed historical novels, starting with the Waverley series in 1814. In 1819 he published his classic Ivanhoe, which instantly received "universal acclamation" (Pearson 142) and ranks among the "most forceful and imaginative contributions of early-nineteenth century Romanticism to the Robin Hood legend" (Dobson and Taylor 56). However, that does not mean Robin plays a central role in the book.

Robin is obviously not the title character of Ivanhoe. Following Major and Munday, the novel is set in the reign of Richard I. It is founded on the premise that "[four] generations had not sufficed to blend the hostile blood of the Normans and Anglo-Saxons, or to unite, by common language and mutual interests, two hostile races, one of which still felt the elation of triumph, while the other groaned under all the consequences of defeat" (Scott 8). Holt terms this premise "false," saying: "By [the time of Richard I] statesmen had ceased to be concerned about the conflict between English and Norman and noted that among freemen the two could no longer be distinguished" (183). Indulging the nineteenth-century penchant for belief in a longstanding English nationalism, Scott creates a scenario in which Norman and Saxon nobles clash in love and warfare. Robin is coopted

to assist the more authentically English Saxons against the corrupt Normans of French ancestry, who "display neither magnanimity nor chivalry to the defeated" (Johnson 1: 739).

A brief plot summary is necessary to grasp the scope and concerns of Ivanhoe. Wilfred of Ivanhoe, son of Cedric the Saxon, has been banished by his father for being in love with Rowena, Cedric's ward, who is supposed to marry another Saxon noble who might have a chance of gaining the English throne someday. After fighting with Richard I in the Crusades, Ivanhoe returns to England incognito to discover that Prince John is aiming to seize power himself. Henceforth, Ivanhoe struggles against corrupt Norman knights of John's camp, such as Brian de Bois-Guilbert and Philip de Malvoisin, confronting them at a jousting tournament at Ashby and at the siege of Torquilstone Castle, from which he must rescue Cedric and Rowena, as well as the wealthy Jew Isaac and his daughter Rebecca, who captures the heart of Bois-Guilbert and nearly Ivanhoe's too. Robin's main part is to assist in the siege "as military support and security to the forces of good" (Knight 173), although he also serves a useful narrative function throughout the book--other characters frequently cross his path in the forest and reveal their attitudes and intentions in the process. After the siege, it turns out that Rebecca has been spirited away by Bois-Guilbert, but she has also been charged with witchcraft by the Catholic order of the Knights Templar. At her trial by combat, Ivanhoe rescues the Jewess but does not marry her. Instead, King Richard regains power and oversees the marriage of Ivanhoe and his original love interest, Rowena.

Evidently, deception and impersonation in connection with Robin Hood do not feature prominently in Ivanhoe. Knight speculates that Scott "saw [Robin] as a distinctly anti-authoritarian figure and in that case may well have wanted to restrain the force of someone so inherently threatening from a Tory viewpoint" (176). This explanation is reasonably plausible, given Scott's interest in things medieval and likely corresponding knowledge of the original Robin Hood ballads, whose subversive implications have

already been discussed. On the other hand, Robin's diminished role as an instigator of action in general and specifically as a trickster may be simply due to the fact that Ivanhoe is at heart an aristocratic romance, and Scott has construed Robin as a yeoman. But Robin is a loyal yeoman, conservative in the extreme and devoted to the concepts of Englishness and just monarchical rule, unlike his medieval forebear. He is not out to foment trouble. He supports good nobles. He has a quiet reserve and a sense of moral and social propriety, not unlike that which the nobles he ends up aiding are supposed to have.

The first time Robin speaks in Ivanhoe is at the archery contest just before the jousting at Ashby starts. Here, he performs a minor impersonation; that is to say, he is not fully frank and forthcoming when Prince John asks him who he is. He answers with the alias of Locksley instead (Scott 150). By the time of Scott's writing, that name had been used for several centuries as a synonym for Robin Hood; naturally, Prince John, being a fictional character, would not realize that, but an informed reader should be able to guess the real identity of "the stout well-set yeoman...arrayed in Lincoln green" (80). Using an alias, though, is not much of a trick. But Robin's near-defiant mien when talking to the Prince betrays his hostility to the forces of evil that threaten to overrun England, and in that manner he demonstrates his adherence to the conservative political position he will continue to espouse throughout the novel.

It seems that everyone wants to know who Robin is in Ivanhoe, but he will not reveal his name until he sees fit. Cedric's servants Gurth and Wamba meet Robin in the woods after the Ashby tournament is over, and they hint at their interest in his identity. But Robin is not to be drawn. He tells them politely, if somewhat condescendingly, that they should mind their own business: "'Mine honest friends,' replied the yeoman, 'who or what I am is little to the purpose'" (206). Intriguingly, he even elaborates by saying that "whether [he is] known by one name or another" (206) does not concern them, but the sense that names carry innate significance is not present as it was in "Robin Hood and Guy

of Gisborne." Rather, Robin has a gentlemanly sense of discretion. He identifies with the values of his social betters. He does not hide his real outlaw identity merely for his own safety or sense of personal honor. He believes that being able to operate undercover will help him to do the most good in the service of his beloved England at this time, which is in no way a subversive purpose.

Reading Robin's motivations for hiding his name as patriotic is supported by the next scene in which someone wants to find out who he is. This time, just before the storming of Torquilstone, Robin is dealing with King Richard himself. However, he does not know that. Richard is still disguised as the Black Knight who did valiant deeds at Ashby. Like Ivanhoe's, the King's disguise is a simple matter of convenience. Richard wishes to move unknown amidst his enemies until the time is right to take power again. In this case, Robin questions the Black Knight to ensure this man is no traitor who will betray him and his supporters as they go to rescue Cedric and his party. Robin insists that the Black Knight be both "a good knight and a good Englishman," prepared to do his duty as a "true-born native of England" (212) should. Though not revealing his name, the knight replies affirmatively, and asks in return to know who Robin is. Robin's reply is proof positive that his motivations for concealing his identity are both patriotic and conservative, not subversive: "'I am, said the forester, 'a nameless man; but I am the friend of my country, and of my country's friends. With this account of me you must for the present remain satisfied, the more especially since you yourself desire to continue unknown. Believe, however, that my word, when pledged, is as inviolate as if I wore golden spurs'" (212-213). The reference to "golden spurs" seals the point. Robin accepts the aristocratic code of honor. He sees being able to keep a secret as an expression of his adherence to that code. And he accepts the status quo.

After depicting the successful storming of Torquilstone, Scott provides a scene that illustrates perfectly how Robin's deeds of deception and impersonation are not totally necessary in the context of this nineteenth-century novel; but when they take place, they

are intended to support conservative interests. By the time of this scene, Robin has already made a public show of his concern for maintaining the structures of society by dividing the booty from Torquilstone, before the eyes of the Black Knight, into portions for "the church," "a sort of public treasury," "widows and children" of those who died in battle, and so on (Scott 356). He has also learned the Black Knight's true identity and received a royal pardon for any illegal deeds committed during England's irregular and "turbulent times" (456) while Richard I was away. Now Robin invites Richard to a celebratory feast in the greenwood along with his merry men. Although a good time is had by all, Robin gets worried when he sees the King entering into the spirit of the occasion with great gusto and familiarity with the outlaws. Robin's worries are twofold: he fears the King is wasting "time which the circumstances of his kingdom may render precious" (472), as Prince John is still on the loose, and he also fears that the outlaws will forget themselves and overstep the bounds of familiarity with the King, for he wonders "how soon cause of offence may arise, [and] how warmly it may be received" if this happens (473). So he makes the very interesting decision to fool the King into thinking it is time to get up and go. Rather than simply warning Richard that time is being wasted, Robin orders one of his men to slip away and blow a bugle blast sounding like the call of the evil Norman knight Philip de Malvoisin. Once everyone has leaped up and made ready for battle, Robin tells the King what he has done and begs pardon for being so presumptuous as to deceive Richard "for his own advantage" (474). Though Richard is momentarily angry, it soon passes as he realizes Robin is right and it is time to go.

When Robin confesses his trickery, it is notable that his manner is "rather respectful than submissive" as he readies himself for reproof by Richard (474). But his manner reflects the self-confidence that is a consistent hallmark of Robin Hood throughout his literary history, rather than any disrespect for Richard or the kingly office he holds. It is not subversive in any way. In the Gest, Robin feels free to violate a vow to the King so he can regain the liberty of the greenwood in the end; by contrast, when we last see Robin

in Ivanhoe, he provides a military escort for the King on his journey. He manifests total concern for the welfare of his sovereign, which in turn removes "any slight grudge which [Richard] might retain on account of the deception the outlaw captain had practised upon him" (475). The King is so pleased he reiterates "his full pardon and future favour" for Robin (475). Their interests are one. Robin's trickery, therefore, is not a significant problem from the standpoint of the highest authority in the land. In this episode, deception is no more than an ornamental feature, a standard feature of the repertoire of the crafty outlaw chief. It serves the interests of the state, but does not comment on the political or social situation. Robin's trickery merely provides some assistance as far as resolving the conflict at the heart of the novel. Scott's conclusion says the events in Ivanhoe were important in moving toward the end of the "hostile distinction of Norman and Saxon" (515) and making England more peaceful. Robin's periodic appearances throughout the novel assist with the unity of the plot, but his main contribution is the spirit of straightforward, conservative patriotism which he represents.

On the evidence of Thomas Love Peacock's correspondence, one might think that his novel Maid Marian would present a portrait of a more subversively deceptive Robin Hood than Ivanhoe. Peacock, born in 1785, chose to forgo the security of being a London merchant like his father, but began writing witty, satirical novels and poetry to support himself, although he did join the East India Company out of necessity in 1819. The year before, Peacock wrote to Percy Shelley: "I am writing a comic Romance of the Twelfth Century, which I shall make the vehicle of much oblique satire on all the oppressions that are done under the sun" (qtd. in Mulvihill 93). Peacock was at pains to distinguish his Robin Hood opus from Scott's, waiting three years to publish it after the latter's popular success. Given the ironic and subversive commentary implicit in Robin's acts of deception and impersonation in ballads before 1500, it might seem from the letter to Shelley that Peacock intended to return to the rough humor and sharp anti-authoritarianism of the medieval period. But Maid Marian belies that assumption. It is an

enigmatic book. Some critics, such as Knight, hail it for its flashes of wit, and even credit it with an "innovative reshaping of the Robin Hood tradition" (183). Knight also states: "The satirical thrust of Maid Marian is to criticize and undermine the growing use of medieval material as a conservative manoeuvre" (182). Others have criticized its inconsistencies in focus and tone. Dobson and Taylor dub it "a disappointing commentary on Peacock's inability to handle the material he had pillaged from [ballad anthologist Joseph] Ritson," and cite it as an example of "the impossibility of reconciling the outlaw legend with a modern literary sensibility" (56). Both viewpoints have some validity; they are not wholly incompatible. But in terms of how Maid Marian handles deception and impersonation, it must be said that Robin comes off as a merry prankster secure in his aristocratic background. Peacock's intentions are satirical at the outset, but he does not succeed in imposing the spirit of his argument on the actions and demeanor of his Robin Hood character. In fact, the novel tends more and more toward the comic rather than the satirical as it goes on, and it arrives finally at an acceptance, though by no means a wholehearted espousal, of the conservative status quo.

Before analyzing the relevant instances of deception and impersonation in Maid Marian, a summary of the novel's action is useful. The wedding ceremony of Robert Fitz-Ooth, Earl of Locksley and Huntington, and Matilda Fitzwater, the daughter of the Baron of Arlingford, is interrupted when envoys of King Henry barge into the church and try to capture the Earl for two reasons: he has been hunting royal deer, and he is also in debt to the Abbot of Doncaster. The Earl fights his way past them and flees to Sherwood Forest, where he takes the name of Robin Hood and is joined by other outlaws. Despite her prospective husband's outlawing, Matilda remains in love with Robin. Despite her father's annoyance, she keeps slipping away to visit Robin in the greenwood, where she is known as Maid Marian. Prince John is in love with Marian himself, and tries to gain her by force by besieging the castle of Arlingford. Though the attempt fails, both Marian and her father are forced to escape to Sherwood and join Robin's group, as the Baron's lands have

been seized. After this episode, Robin, Marian, and the Baron spend some time wandering around the land together, participating in incidents that are drawn largely from seventeenth-century ballads, which is where deception and impersonation often come in--but with the same lack of subversive edge as those ballads of two centuries earlier. At the end, King Richard's return from the Holy Land restores order to England, although the subsequent accession of Prince John obliges the outlaws to go back to the greenwood.

There is evidence that Peacock wanted to send up not just the former institutions that dominated medieval England--feudal monarchy and Catholicism--but also the "reactionary crowned heads of Europe" and social abuses of his own day (Butler 147). However, his use of deception and impersonation does not really contribute to its skewering of "topical concerns" (Mulvihill 94). Earlier on, Peacock is notably prone to inserting authorial quips such as "[S]he had...an obsolete habit of always telling the truth and keeping her word, which our enlightened age has discarded with other barbarisms" (73), or "To give freely to one man what [the King] had taken from another was generosity of which he was very capable" (89). But this is direct ironic statement; it is not satire that stems from the implications of acts of trickery. The second half of the book is much more about Robin's merry jesting, as Peacock seemingly loses sight of his original objectives, perhaps because his satire has "too many targets" (Dobson and Taylor 57).

The first instance of deception and impersonation in Maid Marian is related second-hand by the Sheriff of Nottingham to Sir Ralph Montfaucon, the King's man who has been sent to catch Robin. The tale he tells is a straightforward adaptation of the non-medieval ballad "Robin Hood and the Bishop." As with the ballad, the thrust of the tale is the humiliation of the medieval Catholic establishment, which carries no satirical or subversive weight as far as contemporary concerns go. The humor of Robin's disguising himself as an old woman is retained, although the jokes seem a bit flatter than in the ballad. This effect occurs because the Sheriff does not tell the story in his own voice with all the accompanying indignation and spluttering. Rather, it is told as third-person

narrative, with phrases like "how the merrymen of Nottingham laughed at the abbot: how the abbot railed at the old woman, and how the old woman out-railed the abbot" (Peacock 69).

Robin makes only occasional appearances in the opening half of the novel (which, after all, is called Maid Marian). But he emerges more fully as a proponent of merry trickery once he has joined forces with Marian and her father, and the three are together in Sherwood Forest. The second instance of deception and impersonation is also an adaptation of a seventeenth-century ballad, "Robin and Allen a Dale." Peacock infuses his verbal wit into the sequence where Robin dresses up as a harper to enter the church and rescue Allen's bride from marriage to an old knight. Robin's fun at the expense of the presiding Catholic bishop is considerably more sophisticated than in the original, in which he was a yeoman. Instead of just saying, "Hello, I'm here to play the harp, but I'd like to see the bride and bridegroom first," he engages in repartee with the bishop. The repartee is in itself a reflection of Robin's aristocratic identification, for he has access to a vocabulary that easily surpasses that of an ordinary yeoman. For example, he says that "for [a cup of sack] I will sing the praise of the donor in lofty verse, and emblazon him with any virtue which he may wish to have the credit of possessing, without the trouble of practising" (124); he also asks the impudent question, "[I]n what branch of my art shall I exercise my faculty? I am passing well in all, from the anthem to the glee, and from the dirge to the coranto" (124). The resolution of the conflict is exactly the same as in the original, as Allen gains his bride and Little John recites the banns seven times. So Peacock's embroidering of the episode serves no thematic or plot-related purpose except to increase its humor value and show off the author's wit. Robin's nattering about music to the undiscerning bishop is simply his indulgence in the joys of play-acting.

This thespian tendency is amplified when Robin, Marian, and the Baron "[disguise] themselves as pilgrims returned from Palestine" (128), as the Baron is being escorted to a refuge near the forest of Barnesdale. One incident along the way obliges them to engage

in substantial trickery; but again, it reflects no subversive intentions, only a highly developed sense of fun. The three are sighted one evening by a lady owning a rich castle, and they are invited in to visit with her. She hopes to hear news of her husband from these pilgrims, as he is currently fighting in the Holy Land. It is amusing how the Baron, aiming to maintain the group's impersonation, relates "his own adventures [which he had in Palestine in his youth] as having happened" to the lady's husband (129). Robin increases the humorousness of the scene by giving the lady a description of her husband based on a portrait on the wall, which he concludes to be the man in question after "making a calculation of the influences of time and war, which he weighed with a comparison of the lady's age" (129). When the lady is "completely deceived" by their stories (130), there is no implicit commentary on her intelligence in relation to her aristocratic status, or on her appetite for tales of war, or on her inability to discern the real significance of the pilgrims' costumes, or on anything else. Robin and his friends have managed to keep their disguises intact, and they have had a good time doing so. The exercise of wit is paramount in this episode.

Once the Baron has been delivered to his place of refuge, Robin has another chance to engage in deception and impersonation. Even more so than in the previous case, he is strictly out for fun. He and Marian decide to change their costumes for safety's sake, donning "the habits and appurtenances of wandering minstrels" (144). Absolutely nothing happens to them until they arrive at a river near Sherwood and see a ferryboat moored on the other side. Then they hear someone singing a song with the refrain of "Jolly, jolly rover," which sets the tone for the silliness that is to come. When the singing ferryman comes into sight, it turns out to be Friar Tuck. So Robin decides to trick Friar Tuck by maintaining the minstrel disguise and picking a fight with him: "'He will scarcely know us,' said Robin; 'and if he do not, I will break a staff with him for sport'" (146). Essentially, Robin's provocations result in a reenactment of the post-medieval ballad "Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar," in which Robin obliges the friar to carry him across

the river on his back and then gets dunked himself. The difference here is that Robin and the friar are already acquaintances, so this is fun between friends. After the hearty quarterstaff fight, Friar Tuck shows he is all too aware of Robin's motives for the deception: "Robin, jolly Robin, he buys a jest dearly that pays for it with a bloody coxcomb" (148). But for Peacock's nineteenth-century version of Robin, the price is well worth it. Comic merriment and showing off for Maid Marian are what Robin treasures, not the subversive, anti-authoritarian trickery of his predecessors in the medieval ballads.

The final sequence involving deception and impersonation occurs when King Richard returns incognito to his kingdom. The King is riding through Sherwood when he is accosted by Maid Marian, who tells him he has to dine with Robin this night, regardless of his wishes. Marian is dressed as a man, a "fine young outlaw" (158). The King takes exception to her giving orders, and says he would prefer not to have to thrash such a boy for insolence. Marian's response offers insight into her reasons for impersonating a male outlaw: "'Perhaps,' said the youth, 'my strength is more than my seeming, and my cunning more than my strength. Therefore let it please your knighthood to dismount'" (159). These words can be interpreted in several ways: Marian wishes to put her fighting prowess to the test; she wants to show that women can fight just as well as men; she is unwilling to let the knight beg off from a fight, especially after he has been condescending toward her. But there is also an underlying sense of fun in this scene, which Marian wishes to enjoy. She neither knows nor cares that it is King Richard confronting her. Like Robin in the ferryboat incident, she is just happy to have a chance for a good fight.

Peacock's couching the fight scene in mildly satirical but humorous terms establishes the basically harmless nature of this encounter: "Hereupon, which in those days was usually the result of a meeting between any two persons anywhere, they proceeded to fight" (159). The fight turns out to be totally non-lethal, with "no worse injury than that the knight had wounded the forester's jerkin, and the forester had disabled the knight's plume" by the time Friar Tuck enters to break it up and expose Marian's

impersonation (160). Peacock's intention may be to dispel false romantic notions about how jolly and carefree the Middle Ages were. But as Marian, Friar Tuck, and the King head back to the outlaw camp together in good fellowship, he perhaps inadvertently conveys the impression that those times really were jolly and carefree, worthy of being remembered with nostalgia.

When Richard reveals his true identity among the outlaws, the conclusion of Maid Marian comes surprisingly close to the happily-ever-after feel of the 1938 movie The Adventures of Robin Hood. Even though Friar Tuck drops a sardonic remark about Robin and Richard both being true to the "principles of freebootery" in their own spheres of authority (168), that does not diminish the sense of the gracious monarch restoring privilege and honor to the outlaws who have served England in their rough way during Richard's absence. It is true that the novel admits in a final paragraph which is almost like a footnote that Robin and Marian would return to the greenwood after "the usurpation of John" (171). But this incident has nothing of the assertion of independence that Robin's concluding escape to the greenwood in the Gest bespeaks. Rather, James Mulvihill's observation about Robin's insistence on governing in Sherwood sums up the idealized quality of his rulership: "Despite, then, the occasional satiric parallels drawn by Friar Tuck between it and any other government...the society established in Sherwood Forest is presented along the lines of similar utopian societies found elsewhere in Peacock" (100). In the final analysis, Robin's Sherwood exists beyond the realm of social commentary, with Peacock "content to present the forest outlaw as a figure of nostalgic and idyllic 'romance'" (Dobson and Taylor 57). Such a setting facilitates the construing of deception and impersonation as tools for fun, atmospheric content, and acquiescence to the status quo. Robin is engaged primarily with personal rather than political issues. Peacock's witty, lively narration makes Maid Marian worth reading, but its use of trickery does not match his original intent to create biting social satire.

In many respects, Howard Pyle's The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood provides an even better example than Maid Marian of how the use of deception and impersonation in nineteenth-century Robin Hood literature contrasts with its use in the medieval ballads. The American author's 1883 book consists of an ingenious integration of both medieval and later ballads, entertainingly retold but sanitized to meet late nineteenth-century standards of what was appropriate reading material for children. By this point, the episodes on which Pyle draws should already be familiar; hence, a detailed plot summary of the book is not necessary. However, prior to considering the implications of Pyle's reworking of various trickery-oriented tales, it is instructive to look at the author himself and the context in which he created this still-popular work.

Born in 1853 in Wilmington, Delware, Pyle actually went on to make more of a name for himself as an illustrator than an author in his own lifetime. His "bold wood-cut style of illustration" became popular (Knight 203), and he even set up an art school for American artists in his hometown. By the time of his death in 1911, he had received recognition as a member of the National Academy of Design. However, today his retellings of Robin Hood and King Arthur are primarily responsible for maintaining his reputation. Pyle belonged to a religious minority, the Quakers, and Knight surmises an accompanying interest "in the stubborn reformist strength of the outlaw" was what likely drew Pyle to Robin Hood in the first place (203). But given the Quakers' pacifism and refusal to bear arms, it seems somewhat dubious that Pyle would choose Robin as an exemplary vehicle for delivering a message of social reform. The contents of The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood attest to a much more innocent purpose.

Despite drawing on many of the bloody and subversively inclined Robin Hood ballads of the medieval period, the book has an altogether different atmosphere, which affects its depiction of deception and impersonation. Lightheartedness, a youthful capacity for wonder, and a sense that good deeds mean something are among the book's predominant characteristics. These qualities are evoked in large part by the narrator's

near-obsessive, mantra-like repetition of the word "merry." It becomes nearly impossible not to smile while reading, no matter what is being described, because everything is so merry. The first page of the 1883 edition contains "merry" five times, even though the top half of the page consists of artwork. And later passages reinforce "the bracing simplicity and naive strength" of the narrative (Knight 204): "Up rose Robin Hood one merry morn when all the birds were singing blithely among the trees, and up rose all his merry men, each fellow washing his head and hands in the cold brown brook that leaped laughing from stone to stone" (Pyle 5). Such a world is far removed from the grim life-and-death struggles of the Robin Hood in medieval ballads who is depicted as facing a barrage of political, economic, and social evils. Pyle's Robin, though a yeoman, has none of the concerns of his medieval predecessor.

Consequently, episodes of deception and impersonation in Pyle's book are oriented toward merriment, even when they are based on tales that were anything but merry originally. A tamer, more conservative Robin is the result. The author's introduction explicitly denies that this is a serious book: it is said to deal with "innocent laughter that can harm no one" and characters who are "all living the merriest of merry lives" (vii). Pyle's reworkings of two medieval selections in particular illustrate the essentially conservative flavor of his book. These include chapters II and III of Part Second of The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood, entitled "Little John goes to the Fair at Nottingham Town" and "How Little John lived at the Sheriff's House," which correspond to fyttes 3 and 4 of the Gest (in which Little John enters the Sheriff's service, lures away his cook to the greenwood, and tricks the sheriff into coming to look at "green deer"), and chapter I of Part Eighth, "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisbourne," which corresponds to the medieval ballad of the same name.

In chapters II and III, Little John's motivations for tricking the Sheriff are different from his approach in the Gest. After winning a public quarterstaff competition (rather than a shooting match as in the original), the giant outlaw accepts the Sheriff's invitation

to join his service. But this deception is not motivated by a desire to "quyte hym [the Sheriff] well his mede" (Gest 90), or "pay the Sheriff out," for his persecution of Robin's band of outlaws, as Dobson and Taylor define the medieval phrase. Rather, Pyle's text notes that Little John "thought he might find some merry jest, should he enter the Sheriff's service" (Pyle 64). An opportunity to engage in comic or burlesque action is what spurs him on. That is just what he experiences in his fight with the cook six months later, as the terse description of that scene in the Gest is replaced by an extended, fun-filled sequence with the two feasting and singing before they fight and then decide to leave for Sherwood together (67-74).

Having already duped the Sheriff by posing as Reynold Greenleaf, Little John also makes off with as much silver plate as "[he and his new friend] could lay hands upon" (74). But when Robin sees his lieutenant's plunder, he does not approve of the trickery leading to the theft. In the Gest, Robin only says that it obviously "was never by [the Sheriff's] gode wyll/This [plunder]" (94) fell into the outlaws' hands. Hence, a certain softening of Robin's traditional adversarial attitude toward local authorities is evident in The Merry Adventures. In an earlier episode the Sheriff forfeited three hundred pounds to the outlaws, but Robin feels that recently "he hath done nought that [the outlaws] should steal his household plate" (Pyle 74). After Little John runs off, finds the Sheriff, and tells him to come and see the flock of "green deer" nearby, Robin shows remarkable mercy to his enemy when he has been caught. Instead of beating and robbing the man, Robin just gives him a cup of wine and comments: "[Now] thou comest seeking to do no harm, nor do I know that thou hast despoiled any man" (76). In a stunning reversal of the conventions of the medieval ballads, Robin says that the Sheriff has been behaving better than "fat priests and lordly squires" (76), so he can go home and take his silver with him. This conclusion credits Robin with a degree of chivalry and courtesy toward the Sheriff that would have been unthinkable in the medieval ballads. It demonstrates that trickery in

this nineteenth-century interpretation does not incline toward the subversive or the vengeful, but can furnish a certain degree of moral instruction along with amusement.

The chapter "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisbourne" is inherently a darker and more violent episode, but still Pyle manages to divest Robin's acts of deception and impersonation of the dangerous connotations which they carry in the original ballad. Encountering the horrific figure of Guy clad in horsehide, Robin soon learns that he has not to deal with the mercenary knight that the ballad presents, but with another outlaw of opprobrious character. Though Robin holds back on identifying himself, Guy has no qualms: "As for my name, I care not who knows it. It is Guy of Gisbourne" (258). Guy still looks weird, but he is not as frightening as his predecessor in the ballad. The confrontation between Robin and Guy has less of a mythic dimension to it. Guy is a caricature of evil, which to the nineteenth-century mind would present less problems to the youthful reader than the implacable, subhuman energy he conveys in the original. Here, he is the sort of villain who has to tell everyone just how evil he is. Guy's outlandish boasting illustrates this point: "As for the slaying of [Robin Hood], it galleth me not a whit, for I would shed the blood of my own brother for the half of two hundred pounds" (258). Such words in a fictional context actually tend to make the villain less frightening.

After Robin has beaten Guy at archery, identified himself, and slain the villain, he is not vicious as he moves into his next impersonation. He does not feel inclined to deface the corpse in token of his contempt for Guy and the authorities who sent this man after him. Instead, he states: "This is the first man I have slain since I shot the King's forester in...my youth" (260). Two killings in an entire career is not much for Robin Hood compared to his bloody deeds in medieval literature. This safer, sanitized Robin is ideal for the inculcation of conservative values in children. His ghastly glee in killing Guy in the medieval ballad reinforces his otherness, his unwillingness to participate in society at large. Here, however, his toned-down approach to violent trickery makes him seem a benefactor

of society, "for the terror of Guy of Gisbourne's name and of his doings had spread far and near" (261).

Robin's last deception in this episode, which involves the liberation of Little John from the Sheriff's clutches, is equally toned-down. Though dealing with a practical matter--Robin will not let his friend be executed--the difference between Robin's approach here and in the medieval ballad is unmistakable. As previously, Robin is disguised as Guy when he approaches Little John, having gained the right from the scornful Sheriff to put John to death. But in this case, the Sheriff's rude comments do not seal his doom. When Robin releases Little John and the two turn upon the Sheriff and his henchmen, the price the Sheriff pays is merely an arrow in the behind: "For a month afterwards the poor Sheriff could sit upon nought but the softest cushions that could be gotten for him" (268). This is just one case in which Pyle seems to let the Sheriff off easily, especially in comparison to the medieval tales. The implication is that, in Pyle's view, there are definite limits as to how far one can go in flouting the legally established arm of justice. The authors of the original stories presented a much more radical alternative. In Pyle's book, Robin cannot be a mass murderer, since the use of deception and impersonation is not permitted to transgress the boundaries of safe merriment. The status quo is not in danger.

If one views The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood as Pyle's conservative tribute to a vital legend of the Anglo-American heritage, his decision to offer the reader a chance to opt out of the book's last scene of evil trickery makes sense. The "Epilogue" describes how Robin is bled to death by the treacherous Prioress of Kirklees and dies in Little John's arms. It is a rare example of successful trickery by a villain, and the murder is described in more detail than in the parallel account at the end of the Gest, where Robin is said to have been "betrayed" (Gest 112) by the "wycked woman" (111) whose motivations are somehow related to her love for a certain Sir Roger of Doncaster. On the whole, Robin's death forms a minor strand in his tradition since the medieval period. In Pyle's version, the author does not force his audience to read about Robin's death: "I will not bid you follow

me further, but will drop your hand here with a "good den," if you wish it" (289). Pyle realizes that tragedy must inevitably diminish the merry feeling that the text has been dedicated to building thus far. Even the beautiful, poignant manner in which Robin's death is depicted does not justify causing injury to the feelings of young readers who may not be prepared to accept how harsh life can be. So permitting the drawing of a curtain over this rueful scene is an ideal solution. Deception and impersonation, whether good or bad, thus fail to assume the level of importance they possess in the medieval texts. Pyle does not treat these devices as having social impact; nor does he define Robin's character on the basis of trickery. The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood exists in its own utopian framework of the good old days, where submission to authority is unconscious and trickery is happily unthinking: "But though great changes came, they did not reach to Sherwood's shades...for it was little the outside striving of the world troubled them" (256).

Tennyson's The Foresters approaches deception and impersonation in similar fashion, treating them as mere ornamental features of its Robin Hood scenarios. This 1892 drama is not generally viewed as one of its author's best works. Despite premiering with some "success on the New York stage" (Martin 578) seven months before Tennyson died at age 83, it has been dismissed by commentators then and now as an ephemeral footnote to the career of the man acclaimed as follows in his biographical note in the 1929 Encyclopedia Britannica: "No living poet has ever held England...quite so long under his unbroken sway as Tennyson did." Tennyson's career as the leading poet of the Victorian era needs no introduction, ranging as it does from the extended philosophical lament of In Memoriam to the tub-thumping cadences of "The Charge of the Light Brigade." But Tennyson never did as well with his plays as with his verse, and The Foresters receives scant notice in critical writings. Still, its portrayal of Robin Hood as a full-fledged fun-loving gentleman in fancy dress epitomizes the functions that deception and impersonation play in the literature of the nineteenth century.

Although The Foresters is marked by the craftsmanship one would expect of Tennyson, it feels a bit hollow, as "the neatness of this Robin Hood re-creation comes in part from its full reliance on sources" (Knight 199). It is a mixture of blank verse dialogue and some original songs by Tennyson. The storyline of this patriotic four-act play is simple. Robin, the Earl of Huntington, is celebrating his thirtieth birthday and invites to the feast, among others, Marian and her father Sir Richard Lea, who is in danger of losing his lands to the Abbot, who loaned him two thousand marks to ransom his son Walter overseas at the Crusades. The festivities take place under the shadow of ongoing oppression of humble Saxons by Norman nobles. Also, Prince John is in love with Marian and wants to get her any way he can. Just after the feast, the Prince has Robin proclaimed an outlaw for sheltering "some that broke the forest laws" (Tennyson 35). Robin flees to Sherwood Forest to become the leader of the outlaws that live there. He enjoys a merry life till Prince John, the Sheriff, and a mercenary enter the forest to hunt him down. Robin evades them, first by disguising himself as an old woman and then by fighting them off. Marian and her father intercede in the fight, and Robin, though not recognizing his beloved in her armour at first, is soon reunited with her. A sighting of fairies and the coronation of Marian as Forest Queen follow, neither of which has much bearing on the plot. The conclusion in Act IV brings the return of good King Richard to England and the return of Robin and Marian to their aristocratic life at the King's court, as Marian's father gets to keep his land.

This play marks the full-scale gentrification of Robin Hood in an atmosphere of nostalgia. The similarities between its plot and that of Peacock's Maid Marian are readily observable. Accordingly, it uses deception and impersonation, not to generate subversive commentary as in the medieval ballads, but as simple dramatic devices: characters try to avoid detection, comic and burlesque action ensues, romantic tension between lovers escalates, and so on. In The Foresters, disguise is the principal method of deception, but moving freely across social boundaries is never an issue as it was in medieval texts. This is

a conservative poetic drama exalting a timeless England, not an indictment of medieval social structures. There are four major instances of disguise in the play that merit analysis.

First, there is Prince John's infiltration of Robin's birthday party in Act I. Disguised as a "holy Palmer" (28), John has a simple aim: he wants to see Marian and find out "if her beauties answer their report" (18). He is much less interested in the periodic cries of "Down with John!" that echo through Robin's feasting hall. His lack of interest is an early indication that The Foresters has little to say about the inequities of monarchical government. As Knight notes (198), Robin's criticisms of John are not political either, but based on John's alleged nasty treatment of the fair sex: "I hate him for his want of chivalry./He that can pluck the flower of maidenhood/From off the stalk and trample it in the mire,/And boast that he hath trampled it" (22). John's disguised presence at the party, then, serves mainly to accentuate the personal enmity between Robin and himself. When Robin meets this so-called holy Palmer who has hidden his face and purports to have a vow of silence, Robin exclaims: "I hate hidden faces" (28). Again, the focus is more on John's personality than his corrupt politics; and later, he is called "the king of vice" (44), which comments more on his behavior than his policies. Robin too puts his personal life first, as seen by his happiness over receiving Marian's ring when the party is over. The fact that romance takes precedence over rebellion contributes to the conservative focus of the drama.

Second, Robin's flight to the greenwood and assumption of leadership over the outlaws quickly afford him a chance to don a disguise that provides "sheer comedy" (Knight 199). In undoubtedly one of the silliest episodes in all Robin Hood literature, Tennyson reworks the gist of the post-medieval ballad "Robin Hood and the Bishop," where Robin exchanges clothes with an old woman to elude his foes. Robin is just standing in the forest and soliloquizing when suddenly, inexplicably, Prince John, the Sheriff, and a mercenary come out of nowhere looking for him. Realistically, it is ridiculous for John to be doing his own dirty work; dramatically, this scenario reinforces

the play's focus on personal rather than political issues. After Robin has completed his quick switch with the friendly old woman, Tennyson proceeds to drag the joke out for ten pages. Not only does Robin play the clown in his new role as he talks to his enemies, but he makes the old woman assist him in ludicrous fashion: "Get thee into the closet there, and make a ghostly wail ever and anon to scare 'em" (49). Although Robin bemoans the hard lot of the poor now and then (which has been caused, not by monarchical rule itself, but by Prince John's oppressive management), essentially his bantering is pure foolishness. And he soon proves that he does not even need the disguise in order to save himself; he has really just been wasting time and having fun. When the still-disguised Robin joins his enemies in shooting at nightingales, he betrays his real identity with a carelessness that could only be intentional. Even stupid Prince John catches on and completes the process by tearing off Robin's gown: "Thou standest straight. Thou speakest manlike. Thou art no old woman--thou art disguised--thou art one of the thieves" (58). The episode is proof in itself that deception and impersonation figure more prominently as sources of amusement than as political or social commentary in this late Victorian context.

Third, Maid Marian's attempted intervention in the ensuing fight between Robin and his three foes marks another noteworthy case of impersonation. While she does not actually participate in the fighting, she stands by in the costume of "a Redcross Knight" (59) as her father helps Robin to drive off Prince John and company. When the victory is won, Sir Richard Lea tells Robin that he cannot have Marian because an outlawed husband would not be able to help him pay back his mortgage to the Abbot. Peculiarly, after introducing the disguised Marian as his ransomed son Walter, Sir Richard exits with Little John, leaving the two lovers alone together. Then the effects of Marian's disguise are felt. The scene that follows is vaguely reminiscent of the meeting of disguised lovers at the ball in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, although here Marian has the advantage of knowing Robin's identity and Robin thinks she is her brother. Masquerade love-play dominates, as Robin speaks of the depth of their affection for each other: "Do you doubt

me when I say she loves me, man" (64). Robin becomes testy when he thinks his interlocutor is not praising Marian enough, and the escalating tension is brought to a climax when he spots Marian's ring on her finger. This leads to the removal of the disguise Marian donned to elude Prince John and the happy reconciliation of the lovers. Marian's impersonation, therefore, is nothing more than a device to heighten the emotional tenor of the scene. Her disguise does not reflect a subversive attitude toward society.

Fourth, the return of King Richard in disguise is handled in utterly conventional style. Initially, Richard realizes the time is not right for him to reveal himself: "I must not as yet be known" (124). His enemies still pose too much of a threat. Richard is subjected to some philosophizing by Friar Tuck about the authentic nature of Robin's forest rulership and the failure of England's monarch to administer his own realm with equal skill (125), another motif possibly borrowed from Peacock's Maid Marian. This passage may hint at the particular type of status quo Robin is supporting here: in light of the diminished power of the monarchy by the nineteenth century, perhaps the loyal English citizen is being invited to assume some responsibilities that were previously handled by the monarch. But the King appears to bring such speculation to naught when he finally announces his identity: "I am here and I am he" (142). Significantly, Richard doffs his disguise to prevent Prince John from seizing Marian, not so much to assert his right to the kingship. Disguise, then, becomes the instrument of restoring order, first in the sphere of romance, and second in the sphere of sovereignty. It even seems that Richard's disguising himself might have been unnecessary. In a setting of loyalism and conservatism, linked by Knight to the "concept of a timeless value connected with moral rectitude, English triumphal history and the beauty of the countryside" (201), there is no doubt that the rightful King will ultimately triumph in this play. The closing song triumphantly proclaims, "Now the King is home again, and nevermore to roam again" (Tennyson 155), and its lyrics brook no dissent, no alternative interpretations--even though the real King Richard only spent a few months in England before leaving again. Deception and impersonation in

The Foresters speak to the values of conservative monarchism, of idealized true love, of the merry greenwood forever unscathed in memory. Robin consolidates the greenwood as a nostalgic ideal by apostrophizing it: "You seem, as it were,/Immortal" (154). The fun-loving outlaws' trickery may have aided a little in making England a better place, but their trickery is not an essential ingredient of the recipe for good order.

The Foresters features perhaps the clearest illustration of trends in the use of deception and impersonation in the Robin Hood literature of the nineteenth century. Along with Ivanhoe, Maid Marian, and The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood, it reveals the gap between the subversive medieval yeoman Robin Hood and the conservative, occasionally trick-playing gentleman who would supplant him three hundred years later. Instead of reflecting an anti-authoritarian mindset associated with the grievances of yeomen, these nineteenth-century works consistently make Robin and his friends into supporters of upper-class power and hierarchical rule. As in the texts of 1500 to 1800, Robin frequently indulges in deception and impersonation simply to have fun at the expense of his foes or conveniently save his own skin, without any broader criticisms of the politics, economy, or social conventions of a corrupt society. Nineteenth-century novels and plays retain the mischievous, playful streak established for Robin since 1500, but they go further. More often than ever before, they set him up as a dispossessed member of the nobility. Robin's patriotic opposition to the exaggerated notion of an ongoing medieval persecution of Saxons by Normans precludes trickery that would throw into question the mechanism by which justice can be restored, namely, the return to power of good King Richard at the top of the hierarchy. Also, his love for Maid Marian, herself an aristocrat and a staple figure in Robin Hood literature by now, means that deception and impersonation are regularly downgraded to the level of masquerade love-play. Thus, a tamer, more conservative Robin Hood is consolidated for the reading pleasure of children and heritage enthusiasts of the Victorian period. Trickery with which Robin is associated no longer carries the stigma of social subversion. The alteration of what was

such a definitive part of his persona in medieval times results in his becoming a figure of gentrified nostalgia. His powers of trickery no longer threatening, he is consigned to the glorious past of England by nineteenth-century writers, having fought as nobly for the perpetuation of a traditional English society as the distinguished occupants of the tombs in Westminster Abbey. In today's depictions of Robin Hood, the nineteenth-century impression continues to predominate: Robin is not a dissenter who uses deception and impersonation as ways of defining himself outside society, but a patriotic supporter of hierarchical authority, whose fun-loving ways, romantic spirit, and aristocratic background combine to rule out subversive forms of trickery. This drastic transformation of Robin Hood is one of the most remarkable threads in his long and varied history.

Conclusion

A comparison of medieval and nineteenth-century approaches to deception and impersonation in the Robin Hood tradition supports the conclusion that a major transformation of these themes took place over time. In medieval ballads, Robin freely hoodwinks the representatives of a corrupt hierarchical society. His tricks and those of his supporters, who have become capable tricksters by association with him, comment ironically and subversively on the political, economic, and religious organization of medieval England, positing a life of freedom, humor, imagination, daring, and crime with impunity that is available only to the outlaws, who have abandoned society. Wearing disguises or employing other forms of artifice is not merely calculated to help them avoid danger or obtain wealth. Thus, A Gest of Robyn Hode, "Robin Hood and the Monk," "Robin Hood and the Potter," and "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," along with the play fragment Robin Hood and the Sheriff, show Robin and his friends using deception and impersonation to revenge themselves on authority figures who enrich themselves at the expense of the oppressed. At the same time, they do not hesitate to assist someone such as Sir Richard of the Lea who has fallen on hard times like themselves. The discontented yeomen constituting the primary audience for these tales would have derived vicarious pleasure from listening to the fulfillment of their anti-authoritarian revenge fantasies.

In the medieval period, Robin's fantasy appeal is enhanced by his unwillingness to submit to any authorities except those at the summit of the temporal and spiritual hierarchies. He respects the King of England, even though he may not obey the monarch's orders to the fullest extent; he will gladly pay fervent homage to God and the Virgin Mary. But otherwise, he moves freely across social categories, making light of the restrictions that these normally pose. He and his friends often don garments which are inappropriate for their social rank in order to make a point. Robin frequently causes disruptions in the

intermediate levels of the social hierarchy represented by such figures as the Sheriff of Nottingham or corrupt churchmen. Robin is conscious of the power that names hold in a folkloric sense; in cases such as "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," he can use impersonation as a means of sustaining personal honor. Alternatively, he can assert his manly pride by going undisguised, ready to leave his fate in the hands of heaven, which, he believes, will ultimately decide the fate of all people.

A distinction between the two categories of good deceivers and bad deceivers also becomes evident in the medieval texts. The good deceivers--freedom-loving, subversive individuals such as Robin and his men--see their tricks succeed on a regular basis. In contrast, bad deceivers, who are not only corrupt but also unimaginative, prove unable to use deception and impersonation effectively, as their trickery not only fails but usually comes back to haunt them. Bad deceivers are construed as deserving victims of the retributive justice that Robin and his friends mete out. Hence, deception and impersonation represent much more in these medieval texts than simple practical jokes or dramatic devices. They are tools of subversion which promote dissent from the mainstream conventions of medieval English society.

But between 1500 and 1800, tales of Robin Hood begin to move away from subversion as a cornerstone of Robin's talent for deception and impersonation. Fooling enemies of the outlaw band becomes nothing more than standard fare in both ballads and plays, even though ballads in particular mirror the form of their medieval predecessors. It no longer represents commentary on contemporary social concerns, nor does it contain an implicit invitation to the audience to act subversively. Ballads such as "Robin Hood and Allen a Dale," "Robin Hood and the Bishop," "Robin Hood's Golden Prize," "Robin Hood's Delight," and "Robin Hood and Maid Marian" do not call into question the authority of hierarchical structures, except when attacking a target like Catholicism, which was often derided in England in the wake of the Reformation. Similarly, plays such as George a Green and The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntingdon present deception and

impersonation as harmless tools which may be expedient at times, but are really insignificant in comparison to the stabilizing power of a solid conservative monarchy, which is the true solution. The genesis of motifs that would become standard in the nineteenth century is also apparent: Robin's aristocratic background, his love for Marian, and so on. Throughout, Robin retains his sense of humor, but his trickery no longer creates subversive humor. He is much more willing to bow to authority. Compared to the medieval texts, the Robin of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries is stagnant in both creative and political terms. He is yesterday's trickster. In part, this reshaping of his character can be ascribed to new mass literacy, which was fed by a publishing industry that favored Robin Hood broadside ballads and Garlands that would reach a wider audience by avoiding controversy. Likewise, urban theatres were now the main growth area for plays and those theatres were under the scrutiny of centralized power, which would not hesitate to censor the stage if seditious material was presented. So during this period, Robin Hood's trickery steadily loses the subversive thrust it had before 1500.

In the nineteenth century, the taming of Robin is completed. Deception and impersonation in such books as Ivanhoe, Maid Marian, The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood, and The Foresters are usually featured for comic or burlesque effect. Otherwise, they serve as dramatic devices to heighten tension between lovers in the form of masquerade love-play, or to magnify the historically inaccurate concept of an ongoing medieval struggle between Normans and Saxons. Deception and impersonation are no longer subversive, for Robin is transformed into a nationalistic supporter of the status quo. He is a fun-loving gentleman in fancy dress whose keenest desire is to see the King assert his royal sovereignty. Even when his background is not aristocratic, that desire does not waver. Robin's losing the vigorous, innovative spirit of trickery that helped make him so dynamic in the Middle Ages often results in his marginalization as a character in novels and plays after 1800. Nonetheless, the quality of writing about Robin Hood in this period

is superior to the recycled ballads that dominated the market between 1500 and 1800. But Robin's new lease on life comes at the expense of his being fully coopted by the established powers. The gap between the medieval Robin Hood and his nineteenth-century counterpart is immense. Originally, Robin was a radical trickster who stood outside society and commented subversively on it, pointing out its failings. Now he is depicted as a romantic, conservative, loyalist hero who plays tricks for entertainment.

On the surface, deception and impersonation appear to be consistent themes in the literary tradition of Robin Hood. Constant, yes; but not consistent. Knight observes that the one consistent point about tales of Robin Hood throughout the centuries is that "motifs keep being reinvented" (261). Such is the case with deception and impersonation. That is clearly illustrated in Robin's transformation from the anti-authoritarian, subversively deceptive yeoman to the romantic, conservative dispossessed nobleman who occasionally amuses himself by playing tricks. The transformation emphasizes the power of social change to dictate the way we view this most resilient of legendary English heroes. Most modern readers find the nineteenth-century portrait of Robin the most familiar and also the most appealing. They have no desire for Robin to change or grow. In the twentieth century, most cinematic versions of the legend and new retellings for children have tended to reinforce the conservative image.

At times, it can be difficult to relate the man in the Lincoln green suit and his longbow to today's changing realities. But it would be presumptuous to think that Robin Hood has ceased for all time to develop as a master of trickery. The spirit of resistance, the original spirit of deception and impersonation, has not been utterly effaced from his storyline. Robin may still have a few tricks left in his quiver.

Works Cited

Note: with the exception of "Robin Hood and the Bishop," "Robin Hood's Golden Prize," and "Robin Hood's Delight," which are quoted from F.J. Child's The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, all ballads cited in this thesis are quoted from R.B. Dobson and J. Taylor's Rymes of Robin Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw.

Arnold, Ralph. A Social History of England: 55 B.C. to A.D. 1215. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967.

Bellamy, John. Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973.

Briggs, Asa. A Social History of England. 2nd ed. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994.

Bryant, Frank Egbert. A History of English Balladry and Other Studies. Boston: The Four Seasons Company, 1919.

Butler, Marilyn. Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Child, F.J. The English and Scottish Popular Ballads. 5 vols. 1888. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1890.

Coulton, G.G. Medieval Panorama: The English Scene from Conquest to Reformation. 1938. New York: Meridian Books, 1957.

Crawford, Thomas. Scott. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965.

Dobson, R.B. and J. Taylor. Rymes of Robin Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw. London: Heinemann, 1976.

Fowler, David C. A Literary History of the Popular Ballad. Durham: Duke University Press, 1968.

Friedman, Albert B. The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English-Speaking World. New York: Viking Press, 1956.

Gosse, Sir Edmund. "Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, Lord." Encyclopedia Britannica. 1929 ed.

Greene, Robert (?). George a Green. c. 1600. Oxford: The Malone Society, 1911.

Hanawalt, Barbara A. Crime and Conflict in English Communities 1300-1348. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Harvey, Sir Paul, ed. The Oxford Companion to English Literature. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955.

Haworth, Peter. English Hymns and Ballads. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1927.

Hodgart, M.J.C. The Ballads. 1950. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1962.

Hollister, C. Warren. Medieval Europe: A Short History. 5th ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982.

Holt, J.C. Robin Hood. Rev. ed. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1989.

Hoyle, Fred. The Intelligent Universe. London: Michael Joseph, 1983.

Johnson, Edgar. Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown. 2 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1970.

Keen, Maurice. The Outlaws of Medieval Legend. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1977.

Knight, Stephen. Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994.

Martin, Robert Bernard. Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.

The Middle English Dictionary. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975.

Mulvihill, James. Thomas Love Peacock. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987.

Munday, Anthony. The Huntingdon Plays: A Critical Edition of *The Downfall* and *The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon*. Ed. John Carney Meagher. London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1980.

Myers, Henry A. Medieval Kingship. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982.

The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Palmer, R.R. and Joel Colton. A History of the Modern World. 7th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1992.

Peacock, Thomas Love. Maid Marian. 1822. London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1891.

Pearson, Hesketh. Walter Scott: His Life and Personality. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1954.

Pyle, Howard. The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood. 1883. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911.

Rodes Jr., Robert E. Ecclesiastical Administration in Medieval England: The Anglo-Saxons to the Reformation. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977.

Rowling, Marjorie. Everyday Life in Medieval Times. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1968.

Saul, Nigel. The Batsford Companion to Medieval England. London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd., 1983.

Scott, Sir Walter. Ivanhoe. 1819. London: Penguin Books, 1994.

Shepherd, Simon. Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981.

Swanson, R.N. Church and Society in Late Medieval England. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Tennyson, Lord Alfred. The Foresters. London: Macmillan, 1892.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary. Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1986.

Wiles, David. The Early Plays of Robin Hood. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981.

Wright, David, ed. English Romantic Verse. 1968. London: Penguin Books, 1986.

Appendix

The position I have adopted on the controversial yeoman question can be summarized in the following manner: it is my opinion that the medieval Robin Hood ballads appealed primarily, though not necessarily exclusively, to free, landholding yeomen farmers, rather than appealing primarily to the yeomen of the households of the nobility, which is where J.C. Holt posits the genesis of the tradition. References to a "yeoman audience" in my thesis tend to convey the notion of a distinct social group existing in medieval society with a particular consciousness and set of grievances. This notion may be construed by some historians as having overtones of Marxist analysis with its class-driven model. Other commentators have argued that tales of Robin Hood had a substantially broader audience in the medieval period, and that Robin's acts of deception, impersonation, robbery, and violence directed against figures in authority are not to be viewed as socially subversive. For instance, Holt makes these claims about Robin: "He changes neither law nor society. He simply procures justice within them by guile and violence" (198). In such an interpretation, Robin's deeds are intended to take vengeance upon or perhaps reform particular corrupt individuals, rather than opposing hierarchical authority on the whole. The yeoman question has not yet been resolved to universal satisfaction, and will undoubtedly remain a source of controversy for some time.

VITA

Surname: Aykroyd Given Names: Lucas Mikael Darche

Place of Birth: Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria 1992-1997

Degrees Awarded:

B.A. (First-Class Honours) University of Victoria 1996

Honours and Awards:

University of Victoria English M.A. Teaching Assistantship, 1996
The Edgar Ferrar Corbet Scholarship, 1994
The Robert S. Evans Memorial Scholarship--General, 1993
The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany Book Prize, 1993
The University of Victoria Faculty Scholarship, 1993
The President's Scholarship, 1993
The Dr. Nora Haimberger Scholarship, 1993
The Judge J.B. Clearihue Memorial Scholarship, 1992

Publications:

"'Homage to Switzerland' as Monodrama: A Microcosm of Hemingway's Autobiographically Inspired Fiction." The Hemingway Review 17.1 (1997).

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or by a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis:

Deception and Impersonation in the Robin Hood Tradition: A Comparison of Medieval and Nineteenth-Century Approaches

Author: [redacted]
Lucas Mikael Darche Aykroyd

Date: September 29, 1997