Zeitschrift: SPELL : Swiss papers in English language and literature

Herausgeber: Swiss Association of University Teachers of English

Band: 43 (2023)

Artikel: Robin Hood and the afterlife of yeoman values in Anthony Munday's The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington and The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1047009

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Robin Hood and the Afterlife of Yeoman Values in Anthony Munday's *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* and *The Death of Robert, Earle of Huntington*

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This essay explores the complex definition of the yeoman as a historical entity in late medieval England, assessing how the figure is represented in *A Gest of Robin Hode, Robin Hood and the Monk* and *Robin Hood and the Potter.* In these medieval ballads, Robin Hood is a forester yeoman, whose skills as a hunter and archer are indicative of his status as an outlaw. The early modern period marks an important moment in the character's afterlife and Anthony Munday's *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* and *The Death of Robert, Earle of Huntington* feature a new Robin Hood character, the gentleman in disguise, who finds himself in the woods by accident. The significant alteration and gentrification of Robin Hood's character in Munday's plays, however, does not erase all traces of his medieval yeoman predecessor. In this essay I analyse the way yeoman values are maintained and reconfigured in Munday's plays and argue that they retain a positive appreciation of the yeoman figure, despite the character's status as Robert, Earl of Huntington.

Keywords: Robin Hood, forest, yeoman, outlaw, gentrification

The afterlives of the mythic hero Robin Hood are numerous, from first references to an ancient oral tradition recounted by William Langland (c.1332-c.1386), through written accounts, to the most recent film adaptations (Knight, "Remembering Robin Hood" 149–161).[1] Literary appropriations include medieval plays and games, ballads, early modern plays, and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century broadsides and garlands (Knight, *Robin Hood in Greenwood Stood* 1–30). Each explores different thematic

[1] "The Robin Hood Project," hosted by the University of Rochester, lists fifty-two feature films, fifteen animated films, and fourteen television series (Chandler).

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strands, as do later examples (Holt 139): for instance, John Keats' *Robin Hood* poem (1818) expresses anti-urban patriotism by nostalgically reminiscing about the greenwood; and Alfred Lord Tennyson's play, *The Foresters: Robin Hood and Maid Marian* (premier 1892), shows Maid Marian offering an epic panegyric on Robin Hood as a national hero, alongside Harold the Saxon and Hereward the Wake, who fought the Normans (1.1).[2] This paper focuses on Robin Hood as a yeoman and the ways in which this aspect of his character was adapted during the early modern period by Anthony Munday in *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* and, more briefly, *The Death of Robert, Earle of Huntington*.[3] I first contextualise my analysis of Munday's plays, outlining the figure of the yeoman as it was understood in medieval literature, culture and politics by drawing on the medieval texts: *A Geste of Robin Hode*, *Robin Hood and the Monk*, and *Robin Hood and the Potter*. The chapter then re-evaluates the process of gentrification that Robin Hood undergoes in Munday's plays and assesses their representation of yeomanry.[4]

The legal document called the Statute of Additions, which was drawn up in 1413 in the first year of Henry V's reign, required anyone named as a defendant in a writ, personal action, or record in a criminal action, to designate their estate, degree, or trade. Men who were below the level of gentleman were to identify themselves as yeoman, or husbandman, or labourer, or by their craft (Pollard 114; Holt 115). In this general context, the term 'yeoman' defined a large variety of different social grades within medieval society. A medieval yeoman in rural England would stand between a gentleman and a peasant or labourer. He would possibly own a portion of land, but without being part of the landed gentry. Within the manorial household, in rural and urban centres, the yeoman also held specific roles, sometimes serving as personal guard and protector of the nobility. Within the public sphere, he would hold administrative positions such as bailiff, constable, or churchwarden. Allusions to these 'yeoman' functions are made in several late medieval Robin Hood tales. Yet, as shown by James Holt, it seems that the social rank of 'yeoman' could be interchanged with that of gentleman and esquire, as in the case of a certain John Otter of Warwickshire who is listed in official records as a gentleman in 1455, an esquire in 1468, and a yeoman in 1470 (115).

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2 The writings of Stephen Knight are the best starting point for an exploration of Robin Hood's reception history.

3 The plays were produced in 1598 and first published in 1601.

4 Quotes from the medieval Robin Hood texts, included parenthetically, are taken from Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren.

1 Robin Hood and the Yeoman in Medieval Ballads

When applied to Robin Hood and his men in the late medieval Robin Hood ballads and tales, the term 'yeoman' arguably had a more specific meaning: they are 'yeomen of the forest.' They have the skills of foresters, which involved the use of bows and arrows, and know the codes and crafts of the forester, including hunting (Richmond 98). The yeoman of the forest's skills as an archer were deemed second only to those of knights on the battlefield. Geoffrey Chaucer's yeoman in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* (c.1400) is part of a trio with a knight and a squire that forms a hierarchically organised group with the yeoman at the bottom. The description highlights the yeoman's impressive weapons and his knowledge of the forest as a gamekeeper, both of which would have been useful to the trio in case of ambush or more frontal attacks:

> A Yeman hadde he and servantz namo
> At that tyme, for hym liste ride so,
> And he was clad in cote and hode of grene.
> A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,
> Under his belt he bar ful thriftily
> (Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;
> His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe),
> And in his hand he baar a mighty bowe.
> A not heed hadde he, with a broun visage.
> Of wodecraft wel koude he al the usage.
> Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,
> And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
> And on that oother syde a gay daggere
> Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;
> A Christopher on his brest of silver sheene,
> An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene;
> A forster was he, smoothly, as I gesse. (lines 100–117)

Chaucer's yeoman is a gamekeeper rather than an administrative official in charge of forests (Cooper 37).[5] His portrait, which focuses on external aspects, fits with what one can surmise about Robin Hood in the medieval tales. By contrast, several passages where 'yeoman' is used in *A Gest* (first recorded in printed form in the first half of the sixteenth century)

[5] The description of the canon's yeoman in "The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue" of *The Canterbury Tales* shows Chaucer's understanding of the different social categories the term 'yeoman' covers in medieval culture. This yeoman is a servant (Latin *valettus*) and the prologue clearly highlights the hierarchical structure of his relationship with his 'lord,' the canon (Chaucer 554–719).

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remain vague as to their understanding of the specific functions of the yeoman; for instance, in the prologue, where the narrator announces "I shall you tel of a gode yeman, / His name was Robyn Hode" (lines 3–4) or, a little further on, when Robin advises his men not to do harm to "gode yeman / That walketh by grene wode shawe" (lines 53–54). What is clear, however, is that Robin appears as the type of the just man and not the just gentleman (Richmond 92).

Medieval ballads and tales do not visit Robin Hood's past before he becomes an outlaw, but the ease with which he navigates the forest and makes it a viable, even comfortable abode for himself and his community implies that he is a competent forester (Pollard 121). Robin is also able to 'manage' royal forests in Lancashire:

> All the compasse of Lancasshyre
> He went both ferre and nere,
> Tyll he came to Plomton Parke;
> He faylyd many of his dere.
>
> There our kynge was wont to se
> Herdes many one,
> He could unneth fynde one dere,
> That bare ony good horne. (*A Gest* lines 1425–1432)

The king's annoyance on finding his forest emptied of harts with good horns is a consequence of Robin Hood's hunting / poaching skills.

In addition to these skills, typical of the yeoman of the forest, Robin Hood and his men also engage in outlawry, rejecting hierarchy, and establishing meritocracy. They defy the king and his officers, especially the sheriff of Nottingham; rob the rich and the undeserving without giving back to the poor (a development of the post-medieval tradition); ridicule corrupt heads of religious houses; and use violence, including murder, in the defence of justice (Pollard 117). Robin Hood becomes a yeoman who has "rejected service to a lord, service in a household, altogether" (Richmond 94). Rejection of service to a lord and departure from the household is substituted with communal life in the forest, with no fixed hierarchical structure. In *Robin Hood and the Monk*, following Little John's heroic deeds in freeing Robin Hood from prison and bringing him to the safety of the linden tree, the latter appoints him "maister […] Of alle my men and me" (lines 313–314), thus giving up his own position of leadership and recognising Little John's superiority of character. Little John's refusal maintains the status quo and adds humility as one of his qualities, but the episode nonetheless serves as a reminder that leadership among the yeo-

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men of the forest works according to merit rather than birth rights. In addition, there does not seem to be any hierarchy among the yeomen below their leader.

Heroic deeds are depicted as demonstrations of brotherhood within the yeoman community. In *A Gest* Robin and Much refuse to give up wounded Little John. Instead of killing him or leaving him behind so as to avoid capture by the sheriff, Much carries him on his back as they retreat to find shelter (lines 1217–1232). They find refuge in the castle of Rychard at the Lee, to whom Robin Hood pledges lasting friendship because Lee previously helped a "pore yeman," thereby demonstrating shared understanding of the importance and enactment of brotherhood values between yeoman (*A Gest* lines 71, 1069–1076). In addition to economic independence, self-confidence, freedom, intense *communitas*, and fellowship, these values outclass social division and hierarchy (Holt 126; Gray 84).

A Gest and several of the earlier ballads, such as *Robin Hood and the Monk* and *Robin Hood and the Potter*, circulate yeoman values and ideology that have political force. These fictional tales could have inspired the middling class, to which yeomen belonged, into playing a more active role in the political sphere by challenging corrupt royal officials without necessarily questioning royal authority as such. The attraction of most of the medieval tales of Robin Hood is based on their destabilising function and their momentary, carnivalesque inversion of roles. They question the status quo, critique individual wrongdoing, and, although the fictional characters remain in the end obedient subjects to the king, they nevertheless plant the seeds of revolt and rebellion in the minds of late fifteenth-century middle-class audiences.

Late medieval texts promote Robin through association with Christian virtue, with the Virgin Mary, and by denigrating specific characters. *Robin Hood and the Potter* does so through comparison with an avaricious potter, but what seems most significant in this tale is the insistence on the association of religious devotion and yeoman values. The ballad identifies him as a "yeman" who "For the loffe of owre ladey, / All women werschepyd he" (lines 5–12). *Robin Hood and the Monk* also portrays Robin as a devout Christian, whose reason to leave the forest community temporarily for Nottingham is motivated by a desire to attend mass in Saint Mary's church. *Robin Hood and the Monk*'s emphasis on Robin's religious devotion contrasts with the deceitful behaviour of the monk who reports Robin's presence within the church. Both the monk and sheriff act as foils for Robin who is depicted as genuinely devout, while they, as re-

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ligious and secular officials, ignore the sanctity of the mass and the concept of the church as a refuge for fugitives and outlaws. Here, Robin relies on traditional religious values and insists on attending the ritual of the mass whose spiritual content cannot be lessened by deceitful and selfish (religious) authoritative figures.

The narrator of *Robin Hood and the Potter* addresses an audience of "god yemen" (line 5), but under this label a multiplicity of social roles could apply. While Robin Hood himself bears all the characteristics of a yeoman of the forest, the audience of yeomen mentioned in the late medieval tales may have been a more socially diverse range of individuals.[6] Holt offers the following comment about the household yeoman:

> In short he could be a prosperous landholder who, if he was socially ambitious, might have pretensions to gentility and achieve recognition as a gentleman. At the other end of the social scale, he would not be easy to distinguish from the general ruck of the rural population from which his family might recently have emerged. Those who listened to the tales of Robin Hood could place their yeomen anywhere within this range. That no doubt broadened their appeal. (117)

Another use of the word 'yeoman' expands social possibilities further. The Latin term *valettus* came to be translated as 'yeoman' in the early fourteenth century. In the context of the household and the court, it described a social rank below knights and squires (117). So, the audience of yeomen could have included yeomen landholders, household or official yeomen, and yeomen of the forest.[7]

The outlaw deeds described in *Robin Hood and the Monk* rest on the premise that the tale, based on values shared by the middling class, would also appeal to gentlemen and labourers with similar concerns. Although the early ballads and tales mention only Little John, Much the Miller's son, and William Scarlock as Robin's named companions, they also mention a group of unnamed *wight yemen*, that range from twelve to one hundred and forty, thus populating their narratives with a broad community who support and assent to these values.[8] Early ballads and tales were clearly aimed at an audience conversant with, and responsive to general yeoman values, but it is also more specifically targeted towards the for-

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6 On texts that specifically address an audience of yeomen see Holt (105).

7 For a detailed social history of the yeoman, see Holt (105–153).

8 Their presence within the narrative also triggers inclusiveness beyond its frame to the tale's audience (Knight and Ohlgren 49).

ester yeoman world encapsulated by Robin Hood, "yeman of the forest" (*A Gest* line 887).

A Gest shares the same values as *Robin Hood and the Monk* and *Robin Hood and the Potter*, but a process of gentrification is already at play in this late medieval text and may reveal a desire to extend its impact to a more gentrified and/or socially ambitious middling class audience. Indeed, although Robin remains the standard bearer of forester values, his amenable exchanges with the knight Sir Rychard at the Lee is concluded by the spreading of boards and tablecloths for a courtly banquet that takes place in Robin's wood (lines 1261–1264). Another moment, earlier in Fitt One of the ballad, inverts the social hierarchy when Robin arms Sir Rychard, who has been dispossessed of his wealth by the abbot of St Mary's Abbey. Fitt Eight brings Robin to the royal court for a one-year long stay where he gains reputation, but at a certain financial cost and with the loss of his skills at archery, which stand for his forester yeoman status (lines 1729–1752). Stephen Knight highlights differences from previous medieval tales in the definition of his social status:

> The opening of the *Gest* elevates Robin: Little John addresses him as 'Maister' at the start of his first two utterances (lines 19, 41), and speaks to the knight of 'My Maister' (line 99) – an approach very different from Little John's attitude in the two early ballads. Robin assumes a quasi-Arthurian position of waiting for a marvel before dinner and instructing his men: it is as if the author has a copy of Malory's 'The Wedding of King Arthur' open before him. This positioning of Robin replaces both the Mary-worshipping focus of 'Robin Hood and the Monk' and the yeoman class-identification of 'Robin Hood and the Potter'; it provides a serious social upgrade for Robin that is pursued through the language and plotting of the whole text. (*Robin Hood in Greenwood Stood* 21)

Robin's participation in the life of the royal court is in the end unsuccessful in *A Gest*, but it nevertheless points to the potential for transformation from yeoman of the forest to the falsely accused gentleman of the early modern period.

Ohlgren suggests that *A Gest* was first performed following its commission in 1439 as a semi-dramatic performance on the annual awards banquet of the Drapers Company in London (Hoffman 119). Whatever the case may be, it seems that the *Gest*'s subtle social upgrading in terms of form, content, and character, suited the mercantile urban audience for whom *A Gest* was performed by minstrels in guildhalls or household halls. As shown by Gray, the significant contrast between *A Gest* and *Robin Hood and the Potter* in terms of their length, character, and method

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of performance, suggests that the late medieval Robin Hood material circulated both as a short epic, or long ballad or romance-ballad, and in the form of the merry tale (81). The early Robin Hood poems, with their plain and often formulaic expressions, were almost certainly initially circulated orally by minstrels in the marketplace or in taverns for a mixed audience, while *A Gest*, at least initially and in the form that has survived to this day, was aimed at a more gentrified audience (81).

The process of gentrification of the Robin Hood character undergoes further transformation from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century. The *Historia Majoris Britanniae* (1521) by John Major and its elaboration in English in Richard Grafton's *Chronicle at Large* (1569) proposes a narrative that utterly and definitely transforms the yeoman into an earl (Knight and Ohlgren 296), as well as claiming Robin Hood's authenticity:[9]

> But in an olde and auncient Pamphlet I finde this written of the sayd Robert Hood. This man (sayth he) discended of a nobel parentage: or rather beying of a base stocke and linage, was for his manhode and chivalry advaunced to the noble dignité of an Erle. Excellyng principally in Archery, or shootyng, his manly courage agreeying thereunto: But afterwardes he so prodigally exceeded in charges and expences, that he fell into great debt, by reason wherof, so many actions and sutes were commenced against him, whereunto he aunswered not, that by order of lawe he was outlawed [...]. (Grafton 28)

The chronicle hesitates in its account of Robert Hood's nobility, by first mentioning his noble parentage before moving on to explain his title of earl by means of his personal qualities, such as manhood and chivalry. Within this newly socially mobile society, where 'gentillesse' is acquired by deeds rather than by blood, social assent via the exchange of material goods can also be followed by social descent. As the chronicle tells us succinctly, Robert Hood, unable to reimburse his creditors, is declared an outlaw. According to medieval law, the status of outlaw is reached when a person, having been lawfully summoned to court, refuses to appear for trial (Knight and Ohlgren 149n5). This Robert Hood becomes the wronged nobleman Robert, Earl of Huntington in the plays of Anthony Munday. The type of the forest yeoman seems therefore to be symbolically obliterated, at least initially, from early modern renderings by the transformation of his name from Robin to Robert and finally to Robert, Earl of Huntington.

[9] For more information on the historicity of Robin Hood, see Luxford 70–76.

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2 Munday's Huntington Plays

The yeoman values and ideology identified in the first part of this essay persist in Munday's *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* and *The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington.* These plays, both written between 1597-1598 and printed in 1601,[10] were first performed by the Admiral's Men's Company in front of socially-diverse audiences at the Rose theatre (Gurr 237). The range of ticket prices alone is suggestive of mixed levels of affluency.[11] Meredith Skura has suggested that the plays seem to have been addressing an aspiring and emerging urban London middling class in need of heroes whose social elevation fulfilled their own desires, with their success measured in aristocratic terms (166). As I intend to demonstrate, Munday's plays instead continue to convey yeoman values such as independence, self-confidence, freedom, brotherhood, and fellowship, despite the main hero's promotion to the rank of earl.

The Downfall, a play-within-a-play, is set during the reign of the crusader King Richard I (1189-1199), more specifically during his captivity in Austria. Robert, Earle of Huntington, has unjustly been declared an outlaw by his uncle, Gilbert de Hood, Prior of York, and by Sir Doncaster, a nobleman at the court of Prince John. The accusations are based on a debt that Robert was intending to pay back. This denunciation takes place as Robert and Matilda are about to be betrothed. Matilda, daughter of Robert Fitzwater, desired by Prince John, follows Robert to the greenwood where she changes her name to Maid Marian. Robert is betrayed on several occasions by various courtiers including his uncle, Sir Doncaster and, to a lesser extent, by Queen Elinor, her son Prince John, and Robert's servant, Warman. Following the surprise return of King Richard, Robert is recognised as a faithful subject of the king and is invited back to the court. In a somewhat trusting gesture, Robert exonerates the conspirators, whom he thinks have repented, and returns them to the king as a gift (Nelson 106–107).

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[10] *The Downfall* and *The Death* can be found in Knight and Ohlgren; subsequent parenthetical references record scene and line numbers. Knight and Ohlgren only offer an extract of *The Death of Robert,* up to the death of Robert in scene five. Their edition is the most recent one (2000) and is also accessible online.

[11] Prices were one penny for standing, two for a gallery seat, three for a gallery seat with cushion, and four for a gallery seat where one can be seen. The price range quadruples between the cheapest and most expensive positions, thus making the plays affordable and available to a diverse social audience (Gurr 214). On the Admiral's Men, see Rutter.

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The Death involves the same characters. Robert is poisoned by his uncle and Doncaster at the end of scene five. During this slow death, which lasts almost the whole of the act, he shows great equanimity, inviting his enemies and friends to reconcile and be good subjects to John who has succeeded his brother Richard as king. The following scenes focus on John's harassment of Matilda / Marian. The protection of her uncle, Lord Bruce, being insufficient, Matilda / Marian takes shelter in Dunmow Abbey, but her fate follows that of Robert in that she is poisoned by one of John's evil henchmen. The play ends by showing John repenting for his evil deeds (Nelson 105).

As can be inferred from these brief summaries, several major elements of the late medieval ballads and *A Gest* are left out of Munday's plays: community life as experienced in the forests of Barnesdale, Sherwood, and Inglewood, receives less attention. The trusty tree, official seat of the forest people, is gone. There is no archery contest in Munday's plays, and Robin Hood's other deceitful tricks are omitted. More significantly, his religious devotion in general and more specifically towards the Virgin Mary, which situates his exploits within the larger context of Catholic England, is also absent from the plays. Instead, although the narrative is historically situated during the period of King Richard and Prince John, Munday transfers the events to an early modern aristocratic court, including intrigues, poisoning, and complex love affairs (Robert, Prince Johan, and Marion). This new context and staging of the play in post-Reformation London enables the expression of increased hostility toward members of the Catholic church (Knight, *Reading Robin Hood* 76; Phillips 99–104), such as Friar Tuck's reference to "The envious Priest of Hothersfield" (*Downfall* 11.1618) and the overall representation of Robert's uncle, Gilbert de Hood, Prior of York, as the main villain of the play who masterminds the outlawing of his nephew (2.158–163) and pays the sheriff "a hundred markes" to execute the plan (2.163).

Munday's plays of Robert, Earle of Huntington transform the Robin Hood character of *A Gest,* and other late medieval tales, from yeoman to nobleman. Skura suggests that yeoman values might not have appealed to a London audience in the late sixteenth century, hence the alteration, and claims (based on Munday's biography) that the new Robin Hood would have appealed to Munday as part of a new mobile and ambitious middling class seeking gentrification (173–175). However, the extensive use of the term 'yeoman' in the plays suggests that, rather than being completely obliterated, yeoman ideology and values are still present in the plays, at

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least until the protagonist's demise in line 824 of *The Death.*[12] The remainder of the play portrays secular courtly intrigues marked by King John's aggressive attempts to win over Matilda / Marian. References to yeomanry and its values die with Robert.

A close reading of a few passages from *The Downfall* elucidates the meaning of the lingering presence of the concept of the yeoman in the play. The connotations of service to a lord attributed to the state of the yeoman are pronounced by irredeemable characters in the plays, such as Gilbert de Hood, who betrays a member of his own family out of envy. His use of the term 'yeoman' to qualify the low social rank into which Robert has fallen as an (undeserved) outlaw is understood by the Prior as a synonym of 'servant'. It is not impossible that the Prior plays with the multiple meanings of 'yeoman' in order to demean Robert's status: "That was my Lord; but nowe is Robert Hood, / A simple yeoman as his servants were" (4.496–497). This negative perspective on the state of the yeoman is taken over in the following lines by the wife of Warman:

> Backe with that legge [curtsey], my Lord Prior:
> There be some that were his servantes thinke foule
> scorne to be cald yeomen. (4.498–500)

Here, in a nutshell, the social fall of Robert of Huntington, which contrasts with the immoral climb of his former servant Warman, who will be appointed Sheriff of Nottingham, incarnates the new social mobility between classes in early modern England which enabled, for better or for worse, precipitous changes to one's own social condition.

Within that context, aggressive social climbers, such as Warman and his wife, would wish to banish from collective memory any reference to their lowly status as 'yeomen'. Robin offers solid evidence for Warman's unscrupulous desire for social promotion, which he carries out by betraying his master (3.345–365). While Warman's social ascent is achieved by immoral means, Robert's social descent is unjust. His demotion from earl to yeoman is perceived by his supporters at the court, and by the majority of today's critics, as a problem that needs to be fixed. This reading is, however, complicated by Munday's ambivalent use of the term yeoman throughout the play. Scene nine of *The Downfall* no longer uses the term

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[12] The term 'yeoman,' in its singular and plural uses, appears fourteen times (lines 497, 500, 1015, 1265, 1271, 1297, 1317, 1332, 1341, 1597, 1621, 2484, 2696, 2797) in *The Downfall*, and four times in the excerpts from *The Death* (lines 340, 347, 405, 684, 835). Also see Appendix.

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'yeoman' as meaning servant, but instead associates it with the greenwood of the medieval tales and ballads. The stage directions for scene nine read as follows:

> Enter Scathlocke and Scarlet, winding their hornes at severall doores. To them enter Robin Hoode, Matilda all in greene, Scathlockes mother, Much, Little John, all the men with bowes and arrowes. (9.1258–1260)

The paraphernalia linked to the greenwood, such as the colour green, horns, bows, and arrows, serve as a context for what I would claim is a powerful regeneration of yeoman ideology in the plays.

Scarlet and Scathlocke (like Robert, unjustifiably exiled as outlaws by Sir Doncaster) refer to a life in the Sherwood area that gave them freedom to move unhindered from one location to another, with yeomen welcoming them in various parts of northern England:

> Its full seaven years since we were outlawed first,
> And wealthy Sherewood was our heritage.
> For all those years we raigned uncontrolde,
> From Barnsdale shrogs to Notinghams red cliffes;
> At Blithe and Tickhill were we welcome guests.
> Good George a Greene at Bradford was our friend,
> And wanton Wakefields Pinner lov'd us well.
> At Barnsley dwels a Potter tough and strong,
> That never brookt we brethren should have wrong.
> The Nunnes of Farnsfield, pretty nunnes they bee,
> Gave napkins, shirts, and bands to him and mee.
> Bateman of Kendall, gave us Kendall greene,
> And Sharpe of Leedes, sharpe arrowes for us made:
> At Rotheram dwelt our bowyer, God him blisse.
> Jackson he hight; his bowes did never misse. (9.1279–1295)

The lines provide audiences/readers with a strong sense of northern locality, stretching from Barnsdale Wood at the southernmost point, to Kendall in the north, in the Lake District. That geographical layout stresses the extensive mobility of the two "uncontrolled" brothers before their arrest.

Even if the list is reminiscent of conventional place lists associated with evil characters in medieval drama (McGavin 49), Scarlet's and Scathlocke's contacts with the locals also suggest the existence of a positive brotherhood of yeomen with different crafts able to supply their needs. While some of these are of a material nature (pots and green woollens from Kendall, sharp arrows from Leeds, and bows from Rotherham), they also include hospitality, friendship, and love. Scarlet's long speech depicts

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a regional economy run by equals with different skills and bound together by friendship and trust. It presents the audience with a community of exchange devoid of social difference, in which the nobility does not exist. Yet it is the nobility, represented by Sir Doncaster of Hethersfield (*Downfall* 9.1302), that brings about the symbolic end of the lawful community of yeomen, through his arrest and judicial condemnation of Scarlet and Scathlock to death.

The two brothers, who are based on a single character in the medieval tales, embody yeoman brotherhood and stand, in my view, as a significant model for Robert. Immediately following this positive account of their life as part of a northern yeoman community, Robert gathers all his yeomen and officially delivers the outlaw code that will regulate their own community. The first provisions are specific to Robert as their leader, who gives up his title of earl and renames himself Robin. The second addresses Matilda who is renamed Maid Marian. This name change identifies her as the secular female ideal that supplants the Virgin Mary of the medieval tales to whom Robin showed his devotion (Field 6–22). A name change marks an identity change and the insistence with which Robin sticks to his new name speaks of the profound transformation that he undergoes in the woods. The third article is concerned with unbridled sexuality, which each yeoman should keep under control by expelling lustful thoughts about women. The fourth article promotes hospitality in the form of feasts offered to passers-by, provided they pay for the privilege, without having been warned about the scheme. The yeomen / outlaws also swear never to rob a poor man, although priests, usurers, and clerks are considered acceptable prey. Finally, the sixth and last rule stipulates that every yeoman should defend maids, widows, orphans, and distressed men (*Downfall* 9.1329–1358). Thus, the yeoman of the forest's rules define the ways in which members of the new community need to behave in order to fit into that new social reality.

The name changes combined with the six provisions that constitute the outlaw code mark both individual and societal transformation. At this point in the play, Robin and Marian willingly embrace yeoman values as a long-term option. If they still reminisce about the world of the court, it is not to express nostalgic longing, but rather to reify the natural world as a paradisal space, expressed by Robin in the following way:

> Marian, thou seest though courtly pleasurs want,
> Yet country sport in Sherewodde is not scant.
> For the soule-ravishing delicious sound
> Of instrumentall musique, we have found

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> The winged quiristers, with divers notes,
> Sent from their quaint recording prettie throats,
> On every branch that compasseth our bower,
> Without commaund, contenting us each hower.
> For Arras hangings, and rich Tapestrie,
> We have sweete natures best imbrothery.
> For thy steele glasse, wherein thou wontst to looke,
> Thy christall eyes, gaze in a christall brooke.
> At court, a flower or two did decke thy head:
> Now with whole garlands is it circled.
> For what in wealth we want, we have in flowers,
> And what wee loose in halles, we finde in bowers. (9.1366–1381)

This list of courtly comforts underlines Robin's noble origins but nevertheless shows him supporting yeoman values by proxy, through his interaction with Scarlet and Scathlocke.

Friar Tuck ('played' by John Skelton) reminds the audience about the time when Robin, then Earl of Huntington, saved the two brothers from the gallows, building his reputation as a good man through this gesture of brotherhood towards these two honest yeomen (Knight, *Reading Robin Hood* 77), and also labels Robin "The yeoman good" (*Downfall* 11.1596-1598).[13] The meaning of 'yeoman' here is multiple. From the perspective of the court, it certainly concerns the social degradation of Robert to Robin. On the other hand, following the proclamation of the outlaw code, and the recent praise of Robert as saviour of Scarlet and Scathlocke, the qualifier 'good' echoes the late medieval tradition.

The surprise return of King Richard marks the point at which Robin must begin to confront his former aristocratic way of life. However, the transition is characterised by Robin's reluctance, and that of his men, to give up life in the greenwood. Scene Four of *The Death* describes Robin's encounter with Richard, who greets him as "Earle Robert" (4.394). The king is immediately rebuked by Friar Tuck, who informs him that Robert / Robin does not wish to be called "Earle, Lord, Knight, or Squire" (4.403), but rather "Robin Hood, plaine Robin Hoode, / That honest yeoman stout and good" (4.404–405). The king then addresses him as Robin Hood, thus officially recognising the name change, and by extension his transformation.

[13] In the prologue of the play, a fictional Skelton, based on the poet (c.1460-1529), informs the audience about the play-within-the-play (in which he will play Friar Tuck). The character of Skelton thus provides another example of a medieval afterlife in Munday's early modern play.

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There are further instances where yeoman values are embraced by the king. Scene Four of *The Death* shows the king in the company of several of Robin's companions, with Friar Tuck carrying the head of a stag that has been shot by "honest fellow Scarlet [...] a yeomanbold" (4.346–347). The king rewards Scarlet and Scathlock for their boldness with twelve pence a day for life, and Robin then "bestowes" his yeoman on Richard before giving detailed instructions for his funeral in which the yeomen are overwhelmingly present (5.817). In this speech, Robin asks that the yeomen sing "For holy dirges [...] wodmens songs," bequeaths his "goods and plates" to them, and addresses his goodbyes to both yeomen and royal figures, thereby merging courtly traditions with those of the greenwood (5.814–824).

Yeoman ideology and values thus pervade Robin Hood's last speech in Munday's play. Brotherhood, community, and independence are central to his concerns. By bestowing the yeomen upon the king, he hopes to free them from the yoke of lower royal officials. So, rather than regarding him as a nobleman in disguise, he should be considered as a member of the gentry who converts to embrace the state of the yeoman until his last breath. In that respect, Skura's point about the appetite of socially mobile Londoners for new heroes who reflect their social status desires needs nuancing. Robin in Munday's play is not a gentrified yeoman, but instead a member of the gentry who adopts yeoman values.

Munday's *The Downfall* and its sequel *The Death* provide a set of values that have a transformative power on Robert, Earl of Huntington, so much so that his return to the court marks an attempt at reforming it with the yeoman values that he has fully integrated. If the court is too corrupt to give Robin a chance to disseminate them within the royal entourage, the bestowing of his yeomen upon the king following his death leaves slim hope for the court entourage to redeem itself. Having renounced his title of earl and renamed himself Robin Hood, his return to the court in this new identity propounds the court's possible transformation from greedy social promotion to brotherhood, compassion, and social justice.

The gentrification of Robin Hood in Munday's plays is an important turning point in his medieval afterlife (Nelson 121). From the early modern period, Robin has consistently been portrayed as a nobleman unjustly condemned as an outlaw. The available evidence supporting that point is overwhelming. The circulation of ideas within Munday's plays is, however, more complex: though less overtly than the medieval tales, they still uphold the values of the greenwood and the outlaws' code. Robin Hood reluctantly re-joins the court to face his death, praises the yeomen on his

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deathbed, and shows his attachment to their cultural milieu by welcoming their woodmen's songs for his funeral. Scarlet and Scathlocke's description of their northern community of yeomen offers a model for crafting a set of six regulations to guide the yeoman community around Robin. There is also no turning back for Robin with regard to his change of identity. It is not Robert, Earl of Huntington, who returns to the court, but Robin Hood, plain Robin Hood, acknowledged by King Richard. Carrying identity-change over into the world of the court entails a carrying over of the values that have prompted that change. So, rather than talking about the nobleman in disguise who undergoes a process of self-transformation before returning to his milieu, we should see Robin Hood of the Munday plays as a convert to yeoman ideology whose attempts at conveying its values among the gentry ultimately come at the expense of his own life. As a man familiar with the competitive and unforgiving London world (Skura 173–175), although having given up Robin Hood as forest yeoman, Munday nevertheless wanted to convey through his plays some of the values of yeoman ideology, not as a nostalgic sign for a world which had vanished forever, but rather as an antidote to an aggressive, ambitious, and ruthless late sixteenth-century London social model marked by self-interest and self-promotion.

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Appendix

The following table offers information about the speakers who use the term “yeoman,” identifying the connotation of the term, and the character who is referred to.

Play, Scene,	Speaker	Connotation	Recipient
Do, iv, 497	Prior	Negative	Robert
Do, iv, 500	Warman’s	Negative	General
Do, vii,	Robin	Positive	Scarlet and
Do, ix, 1265	Scathlocke’s	Positive	RH’s men
Do, ix, 1271	Scathlocke’s	Positive	RH’s men
Do, ix, 1297	Scathlocke	Positive	General
Do, ix, 1317	Robin	Positive	RH’s men
Do, ix, 1332	Robin	Positive	RH’s men
Do, ix, 1341	Little John	Positive	RH’s men
Do, xi, 1597	Friar	Positive	RH
Do, xi, 1621	Friar	positive	RH’s men
Do, xiv,	Robin	positive	RH’s men
Do, xv,	Robin	positive	RH’s men
Do, xv,	Eltham	neutral	Prince
De, iv, 340	Friar	positve	General
De, iv, 347	John	positive	Scathlocke
De, iv, 405	Friar to the	positive	Robin
De, v, 684	Stage direc-	positive	praise of
De, v, 835	King	positive	Robin

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