himself wished to take dinner with them'. Clearly, either Forester was mistaken, or Sigismund's 'request' was actually pretended for the sake of decorum, for the emperor was surely the intended guest of honour at the lavish banquet described by Richental.

Forester makes no mention of another such a dinner being held on 29 January; moreover, the duke of Bavaria and burgrave of Nürnberg are the only German princes besides Sigismund who are specifically mentioned by Richental as guests of Clifford, Hallum and the other English bishops. This independent evidence confirms the dating of the second banquet to 31 January; see above, note 4.


Morrissey, 'Surge', 119.

Morrissey, 'Surge', 129.

Morrissey, 'Surge', 113–18.

CHRISTINE RICHARDSON

The Figure of Robin Hood within the Carnival Tradition

In medieval and early renaissance England, the May Games and Midsummer Feast represent one of the strongest manifestations of the carnival or popular festive tradition. The pre-Lenten Carnival, which was the focus for popular participatory dramatic and disruptive activity in continental Europe, was not the main period of carnivalesque activity in England. Such activity, centring on disguisings, inversion, licensed criticism and temporary disinhibition with respect to established social conventions and the dominant structures of authority, was found rather in the liminal period of early summer at the passage of the season. It is thus in the wide sense which Bakhtin applies to the terms 'carnival' and 'carnivalesque' that I shall be referring to carnival elements and the role of Robin Hood as a figure in the carnival tradition in England.

Appearances of the Robin Hood figure in late medieval and early renaissance Britain can be divided into three basic categories: historical or legendary references to an actual outlaw figure; ballads, or references to ballads (or 'rymes') recounting the exploits of such a named outlaw figure; and May Game records of disguisings, 'revels', 'gatherings' or 'ales' in which the identity of Robin Hood was assumed for festive celebrations and the collection of money (later used for parish matters), often in exchange for 'livery' which marked the contributor as one of Robin Hood's band for the duration of the celebration. All three of these categories are mutually linked and interrelated. but it is in particular with the ballad Robin Hood figure and the May Game Robin Hood figure that the carnival and especially the dramatic interest lies.

The May Game revels, gatherings, or ales were intrinsically dramatic events, imbued with that characteristically carnival aspect of dramatic representation which eliminates boundaries between performers and spectators, making the 'performance' a universalizing, participatory event, removing also the barriers between art and life, and presenting life itself, life seen as game, as the matter of representation. Hardly surprisingly, this kind
of spontaneous dramatic activity produced more highly developed dramatic texts of which three examples survive: a 'fragment', from a manuscript of c1475, usually known as Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham; a 'playe of Robyn Hoode' published by William Copland, appended to his edition of the narrative Gest of Robin Hood, in 1560, which in fact consists of two plays, known as Robin Hood and the Friar and Robin Hood and the Potter. This double play is directly linked to the May Games in the title page statement 'for to be played in Maye Games'.

As a figure in the early ballads, Robin Hood is first and foremost an outlaw, a figure (forcibly) removed from the network of established dominant authority and convention and thus the representative of an alternative authority, the law of Robin Hood, which consists in living in and off the King's Forest and stealing from the wealthy members of the church and state hierarchy who travel through his 'domain'. Although the element of 'robbing from the rich to give to the poor' by which Robin Hood is almost exclusively associated and identified in contemporary perception of the figure is hinted at in these early appearances, this motif was in fact a later development brought about as part of the general 'gentrification' process applied to the figure (including noble birth, wrongful disinheritance, etc) by the Elizabethan interpreters of the legend. The appeal of the ballad figure is in the implicit criticism of the dominant authority which it represents, a channelled protest within the protective boundary of entertainment. Though the ballads have come down to us in written form, they were originally transmitted and received as oral performance art. Whether sung or recited, the structure of the ballad with its emphasis on dialogue and its 'montage' technique of episodic switching is inherently performative. The figure therefore contains the same kind of licensed protest which characterizes the carnivalesque:

As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions.

The later Robin Hood ballads display an evolution of this alternative authority aspect which is again inherent to carnival, the revelation of the ambivalence of all authority and of its arbitrary nature, a concept at the root of the carnivalesque criticism of power. In the series of artisan or 'Robin Hood meets his match' ballads circulated in broadside version in the seventeenth century, the plot sequence is made up by the meeting of Robin Hood with a representative artisan, a tanner, a potter, a butcher, etc, whom he challenges to a fight. The outcome of this fight is Robin Hood's defeat at the hands of the artisan, sometimes even notwithstanding his summons of help from Little John or others of his band, and the subsequent invitation to the winner to join the band, invariably accepted. Robin Hood's power thus is labile: he can be challenged and overcome. In addition, the result of the challenge has no serious consequences, but rather contains the positive qualities of equality and universalization. The antagonist joins the band, he is included and incorporated into the system of Robin Hood's authority.

This is the carnivalesque interactiveness and open system of authority wherein hierar-
chies are not fixed or permanent but all members of society, or of a group, have the same opportunities. Leaders may be set up but challenged with impunity and replaced, crowned and uncrowned as the identity of authority switches, for the focus is continually on change and movement. The Lord of Misrule, or Robin Hood, is equally subject to the arbitrary changes of status which 'the second life' of carnival implies, and in the celebratory critique of power he represents, he is himself criticized by being deposed.

This critique of authority through the demonstration of its arbitrary and shifting nature is to be found in both the Robin Hood plays published by William Copland in 1560 and was therefore probably at work in other non-extant May Games plays of Robin Hood. These two plays are presented as one in the text, with no break and containing two quite distinct episodes which nonetheless follow the same structural outline. In the first play, Robin Hood sets out to challenge a Friar who had the previous day had the best of him, finds him, forces him to carry him across the river, and is consequently dumped into the water by the Friar who then begins a fight. Robin Hood by subterfuge calls on his band to assist him and then, having revealed his identity, invites the Friar to join his band. In the second play, this sequence is repeated with a Potter whom Robin Hood wishes to make pay a toll for travelling through 'his' forest. First he meets with the Potter's boy, Jack, breaks the pots the latter is taking to market, and insults his master who then arrives and, rather than pay the proposed toll, prefers to fight; Robin Hood calls upon Little John for help. In both cases Robin Hood's authority is challenged and although in the second play the outcome is uncertain, in the first play at least the successful challenger is rewarded by an invitation to join the band:

How sayest thou, frere, wylt thou be my man,
To do me the best servyse thou can?
Thou shalt have both golde and fee.

In the first play, the point of conflict and the reversal of power is centred on being transported over water, water which is not actually present in the dramatic performance but is created through the dialogue:

Robin Hood: Harke, frere, what I say here;
Over this water thou shalt me bere;
The brydge is borne away.
Friar Tuck: To say naye I wyll not;
To let the of thine oth it were great pitie and sin;
But upon a fryers backe and have even in.
[Threatens to throw Robin Hood into water]
Robin Hood: Nay, have over.
[Robin Hood resists and throws Friar into water]
Friar Tuck: Now am I, frere, within, and, thou, Robin, without,
[Expresses intension] To lay the here I have no great doubt.
[Repeat] Now art thou, Robyn, without, and I, frere, within,
[Throws Robin Hood into water]
Lye ther, knave; chose whether thou wilte sinke or swym.

Robin Hood: Why, thou lowsy frere, what hast thou doon?

[Reacts to change in situation]

No stage directions are given in the text but with this reconstruction of the action through the dialogue we have a sequence in which the essential carnivalesque changes of position, reversals, or even crowning and uncrowning in Bakhtin's terms, are punctuated and thus foregrounded by comments which draw attention to them. This reconstruction also removes the problem of the presumed inverted line in which the Friar contrasts 'within' and 'without' for the second time. It is now not a mistake or printing error, but a repetition which draws attention to the situation pregnant with change, the change which is accomplished at the following line.10

Being carried or carrying is a frequent feature found in rites of passage marking the passage from one status to another or one season to another, and is thus consonant with an early summer carnival celebration.11 However, the ducking of both characters into water can also be seen as a parody of a rite associated with one of the characters: baptism. The rite of baptism marks the conversion of an individual to the Christian religion and as such is, of course, a rite of incorporation. Here the symbolic touching with water used in the actual Christian ritual is materialized into a thorough immersion, first with the roles reversed as Robin Hood 'baptizes' the Friar, and then as the Friar returns the compliment. The result is indeed an incorporation — into Robin Hood's band.

Parody is a characteristic carnivalesque element, associated with the carnival perception of power and authority as arbitrary and reversible, a mockery of the ceremonial and accoutrements with which power is established and expressed in the real world, marking the people's refusal to be constrained by any fixed system. In another parody, this time in Robin Hood and the Potter, Robin Hood demands that the Potter pay a toll. Like tolls in the official world, Robin Hood's toll seems to be unjustified, and the Potter not only refuses to pay it, but offers to 'pay it materially in the blows with which he threatens Robin Hood.

A suggestive parallel offers itself here with another well-known medieval parody, that of the Nativity accomplished in the inner Mak play of Secunda Pastorum. The Shepherds Plays are an eminently carnivalesque location for such a feature for they celebrate a moment of immense change and renewal, the Birth of the Saviour who will bring in a new authority and order to society, removing the constraints of social status. The Shepherds Plays in general are rich in elements pertaining to the sphere of popular entertainment. While this material may have been drawn into the plays as an identification device useful for the didactic purpose of establishing the identity between the Shepherds as the first recipients of the message of Salvation and the audience of the cycle plays themselves implicated in the possibility of Salvation, it could be that another organizational strand of influence is represented by the moment of crisis and the sense of renewal which these plays represent. Insults, tricks, predictions and the feast, all strong features of the carnivalesque, are also to be found in the Shepherds Plays.

The breaking of the Potter's pots by Robin Hood may also be seen as an act of incorporation, a rite to accomplish the entry of the Potter into Robin Hood's band: 'The blows
here have a broadened, symbolic, ambivalent meaning; they at once kill and regenerate, put an end to the old life and start the new. Violence and blows, with quarterstaffs in particular, characterize both the Robin Hood ballad tradition and the Robin Hood plays and link them to that older form of carnival activity which was the pagan fertility rituals, and the evolutionary development of these represented by the folk drama. In this instance the blows intended to achieve the incorporation of the Potter into the band are delegated to the Potter's pots, which Robin Hood smashes. This metonymy is quite clear in the boy Jack's reaction: when Robin Hood threatens, 'I wil them breke for the cuckold thi maister's sake', Jack cries: 'Out alas! what have ye done? If my maister come, he will breke your crown'. The earlier Robin Hood play, Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham, makes the breaking of the antagonist's head more explicit. After several physical contests with the Knight, Robin Hood overcomes him and cuts off his head which he then bears away to Nottingham, having dressed in the vanquished Knight's clothes:

Now I have the maystry here  
Off I smite this sory swyre  
This knyghtys clothis wolde I were  
And in my hode his hede wolde bere.

In this case the antagonist is materially incorporated, for he becomes Robin Hood, or vice versa. The beheading, of course, is the ritual motif of the Winter King and Summer Knight, which seems to lie at the inspirational layer of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

The two later plays are both marked by another form of carnivalesque violence, violence of language. Insults and oaths represent the transgressing of social conventions of courtesy and appropriate register. This kind of verbal rejection of social authority is to be found particularly in two more developed and self-conscious plays in relation to disruptive figures coming straight from the folk play carnivalesque tradition. Trowle, the wild Shepherds' boy in the Chester Shepherds Play and li Dervés, the uncontrollable mad boy of Adam de la Halle's Le Jeu de la Feuillee are rural characters, as is Robin Hood, and as well as showing no respect for social authority — Trowle challenges and overcomes his Shepherd masters in a direct borrowing from the Hero-combat Play, li Dervés eludes control by his father, the monk, the Doctor and local dignitaries — both also go beyond the bounds of socially acceptable language with imprecations and references to illicit topics (as such, entirely carnivalesque) such as farting and copulation. Li Dervés in particular also displays other carnivalesque features in his blurring of sexual categories and his animal associations.

Although Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham is much less sophisticated than the two later Robin Hood plays and its presentation in the manuscript gives indications neither of speakers nor stage directions, the physical contests which lie at the heart of the later plays are clearly present and this less-evolved form suggests how Robin Hood plays may have functioned in the May Games without the extended dialogue of Copland's two versions. They provided an opportunity for contests of physical strength with a minimum of contextualizing dialogue based on a figure both representing an alternative authority and carrying traces of the folk ritual seasonal new King, an occasion to
revolt against the existing structures of authority while maintaining links with an older agrarian rhythm of social organization. The outcome of these contests would not necessarily have been pre-determined: it may well have been truly the strongest who won. The c.1475 piece is generally considered to be unfinished, as is the 1560 Robin Hood and the Potter, but both of these are complete enough in a carnivalesque context which abhors and refuses a fixed establishment of power and victory. Change and reversal are the organizational principals of carnival, and genuine outcomes to the trials of strength in both these pieces make equally satisfying carnival sense. Little John's closing lines of the play, 'I shall rappe him on the snoute./ And put hym to flyghte', would have heralded a true contest in which Little John's intentions may have been realised or not, depending on the relative strengths of the two opponents. Whatever the eventuality, after this fight the play indeed ended.

*Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham* seems to be linked to the Paston household. A letter from Sir John Paston to his brother (in 1473) records an occurrence which outside of establishing the direct link of the play to this family or otherwise nonetheless strengthens the connection of the Robin Hood figure with the Mummers' Play tradition. A servant of the household who had been kept 'to play St George, and Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham' has disappeared. Here Robin Hood appears in direct conjunction with the standard protagonist of the Hero-combat Mummers' Play, St George. A Mummers' Play with Robin Hood as the protagonist has survived from Kempsford and Shipton-under-Wychwood which uses the plot and indeed many of the lines from the ballad *Robin Hood and the Tanner*. In this, the play follows the sequence of the ballad until the death of the antagonist (Arthur A Bland, the Tanner) when it returns to the conventional plot with the entry of the Quack Doctor who is engaged to revive him. Robin Hood was thus considered a direct equivalent of the folk drama protagonist.

The carnivalesque represents a power for change and renewal, a concentration on the moment of becoming, of regeneration as a consequence of death, and a rejection of the fixed and inflexible. It is a criticism of the existing order and a desire, or a nostalgia, for a less hierarchical and constraining system of social organization. It is therefore not surprising that the carnival elements of Robin Hood should be stressed and developed during the 16th century as the Medieval gave way to the Renaissance and the Elizabethan world view took force. Robin Hood as a May Game figure flourished in this period, not merely frequently found in local celebrations but also attaining the status of two printed plays.

Notes

1. The causes for this transposition of carnivalesque activity in England, as opposed to European practice, are not entirely clear. The Celtic celebrations of Beltane and Midsummer doubtless played a part. It should be noted that 'May Games' is a generic term and does not refer exclusively to celebrations for 1 May, but covered celebratory activity throughout the early summer period, covering also the Midsummer Eve (which coincided with St John's Eve) and beyond into the Whitsun period. Cf. David Wiles, *The Early Plays of*

2 ‘This permits us to use precisely the epithet 'carnivalesque' in that broad sense of the word. We interpret it not only as carnival per se in its limited form but also as the varied popular-festive life of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance' (Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World (Bloomington, 1984), 218).

3 In particular, John Holt, Robin Hood (London, 1982), has investigated the historical possibilities of Robin Hood as have Dobson and Taylor, Rymes of Robin Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw (London, 1976/Gloucester, 1989). Both these books also investigate the role of the Robin Hood figure beyond the Renaissance and Dobson and Taylor give the texts of many of the important Robin Hood ballads and plays.

4 A detailed description of the figure, though not directly named as Robin Hood, is to be found in Stubbes' Anatomy of Abuses (1583). David Wiles treats this figure at length, providing many other record references to the practice and suggests that the Robin Hood figure in this context is the direct equivalent of the Summer Lord or Lord of Misrule described by Stubbes.

5 Carnival is life itself but shaped according to a certain pattern of play ... it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators ... Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people’ (Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, 7).


7 Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, 10.

8 ‘The laughter of carnival ... is also directed at those who laugh ... The people's ambivalent laughter ... expresses the point of view of the whole world; he who is laughing also belongs to it' (Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, 12).

9 Robin Hood and the Friar. Another reward is also given to the Friar in the form of 'a lady free' and the following stanza makes great use of double entendre with respect to the 'service' the Friar might perform for her. The materialization of the initially abstract duty, as indeed the inversion of the Friar serving Robin Hood rather than Robin Hood attending the religious service usually offered by friars, and the materialization in the form of sexual activity, the extreme opposite of the chastity associated with religious orders, is all firmly within the carnival key.

10 Cf. both Dobson and Taylor's note to this line and David Wiles' comment: Dobson and Taylor, Rymes, 212; Wiles, Early Plays, 74.

11 ‘For example, carrying and being carried is one of the practices which is found more or less universally in the various ceremonies through which a person passes in the course of a lifetime' (Arnold Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage (London, 1960/77), 185).

12 Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, 205.

13 Robin Hood and the Potter. The reappearance of the phrase 'What have ye done?' which has already been used in Robin Hood and the Friar is interesting. It also appears in the very stark dialogue of the c1475 play Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham. It
would appear to be a standard phrase of the Robin Hood drama and indeed links these more closely with the Mummers’ Plays, where the phrase commonly appears at the death of the antagonist in the Hero-combat plays.

14 Cf. John Matthews, Robin Hood: Green Lord of the Wildwood, (Glastonbury, 1993) for a detailed yet exclusive analysis of Robin Hood as the Green Lord or Summer Knight.


17 Le Jeu de la Feuillée, ll.420–1; 1093.

18 The text of the play, collected in the nineteenth century but said to have been performed during the eighteenth century at least, was published by R.J.E. Tiddy in The Mummers’ Play (1923). It also appears as Appendix 6 in Wiles, Early Plays.

19 Cf. Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, 274. Peter Stallybrass, “Drunk with the cup of Liberty”: Robin Hood, the carnivalesque, and the rhetoric of violence in early modern England, Semiotica 54 (1985), 113–45, examines the role of the carnivalesque in social protest with reference to Robin Hood. The latter part of his study explores the way in which the protest could be contained by, among others, fixing it clearly to a festive occasion and denying its relevance to everyday reality.

ABIGAIL A. YOUNG

Theatre-Going Nuns in Rural Devon?

In the summer of 1329, not long after becoming bishop of the large and demanding diocese of Exeter, John de Grandisson sent a stern mandate to the Austin canonesses of Canonsleigh Abbey in eastern Devon.1 Canonsleigh, although not a famous or exceptionally wealthy convent like Sion Abbey, was nevertheless in the top 20% as far as income was concerned, with an income of £197 and eighteen sisters (including the abbess) at the time of the dissolution.2 It would be completely unremarkable, aside from its occasional presence in the bishops’ registers of Exeter, were it not for two factors, both connected with its founding c 1284 by Maud de Clare, countess of Hereford and Gloucester (the widow of Richard de Clare). First of all, the countess created her convent by converting an existing house of Austin canons into a house for women, a very unusual event and one resisted by the canons.3 Secondly, she gave her nuns a book to guide them in the religious life. This book, a copy of the Ancrene Riwle, is now Bl: Cotton Cleopatra c.vi, one of only seven surviving English ms of that work, and the one from which it has been edited for the EETS. But by about forty-five years after its foundation, the diocesan bishop would appear to have thought that the current crop of professed sisters needed even more help in keeping their rule. In his mandate he ordered the nuns’ strict enclosure, or confinement, within the walls of their convent. Part of his reasoning was to cut them off from access to secular entertainment:

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