

Robin Hood and Maiden Mary

Robin dos Bosques e a Virgem Maria

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ABSTRACT

As well as a Christian name, “Marian” is an adjective related to the cult of, and devotion to, Saint Mary, Herself traditionally associated with the month of May, which includes Mother’s Day. Mary’s own status as a ‘spiritual mother’ for Catholic and — up to the 16th century Reformation(s) — Christian believers, as well as a model for all women, a paradigm of virtue and perfection and thus the opposite of everything that Eve stood for in medieval theological thought and exegesis, account for what Derek Pearsall has suggestively called “Mariolatry”. This Marian devotion, patent in many poems of the 14th and 15th centuries, left powerful traces in the oldest surviving Robin Hood ballads, a fact which inspired my title: “Robin Hood and Maiden Mary”, rather than the phonetically akin, and more predictable one, “Robin Hood and Maid Marian”.

Keywords: Robin Hood; Maiden Mary; Marian cult; Maid Marian; English ballads.

RESUMO

Além de um nome próprio, “Marian” é um adjetivo referente ao culto da, e à devoção a, Santa Maria, Ela própria tradicionalmente associada ao mês de Maio, que inclui o Dia da Mãe. O estatuto de Maria como ‘mãe espiritual’ para os crentes católicos e — até à(s) Reforma(s) do século XVI — cristãos, assim como um modelo para todas as mulheres, um paradigma de virtude e perfeição e, por conseguinte, o oposto de tudo o que Eva representava no pensamento e na exegese teológicos medievais explicam aquilo a que Derek Pearsall sugestivamente chamou “Mariolatria”.

Esta devoção mariana, patente em inúmeros poemas dos séculos XIV e XV, deixou marcas poderosas nas mais antigas baladas sobreviventes sobre Robin dos Bosques, facto que inspirou o meu título: “Robin dos Bosques e a Virgem Maria”, em vez do foneticamente similar, e mais previsível, “Robin dos Bosques e Maid Marian”.

Palavras-chave: Robin dos Bosques; Virgem Maria; culto mariano; Maid Marian; Baladas inglesas.



“When I see myself in times of trouble

Mother Mary comes to me [...]”

(The Beatles, “Let It Be”)¹

To my loving parents,

Maria Luísa and Alberto Alarcão (1931-2025)

Any search for the origins of the sentimental, or ‘romantic’, connection between Robin Hood and Maid Marian — totally absent, in fact, from the earliest surviving textual evidences (14th-15th centuries), whether one considers traditional popular ballads, historical records and/or legendary similes and allusions —, might imply a backward move from the eponymous 17th century broadside ballad² to Anthony Munday’s and Henry Chettle’s companion plays³, and, ultimately, to the May Games of the late medieval-early modern period, when both characters act as, or play the roles of, Lord (or King) and Lady (or Queen) of May. Although controversial, the views held by Jim Lees, an independent researcher who chaired The Robin Hood Society, may be quoted here:

¹ Song recorded between 1969 and 1970 and released in May 1970.

² “Robin Hood and Maid Marian” (#150). In *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Vol. III. Ed. Francis James Child. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965, pp. 218-219.

³ The full titles, with their original spelling, are as follows: *The Downfall of Robert Earle of Huntington, afterward called Robin Hood of merrie Sherwodde; with his love to chaste Matilda, the Lord Fitzwaters Daughter, afterwarde his faire Maide Marian. Acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Nottingham, Lord high Admirall of England, his servants*. Imprinted at London for William Leake. 1601, and *The Death of Robert Earle of Huntington. Otherwise called Robin Hood of merrie Sherwodde; with the lamentable Tragedie of chaste Matilda, his faire maide Marian, poisoned at Dunmowe by King Iohn. Acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Nottingham, Lord high Admirall of England, his servants*. Imprinted at London for William Leake. 1601. Both plays are ascribed by Philip Henslowe (?-1616) to 1597-1598.

“Whereas Chettle and Munday name her as Matilda, whose name is changed upon entering the Forest of Sherwood, in truth the reverse is the case. The ‘Maid Marian’ was originally portrayed as the personification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who Robin idolised and worshipped. The character then became degraded, evolving over a period and eventually embodied in the ‘Matilda’.

[...]

E. L. Hargreaves, in her book *Festivals, Holidays, and Saint Days* (1915), states that ‘The Catholic church has dedicated the month of May to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of course the Catholic dedication of May to the Virgin mother contains reminder of the Purification and honour due to chastity’. In the Catholic hymnary She is honoured in several hymns as ‘Queen of the May’.

[...]

This then is the case of *the* Maid Marian, Queen of the May (Virgins). She is a faint echo of *the* Blessed Virgin Mary who was adored in the festivals from which the May Games sprang, and the fact that she is a chaste and pure personality is never lost sight of. [...] May, Maiden and maid all have the same meaning: *virgin* and *maiden*, being specific to the Virgin Mary.”⁴

Unlike Robin, however, this Lady/Queen seems to have been influenced and moulded by the existence of a female character closely associated with a jolly friar in the Morris dances, themselves a frequent feature of the May Games; that bond is illustrated and documented in the so-called “Tollet’s (or Betley) Window”, which ornamented the old Betley Hall, Staffordshire⁵, and frequently depicted in the bibliography dedicated to the English outlaw.

Likewise, notwithstanding other possible influences, this merry friar may have contributed to the characterization of Friar Tuck and his inclusion in the Robin Hood band and legend. Considering the specific theme of this article, I will not be pursuing

⁴ LEES, Jim – *The Quest for Robin Hood*. Ed. Keith Mellor. Nottingham: Temple Nostalgia Press, 1987, pp. 81-83.

⁵ Made in or c.1621, this stained-glass window is made up of twelve panes, two of which, both in the bottom row, are dedicated to the friar and the lady of the Morris dances and the May Games. This piece is now kept at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

this ethnological/anthropological line of research, even though its relevance has been hinted at in my dissertation⁶ and should be duly recognized here.

Despite the possible influence of a 13th century French *pastourelle*⁷, the coupling of Robin and Marian seems thus to date, by and large, from the late medieval-early modern period, with folklore (including theatre), rather than ballads, playing a major part⁸. Indeed, besides the absence of Marian, there are remarkably few women in the oldest surviving ballad cycle⁹, recorded in manuscript form since the mid-15th century: the Sheriff of Nottingham's wife ("Potter"), Sir Richard at the Lee's wife ("Gest"), the Prioress of Kirklees ("Gest" and "Death"), the old woman who, for some unknown reason, is cursing Robin Hood ("Death"), and the female mourners (also "Death").¹⁰ As J. C. Holt puts it, regarding the medieval corpus,

"[...] there is no Maid Marian. Marian only made her way into the legend via the May Games and that not certainly until the sixteenth century. It was not simply that Robin's devotion to the Virgin Mother left no room for other women. It was rather that there was no place for them in the context of the tales. Only the sheriff's wife in *The Potter* cuts any kind of figure. Her hospitality to Robin and his respect for her may carry a distinct echo of courtly love."¹¹

In other words,

⁶ ALARCÃO, Miguel – *Príncipe dos Ladrões: Robin Hood na Cultura Inglesa (c.1377-1837)*. Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian/Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, 2001.

⁷ LA HALLE, Adam de – *Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion* [c.1283] *précédé du Jeu du Pèlerin*. Ed. Kenneth Varty. London/Toronto/Wellington/Sydney: George G. Harrap & Co., 1960.

⁸ In the context of his Christian reading of the English outlaw, Luke Parsons argues that "If we may call the ballads the scripture of the Robin Hood myth, the may-games provide its ritual." (PARSONS, Luke – "The Meaning of Robin Hood". *The Hibbert Journal. A Quarterly Review of Religion, Theology and Philosophy* 55:218 (April 1957), p. 275).

⁹ This includes "Robin Hood and the Monk" (#119). In *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol. III, pp. 94-101; "Robin Hood and the Potter" (#121). In *The English and Scottish*, vol. III, pp. 108-115; "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" (#118). In *The English and Scottish*, vol. III, pp. 89-94; "Robin Hood's Death" (#120). In *The English and Scottish*, vol. III, pp. 102-107, and, finally and most importantly, "A Gest of Robin Hood" (#117). In *The English and Scottish*, vol. III, pp. 39-89. All these titles will be henceforth abbreviated to "Monk", "Potter", "Guy of Gisborne", "Death" and "Gest".

¹⁰ See nonetheless JOHNSON, Valerie B. – "A forest of her own: Greenwood-space and the forgotten female characters of the Robin Hood tradition". In COOTE, Lesley; JOHNSON, Valerie B. (eds.) – *Robin Hood in Outlaw/ed Spaces. Media, performance, and other new directions*. London and New York: Routledge, 2021, pp. 21-39.

¹¹ HOLT, J. C. – *Robin Hood*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1984, p. 37.

“Os textos que chegaram até nós não contêm a mais leve referência a Marian, com quem, segundo a lenda, Robin teria dividido os prazeres da vida na floresta e as agruras da proscricção [...]. Aliás, pese embora a idealização baladística da floresta, desenhada por vezes a partir do *incipit*, o universo em que os textos se fundam e que eles reconstituem é [...] essencialmente masculino, violento ou até bárbaro, pouco consentâneo com **uma** fora-da-lei, por mais aventureira, determinada e viril que ela fosse.”¹²

As well as a proper Christian name, “Marian” is an adjective related to the cult of, and devotion to, Saint Mary, Herself traditionally associated with the month of May, which includes Mother’s Day. Mary’s own status as a ‘spiritual mother’ for Catholic and — up to the 16th century Reformation(s) — Christian believers, as well as a model for all women, a paradigm of virtue and perfection and thus the opposite of everything that Eve stood for in medieval theological thought and exegesis, account for what Derek Pearsall has suggestively called “Mariolatry”¹³. Out of the many religious and lyrical English medieval poems dedicated to the Virgin, let me recall here “I sing of a Maiden”, with its beautiful and touching simplicity:

“I sing of a Maiden,
A matchless one;
King of all Kings
She chose for her Son.
In quiet he drew
To where she was,
As the April dew
Falls on the grass.
In quiet he drew
Towards her bower,
As the April dew
Falls on the flower.
In quiet he drew
To where she lay,

¹² ALARCÃO, Miguel - *Príncipe dos Ladrões*, pp. 168-169.

¹³ PEARSALL, Derek – *Old English and Middle English Poetry*. Vol. I. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, “The Routledge History of English Poetry”, 1977, p. 247.

As the April dew
 Falls on the spray.
 Both mother and maiden
 Was none but she:
 Well may such a lady
 God's mother be."¹⁴

This Marian devotion, patent in many poems of the 14th and 15th centuries¹⁵, imprinted powerful traces in the oldest surviving Robin Hood ballads (particularly "Monk", "Guy of Gisborne" and "Gest")¹⁶, a fact which inspired my title: "Robin Hood and Maiden Mary", rather than the phonetically akin, and more predictable one, "Robin Hood and Maid Marian". For strictly orthographic reasons, I will be using the versions published in R. B. Dobson and J. Taylor's anthology¹⁷, instead of F. J. Child's (see above, n.9).

Starting with "Monk", the fact that Robin did not pray to the Virgin at mass or matins for over two weeks explains his spiritual discomfort¹⁸ and his imprudent visit to *St. Mary's Church*, Nottingham, where he is recognised by a monk and later arrested by the sheriff's men. The name of the church is, obviously, significant, as is also the fact that, in the first fit of the "Gest", the £400 loan granted by Robin to Sir Richard at the Lee takes place *in the name of Mary*¹⁹, besides the fact that the knight's creditor is the wealthy *Abbot of St. Mary's*, York. Thus, notwithstanding Robin's humanity and

¹⁴ *Medieval English Verse*. Ed. Brian Stone. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986, p. 25. This anthology includes no less than four sections dealing with the Virgin: "Poems of the Nativity", "Poems on the Passion", "Poems of Adoration", and "Poems of Sin and Death".

¹⁵ See also WOOLF, Rosemary – *English Religious Lyrics in the Middle Ages*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968; and GRAY, Douglas – *Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric*. London: Routledge, 1972.

¹⁶ The first two have unfortunately failed to reach us in full text.

¹⁷ "Monk". In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes of Robyn Hood. An Introduction to the English Outlaw*. Gloucester: Allan Sutton Publishing, 1989, pp. 113-122; "Potter". In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, pp. 123-132; "Guy of Gisborne". In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, pp. 140-145; "Death". In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, pp. 133-139, and "Gest". In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, pp. 71-112.

¹⁸ "[...], on thyng greves me,/seid Robyn,/And does my hert mych woo;/That I may not no solem day/To mas nor matyns goo./Hit is a fourtnet and more,' seid h[e],/Syn I my savyour see;/To day wil I to Notyngnam,' seid Robyn,/With the myght of mylde Marye.'" ("Monk", stanzas 6-7). In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 115.

¹⁹ "I have none other [borrow], sayde the knyght,/The sothe for to say,/But yf yt be *Our dere Lady*;/She fayled me never on thys day./By dere worthy God,' sayde Robyn,/To seche all Englonde thorowe,/Yet fonde I never to my pay/A moche better borowe." ("Gest", I, stanzas 65-66). In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 83.

generosity, this loan can hardly be dissociated from the outlaw's personal devotion to the Virgin²⁰.

Likewise, the slight delay of Sir Richard in fit IV, when he is expected back in the forest, one year on, to repay his debt, lies behind Robin's decision not to start his meal, for fear that Mary may be displeased with him²¹. In the meantime, however, another traveller comes to the greenwood: a monk of *St. Mary's Abbey*, who, when asked to pay a toll, will not avow the sum of more than £800 he is carrying with him. In an amusing and ingenious twist, which explores the monk's affiliation, the outlaws ascribe the monk's presence to the purpose of repayment, confiscate the whole amount as a penalty for the monk's deceit, and even thank the Virgin for paying such good interest, far beyond the wildest dreams of medieval usury. The episode is too long to be quoted here in full²², but I will transcribe a few stanzas as an example:

“Lytell Johan spred his mantel downe,
As he had done before,
And he tolde out of the monkes male
Eyght hondred pounde and more.

Lytell Johan let it lye full styll,
And went to his mayster in hast;
'Syr', he sayd, 'the monke is trewe ynowe,
Our Lady hath doubled your cast.

'I make myn avowe to God,' sayd Robyn,
'Monke, what tolde I the?
*Our Lady is the trewest woman
That ever yet founde I me.*

²⁰ The narrator spells out the three daily masses Robin attends to before dinner: “The one in the worship of the Fader,/And another of the Holy Ghost,/The thirde of *Our dere Lady/That he loved allther moste./Robyn loved Oure dere Lady;/For dout of dydly synne/Wolde he never do compani harme/That any woman was in.*” (“Gest”, I, stanzas 9-10). In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 79.

²¹ “Go we to dyner,’ sayde Litell Johnn,/Robyn Hode sayde, ‘Nay;/For I drede *Our Lady be wroth with me,/For she sent me nat my pay.*” (“Gest”, IV, stanza 206, lines 3-4). In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 94.

²² “Gest”, IV, stanzas 213-260. In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, pp. 94-98.

'By dere worthy God,' sayd Robyn,
 'To seche all Englund thorowe,
Yet founde I never to my pay
A moche better borowe.

'Fyll of the best wyne, and do hym drynke', sayd Robyn,
 'And grete well thy lady hende,
And yf she have nede to Robyn Hode,
*A frende she shall hym fynde."*²³

In the last fit of the "Gest", religious feelings and motivation are invoked by Robin to leave the court, after less than two years, and go back to the forest, in order to visit a chapel he had founded and dedicated to Mary Magdalene²⁴. The existence of this chapel has never been historically or archaeologically located or documented; moreover, the allusion to Mary Magdalene, rather than to Mary, is somewhat surprising. However, it could be argued that Robin Hood and Mary Magdalene — "[...] that good outlaw of the New Testament", to borrow Stephen Knight's simile and expression²⁵ — are, to some extent, united by a common repentance, having been pardoned, respectively, for his forest offences and her moral sins, by the English king and by Jesus Christ.

Jacques Dalarun provides a possible explanation for this female trilogy:

"De imediato, uma antinomia: Eva, Maria; uma simbolizando [...] as mulheres reais e a outra a mulher ideal. Por razões de estratégia eclesial, de disciplina clerical, de promoção de uma nova moral, Eva é [...] a mulher de que o clérigo se deve afastar, a mulher [...] de que se devem purificar as uniões principescas,

²³ "Gest", IV, stanzas 247-251. In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 97. Later on, Robin informs the knight that "[...] Our Lady, by her high selerer,/Hath sent to me my pay." (stanza 271, ll. 3-4). In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 98.

²⁴ "Gest", VIII, stanzas 439-442. In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 111.

²⁵ KNIGHT, Stephen – *Robin Hood. A Complete Study of the English Outlaw*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994, p. 80. The analogy reappears in another book where Knight argues that "It is possible to read either of these religious Marys as a stand-in for Marian, bringing limited aspects of the female into the forest story, but they do not of course survive the Reformation." (KNIGHT, Stephen – "The making and re-making of Maid Marian". In *Reading Robin Hood. Content, form and reception in the outlaw myth*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015, p. 191).

a filha do Diabo. A Virgem-Mãe [...] é projectada pelos homens para fora do alcance das mulheres terrestres. Nesta abertura agudizada entre as duas figuras [...] perfila-se Madalena. Os séculos XI e XII marcam o grande desenvolvimento do seu culto. A figura complexa de origem evangélica torna-se mais intensa e mais necessária. Mais intensa visto que os homens, os clérigos, a investem do sentimento novo da consciência [...]. Mais necessária para as mulheres, para quem as vias da salvação são então bem escarpadas, senão mesmo sem saída. Entre a porta de morte e a porta de vida, a pecadora bem-vinda é uma porta entreaberta para uma redenção possível, mas ao preço da confissão, do arrependimento, da penitência.”²⁶

Robin Hood’s distress in “Monk” and in fit IV of the “Gest” reappears in “Guy of Gisborne”, although now for different reasons: the ominous dream of which we only know the final part. Robin’s devotion to the Virgin is once again present, as it is only Robin’s request for protection that allows him to overcome Guy’s initial superiority in the fight:

“Robin was reachles on a roote,
And stumbled at that tyde,
And Guy was quicke and nimble with-all,
And hitt him ore the left side.

‘Ah, deere Lady!’ sayd Robin Hoode,
‘*Thou art both mother and may!*
I thinke it was never mans destinye
To dye before his day.’

*Robin thought on Our Lady deere,
And soone leapt up againe,
And thus he came with an awkwarde stroke;
Good Sir Guy hee has slayne,”*²⁷.

²⁶ DALARUN, Jacques – “Olhares de clérigos”. In KLAPISCH-ZUBER, Christiane (dir.) – *História das Mulheres no Ocidente*. Vol. 2. *A Idade Média*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 1993, p. 53.

²⁷ “Guy of Gisborne”, stanzas 38-40. In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 144.

Mary's protection in this ballad contrasts with "Monk", if we bear in mind that the outlaw is ironically captured in a church consecrated to the Virgin²⁸; conversely, Mary responds favourably to Little John's request of protection for Robin²⁹. Additionally, some excerpts from "Potter" and the "Gest" highlight the influence of the Marian cult in Robin Hood's courteous attitudes towards all women³⁰.

If courtesy is, without a doubt, one of the main features of the hero in the earliest surviving ballads, such emphasis may arguably be seen as a sign of the importance of chivalric values and behaviour, extolled in manuals, treatises and guidebooks, but also mediated, of course, by medieval romance³¹. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, for instance, Gawain's moral character unites, in paradigmatic fashion, the virtues of courtesy³² and Marian devotion³³; in fact, they are inextricably linked, since only through the protection offered by the Virgin can the temptation embodied in Lady Bertilak's third (and last) visit to Gawain's bedroom be resisted to³⁴. But, as many literary critics and historians have argued since the late 1950s, seeking to relate the earliest surviving corpus with the social rank of both the outlaw and the original listening audiences³⁵, the popular Robin Hood ballads can (should?) also

²⁸ "Whan Robyn came to Notynggham,/Sertenly withouten layn/He prayed to God and myld Mary/To bryng hym out save agayn." ("Monk", stanza 17). In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 116.

²⁹ "He has serveyd Oure Lady many a day,/And yet wil, securly;/Therefore I trust in Hir specialty;/No wyckud deth shal he dye.//Therefore be glad,' eaid Litul John,'/And let this mournyng be;/And I shal be the munkis gyde,/With the myght of mylde Mary." ("Monk", stanzas 34-35). In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 118.

³⁰ "Roben Hood was the yeman's name,/That was boyt corteys and ffre;/Ffor the loffe of owre ladey,/All wemen werschep[yd] ye[he]." ("Potter", stanza 3). In DOBSON, R. B.; TAYLOR, J. (eds.) – *Rymes*, p. 125.

³¹ "An important aspect [...] was the version of virtue and the self-image in which magnates, knights, and leading gentry formed a chivalric community committed to individual and collective goals of honour. In this project English romances were produced, received, and taken as offering 'imitable and useful models' [...] showing the links between literature, knightly imitations, and literary representations of those practices." (AERS, David – "In Arthurus day': community, virtue, and individual identity in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*". In *Community, Gender and Individual Identity. English Writing 1360-1430*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 155).

³² This is recognised by Bertilak's wife herself, describing the knight as "[...] the very vessel of virtue and fine courtesy [...]" (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. 2nd. ed., trans. Brian Stone. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983, l. 1298, p. 70); on the issue of courtesy in this romance, see pp. 129-137, and, at a more general level, NICHOLLS, J. – *The Matter of Courtesy*. Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1985.

³³ As the narrator explains, speaking of Gawain: "[...] his prowess all depended on the five pure Joys/That the holy Queen of Heaven had of her Child./Accordingly the courteous knight had that queen's image/Etched on the inside of his armoured shield,/So that when he beheld her, his heart did not fail." (*Sir Gawain*, ll. 646-650, p. 45).

³⁴ "With joy the two contended/In talk of true delight,/And peril would have impended/Had Mary not minded her knight." (*Sir Gawain*, ll. 1766-1769, p. 87).

³⁵ Viz., for example, the debate carried out by Rodney Hilton, J. C. Holt and Maurice Keen in the journal *Past and Present*. Their seminal papers, among many others, were invaluabley republished in KNIGHT,

be seen as a trivialised, and parodical version or imitation of courtly codes, modes, practices, and genres; almost — so to speak — as ‘mock-romances’ in the context of a non-canonical ‘matter of the greenwood’.

Not unexpectedly, and notwithstanding other literary, social, and cultural developments of the hero’s status and of the myth itself, the Protestant Reformation and its Puritan offshoots would bring about the effacement of Robin Hood’s devotion to the Virgin Mary; an example is collaterally provided by A. G. Dickens when he points out, speaking of the *Book of Common Prayer*, that “[...] the invocations to the Virgin and the saints, retained in 1549, were omitted altogether in 1552 and subsequently.”³⁶ As suggested above (see n.3), the Maid Marian depicted in 17th and 18th century poems, plays, and operas is largely a pastoral version of a formerly aristocratic lady, illustrating the eradication of the Marian devotion (and thus of the Maiden Mary connection) patent in the late medieval literary corpus.

This being the case, I would like to conclude by suggesting a topic for further projects and research: the collection and analysis of any material or documental evidence pertaining to the Marian cult in the regions and counties primarily associated with the Robin Hood legend: Sherwood, Nottinghamshire, and Barn(e)sdale, Yorkshire.

Stephen (ed.) – *Robin Hood – An Anthology of Scholarship and Criticism*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999.

³⁶ DICKENS, A. G. – *The English Reformation*. N.p.: Fontana Press, 1988, p. 261.

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