
‘That Robin Hood should bring us John Ball’: William Morris’s References to the Outlaw in *A Dream of John Ball* (1888)

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This article begins by considering representations of the legendary English outlaw, Robin Hood, in the broader English socialist movement of the nineteenth century. By and large, they had very little to say about him. Yet he was not totally absent, for we find the outlaw briefly referenced in William Morris’s *A Dream of John Ball* (1888). I suggest that Morris’s short allusions to the medieval outlaw invoke the radical political sentiments of Joseph Ritson’s *Robin Hood: A Collection of all the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads* (1795) and, to a lesser extent, John Keats’s *Robin Hood: To a Friend* (1818). Morris appropriated Ritson’s revolutionary Robin Hood, conceived at the height of the French Revolution, in order to depict the outlaw as figuratively preparing the way forward for the Peasants’ Revolt. The outlaw’s exploits are depicted as the antecedent of socialism. Just as *News from Nowhere* was situated in the tradition of revolutionary romanticism, so too was *A Dream of John Ball*.

Morris’s enthusiasm for all things medieval can hardly be overstated.¹ As well as *A Dream of John Ball*, medievalism can be found throughout a number of his writings. Although his medievalism predated his conversion to socialism, it was a reading of Henry Hyndman’s *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England* (1883) which convinced Morris that England had an indigenous tradition of socialism from the fourteenth century onwards.² Yet in all of his published works, there are only a few references to one of England’s most famous medieval outlaws. In Morris’s private letters, there are no references to Robin Hood, and the reasons for this remain unclear; it certainly seems strange in view of the fact that Robin Hood, as a man who, according to legend, stole from the rich and gave to the poor, would seem to fit well with Morris’s socialist ideology. Morris was not the only early socialist who gave scant attention to the outlaw’s legend. Hyndman made no reference to Robin Hood in *The Historical Basis for Socialism in England*, and neither did Max Beer in *The History of Socialism in*

England (1919). Ernest Belfort Bax simply sneered at the early Robin Hood poems, and called them the unworthy literary predecessors of the contemporary penny dreadful and the modern newspaper.³ Although it must be said that in the series of articles which Bax co-authored with Morris, ‘Socialism from the Root Up’, they wrote positively about medieval Robin Hood poems, arguing that early ballads such as the ‘rough but noble’ *Gest of Robyn Hode* (1495) were notable because they were inspired by the spirit of ‘[r]esistance to authority and contempt of the “Rights of Property”’.⁴ Those early poems, according to Morris and Bax, were not in themselves revolutionary or proto-socialist but merely symptoms of ‘the confusion and misery’ caused by the abuses inherent in feudal society.⁵

When it came to choosing their medieval heroes, late Victorian and Edwardian socialists clearly favoured the likes of Wat Tyler and John Ball, Sir John Oldcastle and the Diggers; these were people who had actually led revolts against the establishment. Nineteenth-century socialists’ neglect of Robin Hood may also be due to the fact that, during the Victorian period, Robin Hood had become either an apolitical or wholly conservative figure in popular literature. Stephen Knight describes this process as the ‘gentrification’ of the Robin Hood tradition.⁶ The outlaw had been first elevated to the aristocracy during the late sixteenth century in Anthony Munday’s *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntingdon* and *The Death of Robert, Earle of Huntingdon* (1597-98).⁷ Somewhat later, conservative biographers of criminals during the eighteenth century emphasised Robin’s wickedness and criminality.⁸ The anonymous author of the gothic romance *Robin Hood: A Tale of the Olden Time* (1819) was clearly on the side of the establishment, instructing readers at the end of the book to ‘Fear God – Honour the King – Relieve the Poor – Forbear to Envy the Rich; and do as you would be done by towards all mankind!’⁹ Robin of Locksley in Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (1819), far from seeking to overthrow the existing social order, works with Richard I so that the latter can reclaim his kingdom from ‘bad’ Prince John. Moreover, the Tory Scott presents a vision of society, arranged along feudal lines, in which ‘the serf should be willing to die for his master, and the master willing to die for the man he considers his sovereign’.¹⁰

The view that, as a folkloric figure, Robin Hood was a conservative or, at best, non-political hero even filtered into academic scholarship. The American folklorist Francis J. Child in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* maintained that ‘[Robin Hood] has no sort of political character in the *Gest* or any other ballad’.¹¹ In early ballads such as *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, there is indeed little-to-no political comment; in most stories, from the medieval to modern periods, in fact, Robin’s grievances are fairly parochial as he seeks to thwart the schemes of the Sheriff of Nottingham or the cunning Abbot of St. Mary’s in York. In most of his portrayals throughout history,

Robin Hood is more of a social bandit; these outlaws rarely desire to overturn the existing social order, nor do they attempt to establish a society based on freedom and equality; instead, the social bandit helps out where he can – such as saving a widow from the machinations of a local tyrant or setting free a wrongly imprisoned man – but, as Eric Hobsbawm has observed, he does not have a programme to improve society as a whole.¹² The Robin Hood scholar, James C. Holt, developed Hobsbawm's ideas and applied them to Robin Hood, saying that:

He does not seek to overturn social conventions. On the contrary, he sustains those conventions against the machinations of the wicked and the powerful who exploit, flout, and undermine them. He keeps his word, unlike the treacherous Sheriff. He is devout, unlike the worldly clerics. He is generous, unlike the avaricious abbot [...] he makes his world conform to the principles that are supposed to underlie it.¹³

The 'historical' Robin Hood's activities were therefore limited in scope. He was occasionally appropriated by earlier eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers of radical fiction to promote a specific cause. The young Robert Southey, for example, in his unpublished gothic romance 'Harold; or, The Castle of Morford' (1791), depicted Robin as a medieval revolutionary.¹⁴ The depiction of Robin Hood in Thomas Miller's *Royston Gower; or, The Days of King John* (1838) can essentially be called 'the Chartist Robin Hood', while Pierce Egan the Younger in *Robin Hood and Little John* (1838-40) used the outlaw's story to highlight criticisms of Old Corruption.¹⁵ Miller's *Royston Gower* quickly went out of print, while the popularity of Egan's novel by the latter part of the century was eclipsed by retellings of the legend in late-Victorian children's books.

It is an American children's book that is credited by Paul Buhle as having influenced Morris's references to Robin Hood in *A Dream of John Ball*.¹⁶ This book was Howard Pyle's lavishly illustrated *Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883). Yet Buhle's supposition seems highly unlikely for various reasons: while many works examining Pyle's life and works state that Pyle won praise from Morris for the illustrations in *Robin Hood*, there are few references to him actually owning it. Other scholarly works make the point that Morris praised Pyle for his illustrations, though Morris appears to have said little about Pyle's actual text.¹⁷ Where other academic works on Pyle's life and works highlight Morris's praise for the illustrations in *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, they usually cite Joseph Pennell's comment in *The Graphic Arts* which states that:

[Pyle's] book made an enormous sensation when it came out here, and even impressed greatly the very conservative William Morris, who thought up to that time, 1883, nothing good artistically could come out of America.¹⁸

Moreover, neither Morris's letters nor the online catalogue of the books which he owned in his personal library contain any evidence that he owned or even read Pyle's *Robin Hood*.

By contrast, there is evidence from the catalogue of Morris's library that he was acquainted with Joseph Ritson's *Robin Hood*. It was originally published by Thomas Egerton in two small octavo volumes in 1795.¹⁹ As its full title suggests, it is an anthology of every Robin Hood ballad from the medieval period onwards.²⁰ While the ballads are undoubtedly an important part of the publication, the more important part of it for the purpose of the analysis offered here is the biographical section entitled 'The Life of Robin Hood', with which Ritson prefaces the song collection. In the wake of Scott's phenomenally successful *Ivanhoe*, second and third editions appeared in single volumes in 1820 and 1823 respectively.²¹ A fourth edition in two volumes was then printed by William Pickering in 1832.²² Many more single editions followed throughout the nineteenth century, and the edition that was owned by Morris was the Bell and Daldy version printed in 1862.²³ It contains the full text of the 1795 edition, including Ritson's biography of Robin Hood and lengthy footnotes. Other antiquaries who came after Ritson published more comprehensive and scholarly collections of the Robin Hood ballads, notably John Mathew Gutch, who published *A Lytell Geste of Robin Hode* in 1847. However, Ritson's text was the only work dedicated to Robin Hood that, according to current records, Morris owned. In his personal library, Morris also possessed Francis James Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-98). However, Child's text is unlikely to have been a factor in Morris's inclusion of Robin Hood in *A Dream of John Ball*; the third volume of Child's anthology, which contains all of the Robin Hood ballads, was not published until 1888, almost one year after *A Dream of John Ball* finished its initial serialisation in *Commonweal*.²⁴

Although Ritson's anthology of Robin Hood ballads, at first glance, appears to be a dry and scholarly work, it is highly political. To understand the political sentiments behind Ritson's work, one must look at his writings on politics. Ritson (1752-1803) was born in Stockton-on-Tees and was a lawyer by trade, but in his leisure time he devoted himself to antiquarian pursuits.²⁵ Alongside Thomas Percy, who published *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* in 1765, Ritson was a leading figure in the 'rediscovery' of English medieval romances during the eighteenth century.²⁶ He was also a confirmed radical who enthusiastically supported the French Revolution. After having visited Paris in 1791, he wrote to his friend Mr. Harrison that he was:

highly gratified [sic] with the whole of my excursion. I admire the French more than ever. They deserved to be free, and they really are so. You have read their new constitution? We, who pretend to be free, you know, have no constitution at all [...] as to modern politics, one would think that half the people in Paris had no other employment than to study and talk about them. I have seen a fisherwoman read the journal of the National Assembly to her neighbour [...] you may now consider their government completely settled, and a counter revolution utterly impossible: they are more than a match for all the slaves of Europe.²⁷

Unlike contemporary radicals, such as Robert Southey, who eschewed support for the Revolution after the Reign of Terror began during late 1792, the violence did not deter Ritson.²⁸ His surviving letters show him recommending Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791) to his friend Mr Wadeson as late as February 1794, and he was still at that point hopeful that a similar revolution would break out in Britain.²⁹ Almost as soon as the Revolution broke out, Ritson began to address his like-minded correspondents as 'Citizen', although by mid-1794 he was conscious that the authorities were monitoring him and so toned down his use of the word.³⁰ Perhaps needing an outlet through which he could give expression to his revolutionary sentiments, in *Robin Hood* Ritson fashions the outlaw into a medieval Thomas Paine.

Morris's allusion to Robin Hood occurs when the nineteenth-century time-traveller in *A Dream of John Ball* first finds himself transported back to the fourteenth century. While there he enters a tavern. One villager in the tavern requests another man present to sing 'a stave of Robin Hood; maybe that shall hasten the coming of one I wot of'.³¹ The song relates 'the struggle against tyranny for the freedom of life'.³² The idea that the songs of Robin Hood were stories of 'the struggle against tyranny' is directly in keeping with Ritson's interpretation of the Robin Hood tradition. Ritson says, for example, that Robin Hood was:

A man who, in a barbarous age and under a complicated tyranny, displayed a spirit of freedom and *independence*, which has endeared him to the common people, whose cause he maintained, (for all opposition to tyranny is the cause of the people,) and, in spite of the malicious endeavours of pitiful monks, by whom history was consecrated to the crimes and follies of titled ruffians and sainted idiots, to suppress all record of his patriotic exertions and virtuous acts, will render his name immortal.³³

Robin Hood's 'spirit of freedom and independence' is further manifested by the fact

that, according to Ritson, ‘for a long series of years, [he] maintained a sort of independent sovereignty, and set kings, judges, and magistrates at defiance’.³⁴ Ritson’s portrayal of Robin Hood as a freedom fighter is clearly where Morris has acquired the idea that the outlaw’s story is one of ‘the struggle against tyranny’.³⁵ It is a rousing Robin Hood ballad that is sung that day in fourteenth-century Kent, for the traveller says that:

My heart rose high as I heard him, for it was concerning the struggle against tyranny for the freedom of life, how that the wild wood and the heath, despite of wind and weather, were better for a free man than the court and the cheaping-town; of the taking from the rich to give to the poor; of the life of a man doing his own will and not the will of another man commanding him for the commandment’s sake.³⁶

In the *Commonweal* version of *A Dream of John Ball*, the wording is slightly different, for Morris includes a sharp critique of modern industrial society, speaking of how ‘the wild wood and the heath weather were better than the court and the cheaping-town [...] of the life of man rather than the existence of machines’.³⁷ The disapproval of modern ways of life, expressed more forcibly in this passage in *Commonweal* than it is in the single-volume edition, bears a passing resemblance to John Keats’s poem entitled *Robin Hood: To a Friend* (1818). As a book collector, it is unsurprising that a copy of Keats’s poems was in Morris’s library.³⁸ Keats’s *Robin Hood* was also reprinted in the Kelmscott edition of *The Poems of John Keats* (1894).³⁹ In the poem, Keats idealises a time when ‘men knew nor rent nor leases’, and the speaker observes that:

[...] if Robin should be cast
Sudden from his turfed grave,
And if Marian should have
Once again her forest days,
She would weep, and he would craze:
He would swear, for all his oaks,
Fall’n beneath the dockyard strokes,
Have rotted on the briny seas;
She would weep that her wild bees
Sang not to her – strange! that honey
Can’t be got without hard money!⁴⁰

The critique of capitalism and the cash nexus in Keats’s poem would doubtless have

appealed to Morris.⁴¹ And it is these sentiments that he may in fact have been drawing upon in the *Commonweal* version of *A Dream of John Ball*. In the one-volume edition of *A Dream of John Ball*, Morris's idea of forest life correlates to the description of it given by Ritson:

The deer with which the royal forests then abounded (every Norman tyrant being, like Nimrod, 'a mighty hunter before the Lord') would afford our hero and his companions an ample supply of food throughout the year; and of fuel, for dressing their venison, or for the other purposes of life, they could evidently be in no want. The rest of their necessaries would be easily [sic] procured, partly by taking what they had an occasion for from the wealthy passenger, who traversed or approached their territories.⁴²

Thus the outlaws in Ritson's text are truly free men: they live a life of liberty in the forests of Barnsdale and Sherwood. The same forests provide them with everything in life that they require. There are occasions upon which they are forced to steal from people, but Ritson makes sure to tell the reader

That our hero and his companions, while they lived in the woods, had recourse to robbery for their better support, is neither to be concealed nor denied [sic]. Testimonies to this purpose, indeed, would be equally endless and unnecessary [...] but it is to be remembered [...] that, in these exertions of power, he took away the goods of rich men only; never killing any person, unless he was attacked or resisted; that he never suffered a woman to be maltreated; nor ever took anything from the poor; but charitably fed them with the wealth that he drew from the abbots.⁴³

In Ritson's brief biography, there is no mention of the town and the court. But upon reading the next part of the book which is the section that contains *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, Morris would have encountered the 'Eighth Fytte' of the tale. Robin Hood, having been pardoned by the King, is invited to enter the King's service and join his court. Robin Hood finds the world of the Royal Court unpalatable, and after having dwelt among the nobles for fifteen months, he desires to go back to Barnsdale forest.⁴⁴ The King grants Robin Hood permission to return to the greenwood for seven days. In what must be one of the earliest literary portrayals of recidivism, Robin Hood becomes an outlaw again and decides to stay another twenty-two years, thereby risking the wrath of the King.⁴⁵ Clearly, for the freedom-loving former outlaw, 'the wild wood and the heath, despite of wind and weather, were better for a free man

than the court and the cheaping-town'.⁴⁶ The outlaws prefer 'doing [their] own will and not the will of another man'.⁴⁷

The reader is not given the text of the first ballad which the traveller hears and Morris only describes it in terms of relating the idea of freedom from tyranny. Another villager continues afterwards by singing another ballad, or, 'more of a song than a story ballad', praising resistance to a corrupt sheriff and abuses of kingly authority:

The Sheriff is made a mighty lord,
Of goodly gold he hath enow,
And many a sergeante girt with sword;
But forth will we bend the bow.
We shall bend the bow on the lily lea,
Betwixt the thorn and the oaken tree.

With stone and lime is the burg wall built,
And pit and prison are stark and strong,
And many a true man there is spilt,
And many a right man doomed by wrong.
So forth shall we and bend the bow
And the king's writ never the road shall know.⁴⁸

The medieval justice system presided over by the sheriff, as Morris imagines it, is corrupt and has proved to be the downfall of many a good man. In spite of the sheriff's gold and superior strength, however, the outlaws ensure that the sheriff never encroaches on their domain, which is a place where 'the king's writ' never shall know. This poem likewise has resonances with the sentiments found in Ritson's biography which depicts Robin Hood as man who defies corrupt authority: 'when molested, by a superior force, in one place, he retired to another, still defying the power of what was then called law and government'.⁴⁹ Yet there was also a warning for the outlaws and, by extension the villagers assembled in Morris's fourteenth-century tavern:

Now yeomen walk ye warily,
And heed ye the houses where ye go,
For as fair and as fine as they may be,
Lest behind your heels the doors clap to.⁵⁰

Most late-Victorian Robin Hood novels such as Edward Gilliat's *In Lincoln Green* (1897)

or Escott Lynn's *When Lionheart was King* (1908) – and truly to read one of these children's novels is to read them all – depict the local population as having been nothing but friendly towards the outlaws. Yet in Ritson's text, and Morris's *A Dream of John Ball*, outside of the forest, 'his hand was against every man, and every mans [sic] against him', and it is only the forest which was 'free from the alarms, or apprehensions, to which our foresters, one would suppose, must have been too frequently subject'.⁵¹ It was truly a brave act to resist authority, as Robin and the merry men do in both Ritson's and Morris's texts, but this often came at a price; the forest was the only place where 'the Sheriff's word is nought of worth'.⁵²

After the 'stave of Robin Hood' has been heard by the assembled villagers, the men gather in the tavern to hear the church bells begin to ring and they make their way outside. The ballad singer approaches the time traveller and asks: 'was it not sooth that I said, brother, that Robin Hood should bring us John Ball?'.⁵³ John Ball has rung the church bells. He has arrived in the village and is about to deliver a sermon to the inhabitants on the importance of 'fellowship' and of a future world when there will be no masters; men will work for themselves and 'shall not lack for the fields ye have tilled, nor the houses ye have built, nor the cloth ye have woven'.⁵⁴ In a literal sense, Robin Hood 'brings us John Ball' because a song of Robin Hood is heard before John Ball's arrival. In a figurative sense, Ritson's radical Robin Hood has prepared the way for the arrival of the proto-socialist preacher, John Ball; Robin Hood fought for freedom against tyranny prior to the fourteenth century, although it is Ball who brings an egalitarian ideology to the struggle against tyranny by preaching of a time when 'those that labour [shall] become strong and stronger [...] and have the goods of the earth without money and without price'.⁵⁵ This mirrors how many nineteenth-century socialists saw themselves: they were heirs to a radical tradition which, while not strictly socialist, at least laid the groundwork for the emergence of socialism. According to Morris and Bax, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century radical thought was part of the 'roots' of socialism in 'Socialism from the Root Up'.⁵⁶ The weekly section in *Commonweal* entitled 'Revolutionary Calendar', for example, was one means through which adherents of the late nineteenth-century socialist cause might be made aware of their political heritage through commemorations of the deaths of various radical luminaries, including Thomas Paine.⁵⁷ *Commonweal* on occasion republished poems from the 1848 European revolutions, as they did, for example, when the editors included Ferdinand Freiligrath's 'Song of Death' in August 1887.⁵⁸ Later periodicals such as *The Social Democrat* would write special features on elderly former Chartists, evinced by that magazine's publication of an interview with 'Rex the Chartist'.⁵⁹ In effect, Morris was paying his small debt, and that of many other contemporary socialists, to the spirit of Robin Hood and, by extension, early

radicals such as Ritson. Just as *News from Nowhere* can be ‘situated in another tradition, the tradition of revolutionary Romanticism that finds its fullest statement in the writings of Blake and Shelley’, so too was Morris in *A Dream of John Ball* situating the history of English socialism in the revolutionary romantic tradition by drawing on the work of Ritson.⁶⁰ The reason why the reference to Robin Hood was brief, however, was because his main concern in *A Dream of John Ball* was not to tell a simplistic story of robbing the rich and giving to the poor but to give readers a glimpse into the beginnings of English socialism which began in the fourteenth century.

It would not be until the twentieth century that readers would be given a properly communist portrayal of Robin Hood in Geoffrey Trease’s *Bows against the Barons* (1934), in which the Merry Men address each other as ‘Comrades’. Trease’s socialist outlaw novel was written as a reaction to conservative appropriations of the Robin Hood legend in late-Victorian children’s books.⁶¹ However, Trease’s novel was a ‘one off’, according to Stephen Knight; during the twentieth century, Robin Hood has indeed continued to be portrayed as anti-capitalist, or at least against its most predatory iterations, but he is not a socialist, strictly speaking.⁶² In choosing their medieval heroes, Morris and his contemporary socialist writers often neglected Robin Hood in favour of other, more revolutionary leaders such as Wat Tyler and John Ball. Yet the evidence above suggests that in writing *A Dream of John Ball*, Morris was briefly inspired to include a reference to a ‘Ritsonesque’ Robin Hood in order to situate his John Ball’s medieval socialism within a romantic revolutionary tradition.

NOTES

1. See Marcus Waithe, *William Morris’s Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006); see also Suzanne O’Rourke Scanlon, ‘The Medievalism of William Morris’, *Ex Post Facto*, 22 (2013), 153-67.
2. David A. Kopp, ‘Two Williams of one medieval mind: reading the Socialist William Morris through the lens of the Radical William Cobbett’, *JWMS*, 20: 3 (2013), 31-46 (31).
3. E. Belfort Bax, ‘The Curse of Civilisation’, *Commonweal*, 3: 88 (17 September 1887), 300-1 (301).
4. William Morris, *Political Writings: Contributions to ‘Justice’ and ‘Commonweal’ 1883-1890*, ed. by Nicholas Salmon (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), pp. 502-3. (Afterwards Morris, *Political Writings*).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 502.
6. Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 8.
7. For a critical discussion, see Meredith Skura, ‘Anthony Munday’s “Gentrification” of Robin Hood’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 33: 2 (2003), 155-80.
8. See Stephen Basdeo, ‘Robin Hood the Brute: Representations of the Outlaw in Eighteenth-Century Criminal Biography’, *Law, Crime and History*, 6: 2 (2016), 54-70.
9. Anon., *Robin Hood: A Tale of the Olden Time*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1819), II, p. 221.
10. Alice Chandler, ‘Sir Walter Scott and the Medieval Revival’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 19: 4 (1965), 314-32 (324).
11. *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. by Francis J. Child, 5 vols (London: Houghton, 1882-98), III, p. 43.

12. Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 2nd edn (London: Pelican, 1972), p. 55.
13. James C. Holt, *Robin Hood*, 2nd edn (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p. 6.
14. Bodleian MS. Eng. Misc. e. 21 (Summary Catalogue 31777).
15. See Stephen Basdeo, 'The Chartist Robin Hood: Thomas Miller's *Royston Gower; or, The Days of King John* (1838)', *SSL: Studies in Scottish Literature*, 44:2 (2019), 72-81; Stephen Basdeo, 'Radical Medievalism: Pierce Egan the Younger's Robin Hood, Wat Tyler, and Adam Bell', in *Imagining the Victorians*, ed. by Stephen Basdeo and Lauren Padgett, Leeds Working Papers in Victorian Studies, 15 (Leeds: Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies, 2016), pp. 49-65.
16. Paul Buhle, *Robin Hood: People's Outlaw and Forest Hero* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2011), pp. 17-20.
17. Jill P. May and Robert E. May, *Howard Pyle: Imagining an American School of Art* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011), p. 37.
18. Joseph Pennell, *The Graphic Arts; Modern Men and Modern Methods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921), p. 93.
19. *Robin Hood: A Collection of all the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads, Now Extant, Relative to that Celebrated English Outlaw*, ed. by Joseph Ritson, 2 vols (London: T. Egerton, 1795). All quotations from Ritson's text are taken from the two-volume first edition printed in 1795. (Afterwards Ritson, *Robin Hood*).
20. For critical editions of the Robin Hood ballads, see the following: *Rymes of Robyn Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw*, ed. by R. B. Dobson and J. Taylor, 2nd edn (Stroud: Sutton, 1997); *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, ed. by Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000).
21. See *Robin Hood: A Collection of all the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads, Now Extant, Relative to that Celebrated English Outlaw*, ed. by Joseph Ritson, 2nd edn (London: Longman et al., 1820); *Robin Hood: A Collection of all the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads, Now Extant, Relative to that Celebrated English Outlaw*, ed. by Joseph Ritson, 3rd edn (London: C. Stocking, 1823).
22. *Robin Hood: A Collection of All the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads, Now Extant, Relative to that Celebrated English Outlaw*, ed. by Joseph Ritson, 4th edn, 2 vols (London: William Pickering, 1832).
23. 'Ritson – Robin Hood (1862)', in *The Library of William Morris: A Catalogue* [website], ed. by William S. Peterson & Sylvia Holton Peterson, available online: <<https://williammorrislibrary.wordpress.com>> [last accessed 6 February 2017]. (Afterwards *Library of William Morris*).
24. 'Child – English and Scottish Popular Ballads', in *ibid*.
25. See Stephanie L. Barczewski, 'Ritson, Joseph (1752–1803)' in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), available online: <www.oxforddnb.com> [last accessed 6 February 2017]. There has not been a recent scholarly biography of Ritson but the most comprehensive account of his life can be found in the following work: H. A. Burd, *Joseph Ritson: A Critical Biography* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1916).
26. See Monica Santini, *The Impetus of Amateur Scholarship: Discussing and Editing Medieval Romances in Late Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010). Several discussions of Ritson's Robin Hood can be found in the following works: Stephen Basdeo, *Robin Hood: The Life and Legend of an Outlaw* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2019); Stephen Knight, *Reading Robin Hood: Content, Form and Reception in the Outlaw Myth* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Percy's *Reliques* is also discussed in Knight's works, but for a more detailed analysis see Nick Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
27. Joseph Ritson, 'Letter XCVII: To Mr Harrison, 26 November 1791', in *The Letters of Joseph Ritson, Esq. Edited Chiefly from Originals in the Possession of his Nephew. To which is Attached a Memoir of the Life of the Author*, ed. by Nicholas Harris, 2 vols (London: William Pickering, 1833), I, pp. 202-5 (pp. 203-4). (Afterwards Ritson, *Letters*).
28. See Jean Raimond, 'Southey's Early Writings and the Revolution', *The Yearbook of English Studies: The*

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- French Revolution in English Literature and Art*, Special Number, 19 (1989), 181-96.
29. Ritson, *Letters*, I, p. 42.
 30. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
 31. William Morris, *A Dream of John Ball and A King's Lesson* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1888), p. 17. (Afterwards Morris, *A Dream of John Ball*).
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. Ritson, *Robin Hood*, I, pp. xi-xii.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. xi.
 35. Morris, *A Dream of John Ball*, p. 17.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. William Morris, 'A Dream of John Ball', *Commonweal*, 2: 45 (20 November 1886), 266-67 (267).
 38. 'Keats – Poems (1894)', in *Library of William Morris* [last accessed 6 February 2017].
 39. *The Poems of John Keats* (London: Kelmscott Press, 1894), pp. 316-19.
 40. John Keats, 'Robin Hood: To a Friend', in *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1820), pp. 133-36.
 41. John Barnard, 'Keats's "Robin Hood", John Hamilton Reynolds, and "the Old Poets"', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 75 (1989), 181-200 (182). See also Thomas R. Mitchell, 'Keats's "Outlawry" in "Robin Hood"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 34: 4 (1994), 753-69.
 42. Ritson, *Robin Hood*, I, p. vi.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. ix.
 44. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
 46. Morris, *A Dream of John Ball*, p. 17.
 47. *Ibid.*
 48. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
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 50. Morris, *A Dream of John Ball*, p. 18.
 51. Ritson, *Robin Hood*, I, p. vi.
 52. Morris, *A Dream of John Ball*, p. 19.
 53. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
 54. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
 55. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
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