HARTS, HOUNDS, AND HUMANS: HUNTING IN *A LYTELL GESTE OF ROBYN HODE*

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In 1973, Disney reimagined Robin Hood as a charming, animated fox. Given the long-standing association of the fox with cunning thievery and dashing good looks, it is not surprising that Disney made such a leap, especially given that perhaps the association of Robin Hood with his legal animal equivalent—the wolf—may not have been as appealing to young children.[1] A wolf does make an appearance in Disney's animated *Robin Hood*, but in the guise of the villainous Sheriff of Nottingham. Although wolves have appeared as positive figures in a few Disney films, such as the animated film *The Jungle Book* (1967), where a pack of wolves raise the orphan Mowgli, they are depicted more frequently as frightening, menacing creatures; see, for example, the animated film *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) or the animated film *Frozen* (2013) where wolves appear against a stark landscape, threatening to destroy the films' protagonists. These negative portrayals of wolves have a long history. Isidore of Seville, in his seventh-century *Etymologies*, attests that wolves will devour anything they encounter,[2] and Hildegard von Bingen, in her twelfth-century *Physica*, echoes this claim, noting that the "wolf always lies in wait for a human, and will gladly tear him apart if possible, even if it is not hungry."[3] Because of the popular modern notion of Robin Hood robbing the rich to give to the poor, twentieth- and twenty-first-century audiences might have difficulty associating such charitable actions to a wolf.

The fox, on the other hand, remains a much more complex figure due to its archetypal association as a trickster hero. Medieval bestiaries, such as the Aberdeen Bestiary (Aberdeen University Library MS 24), connect the fox, like many of the animals contained within its pages, with the devil while simultaneously describing it with more positive connotations as a "clever, crafty animal."[4] Even though medieval bestiaries were largely created and consumed within monasteries, medieval literary texts, such as the late twelfth-century Old French *Le Roman de Renart*, written by Pierre de Saint-Cloud, echo these traits. The medieval fox may occasionally appear as a negative figure, but often its actions result in humor rather than the outright and

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[1] For a discussion of Robin Hood as wolf, see Sarah Harlan-Haughey, *The Ecology of the English Outlaw in Medieval Literature: From Fen to Greenwood*, Outlaws in Literature, History, and Culture 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 2016). Joseph Taylor discusses the historical and linguistic association between wolves and outlaws in his article, "'Me longeth sore to Bernysdale': Centralization, Resistance, and the Bare Life of the Greenwood in *A Gest of Robyn Hode,*" *Modern Philology* 110, no. 3 (2013): 313-39.

[2] Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, Oliver Berghof, and J. A. Beach (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 253.

[3] *Hildegard von Bingen's Physica: The Complete English Translation of Her Classic Work on Health and Healing*, trans. Priscilla Throop (Rochester: Healing Arts Press, 1998), 217.

[4] "The Fox," The Aberdeen Bestiary MS 24, folio 16r. University of Aberdeem, February 19, 2017, http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f16r. The entry for the fox (*vulpis*) reads thus: "For it is fleet-footed and never runs in a straight line but twists and turns. It is a clever, crafty animal." [Est enim\ volubilis pedibus et\ nunquam recto itinere, \ sed tortuosis anfract\ibus currit. Est et\ fraudulentum ani\mal et ingeniosum.]; see Harlan-Haughey, *Ecology of the English Outlaw*, 16, where the scholar briefly discusses similar parallels between foxes and outlaws such as Robin Hood or Fulk Fitz Waryn.

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threatening violence of the wolf. In Geoffrey Chaucer's late fourteenth-century *Nun's Priest's Tale,* for example, hilarity ensues as the residents of the farm chase the fox across the yard, and humbling self-reflection, rather than death, is the rooster Chanticleer's fate. Thus, Disney's choice to cast its Robin Hood as a fox rather than a wolf granted the studio a chance to create a much beloved character capable of flaunting the authority of the king without terrifying young audiences.

The depiction of Robin Hood in Wynkyn de Worde's edition of *A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode* (ca. 1506), however, suggests another animal association for Robin Hood—the hound.[5] Despite repeated references to the hunting of deer, no dogs are indicated as dwelling among Robin and his men.[6] The sole mention of hounds occurs when Little John, masquerading as one of the Sheriff's men, "met the proud sheryf / Huntynge with hounde and horne" [met the proud sheriff / Hunting with hound and horn] and then leads the Sheriff on a hunt for a "ryght fayre hart" [very fair hart]—that is, Robin Hood himself.[7] Although it is tempting to identify Robin as a deer given Little John's metaphor, as scholars such as Sarah Harlan-Haughey and Joseph Falaky Nagy have done, Robin's behavior—especially his interactions with the king—suggests rather that the absence of literal hounds is deliberate, inviting us to consider instead Robin as a medieval hound. Understanding which medieval social classes used hounds to hunt and why, as well as the defining traits of dogs, particularly their loyalty to their masters, helps to elucidate the king's decision to take Robin with him to his court rather than imposing a more severe penalty for the outlaw's many venison offences. Specifically, the *Geste* reflects an attitude common among the upper levels of medieval British society that those beneath them were less than human. That the king essentially treats Robin Hood as a hound—rather than a human outlaw—which the king can bring to heel speaks to both economic and social prestige. The king has no qualms about having the rebellious Sir Richard killed, for knights are a dime a dozen, so to speak. Robin Hood, however, due to his hound-like qualities, which I will elucidate below, is unique and therefore needs to be collected. This is largely due to the role that medieval hounds played in social rituals which served to establish human superiority, thus affording the king a display of his power by removing Robin Hood from the forest to the court. Just as a medieval hound was dependent upon its master for food, while at court, Robin, now essentially impotent, cannot provide for himself and is rendered fully dependent upon the king. Ultimately, though, Robin Hood rejects this dehumanization, and his final actions result in a severe critique of the king.

In the literature of Middle English romance, it is rare to experience a hunting scene in which hounds are absent. Hounds are as essential as horses for the aristocratic hunt even outside of the scope of romance, as demonstrated by Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century dream vision *The Book of the Duchess*, as the dreamer-narrator observes,

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[5] My focus here is only on working dogs; although dogs were sometimes kept as companions, as Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), notes, "[p]et dogs ... had no place in the world of the hunt," 7.

[6] Harlan-Haughey briefly notes this absence to justify her claim that Robin Hood and his men "act like animals," but she does not identify Robin as a hound, arguing instead that "Robin Hood has morphed from wolf to surreal deer and then back again." *Ecology of the English Outlaw*, 186, 188.

[7] All quotations from the *Geste* are from the Wynkyn de Worde edition *A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode* in Thomas H. Ohlgren and Lister M. Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood: An Edition of the Texts, ca. 1425 to ca. 1600* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013), 114-15, lines 709-10, 721. All translations to Middle English texts in this essay, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

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Men, hors, houndes, and other thyng;
And al men speken of huntyng,
How they wolde slee the hert with strengthe[8]

[Men, horses, hounds, and other things;
And all men speak of hunting,
How they would kill the hart with strength]

Hounds may accompany supernatural parties as well as mundane ones, for in the fourteenth-century anonymous romance *Sir Orfeo*, the titular character observes

The king o fairy with his rout
Com to hunt him al about
With dim cri and bloweing,
And houndes also with him berking[9]

[The king of fairy with his company came to hunt all about with indistinct cries and horns blowing, and barking hounds also with them.]

In the late fourteenth-century *Sir Tristrem*, Tristrem's hound Hodain is so loyal to his master that he accompanies Tristrem into a forestry exile and is trained to hunt silently so as to prevent discovery of the lovers; that his master takes the time to train Hodain in such a way suggests the vital role that hounds played in the hunt. Perhaps the most well-known medieval hunting scene appears in the anonymous late fourteenth-century alliterative romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which depicts a highly realistic portrayal of the medieval hunt as the hounds corral deer, trap the boar, and track a fox during Bertilak's hunts. In addition, there are brief moments in *Sir Gawain*, as well as in *Sir Orfeo*, when the hounds and the human hunters become nearly indistinguishable aurally from one another:

Mony watz þe myry mouthe of men and of houndez
Þat buskkez after þis bor with bost and wyth noyse
to quelle"
[Many were the merry mouths of men and of hounds
that hasten after this boar with clamor and with noise
to kill].[10]

Not only do these two categories of hunting participants become merged through sound; Jean Birrell also notes that, like the human hunters, "occasionally the dogs were disguised, or possibly protected, by coats of cloth."[11] Both the gentlemen whom they accompany and these hounds risk

[8] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchess*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 334, lines 349-51.
[9] *Sir Orfeo*, in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. Anne Laskaya, Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/laskaya-and-salisbury-middle-english-breton-lays-sir-orfeo, lines 283-86.
[10] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed., J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, 2nd ed., ed. and rev. Norman Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 40, lines 1447-49.
[11] Jean Birrell, "Who Poached the King's Deer?: A Study in Thirteenth-Century Crime," *Midland History* 7 (1982): 17.

injury, and even death, for the reward of the kill, and as a result, the roles played by humans and hounds may at times blur and overlap, as I argue they do in the *Geste*.

Given that texts such as the ones discussed above were primarily written for aristocratic audiences, it is not surprising that hounds play such a prominent role in hunting scenes, or that within the world of the *Geste*, the Sheriff of Nottingham uses hounds to hunt. Dogs are of such importance to medieval aristocratic hunting that in the oldest English book on hunting, ten chapters of a total of thirty-six are devoted to discussion of hounds. The early fifteenth-century *Master of Game*, by Edward of Norwich, the second Duke of York, covers such topics as common illnesses and their treatments, training of hounds for the hunt, and details on specific breeds such as greyhounds, spaniels, and mastiffs. In the second chapter, which treats the male deer, the narrator explicitly states of harts that "but in Engelonde þei ben not slayn but wiþ houndes, or with shotte or with strengh of rennyng houndes" [but in England they are not killed except with hounds, or with arrows or by the stamina of running hounds], further indicating the strong relationship between hounds and hunting.[12]

Additional evidence of the importance of hounds to aristocratic hunting practices abound in other medieval treatises. Rachel Hands, in the introduction of her edition of the late fifteenth-century *Boke of St. Albans*, briefly outlines multiple fifteenth-century treatises on hawking and hunting, noting that many contain chapters devoted to listing the names of dogs, the properties of a good greyhound, as well as the work of different hounds.[13] Additionally, David Scott-Macnab notes that the literary antecedent for Edward of Norwich's *Master of Game*, Gaston Phoebus's late fourteenth-century *Livre de chasse*, "bears witness to its author's passion, for it contains no fewer than nine chapters describing different types of hounds, their physical and temperamental characteristics, their uses, and instructions on how to care for them."[14] Birrell draws upon other historical records to learn more about the ubiquity of hounds on the hunt, noting that "[h]unting parties usually employed two or three *leporarii* [a type of greyhound], but sometimes more; eight were taken on an expedition into Dean in 1257."[15] Clearly the literature of medieval romance reflects the historical reality of the importance of the hound to medieval aristocratic hunting practices.

The intended audience for the *Geste*, however, may have differed significantly from the audience for romances such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* or *Sir Orfeo*, and this may impact the number and type of hunting dogs involved. If we consider that Robin Hood is an outlaw,

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[12] Edward of Norwich, Second Duke of York, *The Master of Game: The Oldest English Book on Hunting*, ed. William A. Baillie-Grohman and Florence Baillie-Grohman (London: Ballantyne, Hanson & Co., 1904), 18. See also John Caius's 1570 *Of Englishe Dogges* (Amsterdam and New York: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and Da Capo Press, 1969). Translated from Latin into English by Abraham Fleming in 1576, this treatise discusses a variety of dogs in terms similar to those used by Edward of Norwich, categorizing them in terms of their functions, such as smelling, spying, harrying, et cetera. See also Anne Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: Boydell Press, 1993). For a discussion of the relationship between Edward of Norwich's *Master of Game* and Gaston Phoebus's *Livre de chasse,* see John Cummins, *The Art of Medieval Hunting: The Hound and the Hawk* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).
[13] Rachel Hands, *English Hawking and Hunting in The Boke of St. Albans: A facsimile Edition of Sigs. a2-f8 of The Boke of St. Albans (1486)* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), xlvi-xlviii.
[14] David Scott-Macnab, "The Names of All Manner of Hounds: A Unique Inventory in a Fifteenth-Century Manuscript," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22, no. 3 (2013): 340.
[15] Birrell, "Who Poached the King's Deer," 17.

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perhaps we should not be surprised that neither he nor his men have hounds at their side while hunting. Several scholars have taken pains to attempt to identify a definitive audience for the *Geste*. J. C. Holt argues against R. H. Hilton's assertion that the audience consisted of peasants by focusing on the actions of the characters in order to conclude that the *Geste* was "primarily the literature of the county landowners, of the knights and gentry."[16] More recently, Thomas H. Ohlgren has suggested that the *Gest* was commissioned by the Drapers Company of London,[17] whereas Alexander Kaufman argues that "the author is targeting the merchant class in England, which by this point in the later Middle Ages in England was a growing economic and social force that was beginning to influence the political hierarchy of the landed class."[18] Ultimately the question of the intended audience of the *Geste* is unimportant to my purpose here because all levels of medieval society possessed dogs, either for hunting in the forests or for guarding the home. What differed was the number and function of hounds at each level of medieval society.

Ownership of specific types of dogs was an important social indicator throughout the Middle English period, but that does not translate to the impossibility of Robin and his men making use of hounds. Perhaps the most prominent type of hunting, as seen in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, is the *à force* hunting (that is, hunting "with strength"), which required large numbers of dogs to initially select the animal to be hunted (the silent limers, that is, scenthounds) as well as to run the selected deer down (the baying running hounds, which were often brachets or greyhounds). As Susan Crane has established in her study of its ritual aspects, "the ritual features of this kind of hunting shape it into an assertion of aristocratic superiority."[19] Barbara Hanawalt clarifies the ways in which highly trained and expensive hounds signaled one's wealth and social position, noting in addition to the opportunity to demonstrate one's military prowess on the hunt, "[o]wning [a hunting dog] indicated not only wealth, but also the prestige of possessing a superior domestic animal that could outwit a wild one."[20]

Not only was social prestige at work, for part of the divide between the aristocracy and the lower classes was due to economic factors; as An Smets and Baudouin van den Abeele argue, "the poor simply could not afford the dogs or birds needed for the more aristocratic ways of hunting,

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[16] J. C. Holt, "The Origins and Audience of the Ballads of Robin Hood," *Past & Present* 18 (1960): 95.
[17] Thomas H. Ohlgren, "Edwardus redivivus in a *Gest of Robyn Hode*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 99, no. 1 (2000): 1-28.
[18] Alexander L. Kaufman, "Histories of Contexts: Form, Argument, and Ideology in *A Gest of Robyn Hode*," in *British Outlaws of Literature and History: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Figures from Robin Hood to Twm Shon Catty*, ed. Alexander L. Kaufman (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011), 150. For a discussion of Robin Hood's appeal to the yeomanry, see also Richard Almond and A. J. Pollard, "The Yeomanry of Robin Hood and Social Terminology in Fifteenth-Century England," *Past & Present* 170 (2001): 52-77. Others who explore the historical contexts of the Robin Hood stories include Sean Field in "Devotion, Discontent, and the Henrician Reformation: The Evidence of the Robin Hood Stories," *Journal of British Studies* 41, no. 1 (2002): 6-22. See also P. R. Coss, "Aspects of Cultural Diffusion in Medieval England: The Early Romances, Local Society and Robin Hood," *Past & Present* 108 (1985): 35-79, and Dean A. Hoffman, "'I wyll be thy true servaunte / And trewely serve thee': Guildhall Minstrelsy in the *Gest of Robyn Hode*," *The Drama Review* 49, no. 2 (2005): 119-134.
[19] Susan Crane, "Ritual Aspects of the Hunt à Force," in *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 63-84, 64.
[20] Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Of Good and Ill Repute: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998),147. See also Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature*, 2; here, the scholar notes that gifts of hounds were also common.

[and] neither could they afford the staff needed to train these animals and to take care of them, nor could they devote sufficient time to this."[21] This is not to say, however, that the lower classes did not possess hounds; rather, the number of dogs owned would be significantly lower. In reality, as Smets and van den Abeele have shown, a large pack of hounds would not be needed to hunt: "a small group of six men and one brachet, such as described by Guicennas in the mid-thirteenth century, might come home with three deer."[22] Thus, in a text such as Chaucer's *Nun's Priest Tale,* we are afforded a brief portrait of peasant life, which includes three dogs who enthusiastically join the chase after the fox has seized the rooster Chaunticleer: "Ran Colle oure dogge, and Talbot and Gerland" [Ran Colle our dog, and Talbot and Gerland].[23]

At the same time, though, historical records show that there were restrictions on the possession of hounds among the social levels beneath the nobility. John Manwood's 1598 *Treatise and Discourse of the Lawes of the Forrest* establishes such rules in Chapter 16, section 2, titled, "Who may keepe Dogges within a Forrest," which describes the extent to which members of the aristocracy guarded their hunting privileges through either limiting or denying the possession of dogs useful to hunting to the lower classes. For example, a commonly referenced dog is the mastiff, a large and strong dog capable of bringing down a deer on its own, and Manwood writes that "euery dweller et inhabitant within any forrest of any worth may keepe a Mastiue aboute his house, for the defence of his house et his goods" [every dweller and inhabitant within any forest of any worth may keep a mastiff about their house, for the defense of their house and their goods].[24] But Manwood subsequently clarifies that the "every dweller" is actually limited to "euery Gentlema[n], Husbandma[n], Farmer et householder of any worth" [every Gentleman, Husbandman, Farmer and householder of any worth],[25] thus excluding yeomen and peasants. Elsewhere in his treatise, though, Manwood notes that mowers and harvesters are limited to small dogs that would be incapable of harassing the king's deer: "No Mower shall bring with him any great Mastiue to the field, to driue away the kings Deere, but little Dogges to looke to things without the couert" [No Mower shall bring with him any great mastiff to the field that might drive away the king's deer, but they may bring little dogs to look for animals within the underbrush]."[26] Legally, then, the

[21] An Smets and Baudouin van den Abeele, "Medieval Hunting," in *A Cultural History of Animals in the Medieval Age*, ed. Brigitte Resl (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 59.
[22] Smets and van den Abeele, "Medieval Hunting," 62n9.
[23] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 260, line 3383.
[24] Manwood, John, d.1610. 1598. *A Treatise and Discourse of the Lawes of the Forrest Wherin is Declared Not Onely those Lawes, as they are Now in Force, but also the Originall and Beginning of Forrestes: And what a Forrest is in His Owne Proper Nature, and Wherein the Same Doth Differ from a Chase, a Park, Or a Warren ... also a Treatise of the Purallee, Declaring what Purallee is, how the Same First Began, what a Purallee Man may Doe, how He may Hunt and Vse His Owne Purallee ... Collected and Gathered Together, Aswell Out of the Common Lawes and Statutes of this Land, as also Out of Sundry Learned Auncient Aucthors, and Out of the Assisses and Iters of Pickering and Lancaster*, by Iohn Manwood [Treatise of the lawes of the forest Public General Acts. Forestry law.]. London. https://unco.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/treatise-discourse-lawes-forrest-wherin-is/docview/2248516275/se-2. cap.xvj, 2. Birrell, in "Who Poached the King's Deer," discusses the variety of types of dogs used: "Other types of dogs were used, principally mastiffs (mastini), probably larger and stronger animals. They are typically described as 'moving' deer (amoverunt) for the huntsmen. Bercelets are occasionally mentioned, a spaniel once; often the dogs are called, simply, *canes*," 18.
[25] Manwood, *A Treatise and Discourse*, cap.xvj, 2.
[26] Manwood, *A Treatise and Discourse*, cap.xvj, 2.

lowest classes would not be allowed such a dog, and even those who were permitted to own mastiffs and similar breeds were required to have them expeditated, a process which required the removal of three claws of the balls of the forefoot, thus rendering the mastiff unable to chase, much less bring down deer.

Although the aristocracy attempted to limit hunting among the lower levels of society through guarding of their privilege to own hunting dogs combined with laws that limited access to and use of forests, hunting remained what Birrell calls a "widespread medieval passion" despite the establishment and enforcement of such laws.[27] Dogs were a prominent feature of this passion. Hunting was of interest to all social classes, so that even though determining the intended audience for the *Geste* is difficult, the fact remains that hounds were an important factor of medieval hunting regardless of social position. Roger Manning notes that despite the prohibitions in forest law against the lower classes owning hunting dogs, these laws were often dodged,[28] and Birrell offers specific instances from historical records that attest to peasant poachers accompanied by dogs; for example, "a peasant who shot a doe in Sherwood Forest in 1317 took it 'with a brown dog'; two poachers in the same forest in March 1333 used a white dog; whilst two brothers from Blakeney were caught in the Forest of Dean in 1278 'with a black dog.'"[29] In fact, some members of the lower classes viewed the possession of dogs as a right. William Perry Marvin points out that, according to Thomas Walsingham, a monk of Saint Albans, "one of the tenants' grievances during the 1381 Uprising was that they had been deprived of the use of their hunting dogs."[30]

More importantly, as Birrell has demonstrated, Eyre rolls—records of royal courts held in the counties that were presided over by travelling justices—affirm the common presence of hunting dogs alongside peasants and other lower classes. These documents attest to the details of "venison offences," recording "the date, even the time of day, of an offence, the names of the poachers, whether they carried arms or if they had dogs, how many deer and what sort were taken, and what happened to the venison."[31] The Eyre rolls reveal that the same variety of dogs were used by both the lower and upper classes, and for the same purposes. Birrell describes records of mastiffs being used to take deer in Rockingham in the 1280s, as well as an appearance of "the bercelet, a hound which could track down a wounded deer," in Cannock Forest in the 1270s and in Sherwood Forest in 1329.[32] Greyhounds may be "set at herds of fallow does and hinds,"[33] and

[27] Birrell, "Who Poached the King's Deer," 9. Stephen Knight traces Robin Hood's interactions with forest law from the early ballads to Victorian retellings, arguing that Robin's conflict with forest law primarily emerges from the later enclosure laws and Romanticism; see Stephen Knight, "Robin Hood and the Forest Laws," *The Bulletin of the International Association for Robin Hood Studies* 1 (2017): 1-14.
[28] Roger B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: A Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England 1485-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 154.
[29] Jean Birrell, "Peasant Deer Poachers in the Medieval Forest," in *Progress and Problems in Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Edward Miller,* ed. Richard Britnell and John Hatcher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 76.
[30] William Perry Marvin, "Slaughter and Romance: Hunting Reserves in Late Medieval England," in *Medieval Crime and Social Control*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace, Medieval Cultures 16 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 230.
[31] Birrell, "Who Poached the King's Deer," 10.
[32] Birrell, "Peasant Deer Poachers," 76.
[33] Birrell, "Peasant Deer Poachers," 70.

scenting hounds, known as limers, led their masters silently to their quarry.[34] Even poachers used lurchers, dogs like Tristrem's Hodain, who have been trained against barking,[35] and hunting treatises, such as Alfonso XI's fourteenth-century *Libro de la montería*, offered instruction for training such dogs.[36]

Despite the type of deer hunting that one engaged in, dogs remained a useful addition for people of all ranks in society. As Birrell notes, peasants tended to use traps and snares more often than bows and arrows, in part because the latter would be difficult to hide while carrying, but this does not mean that dogs were absent.[37] Rather, it was quite the opposite. Even when a poacher chose to use traps and snares, dogs still aided in the process. According to Birrell, "[s]nares, traps and engines ... did not usually kill deer outright, but rather brought them within the peasant poacher's reach, where they could more easily be finished off. It was by no means uncommon for deer to contrive to break free of traps and snares, but even if a beast managed to get away, it was likely to be wounded or at the least encumbered and so less able to escape pursuing men or dogs."[38] Forests were maintained by wardens, and simply being found in the presence of a wounded or dead deer were ample grounds for a trespasser to be arrested. Thus, speed was of the essence for the poacher, and the hound's highly sensitive nose was important in helping poachers of all ranks to find the deer and then collect it once it had been brought down, either by trap or arrow.

The fourteenth-century *Parlement of the Thre Ages* offers such a scene of deer stalking, told from the first-person perspective of a poacher. Although the narrator has camouflaged himself and seems to find the deer without any explicit aid, he is still accompanied by a hound, a bercelet, and once the quarry has been injured by the poacher's arrow, the purpose for the presence of the hound becomes clear: "'I hyede to my hounde and hent hym up sone, / And louset my lyame and lete hym umbycaste'" [I hastened to my hound and brought him to the trail quickly, / And let loose my leash and let him seek the quarry].[39] The deer, wounded fatally in the left shoulder, has managed to hide himself in a crag before dying, and the narrator must rely upon his hound to find the deer. In addition, as the narrator dresses the deer, he speaks of his fear of discovery: "I foundede faste therefro for ferde to be wryghede" [I turned out quickly from there out of fear of being discovered].[40]

Significantly, we do not hear of Robin and his men setting snares in the *Geste*, much less any of the other Middle English Robin Hood ballads. Rather, like the nameless narrator of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages,* they are continually associated with the bow and arrow, particularly as evidenced by Sir Richard's gift of one hundred bows and sheaves of arrows:

He purveyed hym an hondred bowes

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[34] Marcelle Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 28.
[35] William Perry Marvin, *Hunting Law and Ritual in Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 74.
[36] Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk*, 22.
[37] Birrell, "Who Poached the King's Deer," 20-21.
[38] Birrell, "Peasant Deer Poachers," 74.
[39] *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, in *Wynnere and Wastoure and The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. Warren Ginsberg (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), lines 60-61, http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/ginsberg-parlement-of-the-thre-ages.
[40] *The Parlement of the Thre Ages,* line 98. Birrell, in "Peasant Deer Poachers," notes that "The solitary poacher 'with a snare and a dog' was a familiar figure in every forest," 76.

The strenges welle dyght
An hondred shefe of arowes goode
The hedes burnyshed full bryght[41]

[He supplied to him a hundred bows, the strings of which were well-made, a hundred sheaves of good arrows, the heads of which were burnished very brightly.]

Robin's words and actions following his return to the forest after his time in the king's court, in addition to the frequent reference to bows and arrows, firmly establishes that even though he and his men do not belong to the aristocratic levels of society, neither do they identify with the peasant class through their eschewment of the use of traps or snares:

It is ferre gone sayd Robyn
That I was last here
Me lyste a lytell for to shote
At the donne dere[42]

["It is a long time," said Robin, "Since I was last here; I desire to shoot for a while at the brown deer."]

One possible explanation for the absence of hounds in Robin's company, then, is that their archery skills would cancel the need for dogs. Yet as John Cummins notes, a particular type of hound—the brachet—would be especially useful because "[i]t was impossible for the most skilled archer to guarantee killing a deer outright, especially a moving one, but a trail of blood provided a good scent for the hound, which would track the wounded beast to the place where it had died, or harry it until its strength gave out."[43] Furthermore, while poachers were capable of tracking a wounded animal, speed is needed; the longer poachers are in the woods searching for their prey, the greater chance they have of either another person finding the wounded deer first (and thus claiming the venison for themselves) or of being caught in the act, and thus risking either sharing the venison or being apprehended. As Birrell notes, "much [of peasant poaching] was opportunistic, even parasitical on the hunting of others."[44] Even though Robin and his men are excellent archers, as demonstrated by their prowess at archery contests, nonetheless, the contest targets are passive, unlike those of the four-legged ilk residing in the forest. Robin's actions against the established authorities of the *Geste*—whether it be the Sheriff or the king—means that there are frequently men-at-arms in the forest searching for Robin and his men; anything that would speed up the process of tracking, hunting, and collecting venison would help to ensure the continued freedom and safety of these merry outlaws.

Thus, the textual absence of hounds in the *Geste* is surprising when we consider the historical records demonstrating the integration of hounds in medieval hunting culture at all levels. At the same time, Robin dwells in a world best described by Joseph Falaky Nagy as a place "where

[41] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 108, lines 517-20. For a discussion of the literary use of archery in the Robin Hood ballads, see Dean A. Hoffman, "'With the shot Y will / alle thy lustes to full-fyl': Archery as Symbol in the Early Ballads of Robin Hood," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 86, no. 4 (1985): 494-505.
[42] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 146, lines 1781-84.
[43] Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk,* 49.
[44] Birrell, "Peasant Deer Poachers," 69.

identity is fluid and separate categories of identity can blend."[45] While Nagy is focusing on Little John's identification of Robin as a deer,[46] I argue that Robin's identity in his interactions with the king at the close of the *Geste* becomes closely tied up with that of the medieval hound.

Perhaps the most defining characteristic of the medieval dog is its loyalty, as attested by a variety of medieval texts.[47] Descriptions such as the one contained in the Aberdeen Bestiary elaborate on the steadfastness of dogs, helping to account for why so many people at all ranks of society owned this particular creature:

> alii custodes domorum, substantiam dominorum suorum custodiunt \ ne forte rapiatur, in nocte a latronibus et pro dominos \ suos se morti obiciunt, voluntarie ad predam cum \ domino currunt, corpus domini sui etiam mortu\um custodiunt, et non linqunt.[48]
>
> [others by their vigilance guard flocks of sheep from the attacks of wolves; others as watch-dogs in the home guard the property of their masters lest it be stolen by thieves at night and sacrifice their lives for their master; they willingly go after game with their master; they guard his body even when he is dead and do not leave it.]

In *The Master of Game*, Edward of Norwich offers an anecdote to illustrate the great love that a greyhound held for its master, King Appollo of Lèonois; after the king's death, the hound retrieved its master's body from the river in which it had been thrown, buried it, and then guarded the grave for several months.[49] Not surprisingly, Edward of Norwich concludes, "An hound is trewe to his lord or to his maystere" [A hound is true to his lord or to his master].[50] As a result of the dog's intense loyalty, it becomes the creature best suited for guarding both the home and field, and I argue that in the *Geste,* the king attempts to take advantage of this quality.

In the *Geste,* Robin manifests this loyalty, for when the king is first mentioned (by the disguised king himself) as he displays the king's shield, Robin's response indicates the depth of affection he has for his seemingly absent master:

> Robyn coud his courteysy
> And set hym on his kne
> I loue no man in all the worlde
> So well as I do my kynge."[51]

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[45] Joseph Falaky Nagy, "The Paradoxes of Robin Hood," *Folklore* 91, no. 2 (1980): 199.
[46] Nagy, "The Paradoxes of Robin Hood," 199.
[47] See also Susan Crane's chapter "Wolf, Man, and Wolf-Man," in *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 42-68, in which she argues that Marie de France's Bisclavret demonstrates traits similar to the medieval dog. See also Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Pets* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 10, where she notes that accounts attesting to the loyalty of dogs to their masters seems to appear only in secular accounts.
[48] "Of the Nature of Dogs," The Aberdeen Bestiary MS 24, Folio 18r, http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f18r.
[49] Edward of Norwich, *Master of Game*, 43.
[50] Edward of Norwich, *Master of Game*, 44.
[51] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 138, lines 1521-24.

[Robin knew his courtesy and set himself down on his knee; "I love no man in all the world as well as I love my king."]

Even the opening stanzas demonstrate Robin's dog-like loyalty, for when Little John seeks instruction from Robin as to whom they should accost, Robin replies,

These bysshoppes and thyse archebyshoppes
Ye shall them bete and bynde
The hye sheryfe of notynghame
Hym holde in your mynde.[52]

["These bishops and these archbishops you shall beat and bind them; the High Sheriff of Nottingham—keep him in your mind."]

Like the wolves and thieves in the "dog" entry of the Aberdeen Bestiary, these characters have indirectly acted against the king, albeit in different ways, over the course of the *Geste*. By attempting to rob Sir Richard of his lands, the abbot attacks the king through the potential deprivation of a valuable military asset. The Sheriff of Nottingham also does the king harm through his behavior in that he repeatedly demonstrates his lack of loyalty. While one might argue that the Sheriff's decision to foreswear his oath to do no harm to Robin is not legally binding due to Robin's outlaw status,[53] the Sheriff's report to the king in the sixth fytte that Sir Richard "wolde be lorde and set you at nought / In all the northe londe" [would be lord and set you at naught / In all the northern lands] is false.[54] In addition, despite the king's assertion that he will come to Nottingham to deal with both Robin and Sir Richard directly, the Sheriff decides to take matters into his own hands and capture Sir Richard himself while the latter goes out hawking. Not only has the king not explicitly ordered such an action, that the Sheriff acts when Sir Richard is unarmed is, at the very least, dishonorable. As Stephen Knight and Thomas H. Ohlgren comment in their edition of the *Geste*, because "the knight would not be fully armed[,] there is a supposition of the sheriff's improper behavior in his capture."[55] That Robin expressly identifies high-ranking church officials and the Sheriff as specific targets for his men's attacks makes sense when we view him as behaving as a medieval dog in that he is protecting the best interests of his master, shielding him from predatory men.

Another trait of the medieval hound that Robin demonstrates, closely related to the hound's loyalty, is his intelligence, for the hound is celebrated for its ability to set its master apart from all other persons. Edward of Norwich writes in *The Master of Game* that "an hounde is of greet vndirstondyng and of greet knowynge ... An hounde is a wise beest" [A hound has great understanding and great knowledge . . . A hound is a wise beast].[56] The Aberdeen Bestiary expands on what makes a dog so intelligent: "Ni\chil sagatius canibus plus \ enim sensus ceteris a\nimalibus habent, nam soli sua nomina cognoscunt, do\minos suos diligunt" [No creature is more intelligent than the dog, for dogs have more understanding than other animals; they alone recognise their

[52] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 95, lines 56-59.
[53] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 117, lines 791-97.
[54] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 131, lines 1279-80.
[55] *A Gest of Robin Hood*, in Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren, ed., *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, 2nd ed. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 163.
[56] Edward of Norwich, *Master of Game*, 44.

names and love their masters].[57] Robin manifests this dog-like intelligence in two ways. First, he cannot be found unless he wants to be discovered, for

> Half a yere dwelled our comly kynge
> In Notyngham and well more
> Coude he not here of Robyn hode[58]
>
> [Half a year and more our handsome king dwelled in Nottingham, and he did not hear anything about Robin Hood.]

Robin knows the forest so intimately that even the king's foresters are unable to lead the king to the outlaw. More significant, though, is the second aspect: recognition. The king has adopted a disguise, but although Robin does not have the keen nose of a bloodhound, he does have piercing eyes, seeing through the illusion to the royal reality beneath: "Robyn behelde our comly kynge / Wystly in the face" [Robin scrutinized our handsome king / Certainly in the face.][59] Robin has the ability to recognize the king, unlike the rest of his company, including Sir Richard, for upon receiving a blow from the disguised king, Robin responds, "My lorde the kynge of Englonde / Now I knowe you well" ["My lord, the king of England, / Now I know you well."][60] There is no indication that Robin would have ever seen the king before this moment in the greenwood; Sir Richard, however, as a member of the aristocracy, may have had the occasion to view the king at court. Yet it is the power of the king's blow—the sheer strength of it—that reveals to Robin the king's true identity rather than Sir Richard's recognition of his liege lord.

In addition, the specific part of the deer that is given to the (still-disguised) king by Robin is significant, further demonstrating Robin's uncanny ability to recognize his master. Earlier in the *Geste,* Sir Richard is given the "nombles of the dere"[61]—that is, the edible organs of the deer—but the king is given "[t]he fatte venyson" [the fat venison].[62] As Ryan R. Judkins has noted, the distribution of the parts of the deer following its death was the most important part of the hunt itself, and there was great social meaning in terms of which person or animal—hound or human—received which parts of the deer. Specifically, the "offal would be washed and cut up, then placed on the skin, where the blood had collected, and often mixed with bread ... and it was given to the hounds as a reward."[63] Robin's gift of the numbles to Sir Richard places the latter on the same level as the rest of the outlaws with the result that they become equals. The king, however, having presented himself as an agent of the king through his disguise as a monk and his possession of the king's shield, does not receive what would traditionally be the hounds' portion but rather the meat of the deer, the part viewed as a luxury and reserved for the higher classes.[64] In addition, the food is shared equally among Sir Richard and the outlaws during the first feast through the use of the plural third-person pronoun:

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[57] "Of the Nature of Dogs," *The Aberdeen Bestiary MS 24*, Folio 18r, http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f18r.
[58] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 136, lines 1439-41.
[59] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 141, lines 1619-20.
[60] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 141, lines 1625-26.
[61] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 97 line 127.
[62] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 139, line 1552.
[63] Ryan R. Judkins, "The Game of the Courtly Hunt: Chasing and Breaking Deer in Late Medieval English Literature," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112, no. 1 (2013): 80.
[64] See Hanawalt, *Of Good and Ill Repute*, 146, for a discussion of venison as a luxury item.

They wasshed togyder and wyped bothe
And set tyll theyr dynere
Brede and wyne they had ynough

[They washed together and wiped their hands simultaneously and sat down to their dinner; bread and wine they had enough.][65]

The king, however, in the later feast is set apart; only he receives the best part of the deer: "A none before our kynge was set / The fatte venyson" [At once before our king was placed / The fat venison].[66] Although Robin does not explicitly recognize the king at this point, the distinction made in the food offerings suggests that there is an innate recognition akin to that of a hound for its master.

If we, along with the character of the king, read Robin as a hound and the king as Robin's master, then the king's subsequent behavior towards Robin takes on new meaning. When the king first arrives in Nottingham and discovers the extent of Robin's poaching in Plompton Park, the king is furious, desiring to have Sir Richard killed:

And he that wolde smyte of the knyghtes hede
And brynge it to me
He shall haue the knyghtes londes[67]

["And he who would cut off the knight's head and bring it to me, he shall have the knight's lands."]

In contrast, though, the king only seeks to control Robin physically and visibly: "I wolde I had Robyn hode / With eyen I myght hym se" ["I wish I had Robin Hood / So that I might see him with my eyes."][68] Given the king's earlier anger, as well as the threat Robin poses to the king's deer and sovereignty (especially in light of both the false report of the Sheriff mentioned above and the "fayre olde knyght"[69] [noble old knight] who cautions the king of the royal inability to redistribute Sir Richard's lands while Robin lives, the king's clemency towards Robin but not Sir Richard is surprising. We might expect that Sir Richard, as a member of the aristocracy, would merit a trial while Robin, as an outlaw, would be subject to immediate death. Of course, as Thomas Ohlgren has noted, the scene in which the king pardons Robin bears a striking similarity to one involving the historical Edward III, who granted several pardons to poachers in 1369.[70] Alexander Kaufman offers additional details about Edward III that resonate even more strongly with this scene in the *Geste*, for "Edward III apparently made a habit of meeting his subjects in disguise, having a meal with them, listening to their complaints, and then pardoning and rewarding them for any poaching done on the King's land."[71]

What is unusual about the *Geste*, however, is the king's demand that Robin

[65] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 97, lines 124-26.
[66] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 139, lines 1551-52.
[67] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 135, lines 1419-21.
[68] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 135, lines 1417-18.
[69] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 136, line 1427.
[70] Ohlgren, "Edwardus redivivus," 14.
[71] Kaufman, "Histories of Contexts," 159.

leue the grene wode
And all thy company
And come homesyr to my courte
And there dwell with me[72]

["leave the greenwood, and all your company, and come home, sir, to my court, and dwell there with me."]

This reaction is not in accord with historical practice, for kings quickly realized that venison violations could bring in significant amounts of income: "by the second half of the 13th century, the kings were as much interested in the cash fines that could be collected from offenders as in the protection of the forest."[73] That is, kings recognized the fiscal windfall that fines for poaching could bring, and the *Geste* makes it clear through Robin's interactions with Sir Richard that he has plenty of money on hand. Why, then, does the king not simply fine Robin instead of requiring the outlaw to accompany him to the court?

The king's actions are particularly strange when we compare this situation to that of another outlaw, Gamelyn, the hero of fourteenth-century *The Tale of Gamelyn*. Even though Gamelyn has killed his brother as well as a justice, a sheriff, and twelve jurors, he is rewarded by the king by being made "[t]he cheef justice" [the chief justice] of the king's forest.[74] Both Robin and Gamelyn are outlaws, stripped of any social standing into which they have been born, but unlike Robin, Gamelyn is not taken to the king's court but rather is granted a position of independence and authority and thus is brought back into the fold of society through the king's generosity.

It is a combination of loyalty and agency which distinguishes Robin from Gamelyn. Although both outlaws work to destroy treacherous men, Gamelyn acts independently of the king, as he announces to his victims: "'For I wil be justice this day domes to deme'" ["For I will be justice today to administer judgement"].[75] He does not seek out the king for permission but instead acts upon his own sense of justice in order to improve his individual situation rather than seeking to serve the realm. In this way, Gamelyn insists on his humanity, refusing to be categorized as an animal despite his outlaw status. As Harlan-Haughey notes, "Literary outlaws are hunted, tracked, and at times slaughtered by humans, much as they themselves might track and slaughter animals."[76] Although Gamelyn resides for some time in the forest, he chooses not to remain. Robin, on the other hand, is tracked, albeit unsuccessfully, by both the Sheriff and the king just as they might track a wolf or a deer. In addition, Robin appears to defer to the king. After he rescues Sir Richard from the Sheriff in the *Geste*, Robin indicates that the king is the ultimate source of justice, telling Sir Richard:

Thou shalt with me to grene wode
With out ony leasynge

[72] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 142, lines 1637-40.
[73] Birrell, "Who Poached the King's Deer," 10.
[74] Knight and Ohlgren, ed., *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, 218, line 888.
[75] Knight and Ohlgren, ed., *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, 217, line 822.
[76] Harlan-Haughey, *Ecology of the English Outlaw*, 15.

Tyll that I haue gete vs grace
Of Edwarde our comly kynge[77]

["You shall go to the greenwood with me without any lying until I have gotten for us grace from Edward our handsome king"].

Whereas the Sheriff, like Gamelyn, attempts to deliver his own justice, Robin does only enough to ensure the physical safety of Sir Richard. Although he does kill the Sheriff, Robin invokes the king just moments before delivering the corrupt official's death: "Of some tydynges of oure kynge / I wolde fayne here of the"[78] ["Of some tidings of our king / I would eagerly hear from you."] Robin's behavior here evokes many accounts of hounds who avenge wrongs done to their masters. *The Master of Game* offers the story of the greyhound of Aubery of Mondidier, which after his master's untimely death

> turnyd aȝein to þe kynges court and þer he founde Makarey whiche was a greet gentilman and had slayn his maystir, And also as sone as the greyhound had perceyued Makarie he ranne vpon hym and shuld haue mayned hym, but ȝif men had lette hym
>
> [turned again to the king's course and there he found Makary, who was a powerful gentleman and who had slain his master. And as soon as the greyhound had perceived Makary he ran at him and would have injured him if men had permitted him.][79]

In fact, the king in this account allows a judicial duel between the dog and Makary as a result of the greyhound's initial attack, placing the animal in a position more typically assumed by a human. Robin, in the *Geste*, seems to behave the same way.

If we read Robin as a hound, then the king's actions at the close of the *Geste* become understandable. The king neither fines nor condemns Robin because the king views him as less than human, an attitude all too common among the upper echelons towards the lower classes during this time period. A hound does not comprehend monetary fines, and the practice of placing animals on trial, although frequent on the continent, was never practiced in England. In her article, "Portraits of Outlaws, Felons, and Rebels in Late Medieval England," Barbara Hanawalt expands on this idea, noting that the lower classes were viewed as on a par with animals, both domestic and wild,[80] and in many ways, the king's treatment of Robin reflects this. The king's demand that Robin accompany him to court only reinforces this master/hound hierarchy, for as the *Master of Game* indicates, constant contact of and surveillance of the hound by the master is necessary to improve the hound's skill and obedience:

[77] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 135, lines 1391-94.
[78] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 134, lines 1361-62.
[79] Edward of Norwich, *Master of Game*, 45. This story resembles both Marie de France's late twelfth-century lai *Bisclavret* and the bestiary tale of King Garamantes.
[80] Barbara A. Hanawalt, "Portraits of Outlaws, Felons, and Rebels in Late Medieval England," in *British Outlaws of Literature and History: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Figures from Robin Hood to Twm Shon Catty*, ed. Alexander L. Kaufman (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011), 52.

> as towchyng greyhoundes men may wel helpe to make hem good techyng as to lede hem to wode and to feeldes and to be ay nye hem, in makyng of many good guyrreis, whan þei han wel idon and astyng and biteng hem whan þei done amys
>
> [as pertaining to greyhounds, men may well help to teach them to be good by leading them to the woods and to the fields and to be always near them, in preparing many good quarries when they have done well, and in holding and striking them when they have behaved badly].[81]

One might even argue that the scene of the king and Robin riding together to Nottingham as they play a game of pluck-buffet is reminiscent of a person engaged in a playful game with their pet dog.[82]

More crucial to this master/hound relationship than proximity, though, is the provision of food. When the king, disguised as a monk, extends an invitation to Robin on behalf of the king, he does so in a manner that emphasizes food through the alliteration: "'And byddeth the com to Notyngham / Both to mete and mele'" ["And I bid you come to Nottingham / Both to meat and to meal."][83] As the late fourteenth-century treatise *The Goodman of Paris* indicates, food is essential to establishing and maintaining a hound's loyalty: "a greyhound or mastiff or little dog, whether it be on the road, or at table, or in bed, ever keepeth him close to the person from whom he taketh his food and leaveth all the others and is distant and shy with them."[84] As Karl Steel has noted, food plays a vital role in establishing the hierarchical relationship between master and hound, for "[h]unting rules required ... that the dogs eat only at their master's command."[85] Steel continues: "Humans' mastery over their hunting animals is even more apparent in techniques that prevented dogs from killing or freely eating the prey. Dogs were allowed to slow, harry, and corner prey, while humans were meant to deliver the killing blow."[86] By inviting Robin to come to court with him in the *Geste*, thus removing Robin from the greenwood where he both killed and consumed the deer, the king attempts to establish mastery over Robin much as a trainer would a hound—by controlling his access to food. The king is already impressed by Robin's control over his men, commenting that "His men are more at his byddynge / Then my men be at myn" [His men are more at his bidding / than my men are at mine.][87] If he is able to fully bring Robin under his own control, then the king is all the more richer in resources.

Yet the king fails to account for Robin's true nature. While Pierre de Beauvais, in a thirteenth-century bestiary, reduces all dogs to two types—those that hunt and those who guard[88] —Robin defies such easy categorizations. Robin is human, after all, not a dog, and like Gamelyn, he ultimately insists on his own agency. Although Robin tells the disguised king that "We lyue by

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[81] Edward of Norwich, *Master of Game*, 58.
[82] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 143-44, lines 1677-1710.
[83] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 138, lines 1517-18.
[84] *The Goodman of Paris: A Treatise of Moral and Domestic Economy by a Citizen of Paris, c. 1393*, trans. Eileen Power (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), 72-73.
[85] Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages*, Interventions: New Studies in Medieval Culture (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 64.
[86] Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 64.
[87] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 139, lines 1545-46.
[88] Quoted in Kathleen Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Dogs* (London: British Library, 2013), 3.

our kynges dere"[89] ["We live by our king's deer"], suggesting that the king controls the source of his sustenance, the truth of the matter is that Robin "alway slewe the kynges dere / And welt them at his wyll"[90] [always hunted the king's deer / And killed them at his will.] The "at his wyll" is significant. Whereas the medieval hunter took pains to prevent the hound from delivering the killing blow, as demonstrated when Bertilak hunts the boar in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Robin does not need the king to "feed" him. Robin acts independently of the king by controlling his source of food, as well as the food provided to others. When Robin leads the disguised king to the group's trystel tree in order to dine, he may appear to act as a hound leading its master to the quarry:

> Forth he lad our comly kynge
> Full fayre by the honde
> Many a dere there was slayne
> And full fast dyghtande.[91]
>
> [Forth he led our handsome king very courteously by the hand; many deer there were slain and very quickly prepared.]

The use of the passive voice in the last two lines obscures who exactly is killing the deer, thus allowing for the suggestion that Robin the hound is restrained from the kill, but it is important to note the manner in which Robin leads the king. He does so "by the hand," suggesting an equality between the two rather than a master/hound relationship.

Robin's assent to the king's proposal continues to highlight his refusal to play the part of the hound, for he warns the king thus:

> But me lyke well your seruyse
> I come a gayne full soone
> And shote at the donne dere
> As I am wonte to done[92]
>
> ["But unless I enjoy being in your service, I will come again very quickly and shoot at the brown deer as I am accustomed to do."]

Robin's use of first-person pronouns in the nominative case emphasizes his agency. In addition, given the emphasis throughout the *Geste* on control of and access to food, *servyse* takes on a meaning in addition to the traditional one of "employment." According to the *Middle English Dictionary*, *servyse* can mean "[p]rovision of food."[93] Not surprisingly, Robin's first action upon returning to the greenwood in the *Geste* is to slay a deer rather than to find his erstwhile companions, and his language continues to emphasize his individual desire and agency: "Me lyste

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[89] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 137, line 1489.
[90] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 136, lines 1445-46.
[91] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 139, lines 1531-34.
[92] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 142, lines 1647-50.
[93] *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Robert E. Lewis, et al. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001. Online edition in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. Frances McSparran, et al.. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018, s.v. "servī̆s(e," (n.) 10.(a), http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED39594

a lytell for to shote / At the donne dere" ["I desire to shoot for a while / At the brown deer.][94] This is in direct opposition to what he has told the king as to his intent during his absence from the court, which significantly contains a nod to the king's desire to control Robin's source of food: "Nother all these seuen dayes / Nother ete ne drynke" [Neither all these seven days / I will neither eat nor drink."][95] Whereas a hound is loyal to its master until its death, Robin displays a more complex nature. Although he is not treacherous, unlike the Sheriff of Nottingham, Robin still rejects the role of the hound into which the king has thrust him.

At the same time, the king's treatment of Robin as hound during his time at the king's court reveals that the king is a poor master. The paucity of the king's court food-wise, which leads to Robin's eagerness to return to his old habits despite his professed loyalty to the king, offers a subtle critique of the king, who neither punishes his corrupt officials (such as the abbot or the Sherriff of Nottingham) nor adequately maintains those most loyal to him. A vital part of the aristocratic hunt is the distribution of rewards, and both human and hound hunters are recipients. As Edward of Norwich notes, once the deer has been killed and dressed, "lett þe houndes come to and ete þe flesshe to þe hard bon from a forun þe shulders riȝt to þe hede, for þat is herreward of ryght" [Let the hounds come forth and eat the flesh to the hard bone, from the front of the shoulders right to the head, for that is their reward by right.][96] Inclusion in the king's social circle, however, leads only to poverty. That is, it is just as important for the master to deliver food as it is to withhold food, and the king fails to do this. Robin is quickly impoverished as a result of his visit to the court:

> In euery place where Robyn came
> Euer more he layde downe
> Both for knyghtes and for squyres
> To gete hym grete renowne
> By than the yere was all a gone
> He had no man but twayne
> Lytell Johan and good Scathelocke
> With hym all for to gone[97]
>
> [In every place where Robin came ever more he spent money both for knights and for squires in order to get great renown for himself. By the time that the year was all gone, he had no man but two: Little John and good Scathelock; all of those formerly with him were gone.]

In the king's mind, Robin-the-hound cannot be trusted without a leash—he kills the king's deer willfully rather by royal command—and so the king's response is to cage him. Robin, however, rejects the king's attempt to restrain him—much less define him—as anything, whether it be hound or human. As the closing lines of the *Geste* reveal, Robin is "a good outlawe, / And dyde pore men moch god"[98] [a good outlaw, / and he did much good for poor men.] The established roles—human as well as nonhuman—within the king's social circle lead only to poverty. As an outlaw, Robin is

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[94] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 144, lines 1765-66.
[95] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 145, lines 1745-46.
[96] Edward of Norwich, *Master of Game*, 99.
[97] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 144, lines 1715-22.
[98] Ohlgren and Matheson, ed., *Early Rymes of Robyn Hood*, 147, lines 1805-6.

free to thrive—and more importantly, to help others to thrive—regardless of the identity he dons for the day.

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