figure in Chester’s post-Reformation Midsummer Show. Each of these characters, it is argued, reflect the city establishments’ anxieties over unregulated female work, as such labour was seen to encroach on traditional rights and privileges of the cities’ guild-dominated (and male) monopolies.

Despite the valuable work of the Records of Early English Drama project and similar historically based resources, the threadbare survival of play texts from England means that our overall understanding of the civic biblical drama is necessarily incomplete; no doubt it is skewed by such dynamic survivals as the York and (largely post-Reformation) Chester cycles. And it is unfortunate, if unavoidable, that this study is almost exclusively focused on the biblical civic drama from York and Chester. It does eschew the artificial generic category ‘Corpus Christi cycle’ that has prejudiced so much earlier scholarship, but there is too little acknowledgement of the civic, trade company-produced Corpus Christi plays evidenced in other northern cities: Durham, for example, enjoyed a proven tradition of guild-produced plays associated with its Corpus Christi festival. Whilst there is passing acknowledgement of the wider heritage in the introduction, the suggestion that York and Chester were ‘exceptional’ in having ‘developed civic performance and scripted biblical drama for the occasion of Corpus Christi’ (p. 4) is an unfortunate oversight.

Overall, however, Rice and Pappanos’s *The Civic Cycles* is a remarkable study which makes an important contribution to the body of historicist criticism of early English civic drama. Both its approach and argument are very effective, and it is certain to become required reading for scholars of early English drama.

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Stephen Knight’s central argument is simple in its complexity: the structure of the Robin Hood tradition is uniquely diversified, functioning as a wide-ranging cultural ‘root system’. Knight borrows from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 1980) to call this a rhizomatic tendency: Robin Hood materials ‘draw without apparent cultural hierarchy on a scattered range of unranked sources and so are remarkably open to new materials and ideas’ (p. 1). Knight has argued throughout his career that individual Robin Hood texts are disconnected cultural snapshots, and the rhizomatic tendency furthers this view.

Knight structures the book as a rhizome, presenting independent clusters of Robin Hood moments, unifying the clusters via the body of the book and roughly
chronological organizational axis (‘Rhizomatic Robin Hood’). He anchors the rhizome in the medieval and early modern entwining of written and spoken text (‘Interfacing orality and literacy: the case of Robin Hood’). Knight then proposes that Scottish appropriation of the Robin Hood tradition might be responsible for characteristic traits of the tradition, like the outlaw’s status as a civic-minded noble robber (‘Rabbie Hood: the development of the English outlaw myth in Scotland’). No Robin Hood scholar can avoid *The Gest of Robin Hood* (c.1500): Knight proposes a reading of the *Gest* and its origins that deliberately cultivates multiplicity (p. 78), by contrast to conventional views of it as ‘a carefully and consciously upmarket confection’ that panders to early print requirements (p. 55; ‘Robin Fitz Warren: the formation of *The Gest of Robin Hood*’).

Knight sees the unrelenting obsession with the ‘real Robin Hood’ as the cause of much intellectual and scholarly distraction, noting that when ‘Robin Hood studies started looking at the actual cultural materials, rather than questing possible real Robin Hoods from places or periods of interest to the enquirer, great strides have been made’ (p. 83). The post-medieval broadside ballads are an important component of the Robin Hood tradition, yet they are relatively understudied (‘Revisiting the broadside ballads’). As Robin Hood scholars know, and Knight demonstrates we must acknowledge, the Robin Hood tradition is not purely medieval. Knight thus focuses strongly on the tradition’s nineteenth-century resurgence: the poetic interests of the century’s first half (‘Romantic Robin Hood’); and the explosion of novels begun by Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (1820) and leading to multiple stage plays and operettas by 1900 (‘Robin Hood and nineteenth-century fiction’). Marian’s variability and ‘volatility’ is the focus of the penultimate chapter (p. 188; ‘The making and re-making of Maid Marian’), and Knight provides a fine survey of the figure beginning in the late thirteenth-century French *pastourelle* and concluding with modern film and novels.

Ultimately, Knight shows us that by connecting an individual text to the broader Robin Hood tradition, scholars, creators, and audiences are always participating in a process of rhizomatic cultural creation.

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Why should a modern reader delve into Old French epic songs? Catherine M. Jones’s volume on *chansons de geste* is modelled on a question which, *mutatis