



Greenwode

J. Tullos Hennig

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The Hooded One. The one to breathe the dark and light and dusk between....

When an old druid foresees this harbinger of chaos, he also glimpses its future. A peasant from Loxley will wear the Hood and, with his sister, command a last, desperate bastion of Old Religion against New. Yet a devout nobleman's son could well be their destruction-Gamelyn Boundys, whom Rob and Marion have befriended. Such acquaintance challenges both duty and destiny. The old druid warns that Rob and Gamelyn will be cast as sworn enemies, locked in timeless and symbolic struggle for the greenwode's Maiden.

Instead, a defiant Rob dares his Horned God to reinterpret the ancient rites, allow Rob to take Gamelyn as lover instead of rival. But in the eyes of Gamelyn's Church, sodomy is unthinkable... and the old pagan magics are an evil that must be vanquished.

Book One of The Wode, a historical fantasy series re-imagining the legends of Robin Hood
(2nd Edition)

Greenwode Details

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From Reader Review Greenwode for online ebook

Ulysses Dietz says

Ken Follett's amazing "Pillars of the Earth" taught us about life in a cathedral town in the middle ages. J. Tullos Henning (another coy name for a female writer of gay male romance) gives us a remarkably deft and literate window into that same medieval world - this time focusing on the social, cultural and religious context of the English middle ages in which Robin Hood was born.

But here, Robin of Loxley is a teenage druidic forest king and Maid Marion is his big sister - and he falls in love with Gamelyn Boundys, youngest son of the local Frankish nobleman. The old, pre-Christian ways have not died out in this part of England, but the increasingly shrill and paranoid Christian hierarchy has got them in their sights. Pagan and Christian, peasant and noble, bowman and swordsman. A strange fate seems to hover over Rob and Gamelyn, although whether love or death will win is in shadow.

Henning is great with language, and the various little linguistic anachronisms that find their way into this complex, gripping text are easily shrugged off (did they have rubbish tips in the 1100s?). What's better, all of the secondary characters are ably drawn and come to life on the page, offering the reader a rich character study from a time as alien as another world.

The reason I did not give this five stars is that no book this long and this involving should end in a cliff-hanger. The highly emotional finale seemed rushed, and, in my opinion, should not have ended where it did. The events were foreshadowed, but there was no need to trick us into reading a sequel by leaving us gasping on the last page. Really, we would have bought the second book, "Shirewode," anyway.

? percy ♡ says

HOLY FUCKING SHIT, THIS BOOK TORE MY NERVES APART MOLECULE BY GRIEVOUS MOLECULE

it started off pretty slow and boring which is why i'm only giving it four stars (and because i'm anticipating the next one will be five stars) but hoOOOOOooly fuck when the tension started going it DID. NOT. STOP. for one fucking second i fucking swear

i'm so dead. i'm so glad this series is on kindle unlimited otherwise i'd be screaming into the void for like 9138103 years

anyways i'm too Shook to write a proper review so y'all are you going to have to deal with this incoherence lmao

The Novel Approach Reviews says

If you love epic fantasy, I can't recommend this book highly enough. J Tullos Hennig's writing is nothing less than eloquent, her storytelling nothing less than stellar. This is the sort of book that makes me fall in

love with words and language all over again. It's a story that drew me in from page one and didn't cut me loose, even when there were no more words left to read.

You can read the rest of this review at [The Novel Approach](#)

Linda ~ chock full of hoot, just a little bit of nanny ~ says

3.5 stars

I have mixed feelings on this one.

First off, I've never read any of the Robin Hood legends, and the only movies I've seen are Prince of Thieves and Men in Tights, so I can't in anyway compare this to the source material aside from the obvious - Marion is Robin's sister, and Rob's gay. I remember John and Will from the PoT movie, but I pretty much don't know who anyone else is. So I'm just going to review this like any other book.

As a fantasy adventure historical, this is great. Very imaginative and takes place in roughly the same time frame as the original RH stories. The pagans are still very much a presence but slowly being squeezed out and pushed to the sidelines by the Christians. There's a lot of world-building here but none of it feels overwhelming. The social and religious strife between the two sides in this conflict is realistic and rooted in our actual history, while adding in elements of fantasy. It's a good meld of the two.

As a romance, you could pretty much pull it out of this book, and plop into any other YA/teen in-the-closet/coming-out story and it would be exactly the same as all of those, along with way too much sex. Except, you know, actual lives are in danger and not just teen angst making it feel like that's the case. Rob's especially pig-headed, and I wanted to smack him a few times, especially at the end, but the book does that well enough when he decides listening to his dick is more important than being stealthy, so I'll refrain. ;) Gamelyn's struggles to accept himself despite his upbringing were interesting though, and I liked that we get to see both accepting and fire-and-brimstone views on sodomy by the two prominent religious figures.

The narrator does an excellent job bringing the story to life and voicing all the characters. He's easy to understand and is able to do a full range of vocalizations for both the male and female characters, and he's pretty great with the accents too.

Serena Yates says

With a definite foray into the magical, this retelling of the legend of Robin Hood is actually far more than a mere interpretation of what we all know. It takes the basics of the legend and adds a whole new meaning to the events, providing us with a historical and spiritual view that is to my knowledge, unique. The battle of the pagans versus the encroaching Catholic Church, in addition to the poor versus rich angle (which happens to overlap, since most of the poor are also pagans) actually sounds very realistic to me. It is one that I have not heard or read much about, but J Tullos Hennig does an excellent job at seamlessly merging this new vision with well-known stories. I was completely fascinated and impressed with the world !

Rob of Loxley is different from the hero image we have learned to accept through various Hollywood

retellings of his story. One reason is because the story starts when he is much younger, giving us all the background and developments before he ever becomes a hero. The other reason is that we find out much more about his background: the stories he listened to as a child, how his parents influenced him, the people he grew up with, and the social pressure he has to live with. He may be poor in terms of material goods, but he has a rich family and spiritual life. Rob became a much richer character for me in this book, and, of course, the addition of the somewhat magical/fantasy aspects create a totally different atmosphere and setting.

Gamelyn Boundys, Rob's somewhat unlikely childhood friend, is the third son of a local nobleman. He is a devout Catholic (most days, at least), grew up with all the material riches of his time, and yet, he is a lonely man by the time he is an adult. His eldest brother has a lot to do with it, basically terrorizing him whenever he can. But there is also a basic disconnect between Gamelyn (who is gay) and the rest of his social circle, which is totally religious. He struggles with this, but there seems no way out of his predicament. Being discovered to love a man would mean death for him.

If you like sweeping fantasy stories set in an interesting world, if you enjoy the retelling of old legends with a new twist, and if you're looking for an interesting, spellbinding read, then I can fully recommend this book. I think it is an amazing achievement!

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

Kindle freebie 5/4/17!

Jax says

Wow. This is the kind of book you get lost in. The kind that sucks you so completely into its world that you forget about everything in your own. This is the kind of book you never want to end, but can't help racing to finish. The kind of book that makes you rethink every other 5-star rating you have ever given. Because this is the shit. This is the real deal.

But be forewarned, you will *need* to go on to book two immediately. So call in sick, take some vacation days, do whatever you have to do to get these books read. Now.

Gerry Burnie says

Gerry B's Book Reviews

5 bees

To me 12th-century England was a fascinating time, filled with knights, squires, wizards, and wonderfully mystical religions, all functioning in and around vast, primeval forests where Druids practised their ancient rites. Of these, the *Greenwode*, by **J Tullos Hennig** [Dreamspinner Press, January 18, 2013] is probably best known, i.e. all one has to do is add Rob of Loxley (or "Robin Hood") to comprehend why.

As such, it is somewhat difficult to categorize this genre. It is mostly fantasy/fiction I suppose, since Robin Hood has never been proven to have existed, but otherwise it might be alternative history. Certainly Greenwood Forest and Druids existed, as did priories, convents, and the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church.

The problem I have with previous versions of Robin Hood, mostly created by Hollywood, is their ‘prettification’ of 12th-century England, with turreted castles (15th-century or later), impeccable clothes, and as one Hollywood Robin Hood put it, “Unlike other Robin Hoods, I speak with an English accent,” [*Robin Hood: Men in tights*]*—albeit, a modern one.*

Fortunately, this author has captured a good part of the dark and primitive atmosphere, which was circa-Crusade England, as well as the mix of old and new religions that existed at the time, and this scores well with me. After all, a period novel should be first and foremost true to the period.

I also like the plot, once again because it is consistent with the period. Rob is the son of a respected (yeoman) forester, but at the same time he is more than that. He is, in fact, a ‘crown prince’ in the Druid religion—a future manifestation of the ‘Horned God.’

Gamelyn, his unlikely love interest, is the minor son of an earl, and a hidebound Catholic, but it is Rob’s simple nobility that eventually evens the playing field between them. Moreover, it is Rob who has the courage to question the horned god’s interpretation of the future.

This is a gutsy twist on a major classic that works. Not only that, but because of the realism, I believe it a step forward. A special mention as well for the absolutely stunning cover art. Five bees.

Kelly says

There is so much good about this book I'm not even sure where to start. First, I'm an old fantasy nerd, and Robin Hood hits it hard. This retelling is fantastic, in both the original meaning of the word and in the awesome meaning of the word.

Let's start with the basics: the language. A minor pet peeve of mine is historical novels where everyone speaks modern English. It just sort of hinders my willing suspension of disbelief. Hennig crafts a world where I can hear the accents in the voices--the variety between the low and high born. There are touches of French, Latin and Gaelic (I think, may be Welsh, I don't remember that it's specifically named), but their use is historically accurate and lends such depth to the world.

The myth maintained: I actually took a class that focused 1/3 of the semester on Robin Hood, so reading this story, seeing where the author has pulled from some of the oldest ballads and woven in all of the key components and characteristics of Robin Hood, yet, making them into a story that I haven't quite read was thrilling. The author did her research and it shows. Both in her weaving of the traditional tale and in her historic details.

The original take: One thing the original myths don't really focus much on is religion. It is present, but not a focus. So, Greenwoode has a unique and creative--yet logical--twist on the Robin Hood myth, placing not only the rich against the poor but Christianity against the native pagan religion.

"The old gods aren't dead... we forget that at our peril..."

--Brother Dolfin

The mysticism and magic of the old religion, and honestly, just the information about and portrayal of the old religion, is completely fascinating.

And then, we have the characterization. The characters, the heart of the story and my ultimate draw-- They're the icing on the cake for this one. Rob and Marion are spectacular as brother and sister and Rob's developing relationship with the near monastery-bound Gamelyn is portrayed wonderfully. The two are magnetic. I can't think of a character that isn't well crafted and defined--from Rob, to his parents, Gamelyn's family and the Horned God himself. All I could think at the end was "Wait, that's it?!"

No. Fortunately, it's the first in a duology... the second just doesn't come out until late this month. Where Greenwood explores mostly pre-myth Rob, the sequel promises to give us more of the Robin Hood--or Hode--myth that we know and love. Honestly, I can't wait for it.

This one is a highly recommended read. Just read it. It blew me away.

Sheziss says

The book called for my attention instantly: the setting is unusual, the plot is unusual, the MC are unusual... Ok, we have seen lots of movies with Robin Hood and Little John and Prince John, the Sherwood Forest, Nottingham, etc, etc, etc. But it was striking the idea of a romance with a man instead of Marian.

Marian here is Robin's sister.

It was strange for me, but I got used to it quickly.

The book has a lot of different parts. That's bad because it means some of them are awesome, and some of them are heavy. The good pages are very romantic: Gamelyn and Robin as friends, then as secret lovers. And God, they are so SWEET.

Gamelyn is Christian, and he lives in a castle. Robin is a pagan and he lives in the forest. Gamelyn hides his heart from his family and Robin hides his druid customs from everyone except his family.

Two worlds that would never understand each other. Pagans are subjugate by Englishmen and homosexuals are a sin for Christians in general.

But they are brave enough to live their desires, because when they are together, they don't have eyes for anything else. But the world was not created only for them, and outside forces (religion, family, politics...) make an appearance and threatens to destroy everything they hold dear.

The problem here is that there is a lot of filler: too many pages about religion, too many pages about druids and magic and hallucinations, too many pages about childhood. Too many pages about flings with passing youths. I loved this book but I also yawned over it.

The most interesting facts happen from halfway of the story on, when Robin and Gamelyn are in their teens and everything surrounding them shatter their little bubble of happiness. Everybody has a say in some moment, and they claim their right to do so. There is a commotion of people and beliefs and confrontations and what began as love ends in hate and loss and revenge vows.

The book ends in a cliffhanger. It's obvious there is a second part, and although I'm undeniable curious about how they would get their HEA after so many years apart from each other, I don't think I would voluntarily offer my time to get bored.

But who knows?

Jesse says

Out of every single book I've ever read in my life...this may be #1. *Greenwode* didn't just *tug* at my heartstrings...it *yanked* insistently, relentlessly and mercilessly, in equal amounts of pleasure and pain. I felt like I was there, right there, experiencing every feeling and emotion through the entire story, emotions and feelings so strong they were almost tangible, almost a strong taste in my mouth at times...wow.

This book had me, on the first page. On so many levels.

First, for the story itself: as solid as the oldest, strongest oak tree you can imagine. Every scene, every twist in the plot, is thrillingly perfect and leads you headlong into the next scene, and the next, and the next. Enchantment. Adventure. Beauty. Heartbreak. *Heartwarmth*. Elation, sadness, anger, horror, disgust. Pity. *Faith*. **Love**.

Settings so real...I know it's a cliché, but clichés are what they are because they're true...the settings are so real you feel like you're right there. So real, but also so powerful and heady that it's almost too much to bear at times.

And apart from that, I've always loved tales of Robin Hood and the Sheerwood Forest. So there was that.

And then...there was *that*. One of the currents that really makes up the lifeblood of this story is the love between Rob and Gamelyn, who are both male. It's not something you see very often in tales of Robin Hood...and also something you don't see very often in general. Growing up, I read countless good books, many great books, and a few really awesome books, which totally spoke to me on almost every level...except for one. For someone like me, there was always something very lonely about reading story after story yet never reading a love story that spoke to me. I'm fine with the guy getting the girl (or the girl getting the guy), really I am. But I always used to read book after book and wonder what it would be like to read about the guy getting the *guy*, instead. Something that actually spoke my language, for once.

Well, all I have to say is, if this is what straight people feel like when they read a love story about a straight couple...then wow. I suddenly get it. And that probably had something to do with why this story just reached in and grabbed my heart, because it is something so *close* to my heart. The way that Gamelyn deals with his confusion over his feelings for another man...yet is unable to deny what he feels inside...well, that may be a theme that has been done before, but never has it been done this beautifully, this enthrallingly, this heartbreakingly. Sometimes it's a sucker punch, but it "hurts good" the whole time.

For those readers who don't typically read M/M love-interest stories...it does get quite moderately graphic in that department. But if that's not normally your thing, don't let it deter you too much. I'm fine with sex in a book as long as it has a meaning, and it isn't gratuitous or superfluous. This is neither; it is integral to the story being told, and the characters themselves. Whether it's love, sex, adventure, action, suspense, horror, or any mixture of those, this book hits the nail right on the head. And the scenes between Gamelyn and Rob are so believable, so vivid...it's just really amazing. Despite all of the insurmountable odds...they struggle to be together. And it is freaking *awesome*.

And last but not least...the characters in general. J Tullos Hennig makes each character *shine*, whether they have a central role or a very minor role. From Rob and Gamelyn (who make me just shake my head and smirk, in a good way) to Marion (who I *loved* from the very beginning...a rarity in a male-male love-interest story is a really good, pivotal role for a female character; well let me tell you, this story has several, and Marion is absolutely a leading lady in her own right) ... and all of the characters, all the way down to the little girl gathering mushrooms in the forest later than she should have been...*all* of them have their own story to tell, and all of them are captivating. Even the b***h of a Raven, Abbess Elisabeth...even *she* shines in her own gleefully horrible way (my stomach turns just thinking of her) but the little glimpses into *her* own personal life? Wow. It doesn't make me hate her any less, but it definitely adds depth to her character. Wow, wow, wow.

This book...is amazing. Parts of it make you feel--like Gamelyn felt--so full of tingling fire that it is amazing you don't spontaneously combust just by reading it. Other parts make you feel like your heart has been ripped out of your chest and ran over by a herd of galloping wild horses. But every bit of it is beautiful, and unforgettable.

Good books make you think about them after you've finished reading them. Great books make you think a *lot* after you've finished reading them. Awesome books haunt you for months afterward. But amazing books like this one? This one will haunt me for the rest of my life (and I welcome that, gladly) and I really am

changed, for reading this, on so many levels. Not the least of which that I can whisper a prayer of thanks when my husband holds me close, that we can have the life we have, which would never have been possible in a time like Rob's and Gamelyn's. But what's even more inspiring than that...is that they didn't let *that* stop them.

MLE says

I received this book as an ARC through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

I really enjoyed this book. The mythology was well developed, and felt true to the times, and the cultures. I liked that it wasn't a case of one group being the "good guys" and the other being the "bad guys", but rather a meeting of different people, and cultures, and values. I liked how this book set the stage for what is to come. It let me understand the people involved, and the factors that shaped them into the figures that they become. I liked that it wasn't just about them as mythology, but them as people. People who make mistakes, and get things wrong. I appreciated the handling of the religious aspects, and how everyone's faith was treated with respect, and neither religion was treated as all good or all bad. I liked the progression of events, and I ended buying the next two books before I had finished this one. Always a good sign for me.

Kara says

When the Kinsey Scale is introduced to Sherwood Forest, a whole new set of possibilities open up the traditional patterns and pairings...

Summer is a Cummin In, indeed! (Sorry, I couldn't resist.)

Robin and Marian are siblings raised in a fairly idyllic English village according to the Old Ways, worshipping the ancient gods and goddess of the forest with an understanding that Nature cannot ever be fully controlled.

Meanwhile, in the decidedly controlled world of Norman-England, a third son of a local noble family, Gamelyn, by chance makes friends with Robin and Marian, and learns the world is bigger than he thought.

While Robin and Marian are absolutely fine with who they are and embrace various sexual partners (Marian is at about a 2 while Robin is a hard, firm 6 and Little John is a 3), Gamelyn is very, very confused that he has fallen in love with another boy.

I questioned just how cool the Pagan characters are with sexual freedom, but then Robin's mom starts talking to him about when he's going to grow out of this phase and give her some grandbabies and I released ohhhh, it's not a progressive attitude we're seeing here, instead, it's the root of the uniquely British attitude that boys are homosexual and men are heterosexual, as documented in most Victorian literature.

So Gamelyn struggles with the idea that the love between him and Robin is not an automatic ticket to hell. It's a mind blowing idea, and one he genuinely struggles with, seeking to undue years' worth of mind washing that hateislove.

The book gets VERY steamy at this point as Gamelyn and Robin have a brief, idyllic love affair. Gamelyn pointedly calls their little camping trip "Eden" knowing it's only a matter of time before it all ends in tears and banishment thanks to some snake or another.

The book gets preachy a few times as various characters bash the Bible and Catholic Church, but it's certainly warranted, considering what some of the Norman characters do "in the name of God".

The old gods make several appearances, making it clear This has All Happened Before And Will All Happen Again, and that these three unlucky kids are just acting out archetypes. However, there are several different patterns to choose from, and there is a definite struggle on the part of all three to try and choose and make happen the best possible future.

Unfortunately, the grown-ups get majorly in the way of that and things end on a truly horrible All Is Lost moment with various fates-worse-than-death handed out to the protagonists who manage to not die.

Alison says

ETA: Fourth time reading this (in a year!) and it's even more gripping now. Simply spectacular.

Absolutely amazing. I loved this so much. This is the first book in a spectacularly good historical fantasy series. It's a rich re-telling of the Robin Hood mythology set in twelfth century England and I absolutely loved it. This series is incredibly immersive and it grabbed me by the heart from the very beginning and sucked me in completely. It's magical and completely involving.

This is excellent storytelling. I love the writing--it's rich, detailed, lyrical, and full of feeling and subtext. The characterisation is wonderfully done and so strong, and these characters are full of realism and they're so vibrant and sympathetic and flawed (and so loveable). Even the secondary characters are well developed, with vivid personalities and strong presences. I feel like I really know and understand the characters and why they do what they do, even the villains. This first book is somewhat a prequel-type origin story in that Robin Hood isn't actually in this book--you'll have to read the second book for that part. Instead, this the story of teenage pagan peasant Rob, his older sister Marion, and their Christian nobleman friend, Gamelyn. All three are POV characters and I love that Marion is such a strong character in her own right, and she plays an even bigger role in the later books. The love story is beautiful and delicate. The historical setting really comes alive and I love that the social and cultural aspects of medieval life are so thoroughly a part of the story. The author's research, not only of the time period, but of the Robin Hood-related body of literature and the Old English ballads, is clear. Religion, and the conflicts between Christianity and the traditional pagan faith, is a major theme in this series and I found the discussions of the nature and the meaning of faith and G/god to be fascinating. I learned a lot reading this, not only because the book is thoughtful and full of information, but because I wanted to know more and kept looking things up.

At over 150,00 words (more than 500 pages), this is a longish book, though it never felt long and it's very much a story to get lost in. If you're looking for a quick, easy, light Robin Hood-themed m/m romance, this is not it. This is a book, and a series, full of depth and subtext that asks you to think. It is the beginning of a long and epic story (that is still unfinished). There are some very dark moments and lots of bad things happen to our intrepid heroes, but there is a beautiful love story at its heart. The ending is quite dramatic and I bought the second book, Shirewode, within minutes of finishing. These books have affected me so strongly

and I've spent an entire month wonderfully lost in the reading and the immediate re-reading of the three books. Highly recommended, to say the least.

Paul says

4.5 Stars

I really loved this book
