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**A Study on the Continuing Presence of *Robin Hood* in Western
Society**

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Abstract

This paper examines the unshaken popularity of the medieval myth of Robin Hood. It argues that the continuing usage of the myth is based upon the tale's traditional popular narrative structure, and its ability to adapt to contemporary social demands. Using the theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Graham Seal, the study substantiates this claim in two ways. Firstly, it constructs a narrative framework for *Robin Hood*, and applies the structure to two adaptations: Pierce Egan's *Robin Hood* and Ridley Scott's *Robin Hood*. In this way, the study establishes that within the *Robin Hood* tradition, there is a principle narrative. Secondly, it argues that within Robin Hood's adaptations, contemporary social and political affairs are addressed. Therefore, narrative regularities and irregularities found in the selected adaptations are put into perspective with their social and political context. The results of these analyses outline the myth's composition of a traditional narrative framework that allows a contemporary representation of social rebellion. In its conclusions, the thesis motivates that the popularity of Robin Hood can therefore be explained through the convergence of the myth's accessible structure, and the ongoing presence of social conflict in society.

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Introduction

With its earliest appearance in *Piers Plowman*, a narrative poem written around 1377, and latest reference in *Arrow*, the in 2016 airing television series involving a hooded vigilante armed with a bow and arrow, *Robin Hood*¹ seems to remain unshaken in its popularity in Western culture. The goodhearted outlaw has become a classic figure in books and films, and there is much research available exploring the literary, historical, and mythical properties of Robin Hood's tales. However, no previous study has investigated the reason for its enduring presence and re-appropriation. In an attempt to make an original contribution to the folk hero's heritage, this thesis therefore investigate the case of *Robin Hood*'s continuing use in Western culture. It will argue that its endurance is based upon two elements: the myth's patterned plot and its ability to convert to contemporary social demands. In order to validate these claims, the study will examine the narrative structure of *Robin Hood* and the social environments in which the myth has been reappropriated and revalued. Ultimately, the study will argue that the convergence of the two suggested elements characterises *Robin Hood*'s accessible narrative structure for appropriation, and that the myth's enduring presence illustrates the unending need of societies to express social discontent.

The study begins with a theoretical framework discussing the narrative structure of myths, and cultural tradition of outlaw literature in relation to *Robin Hood*. This will be followed by a chapter focusing on the original myths, examining the original narrative structure found in

¹ In this thesis, a distinction between the character and the literary works focusing on the character will be made through an italicized feature; Robin Hood will be the folk hero, *Robin Hood* will be a conjunction for the ballads and additional works discussing Robin Hood's adventures.

the ballads preserved in James Francis Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. The chapter will not engage with the social context of the original ballads, since the collection consists of mostly anonymous works with no publication date. This notes a limitation in my study, however it should be emphasised that the focus of this thesis is the continuing reuse of *Robin Hood*, not its initial use. Instead, the chapter will focus on analysing the narratives on their constant and variable narrative components. With the findings, the next chapter will establish a basic narrative formula for *Robin Hood*. This framework will be created in order to determine whether the original myths and newfound adaptations can be considered part of the same traditional narrative pattern. The adaptations selected for this thesis are Pierce Egan's novelised *Robin Hood and Little John*, and a film proposing to offer a prologue to the myth: *Robin Hood* (2010). These works will be analysed by comparing them to the earlier established narrative framework. In addition, the works will also be examined on their contemporary social context. This will help to determine whether the adaptations within their mythical narrative also answer to current social affairs. It should be noted that both the selected works were created by British parties, and therefore the analyses will focus on British environments for the social context. Nonetheless, since the works did circulate in Western society, the results of their analyses can be considered significant for the Western culture as well.

In the concluding chapter, the thesis aims to establish the relation between the patterned narrative of *Robin Hood* and the contemporary social elements found in the myth's adaptations. It will argue that the convergence of the traditional narrative and the myth's capability to represent contemporary social conflicts has ultimately led to the tale's ongoing popularity. In addition, the chapter will argue that the continuing use of *Robin Hood* marks a tradition of social

conflict, and that its adaptations should therefore be put in perspective in order to create a better social understanding of society. The chapter will lastly provide the reader with a discussion on the limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

Theoretical framework

Understanding the enduring reoccurrence of *Robin Hood* means investigating the reuse of mythical stories. Examining folktale narratives, one aspect seems to play a critical role: repetition. In 1928, Vladimir Propp analyses the structures of folklore, identifying the basic underlying pattern in many folktales (7-8). His study illustrates that popular stories such as myths and fairy tales can be reduced to a repeating formulation of narrative components. However, though his principal work on morphology forms the base for this thesis, his study does not engage with the social or cultural characteristics of these narratives. A broader perspective is offered by Claude Lévi-Strauss:

On the one hand, a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place in time: before the world was created, or during its first stages-anyway, long ago. But what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future. This can be made clear through a comparison between myth and what appears to have largely replaced it in modern societies, namely, politics. (430)

The notions of Propp and Lévi-Strauss illustrate two critical points that will support the main claim of this thesis, namely: 1. A myth has a structured narrative that seems timeless; and 2. A myth has a social and political dimension. Their approaches emphasise that there is room for social discussion within a myth's structural narrative framework.

A large body of literature focuses on the mythical aspects of *Robin Hood*, therefore determining its status as a myth seems a redundant task. However, it is important to investigate the story's position in the literary culture of Western society. Discussing several historical and

mythical co-legends, Jeffrey L. Singman and Jeffrey L. Forgeng state that *Robin Hood* can be placed in the cultural tradition of outlaw literature, a literary movement that illustrates society's ongoing conflict between oppressed groups and oppressive authorities (33). Graham Seal calls the continuing celebration of social bandits even 'the Robin Hood principle': "A set of social, political, and economic circumstances involving conflict between one or more social groups develops—almost always over access to resources, wealth, and power—and combines with a charismatic individual perceived as being on the side of an oppressed group" (83). The theoretical approaches of Singman, Forgeng, and Seal emphasise that the continuing presence of *Robin Hood* can be explained in terms of a social tradition as well: the myth's survival illustrates a lasting social and political conflict in society for which the tale is reused as a symbol of criticism. Their studies acknowledge that within the *Robin Hood* tradition, there is a structured narrative pattern and constant social theme. However, their works are limited by solely offering a general approach on the tradition, omitting the influence of contemporary social affairs on *Robin Hood's* reappropriations.

Representations of *Robin Hood* can be found in several shapes and sizes. For instance, nineteenth century *Robin Hood* contributed to the shaping of Britain's national identity as many authors used the folk hero as a symbol of patriotism (Barczewski 10). More recently, the myth became part of a national campaign that promoted the idea to implement customs on large financial transactions. The funds generated from the taxes would be used for social services (Sachs 1). The customs therefore suggested to take from the rich and give to the poor, and was appropriately named the Robin Hood tax. These different appropriations illustrate that though *Robin Hood* has a constant theme of social discussion, the myth is able to represent

contemporary social demands as well. The following chapters will examine *Robin Hood*'s ability to convert to current needs more extensively by focusing on the myth's reappropriations and their contemporary social contexts.

The original myths

Within its anthology of 305 tradition ballads, the collection of James Francis Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* holds many of the oldest remaining texts of *Robin Hood*. The stories date back from the fifteenth century to the late seventeenth century, mostly written by anonymous writers. The collection of ballads suggests that *Robin Hood* has no primary plot but rather consist of many different adventures. However, within these different tales, many identical narrative features can be found. Therefore, this chapter will proceed by discussing the ballads' narratives as a whole.

Starting with the birth of the main character, the beginning of Robin Hood's social stance is described in "A True Tale of Robin Hood," written by Martin Parker in about 1630:

This Robbin (so much talked on)
Was once a man of fame,
lo Instiled earle of Huntington,
Lord Robert Hood by name.
In courtship and magnificence
His carriage won him prayse,
...
At last, by his profuse expence,
He had consum'd his wealth;
And being outlawed by his prince,
In woods he liv'd by stealth.
...

But Robbin Hood so gentle was,
And bore so brave a minde,
If any in distresse did passe,
To them he was so kinde,
That he would give and lend to them,
To helpe them in their neede;
This made all poore men pray for him,
And wish he well might speede. (Child 355-57)

Recounting his life before outlawry, the Child ballad describes Robin Hood initially as a man of higher class, namely as one with the status of an earl. Spending his wealth and being condemned by the crown, the folk hero is forced to choose the life of a forester. As the citation illustrates, his fall from grace does however not change his courtly behaviour: throughout the ballads, Robin Hood is mostly praised for his courage and generosity. Despite his banishment, the folk hero therefore succeeds in maintaining his supposedly higher class behaviour. To some extent, he even succeeds in preserving a higher social position. Within his own community of Merry Men, Robin Hood can be considered a leader:

All they kneeled on theyr kne,
Full fayre before Robyn:
The kynge sayd hyinselve untyll,
And swore by saynt Austyn,
Here is a wonder semely syght;
Me thynketh, by goddes pyne,

His men are more at his byddynges,

Then my men be at myn. (Child 112)

In this quotation, the Merry Men are described as obedient servants to Robin Hood, acknowledging the folk hero as their superior. Nonetheless, Robin Hood's position outside his own community is consistently that of a yeoman: a commoner who is neither part of the nobility nor the pastorate. Analysing the different narratives, this social standing is a principle within *Robin Hood's* structure: it motivates the development of the plot as well as it represents a crucial feature in characterising the outlaw's behaviour as exceptional.

Focusing on the medieval society in *Robin Hood*, the folk hero's performance offers a critique on the ruling institutes. He condemns the malpractices of the first and second estates, yet keeps their purposes intact. This is illustrated by the outlaw's behaviour within his community of Merry Men. There, the folk hero fulfils the function of moral and paternal leader, offering a replacement for the malfunctioning authorities outside the forest. He therefore acknowledges the value of the nobility and clergy while criticising the characters that fail to carry out their higher functions properly. His rebellion is mostly illustrated in his conflicts with the Sheriff of Nottingham. Generally, the sheriff is portrayed as easily deceived and scared, often fleeing the scene after Robin's victory. Their oldest encounter is depicted in 'A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode,' one of the longest remaining ballads of *Robin Hood*. In the tale, the sheriff captures Robin's companion and is eventually killed by the heroic outlaw (Child 105). His death is however not a constant outcome; in several ballads including 'Robin Hood and the Potter' and 'Robin Hood and the Butcher,' the sheriff survives the confrontation (Child 30, 38).

The narrative formula

Investigating the narrative pattern of *Robin Hood*, the ballads seem to contain many identical narrative components. Within the ballads, the hero is always outlawed, yet keeps his courtly manner. In addition, he is always rivalling with authority, often illustrated by battling with the Sheriff of Nottingham, or pulling a heist on the clergy. However, these conflicts do not challenge the authorities' jurisdiction, but solely offer critique on the characters fulfilling their higher social functions wrongfully. For the purpose of this study, these repeating narrative elements have been processed into a structural formula. This structure will be used in order to establishing if there is usage of a constant narrative pattern within the *Robin Hood* tradition. It should be emphasised that this thesis is not the first to compose a framework in order to determine whether a story is part of a tradition. In previous studies, Seal has suggested a narrative pattern for outlaw literature in general, focussing on the tales of all social rebels (74). The suggested pattern for this thesis answers to Seal's framework in forms of the hero's outlawry, the authorities' misrule, and the exploitation of a social minority. Nevertheless, the myth of Robin Hood can be set apart from other outlaw tales. Contrasting with other legends, the narrative formula of Robin Hood consists of the following principles:

1. Robin Hood is outlawed and he is put in that position by an oppressing authority;
2. In his opposition, Robin Hood is supported by a community consisting of fellow outlaws;
3. In his community, Robin Hood shows useful leadership and skill;
4. Robin Hood's behaviour is notably kind and courteous;
5. The behaviour of Robin Hood's opponents is notably unjust and immoral.

6. Robin Hood will only harm his opponents in self-defence, or if justified.
7. Robin Hood will share his possessions amongst the poor and outlawed, and will help when help is needed.
8. His love interest will change her social position to be with Robin Hood in equality.
9. Robin Hood outwits and deceives the authorities, ultimately escaping the consequences of his actions.
10. In his escape, Robin Hood will avoid a lethal confrontation to safely return to the forest community.

The narrative components above illustrate a strong relation between Robin Hood and his society: his status as a heroic outlaw is determined by his social environment. In order to make Robin Hood an exceptional character, he needs to be part of an oppressed minority as well as transcend the social conditions of this opposition. Therefore, a minority as well as a majority needs to be represented. The representation of this social classification seems to be crucial in order to determine the characteristics of the represented social conflict in *Robin Hood*. Nonetheless, it should be emphasised that the meaning of conflict in the case of *Robin Hood* is the presence of opposing parties, a situation that not necessarily gives rise to a dramatic action. As the narrative formula illustrates, *Robin Hood* traditionally ends in a conclusion where the represented minority maintains the same conditions as started while the oppressing party often finds itself at a loss. This solution to a social partition allows the story to offer critique on social discontent in a safe manner. As a result, this thesis will argue therefore address contemporary social issues in adaptations of *Robin Hood*, since the myth offers a safe environment for discussion. In addition,

the reappropriated solution for the social conflict will therefore perhaps illustrate the desires of the conflicted groups in contemporary society.

The 1840 novel

In contrast to the separate ballads, the in 1840 published novel *Robin Hood and Little John; or, the Merry Men of Sherwood Forest* by Pierce Egan the Younger proposes one narrative based on several previous sources (Egan 8). The novel starts with a chapter introducing Robin Hood as an infant taken into custody by Gilbert Head and his wife. He is the orphaned son of the Earl of Huntingdon and excluded from his heritage. The recovering of his birth right brings him in conflict with the authority, and Robin Hood is eventually outlawed (144). In the novel, the reason for the folk hero's banishment therefore seems to be fully determined by the oppressing authority while the ballads suggest that the status of outlawry is partly decided by Robin's own willingness to revolt. With this, the novel agrees with the suggested pattern, however follows its principle in a different manner.

Defining Robin Hood's character, Egan describes the heroic outlaw as "a man noble in spirit, unequalled in courage and daring, active and powerful, prudent, patient, just in his awards, generous and kind-hearted in his dispensations, of charity unbounded and so full of every estimable quality" (8). This description illustrates that despite his lower standing, the folk hero acts upon the moral conventions of high society. In contrast to the ballads, this behaviour is not based upon a previously enjoyed higher position. Egan's Robin is brought up by commoners, an upbringing which seems to emphasise that the noble actions of Robin therefore should not be considered as an emblem of high society behaviour. Instead, his manner of conducting should be seen as an example for every member of society, regardless their social position.

Placing the outlaw into society, Robin Hood is seen caught between the greedy hands of the medieval clergy, and the unjust actions of higher members of the nobility (Egan 194). He is

again in conflict with the Sheriff of Nottingham who has a warrant out for the Merry Men (Egan 98). Robin is however reasonable in their dispute, ordering his men to never hurt the sheriff severely (194). In addition, Robin is crossed by the Abbot of Romsey who, though King Richard orders the outlaw's restitution, refuses to give back Robin's estate (268). The novel also elaborates on the Norman invasion, forcing Robin Hood to participate in foreign politics. The folk hero operates between the enemy lines of Norman and Saxon troops, getting involved in a national conflict that has divided the country. Within this divided society, Robin's outlaw community seems to offer a replacement for the polarised society represented in the novel. In his study, Stephen Basdeo states that Egan's novel advertises the qualities of democracy ("Radical Medievalism" 2), since Robin is rightfully elected as leader by his Merry Men: "friends and brother Saxons – This is a proud and joyous moment for me, that you should so unanimously and cheerfully, at the instigation of Little John, elect me as the head of your community" (Egan 146). The myth therefore radicalises the initial critique on corrupt estates to a proposal for a new manner of government.

Taking these observations into account, the novel follows the narrative principles of Robin Hood's social position and his conflict with the ruling authority. Nonetheless, the manner in which the narrative components are represented differ from the original ballads. While the outlaw seems to sustain the feudal system in earlier tales, Egan's Robin emphasises equality and equity on a social and political level. The reason for this change can be derived from the contemporary social and political environment influencing the appropriation, namely late nineteenth century England. The Victorian age was a time of social and political tension in Britain. The industrial revolution caused for rebellion and strikes amongst the working class. The

unrest resulted in social and political reform. In 1838, the Chartist movement gained support, posing the idea of democracy. In addition, the Chartists also protested the state funding for the Church of England, ultimately requesting for a division of state and church (Faulkner 59). Traces of these political protests can be found in Egan's *Robin Hood* as well. For instance, the appropriation elaborates on the mismanagement of church funds by having Robin Hood being denied his estate by the corruption of a member of the clergy (Egan 268). Within his newfound representation, the outlaw therefore remains a figure of rebellion though discussing different social issues that originally addressed in the myth. Adapting to the demands of Victorian Britain, the novel advocates the statements of the national Chartist Movement. Therefore, the novel illustrates that within principle narrative formula, the myth leaves room for contemporary social discussion.

An important question to ask is why Egan chose to represent the demands of the Chartist Movement in the medieval tale of Robin Hood. As illustrated earlier, the narrative formula of *Robin Hood* is partly based upon the representation of social classification. The social conflict in the myth is marked by a balance of power in society to which Robin Hood seems to offer critique. Therefore, the story easily lends itself to parties searching for a representation of their social discontent. In case of Egan and the Chartist Movement, their critique focused on a misdistribution of power. By choosing *Robin Hood* as the platform for discussion, Stephen Basdeo argues that:

The genius of Egan's writing lay in the fact that he managed to cloak his radicalism in respectability. How could the Victorian middle classes object to tales of *Robin Hood*, *Adam Bell*, and *Wat Tyler*? They had after all been staples of

broadsides and chapbooks for centuries before, and in the case of Robin Hood, the outlaw had by the nineteenth century become thoroughly gentrified and respectable due to the works of Walter Scott and Thomas Love Peacock.

(“Radical Ideas”)

This citation illustrates that in addition to the accessible narrative structure of the myth, *Robin Hood* was also selected for adaptation due to its esteem. Having earned a high position in the literary culture of Britain, the myth offered a safe haven where Egan could share his democratic insights with Victorian readers. The narrative was already marked by social conflict and therefore, changing the characteristics of this discord was considered as non-threatening by Victorian authorities. This marks an addition to the suggested reasons for *Robin Hood*'s continuing reuse in Western culture: the reason for choosing to reuse the myth for addressing social issues can be partly determined by *Robin Hood*'s already established popularity.

The 2010 film

Directed by Ridley Scott, the 2010 epic war film attempts to offer a historical take on the legend of Robin Hood. The film starts with the introduction of the film's protagonist played by Russell Crowe. His character is found on the battlefield of southern France, acting as a common archer in the army of Richard I during the crusades of 1199. The personage is named Robin Longstride and his upbringing is unknown, though flashbacks illustrate a troubled past. In the film, Robin agrees to impersonate Robert of Loxley. The deceased knight was the son of Sir Walter Loxley, a former acquaintance of Robin's father. Sir Walter proposes Robin to act as the returned Robert in order to secure the family from keeping their estate. In exchange, the old man offers to share his memories of Robin's father (Scott 1:07:31). As the plot develops, Robin Longstride discovers he was the son of a revolutionist. His father had constituted a charter of rights, and was eventually executed for his plans to oppose England's absolute rule (Scott 1:45:20). Therefore, his position as an outlaw seems predestined: his family name is marked by social rebellion.

Analysing the protagonist's demeanour, the actions of Crowe's character do not seem to answer to the high society etiquette of courtly behaviour suggested in the earlier ballads. Robin Longstride can sometimes even be described as rude and ill-mannered, enjoying heavy drinking and gambling with his companions. Even his manner of conduct towards women has lost its sense of romance. Upon their first acquaintance, Robin calls Marian 'girl,' while subtly examining her appearance (Scott 0:59:36). These images emphasise that Robin should be considered a common man. Nonetheless, the film also depicts Robin as a man with forest craftsmanship and excellent battle skills. This contrast between common behaviour and

exceptional skill illustrates an important point. A skill can be taught and is in fact transferable, while behaviour is not. Therefore, the film seems to emphasise that the represented character of Robin Hood is solely in his leading function because of his experience and expertise, not his extraordinary nature. In the film, Robin Hood is not a heroic outlaw because of his uncommon character, but merely because of his presence at a certain time and place. The mythical status of Robin Hood and his rebellion therefore seems not an exception phenomenon but merely the result of particular social circumstances.

Focussing on the representation of Robin Hood's opposition, the original conflict with his main rival, the Sheriff of Nottingham, is replaced with a new greater source of struggle. In the film, Robin is crossed by Godfrey, a double spy who poses to be loyal to the now King John while being in service of King Philip of France. Godfrey succeeds in leading French troops into England, and the disguised army start raiding villages in name of King John (Scott 1:09:57). As a result, the country finds itself at the start of a civil war. In order to create peace, Robin follows in the footsteps of his father and proposes a new charter of rights (Scott 1:53:18). With the threat of France taking over his reign, King John agrees to sign the proposal, and a unified English army is created. With Robin as leader, the troops battle the French army at the coast of Dover. Facing his defeat, Godfrey tries to desert the battlegrounds. Preventing his escape, Robin kills the conspirator with an arrow shot from a far. The French troops surrender to Robin, and England is saved from a national crisis. King John, however, sees the popularity of Robin Longstride as a threat to his reign and declares him an outlaw (Scott 2:24:02). The film ends with the mythical figure retreating to the forest of Sherwood where his life of banishment begins.

In the movie's tagline, the film proposes to share "the untold story behind the legend"

(“Robin Hood”). Comparing the narrative structures of the film and suggested formula, the film could be considered as a prologue on which the original myth is based. For instance, only at the end of the film, *Robin Hood* answers to the principle pattern by making the title character an official outlaw and making him join a band of outcasts in the woods. In addition, it should be emphasised that in representing the medieval society of England, the film was determined to offer a historically accurate image. Jacob Lewis argues this concern with history might be chosen to serve a greater purpose: “it allows modern ideology to transcend the Medieval/Modern barrier, and gives avant-garde ... politics a veneer of tradition and historical truth” (Leigh and Duran 174). *Robin Hood*'s focus on factual history and on offering a filmic history to the myth therefore seems influenced by contemporary social and political issues.

Robin Hood was released on the birth of a new decade, having been created in the aftermath of the 2000's. The period was known as a time in which the nation worked on solving its conflicts with Northern Ireland, and participating in the War on Terror. In answer to the revolutionary crisis beginning in the 1960's, the unionists and nationalists came to an agreement in 2006. Known as the St Andrews Agreement, reconciliation was made on the decentralisation of power to a subnational authority (Guelke 288). A resembling proposal is discussed in the film: the historical Magna Carta. The charter suggests King John to limit his authority and lower his taxes. Agreed upon by the king, the opposing troops then unite to fight a mutual enemy: the French. This political and social alliance in order to battle a greater threat seems to refer to the contemporary national involvement in Bush's War on Terror. These fictional and factual agreements illustrate that the filmic reappropriation of Scott appears to answer to a contemporary social environment. It is however important to analyse the manner in which these issues are

addressed in order to determine the reason for the reuse of *Robin Hood*.

The film's interest in history and repetition seems to offer the viewer with an underlying message: history, and more importantly society's social conflict, is repeating itself. The conformity between film and context illustrates this notion, however it is within the film, Scott tries to emphasise it. For example, Robin Longstride cannot be considered an outlaw banished by the authority for most of the film. Nevertheless, this does not mean the character can be acknowledged as a member of society. In order for him to participate in society, Robin is required to be in the disguise of a noble man. Therefore, the personage can still be considered an outcast, acting as 'the other' in society. This newfound definition of his outlawry in the film acts as a prophecy for his later banishment. In addition, Robin revives the political proposal of his father, illustrating an enduring conflict in the represented society. In combination with this political heritage, Robin's position in social exile therefore seems to be predestined. It is important to note that this repetition is however not caused by Robin, but by society. The reappropriation emphasises this by characterising Robin Hood as a common man, strengthening the notion that the mythical legend is not the exception, but rather the rule if certain social conditions occur. In relation to contemporary issues, *Robin Hood* therefore seems to proclaim that society is marked by a continuing social conflict between oppressed and oppressing parties. If a high point is reached, a social rebel will rise: "rise and rise again until lions become lambs" (Scott 1:52:38). To conclude, the reason for reusing *Robin Hood* to address the contemporary social issues of the 2000's is perhaps marked by the tale's solution for the conflict of social classification. The original myth illustrates in its conclusion a still existing social difference, as Robin Hood retrieves to the woods safely while the oppressing authorities continue to exist. The

film adaptation seems to relate to this image, and intensifies it by illustrating its repeating quality: the film marks the beginning of the myth. With this, the film succeeds in addressing contemporary social issues. Adrian Guelke argues in relation to the Irish peace process and the War on Terror that:

The sustainability of maintaining conflicting conceptions of terrorism in different parts of the UK does depend on the exercise of a large measure of discretion in the enforcement of the law. In particular, it would be difficult to argue that the Loyalist wall murals depicting heavily armed men in masks that are a feature of many working-class Protestant estates in Northern Ireland are not examples of the glorification of terrorism that the Terrorism Act 2006 outlaws. (289)

The citation explains that England is still divided in its governmental policies against controversial parties and as a result, social conflict in society still remains. Therefore, the convergence of film and context illustrates the cyclical qualities of conflict between social groups, emphasising that social dividedness seems to be an unquestioned condition of life.

Conclusion & Discussion

This thesis started out with a bold proposition; it claimed to find the reason for Robin Hood's continuing reuse in the Western culture. It argued that the myth's endurance is determined by the correlation between the myth's accessible narrative formula and enduring social conflict in society. The study set out to validate these claims by analysing two adaptations and their contemporary social and political contexts.

The investigation has shown that within the appropriations, traces of a principle narrative framework and a contemporary social conflict can be found. In the case of Egan's *Robin Hood*, this is illustrated by the folk hero's newfound democratic performance and involvement in ethno-nationalist politics, mirroring the ideas of the Victorian Chartist Movement. Similarly, Scott's *Robin Hood* has the mythical figure creating a national union in order to fight a foreign enemy, a political and social development that seems to answer to England's development of the Irish peace process and participation in Bush's War on Terror. These findings indicate that in the reuse of Robin Hood's myth, the adaptations appeal to the principle narrative formula as well as address current affairs in their representation of social conflict. However, more importantly, the examinations mark a convergence between a text and context.

The purpose of this study was to find an argument for the enduring popularity of Robin Hood's myth, and to some extent, it did. As the appropriations have illustrated, the myth can be used as a forum for political and social discussion. Within its narrative, the myth illustrates a polarised society in which Robin Hood addressed its malfunctions. However, in the narrative formula, the folk tale's plot is resistant to changing the represented society. *Robin Hood* fulfils its tradition narrative as long as Robin Hood is part of a minority and in conflict with a majority.

In addition, the conclusion of the myth needs to be open: Robin Hood and the divided society need to remain in their position. With this narrative structure, the folk tale's narrative has provided Western culture with a literary framework in which society can safely offer its contemporary social criticism. It is this correlation by which the popularity of *Robin Hood* can be determined. In addition, its continuing use in Western culture seems to synchronise with the enduring presence of social conflicts. The myth seems to have become part of a literary tradition because its theme of social conflict marks a social tradition: the perpetual dividedness in society.

However, it should be emphasised that the study was marked by limitations as well. It only engaged in the representation of social conflict in the original myths and adaptations of *Robin Hood*. Though the study's arguments for the popularity and reuse of a medieval myth seem to illustrate value points, the question of *Robin Hood*'s enduring presence in society is not fully answered. Further research should provide a broader and more elaborate take on the myth, extending the study by focusing on the changing representation of *Robin Hood*'s characters, or its love story. The folklore narrative has a lot to offer, and perhaps it is the combination of these different themes that marks its survival and continuing presence in Western society. In addition, the theory of text and context could be applied to different myths as well. The world has many popular tales and stories, and as this study has emphasised, their continuing use might be related to an enduring social issue. Investigating their reuse could therefore lead to a better understanding of society.

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