Master's thesis

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
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From Medieval to Romantic Robin Hood

Centralization, Commercialization and "English Puffery" in the Robin Hood Tradition

Master's thesis in English Literature
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Abstract

This project argues that social developments manifested themselves differently in the literature of Robin Hood during the medieval, the early modern, and the romantic era, conveying three very different versions of resistance against oppression. Specifically, this thesis explores how Robin Hood responds to different variants of social development: centralization of outlying regions in the medieval era, commercialization of the ballad tradition in the seventeenth century, and the emergence of "English puffery" in the nineteenth century Romantic era. Framed by realist theory and new historicism, and responding to Stephen Knight's claim that the Robin Hood legend serves as a guide to society's "changing patterns", the central argument of this thesis is that Robin's enduring proverbial truth, that he robbed the rich to help the poor, is insufficient in order to explain his relevance as a symbol against oppression regardless of era. Therefore, this thesis seeks to deflate the idea that Robin was just a simple outlaw and socialist robber, and show that his enduring proverbial truth is much more complex. He is a symbol of a more general resistance against unfair change, whatever shape or form it arrives in, and that he is always prepared to rally against oppression and the misuse of power, wherever and whenever it occurs.

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threatened to consume me.

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Cecilia and Fritjof. Fride. Karina.
“Flokken”, too many to mention. You know who you are.

And my family, always.

Anders Hjertenæs, November 2019

We will, in this Second Portion of our Work, strive to penetrate a little, by means of certain confused Papers, printed and other, into a somewhat remote Century; ant to look face to face on it, in hope of perhaps illustrating our own poor Century thereby.

Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*

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Introduction

Robin Hood as an anti-authoritative character is commonly summarized by the enduring proverbial truth that he robbed the rich to help the poor. In *A Gest of Robin Hode* Robin is described as a "good outlawe, / And dyde pore men moch god" (1823-24) while Joseph Ritson refer to him as a defender of "the poor and needy, and such as were 'desolate and oppressed,' or stood in need of his protection" (vi). Since the first recorded appearance of Robin Hood, sometime during the late 1370s, authors and storytellers, printers, politicians, kings, playwriters, beggars, balladeers and minstrels have sent Robin on a never-ending rhizomatic cluster of riveting adventures.[1] He has fought knights and beggars, battled sheriffs, foresters, and abbots, and tried his professional luck as a potter, butcher, and fisherman. He made friends with queens, housewives, and old widows, he fought in the Holy Land in the crusades alongside Richard Coeur de Lion, and has time and time again proven himself the greatest archer in England. Alongside him, always, a band of loyal merry men ready to offer their support should he need it. Since his genesis, an exceedingly large collection of Robin Hood material has emerged, much of it curiously unrelated to the earliest medieval ballads and tales. And yet, despite the vast amount of material, few of these adventures involve Robin in robbery on behalf of the poor, now considered such an integral part of his character. This lack of correspondence between the outlaw's proverbial truth and his actual literary merits highlights one of the fundamental problems every Robin Hood scholar face: the undeniable truth that "many men speketh wyth wondring of Robyn Hood, and of his Bowe, Whych never shot therin I trowe" (Dobson and Taylor, *Rymes* 289).

The study of Robin Hood is in itself the "study of over five hundred years of the development of modern concepts of heroism, art, politics, and the self" (Knight "Biography" 208). He is always there "lurking at the edge of court culture, slipping through the forests of Romanticism, jumping over the walls of bourgeois fiction," always prepared to offer resistance against unjust oppression and "always a threat to somebody who has power" (ibid 8). Robin's continued presence in English society for more than five centuries provide an interesting possibility for scholars. It allows Robin to become "a guide to the changing patterns and

[1] My treatment of the Robin Hood broadside tradition has some alliance with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's understanding of the rhizome. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980) they write that "the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. […] It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion" (1458).

dynamics of society and culture over that enormous period" (ibid 208). That is, by analyzing the changes in Robin Hood's character scholars can cast light on social and economic changes taking place alongside the development of literature. Additionally, Knight's statement encourages a reciprocal investigative relationship where literature is emphasized as a progressive force in society. Regardless, any proper inquiry into the emergence of the different versions of Robin Hood and their significance as markers of a changing social development must begin with discarding the notion that he was simply a socialist outlaw who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. Rather, in order to follow Knight's "guide", so to speak, Robin must be read as a more general representative of resistance against unjust oppression. These readings, the changing social developments, are best seen in the interplay between the greenwood and society outside the greenwood.

An important distinction is made in this thesis between the natural, the rural, and the urban as separate zones of habitation and interaction, paying tribute to Mary Louise Pratt's "Contact Zones".[2] The natural is understood primarily as inside the greenwood and represents the area where the outlaws live. Douglas Gray has claimed that the lyrical introductions in the early ballads and poems firmly introduces the greenwood, with its birds and deer, as a merry and harmonic place, clearly separate from the remainder of England (14). This natural zone places little value on concepts like economy and commercialization and rather values the aesthetic and pleasant. On those few occasions finance and economy enters the natural an argument commonly ensues. Immediately outside of the greenwood lies the rural. The rural is understood as an area of cultivated land where humans live and work either with their livestock or with their professions. Villages like Barnsdale, Inglewood, and Nottingham are considered part of the rural, commonly serving as an impartial meeting place between the natural and the urban. This impartiality is an important trait of the rural as it forms a contact zone between the natural and the urban "where cultures [can] meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (Pratt 34). The urban, generally, refers to London. But in an extended and more abstract sense the urban is also the absence of natural or rural England. For instance, a corrupt sheriff in Nottingham still belongs to the urban; as does an evil prioress in Churchlees. Joseph Taylor have shown how corruptive power emanate from London and has emphasized that in the Robin Hood tradition "London function as a hub for transactions of injustice rather than a site for appeal to good law" (319). The urban is contagious and always seeks to expand its domain, usually at the expense of the rural, but sometimes also

[2] Pratt, Mary Louise, "Arts of the Contact Zone" (1991).

at the expense of the natural. Finally, this thesis claims that movement in between these separate zones and communication between characters from different zones lead to changes in these characters behavior, good or bad, and that it is not always easy to tell one from the other. Even so, these transactions and the power dynamic they display reveal the changing patterns and dynamics of society and culture Knight emphasized and as such stand as one of the primary constituent elements by which analysis of the legend is possible.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how social developments, that is, the centralization of outlying regions in the medieval era, commercialization of the ballad tradition in the seventeenth century, and the emergence of "that English puffery" in the nineteenth century, manifest themselves as very different version of Robin Hood during the medieval, the early modern, and the romantic era, simultaneously conveying three very different versions of Robin's resistance against oppression. Responding to Knight's claim that the Robin Hood legend serves as a guide to society's 'changing patterns', by looking "less at the presumed center of the literary domain than at its border, to try and track what can only be glimpsed, as it were, at the margins of the text" (Greenblatt 4), this thesis aims to call attention to these differences and show how they reveal the deeper institutional changes taking place in English society. Ultimately, the thesis seeks to deflate the idea that Robin was just a simple outlaw and 'socialist-robber' and show that his 'enduring proverbial truth' is much more complex. He is a symbol of a more general resistance against unfair change, whatever shape or form it arrives in, and that he is always prepared to rally against oppression and the misuse of power, wherever and whenever it might occur.

The first chapter of this thesis, "Medieval Robin Hood," explore Robin as a natural greenwood character, from his first appearance in a literary source sometime during the late 1370s and until the first recorded publication of *A Gest of Robyn Hode* around 1530. By investigating the effect of the urban on Robin Hood during this period this chapter aims to show the dissonance created by the convergence of the natural and the urban, and how this dissonance reveals the power dynamic between two zones. In the early ballads Robin is constantly engaged in the contact zones as, in a series of mini odysseys, he leaves the greenwood and enters a rural or urban environment, before returning to the greenwood. This chapter asks whether or not such contact is possible for Robin without being affected by the contaminating effect of the urban, and whether or not he already is, prior to entering these contact zones, less yeoman and more gentrified than traditional scholarship has claimed.

The second chapter, "Urban Robin Hood," questions the contact between the natural and the urban in the early modern seventeenth century, and its concurrent effect on Robin Hood

and ballad culture. After a prolonged stay in London Robin returns to the greenwood, clearly contaminated by the urban, no longer the natural greenwood character from the medieval ballads. Aiming to substantiate the effects of this contamination and show how it affects Robin's ability to serve as a representative of resistance against oppression, in the seventeenth century manifested as the commercialization of the ballad tradition, this chapter investigate Robin's ability to exercise resistance against oppressive characters or tendencies in the broadside ballad culture. Claiming that Robin manages to retain his status as a representative against such oppression, the chapter also shows that he does so at a cost. As society moves towards modernity Robin is forced to change in order to retain his position as a symbol against oppression. This change, however, proves detrimental to his character as the changes the urban forces onto Robin contaminates him to the extent that he no longer fully belongs in the natural greenwood.

The third and final chapter, "Romantic Robin Hood," investigates the reinvigoration of chivalry in nineteenth-century England and asks what happens when these knightly ideals are suddenly deflated. In his romance novel *Ivanhoe* Sir Walter Scott brilliantly recreates a medieval world. And yet his rural and urban characters are decidedly modern and fallible and continuously set up as "comic figures with human limitations" (Sroka 649). In stark contrast to these comic figures, Robin Hood is established as a morally perfect celestial being; seemingly the only character able to adhere to the medieval ideals. By emphasizing this contrast, this chapter seeks to display the inaccessibility of the natural zone for a modernized nineteenth century rural and urban population blinded by the medieval ideals. Exploring the nineteenth century's perception of the middle ages, in light of their fallibility, and seeking to explain the emergence of what Thomas Carlyle called "the topmost point [of] English puffery" (144) this chapter pays particular attention to the marginal characters in Scott's novel. In the end this thesis challenges the somewhat derogatory proverb that "tales of Robin Hood are good enough for fools" (Dobson and Taylor, *Rymes* 291) and that Robin rather should be seen in light of his more elevated status, as a perpetual symbol of resistance against oppression.

Chapter 1

Medieval Robin Hood

It is early morning in London. The year is 1510 and the sun is rising on the Palace of Westminster, peeking through the heavy curtains inside the chambers of her royal highness Queen Catherine of Aragon. The Queen has just gotten out of bed and is getting ready for her day, well helped by her ladies, when the doors to her chambers suddenly burst open and twelve heavily armed men storm inn. The men are dressed like outlaws, clad in green shirts and hoods, carry swords and bucklers in their hands and have both bows and arrows at their sides. The ladies are both confused and abashed by the spectacle, but their scepticism quickly change to excitement as the men starts performing songs and dances. The twelve men are led by the Queen's husband King Henry VIII, followed by the Earl of Essex, the Earl of Wilshire, and nine other noblemen. The king and his retinue entertain the ladies for a while before, after a period of pleasantries and enjoyable pastime, the men excuse themselves and withdraw from her royal highness' chambers (Hall 513).

This strange tale of King Henry VIII and his eccentric amusements is told by the sixteenth-century lawyer and historian Edward Hall (1496-1547) in *Hall's Chronicle* (1809). The story conveys an uncommonly enjoyable view of a monarch known for having quite a temper and executing two of his wives, but it also raises an interesting question: what possessed the English monarch to dress up as Robin Hood, an outlaw and a thief, who lived long ago in the northern forests, before storming into the Queen's chambers?

The first recorded appearance of Robin Hood predates the events in Catherin's chambers by 240 years and is found in William Langland's deeply moralizing alliterative satire *Piers Plowman*. From deep within Langland's metaphorical forest of moral critique emerges a character who would prove even more significant to English literature than Piers Plowman.

> I kan noght parfitly my Paternoster as the preest it syngeth
> But I kan rymes of Robyn Hode and Randolf Erl of Chestre. (Passus V, lines 394-95)

Langland's magnum opus is a mixture of theological allusion and social satire, concerned itself with the quest for true Christian life, and while Langland does not mention Robin Hood beyond these lines and gives no explanation as to who he is, this lack of explanation is in itself a powerful statement. It is a strong indication that the stories of Robin Hood and his status as an outlaw and a thief was already well established throughout the early medieval ballad material.

The first ballads of Robin Hood started appearing about fifty years after Langland's alliterative social satire. The manuscript for "Robin Hood and the Monk," commonly accepted as the first Robin Hood ballad, is dated sometime between 1420-50 (Knight and Ohlgren 31) while the earliest versions of the long poem *A Geste of Robin Hood* dates from about 1510-30 (ibid 80). From the very beginning the contrast between Henry VIII's burlesque representation of Robin and the ballad's depiction of a violent outlaw is apparent. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* refers to Robin as "a prude outlaw" (5) who attacks his targets and bring them into the greenwood with the goal of taking their belongings. Violence is common throughout the legend and the outlaws themselves state that "To bydde a man to dyner, / And syth [afterwards] hym bete and bynde. / It is our olde maner" (1025-27). Robin's favourite targets are members of the gentry, clergy, and the aristocracy. Knights and statesmen, monks and abbots are treated alike: throughout the legend he robs them all. In *A Gest* he takes 800 pounds from two monks passing by the greenwood (985-92); in "the Monk" Robin is chased by the Sheriff for having stolen a hundred pounds from a big-headed monk (93); and in "Robin Hood and the Potter" Robin and his men attempt highway robbery by charging a road toll they are not entitled to from a passing merchant (41-44) before luring the Sheriff of Nottingham into the greenwood to take all of his belongings (278-79). Then, in "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," Robin kills a bounty hunter who has been chasing him (99-102), increasing the bounty on his head from forty pounds to a fife (204). These examples are only a few of the instances where Robin Hood and his men stand in opposition to medieval rural and urban society and its custodians. Throughout the earliest ballads both law and religious tradition are, in one way or another, under siege by the natural greenwood and its inhabitants, and the rural and urban representatives are always in danger of Robin's next adventure out of the greenwood.

On the surface level the early ballads follow a more or less straightforward structure. We meet Robin in the natural greenwood, from which he emerges to seek out a target in a rural or an urban area. He steals something from this person before, usually chased by a representative of the law, returning to the greenwood. These mini odysseys at first looks like a traditional outlaw narrative but upon closer scrutiny the early ballads also reveal a deeper dissatisfaction with the socio-political development of medieval society: a dissatisfaction

emblematic of a deeper social conflict between the traditional natural and rural communities and the new urban centres emerging across England. Symptomatic of this inherent conflict in the ballad material, every now and then, instances of dissonance present themselves in Robin Hood's character. Moments of dissonance where Robin acts in disaccord with the commonly portrayed view of him as an outlaw and does something unexpected, which challenges our perception of him as just a simple outlaw and thief. This chapter aims to identify those unexpected instances and show that they are caused by the attempts of the monarchy to centralize the outlying regions of England. By looking past the now firmly established idea of Robin as a thief and an outlaw and rather examine the traces left in the margins of the text, this chapter aims to highlight and explain the series of events which allowed Robin – a woodsman and wanted criminal – to charge headfirst into Queen Catherin's chambers that early morning in 1510, and how this is indicative of a more fundamental socio-political change taking place in medieval England.

The Outlaw and the Knight: Dissonance in the Eyes of Realism

One preliminary topic must be considered. Can we actually look past the firmly established idea of Robin Hood as just an outlaw and woodsman, past his "enduring proverbial truth," in order to argue, as this thesis does, that Robin is a more universal representative of resistance against oppression? If we are to do so some common readings of Robin must first be evaluated. In her 1972 paper "What is Literary Realism?" Mary F. Slattery emphasized correspondence as one of the key factors behind a successful narrative. She says that realism is "by its nature referential, and its particular brand of reference seems to be that of correspondence" (56). When searching for realism Slattery emphasizes correspondence with the mundane, "or at least with accessible things, familiar to us from our habituation to reality" (56), as the key element. The recognition of these familiar and habitual things creates an atmosphere which allows the reader to step into and become completely engaged with the imaginary world of the narrative. It follows that the absence of this same correspondence causes the work to fail and keeps the reader from engaging properly with the literary world. Slattery writes in the tradition of Friedrich Engels, who claimed that "the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life" (Leitch 674) and György Lukács, who claimed that realist literature shows the totality of human existence in the totality of human society (Claudi 150). Echoing of her predecessors Slattery claims that typical characters in literature are rendered according to typical circumstances in real life and as such

stands as a representation of these same circumstances. Looking at common social occurrences or settings in the fifteenth century, then, allow us to cast new light on different possible readings of Robin Hood by looking at Robin as the mirror image of these social traits. According to Slattery's theory a successful reading of Robin Hood as a mirror image should not cause any form of dissonance, and it follows that the emergence of dissonance not only allows but, in fact, forces us to look elsewhere for a genuine reading and understanding of the famous outlaw.

Such an investigation has already been attempted by Anthony Pollard in "Idealising Criminality: Robin Hood in the Fifteenth Century." He identifies six distinct characteristics he believes a contemporary audience would have recognized in the early ballad material because of their correspondence with or similarity to accessible things. The first characteristic Pollard identifies is that of a yeoman, immediately confirmed by the textual evidence. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* refers to Robin as "a gode yeman" (3) while "the Potter" explicitly states that "Roben Hood was the yemans name" (9), to mention but a few examples. Then, after including Robin's men, Pollard compares Robin and the outlaws to a group of swashbuckling adventurers. He points out that even though Robin and his merry men rob people, there are very few instances where the outlaws exert bodily harm on their victims (158). When committing robberies, they capture and scare their victims but rarely hurt them. Violence and bodily harm are reserved for revenge; when out swashbuckling, more than anything, the outlaws humiliate and ridicule their targets. One such example is their treatment of their primary antagonist the Sheriff of Nottingham in "Robin Hood and the Potter." He is captured by the outlaws but let go unharmed the same day. He is however sent back to his wife without any of his gear, to the great amusement of the outlaws. Having said that, when the sheriff ventures outside his jurisdiction Robin and his men vigorously and tirelessly engage him, seeking to regulate the power of the establishment wherever it goes. Thus, Pollard's third reading of Robin Hood emerges and shows Robin as a freedom fighter who "celebrates…righteous violence to maintain true justice precisely when the officers of the law failed" (161).

Throughout the early legend there are six planned robberies. Five of them happen on the road. As such, Pollard's fourth characteristic of Robin is as a highwayman. Highway robbery was a frequent occurrence in the fifteenth century and the taken stolen were often as large as those stolen by Robin Hood (162). The amount of court records relating to highway robbery entails a contemporary audience well acquainted with the dangers of being attacked by highwaymen and well versed in the dangers of traveling on the road. But the legend also provides assurances to the commoners; Robin specifies that the outlaws shall

Do no husbonde harme,
That tilleth with his ploughe.

No more ye shall no gode yeman
That walketh by grene wode shawe,
Ne no knyght ne no squyer
That wol be a gode felawe. (*A Gest* 51-56)

The outlaws rob monks and abbots, and the occasional wicked knight, but no yeoman has anything to fear from Robin and his band of merry men.

Despite doing most of his plundering on the road, Robin Hood does not belong on the road, and theft is not the primary way in which the outlaws sustain themselves. "Poaching is a different order of crime," Pollard writes, "and more likely than any other to strike a sympathetic chord with rural audiences" (164). There is little doubt the outlaws sustained themselves by poaching the King's deer, as a passage towards the end of *A Gest* shows the extent to which the outlaws have rummaged freely around the King's forests. Upon his arrival at Plompton Park in Lancashire King Edward "coud unneth [scarcely] fynde one dere, / That bare ony good horne" (1431-32). The outlaws have destroyed every herd of deer in the park. Poaching was forbidden by law, but the fourteenth century authorities seems to have attributed curiously little time to the preservation of wild game, accepting that "poaching was a gentleman's sport and the common man's fair game" (Pollard 165). Not until the ascension of Henry VII and the revival of the forest administration was poaching once again brought under control. That more than one hundred cases relating to the poaching of venison were presented before the first held forest court, with offenders from all social strata, ranging from vagabond to knight, serves to show the vastness of poaching that had taken place prior to the strengthening and enforcement of the laws. Interestingly, almost no cases had more than four offenders, with the majority being accused of taking only one deer (ibid 166), attesting to the fact that poaching was utilized primarily as a way of increasing self-supplication and not for commercial purposes.

Having found traces of Robin in courtly halls, on the highway, and in the village, it is within the forest Pollard finally find the characteristic he feels fit Robin Hood best. "He was dressed in green, carried a mighty bow and a horn, and was a man who knew his 'woodcraft' like the back of his hand," writes Pollard (167). "He was neither a yeoman farmer nor a yeoman household officer. The Forester, the yeoman of the forest, was a familiar figure to fifteenth-century audiences" (ibid 167). Traditionally, the English forester was in charge of keeping the

land and was employed by the lord who owned the forest. The chief forester kept a small staff – depending on the size of the forest, anywhere from three to about sixteen men – and his primary job was the day to day administration and protection of the vert and venison. These are traits we recognize from Robin Hood, who kept a small staff of trusted 'lieutenants' consisting of Little John, Much, and Scarlok, dressed in green, carried a mighty bow and a large horn, and knew the greenwood well enough to avoid both the sheriff and the king, in addition to all their men. "Robin Hood was first and foremost the greenwood outlaw," Pollard writes, and "fifteenth-century audiences would surely have recognized the yeoman Robin Hood for what he was: a forester turned poacher and highwayman" (167).

In all likelihood Pollard is correct and the fifteenth century English population would have recognized most if not all the different characterisations of Robin Hood. And yet, when looking at them closely, Slattery's dissonance looms conspicuously; the reproduction of real life fails. The two most common understandings of the term "yeoman" establish it as either an intermediary household rank between squire and page (Holt 117-28), placing Robin in the urban aristocratic world, or as an intermediate social status between gentleman and husband (Dobson & Taylor, *Rymes* 35-6), placing Robin in the rural village. Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren echo these statements when they write that yeoman "denotes a broad social rank below knight and squires, ranging from a small landowning farmer to an attendant, servant, or lesser official in a royal or noble household" (149). Holt's, Dobson & Taylor's, and Knight and Ohlgren's application of the yeoman term fails because Robin thrives in the forest, not in the courtly halls or in the village streets. Similarly, the outlaws certainly share traits with a band of swashbuckling adventurers, and yet, when Robin leaves the greenwood and goes on an adventure to the king's court, the only thing on his mind is his return to the greenwood. Most of his men rarely leave the greenwood in the first place, adventure seemingly far from their minds. In constant opposition to the Sheriff Robin resists authority vigorously, but only ever on a personal level, and his brawls with the authorities are never attempts at actively changing the social construction of society, which effectively excludes him as a true freedom fighter. Similarly, that Robin commits highway robbery is undeniable, and yet, his extremely narrow selection of targets leaves much to be desired when comparing him to the ruthless fifteenth-century outlaw gangs who rummaged northern England. Because poaching was a supplementary occupation and rarely a mercantile profession, present across all stratum of society, it provides very little insight into the character of Robin Hood. Focusing solely on poaching would, at the same time, show him as belonging to both an urban aristocratic, a rural village, and a natural greenwood setting. Finally, the English foresters were meant to protect

the herds of deer in the king's forest. As Robin and his band have eradicated an entire forest worth of deer they hardly qualify as foresters, despite their likeness in appearance.

There is little doubt that the six different characteristics Pollard attributes to Robin Hood correspond with real life experiences and characteristics the fifteenth century English population would recognize. And yet, rather than creating a harmonic atmosphere allowing the reader to fully emerge himself in the accessible and familiar, they only strengthen the dissonance we set out to explain away in the first place. Where, then, can we search for a harmonious Robin Hood? A Robin Hood that corresponds with the accessible and familiar while simultaneously allowing us to expand our understanding of Robin beyond that of an outlaw. Interestingly, Pollard may have already ventured into the correct area of the greenwood, so to speak, but discarded it due to his historical-scientific focus on criminality. Beyond the loosely conveyed interpretations of the yeoman terminology, by Holt and by Knight and Ohlgren, and the residual traces in the forester-image, Pollard does not identify any aristocratic characteristics in Robin Hood. And yet, this thesis argues that it is within the world of the aristocrat we must continue our search in order to start glimpsing a harmonious reading of Robin Hood.

Early in the first fit of *A Gest of Robyn Hode* Little John, Much, and Scarlok are sent by Robin to find a guest to dine with the outlaws. The three set forth out of the greenwood and soon encounters a passing knight, Sir Richard at the Lee, coming out of Barnsdale. After courteous introductions Sir Richard joins the outlaws. He has already heard much good about Robin Hood, whom he describes as a good yeoman, and therefore decides to accompany the outlaws into the greenwood to meet the famous outlaw. In the greenwood they share a meal, overflowing with "Brede and wyne…And noumbles of the dere. / Swannes and fessauntes they had full gode, / And foules of the ryvere; / There fayled none so litell a birde / That ever was bred on bryre" (127-32). The men enjoy themselves, sharing the ritual of communal dining, to the extent that Sir Richard exclaims that he has not had such a meal for many weeks (135-36). Then, after the meal is over Robin asks the knight to "pay or ye wende" (145) because it is not right for "A yoman to pay for a knyght" (148). Sir Richard apologizingly informs Robin that he cannot pay; fortune has been against him lately and he has no money. His generosity and responsibilities towards his son and heir, he explains, have taken all of his resources and landed him in debt with a malicious Abbot. Sympathetic, Robin immediately gives up his claim for the meal and offers to lend the poor knight the 400 pounds he needs to get his affairs in order. Sir Richard accepts, the outlaws clothe the knight, gift him a few other necessities, and send him

on his way. Sir Richard emerges from the greenwood a man capable of repaying his debt to the Abbot of St. Mary's Abbey.

Initially this story seems to correspond with our expectations of Robin and his men as rebel outlaws: we meet Robin in the greenwood; he sends his men to find a person of wealth, an abbot or a knight, to bring into the forest; this person would later leave the greenwood without the majority of his belongings. However, in the first part of the fit, two things in particular draw attention to themselves by seeming disconnected from the natural outcome expected from the outlaw tale. First, when Little John, Much, and Scarlok first meet Sir Richard, rather than jumping and assaulting him, forcing him to join them, they go through courteous introductions and invite Sir Richard to join them. Meredith Skura has read Robin of the old ballads as a trickster character (176), which could explain this first instance of dissonance: the outlaws, rather than violently assaulting their target, tricks them into giving up their money. However, in a second instance of dissonance, when the outlaws introduce themselves as men of Robin Hood, rather than replying that he wants nothing to do with an outlaw rebel, Sir Richard responds that "[Robin] is [a] gode yoman…Of hym I have herde moche gode" (103-4). Sir Richard's recognition of Robin, not as an outlaw but as a yeoman, eliminates the trickster tale and restores dissonance to the outlaw narrative. Shortly after arriving in the greenwood a third event occurs which once again seems to be in conflict with the expectations to an outlaw narrative. Living in the forest, one would expect the meal prepared by the outlaws to be somewhat sparse. The meal presented to Sir Richard is one of absolute abundance. Sir Richard, as we saw above, even comments that he has not had such a meal in many weeks.

Up until line 148, despite a few unexpected occurrences, the ballad has progressed along the expected lines of an outlaw narrative: the outlaws ventured out of the greenwood, found a knight to bring back to the greenwood, and are now attempting to take his money. The expected structure of an outlaw narrative survives – if just barely – despite the aforementioned dissonance. Then, from line 149, after Robin asks Sir Richard to pay for the meal, something fundamental changes. Unexpectedly, Sir Richard replies that he cannot pay for the meal. Until this point Sir Richard has been located in a social stratum near the top of society; as a knight and a landowner he represents the feudal aristocracy and as a feudal lord he is expected to take care of his vassals work for him and live on his land. Robin, on the other hand, owns no land and has no conventional social position of relevance; it could even be argued that as an outlaw he stands completely outside of society. Outside of the law and outside any social strata he is clearly Sir Richard's inferior. Sir Richard's financial impairment therefore significantly challenges the expected dynamic between the two: the story of an outlaw stealing from a knight

has turned into the story of a knight needing financial support from the outlaw. The dissonance created by the knight's revelation is so strong that it forces us to reconsider the entire relationship between Robin and Sir Richard. Robin, at first, refuses to believe the knight: "Tel me [the] truth," than saide Robin," (153) clearly questioning Sir Richard's honesty. He even sends Little John to check the knight's coffers. That Little John "fonde in the knyghtes cofer / But even halfe pounde" (167-68) effectively completes the remarkable inversion. The financial inversion of the two elevates Robin to a stratum above Sir Richard and subjugates Sir Richard to Robin.

In addition to her focus on correspondence Mary Slattery promotes a second kind of realism which reveals itself in the inversion of Robin and Sir Richard. According to her, when a work fails it fails because it lacks the "natural outcome of a whole plot development characterized by probability" (60). The sociologist and literary scholar Theodor Adorno add to Slattery's statement when he claims that "the lyrical work is always the subjective expression of a social antagonism" (114). What both scholars are saying is that in a literary work there are certain expectancies towards coherence in how a plot develops, and that this plot development relates to the society in which it was written. In a medieval ballad we expect a knight to have more money than and act more courteous than an outlaw. Further, both scholars agree that the conflict is always the expression of an existing social antagonism – an already existing conflict – in the society from which the work emerged. By searching for dissonance in the text, no longer merely in terms of missing correspondence or unfamiliarity, but at the places where probability fails, we can locate the instances where the subjective expression of the work reveals the true social antagonisms. In the words of Adorno: "A collective undercurrent provides the foundation for all individual lyric poetry [and] it is this undercurrent that makes language the medium in which the subject becomes *more* than a mere subject" (Adorno 114-15).[3]

The changed power dynamic, the inverted collective undercurrents, become subsequently more and more apparent throughout the rest of the fit, and finally begin to reveal Robin as more than a mere subject. Rather than Sir Richard paying for the meal Robin now agrees to lend him four hundred pounds (*A Gest* 265), it is revealed that Robin is as rich as any merchants in England (ibid 283), and Robin agrees to clothe the knight (ibid 279) and provides him with two horses (ibid 301, 305). Upon leaving the greenwood Robin even provides the knight with a knave (or yeoman depending on the situation) when he tells Little John to go with the knight. The inversion of Robin and Richard's social stratification also explains the earlier

[3] My emphasis.

dissonance in the fit: John, Much, and Scarlok greeted the knight courteously, and the knight had heard good things about Robin, because they were meeting and speaking of someone of near equal stature, not as outlaws speaking to a knight. The inversion also explains the dissonance of the meal. Rather than a modest forest meal the outlaws put together a feudal feast for Sir Richard. Communal dining was an expected tradition in the medieval feudal society, where the master of the house dined with his servants. When prominent guests like knights came visiting only the best was served. In the first fit of *A Gest*, the outlaws leave the greenwood searching for a "master of the house" fit for the table they have prepared. They are, in essence, inviting themselves to the feudal feast. Then, when Sir Richard's financial impairments are revealed, Robin takes on the role as lord, reverses the roles of the relationship between himself and Sir Richard, and establishes himself as the new master. Finally, the smallest and yet the most revealing evidence of the social restructuring lays embedded in the subtleties of Little John's language: directly after realizing that the knight tells the truth and has no money, he calls Robin "sir" for the first time (172).

In order to understand why it matters who pays for dinner and how this inversion of roles creates such a tumultuous earthquake in the social ranks of medieval England, strong enough to instantly reposition an outlaw rebel above a sworn knight in the social stratum, we need to take a step back and consider the instigative reason behind the change: the relationship between society and money. In 1859 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* where they set out to explain how the economic structure of a society, which they refer to as the 'base structure', affects the 'superstructure'. The superstructure, Marx and Engels says, includes everything from politics and philosophy, through culture and art, to law, science, education, religion and, importantly, social formations. They explain that "the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general" (662) while also pointing out that the base structure and the superstructure exist in a reciprocal relationship where the base structure shapes (and maintains) the superstructure while the superstructure maintains (and shapes) the base.

The inversion of Robin and Sir Richard's socio-political positions happens without intent:

> In considering [transformations of the superstructure] a distinction should be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production… and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms. […] Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we

> not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; […] this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production. (Marx and Engels 663)

When the financial situation between Robin and Sir Richard changed, revealed by Sir Richard's inability to pay for the feast, the whole construction of the base structure changed. This, in turn, affected the construction of the superstructure and as a result the social relationship between Sir Richard and Robin. The revelation of Sir Richard's financial impairment changed "the contradictions of material life" and therefore the "construction of the base structure." Rather than looking at the character's own consciousness, for Sir Richard his position as a member of the feudal aristocracy and a knight, for Robin his status as an outlaw, we must focus on the relations of production, that is, economy, and how they navigate the social productive forces. Granted, Marx and Engels spoke and theorized on a larger scale than the individual, and yet we see how their theory has strong applicational value on an individual level. By superimposing the theory of Mary Slattery and Theodor Adorno on top of Marx and Engels' base/ superstructure theorem a harmonic picture of Robin Hood finally begins to emerge. "With the changes of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed" (Marx & Engels 663) and with these transformations, the relationship between Robin and Sir Richard. The relocation of Robin to a different social stratum force us to abandon our perception of Robin as a simple outlaw and to reconsider his qualities, so that we can start building a more harmonic understanding of who the famous outlaw really was. Not as an outlaw and a thief, though these certainly are recognizable traits, but as an aristocrat, held to the highest standards of knightly conduct.

The textual evidence for Robin's elevation to the aristocratic circles is not always as clear as one could wish. Then again, we are talking about a character who, in the words of James Holt, "cannot be identified" (3). However, the evidence is present, and it becomes clearer when looking at Robin in light of his adherence to the knightly values. In *The Return of Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* Mark Girouard claims that chivalry was a code of conduct for "an élite and increasingly hereditary class of warriors" and that "it accepted fighting as a necessary and indeed glorious activity, but set out to soften its potential barbarity by putting it into the hands of men committed to high standards of behaviour" (16). Exactly what these 'standards of behavior' entailed warrants some discussion, but most scholars agree that they required warriors to adopt a respectful attitude towards their enemies as long as their

enemies did the same, that it required them to stay true to their word, defend the wrongfully oppressed, and exercise courteous behavior towards women and children. These traits clearly separate an outlaw and a thief from a knight, and yet they are all present in Robin Hood, significantly strengthening our perception of Robin as something more than a simple robber.

The chivalric quality that would later manifest itself as one of his primary epithets is Robin's strong propensity to defend the weak and those who have been wrongfully oppressed. The extent to which Robin exhibits an unwavering dedication to defending the oppressed, whilst also displaying the value he places in honesty and respect towards one's enemies, is excellently exemplified the sixth fit of *A Gest.* Having discovered that the Sheriff has taken her husband captive, Sir Richard at the Lee's wife embarks on a long and dangerous journey to find Robin and request his help to free her husband. "Late never my wedded lorde / Shamefully slayne be;" she begs, "He is fast bowne to Nottingham warde, / For the love of the" (1345-48). Robin's response illustrates both the initial trust he had in his enemy – having on a previous occasion let the Sheriff go unharmed because he promised to never interfere with Robin's men again – and the significance he ascribes to keeping one's word. But also the extent of his rage towards a dishonest enemy and his unwavering dedication to those less fortunate than himself. When he hears what the Sheriff has done, "Up than sterte Robyn, / As man that had ben wode" (1237-58) and exclaims that those who will not follow him "and…this sorowe forsaketh" (1361) shall no longer dwell in the greenwood with him. Robin's rage is equally well exemplified by the violence of the Sheriff's murder:

> Robyn bent a full goode bowe,
> An arrowe he drowe at wyll;
> He hit so the proude sherife
> Upon the grounde he lay full still.
>
> And or he might up aryse,
> On his fete to stoned,
> He smote of the sheriffs hede
> With his bright bronde.
>
> "Lye thou there, thou proude sherife,
> Evyll mote thou cheve!
> There might no man to the truste

They whyles thou were a lyve." (1385-96)

When they first met Robin allowed the Sheriff to leave the forest unharmed because he gave his word that he would stay away from Robin and his men. Robin trusted the lawman's word, assuming him to be, although an enemy, an honest person. The brutality now taking place in the streets of Nottingham span from the fact that the sheriff has broken his word, an unthinkable act for a knight. The scene's extremity emanates from Robin's realization, as he explicitly states himself, that the sheriff cannot be trusted. As such, the passage illustrates both Robin's own dedication to the knightly values and simultaneously shows his willingness to uphold and enforce them in relation to others. Especially towards women Robin is always prepared and willing to live in accordance with these values.

Despite the significant work that has been done on feminism in the later Robin Hood material, scarcely anything seems to have been done on the importance of the feminine in the earliest legend.[4] And yet, it is exactly in Robin's meetings with the feminine that some of the strongest evidence for his aristocratic elevation resides as one of the most important traits of the chivalric knight was his courteous behaviour towards women. In "Robin Hood and the Potter," when Robin arrives in Nottingham, he immediately sets up shop "Foll effen agenest the screffeys gate" (129) and starts selling his wares at spot price. Underselling the other merchants, he quickly sells most of his wares, until only five pots remains. He gifts these to the Sheriff's wife who invites Robin into their home. The next day Robin gifts the wife a golden ring before, ironically, leaving with the Sheriff to hunt down Robin Hood. Robin's interactions with the wife brings to mind tales of romantic courtly love where chivalrous knights often gave gifts to their object of affection, small tokens signifying the connection between the two. We recognize traces of such dedication in Robin's gifts as well as in his verbal exchanges with the wife: "God amarsey [thank you]," seyde Roben, / "Yowre bedyng schall be doyn" (153-54). Having captured the Sheriff and stripped him of his items, Robin sends the lawman back to his wife. It is possible that Robin's reluctance towards hurting the Sheriff is a function of chivalric attitude towards the wife more than respectful attitude towards an enemy. Robin does, after all,

[4] Peter Stallybrass, in "Drunk with the cup of liberty": Robin Hood, the Carnivalesque, and the Rhetoric of Violence in Early Modern England," (1985) have commented on Marian's different roles in high and low literature in different eras (306-309); R.B. Dobson and J. Taylor, in *Rymes of Robyn Hode: An Introduction to the English Outlaw* (1976) have traced her development from "a chaste damsel to a bawdy wench" as literacy developed in the lower social classes (214); Lorinda Cohoon, in "Transgressive Transformations: Representations of Maid Marian in Robin Hood Retellings," (2007) compares Maid Marian with the more contemporary Madonna and claims that both helped question women's roles and beliefs in societies where these roles and beliefs were set in stone (217).

smite Guy of Gisborne's head straight off. If this is the case, though she is no longer physically present, the Sheriff's wife still actively regulates Robin's actions, playing a crucial role in the development of the story by affecting Robin's decisions. Either way, wishing to send the Sheriff's wife a third and final gift, Robin sends the Sheriff back to Nottingham with a white palfrey. Safely back in Nottingham the Sheriff can only admit defeat to his wife; when asked how his trip went all he can do is swear at Robin for taking all his gear and deliver Robin's gift. Incapable of action, reduced to a simple messenger, the Sheriff becomes a passive participant in a ballad that more and more clearly concerns itself, not like we expected, with the relationship between Robin and the Sheriff, but, unexpectedly, with the relationship between Robin and the Sheriff's wife.

Similar to the way economy regulated the social structures between Robin and Sir Richard, it also regulates the structures and functions of the relationships between Robin and the Sheriff's wife. Remembering how changes in the economic Marxist base structure causes the superstructure to change, and how these changes have the power to regulate social constructions and position characters in relation to each other, Robin's gifts to the wife gain significant importance. Read in light of the Marxist base and superstructure theorem these transactions signify more than a simple exchange of gifts: they should be understood as attempts at changing the social constructions regulating the relationship between Robin and the wife, finally establishing Robin and the wife as the active participants in the story.

It is at the crossroad of economy and knightly ideals, in the intersecting paths of Robin's chivalric behaviour and economy's ability to regulate societies we find finally begin to glimpse a harmonic Robin Hood. Robin's interactions with the wife brings to mind tales of romantic courtly love where knights "dedicated themselves to the service of one particular woman, not necessarily or even usually their wives, and vied with each other in performing deeds of valour in her honour and under her inspiration" (Girouard 16). Having vied with the Sheriff and defeated him, Robin has established himself as the wife's one true chivalric servant. Holt saw in this contact "a distant distorted echo of courtly love" (126) and reading's Robin's relationship with the sheriff's wife as a courtly romance does significantly strengthen the claim that the Robin Hood of the early legend belongs in aristocratic circles. Reading Robin this way also establishes chivalric values in him, and while it might be overly assumptive to suggest a romance and an affair between Robin and the sheriff's wife, it is interesting to note that "in its purest form courtly love…did not imply sexual relationships" and yet, "sex had a way of creeping in" (Girouard 16).

The Forest Magnate: Centralization of the Borderlands

The medieval knights were more than courtly romantics. Fierce warriors trained and practiced in the art of war, the knights were distinguished leaders in the king's army, and an important element in the political medieval England. Keeping this in mind, at this point, I wish to present a possible alternative reading of Robin Hood. One which encompasses Robin's position as a natural greenwood character and allows him to exercise all his chivalric activities, while at the same time retaining his position as a representative of resistance against oppression. Returning to Mary Slattery's theories of realism and how it is conveyed through referential portrayal, by mirroring the well-known, the portrayal of Robin Hood as a chivalric knight resonates well with the early legend, and in many ways offer a more harmonic portrayal of Robin than that of the outlaw rebel ever did. Nowhere is this as clearly shown as in the first few stanzas of the eight fit of *A Gest,* where Robin and King Edward ride out of the greenwood side by side, at the head of their armies, both dressed in Lincoln green, headed for Nottingham (1689-1720).

Joseph Taylor have commented that "riding down from the North with his liveried and feed army, side by side with the king, and striking fear in southerly Nottingham, Robin does not resemble a base outlaw so much as he signifies a great northern magnate" (315). The historian Frank Musgrove strengthens Taylor's claim by pointing out that "by the fifteenth century England's perimeter was the home of very wealthy, well-connected and interrelated families which could provide an entirely credible and even constitutionally legitimate alternative to the men at the centre, including the king" (157). Musgrove echoes of Joseph Ritson who wrote in the introduction to his collection of Robin Hood ballads that "in these forests, and with this company, [Robin] for many years reigned like an independent sovereign" (vi). Reading the ballads in this context reveals both "a distinct regionalism in the texts, positioned against government and monarchical centralization," (Taylor 315) and establishes Robin Hood in the social stratum where he belongs. "The northern magnate," Taylor writes, "served his king – by protecting the borders of the realm – as well as the interests of his own family and region" (315). Well integrated into the local society, in the case of an invasion, the northern magnates were the only ones who could draw enough support from the surrounding population to mount a proper defence (ibid 316). Reading Robin as a forest magnate, with the northern greenwood as his domain, entails that Robin must protect the north from invading forces, while remaining loyal to his king, and at the same time protect those who serve under

him. In return for his protection his men will fight for him when called upon and remain loyal to their leader as long as he remains loyal to them.

Establishing Robin as a northern magnate reveals an interesting conflict in the early ballad material. The conflict challenges Robin's role as leader of the greenwood, exemplifying two kinds of possible leadership. Robin, the forest magnate and aristocrat, initially seeks to consolidate leadership in a Hobbesian absolutist leader, while John ascribes to a consensus based natural approach to leadership with communal values as the main emphasis. The conflict is interesting because it not only deals with contested leadership in the greenwood, but also reveals a deeper structural confrontation between the natural greenwood zone and the rural village and urban city zones in the fifteenth century. Allowing us to fully investigate how social developments and attitudes towards leadership manifested themselves in the early ballads, Knight and Ohlgren have argued that the greenwood must be viewed as "a dream of yeomanly community and self-protection, a set of values that mesh with the realization of a fully natural world," while contrasting it with the threatening towns, filled with "cash, letters, royal seals and the institutions of religion and commerce" (34). This conflict between natural and urban is exhibited in a microcosmos, in an argument between Little John and Robin, at a time when it is not yet given that Robin is the undisputed leader of the merry men.

"Robin Hood and the Monk" opens with Robin expressing a desire to go into Nottingham to say mass. Fearing for his safety in a rural environment the outlaws wishes to send some men with him. Robin refuses but proposes that "Litull John shall beyre my bow, / Til that me list to drawe" (35-38). When little John refuses to carry his master's bow and rather insists on bringing his own, the ballad elegantly position both men as possible leaders of the greenwood, essentially setting the scene for the conflict about to happen. On their way to Nottingham the two outlaws get into a shooting match which John wins. Robin, however, refuses to pay John his prize and the two have a violent falling out. After separating, John heads back to the forest while Robin continues on into the city of Nottingham. Knight and Ohlgren have pointed out that "just as violence enters the Edenic world, the communal calm of the outlaw band is disrupted by conflict, and [this] argument between John and Robin is the most fully worked out instance of this important theme in the tradition" (33-34). Viewed in light of this statement, it is interesting to note that after such an important argument Robin retreats to the rural centre of Nottingham to partake in institutionalized religion, while John returns to the natural greenwood.

Whilst in Nottingham to say mass Robin gets captured by the Sheriff and thrown in jail. After a period of time, unknown for how long because of some missing lines in the manuscript,

word of Robin's imprisonment reaches Little John and the other outlaws. Informed of their leader's predicament, assuming they no longer have anyone to lead them, the merry men lose all sense of composure as "Sum fel in swonyng as thei were dede, / And lay stil as any stone; / Non of theym were in her mynde" (121-123). Only Little John, aware that a natural consensus-based attitude towards leadership allows him to step in and lead the outlaws in Robin's absence, retains his self-control. After calming the men he promises to bring back Robin and sets out from the greenwood. This communal leadership-ideology is further displayed in John's final words to the merry men before leaving the greenwood: "Loke that ye kepe owre tristil-tre, / Under the levys smale, / And spare non of this venison, / That gose in thys vale" (143-46). It is not John's tree nor John's vale and venison, it is the natural collective property of the outlaws. John instruct the men to keep the vale in order while he is away, but he appoints no intermediary leader. He expects the collective group of outlaws to manage itself in his absence.

The socio-political differences between the greenwood zone and the rural zone fully reveal themselves when comparing how the outlaw's handle the loss of their leader with the reactions of the townspeople of Nottingham when they think their king has been killed. Late in *A Gest*, in a section which we will soon investigate further, the inhabitants of Nottingham believe their king has been killed whilst visiting with Robin Hood in the greenwood. While the initial reaction of the townspeople resembles that of the outlaws, they do not, unlike the outlaws, accept that another leader shall rule them. "Full hastly they began to fle, / Both yemen and knaves, / And olde wyves that myght evyll goo, / They hypped on theyr staves" (1713-16). Certain that Robin Hood is coming to conquer them, clearly unwilling to let such a thing happen, they attempt to flee; the people of Nottingham will be ruled by their king or by no one. Comparing these two reactions reveal that in the natural greenwood zone the inhabitants the inhabitants accept and adhere any leader who ascribes to a communal-leadership ideology. In the rural zone, on the other hand, the inhabitants are much less likely to accept such a change of leadership. Not until the villagers "se our comly kynge" (1719) who "loughe full fast, / And commaunded theym agayne" (1717-18) do they calm down.

The difference spans from the realization that whilst living in the realm of the northern forest magnate, the outlaws have grown accustomed to Robin's absolutist rule and they accept his leadership as long as Robin also adhere to their natural lifestyle. The outlaw's acceptance of a political structure not necessarily prototypical of their actual lifestyle gives the illusion of an absolutist rule in the greenwood; this illusion is easily broken once Little John establishes himself as an intermediary leader. Little John's refusal to carry Robin's bow reveal the outlaw's real preference for a consensus-based leadership. The villagers, on the other hand, are

accustomed to the absolutist rule of the rural and urban zones. Their sovereign rules as an absolutist leader and they will accept no other style of leadership.

Little John eventually manages to free Robin from imprisonment and brings him back to the greenwood. Upon their return to the forest, before reuniting with the rest of the merry men, Little John tells Robin that he will not accompany Robin back to the other outlaws. Having done a good deed towards Robin, despite their argument, John thinks Robin should repay John whatever he can, but he also accepts that he should be on his way. Although it is unclear from where John's realization came, John seems to have understood that Robin is the undisputed leader of the greenwood. Accepting that Robin's style of leadership does not match his own, retaining his natural respect for Robin while also acknowledging that the two have had a dispute, he intends to leave the forest. Robin, on the other hand, has fully realized John's value and exclaims:

> "Nay, be my trouth," seid Robyn,
> "So shall hit never be;
> I make the maister," said Robyn,
> "Of alle my men and me" (311-314).

John refuses Robin's offer, but he accepts his invitation to stay. Answering his leader, John replies:

> "Nay, be my trouth," seid Litull John,
> "So shalle hit never be;
> But lat me be a felow," seid Litull John,
> "No noder kepe I be" (315-318).

The two men's acceptance of the other's view on leadership in many ways summarize the relationship the two would have from that point. Robin understands the value of John, and despite expecting John to listen when giving orders, he also acknowledges the immense value of keeping John around, consequently offering him more freedom than the other outlaws. Similarly, John accepts Robin's status as the greenwood sovereign and gives up his claim to leadership.

The conflict between John and Robin raises questions about leadership that would remain relevant well into the nineteenth century. First published in 1843, Thomas Carlyle's

Past and Present raises a plethora of interesting questions in relation to England and its leaders, however, one overarching question remains significant throughout Carlyle's whole work:

> Behold us here, so many thousands, millions, and increasing at the rate of fifty every hour. We are right willing and able to work; and on Planet Earth is plenty of work and wages for a million times as many. We ask, If you mean to lead us towards work, try to lead us. […] Or if you declare that you cannot lead us? And expect that we are to remain quietly unled, and in a composed manner perish of starvation? What is it you expect of us? What is it you mean to do with us? (23)

The essence of Carlyle's argument is that the working class does not challenge the ruling class's right to rule, however, it expects to be led properly. Only a leader that offers work and security to his workers deserves the allegiance of the millions of English workers. A similar construct and expectancy towards leadership can be seen in the relationship between Robin and Little John, and with the rest of the merry men. At the beginning of "the Monk" Robin does not respect the duality of the relationship between himself and the other outlaws. Only in the wake of Robin's realization that the outlaw's allegiance comes at the price of reciprocal loyalty can he truly assume his position as the forest magnate and usher in a new era of centralized leadership in the greenwood. Unfortunately for the outlaws, Robin's realization would not last long.

In the wake of the Wars of the Roses the English government underwent a substantial and lasting centralization. Clear traces of this centralization can be seen in several contemporary texts: Patricia Claire Ingham has called Galleroun and Gwaison's combat in *Awntyrs off Arthure* a "useful metaphor for [outlying regions'] struggles with a London-based aristocracy deploying regional alliances and identities…in its battles over centralized power" (187) while Randy Schiff, when comparing *Awntyrs* and *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane*, comments that these texts register "regional reactions to processes of nation formation sweeping away the borderlands society that had fed off the almost continuous armed conflict of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries" (613). This conflict is clearly visible in the early Robin Hood ballad material, most clearly in the legend's relationship and interactions with the distant urban city. Joseph Taylor has called London a "distant hub for transactions of injustice" and commented that "for workers of treachery in the ballad, London is a place to which they must travel in order to advance their interests" (319). Taylor shows how, when the Abbot of St. Mary's fails to claim Sir Richard's lands by forfeiture, he immediately dispatches his cellarer to London, "There to

holde grete mote, / The knyght that rode so hye on hors, / To brynge hym under fote" (*A Gest* 1010-1012). Later, after Robin has escaped from the sheriff and Sir Richard has hidden him in his castle, the sheriff speeds to "London towne" (ibid 1287) to inform the king of the outlaw's activities. Undoubtedly conveying a singularly bias rendition of what has taken place in Nottingham, Lancashire and Barnsdale, the Sheriff even warns the king that Robin Hood "wyll be lorde, and set you at nought, / In all the northe londe" (ibid 1295-96).

Both the Sheriff and the abbot draw on their connection to London to work their treachery. Rather than deploying their local networks they utilize their positions as agents of the monarchial centralized government to further their corruption and personal agendas. Gerald Harriss have pointed out that the centralizing government of the Middle Ages "was exposed to strain and failures, either through the attempt by central government to override local power or by the temptation for a local power to turn royal authority to its own advantage" (164). As such, Robin's resistance against the corrupt sheriff and the greedy abbot (and not just the abbot but the entirety of the clergy) is not so much resistance against the royal power itself, but rather reveals a more general resistance against the abuse of the royal power. In light of this, one important distinction must be made: Robin is not in opposition to the king himself (Taylor 322). Rather, he rebels against the wrongful rule of the king's subordinates.

Ironically, Robin's resistance against those who abuse the royal power weakens his own position as a northern magnate by strengthening the monarchy. While the centralization of royal power to London and the redistribution of this same power back to the local agents of the monarchy in the borderlands strengthened the local authorities, it simultaneously siphoned authority from the old ruling families and placed it into the hands of the Crown (Taylor 320). The magnates knew that they depended on the support of the local population to maintain their position as rulers and recognized that this entailed caution in the exploitation of local estates. Exploitation of the local population would only weaken their claim to the people's loyalty, at the cost of the people's loyalty to the Crown. Thus, when viewed from a national perspective, the border magnates were protectors of the realm, defending England against invading northern armies. However, more importantly, when seen from a local perspective, they were also protectors of the North, keeping the local northerners fed and content. Forced to balance this dual role, defending England from the Scotts on behalf of the monarchy while also defending the North from the increasing centralization siphoning their hereditary power to London, the magnates could only watch as their power diminished alongside the rise of the centralized government. The need to balance this duality forces Robin to remain selective in his thieving ventures: as magnate of the greenwood he depends on the loyalty of the local population for his

power and must always strive to ensure their well-being. At the same time, he must fulfil his role on the national stage by fighting against the Sheriff's and the abbot's corrupt powers, ensuring the legitimacy of the royal power. Forced to choose between subjugation to his monarch and subjugation to the corrupt local agents of the crown, Robin chooses loyalty to his king, retaining his position as a forest magnate, in vigorous opposition to corruption.

The subjugation of the northern magnates to the royal power reaches its climax at the end of the seventh fit of *A Gest*. In something closely resembling a "king and subject" narrative King Edward ventures into the natural greenwood with a few of his most trusted men, all of them disguised as monks, and tracks down Robin Hood. King Edward's intrusion, not only into the rural zone, but fully into the natural zone, reveals the "highly asymmetrical relations of power" (Pratt 34) between the natural and the urban. Inside Robin's natural contact zone, when meeting with a representative of the urban who have intruded on the natural zone, one would expect Robin to exert a certain amount of authority. Instead, quite opposite, after Robin and King Edward have revealed themselves to each other, Robin asks mercy for himself and his men, to which the king replies:

> "Yes, for God," than sayd our kynge,
> "And therto sent I me,
> With that thou leve the grene wode,
> And all thy company,
>
> "And come home, syr, to my courte,
> And there dwell with me." (1651-58)

The king's pardon is conditional and, taking into account the corrupting power of London, foreshadows Robin's own demise. Seemingly aware of this, Robin agrees to join the king but ends the seventh fit by countering the king's condition with one of his own: "But me lyke well your servyse, / I come agayne full soone, / And shote at the donned ere, / As I am wonte to done" (1665-68). The king does not reply, rejecting the possibility of Robin eluding the chains of centralized government.

The eighth fit opens with a question from King Edward to Robin: "Haste thou ony grene cloth," sayd our kynge, / "That thou wylte sell nowe to me?" (1669-70). The king adopting the livery of Robin and his men does not imply his adherence to the ways of the greenwood. Rather, when the king adorns himself and his men in the green clothes, London's ability to corrupt

begins to seethe through the livery and subjugates it under the King (Taylor 336). The significance of King Edward's adoption of Robin's livery is shown clearly as the good people of Nottingham realize a band of green-clad men is emerging from the greenwood. Having spotted nothing but the green clothes, they still exclaim that Robin is on his way, clearly aware that this is the livery of Robin and his men. The villager's reaction to the green clothes shows how interconnected Robin and his men are with their livery – it is virtually impossible to separate one from the other. We saw above how, certain that Robin has killed their king and is coming to take their lands, refusing to be led by anyone but their king, and well aware that "on lyve he lefte never one" (*A Gest* 1712), the villagers flee. Only after someone spots the king at the head of the approaching army do the villagers calm down. Initially the people of Nottingham feared the green clothes because they symbolized the invading army from the greenwood: the aggressive transgression of the natural into the rural. When they see the king adorned in these same clothes they calm down because the clothes no longer represent the rebellious character of Robin. The power of the king and the corrupting effect of London is so strong that anything King Edward take as his own immediately becomes subjugated to his person. This includes the natural contact zone. Rather than an outlaw rebel emerging form the forest to attack the city of Nottingham, the once proud outlaw leaves his domain a magnate lord under the sound leadership of the royal power. When King Edward buys and adorns himself in the green clothes of Robin, he simultaneously inverts the hierarchical structure symbolized by the livery; the king has bought Robin's autonomy both figuratively and literally and is bringing it back to London as his own (Taylor 336). The transaction mirrors the inversion that took place between Robin and Sir Richard, only this time Robin is subjugated and King Edward is elevated.

In a distinct metaphor for centralization, the forest magnate must leave his forest behind and go live in London. In the seething pot of corruption that is the capital, under the scrutinizing eyes of his monarch, Robin is fully subjugated to the absolutist reign of King Edward. Quickly withering away, after only one year at court, Robin's men have left him, he has squandered away his money, and his superb skills as an archer and a fighter have deteriorated to the extent that "Yf I dwele lenger with the kynge, / Sorowe wyll me sloo [slay]" (*A Gest* 1745-52). The earlier foreshadowing of Robin's demise has come true. In one final act of resistance, one final assertion of apparent power, realizing his precarious situation, the forest magnate leaves his king and returns to the greenwood. And yet, his return to the greenwood lacks the merry and harmonic disposition of the first few fits. His slaying of a "full grete harte" (ibid 1785), like he promised prior to leaving the greenwood, lacks the intensity and retributive nature of the earlier forest magnate. Thus, although Robin blows his horn and "seven score of wyght yonge men /

Came redy on a rowe" (ibid 1791-92), Robin knows that his forest rule is empty (Taylor 338). A victim of centralization, not only Robin himself but also his lands have been brought under the strict rule of the monarch; for the remainder of his life Robin lives in the greenwood, but always in "drede of Edwarde our kynge" (*A Gest* 1799).

Robin's death finally completes the process of centralizing the North, instigated by King Edward when he first travelled into the greenwood. "The prioress of Kirklee's treacherous murder of Robin," Taylor writes, "in collusion with the knight Sir Roger of Donkester, testifies to the new North to which Robin has returned" (338). Deceit and corruption have arrived in the North, and Robin pays the price. Stripped of its autonomy, lacking the familiar networks which facilitated the autonomy in the first place, the North has become an extension of London; a place devoid of virtue, seething with the vile corruption of treachery and corruption.

Robin clearly does not belong in a centralized political system, to the extent that the Crown's campaign to centralize England costs him his life. The shift of political power from the local border magnates, to the Crown, and back to the Crown's representatives in the outlying areas challenges the border magnates legitimate claim to their land, wealth, and status as kings in the North. As such, Robin's status as an outlaw seems to emanate less from traditional outlawry like petty thefts and murders of random individuals – he is no common outlaw – and must rather be understood as targeted resistance against the misuse and corruption of centralized power. The Sheriff and the clergy serve as the two main representatives of this corruption. Reading Robin this way, like a dethroned magnate of the North, finally reveals the harmonic characteristics we initially ventured into the greenwood in search of. In the forest, just like King Edward did, we find the leader of the forest outlaws, the king in the North, resisting the centralized Crown's corrupt ambassadors in an attempt of self-preservation. Unfortunately, "under the weight of centralization and the redistribution of authority fully into the hands of an absolute monarch" (Taylor 339), the greenwood magnate must finally succumb to the overwhelming power of the early modern era ushering in the end of the Middle Ages.

The same way King Edward consolidated English monarchic power in his person, Robin gathered the leadership of the greenwood and elevated himself to the position of forest-magnate. John's rebellion and later subjugation serve as the point of no return. Just like Robin's venture to London firmly established him as subjugated to the king, when John accepts Robin's invitation to return to the greenwood, the final straw of resistance towards Robin's absolutist rule is eliminated.

> The culmination of centralized monarchy and absolutist power in Henry VIII's reign has led James Simpson, among other scholars, to view this moment as the definitive shift from the Middle Ages to the early modern period. Simpson argues, "only new concentrations of political power enable such powerful redrawings of the periodic map." Centralization did not simply shift jurisdictional maps, replace provincial elites with friends of the king, and establish London and Westminster as the nucleus of English law; consolidation made possible the emergence of modern sovereignty in England—the absolutist king of Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes—and modern English nation-state. (Taylor 318)

The Early Modern Era was coming to the greenwood, and with it, a shift in leadership structure from a natural consensus-based structure to the consolidation of power in one powerful absolutist leader. As such, in many ways, the Robin Hood portrayed by the early ballads was a leader for the future, unfit for the feudal society from which he emerged. The development that took place in England, with consolidation of power in the hands of an absolutist monarch, mirrors the society Robin has created in the greenwood. Unfortunately for Robin, the construct he created in the greenwood was built on and mirrored after a social construction that in its very nature would eventually demand Robin's subjugation to the English king, reducing the famous outlaw to nothing more than carnivalesque entertainment for Queen Catherine of Aragon and her ladies.

Chapter 2

Urban Robin Hood

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
Then the whining schoolboy with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school: and then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow; then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden, and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble 'reputation'
Even in the cannon's mouth. (*As You Like It* 2.7.139-153)

'All the world's a stage' and 'one man in his time plays many parts' certainly rings true for Robin Hood during the seventeenth century. The medieval ballads portrayed Robin Hood as a leader suited for the future: an absolutist ruler who, much like Henry VIII, gathered to his person the ruling power of his domain and established himself as a northern magnate in absolute control of the greenwood. Unfortunately for Robin, the northern magnates among whom he established himself were soon subjugated under the monarchial power in London and he lost his freedom. Robin's fear of King Edward, after his return to the greenwood, his concurrent discomfort in the greenwood, and eventually the impelling force of urban London on his character, are all signs emblematic of a more general development forming in the seventeenth century ballad tradition. For although, in the stories, Robin's physical self returns to the greenwood after his stay in London, Robin's spirit – the essence of the medieval Robin Hood

– remained in the city as an urbanized shell of its former natural self. In London this 'shell' was soon discovered, adopted, and adapted by innovative London-based balladeers, hack-writers, hawkers, and printing houses. Fully immersed in the creative climate of the London broadside tradition, Robin's 'acts' soon amounted to much more than seven.

Patricia Fumerton has shown that during the seventeenth century "viewers or listeners of ballads saw or heard them depending on where they just happened to be walking" (16). Asserting that different people with different interests inhabited different areas, like the bookstall, the marketplace, the alehouse, or the scaffold, Fumerton claims that "different kinds of ballads would certainly be peddled at those different places. Ballads celebrating community and homosocial pleasures would be more saleable at the alehouse…whereas 'good-night-ballads'…were the favorites at scaffold scenes" (16). When looking at the audience for the Robin Hood ballads it is impossible to define a single unified audience for the material; the expansion of a tradition for such a diversified audience would eventually lead to a diversification of the tradition itself. One particularly interesting development ushered in by the broadside tradition is the addition of extraneous material during the late sixteenth- and the seventeenth century.[5] Towards the end of the sixteenth century, with the arrival of the popular broadside ballad, consistency in the Robin Hood legend started to change. Robin's story was repeated and repeated over and over again, in cheaper and cheaper and continuously developing and altered formats, in several price ranges and multiple versions, and for an ever expanding and diversified audience. "Socially," over the course of the seventeenth century, "Robin became all things to all men. At one end of the range he acquired breeding, even became the outlawed Earl of Huntington, while at the other he engaged in rustic combat with butchers, tinkers and beggar. In its earliest written versions the legend was already contaminated. Now it was to be adulterated" (Holt 155).

Offering some structure to this "adulterated" tradition, James Holt loosely divides the Robin Hood material during the Early Modern Era into two distinct periods. From the time of Henry VIII (who ruled from 1509-47) and until about 1700 the tradition is characterized by the accession of new material to the old tradition. This accession came in two rounds. During the sixteenth century these additions primarily happened in the playhouses, brought on by opportunistic playwriters like Anthony Munday, who wrote two plays about the "Earle of

[5] Although there are differences between the early and later medieval texts, they are for the most part small and insignificant. Knight and Ohlgren in *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales* refer to them as changes which "cast light on how the earlier material was understood" (80) rather than conscious attempts to adapt the story in a specific direction.

Huntington". Then, from the beginning of the seventeenth century, the tradition was taken over by the London printing houses and the broadside ballad tradition. After 1700 the tradition for the most part stops adopting new impressions and focuses more on presentation: "Repetition [has] overtaken invention," as Holt puts it (172).

This chapter focuses on the emergence of the earliest broadside ballads, from the beginning of the seventeenth century, and until the process of adding extraneous material to the legend slows down around the end of the century. The first part of this chapter deals with the emergence of 'prequels' to the tradition, that is, ballads concerned with Robin's early history and the expansion of his crew. The second part then discusses how one event in the traditional material, namely the archery contest, could be taken and adapted in different directions, depending on whom the adaptation was written for. Finally, the third section of this chapter discusses the amalgamation of the medieval and the early modern ballad traditions and looks at Robin's ability to execute his role as a symbol of resistance in an early modern world. In particular, this chapter will show that the urbanization of Robin's legend – that Robin's ballads were adopted by the major London printing houses and printers like Thackeray, Clarke, Passinger, Coles, Vere, and Wright and placed firmly within a commercialized system and context – contributed greatly to its expansion, not only in terms of volume and distribution, but particularly in terms of how the story itself expanded and developed. Simultaneously, questioning the effects of transferring Robin from the natural zone and into the urban zone, this chapter aims to substantiate the effects of the urban contamination brought on by the broadside tradition. Responding to Francis J. Child who called parts of the Robin Hood broadside tradition for "this foolish ditty" (III, 218) and to Dobson and Taylor's claim that several of the broadsides show "a complete lack of literary merit," at one point referring to them as "extreme and implausible attempt[s]" at balladeering (*Rymes* 176), this chapter will investigate how the urban contamination affects Robin's ability to exercise resistance against oppressive characters or tendencies in the broadside ballad culture.

The urban contamination of the broadside tradition is in itself fascinating and can be understood by looking, not at the text itself, but by glimpsing at "the half-hidden cultural transactions through which great works of art are empowered" (Greenblatt 4). In *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988) Stephen Greenblatt introduced the concept of 'social energy'. He writes that:

> The "life" that literary works seems to possess long after both he death of the author and the death of the culture for which the author wrote is the historical consequence,

> however transformed and refashioned, of the social energy initially encoded in those works…We identify *energia* only indirectly, by its effects: it is manifested in its capacity of certain verbal, aural, and visual traces to produce, shape, and organize collective physical and mental experiences. (Greenblatt 6)

Greenblatt uses *energia* as understood by the Greek rhetorical tradition and compares it to words or concepts with the ability to cause "a stir to the mind". Understood this way, social energy is created in a discursive forcefield, when discourses clash against one another and creates friction. Greenblatt's "social energy" and its focus on discursive friction reinvigorates and strengthens both Mary Slattery and Theodore Adorno's realist theories of dissonance, which considered a work of art as 'conceived by the subjective expression of a social antagonism'. By extracting the general antagonism of the early Robin Hood legend and transferring its *energia* metatextually, freed from temporal restrictions, the broadside tradition is infused with the same social criticism with which the older ballads were imbued; or, as Greenblatt explains it: "collective beliefs and experiences were shaped, moved from one medium to another, concentrated in manageable aesthetic form, [and] offered for consumption" (5). This chapter claims that while this transformation, the commercialization of the ballad tradition, proved detrimental to Robin's character, contaminating him to the extent that he no longer fully belongs in the natural greenwood, it also made it possible for the legend to retain Robin's antagonistic traits and transfer his symbolic status as a representative of resistance against oppression into the Early Modern Era.

The Prequels: Robin's History and the Expansion of his Crew

Around the middle of the seventeenth century a tall young man, fifteen winters old and carrying the name of Robin Hood, strolls into the city of Nottingham. He is both proper, stout and bold, and has travelled to the city "with the general for to dine" ("Robin Hood's Progress to Nottingham" 8). Upon arriving in Nottingham this young Robin Hood meets fifteen foresters who, after Robin approaches them to ask about a shooting match, ridicule the young man "That's not able to draw one string" (ibid 18). In response Robin challenges the foresters to a bet, claiming that he is capable of hitting "a mark a hundred rod, / And […] cause a hart to dye" (ibid 21-22). The foresters accept and Robin kills the heart, but the foresters denies him the prize:

"The wager's none of thine," then said the foresters,
"Although thou best in haste;
Take up thy bow, and get thee hence,
Lest wee thy sides do baste." (ibid 39-42)

Robin initially listens to the foresters, but an ominous change of the mood foreshadows what is to come. Walking across the field Robin smiles and laughs, and it quickly becomes apparent why. Having put some distance between himself and the foresters the ballad takes a turn for the macabre. Robin draws his bow and quickly shoots down fourteen of the fifteen foresters with his broad arrows.[6] Robin keeps the last forester alive for a moment, but only so that he can call out to him and gloat. "You said I was no archer […] But say so now again," (ibid 55-56) Robin shouts, before splitting his head in two with another arrow and escaping into the forest.

"Robin Hood's Progress to Nottingham" is the first broadside ballad when organizing Robin's legend in narratological order rather than by year of publication.[7] The ballad describes how Robin became an outlaw at a young age, arguably one of the most striking omissions in the early legend, and is likely produced in prequel mode to explain how Robin came to find himself in the forest. Stephen Knight has comments that in the medieval ballads the outlaws "are, just like the deer, a part of this natural world, at ease in the forest, not hoping always to leave it to resume their lives. The outlaws are elemental forces, part of the forest, one of the dangers that those who impose laws from afar must face," (20) giving the outlaws an almost metaphysical existence. It is possible that a seventeenth-century ballad audience rejected the more medieval and supernatural explanation, along the lines of "elemental force" and "part of the forest," as the seventeenth century saw multiple attempts at explaining how the outlaws first came to be in the greenwood. More likely, a crafty London printer saw financial potential in the expansion of Robin's ballad tradition and hired a professional ballad writer to construct Robin's prequel story. Either way, the result was an extensive expansion of Robin's legend.

Despite its early modern origin, the structure and language of "Progress to Nottingham" is somewhat reminiscent of the medieval ballads (Knight and Ohlgren 507). It lacks the internal rhyme of the third line common in the later broadsides written by professional balladeers, for the most part only rhyming the second and the fourth line, and thus resides much closer to the

[6] The broad-headed arrow was used for felling sizeable game, including men (Knight and Ohlgren 511).
[7] Only the strange and exceedingly gentrified broadside "Robin Hood's Birth, Breeding, Valour, and Marriage" has any real claim to an earlier narrative position in the legend. Joseph Ritson, for instance, places it right before "Robin Hood's Progress to Nottingham".

structure of the medieval ballads. “Progress to Nottingham” also utilizes repetition as a key element, a common sign of oral tradition. In the fifth and the sixth stanza and in the eleventh and the twelfth stanza significant parts of the first is repeated in the second. The use of repetition is also apparent inside specific stanzas; in the ninth stanza, after Robin’s arrow has hit its mark, the ballad continues: “the hart did skip, and the hart did leap, / and the hart lay on the ground” (35-36). In terms of language the ballad is not as wordy or theatrical as some of the later broadsides, primarily using common words and imagery.

Even so, “Progress to Nottingham” is clearly a seventeenth-century ballad. While the story in the medieval ballads start in the greenwood, a common trait in the early modern material is a relocalization of the observer from within the forest to a position outside of the forest; a form of a rural or urban relocalization. This change of perspective showcases a general trend where, rather than encountering Robin in the forest, he emerges from the forest and meets the audience in a rural or urban setting. At the end of the ballad, bracketing this development, Robin “took up his noble bow, / And is gone to the merry green wood” (69-70) while we are left behind in the field outside of Nottingham. In a sense, the structure of the medieval Robin Hood ballads is retained, as Robin enters, engage in, and leaves a rural setting. However, the shift of perspective from natural to rural – that the reader no longer follows Robin around – is a clear sign of the ballad tradition taking a turn towards a more modern affiliation.[8]

Another interesting development in “Progress to Nottingham” is the figure of authority Robin rebels against. Robin’s brawls with the Sheriff of Nottingham has long since gone into history as one of the best-known protagonist-antagonist relationships in literature. Granted, Robin also frequently quarrels with evil abbots, monks, merchants and other figures of authority, but his run-inns with the Sheriff remain to this day the chief conflict. In “Progress to Nottingham” a new group of authority figures have suddenly made their way into the legend. The emergence of the forester as an antagonist is particularly interesting considering Anthony Pollard’s discovery that the medieval Robin Hood, more than anything, resembled a forester turned poacher and highwayman. The story in “Progress to Nottingham” would work just as well if Robin had encountered the Sheriff or an Abbot, accompanied by fourteen of their men. However, Robin encounters the foresters, and although the encounter may initially seem strange, it fits well in a larger context of anti-forester spirit of the time. The anti-forester

[8] This lack of “a return to the forest” is common in other ballads as well. “Robin Hood Rescues Three Young Men” ends in a field outside Nottingham, “Robin Hood’s Birth, Breeding, Valour, and Marriage” ends strangely with the violent intrusion of the narrator, while “Robin Hood and Maid Marian” ends in a tavern or pub, also with the narrator, to mention but a few examples.

tendencies in balladeering did not suddenly appear out of nowhere. Paul Hamilton raises an interesting question in his essay "Reconstructing Historicism" when he asks whether or not historical and aesthetic discourses are opposed in their tasks or offer each other mutual support. His answer, in short, is that they offer mutual support, because "historicism finds that it needs its discarded ally [aesthetics]" in order to rediscover "an understanding of aesthetics…that restores literature's credibility as a power to regenerate our threatened historical sensibility" (386). While the anti-forester tendency in "Progress" is evident, its aesthetic relevance is difficult to understand without first considering the contemporary historical discourse.

In chapter one we touched briefly on the resurgence of the traditional forest administration under Henry VII and the effects this had on the criminalization of poaching. The revival of the forest administration and the authorities' renewed focus on protecting its wild game, quickly turned poaching from a traditional way of self-supplication and pleasant pastime into criminal activity. The forester, the local representative of the forest administration, who previously could look past the local population's exploitations of the king's forest, was now forced to assume a more authoritative role and prosecute such infractions. It is probable that such a tendency would reflect itself in the ballads of an outlaw famous for resisting unjust oppression, effectively transforming the object of Robin's resistance into a group of foresters.

In the Robin Hood broadside tradition – infused by the friction of the early modern representation of the forester, intersecting with the traditional understanding of Robin Hood as a forester turned poacher and highwayman – a word such as 'forester' would certainly be imbued with Stephen Greenblatt's social energy. In "Progress to Nottingham" the social antagonism reveals itself as Robin take up "his noble bow, / And his broad arrows all amain, / And Robin Hood he laught, and begun to smile, / As hee went over the plain" (43-46). Why does the young man smile after having been bullied by the foresters? Allowing us to reinvigorate both Robin and the ballad with the 'life that literary works possess', the broadside releases the temporal free frictional dissonance of social criticism embedded in the Robin Hood ballad tradition. Robin's role as a representative of resistance against unjust oppression is revealed as he kills all fifteen foresters. "Robin Hood's Progress to Nottingham" shows an almost unparalleled ability in the broadside tradition to adapt and expand itself to the time and social setting in which it resided. Clearly a modern ballad, "Progress" still manages to retain Robin's antagonistic position from the medieval material and transfer it into a different era. Still conveying resistance against authority, but clearly channelling that resistance towards a contemporary antagonist. It is a fascinating accomplishment, dependent upon Greenblatt's social energy.

In the end it is the transference of the social energies from the medieval legend and the implementation of these same energies in a new early modern narrative that allows "Progress to Nottingham" to retain, and not only retain but add to, the traditional Robin Hood narrative, while simultaneously expanding his story beyond the traditional material. By releasing the legend from a strict medieval narrative tradition, and rather reading it as a set of social energies that transcends temporal barriers, Robin's story can manifest itself fully in the early modern era. The broadside tradition found its 'oppressive antagonist' when the revival of the forest administration and the renewed focus on protecting wild game started making criminals of previously law-abiding citizens. When Paul Hamilton wrote that "whatever is revelatory and exciting is actually generated by a discursive function typical of its age" he demonstrated that the aesthetic traded in its traditional cultural endorsement of the exceptional and instead announced the current location of a particular form of cultural endorsement (395). The addition of extraneous material to the legend function as a catalyst for the tradition's inherent social criticism; it is the social energy embedded in the forester-terminology, not the aesthetic defamiliarization of the forester and the dissonance it causes but the *friction* caused by the clash of these traditional and modern understandings of a forester, which allows us to finally discover and fully reveal the social criticism of "Robin Hood's Progress to Nottingham".

When Robin first meet Little John five years have passed since Robin's escape from Nottingham and the slaying of the fifteen foresters. The young man, now "about twenty years old," ("Robin Hood and Little John" 1) has gathered around him a following of bowmen and taken up residency in the greenwood. One day Robin informs his men that because the previous fortnight has been very quiet he will venture abroad and try to find some sport for the outlaws to enjoy. "They happened to meet on a long narrow bridge" (ibid 26) the ballad informs us, and thus begins one of the most famous scenes in ballad tradition: Robin Hood and John Little's first meeting and fight on the narrow bridge in the greenwood. "Robin Hood and Little John" presents "a central event in the myth which has remained dear, even obsessive, in the hearts of theatrical and film redactors over the centuries" writes Knight and Ohlgren (476-77). The story is well known: the bridge is narrow and one of them must turn around to let the other pass; neither one budge and they fight with quarterstaffs; Robin loses and is knocked into the water. Then, once ashore, Robin calls his men by blowing his bugle horn. The outlaws quickly arrive, and seeing their leader wet from top to toe, threaten to duck John Little in the river in retaliation. Robin, however, stops them because "he is a stout fellow" (101) and invites John to join the outlaws; the invitation is immediately accepted. The outlaws then feast and clothe John "from top to the toe / In garments so green, most gay to be seen, / And gave him a curious long bow"

(139-41). William Stutely ironically names the huge man Little John, before, finally, when night comes, the company retires from the greenwood to their caves, Little John formally one of Robin's men.

In what came to be known as "Robin meets his match" ballads, professional and creative balladeers found a medium through which they could expand Robin's story whilst also making a profit for themselves. The expansion of Robin's crew drew much attention from the professional balladeers and seems to have been exceedingly popular with the contemporary audience. The number of surviving texts and the amount of characters who have received a Robin meets his match ballad attest to their popularity: William Scarlet, Allin a Dale, Maid Marian, the Pinder of Wakefield, the Curtal Friar of Fountains Abby, and Little John all have their very own recruitment ballad. According to the broadside itself, "Robin Hood and Little John" is, "An Account of their first Meeting, their fierce Encounter and Conquest. To which is added, Their friendly Agreement, and how he came to be call'd Little John" (EBBA33991). The first registered ballad with this name is dated back to 1624, which Knight and Ohlgren considers a possible date for an original version of this text (476). Even so, the language and structure of the ballad suggests a date later than 1624, and it is likely that even though the ballad may have first appeared in 1624 modernized versions kept hitting the marked as London's hack-writers and eager printers had their way with the legend throughout the seventeenth century.

If "Robin Hood's Progress to Nottingham," despite being produced and printed in the early modern era, retained the more traditional oral ballad structure from the late middle ages "Robin Hood and Little John" shows "every sign of having been produced by a professional ballad writer" (Dobson & Taylor, *Rymes* 165). In particular, the modern compliment of an internal rhyme in the third line, in addition to the traditional rhyming of the second and the fourth line, strongly suggests a modern origin for this version of the ballad. An updated vocabulary also argues for a more modern origin. Knight and Ohlgren draws attention to how certain words and phrases in the ballad carry signs of the hack-writers common later in the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century ballad tradition. They mention *passionate fury and eyre*, line 71; *I prithee*, line 78; *accoutrements*, line 106; *And did in this manner proceed*, line129; and *the whole train the grove did refrain*, line 152 as examples of a more early-modern hack-infused lingo (476). Additionally, *abroad will I go*, line 19; *Nottingham play*, line 29; *a staff will I take*, line 44; *thrashing of corn*, line 65; and *live here like esquires, or lords of renown*, line 146 all echo of modernization and urbanization. The ballad also carries strong traits of the urban relocalization mentioned in relation to "Progress to Nottingham". In particular, stanzas 1-3, parts of 16, 37, 38, and stanza 39 contain urban components, chiefly in

the form of the intrusion of the narrative voice: "How they came acquainted, I'll tell you in brief, / If you will but listen a while; / For this very jest, amongst all the rest, / I think it may cause you to smile" (10-13). The intrusion of the narrative voice is one of the clearest signs that the ballad tradition has donned itself in modern commercialized garments and ventured further away from the traditional ballads of the medieval era. The intrusion of the narrator and the interruption this causes reveals a form of dissonance triggering our curiosity. However, this time it is a different kind of dissonance that emerge; one dependent upon the rivalry for attention between the natural aesthetic tradition and urban modernity.

Keeping the intrusion of the narrator in mind, if we return for a second to *Shakespearean Negotiations*, in his introduction, Greenblatt proposes an interesting analytical proposition. He says that while "sustained, scrupulous attention to formal and linguistic design will remain at the center of literary teaching and study" we should attempt to look "less at the presumed center of the literary domain than at its borders, to try to track what can only be glimpsed, as it were, at the margins of the text" (4). Greenblatt's methodology is an interesting combination of new criticism's focus on close reading, while also accounting for literature's position in a socio-historical milieu. For while 'glimpsing at the margins' undoubtedly demands close attention to the text itself, it also places the scholar and critic at the edge of text, so to speak, in prime position to sneak a peek outside these same margins. It is in the combination of these two perspectives the intrusion of the narrator reveals its true motive.

Many of the new broadside ballads were made specifically to draw the attention of nearby listeners to the hawkers, pedlars, and street performers attempting to make a living, singing or selling the ballads in pubs, taverns and on street corners. The pedlars and performers could buy cheap broadsides from the London printing houses and then hawk or perform them around London or other urban centres and villages around England. A note at the bottom of "Little John," for instance, instructs whomever buys the broadside that it was "Printed by and for W. Onley, and are to be sold by the Booksellers of Pye-corner and London-bridge" (EBBA33991). Similarly, at the bottom of "Progress to Nottingham" a note states that the broadside is "Printed by and for A. Wilbourn, and sold by the Booksellsers of Pye-corner and London Bridge" (EBBA33734). These performers and salesmen depended upon the attention of their audience and customers for their income, and drawing attention to themselves and their wares was an important part of the increasingly commercialized and mercantile process surrounding the trade. The three introductory stanzas in "Little John" and the intrusion of the narrator is also the intrusion, not only of modernity, which we saw revealed structurally in the rhyming pattern, but of the modern cash-nexus which would come to dominate print culture.

When seen like this, these stanzas are, for all intents and purposes, more like an introduction designed to draw attention to the performance of the broadside, and less a part of the actual ballad. The intrusion of the narrator, as such, reveals that a macroeconomic change is taking place in the broadside ballad tradition. A change where the performance and production of ballads slowly moves into an urban economic sphere, further away from its natural cultural and historical inheritance.

By reinventing the Robin Hood tradition in a new and modern macroeconomic setting the printing houses and ballad hawkers made history a function of money. In the process the aesthetic discourse lost its historic value and significance in the ballad tradition, conceding its place to financial considerations. In the medieval ballads Robin's 'social energy' depended upon the friction created when the natural aesthetic met with the rural or the urban; in "Little John" commercialization of the ballad has killed this friction, which should have been present in Robin's battle with the outsider John Little. One sentence that shows this process of modernization and commercialization, and its concurrent effect on the ballad tradition, is Robin's exclamation towards John that he will "show you right Nottingham play" (29). Initially it seems strange that Robin, who lives in the greenwood and represents the true essence of the outlaw, does not threaten John with 'greenwood play'. However, an important trait of the broadside ballad tradition is a commercialized and complex intertextuality. Rather than attempting to retain historic accuracy, the professional balladeers sought to establish the ballads in an intertextual relation to one another. By reading "Little John" in relation to "Progress to Nottingham," Robin's "Nottingham play" statement immediately gains significance. We saw above how Robin travelled to Nottingham to participate – or play – in the King's archery competition but ended up killing fifteen foresters who insulted him. Read in light of his past activities in Nottingham, Robin's commentary should sound more ominous than it does. Robin tells John that if he does not move off the bridge, he will put an arrow in him, just like he did with the foresters in Nottingham five years before. And yet, with one simple sentence, John disarms Robin's threat: "I'll licker thy hide, / If thou offer to touch the string" (32-33). By linking the ballads together like this, its writer made sure the ballad would fit in a greater rhizomatic structure, connecting the ballad to other Robin Hood ballads, each ballad drawing attention to another ballad, one ballad facilitating the purchase of another in an ever expanding rhizomatic structure. And while this intertextuality made the ballads more attractive for the increasingly popular garlands, which due to its size, could be sold for more money than the individual broadsides, it also disarmed Robin, defusing the potential social energy of the meeting between natural Robin and rural John.

Reading “Little John” intertextually quickly reveals another striking feature of this broadside: a broadside which presents one of the premier events in the Robin Hood ballad tradition. It is almost completely made up. Some key traits from the medieval tradition, like the outlaws’ livery and Robin’s bugle horn, are retained but for the most part the ballad contains very little traditional material. “The more the tales acquired the form of the popular ballad,” Holt writes, “the less accurately did they tend to preserve the original legend” (171) and emphasizes the creative process that took place inside and outside the London printing houses. Sacrificing tradition for inventiveness and creativity, the Robin Hood broadside ballad tradition flourished. However, the ‘flourish’ came at a cost. “The degree to which a text successfully erases its practical social function matches the degree to which it secures autonomy as a poetic, purely cultural, unmarketable object” claims H. Aram Veeser. “On its ability to sustain this illusion depends its privileged status in a zone that supposedly supersedes market values” (xiv-xv). But the Robin Hood broadside tradition did not reside in a zone which superseded market values. Rather, invested fully in a commercialized urban market economy, the broadside tradition sacrificed tradition for monetary gains. This rejection of tradition simultaneously terminated Robin’s position as a symbol of resistance, because it removed the potential for friction between the natural and the rural and urban. The broadside tradition claimed to provide the urban English population with a link to its aesthetic and historical past. But deeply affected by the new market economy and the adoption of traditional ballad culture into the London printing houses, and the concurrent production of new broadsides, both tradition and history were lost under a plethora of new and inventive popular broadside sheets.

By reinventing the Robin Hood tradition in a new and modern macroeconomic setting the printing houses and ballad hawkers made history a function of money. In the process aesthetics lost its historical value. With the introduction of the broadside tradition into an early market economy the ballad readership became depended upon someone’s ability to purchase the broadsides, either themselves or, at the very least, the ballad singers around them, in order to remain in contact with their historic English past. Ironically, the broadsides no longer announced the proper historical past and rather conveyed a modernized and disarmed reworking of the traditional stories. Many claimed, like Martin Parker, that they wrote and performed the true tale of Robin Hood. But their stories seldom carried much relation to the traditional material and were more often than not compilations of the invented broadside. Robin’s legend was expanding, but not always for the better. Rather than attempting to retain the traditional ballad material, the seventeenth-century ballad writers took Robin’s story and added freely to it, adapting their approach and material depending on who they were writing for. This reveals the

biggest dissonance of them all: the dissonance between the believed Englishness of the broadsides and their actual connection to a historical past. Robin's legend *was* expanding, but the expansion was not necessarily founded on reality or the aesthetic past. Rather, the broadside producers saw potential for financial acquisition and jumped at the opportunity, detaining Robin Hood in an urban setting, allowing the metaphorical shadows of urban commercialized ballad tradition to reach further and further into the greenwood. Whereas the ballads previously clearly belonged with Robin in the natural greenwood, their modernization, quite literally, shifted the perspective to a more urban position: whether a street corner in London or a pub in Nottingham. Regardless of where, the primordial origin of the broadsides was urban and commercialized, not natural and traditional, and conveyed an urbanized, commercialized, and disarmed, version of the Robin Hood legend.

Reworking a Tradition: The Archery Competition

The changing socio-economic climate in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth century altered the lines along which the Robin Hood tales were being handed down. J.C. Holt has written that the changes that took place "broadened and further diversified both the means of communication and the audience. This in turn affected the content of the [Robin Hood] legend" as "minor elements in the old stories were now developed into major themes" (155). One of the most iconic scenes in the traditional ballads, which became a major theme in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, is the archery competition from the fifth fit in *A Gest of Robyn Hode*. During the seventeenth century the scene appeared fully in two separate broadsides. In "Robin Hood and the Golden Arrow" the Sheriff attempts to lure Robin into a trap with an archery competition. Robin dresses up to avoid recognition, wins the competition, and humiliates the Sheriff. The other ballad, "Robin Hood and Queen Catherine," deals primarily with the pleasures and pastimes of the English monarchy.

Throughout "Robin Hood and the Golden Arrow" there is an interesting duality which presents itself as a tug of war between tradition and modernity. On one side, the broadside contains many of the modern and urban elements common in the seventeenth century broadside ballads. Structurally the broadside is clearly modern with its internal rhyme in the third line and relatively precise rhyming throughout. That it is quite short, at 133 lines (33 stanzas), is also consistent with the standards for broadside ballads. Additionally, Knight and Ohlgren has noted that the ballad contains some "fussy language," like, *tricking game*, line 15; *whateer ensue*, line 57; *They thought no discretion*, line 65; and *brave pastime*, line 101, (541) and while such

language is not unheard of in the traditional material it is much more common in the early modern broadsides. On the other side, the ballad discusses many topics reminiscent of the medieval Robin Hood ballad tradition. London remains a place for scheming and deceit, there is a distinct focus on clothes and livery and how they are representative of the wearers identity, we recognize the contest between the Sheriff and Robin Hood, and when we first meet Robin we do so within the frames of his traditional mini odyssey narrative.

When the ballad begins we meet the Sheriff of Nottingham about to depart for London. He is on his way to seek advice from the king on how to apprehend and deal with "that strong and sturdy thief" (4). The Sheriff however receives no advice from the king, only strict instructions to "Go get thee gone, and by thyself / Devise some tricking game" (13-14). The Sheriff is well aware of Robin's archery skill and knows that he considers himself the best archer in England. He also knows that Robin is no coward and therefore decides to host an archery competition to try and lure out Robin. He is certain that "when such matches were, / Those outlaws stout, without a doubt, / Would be the bowmen there" (23-25). The Sheriff even announces that a grand price, a silver arrow with a golden head, shall be given to the winner of the competition, further tempting Robin into making an appearance.

These first seven stanzas of the ballad are strongly influenced by the broadside tradition. Robin's antagonists have travelled to London before,[9] but we never travelled with them. Additionally, both Robin and Little John have visited and lived in rural and urban environments. In the fourth fit of *A Gest* Little John goes to live with the Sheriff, disguised as Reynolde Grenelefe, and we have already discussed Robin's experience in London with King Edward, but in all these intrusion into the urban the narrative began in the greenwood. From the natural greenwood environment we followed someone from the outlaw band who travelled into an urban environment, eventually returning to the greenwood. The first seven stanzas of "Golden Arrow" display a shift away from this dependency on the outlaws; it is now completely legitimate in a ballad about Robin Hood for the urban Sheriff, living in rural Nottingham, to travel to London without even involving the greenwood community.

As the ballad moves on, embedded into this urban broadside, is hidden a pleasant natural echo from the past. The second section of the broadside, consisting of lines 30-101, reminisce of the traditional medieval Robin Hood ballads. "Tidings came to brave Robin Hood, / Under the green-wood tree" (30-31) the ballad states and immediately transports us from rural

[9] A monk from St. Mary's Abbey, which Robin stops and robs, is on his way to London in the fourth fit of *A Gest* (1010). Later, the Sheriff himself travels to London in the sixth fit (1287).

Nottingham and into the forest. This transportation separates "Golden Arrow" form "Progress to Nottingham," where we as readers remained fixed in a rural environment which Robin travelled into and later escaped from. In "Golden Arrow," in the eighth stanza, rather than remain behind in the urban environment we are transported with the narrative to the greenwood, demonstrating a more complicated and modern narratological structure. With our transportation we also seem to bring Robin the news of the archery contest. The same moment we encounter the outlaws, Robin exclaims that he will partake in the competition. Though some of his men protest, claiming that it will be dangerous for them, Little John immediately devises a solution which allows Robin and his men to partake, while also remaining undetected: "Our mantles, all of Lincoln green, / Behind us we will leave; / We'll dress us all so several / They shall not us perceive" (50-53). Little John's solution echoes of the traditional ballads where the clothes literally made the man. By substituting their Lincoln green clothes for rural colours, the outlaws expect to be able to venture into the rural realm and remain there undetected. Having clad themselves in white, red, yellow, and blue clothes, four outlaws leave for the competition. Well disguised, Robin shoots while the Sheriff's men look for him, but they cannot find Robin nor any of the other outlaws. At one point they come close, when one of the guards shout "Yon man in red / In this place has no fellow" (84-84), but Robin's disguise holds up. The best archer in all of England, Robin easily wins the tournament and receives the price, the silver arrow with a golden head. However, before leaving, Robin overhears a disappointed Sheriff talk to his men about how (to his knowledge) Robin did not dare show himself at the contest: "I thought he would," the Sheriff says, "but, though he's bold, / He durst not now appear" (76-77). Having received his price Robin leaves with his men and returns to the greenwood.

When the third section of the ballad begins Little John is once again called upon to solve another one of Robin's problems. Safely back in the greenwood and holding his golden price, Robin remains unable to let go of the Sheriff's words. "All my care is," he exclaims, clearly frustrated, to his men, "How that yon sheriff may / Know certainly that it was I / That bore his arrow away" (102-105). The frustration Robin exerts is the bodily manifestation of the ballad's lack of social energy. John's plan has worked to well, the natural intrusion into the rural contact zone did not lead to a friction-filled confrontation with the urban Sheriff, and as a result, in an unexpected turn of events, Robin has lost his honor. Something must be done to inform the Sheriff that he has been fooled:

"This I advice," said Little John;
"That a letter shall be pend,

And when it is done, to Nottingham
You to the sheriff shall send."
[…]
"I'll stick it on my arrow's head,
And shoot it into the town;
The mark shall show where it must go,
When ever it lights down." (114-117, 122-125)

Again, Little John's plan works perfectly. The arrow is found and brought to the Sheriff who cannot understand how Robin fooled him: "When he [the letter] read," the ballad goes, "he scratched his head, / And rav'd like one that's mad" (128-29). With the Sheriff now well aware that it was Robin who won the competition, that he dared come out of the greenwood, and managed to fool the Sheriff, the ballad ends. Though, not as expected, in the greenwood, but in the city. In the final two lines the narrator once again intrudes on the story. "Attend, and hear the end" (132), he promises his audience, and we, of course, remain to listen while the outlaws trot back to the greenwood, for what he promises is nothing less than "the end / of honest Robin Hood" (133).

This ballad is very interesting when looking at the relationship between the traditional and the broadside material. Meredith Skura's reading of Robin Hood as a trickster character in the traditional material has already been rejected in the first chapter, because Robin rarely tricks his victims. He may tell them that he is someone he is not, or more commonly, as in the beginning of "Guy of Gisborne," not disclose his identity at all. But in the traditional material Robin rarely tries to trick anyone; tricksterism, in the Robin Hood ballads, is a modern invention. In the traditional material Robin's approach to a situation commonly involves different levels of force and violence. The archery competition in *A Gest*, for instance, fully exemplifies this. After hearing about the competition Robin gathers "seven score of wyght yonge men" (1151) and travels into Nottingham. Clearly expecting trouble, he tells his men to remain "with good bowes bent" (1159), ready to defend him should anything happen. As expected, the outlaws are detected and must flee (1181). While escaping, Little John is shot and immobilized (1205) and the outlaws are forced to take shelter in the castle of their friendly knight Sir Richard at the Lee (1238). The fifth fit of *A Gest* is a violent tale of Robin venturing heedlessly into a situation over which he has no control, trusting in his knightly bravery and the power of his men to get him out of trouble should anything happen. Comparing this story to its counterpart in the broadside material reinvigorates Meredith Skura's reading of Robin Hood as

a trickster character, as his contest with the Sheriff is clearly one of wits and not violence. Armed with John's newfound wits and disguises, the outlaws no longer require violence to defeat the Sheriff, because trickery keeps them from getting discovered in the first place. As such, with the intrusion of the broadside tradition, the ballad evolves from a violent medieval narrative where archers chase outlaws throughout the English countryside, to an early modern (perhaps even sophisticated) tale where the use of force is kept at a minimum as the urban way of trickery and deceit – the urban contamination – has reached the greenwood.

The third and final section of the ballad, the final eighth stanzas, introduces an interesting (and perhaps a little unexpected) dissonance into a tale. For even though Robin achieved his goal of winning the contest, as we have seen, he is not content. Simply tricking the Sheriff is not enough and he longs from the traditional confrontation where the Sheriff is violently defeated; the contrast with *A Gest*, where Robin did not get the prize but was forced into a confrontation, escaped, and thus retained his honor, is clear. In an ending that more than anything resembles the ending of the Arthurian romances, where public honor is the capital concern, Robin is once more forced back out of the greenwood. He ventures out of the greenwood and into the urban environment where he tries to force the confrontation which will restore his honor. However, the confrontation, at least in a medieval violent understanding, does not occur. For once again Little John's solution to Robin's problem is one of trickery and inventiveness rather than violence and confrontation. The outlaws never reveal themselves to the Sheriff. They dispatch their arrow and message, and although the message reaches the Sheriff, he never sees the outlaws and they never fight. The idea that the sheriff is left "chafing in his grease" (130) is a far cry from the ferocity of the medieval ballads where Robin's response to the Sheriff's trickery was an arrow through the head (Knight and Ohlgren 541). The climax of the ballad is an unfulfilling one, and Robin pays the price as the narrator returns to proclaim his end.

The final two lines of the ballad carries double meaning. On one side they clearly state that there is more to come, as Robin's story lives on. New broadsides will be printed, new peddlers will carry them around England, the machine that is the London printing industry cannot be stopped. Also, since "The Death of Robin Hood" usually followed this ballad in the garlands, the lines also emphasize the intertextuality of the broadside tradition. But there is a more metaphorical ending taking place here. Robin is no longer capable of adhering to the traditional medieval values which he valued so strongly in the early tradition. Twice he tried forcing a confrontation with the Sheriff, and twice he failed. The traditional material tries endlessly to break through the modern broadside tale, attempting to force the confrontation

between the natural and the urban, but remains unable to do so. "Hear the end of honest Robin Hood" echoes ominously of a fare graver ending than just that of Robin Hood himself; it is a sign and a confirmation that the early modern age has taken over the greenwood and that the corrupting powers of London have made their way into Robin's boughs. 'The end' is not just of Robin Hood, but of the entire medieval value system as the early modern era draws ever closer. The ballad has received new liveries, so to speak, and much the same way Robin surrendered his autonomy alongside his livery in the eight fit in *A Gest*, the tradition itself surrenders its medieval identity as it is donned by ballad writers and printers in an early modern suit and brought into the city. Devoid of its social energy, having lost the tug of war between the naturally aesthetic and the modern commercialized legend, modernity has taken over both the greenwood and the traditional greenwood narrative, enclosing it from both sides, both literally and metaphorically.

One more Robin Hood broadside has utilized the archery contest from *A Gest* as its basis. However, where "Robin Hood and the Golden Arrow" sought to remain within vicinity of the traditional Robin Hood legend and retained parts of the tradition (although arguably with little success), "Robin Hood and Queen Catherine" is a prime example of how ballad writers extracted concepts more than full narratives from the traditional ballads and adapted them for an early modern and urban audience. According to Knight, "Robin Hood and Queen Catherine" is "clearly a made-up ballad, drawing on several popular elements, constructed for an audience in…'lovely London', and in which Nottingham can be seen, perhaps in irony, as far in the north" (*Forresters MS* 53). Similar to how the ballad writer of "Robin Hood and the Golden Arrow" rewrote the archery contest from an urban perspective, the ballad writer of "Robin Hood and Queen Catherine" tries to rewrite Robin in an aristocratic, maybe even royal, context.

Knight and Ohlgren have referred to the ballad as "a Robin Hood adventure within the framework of the court of Henry VIII" (563) and from the very beginning a connection is made between Robin Hood and the royal authority. The two opening stanzas inform us that Robin has stolen some gold from the king's harbingers; gold he later gives to Queen Catherin as a gift. No explanation is given as to why Robin gave the gold to the Queen, and no reason is offered as to why her royal highness would want the king's gold in the first place. The passage carries similarities to lines 129-136 in Martin Parker's "A True Tale of Robin Hood," where Robin and his men encounters the king's men, "set them upon, / And did their gold obtaine," and it is possible that the composer of "Queen Catherine" utilized this earlier ballad construct to legitimize the relationship between Robin and the Queen. Paul Goring has found that during this time "the classics were revered, but were nonetheless treated very loosely and inventively

when they served as inspiration for new writing" (72). Although Goring speaks primarily of the heroic poems and epics, one can assume that the trend was general; in the intertextual world of broadside balladeering such blatant copying would not be uncommon. Parker's tale makes no mention though of the queen, and the passage as such remains at best a poor attempt at introducing the ballad into an aristocratic setting.

It is important to note that even though this registers as a gentrified ballad, in it, Robin is not a gentrified character. Despite his clear connections to the aristocracy and the royal family, Robin is still just an outlaw robber and excellent archer.[10] And not only is Robin not gentrified, he is not even necessarily the main character. After the initial mention of Robin and his relationship to the queen, the ballad focuses on the relationship between King Henry and Queen Catherin who were "to th' gardens gon, / To passe the time away, / And lovingly with one another / Till evening they did stay" (10-12). During their time in the gardens a bet is made to see whose archers are the best. Thus, rather than being the main character, as he was in "Golden Arrow," where the whole premise of the archery competition was to capture Robin, in "Queen Catherine," he plays a more peripheral role as one of the Queen's archers. And while his contribution to the broadside remains important, the ballad is first and foremost a battle of wits between the two monarchs and deals with the pleasures and pastimes of the English monarchy.

The change of focus in this ballad, from a primarily rural to a more aristocratic setting, is emblematic of a greater and more general transition that took place in England during the seventeenth century. Even though a great portion of the English population still worked on the land and the quality of the annual harvest carried significance for the welfare and wealth of the nation, towns and cities were growing quickly in both numbers and size. Over the course of the long eighteenth-century London's population doubled in size to about one million and the population of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland rose from about 9 million in 1688 to around 14,5 million in 1789 (Goring 2). Even though England was still divided according to a rigid social hierarchy in which division between the different social ranks were keenly felt (Goring 2), communications between urban centers were developed and improved upon, making travel between rural and urban England easier. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century rural and urban England slowly but surely came closer and closer together.

[10] The only truly gentrified trait of Robin in this ballad is found in a 1663 garland, where the king pardons Robin and makes him "Earle of fair Huntington." This ending has not made its way into any of the other versions of the broadsides or garlands.

This union of the rural and the urban, as relating to the ballads, seen in both "Progress to Nottingham," "Little John," and "Golden Arrow," was not necessarily mutual. For the most part, some traits of the traditional ballads were retained, but generally, the transition was one where urban tendencies and impressions superseded the rural, and especially the natural. "It is notable that the forest is not named, and is soon left," (*Forresters MS* 53) Knight writes in his analysis of "Queen Catherine," while "London, with its well-known Finsbury Fields, is both the focus of action and place of production of this fine […] ballad" (*Forester MS* 53). The broadside displays many of the same traits "Golden Arrow" did – an archery contest between two opposing factions, a battle of wits over rather than violence, the cleaving of arrows and willow wands – and yet it is clearly different from its most obvious counterpart in the broadside tradition. Although "Golden Arrow" started in an urban setting, with the Sheriff visiting the king in London, the majority of the story took place in Nottingham. "Queen Catherin", on the other hand, despite a quick visit to the north, moves the majority of the broadside's narrative to London. Robin's peripheral role in the ballad is emblematic of the fading importance of the natural in the ballad tradition, and the increasing pressure and importance of urbanized material in a broadside production dominated by the London printing houses.

In the wake of this urbanization, Robin has lost some of his mythical presence. After he bet with the king Queen Catherin dispatches a page to the north to summon Robin. That the first yeoman the page encounters is able to escort him to Robin, clearly shows that some of the mystery surrounding the outlaws and their hidden whereabouts deep within the greenwood has disappeared (69-72). The natural greenwood is no longer as strange and dangerous as it once was. The intrusion of urban England into the north is completed during Robin and the page's conversation. "Queen Catherine […] bids you post to London towne" (77,79) the page tells Robin, who immediately responds by removing his Lincoln green mantle. The importance of one's livery to one's character is well documented at this point and Robin's response does not bode well for the outlaw: "Here take my mantle," said Robin Hood, / "A present for the queen" (87-88). Sufficient to say, the royal summons echoes ominously of Edward's visit to the greenwood, and carries the same function in terms of subjugating Robin to the monarchial power. The ballad initially tries to resist the urban inversion, echoing of the medieval ballad openings:

> In summer time when leaves grow green
> 'Twas a seemly sight to see
> How Robin Hood himself had drest

And all his yeomadrie. (93-96)

But to no avail. Urbanity quickly recovers and finalizes the inversion:

He clad himself in scarlett red
His men in Lincoln green
And so prepars for London towne, (97-99)

Robin's change of clothes not only shows his subjugation to the monarchical London. It also shows that even though the archery competition from *A Gest* is retained, the focus of the broadside is much closer to "Robin Hood and the Golden Arrow." The trickster narrative, the battle of wits between two parties, forms the basis for the central storyline in this broadside and Robin's change into a scarlet red costume signal's its coming. The same way the change of clothes in "Golden Arrow" signaled the outlaws intent to trick the Sheriff, Robin's change of livery, into his scarlet red urban attire, in "Queen Catherin" signals that trickery is once again in play. London has clearly retained its role as a place for trickery and deceit.

Resonating of the trickster narrative tradition, Queen Catherin has devised a plan and keeping Robin's identity hidden is crucial for the plan to work. Immediately after Robin's arrival in London, now fully satisfied that she will win the bet, Catherin goes to her husband's chambers "as fast as she can dree" (122). Upon arriving she shamelessly lies to her husband, claiming that "Ther's not an archer in all my court, / Will shoot against your men" (127-28). The King, well aware that only Robin Hood can beat his archers, is not surprised. Catherin then reveals why keeping Robin's identity hidden is so important:

"Double the wager," said the queen,
"Brave holden you shall bee."
"No, by my truth," then said our king,
"Woman's full of subteltie." (133-36)

Suspicious, and seemingly well versed in the deceitful nature of London and its inhabitants, the king remains cautious, clearly expecting some form of trickery. The archery tournament itself progresses as expected. The king's men shoot first and they shoot well. In fact, they shoot so well that even before the queen's archers have shot it seems for the onlookers that "the game is gon" (164). Only then, with the competition seemingly lost, does the queen finally manage to

convince someone to increase the value of the bet. Even though the king himself refuses, one of the onlookers, the Bishop of Hereford, decides to bet "all the money in [his] purse…It's neer a hundred pounds" (188, 192). This sudden interruption into the archery tournament solidifies the notion that the goal of the ballad is not to decide who has the finest archers, but rather to lure someone into forfeiting their property. Tempest, the king's bow bearer, shoots first and it is a fine shot. However, Robin then proceeds to cleave Tempest's arrow in three with this own (216), Midge the Millers son shoots within a finger's breadth of the bull's eye (219), before Little John finally cleaves the whole willow wand and wins the bet (224). The outlaw's shots are so fine that Tempest exclaims, almost ecstatic, that they must have been taught by Robin Hood himself.

In the wake of the contest, after Robin's identity is revealed, none of the aristocrats seem particularly startled. Even the Bishop of Hereford, who Robin has previously tied to a tree and forced to say mass, simply responds that had he known it was Robin who shot, he would not have bet one penny (223-26). Keeping the Marxist base- and superstructure theory in mind – that changes in the economic base structure has the ability to alter the social superstructure – Robin's actions towards the Bishop of Hereford are particularly revealing. In an uncommon turn of events, having heard the Bishop's tale, Robin wants to recompensate the bishop for his troubles in the greenwood and tries to give back half the bishop's gold. Little John, having retained his connection to the natural and avoided getting caught up in urbanized society, immediately exclaims "Now nay, now nay…Master, that may not bee" (261-62). Even though no money actually changes hands between Robin and the bishop, we still sense a change in the social construction. Not between Robin and the bishop, but between Robin and Little John. Robin's wish to recompensate the bishop finally cements his position as an urban, not a natural, character. Bringing about the argument from "Robin Hood and the Monk," where the two friends argue about the division of money after a shooting contest, the ballad ends with a conflict. Robin no longer understands that separation of the natural zone from the urban zone, being himself now fully integrated in the urban world. John, on the other hand, would never give gold to one of the king's men and cannot understand why Robin would either. As such, the friction in the ballad, the 'social energy' is still created by the intersection of the natural and the urban. However, unexpectedly, the intersection is not between the outlaws and the aristocrats, but between Robin and John: one being pulled towards the city, the other clinging to life in the greenwood.

An urbanized ballad, fit for a gentrified audience in lovely London rather than a rural readership in Nottingham far to the north, the first two and the last two stanzas of "Queen

Catherine" brackets the broadside in a modern cash-nexus setting. "Queen Catherine" opens with the word 'Gold' and ends with the argument between Robin and John. As such, the two initial stanzas of the broadside become more than simply a way to associate Robin with the Queen. They foreshadow Robin's development towards an urbanized character by revealing Robin's newfound propensity of giving gifts to representatives from the urban zone. Ultimately, the broadside adaptation of the archery competition turned out to be a modern ballad focused on tricksterism and the acquisition of money, not a violent exploration of archery skills, revealing how the broadside material was being altered and adapted to fit the audience it was being presented to. While the traditional material was commonly focused around some form of self-supplication for the outlaws, the early modern broadside ballads carried more diverse story lines focused on modern concepts like statesmanship, the acquisition of gold, or the retention of honor.

"Ty me to the main mast": The Amalgamation of Traditions

Despite many attempts, very few authors managed to implement the traditional material in a commercialized context and still retain Greenblatt's social energy, the *energia*, contained in the traditional material. Some decent attempts exist, and one particular broadside came very close to achieving this feat. What is particular about "Robin Hood's Fishing" is that while most of it is completely made up, like "Little John," it still clearly pays tribute to its heritage, seemingly well aware of its protagonist's long and traditional past, to the extent that it even shows early traits of postmodernity's focus on self-conscious use of earlier styles and conventions. It is in no way a traditional ballad; it is clearly influenced by capitalism's ideas of ownership, capital, and worker-employer relations, and yet it retains the natural aesthetic focus on the greenwood, so crucial in a proper traditional Robin Hood ballad, with such aptitude that it restores Robin's position as a symbol of resistance against unjust oppression.

"Robin Hood's Fishing" was entered into the Stationer's Register in 1631 and is clearly an attempt at providing Robin with a professional career. The name "Robin Hood's Fishing" is rather new and came with the discovery of the Forresters Manuscript; "in its broadside versions the ballad is usually called "The Noble Fisherman," with the subtitle "Robin Hood's Preferment," which implies something like 'professional advancement'" (Knight & Ohlgren 581). Throughout, the ballad has been seen by scholars and critics as not particularly well written and it has been called both "infantile" (Child III, 21) and "a bizarre metamorphosis" of the hero (Dobson & Taylor, *Rymes* 179). However, it is neither infantile nor bizarre. Rather,

"Robin Hood's Fishing" is one of the broadsides which best retains the structure and content of the traditional material, whilst transforming it into a modernized broadside with a commercialized and urban profile.

One clear example of how the ballad handles its transportation into a commercialized context is shown in how the ballad deals with the intrusion of the narrator, so common in the broadside tradition. The intrusion of the narrator has been shown to be one of the clearest traits of a commercialized heritage, and while the narrator is visibly present in the opening stanza of "Fishing" the first two lines also exhibits familiarity with the traditional material. "In sumer time when leaves grow green, / When they do grow both green and long," (1-2) echoes loudly of the opening of both "Robin Hood and the Monk,"[11] "Robin Hood and the Potter,"[12] and "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne."[13] Even though the ballad shows clear traces of a commercial narrator, unlike previous ballads where this narrator loudly and explicitly announced his presence, drawing attention to himself and his performance, this time he does so in a more harmonic way. He says that he will 'sing' his song, echoing pleasantly of the minstrels of old, and though his attempt at some lyrical language in line five and six shows a more modern approach to the material, we never fully feel the commercialized and urban intrusion. There is no sign of the internal rhyme in the third line, and, apart from some Grub Street like language in line 80 and 122, the ballad contains very straight forward diction and technique (Knight and Ohlgren 582). The author, like Robin and his men, is simply there, to sing his song with "merry good cheer" (6).

Despite the natural aesthetic opening, no broadside demonstrates capitalist views as clearly and openly as "Robin Hood's Fishing". Not only is the title and subtitle strongly influenced by the desire for professional progression; in lines seven to twelve Robin explicitly states that his primary goal is the acquisition of money.

"I am weary of the woods," said hee,
"And chasing of the fallow deer.

"The fisher-man more mony hath
Then any marchant two or three;
Therefore I will to Scarburough go

[11] "In somer, when the shawes be sheyne, And leves be large and long" (1-2).
[12] "In schomer, when the leves spryng, The bloschoms on every bowe" (1-2).
[13] "When shawes beene sheene and shradds full fayre, And leeves both large and longe" (1-2).

And there a fisher-man will bee." (7-12)

This mercantile variation on the traditional material at first seems a far stretch from Robin's natural greenwood heritage. However, as Knight and Ohlgren has shown, "this ballad, for all its nautical setting is in many respects structured like *Robin Hood and the Potter*" (582). In both ballads Robin moves from a greenwood setting and into a mercantile profession. In both ballads he handles the transition poorly, and yet, in the end, his abilities with the bow, his inherent cleverness, and his courage assures him both victory and wealth. The wealth is shared generously; his victories celebrated. And all though significant differences separate the two ballads they are more alike than critics have historically admitted.

Traditionally, when leaving on an adventure, Robin does so because of his impulsive adventurousness. Though his adventurousness in "Fishing" is less impulsive and the scope of his adventure is more significant than before, it is not the first time Robin plans ahead and prepares for one of his excursions. What separates "Robin Hood's Fishing" from the remainder of the ballad and broadside material is the *financial* preparation which goes into Robin's trip. In "Fishing," before he leaves, Robin calls his men to him and pays them their wages in advance. The payment is made in "gold and good monie," (16) not in new liveries and sustenance, significantly emphasizing the capitalist nature of the broadside.

Still, it is important to note that Robin has always paid his men, although the medium through which he assures their loyalty has changed. When Little John joins Robin's band he is given his livery "and other accoutrements fit for [Robin's] train" ("Little John" 106); the curtal friar is given "a noble" ("Curtal Friar" 144) when he joins the band, almost like a signing bonus, and is promised that "every holy day through the year, / Changed shall thy garment be" (ibid 145-46); the Jolly Pinder is promised "a livery twice a year" ("Jolly Pinder" 43). And upon closer scrutiny it is revealed that not even the existence of monetary wages is new in the tradition. When Robin tries to recruit the Jolly Pinder he informs Robin that "If Michaelmas day were once come and gone / And my master had paid me my fee, / Then would I set as little by him / As my master doth set by me" (ibid 45-48). The Pinder cannot join Robin because he is bound by contract to his current employer and has been paid a fee. He will not forsake his pinder craft, though he promises to join Robin once his contract is up. That the pinder is already a paid worker employed by someone else shows that a capitalist worker-employer structure already existed outside the greenwood; the Pinder's unwillingness to shy away from his agreement equally shows the power and importance of these structures. The difference in "Fishing," then, is not that Robin has started paying his men. The cash-nexus in which he now

operates was already a well-known and established trait in the society from which his men arrived. Rather, the difference resides in the extent to which this modern and urban cash-nexus has followed the merry men into Robin's domain and established itself in the natural greenwood.

Upon arriving in Scarborough Robin takes up residence with an old widow who owns a boat. The boat is likely inherited from her late husband who, after his passing away, left the widow in need of someone to work her boat. Robin, being both a gentleman and eager to learn the trade, accepts the position and promises the widow to "sarve yea well for years three" ("Fishing" 36). Just like the pinder, when he accepts "both meat and fee" from the widow (ibid 34), Robin commits himself to an employer and binds himself fully in a merchant capitalist structure. However, it quickly becomes apparent that, despite Robin's confidence in his own abilities, Robin is no fisherman. In fact, he is so bad at his new trade that the people he fishes alongside tells him that he has "begger'd the widdow of Scarburrough" (ibid 59). Robin soon discovers that the new modern trade-nexus into which he has inserted himself is neither as remunerative or as simple as he expected, and the initial allure of the early modern era quickly disappears as reality washes away idealism. The important thing to note here is that while Robin fails in his chosen trade in both "Robin Hood and the Potter" and "Robin Hood's Fishing," in "Potter" he chooses to be bad at his profession in order to gain access to the Sheriff, while in "Fishing" Robin is actually a second-rate professional. Having failed, not intentionally but because he lacks the required skills, unable to master his new profession, Robin soon withdraw into a retrospective state of mind. Just like he did in *A Gest,* when aristocratic life in London began taking its toll, he begins longing for his past life in the greenwood. "Were I in Plumpton Park againe," Robin says, "A fisher-man I nare would bee" (ibid 71-72). But Robin is not in Plumpton Park, and bound by his promise to the widow and the payment he accepted, this time, he cannot escape his responsibilities. His melancholy is evident, depicted brilliantly in the image of Robin sitting quietly in the fishing boat sharpening his arrows, uttering "Farewell to the green leaves on the tree" (ibid 70).

One day at sea, after the fishermen have finished fishing for the day, they spot a ship of French pirates coming towards them. The fishers are distraught, convinced that not only will they lose all their fish, but they will also be captured and made "prisoners into France" (ibid 87); "Not a man of us that they will spare" (ibid 88) exclaims the fishermen in despair. It is at this point Robin's vitality finally returns. Because Robin Hood is an idealized character, he always lives where and how the contemporary society imagined their own utopia would be. Having said that, that which society believed to be their utopia – in the early modern era a form

of merchant capitalism focused on the acquisition of money, particularly present in the cities – was not always their actual utopia. Thus, in the ballad, having realized that a professional career was not as lucrative as first believed, an inversion takes place. Initially "Robin Hood's Fishing" has allowed modernity and merchant capitalism to intrude on the ballad legacy and attempted to create a modernized version of the tradition. Robin leaves the greenwood seeking financial improvement as a professional fisherman, but quickly realize his mistake and is forced to accept his failure. This realization, that utopia does not exist at sea, has an interesting effect on the ballad. It forces an inversion of perspectives in the ballad: the traditional aesthetic ballad legacy suddenly begins to intrude on this modern interpretation of a Robin Hood ballad and attempts to retrace its steps back into the greenwood. Realizing the mistake of letting Robin leave, the forest, so to speak, begins to fight back. The greenwood tugs at Robin's mentality, unwilling to let go of him, and tries to pull him back into a traditional and familiar ballad structure. Eventually, something has to give, in this tug of war between tradition and modernity.

Robin is prepared for an attack; while the others have fished, he has sat in the boat and "scrap'd his broad arrows" (ibid 63). However, he is still on a boat and unable to find proper footing. When the pirates attack, clearly frustrated, he staggers around exclaiming that

> I would gladly give three hundred pounds
> For one three hundred foot of land.
>
> Quoth Symon, "Then do not them dread,
> Neither master do you fear.
> Give me my bent bow in my hand,
> And not a Frenchman I will spare." (ibid 91-96)

But Robin is not on three hundred foot of surefooted land, and without sure footing he cannot do anything to help his fellow fishermen. Though he is physically capable of fighting the French pirates, his new occupation as a professional fisherman has placed him at sea where his skills cannot be utilized. We recognize Robin's frustration as another incident of the bodily manifestation of Greenblatt's social energy. When a solution to the fishermen's precarious situation finally presents itself, it materializes as both the literal and metaphorical amalgamation of the traditional and the popular Robin Hood material. Robin tell the other fishers to "Ty me to the main mast / That at my marke I may stand fare" (ibid 101-102), asks "Whom shall I shoot at, thou master man" (ibid 109), and in those two short instances acknowledge that he cannot

beat the pirates on his own. His traditional set of skills are not suited for his fight with the pirates. He cannot stand steadily on the boat and thus cannot shoot his bow, and he does not know whom on the pirate ship to shoot at. In order to beat the pirates Robin *cannot* allow tradition to pull him back into the greenwood. Rather, he must literally tie himself fast in the early modern era, to the main mast specifically, and by doing so simultaneously accepts that in order to survive in this strange new commercialized world into which he has ventured he must adhere to the rules of this early modern society. Accepting that modernity is an integral part of society in the rural and urban zones, simultaneously accepting his unfamiliarity with modernity and his need for help, releases the social energy, allowing Robin to once again serve as the symbol of resistance against oppression the fishermen need.

This merging of tradition and modernity is discussed by Paul Hamilton in a very interesting paper dealing with the reconstruction of historicism. Hamilton writes that "the articulation of our *difference*…is precisely what allows us to translate Shakespeare into our own terms. […] Put simply, we agree to differ. But we can differ only by making Shakespeare party to our disputes, by historicizing him on one side of the argument or the other" (389).[14] What Hamilton suggests is that the only way we can fully understand a certain "term" – a position – is by accepting that different positions exist, and then engaging these opposite positions vigorously with our own arguments. Seen in light of the ballad tradition, what this means is that that each time the traditional ballad material attempt to retrace its steps away from a commercialized existence, it simultaneously accepts that there *is* a system of commercialization in the ballad tradition and thus validates its existence. And it is here the real power of "Robin Hood's Fishing" lies. Not in the rejection of either convention, but in the self-conscious acceptance of modernity's newfound place in society and its influence on the ballad tradition. "Robin Hood's Fishing" does not reject the existence of a commercialized broadside ballad structure, but it does not accept it uncritically either. The ballad allows the popular broadside tradition to go head to head with its traditional heritage – it allows the two conventions to fight it out – and then sees who comes out on top. Interestingly, the result is that neither comes out on top. Rather, a fascinating merging of the two traditions reveal itself. A merger which shows that while Robin Hood and his men clearly belong in the greenwood their existence outside the greenwood is equally possible, although, such residency outside the greenwood necessitate

[14] Hamilton's paper discusses the New Historical analytical approach in relation to Shakespearian poetry and plays.

conformity from Robin Hood and the other outlaws. They must tie themselves to the mast of the early modern merchant capitalist way of life.

Critical interpretation has commonly sought to establish ballads as being either in line with or not in line with the medieval Robin Hood tradition. F.J. Child called this ballad "infantile" and Dobson and Taylor called Robin's development in the ballad a "bizarre metamorphosis" because they felt that the new material did not resonate properly with tradition. "Robin Hood's Fishing" is so important because it rejects this position entirely and rather seeks to include modernity as an integral part of the Robin Hood canon. "What […] is the social energy that is being circulated?" asks Stephen Greenblatt, before answering his own question: "power, charisma, sexual excitement, collective dreams, wonder, desire, anxiety, religious awe, free-floating intensities of experience: in a sense the question is absurd, for everything produced by the society can circulate unless it is deliberately excluded from circulation. Under such circumstances, there can be no single method, no overall picture, no exhaustive and definite cultural poetics" (Greenblatt 19). Greenblatt's statement establishes an important precedence for the interpretation of the Robin Hood ballads; the separation is no longer one between tradition and modernity but, on the contrary, resides in the retention of both tradition *and* modernity, while simultaneously emphasizing the separation of life in the greenwood and the natural aesthetic traditions from the remainder of early modern English society and their focus on the acquisition of capital.

In the end, what sets "Robin Hood's Fishing" apart from the remainder of the broadside tradition, is the way it manages to expand the tradition into a mercantile setting without forfeiting any of the inherent conflict between the urban and the rural. The ballad manages to retain its *energia* because of a third kind of dissonance; one dependent, not upon the competition between modernity and tradition, but rather on the unexpected *merging* of these two conventions. "I had dreamed of speaking with the dead," says Greenblatt, meaning the literary voices of characters of old "and even now I do not abandon this dream. But the mistake was to imagine that I would hear a single voice, the voice of the other. If I wanted to hear one, I had to hear the many voices of the dead" (20).

Even thought they were, for the most part, completely made up, commercialized representations of Robin Hood had come to stay. However, unlike other broadside ballads, which blatantly extorted the traditional material for financial gains, "Robin Hood's Fishing" manage to balance the traditional and the commercialized aspects of the ballad. The *energia*, the friction created by the interplay between modernity and tradition, as they meet and fight in each other's contact zones, is retained, while at the same time allowing for contemporary

impulses. In the end it was the broadside traditions self-conscious use and acceptance of earlier styles and conventions, borderline postmodern in its exploration, which finally allowed Robin Hood to find a place in early modern society. The effect was nothing less than the production of an extremely popular ballad which appeared in an exceptionally large number of seventeenth-century broadsides (Dobson & Taylor, *Rymes* 179) and which critics would eventually come to accept as "a skilful reorientation of the outlaw tradition…more in tune with the spirit of the Robin Hood material than has been realized by those who have treated this ballad simply as an oddity" (Knight & Ohlgren 582).

'All the world's a stage' and 'one man in his time plays many parts' certainly rings true for Robin Hood during the seventeenth century. Spurred on by the eager hack writers and innovative printing houses of London, Robin took on a modern and urbanized form better suited for a new and diversified audience. This shift, from an aesthetic natural character and into an urbanized professional, in many ways mirrors the general development taking place throughout England. Even so, it is important to remember that while the ballad industry quickly developed and expanded Robin's tradition, the majority of the English population still lived in rural areas, farmed the land for a living, and for the most part had very little to do with the emerging industrialized urban areas (Goring 2). Throughout the seventeenth century the general population's connection with these urban areas came primarily from interacting with the thousands of pedlars whom carried, among other things, seemingly endless stacks of broadsides from the London based printing houses into rural England.

In many ways, despite the professionalization of the printing industry and the increasing pressure of capitalism and modernity on the traditional ballads, broadside ballads arguably remained "the most 'democratic' of all print forms, for they could be composed, printed, and circulated orally *and textually* by persons on the margins of literacy" (McDowell 173). Despite the London printing houses, hack-writers, and peddlers continuous attempts at developing Robin's tradition and introducing the altered material to a new audience, the traditional material never disappeared from the legend and remained an important counterweight to the new impressions and developments. Though its importance may not be as visible as before, the greenwood and its traditional way of life never gives in to modernity nor loses its prominence. Even so, we have seen how Robin, after returning to the greenwood from the court of King Edward, found himself unable to find peace and quiet in the greenwood. This is not because the greenwood and the tradition has changed. Rather, it spans from the idea that Robin no longer fits in the greenwood. "Men still knew Robin Hood," exclaims J.C. Holt when faced with the changing audience to the Robin Hood legend. "That was because Robin himself had been

changed" (153). Specifically, Robin Hood had changed into an urban character, which no longer fully belonged in the greenwood. His gentrified decent in "Progress," the language in "Little John," his focus on honor, trickery, and deceit in "Golden Arrow," his familiarity with the aristocracy in "Queen Catherine," and finally his desire for financial gains in "Fishing" all signal a significant change in the character of Robin Hood. For the legend to survive it had to adapt; this adaptation was finally found in the unexpected amalgamation of the traditional and the popular Robin Hood traditions.

When Dobson and Taylor called Robin's transformation for a "bizarre metamorphosis" of the hero they were only partly correct. The transmutation of Robin was not bizarre, and, more importantly, the true metamorphosis of the famous English outlaw had only just begun. Throughout the seventeenth century the Robin Hood ballads retained a significant part of their socio-cultural commentary, in particular, though not always particularly visibly, in the legend's insistence on upholding the separation between natural and urban England. In the coming centuries the metamorphosis of the hero and his legend did not slow down, and at the end of the Romantic Era a plethora of other mutations had taken palace. However, as we are about to see, "the romantic interest in the medieval past which Ritson foreshadowed and Scott expressed was concerned more with atmosphere than accuracy" (Holt 183-84). This Romantic focus on atmosphere over accuracy led to an interesting mutation of the traditional legend, as we shall see, best glimpsed "in the margins of history".

Chapter 3

Romantic Robin Hood

During the middle of the nineteenth century, a giant felt hat seven-feet high could be observed in the streets of London. Mounted upon wheels and tugged around the city it caught the eyes of observers throughout the Strand of London. The giant hat was a promotional experiment by one of the city's hatters, who had failed to draw sufficient business to his shop. Now he attempted to expand his business by shamelessly promoting his craft for all to see. In the rough economic climate of London during the middle of the nineteenth century several such innovative attempts were made to draw attention to oneself and one's business. The giant hat was perhaps one of the more experimental attempts, and yet it became, as described by Thomas Carlyle, "justly […] one of our English notabilities" (144). Even so, though Carlyle admits that the hat has a certain entertaining value, he also refers to the hat as "the topmost point as yet […] to which English Puffery has been observed to reach!" (144).

> The Hatter in the Strand of London, instead of making better felt-hats than another, mounts a huge lath-and-plaster Hat, seven-feet high, upon wheels; sends a man to drive it through the streets; hoping to be saved *thereby*. He has not attempted to *make* better hats, as he was appointed by the Universe to do, and as with this ingenuity of his he could very probably have done; but his whole industry is turned to *persuade* us that he has made such! (Carlyle 144)

To Carlyle the hat represents the development of English society, from a morally sound feudal past during the middle ages and into social anarchy in the 1840s. He discusses his thoughts on the subject in *Past and Present* (1843), loudly commenting on the condition of England question. The "English Puffery" to which Carlyle refer – the desire to convey a certain skill or condition which one did not necessarily possess – was a general trait in the nineteenth century commercialized London. Few texts conveyed this tendency as brilliantly as the first Robin Hood novel, Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819).

When Sir Walter Scott published his romance novel *Ivanhoe* in 1819, Robin Hood had recently been the subject of an antiquarian ballad revival led by Joseph Ritson and the publication of his extensive Robin Hood collection in 1795. The original collection consisted of thirty-three texts, arranged in roughly chronological order, each illustrated with a vignette by either John or Thomas Bewick (McNutt 164-65). As a ballad collection relating to Robin Hood, Ritson's work would not be surpassed until Francis J. Child published *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* at the end of the nineteenth century. Affixed to Ritson's collection was two critical sections relating to "The Life of Robin Hood" followed by some "Notes and Illustrations." In these "historical anecdotes of his life" Ritson first and foremost concerned himself with collecting all extant material relevant to that English outlaw, structuring and organizing it, "however inadequate" while accurately documenting his sources (McNutt 166).

Ritson's collection – his critical scholarly approach to Robin's historical past – and the reinvigoration of the Robin Hood genre paved the way for Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. But unlike Ritson, Walter Scott sought stability in his antiquarianism, in his meeting with the aesthetic history. Even so, despite Scott's more reticent approach to the Robin Hood material, there is an interesting duality in Scott's novel, balancing carefully, one might say, on the tip of a broad arrow. On one side, Scott recreates the world of the middle ages; the correctness of his belief in Robin's name to raise the English spirit "is vouched for by the phenomenal popularity of this first venture into medieval English history" (Dobson and Taylor, "The Legend" 176). On the other hand, Scott's novel also offers sharp critique of the Romantic society in which he wrote. Thus, although his novel initially comes across as a well written medieval romance, it is both politically charged and highly critical of the English puffery permeating through English society.

This third and final chapter, "Romantic Robin Hood," focuses on Walter Scott's romance novel *Ivanhoe* and investigates the reinvigoration of medieval traditions in nineteenth-century England. In *Ivanhoe* Sir Walter Scott brilliantly recreates a medieval world, and yet his rural and urban characters are decidedly modern and fallible, continuously set up as "comic figures with human limitations" (Sroka 649). In contrast, Scott establishes Robin Hood and the greenwood community as morally perfect beings, almost celestial in their appearance. By emphasizing this contrast between, on one side, Robin Hood and the greenwood community, and, on the other, Walter Scott's fallible characters, the chapter seeks to shows the inaccessibility of the natural greenwood zone to an urban nineteenth-century population blinded by medieval ideals. In the end this chapter challenges the somewhat derogatory proverb that "tales of Robin Hood are good enough for fools" (Dobson and Taylor, *Rymes* 291) and will

show that Robin Hood and his men should rather be understood, as they were, first for Keats, then for Knight, as "a totem of value by which the modern world can be tested" (Knight 108).

Ritson, Scott, and the Deflation of Chivalry

In 1795 Joseph Ritson began his outlaw biography *Robin Hood: a Collection of Ancient Poems, Songs and Ballads Now Extant, Relative to That Celebrated English Outlaw: to Which are Prefixed Historical Anecdotes of His Life* by stating that:

> It will scarcely be expected that one should be able to offer an authentic narrative of the life and transactions of this extraordinary personage. The times in which he lived, the mode of life he adopted, and the silence or loss of contemporary writers, are circumstances sufficiently favorable, indeed, to romance, but altogether inimical to historical truth. (iii)

Despite his somewhat humble (and quite demoralizing) introductory statement, Ritson dives straight into an "eclectic, eccentric, and exhaustive" exploration of Robin's origin (McNutt 165). In 'The Life of Robin Hood' and the accompanying 'Notes and Illustrations,' over 126 pages, he offers an in-depth analysis of Robin's life and activities, greatly influenced by Ritson's own political prejudice as a Jacobin (ibid 166). He included, for instance, the socialist idea that Robin took from the rich and gave to the poor, uncommon in Ritson's days, rather than his usual robbing of abbots, bishops, and the Sheriff of Nottingham, while completely excluding Robin's relationship to the noble knight Sir Richard of the Lee. Genevieve McNutt have recently called Ritson's collection a product of "an atheist and a political radical in an intensely politically charged period" and argues that Ritson "promotes a radical reading of the 'celebrated English outlaw,' one not lost on contemporary reviewers" (ibid 166).[15] Despite his political incentives, Ritson's radical antiquarian endeavors would soon prove exceedingly important to the publication of Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe.*

Ritson's approach to the ballad material fits into a more general trend of nineteenth-century antiquarianism where "the notion of the ballad as an ongoing tradition contributed to [a] process of adaptation and accretion; editors and poets alike felt that the ballad was malleable. Indeed, its *borders*, to borrow Scott's overarching image, were indistinct: it was an adaptive

[15] For a full discussion of Ritson's published materials see Genevieve T. McNutt: *Joseph Ritson and the publication of early English literature* (2018).

genre" (Cowan 53). We saw clear evidence of this adaptability and accretion in the seventeenth century, where broadside literature and print culture significantly expanded Robin Hood legend. In the eighteenth century, this development once again blossomed with the rise of antiquarianism and ballad collecting, before finally being romanticized in the nineteenth (Gray 4). The seventeenth-century hack writers and ballad printers had provided the coming ages with an exceedingly large amount of Robin Hood material, material with questionable traditional relations, which antiquarians like Ritson gathered, edited, critiqued, and finally published. In Life and Notes Ritson gathered every reference to Robin Hood he could find, carefully constructing the historical anecdotes mentioned in his title. However, while "The Life and Notes show us Ritson's method, its excellences and defects" they also "illustrate the weakness of the man as a critic" (Moreland 522).[16]

Although his critical skills were questionable, Ritson's antiquarian examinations were exceptional. Having gathered "the oldest manuscripts and sources he could find [displaying] amazing diligence in searching out original documents," (ibid 522) Ritson proceeded to combine these into his now so famous ballad collection. Despite the politically charged state of Ritson's introductory texts, his notable editorial additions and omissions, and the generally questionable critical work in Life and Notes, more than two centuries after its initial publication, "practically nothing has been added to the references given by Ritson; he was thorough and painstaking in his work" (ibid 536). In his collection Ritson also established an important connection to the historical past for the Robin Hood material. Over the course of the first few pages, Ritson confirms Robin's gentrification by claiming that he was born a nobleman, follows Munday in outlawing Robin because of his extravagant deposition with money, states that his band consisted of one hundred archers, all whom were recruited by means of a trial of battle, and, importantly, confirm Robin's enduring proverbial truth, that he:

> In these forests, and with this company…for many years reigned like an independant sovereign, at perpetual war, indeed, with the king of England, and all his subjects, with an exception, however, of the poor and needy, and such as were "desolate and oppressed," or stood in need of his protection (vi).

[16] An in-depth exploration of Ritson's abilities as a critic is given in Carroll C. Moreland's "Ritson's Life of Robin Hood" (1935).

On the rare occasions Ritson lacks a source, he claims that the lack of historical records and material comes from the "malicious endeavours of pitiful monks…to suppress all record of his patriotic exertions and virtuous acts," (xiii) effectively transforming Robins very survival into popular culture into an act of resistance (McNutt 166). While Ritson always followed up his claims with a thoroughly researched source or a reference to a manuscript fragment, often both, these fragments also had a propensity to contradicted eachother. Ritson's Life and Notes were political, not historical, and it shows. According to Maureen McLane, "the ballad emerged as the genre most implicated in the romantic exploration of primitivity, modernity, and historicity" (424) and while Ritson gathered and presented to the nineteenth century an unparalleled collection of Robin Hood material, paving the way for writers like Walter Scott, his political beliefs got in the way of the collection exerting the same critical brilliance as its antiquarian splendor.

Ritson's radical approach to the Robin Hood material is quite different from Sir Walter Scott's romantic approach who, in the Dedicatory Epistle to his new novel, wrote that "the name of Robin Hood, if duly conjured with, should raise a spirit as soon as that of Rob Roy" (14).[17] Following up this statement, Maureen McLane has claimed that "to restore poetry to those [historical] origins, or at the very least to remind readers of those origins, was the explicit aim of such poets as William Wordsworth and Walter Scott" (423). Further exploring Walter Scott's minstrelsy and Victorian ballad collecting, Yuri Cowan has commented on how "the illusion of textual stability, like the illusions of minstrel authorship and editorial authority, was essential to the other ballad editors' primary goal of establishing their own reputations as conveyers of an authentic national culture of popular narrative song" (53). In many ways, Ritson, in his critical works, ventured away from this stability when he infused Life and Notes with his political beliefs. And yet, his antiquarian inquiries "prepared the way for Scott, whose novel opened a new cycle of Robin Hood fiction in the nineteenth century" (Simeone 230).

Ivanhoe is a brilliant recreation of the world of medieval England in the form of a romance novel. In the novel, Walter Scott utilize the conventional progression of the romance plot: "the conflict between ideal good and evil embodied in the heroes and villains, the perilous journey of the main character, his individual struggle and passage through ritual death, his rescue of the endangered maiden and marriage to her, and the promise of general future

[17] Rob Roy (1671-1731), Scottish outlaw; born Robert Macgregor. His reputation as a Scottish Robin Hood was exaggerated in Walter Scott's novel with the same name (1817).

happiness in a newly established social order" (Sroka 645).[18] The conflict between the ideal good and the manifestation of evil is shown in the battle between Ivanhoe and Brian de Bois-Guilbert, reaching its romantic culmination in their battle outside Templestowe. Both Ivanhoe and the Black Knight performs perilous journeys and both Ivanhoe and Athelstane are gravely injured, to the extent that one wonders whether or not they will survive. First Rowena and then Rebecca are rescued by knights in armor, Ivanhoe marries his damsel Rowena, and finally, with the return of King Richard to the throne, the promise of general future happiness in a newly established social order prevails.

In stark contrast to the ideals of the romance novel, embedded in almost every page of Scott's romance lies a critique of nineteenth-century society. For while Scott undoubtedly created a medieval world in *Ivanhoe* his characters are decidedly modern and fallible. And in stark contrast to Scott's fallible characters stand Robin Hood and the greenwood community. Revisiting Mary Slattery's realist focus on correspondence and dissonance in literature one last time immediately reveals the inconsistencies in Scott's characters. We remember how, according to Slattery, typical characters in literature are rendered according to typical circumstances in real life and, as such, stand as a representation of these same circumstances: a knight is expected to act chivalric and a nobleman expected to take care of his subjects. However, we also saw in the broadside tradition how the only medieval place left in England was the greenwood; in the city tradition and capitalism had synthesized into a modern understanding of the ballad tradition. Attempting, then, to portray medieval customs and behavior, like chivalry, outside of the greenwood must fail, because society no longer conforms to nor understand such attitudes and behavior. Scott, a master of the romance form, refuses to let go of this synthesis of tradition and modernity, well aware of what this does to his romance. Thus, while the form of his book is expressively romantic, closer scrutiny "reveals how Scott tempers it with the realistic elements of the novel" (Sroka 645). Scott's world is decidedly medieval, with vast unexplored forests and majestic castles, roaming knights, and damsels in distress; his characters decidedly modern in their failure to convey the medieval institutions. This tempering reveals a separation of societies in *Ivanhoe* – into a traditional society inside and a modern society outside the greenwood – and is particularly visible in the comparison between Scott's urban "heroes" and the natural aesthetic Robin Hood and his men.

[18] Kenneth Sroka draws his theory and terminology of the romance largely from Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), especially "The Mythos of Summer: Romance," pp. 186-206.

Kenneth Sroka has called Scott's portrayal of his characters a deflation of the romantic hero and claimed that they are not romantic heroes at all; he calls them "comic figures with realistic human limitations" (649). When Ivanhoe defeats Bois-Guilbert in the battle for Rebecca's honor and freedom he does so, not because of his valor, but because Bois-Guilbert, more than anything, self-destructs. Whether evil is punished by accident or simple, unexpected poetic justice is irrelevant, the important part is that he is not punished through the agency of the hero Ivanhoe (Sroka 649). In fact, Ivanhoe, if anything, is defeated himself, almost immediately knocked from his horse. Similarly, when Cedric and Athelstane are on their way back from the tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche, rather than knightly valor and chivalric courageousness, their incompetence is in full display:

> Cedric and Athelstane, who were at the head of their retinue, saw the risk of being attacked at this pass; but neither of them having had much practice in war, no better mode of preventing the danger occurred to them than that they should hasten through the defile as fast as possible. (Scott 208)

The party is, as we know, attacked. Their attempt to fight, comic. One is disarmed before he can draw sword, the other disarms himself:

> Cedric spurred his horse against a second [assailant], drawing his sword at the same time, and striking with such inconsiderate fury, that his weapon encountered a thick branch which hung over him, and he was disarmed by the violence of his own blow. He was instantly made prisoner….Athelstane shared his captivity, his bridle having been seized, and he himself forcibly dismounted, long before he could draw his weapon, or assume any posture of effectual defence. (Scott 208-9)

Even the noble King Richard Coeur de Lion struggles to keep the romance alive. In ironic language, echoing of Miguel de Cervantes' romantic hero Don Quixote and yet being very different, we are informed that

> the Black Knight either had no mistress to meditate upon, or, being as indifferent in love as he seemed to be in war, was not sufficiently occupied by passionate reflections upon her beauty or cruelty, to be able to parry the effects of fatigue and hunger, and suffer love to act as a substitute for the solid comforts of a bed and supper. (Scott 179)

Scott's critique lies in the representation of the English aristocracy, and he makes no distinction between Saxon and Norman, as both incompetent and inept. They possess medieval titles and own both land and wealth, but their actions do not match. Their continued failure to uphold the chivalric ideals, which the nineteenth century had come to associate with the medieval era and England's historical past, in fact shows that Scott's characters are not very different from himself and his contemporary readers (Simeone 230). "By portraying the worst abuse of chivalry in its villains," like Bois-Guilbert's kidnapping of Rebecca, "and by humanizing those who too easily might be termed its perfect heroes, *Ivanhoe* infuses reality into its dialectical romance conflict" (653).

In stark contrast to these comic figures, Scott' Robin Hood in *Ivanhoe* is emblematic of a savior or a deliverer; always immersed in vital activity and an outcast with no attachments to distract him "the Robin Hood of *Ivanhoe* can concentrate completely on the great mission he has in the novel, the deliverance of his country" (Simeone 231). The dignity attributed to Robin Hood actually spans from a tradition which started at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Irish dramatist George Farquhar published two plays set in the provinces, in Shrewsbury and Lichfield, *The Recruitment Officer* (1706) and *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707), in which he attributed dignity to provincial character, a trait which at that time was largely reserved to urban characters in seventeen-century comedies (Goring 81). The dignity Farquhar ascribed to his character is mirrored in Robin when he first appear during the first day of the tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouch as a "stout well-set yeoman, arrayed in Lincoln green, having twelve arrows stuck in his belt, with a baldric and badge of silver, and a bow six feet length in his hand [with a] countenance, which his constant exposure to weather had rendered brown as a hazel nut" (Scott 91). Unhappy with a situation developing before him Robin "grew darker with anger" and delivered his "intimation…in Norman-English with a firm voice and stern aspect" which "made the Jew shrink back" (Scott 91). The quick encounter displays the innate power of Robin Hood; his words alone are enough to make Isaac the Jew shrink away from the situation.

A few pages later Robin's stature and disposition is again on display when the monarch himself questions Robin. Urged on by the Prince to participate in the trial of archery, Robin simply answers that "'I shall not fly the trial'…with the composure which marked his whole deportment" (Scott 97) A surprise for anyone familiar with Prince John's temperament and unwillingness to be spoken against, that is the end of the discussion. Not until the following day does Locksley draw his bow. Well known in ballad tradition, the archery contest in *Ivanhoe*

shows just how superior Robin Hood is to Scott's other characters. Having seen Robin cleave Hubert's arrow to splinters – an arrow lodged in the center of the target – the people observing Robin's skill "could not even give vent to their surprise in their usual clamour. 'This must be the devil, and no man of flesh and blood,' whispered the yeomen to each other; 'such archery was never seen since a bow was first bent in Britain'" (Scott 159). Robin's final act of superiority comes when he cleaves a willow wand at a distance another archer could only dream of. Even Prince John's best archer Hubert yield, uttering that "a man can but do his best, and I will not shoot where I am sure to miss" (Scott 160). Robin's superior archery skill fills Prince John with such wonder and amazement that he completely forgets and foregoes his annoyance with the woodsman. The final exclamation point is Robin's refusal of Prince John's offer to join his ranks, before he simply mixes with the crowd, clearly one *of* the crowd, and disappears. "The result of this demonstration," in the words of William Simeone, "illustrates a superiority so complete that it lifts the yeoman out of the realm of ordinary mortals" (231). The effect is effectively the deflation of every "hero" other than Robin Hood, by making them comic figures (Sroka 649).

At specific points of the novel Robin reappears from the greenwood to execute his role as a deliverer. First, during the battle of Torquilstone, after Cedric – whose unfamiliarity with battle we have already noted – refuses to lead the charge at the castle, Robin assumes the role of leader: "he bent his good bow, and sent a shaft right through the breast of one of the men-at-arms [who] were daunted, for no armour seemed proof against the shot of this tremendous archer" (Scott 331-32). Robin emerge again some chapters later to rescues the Black Knight from the cowardly ambush of Waldemar Fitzurse. The situation is precarious for the Black Knight as "he was pressed close by several men completely armed, and began to be fatigued by the violent exertions necessary to defend himself on so many points at nearly the same moment, when a grey-goose shaft suddenly stretched on the earth one of the most formidable of his assailants, and a band of yeomen broke forth from the glade, headed by Locksley and the jovial Friar, who taking ready and effectual part in the fray, soon disposed of the ruffians, all of whom lay on the spot dead or mortally wounded" (Scott 450). In many ways Robin has acted more like the king than the king himself, who always seems more interested in adventure than the protection of his subjects. Finally, at the ceremonial feast, with the revelation of the Black Knight's identity, the kingdom "again in the hands of its rightful master…is restored to sound health" (Simeone 232). Robin's role as a deliverer is completed with the revelation of Richard's identity.

William Simeone claims that the elevation of Robin and his rejection of a reward for his services reflects the Romantic idea of the nobility in the common man, stating that "Robin Hood's reward is the noble one of having almost by his hand alone alleviated the sufferings of an oppressed people. His efforts, resulting in the harmony of Sherwood Forest, produce the nearest thing to an Eden that Scott probably could commit himself to, and this harmony is all the reward the deliverer of his country would want" (232). As such, Robin's final deflation of chivalry is the way his composure and elevation reveal everyone else's failure. But it is also the beginning of the end for Robin Hood: "the writers of the Romantic period and after popularized Robin Hood" but his popularization came "at the cost of converting him from a real outlaw into a literary symbol of a vanished and largely illusory medieval Arcadia" (Dobson and Taylor, "The Legend" 177). Robin's status as morally perfect, a celestial being, in *Ivanhoe* once and for all separates Robin and the greenwood community from the "noble common man" with whom Simeone claimed they belong. Similarly, the elevation of Sherwood Forest into a Garden of Eden, where characters are "not so much underground as on holiday" and "kings and subjects discover themselves and one another in the play of primitive social forms and relations" (Scott xviii), fully completes the separation between the aesthetic natural Sherwood Forest and urban modern England. A separation which fixes the urban contamination which began after Robin left the greenwood for London in *A Gest of Robyn Hode.*

Elevation and Inversion: Robin and the Clown

Returning to Stephen Greenblatt's New Historic notions that truth is glimpsed "less at the presumed center of the literary domain" and rather resides "at the margins of the text," it soon becomes apparent that throughout the novel Robin's historical significance as a symbol of the common people fails spectacularly. Not only because of Robin's newfound position as a morally perfect celestial being and concurrent separation from the common man, but because, from the margins of the text, we are suddenly reminded of whom the outlaws really are:

> Those honest fellows balance a good deed with one not quite so laudable…the merry-men of the forest set off the building of a cottage with the burning of a castle…the setting free a poor prisoner against the murder of a proud sheriff. […] Gentle thieves they are, in short, and courteous robbers; but it is ever the luckiest to meet with them when they are at the worst…[for] then they have some compunction, and are for making

> up matters with heaven. But when they have struck an even balance, Heaven help them with whom they next open the account! (Scott 446-47).

Throughout the novel, Scott's most uncompromising critique, his most extreme deflation of chivalric values, comes in the shape of the wise fool Wamba. Wamba's statement, coming from one of the peripheral characters, from the margins of the text, remind us that the outlaws are, after all, outlaws, and that their actions must be seen as such. Also embedded in Wamba's statement lies the separation of tradition and modernity which so often infuse the Robin Hood literature with its social energy. The outlaw's actions show that they believe righteous vengeance is acceptable as long as it benefits the natural aesthetic: the contrast between building a cottage and burning a castle is evident. Thus, in Wamba, Scott reawakens the century old conflict between the natural, rural and urban; he "reminds us of man's limitations and thereby tempers the dream image of man which romance ordinarily paints" (Sroka 655), and not only man, but also the outlaws.

Kenneth Sroka has also shown that the deflation of the conventional heroic is strengthened by the conversion of Wamba the jester (and Gurth the swineherd) from buffoon and rustic into *eirôn* figures (650). We are introduced to the two figures in the very first chapter of the novel. In his first sentence Wamba foreshadows his significance; when Gurth asks for help collecting his herd of swine, Wamba replies that to trample through the marshes would be "an act of unfriendship to my sovereign person and royal wardrobe" (Scott 31). Delivered with a healthy amount of irony, his statement is easily dismissed as nothing more than laziness. And yet its significance should not be undervalued as it reveals early traits, ironic or not, of Wamba's self-perception as something more than a simple jester. The deflation of conventional heroics, Robin's elevation into a morally perfect celestial being, and Wamba's concurrent conversion into an eirôn figure and emergence from the margins allows Wamba to assume Robin's position, left behind by Robin's retreat into the elevated natural greenwood, as a symbol of proper medieval attitude.

Three situations in particular show Wamba's newfound symbolic position. First, during the tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche, when the Norman Prince John challenges Cedric the Saxon. Out of the margins of the text steps Wamba:

> The catastrophe was prevented by the clown Wamba, who, springing betwixt his master [Cedric] and Isaac, and exclaiming, in answer to the Prince's defiance, 'Marry, that will I!' opposed to the beard of the Jew a shield of brawn…while the Jester at the same time,

> flourished his wooden sword above his head. […] The Jew recoiled, missed his footing, and rolled down the steps, – an excellent jest to the spectators, who set up a loud laughter, in which Prince John and his attendants heartily joined. (Scott 97)

Then, prior to the battle of Torquilstone, Wamba (and, this time, Gurth's) valor is on display when they send a message to the knights within the castle, demanding the release of Cedric and the remainder of his kidnaped party. De Bracy and Font-de-Boeuf laugh away the threat, but Wamba (and Gurth), although well helped by the Black Knight and Robin Hood, make good on their threat. The castle is sacked and burned; the kidnaped party released from captivity. Even more descriptive of Wamba's inherent chivalric values is his devotion to his master Cedric. At the risk of his own life Wamba gains entrance to Torquilstone and the dungeon where Cedric is held: "I came to save my master, and if he will not consent—basta—I can but go away home again," (Scott 272) Wamba firmly states. "I'll hang for no man but my own master" (ibid 272) echoes loudly of an idealized version of the medieval reciprocal relationship between feudal lord and his vassal.

Wamba is eventually rescued from Torquilstone and soon finds himself following the Black Knight. In yet another display of crafty observance and heroic bravery exerted from the margins of the text, riding through the forest with the Black Knight, Wamba calmly notes to the knight that he would much appreciate it if the knight made ready for combat for "there are company in yonder brake that are on the look-out for us" (Scott 448). Wamba's careful observance saves the Knight's life, for right after closing the visor of his helmet "three arrows flew at the same instant from the suspected spot against his head and breast, one of which would have penetrated to the brain, had it not been turned aside by the steel visor" (Scott 449). A few moments later Wamba "winded the bugle horn" and "though so imperfectly weaponed" rushed in to save the Black Knight. It is at this moment the deflation of chivalric value reaches its peak, almost as if summoned with the winding of the bugle horn. Kenneth Sroka notes that "common men, who make no public claim to special courage or intelligence, possess chivalric ideals to a greater degree than those whose profession would have the world believe them to be more than they are" (651). As we know, the horn summons Robin Hood and his men, who save the king's life. Following the battle, identities are revealed, Robin and Richard dine together in Sherwood Forest, the kingdom is restored back into the hands of its rightful monarch, Robin's elevation is completed, and Wamba once again disappears back into the margins of the text despite being the one who saved Richards life.

A plethora of other instances can be found where Wamba lurks in the margins of the text. After the sack of Torquilstone, as a reward, Wamba receives his freedom. But he insists on giving his freedom to Gurth, he himself continuing in the service of his master Cedric. His refusal to step fully out of the margins, so to speak, finally reveals Wamba's relevance in the nineteenth century. Wamba's refusal to remove the brass collar carried around his neck, the symbol of his subjugation to Cedric, suddenly echoes loudly of Thomas Carlyle, who claimed that "[man's] true liberty were that a wiser man… could, by brass collars… lay hold of him when he was going wrong, and order and compel him to go a little righter" (Carlyle 212). Wamba needs no other liberty than the freedom he receives in the service of Cedric. In his own opinion Wamba is already as free as he will ever be, and no removal of a brass-collar can change that: "the serf sits by the hall-fire when the freeman must forth to the field of battle," he explains to Gurth, and ends with his own proverbial truth: "better a fool at the feast than a wise man at a fray" (Scott 346). For the nineteenth-century audience "Liberty require[d] new definitions" (Carlyle 212); this liberty was sketched out by Scott, in Wamba. De Bracy and Font-de-Boeuf laughed at Wamba and his letter prior to the siege at Torquilstone but the last laugh is Wamba's, this time "at the expense of those who fancy themselves more valorous than they actually are" (Sroka 651). In Wamba's character Scott once and for all deflate the chivalric values, by attributing them to the lowest class of people in his medieval society.

The nineteenth century Victorians sought in their medieval history to glimpse the proper English historic past. That glimpse quickly manifested itself as something quite different than what they were expecting. Rather than chivalric knights, damsels in distress, and moral guidance the Victorians soon found themselves playing with broomsticks. One particular episode from the Eglinton Tournament in 1839 stands out where, after the proper tournament failed due to rain, "the guests amused themselves with a variety of high jinks indoors, culminating in a mêlée between two sides in armour, wearing crests of apples and oranges, and armed with mops and broomsticks. To shrieks of laughter, mops and brooms splintered on helmets, and apples and oranges flew in all directions" (Girouard 102). Judging by the actions of their aristocracy, the days of British chivalry and valor had certainly passed. Nothing more than puffery, acted out by grown men and women who behaved like children, remained. Carlyle's giant seven-foot hat had made its way into the legend of Robin Hood. The metaphorical giant hat – hats, one might even say – were all around, throughout the legend and throughout nineteenth century society: in De Bracy and Font-de-Boeuf when they laughed at Wamba's letter; in Ivanhoe, who does very little of value and yet has a romance novel named after himself; in Richard Coeur de Lion who is more concerned with adventure than

statesmanship; in Robin Hood, that once famous outlaw, now more deity than man; and, finally, in nineteenth century England's belief in the majestic medieval society.

Some tried to keep the past alive. Hamilton Reynolds wrote on Saturday, 31 January 1818 to John Keats and enquired: "The trees of Sherwood Forest are old and good,— / The grass beneath them now is dimly green; / Are they deserted all?" (Barnard 125). Reynolds believed that the outlaws could still be found: "In the soft shadows…the archer-men in green, with belt and bow / Feasting on pheasant, river fowl, and swan, / With Robin at their head, and Marian" (ibid 125). However, when Sir Walter Scott deflated chivalry and, in the process, toppled the English puffery, his elevation of Robin Hood into a morally perfect celestial simultaneously killed the traditional outlaw and sealed Sherwood Forest for modern society. Keats' knows this; his response is instant. On Tuesday, 3 February he replies that:

> No! those days are gone away
> And their hours are old and gray,
> And their minutes buried all
> Under the down-trodden pall
> Of the leaves of many years (1-5).

The greenwood was literally disappearing, not just metaphorically, and as modernity expanded, so did British urban centers who grew at an unchecked rate at the cost of rural England. Britain's forests had been under pressure since the middle ages, the victim of significant deforestation in the fifteenth century (Nef 140). That Britain's large shipyards demanded more and more timber in order to retain Britain's position as a premier naval power did nothing to help the situation. In his reply Keats attacks both the navy and commerce:

> She would weep, and he would craze:
> He would swear, for all his oaks,
> Fall'n beneath the dockyard strokes,
> Have rotted on the briny seas;
> She would weep that her wild bees
> Sang not to her – strange! that honey
> Can't be got without hard money! (42-48)

His view of the world as irrevocable stands in stark contrast to Reynolds' sentimentality. For Keats the past is just that, past; so is Robin Hood who "despite his personal bravery and the loyalty of his men" was "condemned to extinction by the inexorable laws of the historical process" (Dobson and Taylor, "The Legend" 176).

But the "historical process," as we have seen, did not, like Keats claimed, kill Robin Hood. Paul Hamilton clams that "to see the loss of aura [in art] as loss, and nothing more, [is] to ignore the democratic advantages inhering in its reproduction". Such pessimism repeats "the mistake of the bourgeois in *The Communist Manifesto,* who believed the loss of his culture to be the loss of all culture" (403). Keats condemns Robin to extinction, his culture lost, but one final time, a marginal character, or rather, a marginal play, appears. In his otherwise largely uninspired play, *The Foresters*, Lord Tennyson[19] provides a nice contrast to Keats's skepticism as his foresters sing:

> There is no land like England
> Where'er the light of day be;
> There are such hearts like English hearts
> Such hearts of oak they be (757).

While Keats believed Robin to be gone, Lord Tennyson simply considered Robin and his domain inaccessible; in the play's final lines Robin can finally rest:

> Now the King is home again, and nevermore to roam again.
> Now the King is home again, the King will have his own again,
> Home again, home again, and each will have his own again,
> All the birds in merry Sherwood sing and sing him home again. (782)

In the end, the difference between Tennyson and Keats resides in one man's belief in and the other man's rejection of the possibility of a return for Robin Hood. And in an urbanized world, striped clean of fairy tales and mysticism, that promise is, I suppose, the true power of Robin Hood. He is an idolized character – since the nineteenth century, a celestial being, a spirit, a forest force majeure, residing in the garden of Eden – always ready to emerge from the forest

[19] In the context of Robin Hood Alfred, Lord Tennyson's work *The Foresters: Robin Hood and Maid Marian* has been largely overlooked, especially by Tennysonians (Knight 137) and can therefore in good conscience be called marginal.

to fight against unjust oppression, in whatever form such oppression should show itself, be it under threat of centralization, as a force resisting the threat of modernization and urbanization, or in the form of incompetence of our leaders. “The Quack has become God” (144), Carlyle proclaimed, seeing the medieval era as a place of inspiration, a communal society were moral lessons could be learned. The nineteenth century, on the other hand, was “a hubbub of talk without substance, action without wholesome result,” (Altick xi) mêlées with broomsticks, and a giant lath-and-plaster hat, seven-feet high, mounted upon wheels and tugged around London.

Conclusion

"It is remarkable," concluded Douglas Gray in 1984, "that the outlaw hero continues to exercise such a powerful, almost mythical, appeal," (4) establishing once and for all that Robin Hood's symbolic value as a representative against unjust oppression is timeless. In northern medieval England, Robin the forest magnate was a symbol of resistance against the corruption emanating from London, and the looming threat of urban centralization. Forced to choose between subjugation to his monarch and subjugation to the corrupt local agents of the crown, he remained faithfully an object of resistance against corruption, despite the consequences to his character. Some years later, now situated in London, tradition and capitalism had synthesized into a modern understanding of the ballad tradition. Seemingly lost under a pile of new and inventive popular broadside sheets, deeply affected by the new market economy, again, when needed the most, Robin emerges from the pile and fights of injustice against those threatened by oppression. In the nineteenth century the Romantics elevated Robin to a morally perfect celestial, a symbol of a forgotten past, and in the process sealed the greenwood for modernity. But again, this time in the form of Robin's mirror image, the clown Wamba emerges from the margins of the text and reminds everyone who believed themselves morally perfect of how fallible they really were: the 'English puffery' of the nineteenth century was debunked by a common jester, who resisted the threat of modernization and urbanization by living out the moral teachings Robin had left for the nineteenth century.

This project began when Knight provided a guide to Robin Hood, which Slattery showed us how to us, and Greenblatt allowed us to transport between eras. And yet, despite our guides and instructions, throughout, Robin Hood and his merry men has shown an impressive ability to avoid our scrutinizing eyes. James Holt, perhaps, said it best when he claimed that "legend is fact of a very peculiar kind. At one and the same time it illuminates and distorts" (199). Illumination came in the shape of our enhanced understanding of social antagonisms by evaluating Robin's changing qualities; distortion never left us in the first place. For while Robin Hood is always there, throughout the ages, in ballads and broadsides, in plays and poetry, and in romance novels, fully visible and accessible, we never fully feel like we comprehend the totality of his character. He always seems to elude us at that final point of conception, always returning to the greenwood before we can fully understand his nature.

In a more metaphorical sense, Robin's enduring proverbial truth still rings true. He robbed the rich to help the poor, but what he took was not money. Rather, Robin's perennial

resistance against oppression inverts injustice and restores morality to those wrongfully oppressed. Therefore, when many spoke of Robin Hood that never bent his bow, they rightfully did so. Because Robin is not just an archer, or a fisherman, or a potter, or a butcher, nor just a chivalric knight or a great northern magnate, or just a thief and an outlaw. He is none of these things, and he is all of these things. Throughout the ages Robin Hood has manifested himself as whichever symbol of resistance the wrongfully treated and oppressed needed. He is always there, lurking at the edge of the forest and in the margins of the text, always ready to mobilize against injustice wherever it turns up next. To enter the word's stage and play his next part.

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Last scene of all

That ends this strange eventful history

Is second childishness and mere oblivion,

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

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