Decoding Robin Hood:

Towards a Palimpsestic Method - Reading Layers of Meaning through the Costumes of the Cinematic Robin Hoods, 1938-2018

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Abstract

Decoding Robin Hood studies the way in which the costumes of cinematic Robin Hoods in Hollywood have changed between 1938 and 2018, and how these costumes and changes convey meaning through context. Evolving from medieval folk tales and ballads through pageantry and plays with a green-clad hero who lives in the forest, the cultural presence of Robin Hood has become fully mythical further aided by his international appearance in cinema. It has informed and provided limits for cultural language (verbal and pictorial), with myth being embedded, active parts of everyday social and cultural life (Barthes, 1972), as well as determining cultural in-groups and possible expressions within that group (Dundes, 1969). The cinematic texts are approached chronologically through close readings of the costumes (Corrigan and White, 2012), whilst also considering their materiality and the social and cultural context within which they appear. Through the re-presentation of the image (Hall, 1980), the costume exists in relation to previous images, and functions intertextually through the image's layers of cultural palimpsest (Hutcheon and O'Flynn, 2013). In this process, it becomes a distilled image of the ideal as the assumed and specific characteristics of Robin Hood are dressed in what is considered to be appropriate in contemporary culture.

Departing from existing work on cinematic costume (see for example Berry, 2000; Bruzzi, 1997; Cook, 1996 and 2005), this thesis studies costume as unspectacular and representative of the ordinary and expected (Street, 2001), which allows for a reading of costume as representation of myth, where gender is one layer through performance (Butler, 1990). This informs the hypothesis of *Decoding Robin Hood*; images function as palimpsests where the layers of the image contain meaning related to cultural myths. Studying costume is thus an effective way of cutting away the superfluity of a famous narrative, and focusing on the palimpsestic image of a mythical character as it appears in an historical moment. *Decoding Robin Hood* therefore makes a primary contribution to knowledge through providing a method of considering these images.

Key words: Robin Hood, cinema, palimpsest, costume, myth
Word count: 331

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1. Introduction

1.1. Prologue

In June 2016; I travelled from Glasgow back home to Sweden for Midsummer. Having the summer term to write my MA on the different costumed forms of James Bond, I had decided to spend the end of June in Sweden. On Midsummer's Eve, I got up and prepared to celebrate the shortest night of the year with friends as Swedish tradition dictates and was met with the news of the Brexit referendum results as they were announced on Swedish television. Having lived in Scotland for the previous year, I was stunned to hear that the British people had voted to Leave. Everyone I had spoken to about the referendum had, with emphasis, stated that Remain would win, but it became evident that the spaces I had inhabited were not representative of the country. As an EU citizen living in the UK, I was confused: what does this mean for me and others like me? Are we no longer welcome? What do people think of us that they are too afraid, or too polite to tell us to our faces?

When Brexit finally took effect in 2020, I was enrolled at the London College of Fashion. When I enrolled as a research degree student, I did it as an EU student, with the benefits of being able to visit campus for on-site supervisions whilst still living in Sweden, having access to the physical materials in the libraries and to do hourly-paid teaching work without having a UK address. After Brexit my status was changed to an international student, barring me from these activities. To me, the signal was clear: the UK post-Brexit was adamant about keeping outsiders out.

Another 4-year leap, and the summer of 2024 has brought some frightening images from the UK across the Channel to Europe. Riots fuelled by far-right views on immigrants, Muslims and people who are non-white, creating headlines that still manages to shock me. However, unlike when the referendum results were announced, I am no longer surprised. Since Brexit, the trend according to my Swedish and thus outsider's perspective, has always pointed in this direction, as it has in my own country and many others around the world. The climate has hardened, the public conversation has normalised aggressive behaviour against minorities whether it is about their religion, ethnicity or even their (at times only

perceived) gender whilst still claiming a higher moral ground and not punishing those of the majority who commit aggressive actions.

In the context of all of this, why Robin Hood? What began as a for me interesting cultural phenomenon in 2018 that stemmed from my interest in the retelling of stories that I had focused on in both BA and MA level studies, has now become highly relevant as the far-right adopts iconography related to eras and stories where Robin Hood features. A man wears the English flag as a cape in a clip of the riots played on Swedish news (SVT Nyheter, 2024), and the red cross against the white background echoes the crusader tunic that also figures in social media posts circulating on Facebook (see image 1) about fighting to protect the country and its (white) people. The idea of being English or British in the *right* way becomes central, and if someone is perceived as not fitting the very rigid but also very arbitrary mould, that difference is threatening to those who believe they do. Iconography through clothing, symbols that we all wear unknowingly or not, are used with what appears as no precognition, they are simply adorned to signal a belonging or an opinion. The way someone looks therefore is rather more important to creating a sense of safety or immediate danger than what people appear to realise.

Image 1: A costume for the 21st century Crusaders (image from Facebook, collected by Barry Curtis, June 28th 2024)

Approaching a cultural mythic figure who has been embedded in the perspective of both national identity but also as the defender of the people against a perceived oppressor is therefore crucial, as the symbols used by the people acting a certain way can inform the rest of us of their values and their perspective. As of December 2024, I have not yet seen Robin Hood himself being adapted by far-right extremists, but if the last eight years have taught me anything it is to never underestimate the power of consumers and creators of culture to radically influence and change the perception of visual culture.

1.2. Original contribution to knowledge and research question

Much like the development over time of myths in culture, this thesis started as something different from what it eventually became. What originally was a study of the representations of gender in remakes and retellings of stories in cinema, has become a method of approaching these representations as they appear through costume. Through this thesis I suggest a methodological approach to the study of these mythical characters or images with the focus on what they are wearing and what they look like or *appear as*. The perspective is not limited to Robin Hood, even though he is a perfect example of the plasticity of myth as it changes with contemporary contexts of appearing a certain way and conveying certain values, as the politics of Robin Hood are frequently adapted from context to context, film to film. Robin Hood is constantly shifting while still containing a foundation of meaning, and these shifts can be traced as palimpsests through cinema, informing the palimpsestic method suggested by this thesis. Furthermore, Robin Hood becomes a symbol of the method suggested herein as his way of taking from the rich and giving to the poor functions as an allegory for the way in which these multilayered images work wherein the surface layer (the poor) is taking from the underlying layers (the rich) to provide the palimpsest with a fuller set of meaning(s). This thesis builds on and is indebted to theory on intertextuality (such as for example Genette, 1982, and Kristeva, 1984, but also Hutcheon and O'Flynn, 2013). The palimpsestic method as suggested herein builds on intertextuality as it defines the intertextuality of the object within the image; recognises the relationships between texts. In the case of this thesis, the object is the costume of Robin Hood, and intertextuality enables the analysis of the many layers of meaning informing the palimpsest of Robin Hood through costuming. Where intertextuality

recognises the existence of other layers, of intertextual relationships, the palimpsestic image provides a method to approach these relationships as parts of a whole, making it a development of the intertextual perspective on cultural texts and specifically applying it to images. Therefore, my methodology suggests that, when considering an image of a character or a person, the clothing worn represents layers of meaning that together create a palimpsestic whole, making it specifically appropriate in the study of costume as it identifies specific a specific layer of the image to approach. These layers consist of the items of dress or the shape of the body underneath and they contain meaning as they relate to each other and the historical and socio-cultural context they appear within. The method is also built on theory of the fashioned body (see for example Entwistle, 2015), where the palimpsestic method then recognises these layers as makers of meaning. Instead of generally approaching a Robin Hood film as an intertextual object alongside other Robin Hood films, the palimpsestic method allows for the distinction of a single layer as the subject of analysis. The applicability of the method is thus not limited to the study of cinematic texts, instead it could be applied to any text where costume or clothing provide a context and intertext of meaning, which arguably is any and all visual imagery. The Robin Hood palimpsest, both in the literal sense as this thesis will establish, and the figurative sense, provides a method for approaching these texts which centres around costume and, in the case of this thesis, accounts for masculinity. In other texts, femininity might be important to consider as well as class or colonialism, but for the sake of spatial limitations, these aspects will not take centre stage in this thesis.

Research Question
- In what way can the costuming of Robin Hood in Hollywood cinema be considered a palimpsestic image, and how can that image be decoded, to deepen understanding of cultural myth?

Aims and Objectives
Aims:
- To ascertain how costumes in selected cinematic representations of Robin Hood since 1938 expose the palimpsestic (multi-layered) image of a

gendered performance of masculinity in relation to their contemporary and contextual settings.

- To develop a costume-centric approach to the study of mythical film character.

Objectives:

- To investigate how and to what extent costume is a primary tool expressing the relationships between contemporary conceptions of masculinity and culturally embedded myths.

- To create a methodological model for the study of mythological characters in popular culture and the politics which govern their (re-)appearance.

Contribution to Knowledge

This project intersects multiple fields of study, in a way that has rarely been explored before.[1] Firstly, scholars studying Robin Hood are generally concerned with the history of the characters (Aberth, 2003; Knight, 1994 and 2008; Phillips, 2008; Richards, 2007 and 2008) or his place within English or British mythology (Barber, 2004; Barczewski, 2000 for example), while others have written compilations of the Robin Hood stories in cinema (Nollen, 1999; Thomson, 2017) and even how a specific form of animated cinema (i.e. that which is produced by Walt Disney Productions) handles the myth (Brode and Brode, 2016). Secondly, costume studies rarely considers male costuming (see for example Berry, 2000; Cook, 1996 and 2005; Gaines and Herzog, 1990), and when it does, it prefers spectacular gangster suits (Bruzzi, 1997), futuristic full-length leather coats (Street, 2001), the artistry and skill of costume designers (Landis, 2003) and artisans and commercial tie-ins (Chapman, 2022), rather than ordinary, unspectacular clothes appropriate for living in Sherwood Forest. Thirdly, the theories surrounding myth and genre are often related to the form of the cinema text (Bazin, 1967; Singer, 2008), the function of the narrative (Crisp, 2002; Propp, 1958; Voytilla, 1999; Wright, 1975) or the expectation of the audience (Neale,

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[1] See for example Llinares's (2011) study of the astronaut as image of mythical masculinity in Western popular culture. Llinares's study shares the interest in mythical characters with this project, but differ significantly through the areas of focus; media studies of Llinares's versus film studies of this thesis, as well as the focus on over-all image versus specifically costume.

1990) rather than the factors that change the genre from within such as palimpsests, as suggested by this thesis. Furthermore, where genre has been considered in relation to gender and specifically masculinity (Bruzzi, 2013; Tasker, 1993), it is not specifically in relation to costuming even though the body often features (Jeffords, 1994). The following chapter 2. Theoretical framework will position the thesis in relation to all these aspects that inform the study, where the focus is on the cinematic image as a construct (2.1), intertextuality and how it relates to the palimpsestic image (2.2), the way in which gender is perceived for the purpose of this study (2.3), the appearance of a costumed body in cinema (2.4), and lastley, the influence of genre on films such as those telling the Robin Hood myth (2.5).

The original contribution to knowledge of *Decoding Robin Hood* is thus providing a new perspective for the study of Robin Hood through the focus of costume and gender within the myth, rather than for example its fidelity and relation to history. Through the combination of costume, intertextuality and myth, it will also provide a methodology for the study of other reappearing cinematic figures,[2] and their changing expressions over time as palimpsestic images. It further adds to the field of costume studies in cinema through the focus on everyday, non-spectacular men's costume, as well as approaching cultural myths through costume and discerning the messages of gender expression encoded within. The chapters 4 to 8 contain case studies where Robin Hood films from the 20th and 21st centuries are approach through the palimpsestic method in order to decode the palimpsestic images that are produced.

1.3. Limitations and implications

As a mythical character repeatedly reappearing within popular culture since the 14th century (Knight, 1994), the numerous appearances of Robin Hood within cinema are an evolution in accordance with the myth's movement across media and cultural forms. In order to limit the scope of this project, not all Robin Hood productions (Hollywood, English-speaking or otherwise) will be considered. Instead, this thesis will perform a textual analysis of Robin Hood films selected

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[2] Such as, for example, James Bond.

partly due to their contemporary popularity, such as *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (USA, dir. Kevin Reynolds, 1991), as well as their continuing popularity and academic standing, such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (USA, dirs. Michael Curtiz and William Keighley, 1938). These factors speak of the cultural influence of both contemporary and later productions and perceptions of the myth.

Furthermore, the film selection has also been based on the film as indicator of its contemporary culture and gender politics, a category wherein *Robin and Marian* (USA, dir. Richard Lester, 1976), *Robin Hood* (USA, dir. Ridley Scott, 2010) and *Robin Hood* (USA, dir. Otto Bathurst, 2018) fall. These films speak of the relationship between cinema and contemporary politics or social climate, of cinematic stars, their personas and their relationships with film as a medium. The flexibility of the Robin Hood myth to fit all of the functions of the above-mentioned films argues for the appropriateness of the methodology in studying the changes in gendered representation. Even though gender as performance (Butler, 1990) is fundamental to the perspective of this project in terms of masculinity, it is not the intention of this project to apply performance analysis, as the focus is neither on the performance of the actor nor the audience reception of the performance (Martin et. al., 1995), but rather the contents of the cinematic image as text.

Equally, this thesis will not primarily study the various Robin Hood television series, due to the fundamentally different medium of television contra cinema. Films made on smaller production scales, as well as those belonging to another genre than the classic adventure film (such as for example the satire *Robin Hood: Men in Tights,* USA, dir. Mel Brooks, 1993), have also been excluded from the primary study of this project in order to focus in greater depth on a selected representative sample within the major cinematic Robin Hood productions. The study of television, as well as other cinematic genres than the adventure/action film, demand their own theoretical framework and thus the corresponding space and time, which cannot be provided herein. Even so, I will refer to these

productions where appropriate for context as they influence the intertextual image of Robin Hood through their cultural presence.[3]

However, there are issues with studying palimpsestic images in retrospect. For a knowledgeable viewer, the image of Errol Flynn for example is inevitably coloured by the crimes he was accused of in the 1940s as well as his addictions to drinking and narcotics, even though these occurred and became public knowledge after the performance of Robin Hood was completed (Thomson, 2017). I argue, however that this is the point of the palimpsestic image: it is never completed or finished, layers are added continuously as the image exists intertextually. Like intertextuality, these images are created by and consists of the layers and associated meanings perceived by the reader. Someone who has never seen a Connery Bond film would not add the spy association to Robin/Connery, even though this would be a given for the contemporary audience of *Robin and Marian* (1976). Nevertheless, the methodology I suggest provides an avenue of interrogation that cannot be reached by simply analysing and focusing on narrative, set design or production context. The viewer approaches cinema as a visual media, therefore the visual images created must be studied, and how they relate to other images. And, as I argue in this thesis, costume is a highly appropriate way of doing this, since costume, like all symbols and images, exist and create meaning in relation to the other elements of the image and the media.

In the cinematic versions of the English hero of Robin Hood produced in Hollywood, English actors are rarely chosen to play the lead role.[4] This fact is

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[3] See for example the British television series *The Adventures of Robin Hood* starring Richard Greene as Robin Hood (1955-59, UK, ATV London) which became one of the more wide-spread images of Robin outside of cinema after Errol Flynn's Robin from the 1938 *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Curtiz and Keighley), and as such has influenced perception and production since. Furthermore, the 1950s television series exemplifies the contemporary political influence of the Robin Hood myth; the first episode was written under a pseudonym by Ring Lardner Jr. Lardner had at the time been blacklisted in Hollywood as a communist by the McCarthy-led HUAC committee, and instead began writing for British productions. The 1950s Robin Hood television series was "conceived, written and produced as a means of employing communist scriptwriters who had been blacklisted" (Dewe Mathews, 2006). The choice of Robin Hood as a character embodying resistance, was, according to Lardner (quoted in Dewe Mathews, 2006) a way for these blacklisted writers to express their critique of the contemporary Eisenhower administration in the US.

ridiculed in the Mel Brook's satire *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (Brooks, 1993), where Cary Elwes, who is English, looks into the camera and says "Unlike some other Robin Hoods, I can speak with an English accent". In contrast, the more regionally emphasised format of television features productions with English actors, such as the 1950s production by the BBC starring Richard Greene.[5] This difference in cinema and television could be linked to the different conditions of distribution, where television often is made for a domestic audience, whilst films often are meant to be distributed internationally, at least for Hollywood film.

Even though the actor playing Robin Hood apparently does not have to be English, as the mythical character himself, they still must navigate a space of Englishness, often through the spatial implications of the narrative. In the 2022 BBC drama series *Sherwood* (BBC One, written by James Graham), the detective in a Nottinghamshire village repeatedly snaps at his colleagues to not make Robin Hood jokes or references after the murder of several villagers on the outskirts of Sherwood Forest. The victims had been shot with arrows from a bow, further stoking the fires of associations to the mythical hero. However, the fact that the murders are located near Sherwood, combined with the name of the series, forces the viewer to consider the association with the mythical outlaw and in what way the story is told in relation to it; is it about class? Taking from those that have to give to those who lack? Is it the vengeance of the oppressed against the oppressor? Or is it simply about political extremism in the form of domestic terrorism, targeting a peaceful village with equally peaceful villagers? No matter the intent of the production, or the events of the narrative, a single fact remains: the diegetic space contains meaning, and the meaning transfers onto and outside of narrative.

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[4] Douglas Fairbanks (*Douglas Fairbanks in Robin Hood*, USA, dir. Allan Dwan, 1922) and Kevin Costner (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, 1991) are both American, Errol Flynn (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938)and Russell Crowe (*Robin Hood*, 2010) are Australian and New Zealander respectively. Sean Connery (*Robin and Marian*, 1976) was Scottish and Taron Egerton (*Robin Hood*, 2018) is Welsh. In other versions, Patrick Bergin (*Robin Hood*, USA, dir. John Irvin, 1991 is Irish. Only the Hammer productions of the 1960s and an early Disney production features English actors; Richard Todd for Disney, and Richard Greene and Barrie Ingham for Hammer.
[5] However, the 2000s BBC production starred Jonas Armstrong, an Irish actor, as Robin.

All but one of the films studied herein portray a Robin entering Sherwood forest, the mythical home of Robin Hood and his band of outlaws.[6] Considering the nature of the space of Sherwood, the Forest is both a 424.75-hectare[7] woodland under the care of the Nottinghamshire County Council, as well as a mythical home of outlaws in stories; it exists both as a place to take a walk on a Sunday afternoon, and a place where Good fights Evil for King and Country. Additionally, according to Natural England (2014) Sherwood Forest contains a number of trees "which are known to be more than 500 years old" and the Forest itself "is thought to be over 1000 years old". Simply considering the aspect of time, the materiality of the forest is thus of several different times, including the present in which for example a walk is taken, while also existing in a culturally constructed time of myth and history, such as that portrayed in Robin Hood films.[8] Adding the layer of space, the physical space of the Forest as it stands in Nottinghamshire, is quite different from the physical space of the myth, specifically that of cinematic Sherwood.[9] Fans of the films would then, possibly not recognize Sherwood the Forest, whilst being nostalgic for Sherwood the Myth. It is through the performativity of Sherwood Forest, wherein a space is spoken into being Sherwood Forest through language, that a Californian woodland landscape can become the mythical forest of Medieval England in a film such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938). However, the language used is not necessarily verbal, but rather through use of semiotics, and the placement of signifiers within the space, where the object (the costumed body), space and time are layered in order to create a palimpsestic image of mythical masculinity and its meaning(s).

The specifics of space/time, that is Sherwood the Forest in 2024 as opposed to Sherwood the Myth in 1976, contains in themselves meaning, as space is understood through preformed identity and knowledge (Löw, 2016); Sherwood

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[6] *Robin Hood* (Bathurst, 2018) shows Robin and his friend walk a forest path in the final scene, the path could be Sherwood but it is never explicitly stated.
[7] According to Natural England (2014). According to Nottinghamshire County Council (2021), the Forest is 450 hectare.
[8] Sherwood Forest also functions mythically in culture outside of cinema, such as retelling the story of Robin Hood in children's literature or folk tales.
[9] *Robin and Marian* (1976) was, for example, shot in Spain.

the Forest in 2014 was a fraction of the size of the Royal Forest of Sherwood of 10,000 acres it once was a part of (Natural England, 2014), and can thus for a contemporary explorer be an example of loss of biomass in an environmental crisis, or a manifestation of the development and spreading of human industry through history. In contrast, Sherwood the Myth exists *before* both of these modern layers of Sherwood the Forest, and the (Spanish) Sherwood of *Robin and Marian* (1976), with its lush green foliage, functions not as the Forest, but as the Myth, however only because, or if, Robin, dressed in appropriate clothing, steps into it.[10] Therefore, the object, that is the costumed body of Robin Hood, creates a layer of the image that overwrites previous meanings. A forest of no particular time becomes Sherwood in the 12th century, through the eyes of the 1970s Hollywood, as Robin Hood on the body of Sean Connery moves into frame. However, the body of Sean Connery itself does not suffice for this transformation of meaning, it needs to be Robin Hood, which is partly conveyed through the narrative establishing that Connery *is* Robin, but also that what Connery wears *signifies* Robin. The space in which a performance of Robin takes place is important as it informs the meaning of the image constructed, giving Robin a context in which the costumed (or sometimes naked) body appears and through which it can be understood. Robin being in or outside of Sherwood, in a specific costume, makes him appears as himself, and as a result, a certain form of masculinity.

1.4. Retelling the story of mythical Robin Hood

As an English cultural phenomenon which has also had an international presence since the 13th century (Knight, 1994), the mythical medieval character of Robin Hood provides a rare example of a reappearing, reimagined and reworked masculine figure within popular culture. The study of the representations of mythical meaning as reconstructed in and by contemporary discourses (Hall, 1980) provides an opportunity to trace the parameters and definitions of these dominant discourses. Within this thesis, one of the primary discourses in focus is the terms for performances of masculinity. Due to Robin Hood's function as a hero and as such an individual to admire and idealise, the gendered performance may

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[10] Arguable, Sherwood the Forest, could then be Sherwood the Myth when actors in Robin Hood costume step into it as well.

thus be linked to what might be socio-culturally preferred masculine qualities within a specific time period in Western culture, as the mythical masculinity of Robin Hood is revisited, reimagined and enforced through the cultural images of cinema.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse these cultural images of Robin Hood in cinema through the different costumes that Robin wears. This will provide an understanding of the contemporary masculinity portrayed, through mapping what has been kept of the mythically established attributes, and what has been changed or added in the re-presentation, and therefore what is considered important (or not), and as a result trace the palimpsestic image of Robin as it evolves. An aim of this thesis is thus to provide a method for answering the question of how cultural myths are used as reflections of expressions of gender through costumed bodies in cinema, which results in palimpsestic images, the layers of which can be decoded to trace these reflections. However, the method may also prove useful for mapping other types of meaning within a cultural image and can therefore be applicable outside of cinema.

Even though Robin Hood appears in the 14th century in folk ballads, and later in novels (and cinematic adaptations of these novels), as for example Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), scholars such as Knight (1994) and Phillips (2008) argue that Robin Hood does not have a literary or historical original; which could arguably explain the popularity and longevity of the myth, as there is no 'original' version with which a comparison can be made, and therefore no clear way in which a version can be 'incorrect'. The flexibility of the myth is thus only limited to what is part of the social and cultural understanding and acceptance of the themes and characters, which, will be argued by this thesis, are constantly changing. As a result, and in order to approach the concept of myth, a consideration of folk tales and cultural narratives is necessary. Folklorist Alan Dundes (1969) argued for the function of myths in defining cultural groups through the common narratives of the group members, whilst Singer (2008) defines myths as pieces of art that convey meaning about the world and the people in it. Similarly, Barthes (1972) claimed that all social and cultural phenomena functioned as myth in the way in

which they could be read, and conveyed meaning for individuals within these socio-cultural groups.

Other than expressions of gender, Robin Hood's myth contains elements of magic, which would be incomprehensible to those unfamiliar with the innate properties of the character. The archery contest, portrayed in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Curtiz and Keighley, 1938), as well as in early ballads (ballad no. 152 in Child, 1888b), where Robin shoots an arrow and splitting another arrow already centred in the bull's eye of a target, is one such instance of the near-magical abilities accepted as inherent to Robin. Had not Robin's near-magical archery skills been an unquestioned aspect of the myth, the splitting of the arrow might have been rejected from the script and would thus not appear in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), adding to the fantastical element of Robin/Flynn's image. The splitting of the arrow also occurs in the animated Disney film *Robin Hood* (USA, dir. Wolfgang Reitherman, 1973), where the magic is further emphasised through the story being a fable, Robin Hood being a fox. The evident influence of magic in the modern Robin Hood legend is indicative of not only the cultural understanding of the myth, but also its heritage within folk narratives.[11]

As exemplified by the story of the archery feat; while providing a flexible template with which contemporary ideals and ideas can be expressed, the figure of Robin Hood still carries with it defining characteristics and attributes which have been relatively consistent over the centuries. This thesis argues and assumes that this template has been reinforced in terms of physical attributes and costume through the Robin Hoods who have appeared in cinema. Clothing and colours' meanings can be read as indicative of character as well as circumstances (Lurie, 1981), and a textual analysis of the cinematic image will in this research reveal the costume's significance through design choices, as Robin is given signs expressed by articles of clothing, their style and cut, and the colours of the materials. These material signs on Robin's body relate to characteristics through associations, resulting in an image of Robin in a spatiotemporal context, and next to other characters, where

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[11] Further background to the Robin Hood myth will be given in chapter 3 Mythical layers: Robin Hood's many renditions.

the costume exists as layers to unpack and peel back. How these characteristics relate to the myth of Robin Hood is handled in different way in the films studied herein, where the acrobatic feat of the swashbuckler Errol Flynn (*The Adventures of Robin Hood,* 1938) is costumed differently from the vigilante war veteran Taron Egerton (*Robin Hood*, 2018) as these versions of the myth rely on a Robin with emphasises on different aspects of his mythological character.

Not only is the space of Robin Hood a bearer of meaning, but so is also the name and the values it contains. In another, non-physical space, the online forum Reddit went in January 2021 from a corner of the internet that the general population may be unfamiliar with to the centre of attention of international stock markets. The change was brought about by the interest of the Reddit users in the shares for the American video game retailer, GameStop, the stock prices of which rose rapidly due to the Reddit users' united decision to buy them. Involved in this was an online financial service company called Robinhood, complete with a green feather as its logo. Robinhood promises its users "commission-free investing, and tools to help shape your financial future" (according to the tagline of the Google search for the company, 2022). At the height of the Reddit-GameStop trading, Robinhood halted the trading of the stocks, a decision that lead to a suit for 'market manipulation' in the US (Saul, 2022). The lawsuit reads, according to Fox Business, that through their actions Robinhood "were looking out for Wall Street hedge funds at the expense of the individuals who were costumers of Robinhood" (Chiarello, 2021). In the 21st century then, the name of Robin Hood, even though slightly modified, is used by a company that some, according to the lawsuit, accuse of giving to the rich, rather than to the poor. In March of 2021, Forbes reported on clients of Robinhood travelling to the California headquarters to protest this block in trading, "with a number of ten encounters, including protests, vandalization, and even – in one case – the throwing if animal faeces" (Beer, 2021). Using, or misusing, the Robin Hood name can thus lead to considerable consequences, as the myth associated with the name is powerful enough for people to rally against the abuser.

The use of the myth of Robin Hood by an American financial service does build on the established ideas within culture about the mythical character and the values he represents – and in the context of a financial service, Robin Hood does hold

considerable authority and pathos. But for Robinhood to be able to use this mythical meaning and image, it needs to be established, which it has repeatedly been for centuries through a multitude of cultural media. In the 20th century, Robin Hood was once again made popular and important for popular culture through the many cinematic renditions of him and his adventures, facilitating the use of him in other types of media and contexts, such as for example an American company name (Robinhood) or even an English half marathon (The Robin Hood Half Marathon, not surprisingly taking place in Nottingham). The intertextuality of the Robin Hood myth is therefore not only influential on cinema and genres such as action adventures or swashbucklers, but for cultural language in general, and the construction of a mythical image on screen specifically. Outside of Britain and the US, Robin equally frequently emerges in culture, and the story is tailored to fit the local, regional and national requirements of the new environment, such as 'Harald Handfaste' (Eng. Harald the Stalwart) (*Harald Handfaste*, Sweden, dir. Hampe Faustman, 1946) in 1940s Sweden, where a version of Robin appears in the media of film and comic strip, or as 'Robin des Bois' in French speaking stories, plays and musicals, where the values retained within the myth is transferred to new spaces.

As noted by Thomas Leitch "there is no natural order of relationships among texts" (2011, p. 7). There is no such thing as a linear adaptational relationship, where a text is influenced by another in a chronological manner. Instead, like the vampiric qualities noted by Leitch (2011), texts feed (off) each other, informing and influencing the construct of a text, but also the way in which the text is received. An example of this is the reviewers' constant comparison to the 1938 film *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, when reviewing the 1991 film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991) (see for example Ebert, 1991). Even though the contents of the story in many ways are similar, the films are separated by more than 50 years, and the aesthetical, economic, social and political circumstances are equally different. Leitch also notes that "For better or worse, every adaptation is an expression of love, however selfish or perverted that love may seem" (2011, p. 10), and through retelling a story it is allowed to live on.

Similarly, the intertextuality and thus palimpsestic self-awareness of the latest Robin Hood film released in 2018 (*Robin Hood,* 2018) is inescapable from the

opening sequence. A voice-over (with the voice of Friar Tuck[12], played by Tim Minchin) tells the viewer that this version "doesn't begin with the thief you know", indicating that the viewer has a thief (most likely Robin given the film's title) in mind, whilst the film instead begins with Marian (played by Eve Hewson) as the thief. After the opening scene where Robin (played by Taron Egerton) and Marian meet for the first time, the narrator comes back, instructing the viewer to "forget history, forget what you've seen before, forget what you think you know", once again positioning this film in relation to and as different to other Robin Hood films while at the same time admit to and play on the intertextual nature of the production and the audience's expectations.

In the understanding of intertextual texts, the focus shifts from the creator or author, and who could be argued to be the sender of the text, to the text itself. Barthes (1977) famously argued for "the death of the author", as Barthes considered meaning to reside in the reading of a text, not in the circumstances or intentions of the sender of the text, while cultural perception often considered the work as an extension of the artist, and as such was understood as a product of the artist. Even so, while the director may not be the only sender of a cinematic text as assumed as an auteur, directors such as Ridley Scott of *Robin Hood* (2010), have developed an intertextual construct more like that of a star persona (Dyer, 1979) of the director surrounding their films following commercially and culturally successful projects such as, in Scott's case, *Alien* (USA, dir. Ridley Scott, 1979), *Blade Runner* (USA, dir. Ridley Scott, 1982) and *Gladiator* (USA, dir. Ridley Scott, 2000).[13] Together with the star persona (Dyer, 1979) of an actor, the films become even more loaded with cultural meaning, where in for example *Robin Hood* (2010),

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[12] Like Little John, Friar Tuck is one of Robin's traditional Merry Men. He, like Robin, is "involved in the anti-authoritarian aspects of the outlaw tradition" (Knight, 1994, p. 6) in the ballads, which can be seen in the cinematic representations of him as a friar who questions the injustice of the church, and is either thrown out or joins Robin's cause of his own free will (see the Bathurst (2018), Scott (2010) and Curtiz and Keighley (1938) films, for example).

[13] *Alien* (1979) earned 108 million dollars at the box office and had a production budget of 11 million dollars, while *Gladiator* (2000) grossed 460 million dollars globally, with a budget of 103 million dollars. In contrast, *Blade Runner* (1982) was not successful at the time of release, but has taken on a cult status since (Parrill, 2011).

the intertextuality of Scott's previous works and Russell Crowe's star persona become intertwined.[14] Even so, the meaning of a cinematic text is also constructed in the reading of a text, and the pleasure of the audience who is aware of the director's previous work add additional meaning in turn. It is therefore not the director, the star, the diegetic space, the body and costume of the star or even the narrative that is the generator of meaning in a cinematic text, but rather they are all layers of the palimpsestic image, layers that can only be identified by a reader or observer that recognises them. The palimpsest functions therefore in a way like a sociolect, a speech variety informed by the social (including age, gender, and class) influences on the speaker (Trudgill, 2003), as culture functions as a language where consumers of culture with specific social contexts perceive meaning where those with other perspectives do not.

A note on the formats in the text:

In order to facilitate for the reader, the different Robin Hood films will be referred to in the following chapters (as well as in this Introduction), according to as follows: *The Adventures of Robin Hood* becomes simply *The Adventures*, while *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* loses *Robin Hood* and is referred to as *Prince of Thieves*. However, the two films from 2010 and 2018 are both titled *Robin Hood*, making their distinguisher the year of release. The films that this thesis primarily focus on are thus: *The Adventures* (1938), *Robin and Marian* (1976), *Prince of Thieves* (1991), *Robin Hood* (2010) and *Robin Hood* (2018).

Furthermore, the name Robin Hood or Robin refers to a multitude of different performances, constructs, and at times even characters. The shorter version, the simple Robin, is used throughout as not all characters in cinema or myth are named Robin Hood (for example in *Robin Hood* (2018) the character's name is Robin Longstride, never Robin Hood) but as a rule they all share the first name Robin. Therefore, when discussing the performance of a specific actor as mythical Robin Hood, the format of Robin/Surname is used to distinguish the Robin of a specific performance from other types of Robins, for example, Robin/Flynn for the performance of Errol Flynn or Robin/Crowe for Russell Crowe's. This format will

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[14] See on *Robin Hood* (2010) for a discussion on Crowe's star persona.

not be used with other recurring characters such as Marian or the Sheriff of Nottingham, if not necessary where a comparison between performances is made. When a reference is made to Robin Hood or simply Robin, this refers to the mythical character separated from a specific performance or version.

2. Theoretical framework: the palimpsestic method

2.1. The cinematic image

This project will apply textual analysis and close reading of film texts, and specifically the aspect of film costume, in order to distinguish their meaning, as costume are considered code-carriers within the cinematic image (Corrigan and White, 2012). The idea of costume as code is related to the signifier/signified in semiotics and structuralism (Barthes, 1983). Fundamental to semiotics is the code/language of the sign, and the arbitrary nature of the relationship of the signifier (sign) with the signified (meaning) (see for example Buckland, 1999). Even so, film semiotics' investigation of the specific language of cinema (see Metz, 1968) is not applicable to the purpose of this thesis, as the focus is not the structuring of signified/signifier into a cinematic language, but rather the relationship between and the *plurality* of the signified and the signifier.

Instead, it is structuralism according to Barthes (1972 and 1983), as his perspective of socially and culturally agreed signs, such as clothing or myths, making films and other, similar media texts "*polysemic*" (Bainbridge, 2011, p. 228), that is a single sign's ability to contain multiple significations, and how signs are able to convey meaning without a relationship with reality (Baudrillard, 1984). To answer the research question posed by this thesis, a textual analysis is the most suitable way of approaching the film text, as through a close reading of the cultural signs of the hero's clothing in terms of colour, fabrics, silhouettes, fit, embellishments and patterns, together with the Robin Hood narrative within the spaces of the cinematic image, the masculinity performed, and the signification thereof, can be deduced. As these signs are created as products of dominant socio-cultural discourses, the findings can only be relevant in terms of cultural understanding if supported by contemporary context as signs fluctuate in meaning over time, such as, for example, the green tights worn by Errol Flynn in *The Adventures* (1938) where the meaning of the tights have gone from Sherwood hero to Sherwood ridicule (*Robin Hood: Men in Tights*, 1993)*.* Specifically for this thesis, the fields of costume, gender, and film and cultural theory will provide the necessary foundation to answer the research question, providing the foundation

from which the palimpsestic method is built. Through studying costume in relation to the layers of myths and cultural adaptation, understanding of gender expressions as well as of the role of costume in myth can be reached.

Functioning through both socio-cultural myths and clothing are expressions of gender. Gender as something that is 'worn' like a mask was discussed by Riviere in her 'Womanliness as Masquerade' in 1929, and has since been developed by gender theorists into 'doing' (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and 'performing' (Butler, 1990). The primary perspective of this thesis is considering gender as a performance. Psychologist Flügel (1930) also argued for the performativity of clothing in influencing gendered behaviour. According to Flügel, wearing clothing associated with specific meaning would trigger the embodied expressions of that meaning in the wearer, ultimately separating men from women, through the assumption of masculinity and femininity as a consequence of their clothing. Clothing as facilitating behaviour correlates with the close relationship between actor and their costumes in performance, as discussed by Landis (2003) through interviews with costume designers about their craft. As the actions or performances are culturally constructed, and expressed through means such as clothing, gender theory provides the analysis of myth and costume with the tools of application to masculinity, (Edwards, 1997; Jeffords, 1994; and McCauley Bowstead, 2018).

In *Undressing Cinema*, Stella Bruzzi discussed different types of cinematic costume: those that are intended to be 'looked at', in contrast to the costumes whose purpose is that of being looked 'through' (1997, p. 10). The former can be exemplified as acting outside of narrative, of drawing the gaze, such as ball or designer gowns, while the latter are embedded within narrative meaning. Street (2001) in turn analyses the costume that aspires to imitate the everyday in *Wonderland* (UK, dir. Michael Winterbottom, 1999), wherein the costume is created in relation to the intended realism of the film, and the purpose of such costuming is to produce what is often the assumed primary function of costume; "social verisimilitude" (Bruzzi, 1997, p. 7). Even though Robin Hood's costume may draw attention to a medieval narrative and as such is 'looked at', its primary function is arguably not to exceed the narrative, nor distract from it, such as the

costume of Robin/Crowe in *Robin Hood* (2010). Instead, Robin's costume is constructed to provide verisimilitude and appear appropriate for the world and circumstances wherein he lives, according to the contemporary assumptions of the audience; its primary perspective is to provide "generic verisimilitude" (Bruzzi, 1997, p. 7).

Cinema's ability to record reality is linked to what Bazin (1967) considered to be the function of cinema: the conveying of reality, being an art of realism. The camera, unlike other technologies of art, records what transpires before it, and is therefore best suited to record life as we know it. However, as the art form developed, the realism argued for by Bazin, was left behind by mainstream cinema, as the long shot without editing was dismissed for the dynamic styles of Hollywood cinema. The realism referred to herein is thus rather about imitation of a perceived reality that the Robin Hood films attempt to construct, a 'historical' time in which the events take place. For that reason, the realism of this thesis is about construction of time and space that the audience recognise as plausible: the history film shows 'a constructed version of history that accords with the ideological values of its makers and the cultural tastes of its audiences' (Chapman, Glancy and Harper, 2007, p. 7). A film is therefore perceived as containing meaning relating to a historical time to the extent that the audience recognises it as such. With the Robin Hood films being explicitly that, the films are equally explicitly in a historical era that the audience expects to appear in a certain way. These expectations of realism through time as well as gender expression are navigated in mise-en-scène in general, but specifically in costume, which is the focus of this thesis.

Within theory of film, the phenomena of time and space have been generating discussion for almost the entirety of the existence of cinema. In the 1930s, Panofsky argued for the crudeness of cinema as it related to folk art, and how the moving image presented on screen was the 'dynamization of space' and 'spatialization of time' (Panofsky, 1995), whereby cinema creates a 'space-time continuum' (Lavin, 1995, p. 11) not seen in other mediums. Half a century later, working with Bergson's philosophy of cinema and the distinction of "duration" and "space-time movement" (quoted in Singer, 2008), Deleuze presented the concepts

of the movement-image (Deleuze, 1986) and the time-image (Deleuze, 1989), where the former identified cinema's ability to convey meaning through how cinema relays movement through images, and the latter how cinematic images can equally convey experiences of time and memory. Deleuze's theory has informed the work of many others, as these images, their (possible) interconnectedness and relationship with cinema(s) is discussed (see for example Flaxman, 2000; Martin-Jones, 2011; Thomas, 2018). Whilst Panofsky's perception of cinema as akin to folk art and folk performance is interesting in relation to the portrayals of Robin Hood in both, these perspectives do not inform this thesis in any way other than pointing to the complexity of approaching time and space within cinema. Cinema creates an image of time and space wherein bodies perform, and thus create the illusion of space and the experience of the duration (or lack thereof) time (see for example Pavis, 2003; Singer, 2008). How these elements relate to one another creates the analytical perspective of the palimpsest of a cultural image, and because of cinema's unique ability of creating a contained space-time with bodies in performance, the cinematic image is well-suited indeed to provide the medium of this study. The specificity of space-time in cinema will be revisited in 'Layers of genre', as it applies to the ways in which the cinematic image is influenced by the conventions (and expectations) of genre for Robin Hood films.

2.2. Intertextuality and the cultural image

> "Intertextual reading encourages us to resist a linear reading of texts from cover to cover." (Allen, 2022, p. 7)

The lack of a literary original in the Robin Hood myth demands that the perspective of this project intertextually reflects differing representations rather than fidelity to an original work.[15] First established by Kristeva in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (translated into English in 1984), intertextuality is the meaning that is created by the reader in the reading of a text that contains elements or signs

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[15] The perspective of fidelity, as in an assessment of how carefully the film has adapted the novel, has long been an issue within adaptation studies (see for example Bluestone, 1957). This perspective has been widely critiqued as being judgmental in terms of quality, which is not the intention of film studies (see for example, Naremore, 2000, Stam, 2005, and Hutcheon and O'Flynn, 2013). As Robin Hood does not have a literary original, this perspective is not relevant for this thesis.

of other texts. The meaning is thus created intertextually, which is in the space or the meeting of multiple texts. In other words, the concept of intertextuality assumes that "in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 36). Even so, intertext is not itself embedded within a text, but only exists in the knowledge the reader has of the text as read. Similar to Kristeva's focus on novels and the written word, Bakhtin (1968) speaks of utterances in verbal language as indicative of established conventions and social knowledge. Verbal communication, and visual or mythical according to Barthes (1972), are possible sites of intertextuality as they are created with inevitable cultural influence, such as the bright green colour of Robin Hood's costume in relation to the Green Man imagery (see 3. Mythical layers for discussion of the Green Man and his relationship with Robin Hood).

As such, intertextuality is similar to the comparison of reference and adaptation, through the fact that the adaptation is inevitably intertextual, but only "*if the receiver is acquainted with the adapted text*" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn, 2013, p. 21). A text can thus only be intertextually read if there is knowledge of the intertext, as for example a comparison with a novel can only be made if the novel is known. Even so, Hutcheon and O'Flynn argue that all texts are "mosaics of citations" (ibid.), but adaptations or reworkings of a dominant cultural myth such as Robin Hood are different as they are consciously and explicitly based on the fact that they are citations, reworkings and remakes. Furthermore, Hutcheon and O'Flynn argue that the previous versions cannot be erased, but "we experience adaptations (...) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation" (ibid., p. 8). As such, Hutcheon and O'Flynn's perspective is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss's claim that a myth is defined "as consisting of all its versions" (1955, p. 125), and that it is through gathering the functions of the versions of the myth into bundles, that the true meaning of the story can be found. Even so, Lévi-Strauss's method separates the myth from socio-cultural and historical context, making it ultimately unsuitable for this project.

Given the close relationship between culture and folklore, folklorist Alan Dundes (1969) believes myth is a mirror of culture.[16] Through the study of American school children in the 1960s and the stories and jokes they tell, Dundes concluded that that which is expressed through folklore is active and relevant within the culture; "folklore is collective fantasy and as fantasy, it depends upon the symbolic system of a given culture" (ibid., p. 64). Folklore is therefore a "way for both adults and children to deal with the crucial problems in their lives" (ibid.), and thus, through the study of these cultural expressions, Dundes believes, these issues can be revealed. This perspective is also examined on an individual level by Bettelheim (1976) in relation to children coping with trauma and the use of fairy tales in aiding their recovery, as well as on a cultural level in Zipes's (2011) study of popular fairy tales as being a reflection of cultural issues. Through the study of folklore, a culture can be seen "*from the inside out* instead of *from the outside in*" (Dundes, 1969, p. 55). The constant returning and retelling of the Robin Hood narrative is arguably, according to Dundes's perspective, such a mirror, and as such is evidence of a cultural expression necessarily repeated, which, according to Hark (1976) becomes the function of *The Adventures* (1938). What is important for Dundes is to separate and not confuse "surface *use* and disguised *meaning*" (Bronner, 2007, p. 6). In a medium dependent on surface, such as cinema and its image, the culturally defined meaning is separate from the surface use of an object or story through intertextuality (Kristeva, 1984) of the image. The image's palimpsestic nature with its many layers can inform multiple meanings, based on the dominant cultural perspective. Even so, the image is created within an environment saturated with its own signifier/signified relationships, and the deciphering of these refers back to the production environment. This perspective aligns with Bakhtin's (1968) argument that meaning is created in social contexts, the intertextual image is therefore meaningful as it exists within a context, a context which depends on the people telling and engaging with the stories told around the image.

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[16] Dundes in turn built his argument on the writings of Franz Boas, who established the 'mirror' concept as reflective of society within anthropology (Bronner, 2007).

Another perspective on the Robin Hood texts is to consider them as hypertexts (Genette, 1982), where they keep re-reading and re-writing each other. As a consumer of Robin Hood texts, this cannot be done chronologically, as contemporary culture is saturated with the images of Robin. Considering one Robin Hood film in relation to another then becomes futile if the purpose is to deduce which film influenced another. They exist as hypertexts and thus influence each other through the consumption of the viewer. However, as Genette (1982) argues, the pleasure of the palimpsestuous nature of hypertexts is not to track layers, but to recognise them and their influence on the (in this case, cinematic) text. In contrast to Kristeva's (1984) definition, where intertextuality is built on the pre-existing knowledge of the reader, the hypertextuality according to Genette (1982) provides a (hyper)text that function without the knowledge of the hypotext. There is therefore still pleasure in a hypertext without it being recognised as such, where intertextual texts can lose their meaning or even their readability if not recognised. Therefore, the moment a text is recognised as a hypertext, it can be seen to contain more layers than previously known. While these layers had not previously been noticed, that does not mean that they did not exist, but they do indicate the relationship between a hypertext and an intertextual text. In order to imitate a hypotext, the most essential elements, or "specific quality" (Genette, 1982 p. 6), of the text must be identified to then be imitated into the new hypertext. In contrast, a transformation is simply a transformation of the hypotext into the hypertext – such as Homer's the *Odessey* into *Ulysses* (Joyce, 1920). In the transformation of a text it is relevant to consider whether the new text is produced to "say the same thing differently" or "saying another thing similarly" (Genette, 1982 p. 6) – when a Robin Hood film tells the story of Robin Hood's daughter, as in the film starring Keira Knightley for example (*Princess of Thieves*, USA, dir. Peter Hewitt, 2001), the story is told in the same way to say another thing similarly, while a television series (and comic book) such as the Green Arrow, says the same thing differently. Gennette's explanation of allusion as it "presupposes the perception of a relationship between it and another text" (1982, p. 2), is also describing these relationships between text, and describes what can be considered by the knowledgeable audience.

According to semioticians, myths function like a language where the myth can be read as signs. In *Mythologies*, Barthes claimed that "*myth is a type of speech*" (1972, p. 131), and "everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse" (ibid.). In discussing the critical debates of semiotics, Weedon, Tolson and Mort (1980) note that the myth according to Barthes, does not *re-present* language as it has been assumed, but that myth is a language in itself through myth's function on "the level of denotation" (p. 190). Even though Weedon, Tolson and Mort discuss 'signs' and 'signified' in relation to verbal language as theorized by early 20th century linguists such as Saussure (1993), Barthes's perspective as it is detailed above is equally applicable to images and physical objects such as clothing. Like verbal language, physical objects contain meaning, and as such their images can convey that meaning, together with the possibility of secondary readings due to the effects of intertextuality. Due to this function of the object/clothing, the type of myth as language related to clothing, such as Robin's hood, is different from verbal speech as language, in that it is based on visual performance. This differs from the use of costume in that costumes, and especially mythical costumes as in Robin Hood films, are rarely made to be worn elsewhere other than on set. Even so, the performativity as part of philosopher Baudrillard's theory of fashion in the discussion of fashion's cyclical nature which makes fashion in particular, but clothing in general "endlessly revived as effective signs" (2007, p. 463), is similar to the reuse and remaking of the signs within Robin Hood. The function of myth as performative utterance is then to "transform a meaning into form" (Barthes, 1972, p. 156), and the meaning may be created within an image or object as secondary, or independent of the image itself. The image as text is therefore a multidimensional space (Barthes, 1977), where the creator of the text applies it with already existing signs or expressions for the reader to interpret. For that reason, which is also the justification for the method suggested here, the image cannot be considered as finite in meaning, as signs fluctuate, lose and gain meaning over time and can therefore only be considered in the contemporary setting of a reader.

2.3. Gender as social construct

> "In the field of dress, for example, if people were to freely adopt the hundreds of styles proposed professionally each year and the other thousands which the

absence of competition would allow, there would be a veritable 'Tower of Babel' consequence. *Fashion introduces order in a potentially anarchic and moving present.*" (Blumer, 1969 , p. 289)

In *Masculinities*, published in 1995, Connell writes that "masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-relation" (p. 44), that is, according to Connell, it is in constant relation and negotiation to femininity. The concept of masculinity, as defined for the purpose of this thesis, is not set, nor 'an original' against which other genders can be defined. Masculinity is the gender expression acted out by individuals according to social 'scripts' (Butler, 1990) driven by a set of heterosexual gendered norms. Butler argues (1990) that as a bodily style, gender is performed. Performativity refers to those performances of gender that unconsciously reproduce social norms, and this is how sexed and gendered subjects come into existence. 'Masculinity' thus becomes the bodily styles incorporated by the body to yield a gendered subjectivity. Furthermore, the performance is based on other performances, and as such exists in relation to the culturally constructed image, or screen (Silverman, 1996). The actions of the actors playing Robin Hood studied in this thesis are thus expressions of the masculinity that is socially and culturally expected of Robin Hood in that specific context. Even though Connell (1995) believes masculinity to be defined as the opposite of feminine, Connell's argument, that "masculinity is not just an idea in the head", but is also integrated into the foundation of culture, "merged in social relations" (ibid., p. 29), indicates the relativity of masculinity.

As already mentioned, Butler famously argues for gender as relative and expressed through performance in their seminal work *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990). Here, Butler claims that gender is not biologically inherent, but socially constructed and a taught performance based on socio-cultural expectations of the gendered performances. As such, as Butler argues, "gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender" (1990, p. 178). Gender is thus "cultural fictions" (ibid.) which are produced and repeated through social performances, performances that arguably are influenced by cinema. This perspective is also argued by de Lauretis (1987) in her *Technologies of Gender*, where she argues for a perception of gender as a "product of various social technologies, such as *cinema*" (p. 2, my emphasis) as well as "practices of daily life" (ibid.). Similarly to Butler's

idea of gender as cultural fictions, de Lauretis also argues for gender as falsely assumed to be inherent to human beings; instead "the representation of gender *is* its construction" (ibid., p. 3). Furthermore, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) in their article "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept" writes that masculinities are not fixed; they are rather "configurations of practice" that are fundamentally social practice, and can therefore "differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (p. 836), an idea similar to Butler's theory of gender as performance. The performance, or social practice, can thus shift and differ, and an arguably quintessential masculine performance, that of for example a hero fighting the rich to give to the poor, may be an example of what masculinity should or should not be in a contemporary setting, and as such relates to notions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995). As there are some expressions of masculinity that are considered more desirable than others in the Robin Hood films studied herein, the model of hegemonic masculinity as suggested by Connell (1995) could be useful to approach the dynamics of power as they exist within Sherwood and Nottingham. However, as these expressions are allowed to evolve both within a film but most importantly over the decades of cinema, the later definitions of hegemonic masculinity as argued by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) would be more appropriate as it allows for hegemonic masculinity to be influenced by marginalised groups, including but not limited to traits associated with femininity. This thesis does not suggest that there are inherent traits of masculinity (or femininity) that are therefore performed by the male actors playing Robin Hood, rather it suggests that there are traits that are considered to be that of a male hero, a mythical hero, that function as an expression of hegemonic masculinity in the sense of dynamics of power within the diegetic context. Robin Hood in the performance of Errol Flynn in *The Adventures* (1938) is not clever and righteous because he is a man, but his cleverness and righteousness makes him a credible Robin Hood, which in turn gives him the power to enact violence against those who are not considered righteous.

Even so, Connell (1995) argues that it is not sufficient to realise that there are different expressions of masculinity, but that the relationships of power between these gender expressions are important as the gender practices "exclude and include, (…) intimidate, exploit and so on" (p. 37), which can limit and influence the

accepted gender performance. Similarly, Butler (1990) notes that individuals who perform their gender transgressively are punished by the social group, making attempts to change or control the preferred performance dangerous. Even so, gendered performances are not set over time, and a performance that was socially desirable and accepted in one setting, is not in another. Exemplifying the possibility of change are the different Robins as performed by Errol Flynn and Russell Crowe in *The Adventures* (1938) and *Robin Hood* (2010) respectively. Flynn's acrobatic, flamboyant performance in green tights is based on the contemporary, generic expectations of the hero of a 'swashbuckler', just as Crowe's subdued and grounded performance in chainmail and brown wool indicates its own rather different assumptions.

As de Lauretis (1987) suggests, cinema is one of the ways in which images of gender are consumed and produced; the cinematic image can thus become powerful in the creation of a perceived 'original'. Silverman (1996) discusses the image as a screened relation to Lacan's theory of the mirror image. In its difference to the mirror image, as indicative of the subject that is reflected, Silverman argues, the screen does not have an indexical relationship with the subject. Similar to gender lacking an original, that which is portrayed on screen does not necessarily have an "existential connection" (Silverman, 1996, p. 19) with a subject. Even so, Silverman argues, the screen is perceived as 'real' and containing the image after which identities are constructed, and as a subject tries to imitate or perform that which is perceived on screen, this construction is based on that which "is a at a given moment representationally 'possible'" (ibid., p. 204). As such, the performance must be "symbolically ratified" (ibid., p. 205), and the subject is thus limited by contemporary signs of gender in their performance. Silverman uses the metaphor of a wardrobe to illustrate the possibility to choose the symbolic images that "we will 'wear'" (ibid.) to create our identity. A metaphor that is also applicable to a wardrobe in the literal sense; the items of clothing within the wardrobe contain meaning (Barthes, 1983; Lurie, 1981), and the act of choosing clothing thus becomes the act of choosing and constructing an image and a gendered performance. Even so, the act of constructing and performing gender, as argued by Butler (1990), is not conscious but socio-culturally learned. The clothed or costumed image, thereafter, as argued by this thesis, is dependent on the

cultural expectations of the gender performed, and the choices of dress that express these expectations, as gender is partly constructed through dress (Wilson, 1985).

2.4. The costumed body in cinema

Other than writing on myth, Barthes (1983) also wrote about clothing. Barthes considered clothing to be a language similar to myth, through the culturally reinforced sign-system of signifiers and signifieds. As such, the meaning of clothing is also similar to that of gender and genre through the creation of meaning through repetition, where clothing also may be indicative of genre and/or gender. The intention of this thesis is to study the cinematic costumes in order to draw conclusions about aspects of gender, or more specifically masculinity, portrayed by the actor and the film. In relation to visual and performative arts, art historian Hollander (1978) argued that the clothing portrayed here could appear more real or as having more significance than clothes in real life, which is indicative of the need for stylisation of attributes in genre and in the performativity of gender in order to create a comprehensible image. Clothing functions as a marker of identity, and a way to express that identity as it relates to intersectional markers such as gender, race and class (Crane, 2000; Entwistle, 2015; Worth, 2020). Where Crane (2000) argues for clothing and class relating to each other as signifiers, and enforcing control, Entwistle (2015) gives a more nuanced perspective on the function of clothing in relation to the construction of identity, as Entwistle puts it, fashion "is far too subtle to allow for direct communication of an 'agenda'" (p. 26). The tools provided by fashion to costume are therefore more subtle than simply defining a character as a fixed identity, may it be an identity related to, for example, class. Being clothing in performance, costume functions in a similar way, signalling and signifying elements of a character's identity to the audience. Class as a marker of this identity is therefore not considered herein as it relates to a character's historical position or the likelihood of said character in acquiring a piece of clothing, but rather as a costume relates and represents notions of class as it is constructed in the 20th and 21st century, which is the contemporary productional environment of the film. As this costume represents class as it is perceived in a historical context, it does so through the perspective of the contemporary context. Therefore, the class as it is constructed does not necessarily

relate to the feudal systems of medieval England (even though it does not ignore these limitations or influences, as can be seen in *Robin Hood* (2010) for example), or the classic Marxist definition of class as it relates to means of production (Marx and Engels, 1888). Instead, the class discussed herein relates to the hierarchical and cultural structures of these mythical stories of kings, knights, and outlaws, as class systems define and identify the upper and lower parts of these structures as it relates status, and thereby class, to consumption (Weber, 1974; see also Worth, 2020), where the clothing, or costume of a character functions as social control and identifier (Crane, 2000). Within the world of Robin Hood, those of higher status, and therefore of higher class, are those with the means of consumption, or the gold that Robin Hood then steals to give back to the poor. The concept of class as an identifier of character is visible in all the films studied in this thesis, but becomes explicitly addressed through costume in the social mobility of Robin/Crowe in *Robin Hood* (2010) and the many personas of Robin/Egerton in *Robin Hood* (2018).

Unlike clothing or fashion in the real world, costume is curated by a designer, but that does not make the signs of costume completely different from the signs of clothing or fashion. In *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), Errol Flynn in the leading role wears a pair of light green tights with a Lincoln green tunic and cape, which shows knowledge of the history of the character within pageantry, both in colour and style and thus establishes continuity with the mythical character within popular culture. These green tights are later abandoned by cinematic productions, such as the 2010 film, but also in the Bathurst film Robin/Egerton does not wear green at all , indicating that in the 21st century, heritage may not be as important, or perhaps that 'essences of cool' (for example, the black hooded leather jacket Robin/Egerton wears) are more important than the history of the performance. Furthermore, as Robin Hood does not have a historical original, the level of historical fidelity is inconsequential to the portrayal of a character with strong mythical attributes, despite the historical setting. The fact then of the changes of costume from 1938 to 2018 is, according to this thesis, not about a new perspective of history, but rather a new perspective of the myth, and specifically the mythical masculinity.

The costumed image presented in cinema is not only important for the creation of a perceived performed gender, but also as one of many tools of cinema to tell stories, where the palimpsestic image provides a method of untangling the stories told. Through costume, aspects of style, mood and world-building are made possible, alongside the primary functions of creating a character, as well as contributing to narrative. A piece of costume, such as the white vest top worn by Bruce Willis as John McClane in *Die Hard* (USA, dir. John McTiernan, 1988), can signal aspects of time, which is complicated in cinema as time functions in multiple ways, through wear, colour and level of dirtiness. In the example of McClane's tops, the costume designer Marilyn Vance created 34 versions of the same costume, where half were for Bruce Willis and half for his stunt-double, in different stages of destruction so as to run parallel to the narrative unfolding (Hills, 2023). However, despite the example of McClane's vest top, men's costume has, similar to men's fashion, historically been understudied, perhaps because of its association with practicality and necessity, which, according to Edwards (1997) has left the study of men's fashion neglected as a result of the prevailing gender stereotypes around men's dress. Approaching men's costume much in the same way as women's costume thus assumes that the constructs that inform women's costume, such as gender, sexuality and class, also inform men's costume, which moves away from men as different from women in the function of their clothing - even though it was not until the 1980s that men were considered to be dressing for themselves in general and for their sexuality specifically (Mort, 1996; Nixon, 1996).

Within costume studies, the primary focus has been on costume as spectacle[17] (see for example Bruzzi, 1997; Faiers, 2013; Ganeva, 2018; Petrov and Whitehead, 2018; Uhlirova, 2013), as well as a focus on women's costume, as established by the seminal work by Gaines and Herzog published in 1990, *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body* (but also Berry, 2000; Cook, 1996 and 2005). Evident from the many works on spectacular costume, this type of costume frequently figures within cinema despite how "conventional ideas about costume stipulate that they should serve the narrative and refrain from being spectacular" (Bruzzi, 1997, p.

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[17] Spectacular costume is defined by Bruzzi (1997) as costume for costume's sake, or the meaning of costume as being something different and/or separated from the narrative and plot

17). The approach to studies of cinematic costume has even so, according to Bruzzi, focused on costume in terms of narrative, and how the costume can be seen to serve the narrative. The palimpsestic image, in contrast, allows for the costume to function both to serve the narrative, and outside of narrative, without having to be spectacular, which are the two categories suggested by Bruzzi (1997). In order for the palimpsest to exist, the costume does not have to be neither spectacular or adhere to verisimilitude. Instead it contains meaning both as it relates to these perspectives, at the same time as it relates to the space and time within the image, and finally, the narrative itself. At the same time, it is informed by convetions of dress extra-texually; *Robin Hood* (2010) features a vigilante Egerton/Robin whose popular name is The Hood rather than Robin Hood, and his black leather jacket with matching hood is associated with hoodie culture as it was a social issue in Britain in the 2000s and 2010s (see chapter 8).

Considering the writing of Tasker (1993) and Jeffords (1994), who primarily study men and male characters rather than women, the body does not necessarily have to be clothed to be spectacular either. As noted by Turner (2008), bodies are the self represented in space, the object of self in space as it were, making the creation and perception of the self and one's identity inescapably linked to the body (see also Wilson, 1985). However, equally astutely noted by Entwistle (2015), the human body is a fashioned body – very rarely is the human body without any form of dress, and if it is that contains meaning in itself, such as Robin/Costner's naked swim under a waterfall witnessed by Lady Marian in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) (see subchapter 6.4.); "the social world is a world of dressed bodies" (Entwistle, 2015, p. 40). The study of a body therefore also requires a study of dress, as the body and the clothing it is associated with (if it may be lack thereof) are equal creators of meaning. The masculine, muscular bodies of the works of Tasker (1993) and Jeffords (1994) function therefore similarly to, and because they are part of, costume as spectacular, and outside of narrative, much like the costume of the mythical gangster style, as studied by Bruzzi (1997), or the superhero power (Brownie and Graydon, 2015). The dressing of the body is the way in which the body is prepared for the social world, and even though Entwistle (2015) primarily refers to the way in which bodies are dressed in lived experiences rather than on screen, the construction of characters on screen functions similarly to the way the

identity is constructed in the dressing of self. It is therefore difficult to separate the body from the clothing adorning it, as these inform and define each other, as will be seen in films such as the already mentioned *Prince of Thieves* (1991), but also in all of the films studied herein. The dressed body in space relies on the knowledge required of social individuals (see Entwistle, 2015) to recognise the decisions to inform the meaning created in costume design. Similar to the gangster, who is defined "largely iconographically, against his predecessors" (Bruzzi, 1997, p. 70), Robin Hood is also wearing mythical, iconographic costume - the green clothing, the bow and arrow, the hat or hood. Costume can, through the effect of iconographical items "substitute characterisation" (ibid., p. 76), through carrying dominant connotations, easily read by the textually knowledgeable audience. But unlike the gangster, Robin Hood does not appear in front of the mirror or in front of others in an attempt to "emulate that mythologised ideal" (ibid., p. 70); instead, the mythical appearance is assumed to be 'true' for the character and as such not 'constructed'.

Street (2001) is in agreement with Bruzzi on the possibility of costumes' function(s) outside of narrative, or as spectacle. Street writes that "film costumes can exceed the demands of the plot or historical accuracy […] offering an alternative discourse from that suggested by the 'preferred' reading" (2001, p. 6). This is especially true when it comes to costumes in historical films, where "they can extend a film's sense of time since they relate both to the period in which the film is set but also to when it was produced and released" (ibid., p. 12). Street acknowledges this, but instead points to Cook's mentioning of "bricolage" (Cook, 1996, p. 45), the act of putting together what Hutcheon and O'Flynn would call a "mosaic" (2013, p. 21) of independent 'signs' in order to create a new meaning. This would then instead enable an intertextual reading of costume, with the layers of time and culture stacked upon and next to each other, to provide possibly multiple meanings, which this thesis argues is fundamental in the creation of Robin Hood costumes.

Most importantly though, Street (2001) considers the costuming of the 'ordinary' and the functional, which would entail, for example, costume for characters in realist dramas. This is uncommon in the study of costume, while it is still

considered to be the highest function of costume as crucial for the verisimilitude and credibility of the diegetic world. The rarity of study of functionality and ordinariness of costume may also be connected with the comparative lack of interest in men's costume in relation to women's costume, as women are more often dressed by famous designers and are given opportunity within films to showcase the spectacular clothing (see for example Bruzzi, 1997, on the relationship between Audrey Hepburn and the designer Givenchy, and the costumes of *Sabrina* (USA, dir. Billy Wilder, 1954) and *Funny Face* (USA, dir. Stanley Donen, 1957), as well the multitude of work on film costume where the primary focus is the spectacular, as for example Laverty, 2013; Petrov and Whitehead, 2018).

However, costume and cinema are separate systems of representation (Gaines, 1990). In superhero cinema, for example, considerable lengths have been gone to in order to reduce the possibilities of ridicule and increase the factor of 'cool'; Batman no longer wears grey tights, nor does Superman wear his red underwear outside of his blue tights. However, the trademark S for Superman and the eared helmet for Batman, not to mention both of their cloaks, are still recurring and are arguably central to the costume. In contrast, the costume designs for Robin Hood have moved away from these visual cues; it has been several years since Robin wore green. The costume choices are therefore not only based on the gendered performance of a character, but also the intertextuality of the star persona, both of the character and the actor. A function of the star is to be looked at, and in relation to the costumes to-be-looked-at-ness (Bruzzi, 1997), the star's costume is designed to be at the centre of attention. Moseley (2005) questions whether "star dress 'disappears' against the body as 'clothes', or speaks out performatively as 'costume' or 'spectacle'?" (p.1); however the differences between these are, at least in terms of historical narratives such as Robin Hood, difficult to distinguish. The costume of the actor playing Robin Hood is both 'clothes' and 'spectacle', but most importantly, it creates layers of the character, layers of the image of Robin Hood. As such, the costume is both on and of the body, on and of the character, at the same time.

<u>2.5. Layers of genre</u>

> "Films with weak generic ties usually depend heavily on their own internal logic, whereas genre films make heavy use of *intertextual* references. The Western respects and recalls the history of the Western more than it does the history of the West." (Altman, 1999, p. 25, italics in original)

Simply attempting a discussion of genre opens up a multitude of possible critiques of the form of the cultural text, the parameters and definition of it, critiques that are discussed thoroughly in Altman (1999). However, it is not the intention of this thesis to discuss the form of cinema or the possibilities or limitations of cinematic genre as a phenomenon, but rather the limitations of genre upon a film text. Similarly to Altman's perspective on Aristotelian theory regarding poetry and genre, "[b]y accentuating poetry's internal characteristics rather than the kinds of experience fostered by poetry" (1999, p. 2) wherein the study of genre (in poetry) becomes limited - this study of cinematic genre does not approach the films in the format of action, adventure or any other generic format but rather as Robin Hood films. The generic format is here created by the experience rather than the internal characteristics of the narrative or cinematic style. Thus, the assumption of this thesis is that there is such a thing as a cinematic genre. In cinema, when the conventions of genre are played out "they become *generic formulas*" (Corrigan and White, 2012, p. 322), which can be forced by "*generic expectations*" (ibid., p. 323).

Cinematic genre functions to "stabilize an otherwise unstable film industry" (Belton, 1994, p. 115), as Hollywood historically has developed its genres in order to distil the incentives for audiences to go to the cinema. When a film has been proven successful, others like it are produced in order to achieve the same success. One of the ways in which this similarity is created is through stars, i.e. casting actors that are popular with audiences to get that audience to buy tickets, but in terms of narrative (and when stars are hard to come by), genre provides the same functionality, something that many have noticed in 21st century cinema and the many superhero films produced during the last two decades (New York Times, 2023). However, as Belton argues, "by looking at the large body of films within individual genres, we can see how those genres help to shape and are shaped by our understanding of American culture, character, and identity." (1994, p. 116), which is the perspective that informs this thesis. When making a genre film, signs

from previous films are reused, but every film is also different in order to track and develop the cultural perception of the issues portrayed in the film, as well as entice audiences to watch another film in the genre. In relation to Robin Hood films, the action-adventure films have developed from the swashbuckler of the 1930, via the historical emphasises of the 1970s and epics of the 1990s and early 2000s, to the superhero-esque production of 2018, as the desires of the audiences have shifted. Genre films use these signs to establish an intertextual relationship between themselves, but also to the outside world in order to stay relevant. The use of symbols, is thus, crucial for the function of the genre (Altman, 1999).

First published in Russian in 1928 and later published in English in 1958, Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* provides a way of approaching folk- and fairytales through the analysis of their structure. *Morphology of the Folktale* identifies and lists the events that could take place within a folk tale (narrative) without specifying the details of these events (functions), and also identifying the recurring character types, ("dramatis personae" (ibid., p. 18)). Even so, Propp's work arguably should not be taken literally when applied to other types of cultural texts, as functions within a particular story and its genre may not be identical with the functions suggested by Propp since these are based on the events of Russian folk- and fairy tales.[18] Nevertheless, the theory of functions is useful in terms of genre as it "furnishes the possibility of studying the genre as a whole, a unity, a system, and of comparing the various plots, rather than dismembering them and considering them separately" (Propp, 1978, p. 228). Meaning, then, cannot be fairly analysed or concluded without the understanding of the narrative in terms of genre and history. Studying the plots historically, that is, over time and in great number, "[o]ne discovers the historical interconnections among the plots and that forms the basis for also studying them separately" (ibid.).

In a later article, in defence of his work after it had been reviewed by European scholars such as Lévi-Strauss (1955), Propp argued, "that an identical composition can furnish the basis for many plots, and that [...] several plots have basically one

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18 Gilet (1998) critiqued the applicability of Propp's theory to fairytales of other origins than Russian, as not all functions appear in all narratives and some functions are for this reason not relevant or applicable to studies of other material than Propp's.

identical composition" (1978, p. 234), but when studied in terms of function it is clear that "[c]omposition is the constant factor; plot is the variable factor" (ibid.). Propp's ideas of compositions determined by function, to some extent separate from plot, are akin to Bakhtin's (1968) speech genres, as utterances (compositions) determined by style and structure (function) contain meaning even though the utterance as such may not be completed. The understanding of the functions, and the compositions, is also similar to Barthes's (1972) myth, as socio-culturally understood codes or series of signs. Genre and myth are thus essentially linked, in that they set and adhere to conventions.

The structuralist perspective of Propp informs this project through these ideas of genre.[19] In cinema, genre specific utterances can be the chiaroscuro cinematography of the film noir (Corrigan and White, 2012) or the muscular male bodies of action films (Tasker, 1993). In her introduction to the anthology *Gender Meets Genre in Postwar Cinema*, Gledhill (2012) argues for the similarities of genre and gender in that the past and future co-exist in both these concepts, through which they "[offer] a 'constellation' of cultural aesthetic, and ideological materials, containing [...] a more inclusive range of possibilities than allowed by ideologically driven 'readings'" (p. 4). Furthermore, Gledhill also argues that through the awareness of genre's influence upon gender, genre as well as gender is recognised "as the ground of all our imaginings and thinkings, offering both the resistances of past meanings and potential for remakings and resignifications" (ibid,, p. 11). Gender as generic is thus similar to Butler's (1990) performativity; it is imitation of imitation, expressions based on previously constructed expressions.

Nevertheless, the reoccurring functions of a genre, in this case Robin Hood films, are constructed over time, they are utilised, and function, within changing social conditions. As the Robin Hood narratives have shifted repeatedly over the almost a hundred years since Douglas Fairbanks's *Robin Hood* (USA, dir. Allan Dwan, 1922), the expectations of the myth force the cinematic productions to take certain shapes, to include certain events and characters, and thus adhere to a generic

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[19] Genre is defined in relation to Bakhtin's (1968) dialogism. As such, genre is constructed of 'utterances' or communications that have been set by social practice into set patterns and style, and thus communicate connoted meaning with those 'utterances'.

meaning-making structure. Even so, the events of the narratives and the themes of the stories as expressed through, for example, casting have changed over time, while still appearing generic. The perspectives of Propp and Bakhtin, and the idea of functions and utterances as creating meaning, are thus relevant as they will facilitate the reading of the films from a perspective of change; in omitting or introducing certain parts such as an aristocratic background for Robin/Crowe (*Robin Hood*, Scott, 2010) and Robin/Egerton's leather jacket (*Robin Hood*, Bathurst, 2018), meaning shifts, and the results are indicative of the contemporary climate within which the film is made.

There are many examples of mythical stories other than Robin Hood that have been reworked over time. The fairy tale of Cinderella for example, has much in common with the myth of Robin Hood: the constant reappearing and reimagining in cinema and other mediums, and also the political flexibility of the narrative. In the case of Cinderella, the story is constructed to fit feminist, post-feminist or anti-feminist agendas (Sibielski, 2019). Fairy tales such as Cinderella are defined by Propp (1958) through their narrative functions, which often include magical elements such as enchanted objects or magical characters such as fairies and dragons.[20] Sibielski (2019) discusses numerous cinematic versions of the character since the late 1990s, but adds the feminist perspective of studying the female representation in relation to the attributes of the fairy tale Cinderella and the portrayals of women influenced by modern gender politics concerning women in these films, a perspective that is otherwise lacking in the scholarly works read for this thesis. The reworkings of Cinderella is, thus, according to Sibielski for women what Jones (2000) argues Robin Hood is for men; a nostalgic escape to an undisputedly heteronormative, patriarchal time. In contrast to fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes's (2010 and 2011) argument, that retelling these fairy tales is a way for people to come together around shared issues and providing relief from these issues, Sibielski claims that texts such as those based on the Cinderella narrative, provide a space in which "the question of how women's empowerment is constituted and enacted in contemporary American society" (2019, p. 591) can be examined, alongside "the role that feminism does or should play in such

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[20] Further discussion of Propp's (1958) functions will be given in part 2.

empowerment" (ibid.). Sibielski's argument is limited to the reworkings of Cinderella, and as such does not assume application on other fairy tales and their reworkings. Even so, according to the different opportunities and aspirations of the cinematic Cinderellas, the myth can thus be manipulated according to culture as well as politics, just as, I argue, happens with the myth of Robin Hood.

In contrast to Cinderella, it is not gender politics[21] that is at the centre of the Robin Hood myth and is constantly reworked in new adaptations of the fairy tale narrative. Instead, it is Robin's role as a resisting, social hero, which is expressed in the more subtle changes in costume according to the way in which preferred dominant ideals of masculinity change. Even so, Robin Hood, through constant appearances, is provided with a stability of presence that, according to Sibielski via Cinderella, contains more than what is simply read within the narrative, which is a secondary palimpsestic layer negotiated in different iterations. The meanings of Robin Hood that are not foregrounded in the narrative thus function as reminders rather than nostalgic revivals, of an uncomplicated hetero-normative past, as often seen with Cinderella, or of a national heritage in the pastoral tradition, according to Jones (2000).[22]

Alongside genre, stars play a "crucial economic role" (Belton, 1994, p. 85) in the history of cinema. According to Altman (1999), stars reaffirm genre so that the audience can be confident in what they can expect from a film based on the star it is associated with: the stars "guarantee a certain style, a particular atmosphere and a well-known set of attitudes" (p. 25). Belton (1994) point out the fact that stars are multilayered, they are at once the person, the actor and the star, and have to navigate these layers in their interaction with audiences and media. Similarly to

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[21] Central to the Cinderella story is her role as a woman, through being a servant and caregiver for her stepmother and stepsisters, as well as her escape through marriage with the prince.

[22] Another mythical, masculine character, as previously mentioned, is James Bond. Bond and Robin have in common the constant refiguration within a new body, through the change in actors - a dramatic change, which (despite some media disagreement beforehand, at least in terms of James Bond) is generally accepted and uncommented by the audience. This change thus argues not for the importance of the body or actor as such, but rather the other attributes as myth-defining; hoods, bow and arrow, suit and car, for example.

how Dyer (1979) approaches stars in the seminal *Stars*, *Decoding Robin Hood* consider stars as signs, the semiotic perspective being considered in relation to the other signs of the cinematic image as it provides one or several layers to the palimpsest. However, after the fall of the studio system, the construction of stars have left the control of studios and are now in the hands of the actors or stars themselves (Belton, 1994), making the star image increasingly complex and multilayered. As Gledhill (1991) points out, textual analysis and the intertextual consideration of the star image makes possible contradictory readings of a star image, but it is a risk worth taking.

In her book *Spectacular Bodies,* Tasker (1993) studies male and female bodies seen in action films during the 1980s, and their increasing muscularity. The masculine performance, Tasker argues, is influenced by the perceived personas of public masculinities, and of the physical attributes and looks of such personas. The performances of the stars, are thus, as according to Butler's performativity theory, themselves copies of copies; as the bodies of stars such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone are defined through manipulation, construction and consumption, the creation or "fabrication of identity" brings with it a "denaturalising of the supposed naturalness of male identity" (Tasker, 1993, p. 110). If the masculinity portrayed in action films such as those starring Schwarzenegger and Stallone is perceived as representative of the performed masculinity after which other masculinities thereafter are shaped (the copy upon which other copies are made), it thus brings with it elements of visible performance and staging, which has, up until this point, not been conceived as masculine.[23]

The chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981), derived from the Greek for time and space, establishes a way in which to approach narrative settings as expressions of time and space. However, in order for the use of the chronotope to function within the analysis of cinema and cinematic imagery, these images need to be believed to be equal to that of language. Barthes's semiotics and cultural phenomenon and

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[23] In contrast to femininity, where Riviere's 'Womanliness as a masquerade' (1929) argued for femininity as a performative act as early as the 1920s.

images as language is therefore combined herein with the linguistics of Bakhtin. Thus there are several legs on which this thesis stands: cinema as language (but not in the Metzian sense but rather the Barthian, where the aspects of cinema such as space, object and narrative, are holders of meaning in a language of its own) and *a langage rather than a langue,* where *langage* referrers to the function within linguistics in terms of language, or the language that is spoken and understood by others, in contrast to the *langue*, or the speech spoken (Saussure, 1993).

Cinema, in this thesis is understood as a language in itself, where this function is interlinked with genre, as the representations of time and space positions a narrative within a generic structure, specified be a time and space. Time in the chronotope is therefore not time as duration, plot or story, but as appearing and being a product of space, which is another way to approach and consider time in cinema. Studies on narrative often consider time in terms of order, duration and frequence (see for example Genette, 1980), or time as a stylistic influence or the experience of diegetic or non-diegetic time in relation to narrative (see for example Ricoeur, 1983). The chronotope allows for the combination where time and space are 'fused' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84) together, the world is literally 'time' and 'space', and where meaning is created in the co-existence of both. Within a text or a work, one or more chronotopes can co-exist, and are dialogical with each other, but most importantly, with the outside world, 'the world of the listeners and readers' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 252). The interaction between the text and its readers create the conditions for the survival of the text and the 'continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers' (ibid., p. 254). Bakhtin (1981) argues that the sign cannot exist without its spatiotemporal context, and therefore any sign, of any nature, is meaningful as it is perceived in relation to the chronotope. For the purpose of the establishment of a method approaching cultural images as palimpsests, the influence of the chronotope is central: without it, the peeling back of layers of the palimpsest is futile as their full meaning cannot be appreciated.

Equally, the layers of the palimpsest, and the images they construct, function in a rhizomatic manner (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) as the reader forms connections with other texts and other signs. The palimpsestic image cannot be considered

without appreciating the structures of which it is a part, and within cinema those structures include those of cinematic history, as well as convention or genre. The model of the rhizome allows for the understanding of the Robin Hood palimpsest as a network, where the images presented in cinema is influenced by images in popular cultural and social life, which in turn are influenced by the images constructed in visual culture. Contemporary art practices are heavily postmodern, and through using elements of pastiche, imitation and mixing of styles to create recognisable works relating to previous cultural outputs (Allen, 2022), genre plays a defining role in making works relatable to each other, the intertext between the hypertext and hypotext is often genre, or the rejection of genre. When making a Robin Hood film within or outside of the traditional genre of action adventure films, the consideration of the intertext points to the hypertext, i.e. whether the film is to "say the same thing differently" or "saying another thing similarly" (Genette, 1982 p. 6).

According to Richards (2007), "genre films were the staple of Hollywood production in the heyday of the studio system" (p. 119), and in 1938 *The Adventures of Robin Hood* was released as a product of the Hollywood studio system. The film, starring Errol Flynn in the leading role, had to conform to the generic expectations of both the 'swashbuckler' films, but also of the Robin Hood myth. Richards (1977 and 2007) argues that the cinematic quality of the 1938 film was one of the reasons for its success, as well as specifying the reason for why it stood without competition for decades was due to the fact that it portrayed "the basic values of chivalry [...] promoting wholesome values at home and abroad, and combating at the same time Communist totalitarianism, atheism and juvenile delinquency" (Richards, 2007, p. 127). Even though the 'swashbuckler' is no longer a common genre in Hollywood cinema, the generic expectations of chivalry are equally expected in the stories of Robin Hood after 1938, with possibly the Robin Hood myth providing generic formulas for the 'swashbuckler' and not the other way around.

What Richards refers to as "the grace and colour of historical costume" (quoting himself 1977, in 2007, p. 119) while referring to the 'swashbuckler' genre and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* specifically, has arguably not survived within the Robin

Hood films since the studio system. Russell Crowe as Robin in *Robin Hood* (Scott, 2010), together with all the other characters in the film, wears muted brown, grey and green colours, and rougher fabrics of wool and linen, while the generic norm as established by films such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* calls for brighter and more luxurious fabrics such as green and purple velvets. The Robin/Flynn costume of green tights and velvet cape establishes a relationship with stage costumes such as for example the Harlequins as described by Barbieri (2017), and is as such intertextually performative as it draws attention to the staged setting of the Robin Hood film.

In contrast, the historically correct ambition of Robin/Crowe's costume (*Robin Hood*, Scott, 2010) through attempting to dress him in a way which would appear 'natural', that is appear historically correct and character-appropriate, instead positions this costume in the intertextual setting of cinematic costume and the expectations of the contemporary audience of period films. Through the rejection of these colours and fabrics, the *Robin Hood* of 2010 indicate not only its cinematic time period, that is, the 21st century as well as post-Technicolor, but also a move away from the 'swashbuckler' genre and into historic action films, while still maintaining defining motifs, such as the charming of Marion and the archery skills. This indicates that even though genres are established, and as such may appear fixed, they are as flexible as the myths upon which they are based, and these changes are expressed through costume choices.

3. Mythical layers: Robin Hood's many renditions

There is a tradition within film theorists to trace the evolution of cinema in technology (the lantern, the camera obscura) (see e.g. Bazin, 1967; Crary, 1988) and in function (Plato's cave, the dream) (see e.g. Baudry, 1975). Where the former allows for cinema to be a part of humanity's progress in the physical space, the latter does the same for the emotional or mental spaces of human beings, through the stories that are told by and thanks to cinema. While this thesis is not a project of history, the attempt to map evolution is relevant for the appearance of Robin Hood as he appears in different cultural contexts and media, and as his appearance and re-appearance are closely tied to the contemporary conditions of the way in which mythical stories are told. Unlike cinema, the form of Robin Hood cannot be traced to the late 19th century, and unlike cinema, he is neither explicitly technological nor related to a specific function other than entertainment. Even so, given that he does exist an origin is inevitable and his appearance is many things and takes many forms, political, mythical and cultural, and at different times. This chapter attempts to describe this evolution in order to provide foundational layers for the understanding of the appearance of Robin Hood in cinema. The plurality of layers to cinematic Robin is established already in the plurality of pre-cinematic Robin, and the palimpsest becomes equally multifaceted based on the layers recognized by the reader, viewer, or listener.

3.1. Robin Hood, the outlaw

Despite the popular image of a green-clad hero, a man noble both by birth and spirit, these aspects of Robin Hood's distinct character have been assembled over time without a distinct origin through the oral traditions of the Medieval Period in England and neighbouring regions. According to Knight (1994) and Phillips (2008), the name of Robin Hood (or variations thereof) first appeared in writing in criminal records as early as the 13th century, suggesting that the legendary outlaw was part of the cultural consciousness as early as the early 1200s, and then continued through the ballads and tales circulated through a spoken or sung tradition. Knight (1994) lists a man called Robert Hood who was accused of murder in 1213-16, another "outlaw 'fugutivus' named Robert Hood" (p. 262) in 1228-32, and in 1262 a man accused of harbouring thieves, becomes outlawed and

is thereafter referred to as "William Robehod" (ibid.). Similar entries into criminal and other records follow over the years, and Knight (1994) claims that these Robins appearing in medieval records have become fuel in the search for the 'real' Robin Hood, which is still on-going today. The reason for the uses of Robin Hood's name was arguably for ordinary people to associate themselves with the mythical hero, and as such possibly lend some of his characteristics to aid them whilst hiding their own identity. Whether or not they are indicative of a living man, the uses of the name point to the considerable power of the myth to create patterns in history.

Ever since the medieval performances and ballads of Robin Hood in which his persona was culturally established through word of mouth and which bled into the use as the name as an alias in the function of the 'social bandit' (Hobsbawm, 1969), Robin Hood has also commonly figured as an oppositional force if the community is threatened or corrupt. A specificity of Robin Hood's myth is the flexibility of the story even while still constrained by certain motifs. For example, though Robin Hood's antagonist may not be fixed, and the myth may be used for different political (conservative and/or radical) purposes, he is still considered to be a hero through his constant opposition to oppressive forces, whatever they may be (see for example image 2). The opposition is then performed through what are criminal and immoral acts, such as theft, deceit, and murder, but all in the name of the cause, and as such are justified. Phillips calls this "the paradox of the good rogue" (2008, p. 3); a paradox which indicates the complex nature of "issues of social good and bad, of law and resistance" and the fact that they are "rarely clear-cut" (ibid.)

Image 2: *Robin Hood shoots with Sir Guy*, Rhead (1912)

and can be an immoral act made in the name of a morally superior cause. Robin could thus "become involved in opposition to authority" of for example the sheriff or usurping royalty (Knight, 2008, p. 102), while still being loyal to the rightful king.

These aspects of his persona explain the use of the name by others as they gave an alias

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to the ones keeping criminal records in the 13th century, as described by Knight (1994). As early as in the 13th century, Robin Hood was a symbol of resistance, and using his name lent the bearer the qualities of the green/good rogue, the 'social bandit' (Hobsbawm, 1969), an association by name that lived on into the 21st century. In a study of the inmates of a Welsh prison, Beynon (2008) noticed that the inmates often identified with Robin Hood as a criminal, and used the language associated with the myth in their language; referred to their girlfriends as Marians and so on. These inmates, as convicted criminals, are resisting the authority of society and its laws, and they perceive their criminality is equated with Robin Hood's status as an outlaw, and it is as such that Robin Hood is identified. The association with Robin Hood becomes a way in which acts are justified, as they are assumed to be for the greater good, even though the greater good may be for own personal gain, economic or social. This justification through assumption is indicative of the way in which the myth of Robin Hood is pliable to fit political circumstances that at times can be contradictory.

3.2. Robin Hood, the performer

Other than as a name for outlaws, Robin Hood and his Merry Men appear "from at least the fifteenth century onwards, if not (as is likely) one to two centuries earlier, in plays and pageants" (Phillips, 2008, p. 16). Robin as a symbol of merry-making and of goodness can be traced to the character's appearance within the medieval pageants where he would "collect money for the community" (Knight, 1994, p. 99). The medieval pageants experienced a revival in the late 19th century and early 20th century in England, wherein local histories were performed in processional and episodic form in order to establish national and local identities (Bartie *et al.*, 2018).[24] In these pageants, costume became important to signify character, and Robin Hood was often dressed as or similarly to the May King or the Green Man, in a green costume and with symbols and objects of nature such as wreaths and garlands. The association came from Robin Hood's place within Sherwood Forest, but with the effect of becoming associated with the magic connected to these other mythical characters of forests. The colour green in British mythology is not only

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[24] Nottingham focused heavily on Robin Hood in a pageant of 1935, as evidence of the focus on and importance of this local connection (Bartie *et al.*, 2018).

associated with greenery and vegetation, but also fairies and elves (Lurie, 1981). Colloquially referred to as 'the little people', fairies and elves are known for their magic abilities, further connecting the colour green with magic, and, as a result, granting the wearer of the colour green magical abilities in folk traditions such as plays and pageants (Larrington, 2015). Even so, Robin Hood does not have to wear green, as can be seen both in the films studied herein as well as 19th century art (see image 3, where Robin Hood is dressed in red as well as green).

Image 3: *Robin Hood and His Merry Men Entertaining Richard the Lionheart in Sherwood Forest*, Maclise (1839)

Furthermore, the May King borrows attributes from the Green Man, "an ancient vegetation god, a hybrid of man and tree" (Larrington, 2015, p. 228), an hybridisation and personification evident in the leaves and branches which make up the Green Man's physical form. The Green Man was believed to be the protector of the forest and as such embodied notions of regeneration and rebirth, and as a part of his role as the acting agent of the forest and the land, he defended the forest against human trespass through trickery and deceit. The characters who Robin Hood has been associated with historically (the Green Man and the May King) are

like Robin Hood himself defined by their green colours and their fabrics much softer than leather. See for example Lurie's *Language of Clothes*, where green is linked to Robin Hood in the first paragraph on the colour: "It is worn, most typically, by the outlaw Robin Hood (originally, according to some scholars, Robin Wood) and his band of Merry Men" (1981, p. 200). The ability to trick others and merge back into the forest has, through the May King's kinship with the Green Man, lent mythical and magical abilities to Robin Hood through association of colour and setting, with Robin's community in Sherwood Forest, and his ability to disappear back into it to hide from the Sheriff of Nottingham or Sir Guy of Gisbourne.

The pageants and Robin Hood's appearance within them are thus fuelled by magical thinking; the apparently illogical but individually or culturally justified connection of ordinary actions with magical or supernatural effects (Rosengren and French, 2013). The pageants were also built on a consensus of the suspension of established order, where social roles where overthrown and kings such as Henry VIII dressed up as Robin Hood and through this action they became an outlaw for a day (Harrison, 2000). Through the use of myths, the illogical and arbitrary nature of magical thinking is socio-culturally justified, and through the pageant the magic is performed into being with an effect of it becoming reality, if only for a limited time. Robin Hood is for this reason related to myth as described by Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1914), wherein Frazer argues for the function of myths and their associated rituals in ancient societies as magical thinking which could change and influence the world and its inhabitants. Through myth the magical functions that are described by Rosengren and French (2013) to be primarily associated with ordinary actions are expanded onto performances, making them magical. Through providing Robin Hood with the setting of suspension of normality through pageants and festivity, he is infused with possibilities beyond normal human capabilities as a result of this association with myth through magical thinking and performance. Robin Hood has since mostly left the spatial realm of the pageant and is now instead capable of near 'magical' feats in the spatial realms of theatre and cinematic storytelling, due to these historical connections.

Even though Robin Hood lives on in pageantry, he becomes increasingly popular within theatrical performances. By the 17th century, Robin Hood had become more or less gentrified through the plays and performances of the period. His gentrification is constructed through the creation of a title (Earl of Huntingdon and/or Sir Robert of Loxley), and an estate, both of which are usually taken from him in the process of provocation by Prince John, Sir Guy of Gisbourne, or the Sheriff of Nottingham (Knight, 1994).[25] Through this process, Robin Hood thus moves away from the May King and Green Man of the earlier performances by becoming rooted in the real world of social hierarchies. Instead of still being a creature made of wreathes and leaves, he becomes closer to the people in an all-human form. Furthermore, as an aristocrat, his leadership is widely accepted; as an estate owner, he is responsible for the people living on the estate, and he is no longer an outlaw living in the forest because of his own free will, but is forced there by oppressive and illegitimate authority. Through his role as an aristocrat, Robin Hood is also more widely accepted within multiple social spheres. While Robin/Crowe the archer in *Robin Hood* (2010) can only socialise with other foot soldiers in King Richard's army, Robin/Crowe/Sir Robin the aristocrat can remain friends with his old comrades as well as move in higher circles amongst royalty, clergy and knights. As an aristocrat, Robin Hood's social power and ability to gather and lead the people dramatically increases. Whether or not a rendition of the myth portrays Robin Hood as an aristocrat is one of the ways in which the myth can be manipulated politically, as Robin Hood the common outlaw can be used to support the assumed superiority of the upper class as seen in *Ivanhoe* (USA, dir. Richard Thorpe, 1952) while Robin Hood the aristocrat has a voice in questioning the nature of and grounds for the people in power as in *Robin Hood* (Scott, 2010).

In the process of gentrification, Knight argues that "Robin's personal charity to the poor emerges" (1994, p. 8), which is an extension of the resistance of improper authority in previous performances, as seen in the appearances of Robin Hoods in criminal records, but with the added personal responsibility of nobility to their

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[25] This also occurs in cinema and television, in for example *Prince of Thieves* (1991), the Bathurst *Robin Hood* (2018), and the television series *Robin Hood* (BBC One, UK, 2006-09).

dependents. Even though Robin Hood in pageantry could collect money for the needy, it is not until he is gentrified that this becomes a central aspect of his character. The agency of the gentrified Robin Hood where he no longer is a part of the forest, but rather of social structures and society, allows for him to be real, to have a history and thus motivations. Whereas the creature of the forest needs nothing for himself as the Forest provides, and instead of facilitating the act of charity through medieval pageant performances, the gentrified Robin Hood becomes the one to ask for others to be charitable, to collect and distribute it himself.

The movement, and with it the necessary changes in costume and attributes to it fit into elite circles are similar to that of the Harlequin figure (Barbieri, 2017). Similarly to Robin Hood's pageantry costume, Harlequin's ragged, patch-worked, worn costume with ties to supernatural figures such as the Wilder Men pushes the limits of human capability. After being elevated into stage performances, Harlequin's costume becomes a tight-fitting, geometrically structured costume "reminiscent of a servant's tailored livery" (Barbieri, 2017, p. 74), which as such is defined by its service to whoever employs him. While the Harlequin remains a character to act for the pleasure of the elite through comedy, Robin Hood's movement into the elite circles as one of them emphasises the attributes previously associated with his magical capabilities as useful for the purposes of other groups than the poor. These attributes of the Sherwood outlaw of the ballads instead become natural through birth and education of the Earl of Huntingdon as a member of the aristocracy; there is no need to explain Sir Robin's proficiency with the bow and arrow as he most likely has been trained since he was a child, and he wears the costume of fine materials to match.

Barbieri's (2017) study does not detail the Harlequin's costume as it appears in the 20th century other than its influence on the clown costume, even so, the Harlequin has much in common with the gentrification of Robin's stage presence before cinema. However, since the 1950s, Robin's costume has begun to regress back into a more ragged state, possibly attempting a perceived historical accuracy, which is far away from the tights and cloaks of Fairbanks, Flynn and Greene in early cinematic performances closely related to those of theatre. As such, he appears less

like a stylised character, such as the Harlequin, but more of a real human, and can therefore, arguably be more easily identified with in later renditions.

3.3. Robin Hood, the community member

Knight suggests that Robin is a popular hero in the sense that "His reality is (…) a functional idea, and one that invites people not to identify him, but to identify with him" (2008, p. 102). In contrast, Jones (2000) argues that it is in the need to identify him that the search for the real Robin Hood has been "elusive" (p. 115), and this need to know is what continues to drive the interest in the myth. The reason for why Robin reappears is quite simple, according to Jones (2000): the nostalgic need for the past and a simple state of nationhood perceived as less problematic than the present. The influence of the myth of Robin upon English and Welsh children's literature in the early 20th century ensured that these ideas were passed on in education, ideas that take "little account of ethnic and cultural diversity" (ibid., p. 116) but reinforced the 'glorious history' of the nation and its people. While this may be true to the educational literature of the early 1900s, the cinematic versions of Robin Hood since the mid-1980s have tried to change this fact. As for example in relation to the casting of Morgan Freeman as Azeem in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) and Jamie Foxx as John (or Yahya) in *Robin Hood* (2018), the cinematic representations of the myth since the 1980s are increasingly aware of the ethnic groups within the audience and as such begin to deal with characters such as Arabs or Muslims with "glimmerings of respect" (Michalak, 2002, p. 13) in contrast to the stereotypical treatment in Hollywood history, a history that can also be traced within the retellings of Robin Hood (Martone, 2009).[26] The pastoral 'whiteness' of the medieval ballads is thus no longer necessarily representative of the communities that could be in need of an oppositional hero, and the performances of the communities have therefore undergone change, much as they did in the gentrification process of Robin Hood himself. Through the multiple representations within the cinematic image, other groups are included to a greater extent than they have been previously. Furthermore, Robin's acts of charity, which

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[26] See Michalak's (2002) article on the Arab in Hollywood cinema for the different stereotypes and categories into which such characters are put, which is further discussed in the chapter on *Prince of Thieves* (1991).

became central through gentrification, are less focused on the physical giving of money in these later film, with the exception of the Bathurst film from 2018, and more about the fight for freedom and right to choose one's own way of life and creating communities where this is possible, as the injustices Robin fights are larger than what he is capable of righting through theft of gold and jewels.

As discussed above, Jones's (2000) Robin is quite different from Knight's, as a symbol used in order to influence the public's patriotism, a use that also Martone (2009) identifies. Knight (1994 and 2008), on the other hand, paints a brighter picture, of a Robin fighting for his people and standing up to oppressors, a version of the character that can be found in a majority of the work published and produced. Even so, these attributes may not be mutually exclusive; had Robin not been perceived as a 'good' man, he might not have functioned as well as a nostalgic marker and inspirational Englishman, and as such a definition of what it is to be truly English for some. Jones and Knight thus consider the same product from two perspectives, and reach different conclusions because of this. The relationship between the concepts of masculinity and nationhood is further developed (even though not in terms of Robin Hood) in Jeffords's (1994) study of the action genre of the Reagan era, in Tasker's (1993) book on the bodies of action film stars of the 1980s, as well as by Faludi in *Stiffed* (1999), and is as such not something to disregard. After all the images of characters defined by their national identity functions semiotically in cultural language. However, as these images of Robin Hood are multi-layered in terms of nationality, it is not simply a matter of him being English, but what the notion of English-ness entails in the specific context, which as a rule is related to being righteous and loyal to the people, and sometime to the monarchy, given that the king is King Richard the Lionheart.

Similarly to the portrayal of Robin in *Robin Hood* (Scott, 2010)*,* where Robin/Crowe opposes the unjust treatment of the people through taxation and the effects of poverty and starvation through, amongst many things, advocating for the rights of all as well as stealing and planting grains for the villagers, Robin has over the years been established as an alternative to the oppressive authority, making him a resisting hero and a symbol for the people, which can explain the many figurations of him over the centuries. Through the creation of the Merry Men as an

alternative community for those who have been rejected from mainstream society, a community built on suffering and misfortune but maintained through friendship and a common aspiration to be free to choose their own lives and be treated fairly, [27] the myth enables audience identification and provides space for those who, like Robin, resist authority and/or oppression. Robin's approachability and cultural applicability as a hero can thus to some extent be explained by what Phillips concludes, that "the medieval Robin Hood differs from many medieval outlaw-heroes in being low-born and having wholly human adventures" (2008, p. 6). As the longevity of the legend into the contemporary world indicates, as well as the flexibility of the legend in changing Robin's background and main enemy, the myth can be "used and re-used to service political, ideological, and personal purposes, [which are] changing over time" (ibid.). The political flexibility can be seen in the different renditions of Robin in the cinematic productions studied here, but also in films such as *Ivanhoe* (Thorpe, 1952), based on the novel by Sir Walter Scott, wherein Robin acts as the representative of peasants' support of Ivanhoe's quest to return King Richard to the throne, a goal which Robin as an outlaw cannot reach, but a knight such as Ivanhoe can, echoing the conservative notions of the novel. Equally, Robin Hood is given more power through gentrification when it suits the narrative, examples of this can be found in the films studied herein, such as for example *Prince of Thieves* (1991) where Robin/Costner's status as the son of a lord enables the start of the film portraying him as a crusader returning from the Holy Land as well as the finale with his marriage with the noblewoman Maid Marian, a ceremony officiated by King Richard the Lionheart himself.

The myth of Robin Hood is thus like folktales, according to folklorists' own definition of the word, in that "they mix the miraculous with the natural, the near with the far, and the ordinary with the incomprehensible in a completely effortless way" (Lüthi, 1982, p. 2). A folktale is in other words grounded in places and objects familiar to people, as well as containing motifs and events relevant to people's

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[27] The classic ballad *The Gest of Robyn Hode* (estimated to be from the mid to late 1400s) describes how a knight has lost his fortune in order to save his son from a death sentence, and as such is thrown out of mainstream society, but is asked to join Robin in the forest, and through their friendship, co-operation and trust, the knight's fortune is restored and he is able to reclaim his estate (Harrison, 2000).

lives. For Robin this would be the social and geographical spaces of, rather than a mythical kingdom far away, Sherwood Forest and Nottingham, where issues of poverty and oppression as well as freedom, friendship, and love are equally present. The mythical Sherwood is according to Knight (1994) established as a pastoral ideal in 18th and 19th century plays, and as such provides an escapist function for the industrialisation of the time; the forest itself becomes a symbol of "fertility and freedom" (Beynon, 2008, p. 234) against the opposing forces of authority. As Sherwood and England on a map are real, through the logic (or perhaps, rather the magical thinking) established by the myth, so may the magical versions of them also be, magic that is reinforced and established in objects of costume. Objects such as green felt hats have a different meaning if they are bought in The Robin Hood Shop, located in Nottingham, than if they are simply ordered online.[28] Similarly, as Nottingham and Sherwood are locations on a map and therefore real, so must Robin himself be. In West Yorkshire, 'Robin Hood's Grave' is located on the Kirklees Park Estate, near the ruins of Kirklees Priory where, according to medieval ballads in *Robin Hood's Death* (ballad no. 120 in Child, 1888a), Robin was killed through bleeding by the prioress. As a final act of life, Robin shoots an arrow and asks Little John to bury him where the arrow lands (an act recreated in *Robin and Marian* (1976)). However, as the questions and answers associated with the location in Google informs the person interested in it, scans have revealed there to be no body buried in the monument (see image 4). A monument called 'Robin Hood's Grave' must contain Robin's body hundreds of years later, simply because the myth and the characters within it has become rooted in reality through repetition and magical thinking.

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[28] The Robin Hood Shop does have a shop online, but the address lends the shop its legitimacy.
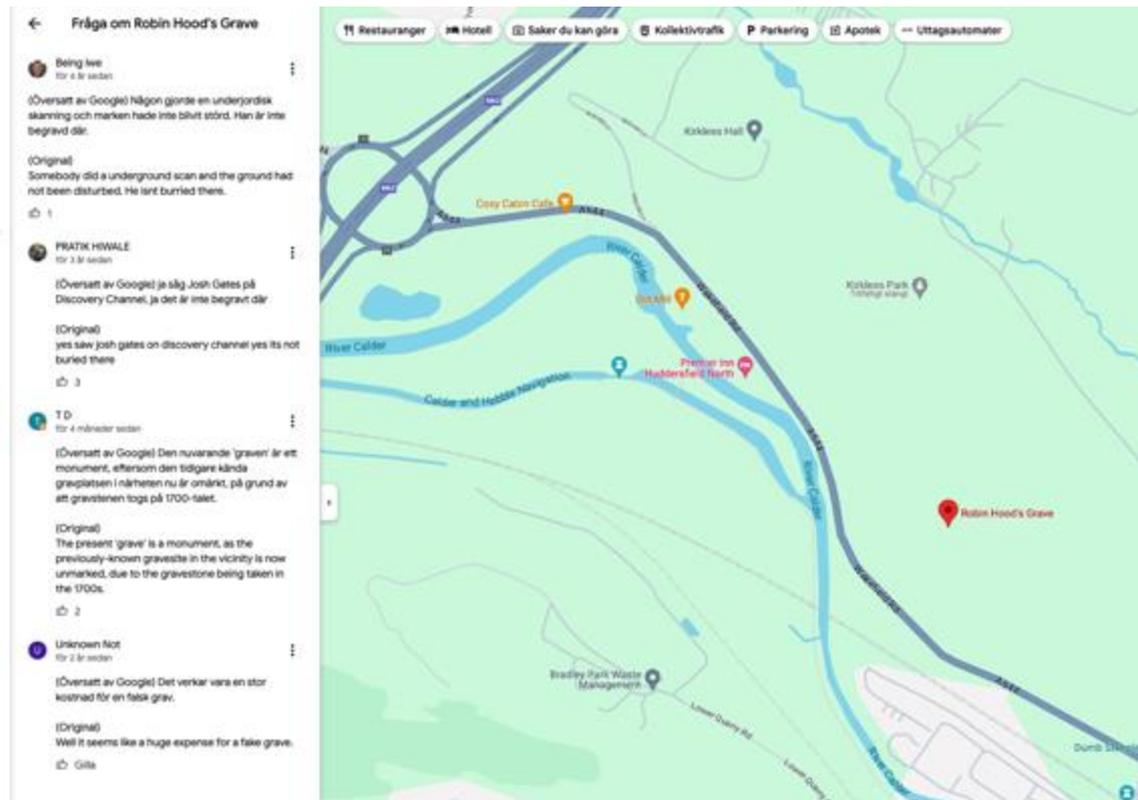
Image 4: Questions and answers for Robin Hood's grave (Google Maps, accessed 31 July 2024)

Even so, there have been alternative sites for Robin's activities other than Sherwood Forest in the myths, such as Barnsdale, or even Scotland (Knight, 2008). This is indicative not only of Robin Hood's flexibility in personal and social characteristics, but also spatial relativity; the myth can be moved and places changed without manipulating meaning as long as the themes of resistance and opposition are dominant. Further examples of this spatial relativity are films such as the Soviet production *The Arrows of Robin Hood* (Soviet Union, dir. Sergei Tasarov, 1975), and the more recent Philippine series *Alyas Robin Hood* (GMA, 2016). The international appropriation of Robin Hood does therefore argue for the applicability and resonance of the character; the characteristics and ideals presented in the myth are cross-cultural as well as not being bound by time. Arguably, despite the threat of nostalgia, the myth and re-imagination of Robin Hood provides an outlet for representations of ideals concerning heroic masculinity and national and social identity. As he is cemented in culture not only through education, as pointed out by Jones (2000), but through repetition and presence, as an ideal masculinity and ideal community which we long for and should strive to achieve, the way in which he is represented gives evidence of what

is actually perceived to compose such ideals. In the history of the Robin Hood myth, Robin has received different means with which to act out this resistance, through his gentrification, the social and geographical spaces within which he operates, as well as the costumes he is given. Robin's power lies in being identifiable, and the central theme of the myth, that of resistance, has been seen to change accordingly to social expectations of what an identifiable character is, and what he does. Through expressions and changes in costume, and thus the character that is portrayed, the contemporary expectation of a leader, an aristocrat or a peasant, a resisting force and a hero is evident. These constructed images, layered with centuries of meaning, it is the intention of this thesis to study.

4. *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Curtiz and Keighley, 1938)

4.1. The Hollywood woodlands: the (re-)creation of mythical space in early cinema

Galloping over luscious hills and jumping a tree branch conveniently placed at show jumping height, two men ride into Sherwood Forest. The man to the right and nearest to the camera is wearing bright red, and the man to the left, partially hidden by his friend, is dressed in forest green. The former is Will Scarlet (played by Patric Knowles), to which the colour of his clothing is a clue, and the latter is Robin Hood, here portrayed by Errol Flynn. Despite Will Scarlet being closer to the camera in the opening shot, the second shot moves around him and shows Robin/Flynn ride past his friend and taking up the full frame with just a glint of red behind him. The Lincoln green velvet cape slung around his shoulder billows in the wind as the low perspective close-up shows Robin/Flynn looking out into the distance off camera (see image 5). There, in the distance, the villager Much has been apprehended by Sir Guy of Gisbourne and Prince John's men, and Robin's first appearance as a hero of the people is about to take place. And he is dressed for the occasion.

Image 5: Robin (Errol Flynn) looking into the distance (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938)

In *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), the Robin Hood portrayed by Errol Flynn is a hero of the swashbuckling era. In the silent and early sound eras of cinema, Hollywood executives created 'stars' to associate with the films, and thus amongst other things increase the revenue of these films in cinemas (Dyer, 1979) (and at times, in marketing other products (Stacey, 1994)). However, the purpose of this creation was not to mass-produce stars in a standardised form, but rather to create individuals (deCordova, 1990), individuals the audience could either identify with or aspire to be or have. The star in turn is associated with a physical image created over time, one that is different and distinguishable from other star images, and as such contains other meanings and values. These values associated with a star relates to their function as 'charismatic', where a star "embodies what the discourses designate as the important-at-the-time central features of human existence" (Dyer, 2004, p. 18), and therefore might not represent lived lives of people of the time, but contemporary cultural aspirations. The Hollywood star system and the established images of stars were successful and effective enough to still resonate a hundred years later; as for example with the portrait and (star) image of Greta Garbo which has since 2016 graced the Swedish 100 SEK bank note.[29]

By the late 1950s, the studio system and the star system as it had been were falling apart,[30] and actors were left to create, or attempt to create, their own star personas (Hayward, 2013). The star, and the image/persona of the star, has since been theorised extensively, and most famously by Richard Dyer. Dyer argues that stars are important because the appearance of stars in a film "are a part of the ways films signify" (1979, p. 1), but they also function outside of the films, and at times retain the meanings of their previous film appearances into what Genette might call paratextual appearances, that is, appearances outside of cinema. Errol Flynn, the star of the 1938 Robin Hood film *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, had in the 1930s already been cast in a 'swashbuckler', "a sub-genre of the adventure film which almost inevitably acclaims a pattern of social unrest and revolution"

[29] Alongside director Ingemar Bergman on the 200 SEK note.
[30] Walker (1970) credits part of this break-down to the star of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* Olivia de Havillard and her win in California court against Warner Bros.

(Bourget, 1973, p.198) set in a historical past, but which also contains a political tone with a "chivalric ethos as a binding value system" (Richards, 2007, p. 119). Flynn's first swashbuckling appearance, *Captain Blood* (USA, dir. Michael Curtiz, 1935), saw Flynn playing the heroic Captain Blood, a physician in 17th century England who is convicted of treason after having aided a wounded rebel and is sold into slavery in the West Indies, where the rebellious but impeccable character of Blood the physician becomes Blood the pirate captain. After having refused to aid the English colonisers (as they are attacked by the French) because of the corrupt English king, Blood eagerly changes his mind as he receives word of a new king on the English throne, one who also promises to pardon Captain Blood and his men. This loyalty to the righteous sovereign that Captain Blood shows is a trait often associated with Robin Hood himself. The performance of Flynn in *Captain Blood* thus helped to establish his star persona as the character in the film was perceived; a chivalrous, dashing, albeit at times swaggering, hero with clear and righteous loyalties to an authority. The Flynn persona is thus a type of star heavily influenced by the swashbuckler hero, which retains and adds to later performances.[31] The star, in a Barthian sense, is thus a cultural myth that influences the reading of a text, and as such becomes one of the layers in the film palimpsest.

While the framing of the first shots of Robin/Flynn in *The Adventures* (1938) is both genre and star persona appropriate of Flynn's earlier performances, with close ups of Flynn gazing into the distance, it functions to establish this version of Robin Hood as a hero for the modern, contemporary era, rather than of medieval ballads and tradition as it places the body of the medieval folk hero onto the Technicolor screen of the golden era of Hollywood. In the case of *The Adventures* (1938), the star image of Errol Flynn was put in relation to the one of Douglas Fairbanks. As the cinematic representation of Robin Hood had been so firmly tied to the star image of Fairbanks due to the widespread distribution and critical

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[31] The Flynn persona also encompassed Flynn's off-screen life, where for example the trial of 1943 saw a public reception of Flynn heavily influenced by the constructed cinematic persona; 'after the verdict [where Flynn was cleared] was read, a little girl rushed up to present him a bouquet of flowers' (Burr, 2012, p. 152).

praise of the film released in 1922, a new version of Robin Hood needed to position itself in relation to the model created by Fairbanks. Thus in the mid-1930s, when Warner Bros. Studios considered a Robin Hood film of their own, they were in search of a replacement for Douglas Fairbanks, and found Errol Flynn "at a time when no one else in Hollywood seemed able to take up Fairbank's cutlass" (Schatz, 1988, p. 209). Flynn had already proven himself adept at handling the swashbuckler genre of 1930s historical adventure and action films with the production of *Captain Blood* (1935). The performance of Flynn in *The Adventures* (1938) was thus partly influenced by the generic expectations established for Flynn through *Captain Blood* (1935) but also by the association this created with Fairbanks, and ultimately the history of Robin Hood performances on and off the cinema screen and star persona of Flynn. Through these many associations, genre conventions of the swashbuckler were adhered to in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938).

Through the appearance of Robin/Flynn in a vivid green costume and in the outdoors Sherwood Forest set, the character is removed through the advances of technology from the space of tradition in theatre and pageantry into the space of modernity on the cinema screen. However, the Sherwood Forest of *The Adventures* (1938) is not English nor even European, as the majority of the outdoor scenes are shot in California. Even though the previous Robin Hood film starring Douglas Fairbanks, titled *Douglas Fairbanks in Robin Hood* (USA, dir. Allan Dwan 1922), was considered to be an early predecessor of the blockbuster format (Vance, 2008), the limitations set on cinematic staging in the studio era as well as the technological conditions of the 1920s forced the Fairbanks Robin into the grey-scale of the silent film era, leaving the viewer to imagine the vivid colours of the landscapes, villages and castles of Medieval England rather than showing them. Thus, while also confirming Robin as a hero for the modern world through the shine of Technicolor, the Flynn film also evokes traditional imagery of a historical past as reimagined in the late 19th and early 20th century as a design tool in order to establish the heritage of the main characters, at the same time as the choice of location enables the perception of England to be applied to Californian landscapes. The design and production of *The Adventures* (1938) goes to considerable lengths in order to create England for Americans, and the costuming as well as the performance of

Robin by Errol Flynn embodies this constructed perception of real historical time and physical spaces.

The power of Robin's dress in *The Adventures* (1938) was enough for it to live on, as it greatly resembles the way in which Robin is still portrayed in popular culture more than 80 years later, even though that image might at times be more associated with productions aimed at children[32] than international blockbusters. The bright green tights are so effective in creating a uniform for the Merry Men that that are parodied in Mel Brooks's *Men in Tights* (1993), where the titular Men are Robin's Merry Men, and the tights are the green tights first seen on Errol Flynn in *The Adventures* (1938).[33] Being able to don items of Robin's costume, invites the wearer into the community of the Merry Men through their uniform, and it lends the wearer the association with the political ideas of Robin, and the methods of the Merry Men.

4.2. Into Sherwood: following traditions of performance to establish continuity and context

The costuming of Robin/Flynn is itself traditional; it follows the template established through drawings accompanying early literature and art,[34] where Robin's green tights, tunic, and feathered hat have become iconic and culturally synonymous with the values of the outlaw.[35] The Technicolor image might enhance the perception of a synthetic surface in relation to the muted image of the Fairbanks black and white commercial success, but it does achieve the construction of a mythical space similar to famous works such as *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (Pyle, 1883) and *Bold Robin Hood and His Outlaw Band* (Rhead, 1912), thus bringing Robin to life in Sherwood Forest, from the silent page or illustration into moving image and cultural memory. As Robin thus is worn *on*

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[32] See for example the Disney version of the myth, *Robin Hood* (1973).

[33] The green tights and tunic is also the result for a internet search for Robin Hood costume.

[34] See for examples Maclise's *Robin Hood and His Merry Men entertaining Richard the Lionheart in Sherwood Forest* from 1838, finished a hundred years before the premiere of the Flynn film.

[35] See for example costumes in video games such as *The Sims 4: Cottage Living* (2021), meme culture, comics etc.

the body of Australian movie star Errol Flynn, the image and perception of Robin is inescapably linked to the form of Flynn through the first Robin Hood Hollywood film in colour.

While Robin/Flynn's costume is a version of previous images of the character, it is able to transform Robin into a creature of the forest and the English landscape that drawings, theatre and the previous cinematic version starring Fairbanks, were unable to, through the vivid and moving Technicolor images of Hollywood cinema. As Robin/Flynn appears in the films, he does so out of the green hills and into the forest; he emerges as a part of the countryside and of the land. Riding alongside his friend Will Scarlett, the bright green of Robin/Flynn's costume and the landscape is set against the scarlet of Will's costume, the vivid colours grounding Robin/Flynn's belonging in the natural landscape of the woodland.

As he emerges from Sherwood Forest, Robin is the epitome of the hunter and the forester, the man who can live of the land from which he came. His weapon is famously the bow, and his skill with it is remarkable, as shown in the archery contest scene in, amongst many other Robin Hood films, *The Adventures* (1938) as well as in a medieval ballad (ballad no. 152 in Child, 1888b), positioning him as a hunter rather than a soldier as he rarely carries a sword. In *The Adventures*'s (1938) opening sequence, Much the Miller's son shoots and kills a deer, an animal he is forced to hunt and kill because he is unable to feed his family in another way due to the oppression of the Saxons by the Normans. As he is about to be arrested by Sir Guy of Gisbourne for this crime against the crown, Robin/Flynn swoops in with Will Scarlett and saves him. Robin and Much both blend into the green and brown colours of the scene, while Sir Guy and the Normans do not in their metallic and grey hues, visualising the oppositional forces at work; the values of the forest, of rebirth and balance, against industry, oppression and exploitation (see image 6). After the run-in with Sir Guy, Much joins Robin's Merry Men, after which Robin/Flynn becomes the provider, embodying his role as the ultimate hunter and forester, relieving Much of the responsibility to provide for his own family by entrusting that task to Robin. Robin/Flynn is thus of the land in a way the ordinary men (the villagers) of the Merry Men are not – he controls the forest as a spirit of the same – and is able to give to the people what they cannot take for themselves.

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For the Saxon people who have been forced to live of the land in a way the richer Normans have not, he is thus the ultimate leader.

Image 6: The metallic Sir Guy (Basil Rathbone) speaking with the soft Robin Hood (Errol Flynn) (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938)

While the film was shot outside of Los Angeles in Chino (Hark, 1976), making the hills not English nor even European, the rural and forest spaces of Robin/Flynn are established through pre-established notions of the colours and appearance of England, as well as Flynn's persona as portraying Englishmen. The space of Sherwood in *The Adventures* (1938) is thus only "England" and "English" because the existence of Robin/Flynn within the space. The power of Robin as meaning-maker is thus not only limited to the meaning of costume, but also the influence of space, and arguably the construction of temporality through technological means. While the film does have an opening sequence wherein the historical context is established as being of the time of Richard the Lionheart through the opening titles, the medieval-esque mise-en-scéne but most importantly the body of Robin himself further functions to reinforce the notion of historical drama and time.

While being a part of the forest from the opening sequence, Robin/Flynn is not (yet) dressed to blend in into the Sherwood space before he is outlawed. The brown costumes of the peasants achieve camouflage more successfully as the brown hues do not shine in the Technicoloring, in contrast to the brilliant green of Robin's tunic as well as the decorative studs along the edge of the sleeves sparkling as they catch the artificial production lighting. Instead, Robin appears to be of the forest through the greenery surrounding him, he is not grounded in the earth and functionality of the wooden brown, but is moving and giving life through his similarities with the leaves. As he is outlawed by Prince John, and forms his guerrilla community in Sherwood Forest, he removes many of the items that draw attention - the studded tunic, the velvet cape – and dons more simple textures in deep browns, while still keeping his green tights. These removed items are a rejection of class, as Robin of Loxley, Robin/Flynn is a landowning Saxon nobleman, but as the outlaw Robin Hood he is more or less without social class, while still having considerable social capital through ideology and the perception of his character.

Furthermore, the metallic shine of the studs and the bright green colour of the tunic, evokes the colours and textures of the Norman armour, where the primary colours of heraldry and metallic shine of chainmail and helmets stiffens the bodies of the Normans. With softer, earthier tones, Robin/Flynn moves from the mechanical stiffness of the Normans and the upper classes, and into the natural and rejuvenating values of nature. Robin/Flynn is thus not *in* Sherwood, but *of* Sherwood, where the Forest is as much part of him as it is of the landscape. The film then functions to tie Robin/Flynn to the tradition of the Green Man, the creature or spirit of the forest who embodies fertility and life. Equally, the green colour of Robin's costume echoes his ability to be more than human, to embody the ideals of the good outlaw, as well as the near-magic ability to change the world for the better.

4.3. Robin/Flynn, the acrobat: physicality, physics and fighting

The materiality of the costumes, the softness of Robin/Flynn's fabrics, as they are framed alongside the rolling hills and the foliage, and the sharpness of the steel

grey helmets and chainmail of Sir Guy and the soldiers of Nottingham separate these characters into the groups to which they belong, the Normans of Prince John and the Saxons of Robin/Flynn. Even so, due to the tight fit of the tights and the short tunic Robin/Flynn is wearing, the body of Robin is sharply defined against the environment, the shape of his legs against the bright blue sky as he swings through the air (see image 7). Robin/Flynn, and his men as they wear similar costumes, "are portrayed in natural surroundings and are characterized by spontaneity of action and unrestrained motion; they generally create a dynamic mass within the frame" (Hark, 1976, p. 7). The aerial feats of Robin/Flynn are a cinematic circus performance, placing his acrobatics within an intertextual context that has been woven into and through cinema since its invention. According to Stephen Knight, Douglas Fairbanks was persuaded to take on the role of Robin in the 1922 film when the director Allan Dwan "showed Fairbanks how a series of hand-holds" (1994, p. 222) and rails allowing Fairbanks to climb the set and "almost magically, slide down it" (ibid.) The first half of the film came to focus on the spectacular and extravagant crowd scenes of jousts and army marching, while the second half came to focus on Fairbanks's Robin "the prankster gymnast" (ibid., p. 223). Fairbanks's physicality and bodily skill transferred onto the contemporary perception of Robin Hood: the socio-political bravery of the rebel was embodied in his daring and unrestrained flight through the air. In *The Adventures* (1938), this essence of character needed to be continued, and Robin/Flynn flies through the air more than once, a feat "spatially symbolic of birds yet metaphoric of gods" (Tait 2005, p. 3). Despite this association with power and freedom through birds and gods, Tait (2005) describes the risk of male acrobats and aerialists in the late 19th and early 20th century appearing too feminine through the focus on their movements and bodies, resulting in these bodies having to appear "macho" (p. 4) in increasing the muscularity and daring of the performances (while also reducing the roles and thus status of female aerialists). Through this fear of the feminine, the muscular body becomes central to the perception of the masculinity of these performers, and in Robin the muscular body is highlighted in the snug fit of the green tights as the costumed body is an indicator of identity (Entwistle, 2015). Furthermore, the brave flight through the air does not only show the masculine body and thus character (enforcing masculinity as capable, possible in relation to the incapable non-masculine if masculine is to believed to be in opposition to non-

masculine (Connell, 1995)), but it can also only take place in open spaces where a rope or a chain can swing from one end of the frame to another. These open spaces, specifically Sherwood Forest, provide a setting reinforcing the perception of freedom in the flight, while also being highly associated with men and masculinity (Löw, 2016). Here space, object and action participate in the palimpsest of masculine freedom and bravery.

Image 7: Robin Hood (Errol Flynn) smoothly landing after swinging into frame on a leaf-wrapped rope (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938)

The softness and fit of Robin/Flynn's costumes try to be persuasive as ordinary and natural for the forest space in which they appear. Even though the fabrics of the costume are soft, they indicate a sleekness through streamlining the silhouette against the firm shape of Robin/Flynn's body, which gives him materiality, shape and momentum within Sherwood and in relation to the bulky forms of the Normans. In contrast, the armour of the Norman soldiers and Sir Guy exaggerates the size of their bodies as the tunics flow around their legs, and the chainmail enlarges the width of their arms, making them appear slow or sluggish. Envisioning Basil Rathbone swinging through the air in his costume as Sir Guy of Gisbourne does not invoke the same mythical air of heroism as the green-clad body

of Errol Flynn, simply due to the bulky or sleek costumes they are dressed in. In later Robin Hood films, such as *Robin Hood* (2010), Robin's association with armour signals his masculinity through its relation to strength and violence, while in *The Adventures* (1938), it is rather the lack of armour that highlights his capabilities. The comedic effect of the tights (which, for example, is central to the Mel Brooks' film *Men in Tights* (1993)) is avoided by Robin/Flynn through their relationship to movement, and freedom as such. Within the image of Robin/Flynn the stiffness of armour is not possible as it would negate the other layers.

Similar to the way in which the colours of the costumes place the characters within contexts, so do the shapes and forms that they strike. The smooth, narrow tights and the looser tunic give Robin/Flynn an air of flexibility, a physical trait he even shows in his acrobatic flight through the air. As a character he becomes flexible in the sense of adapting to circumstance, but like the firm muscles underneath the fabric, the ideological conviction hides under the surface, signalling him a strong but brave and leader, where the body becomes the sign of his virtuous attributes (Baudrillard, 2005). Sir Guy, on the other hand, in his bulky armour and well-groomed moustache, looks rigid and mechanical, in turn connoting the industrial churn of political oppression and the heavy-handed elitist leadership. The costumed body, and in the case of Robin/Flynn, the muscular male costumed body, becomes a sign for the values associated with the many layers of the palimpsest, where the diegetic body adds layers to the intertextuality. The physicality of this Robin Hood, as it is highlighted through the tightfitting clothing, becomes the symbol later Robin Hoods need to navigate, either through rejection or acceptance.[36]

The apparent impossibility of heroism dressed in chainmail in *The Adventures* (1938), is not in relation to Sir Guy/Rathbone's actual physical abilities, as they are later proved to be adequate enough for a swordfight with Robin/Flynn in the film's finale, nor is it necessarily related to the chainmail as such, as in later films,

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[36] The acceptance of the silhouette has become increasingly associated with parody, see for example *Men in Tights* (Brooks, 1993) but also *Shrek* (USA, dirs. Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, 2001).

Robin/Crowe wears this type of armour multiple times while retaining his protagonist status and Robin Hood qualities. Instead, it is both the shape of the chainmail on Sir Guy/Rathbone as well as the space in which the chainmail is worn which constructs its meaning through layering. In Sherwood, Robin's woodland realm, metal armour is not as suitable as it is within the stonewalls of Nottingham Castle. Rather, it is the softer leathers, suede, linens and cottons of Robin/Flynn and his men that are not only sourced from nature, but appear natural in the organic space. It could therefore be argued that the reason behind Errol Flynn wearing this specific form of costume in *The Adventures* (1938) is not necessarily because he is portraying Robin Hood, but rather because the film primarily places Robin within Sherwood. The costume of the forester is used and emphasised in *The Adventures* (1938) in contrast to other versions of Robin Hood because Robin/Flynn is in and very much of the forest. Robin/Flynn being a part of the forest through the use of fabrics, textures and items of costume is again a layer within the palimpsest that later versions have to navigate. Considering the 2010 film with the Robin Hood version of Robin/Crowe, a Robin firmly rooted in his relationship with nature (while not necessarily Sherwood Forest), the use of fabrics resonates with the choices made in *The Adventures* (1938). The wools and linens of Robin/Crowe places him within the forest, and as someone who knows the forest, and they also become a way in which Robin/Crowe states his power; he tells the boys of Sherwood forest that he can teach them how to survive in the forest, where their need to "stay clean" (*Robin Hood,* 2010) is essential.

4.4. Groups and uniforms: being visually and politically uniformed

The dichotomy between the Saxons and the Normans is introduced in the opening minutes of *The Adventures* (1938), where the opening titles for plot context describe the Norman barons as giving aid to Prince John for him to be able to seize the throne in King Richard's absence, at the cost to the 'luckless' Saxons. The titles are followed by the prologue scene, wherein Prince John (Claude Rains) asks Sir Guy of Gisbourne (Basil Rathbone): 'How have the dear Saxons taken the news [of King Richard's kidnapping]?', positioning the prince of England in opposition to parts of its population. The opening sequences of *The Adventures* are careful to inform the (mostly American) primary audience of this conflict between medieval English ethnic groups, a conflict which in the 19th Century became central to the

Robin Hood myth.[37] The opposition of these groups, and the oppression of the Saxons by the Normans, is further embodied through the groups of actors, where the former are dressed in the greens and browns of Robin/Flynn and the latter in the silvers and metallics of Prince John and Sir Guy of Gisbourne. These visual cues as well as the political dichotomy run throughout the film, as early as in the scene in which Robin/Flynn meets Sir Guy for the first time: Robin/Flynn in greens and browns and the Saxon Much (who later becomes one of the Merry Men in green) only in browns, while Sir Guy and his knights are in primary red, yellow and blue, and metallic silvers and greys. However, while Robin/Flynn's best friend Will is defined by the scarlet of his surname, the red of Will is not enough to associate him with Sir Guy and the Normans, partly because of his association with Robin/Flynn but most importantly because of the lack of both metal and metallics as well as the simpler cuts, without embroidered embellishments.

Image 8: Robin (Errol Flynn) entering Nottingham Castle with one of the King's stags (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938)

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[37] Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), where Robin Hood helps the Saxon knight Wilfred of Ivanhoe, is crucial for this relative simplified and romantic perspective of the Medieval English political landscape.

After the initial altercation with Sir Guy of Gisborne in Sherwood Forest in the early scene, Robin/Flynn steps out of the Forest into Nottingham castle, wearing the green clothes of pageants and folk tale, freedom and movement, with a deer slung across his shoulders (see image 8). Hark (1976) points to the people of Nottingham castle as "rigid and artificial" (p. 7), and the space in which Robin/Flynn steps with the stag over his shoulders is industrially grey, with "geometrical symmetry" masking a politics of "sadism and greed" (ibid., 9). In her article, Hark (1976) argues for the film as allegory and a rallying call for the resistance to fascist movements in 1930s Europe. According to Hark (1976), the film is explicitly political, and a contribution to the contemporary debate on ideology surrounding the brewing conflict in Europe and how it would and should affect the US. Robin/Flynn's and the Merry Men's Sherwood heroics and fight to re-establish the "humanitarian values" (ibid., p. 16) of freedom and equality (according to the dictated class structures of King Richard the Lionheart's England) that are taken away by the oppressive rule of the Normans is an allegorical call for Americans to take a stand against the fascist movements in Europe. In contrast, Sherwood Forest is a wholly masculine space in *The Adventures* (1938) not because of the rigidity and symmetry of the space, and thus the fascist undertones of the Normans, but rather because the men allowed in are part of a brotherhood. The politics of male friendship in the forest are built on notions of fraternity (Derrida, 1997), where men are brothers because they are all sons of a higher power, such as the Christian God, or in Robin Hood's case, outlawed sons of Sherwood. Derrida questions the patriarchal perspective of the link between friendship and brotherhood in *Politics of Friendship* (1997), and points to the lack of women in the space that have become central to the notion of brotherhood, such as the battlefield of war (Devere, 2005). This critique may very well also apply to Sherwood as a space of brotherhood, as no women are allowed there either unless associated with the leader Robin. The brotherhood of the men in the forest is united under a hierarchical structure, which, according to Derrida (1997), becomes a secular concept of politics where democracy is equality in action, that results in friendship (fraternity/fraternisation). The brotherhood of the forest is therefore ideological; it is the acknowledgement of a leader but is built on the democratic values of the choice of that leader – Robin leads the Merry Men

not because he is born into a title, like Prince John, but because the people deem him the most worthy to lead them, a perception enforced by his appearance where the texture and cute of the fabrics and green of his costume is a little more refined, a little more polished than those of the Merry Men making him one of them while still singling him out in the band. The women of Sherwood, if indeed there are any, have no voice in this brotherhood (as they are not men), and therefore have to follow the androcracy of the forest. The space of Nottingham Castle exists in opposition with the space of Sherwood, and therefore invokes the opposite values; Normans repress freedom and equality in the quest for power and control, their armours and metallic costumes visualising the rigidity of the system and people underneath. Nottingham Castle functions as a reminder for the contemporary viewer of what their own lives can become if the freedom and equality of Sherwood is erased by fascist rulers. It follows, then, that the Robin/Flynn costume becomes an act of resistance.

If the politics of *The Adventures* (1938) is considered to at least have attempted to influence international macro politics in the 1930s, the gender politics is of an equally macro level, but is not fully recognised as such by Hark (1976). Instead, the gender politics of *The Adventures* is portrayed as innate to the politics of ideology; Robin/Flynn's freedom-fighting hero is portrayed as virile, charming and handsome, while Prince John and Sir Guy are strict, authoritarian, condescending and ultimately the losers of the story, with "matching visual images" (Hark 1976, p. 17). The distinction that Hark (1976) describes, as well as that which has been detailed above, creates two groups out of the characters within the film: the Normans and the Saxons, and their respective characteristics, a distinction which essentially creates uniforms to be worn in the fictive Medieval England of *The Adventures* (1938)*. Creating a distinction between the official uniforms of government forces and the revolutionaries through use of colour, cloth, or items of dress can be traced to the French Revolution (Craik, 2015) where the use of colour visualised the difference between the revolutionaries and the system against which they rebelled. Wearing items and/or colours of resistance continuously reappears in social and cultural contexts (Tynan and Godson, 2019), such as the Suffragette colours of purple, white and green in the early 20th Century UK, and the Palestinian *keffiyeh* as a symbol of Palestinian nationalism and support for

Palestine in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Given these continued political meanings of revolutionary items, it is interesting to note the ridicule the Robin Hood green tights have been treated with since the mid-20th century (see for example *Men in Tights* (Brooks, 1993). Green tights are thus no longer associated with a fight against oppressors, arguably because of their association with an obsolete form of masculine expression.[38]

In *The Adventures* (1938) the visual difference between the Norman soldiers of Prince John and the Saxon Merry Men of Robin Hood is inescapable through the use of colour palettes, where the soldiers wear metallic greys for their chainmail (which really is painted fabric and not metal at all), and the bright greens and brown of the Merry Men, colours much more associated with the life and plenitude of Sherwood Forest in contrast to the cold stone and metal of the Nottingham Castle. Repeatedly within work on uniforms, uniforms are often described to have originated from military styles of dress (Tynan and Godson, 2019). Robin Hood and his men are not necessarily military, but might resemble a militia, or guerrilla group, and for that reason their costume may fall into the category or type of uniform associated with violence, war and the nation state, while still appearing apart from it as a group of resistance. However, as the softness of the uniform is exaggerated in relation to the hardness of the Norman uniform, the association of violence is removed. As they do not wear armour, they are not prepared for battle, and therefore not expecting violence.

However, the association of green to plenitude and the cornucopia of life in the forest clashes with the group appearance as the Robin Hood/Merry Men costume is also a uniform through it being *uniform*. The Merry Men wear what Robin wears, they are all in the same palette of greens and browns, and the same textures of wools, linens and sometimes cotton. The only exceptions to this uniformity of dress are within the inner circle of Robin/Flynn's; Will Scarlett, Little John and Friar Tuck, the former two wearing accents in red and blue respectively, while the Friar wears his soft brown habit. Dressing the Merry Men in uniforms orders this disordered group of peasants into a militia strong enough to resist and overthrow

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[38] See for example the chapters on *Robin Hood* (2010) and *Robin Hood* (2018).

the current system. Providing them with uniforms lends them not only the hardening of the body and self into a unified whole (Tynan and Godson, 2019), but it also lends the individual the attributes of the group, and most importantly, the model for the group: Robin Hood. The soft form and materials of the costume rejects the hardening of bodies associated with military clothing, but still enables the form of a unified whole; strength, in Sherwood Forest, lies in numbers and through aligning oneself with Robin/Flynn and his quest for freedom. The soft green tights and tunics do little to protect the wearer from the swords, spears and arrows of Prince John's men (ironically, neither does the painted knitwear imitating chainmail of the Norman's soldiers). As Tynan and Godson (2019) emphasise, uniforms and their design exists "as a means of exercising and contesting power" (p. 2), but is a fundamentally social and cultural construct, as is all costume. Equally, the uniformed body indicates a uniformed self (Joseph, 1986), that is, an ordered and disciplined self, and as a result in a group of uniformed bodies, an orderly and disciplined community. This effectively communicates itself in *The Adventures* (1938) and Robin/Flynn's ability to order a heterogenous group of peasants into a unified community with a common goal. As this goal aligns with Robin's they take after his costume, making the green dress of the noble man of the forest the uniform of the Saxon resistance. The creation of the uniform is thus to create order in a disordered world (Tynan and Godson, 2019), and embodied in- and out-groups of those who are with or against you, and as a result identifies which fights are yours to fight.

The rejection of the hard body of the semi-fascist portrayal of the Norman soldiers (Hark, 1976), questions what power Robin/Flynn and his men align themselves with as members of a resistance movement, and to some extent, a guerrilla group. Robin/Flynn's is not the power of force and violence, of structure and rigidity, but it is a power of bravery and strength, and especially strength in numbers, which the uniforms of the Merry Men enhance and embody. Later on in *The Adventures* (1938), after Robin/Flynn has taken his place as the leader of the Merry Men of Sherwood Forest, the outlaws ambush Sir Guy and the Sheriff of Nottingham on their way through Sherwood, and take them back to their camp. At this point, Robin/Flynn and his men have all acquired the uniform for outlaws; green tights, green shirt and brown tunic and boots, with brown or green feathered hats.

Robin/Flynn is also wearing a green, pointed hood over his shoulders. In contrast to the previous costume worn by Robin/Flynn, the outlaw uniform does not have any decorations, and as such indicates the simpler way of life of the outlaws. It also indicates Robin/Flynn as an ideological leader with the Merry Men following his example, as they imitate the simpler version of Robin's costume rather than adopting another uniform. While the Merry Men's uniform is imitating Robin/Flynn's forest costume, but Robin/Flynn's status as leader and distinct from the others is still evident in items of costume associated with him: the green hood. As they enter the camp, the Merry Men dress Sir Guy and the Sheriff in wreaths and rags, referring to the history of pageantry and performances of the May King, but in this scene this is used to ridicule the Normans as an act of resistance to their suppression of the Saxons through emphasising their difference to the Merry Men through non-uniform dress while denying the safety of the Norman costume (and group belonging) in their own costumes (see image 9). Much discussion of uniform is about the creation of structures and hardened bodies (see for example Tynan and Godson, 2019). However, when the function or design of the uniform is the opposite – when the uniform highlights the softness and the vulnerability of the body through emphasising the legs, exposing the arms and neck, the uniform becomes less of a symbol for physical structure, but more of ideology and social practice. Through removing the hardness of the armour and chainmail of the Normans, and breaking up the lines of their bodies (individually) with rags, the form of the Normans becomes distorted and their bodies (collectively) lose their structure. Unlike the closer fit of the Robin Hood uniform, the rags hide the Normans' bodies underneath rough and varied textures instead of highlighting the body and its capabilities. The Robin Hood uniform removes symbols of class as it relates to wealth (Weber, 1974; Worth, 2020) through the change of fabrics, colours, and fits, as this definition of class is useless in the forest as a place of freedom and brotherhood. However, the rags given to the Normans emphasises the existence of class symbols in the armour (sparkling with jewel tones) and heraldry of their tunics, symbols of higher social status that are replaced by ones of a lesser sort, and are more like the Saxons they are persecuting. The costume functions here as a form of social control in relation to class (Crane, 2000); the symbols of the Robin Hood uniform are subverted in the rags, and effectively ridicules the appropriation of it by those not deemed worthy as they are primarily

oppressors but visually preoccupied by worthless distractions, such as sartorial class symbols rather than hierarchy based on true leadership and freedom.

Image 9: Robin (Errol Flynn) hosting a Sherwood Forest feast (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938)

The Forest scene inverts the previous scene in which Robin/Flynn enters with the stag, where the structure and order of the Norman celebration is contrasted with the organic flow and jolly chaos of the Merry Men. In the castle scene, it is the green clad Robin/Flynn who stands out from the uniformed mass of bodies in chainmail and metallic hues, but unlike the difference of the flowers and rags Sir Guy is dressed up in, Robin/Flynn's costume is his own and therefore functions as difference through the resistance and rejection of Norm(ans) rather than difference as ridicule. Standing on the table in the forest, with his Merry Men before him and Sir Guy, the Sheriff and Lady Marian on either side, the entire figure of Robin/Flynn is in frame, and the viewer is allowed to study his costume as well as how the costume fits his figure. The posture is similar to Daniel Maclise's 1839 painting *Robin Hood and His Merry Men Entertaining Richard the Lionheart in Sherwood Forest*, which also features a Sherwood feast where Robin presides. The performance thus indicates an awareness of the Robin Hood performative legacy

and refers to the origins of the aspects of the genre. More importantly, however, this scene, as the inversion of the scene in Nottingham Castle, shows the structure of the forest community, and the capability of the Saxons to push the Normans away from power as they are equally as ordered but markedly free. Their uniforms provide a unified front, and they no longer appear as disorganised peasants, but a unit with structure, something that was lacking before the appearance of Robin/Flynn. Here he provides leadership through structure, where the structure is embodied through uniform, giving the people a common goal and a means to achieve it.

4.5. The Lady Marian: costume indicating relationship

While both Sir Guy and the Sheriff of Nottingham are dressed up in pageantry-esque costume for the pleasure of the Merry Men and Robin/Flynn, Lady Marian (played by Olivia de Havilland) is allowed to keep her dress, including a wimple, veil and jewelled belt and cape buckle, despite these latter items seeming ripe for the outlaws to steal. Even though Marian at this point is quite sceptical of the Saxon outlaw, her jewels match the bright green of Robin's shirt and hood, and the metallic undertones of her long-sleeved dress also carry hints of green (see image 10). The use of colour in this scene between Robin/Flynn and Marian is facilitated by Technicolor, and without this contemporary, highly fashionable technology, the clue to the future shift in loyalties of Marian would be lost. Furthermore, the fact that Robin/Flynn allows Marian to keep her clothing while the men of her party are stripped and ridiculed is another way in which the expected chivalry of Robin/Flynn in allowing a beautiful woman to keep her dignity is expressed through costume. It would be hard even in later versions of Robin to picture him expose Marian to such a treatment, separating the treatment of Marian from what could be argued to be the 1930s gender ideology to the character and behaviour expected of Robin Hood of his love interest.[39]

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[39] Considering the introduction of Lady Marian in later versions of the myth, the construction of Robin Hood as a gentleman is a later one (Knight, 1994).

Image 10: Marian (Olivia de Havilland) and Robin (Errol Flynn) speaking in Sherwood Forest (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938)

This era of Robin Hood is however the last to have a uniformed group of Merry Men. By the 1970s, the members of the group around Robin are dressed individually, costumers perhaps noticing the way in which resistance movements often rejected markers of group identity in order to protect the members of the groups from outer harm (Craik, 2015). Even so, the notions of masculinity still live on in the portrayals of Robin and the ordering of the Merry Men through its association with uniforms. The costumes in later Robin Hood films are no longer uniform as in of a unified form, but they resemble uniforms or military wear. Robin becomes in the later years of the 20th century more explicitly a man of violence, however peaceful and well-intended. Furthermore, Robin/Flynn's skill as a forester and acrobat, thus his coexistence with Sherwood Forest, is continued and reworked into other attributes that highlight him as freedom embodied.

The power of Robin's dress in *The Adventures* (1938) was sufficient to set a kind of costume blueprint, as it greatly resembles the way in which Robin is still portrayed in popular culture more than 80 years later, even though that image might at times be more associated with children's television than international blockbusters. The

bright green tights are so effective in creating a uniform for the Merry Men that they are parodied in Mel Brooks' *Men in Tights* (1993), where the titular Men are Robin's Merry Men, and the tights are the green tights first seen on Errol Flynn in *The Adventures* (1938).[40] Being able to don items of Robin's costume, invites the wearer into the community of the Merry Men through their uniform, and it lends the wearer the association with the political ideas of Robin, and the methods of the Merry Men.

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[40] The green tights and tunic is also the result for an internet search for "Robin Hood costume".

5. *Robin and Marian* (Lester, 1976)

5.1. Hollywood in the post-studio era

In the development of the Robin Hood mythology before and during the 19th Century, it has become central for Robin to motivate his resistance to the oppressive authority of the Sheriff of Nottingham and/or Prince John, with the defence of the people and villagers of Nottingham for the return of King Richard. In *The Adventures* (1938), Robin's acts of resistance are rewarded when the king returns; his status as an outlaw is removed and he is allowed to marry Marian, the king's ward, a resolution which is echoed in the 1991 film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991). The Richard Lester film from 1976, in contrast, subverts the expectations of the rewards, and the story is set adrift without an expected ending as King Richard dies early on, and especially as the king rejects all the romanticised idealism of England. Instead, Robin and John return to England without a clear purpose, other than a wish and a need to return.

In the period following the reorganisation of the Hollywood studio system in the 1950s and 60s as the result of threatened collapse, the style of Hollywood cinema changed to appeal to a new generation of cinema audiences of this period (Belton, 1994). While the major Hollywood studios still produced films that became box office successes and later classics, such as *The Sound of Music* (USA, dir. Robert Wise, 1965), the studios struggled with the decrease in cinema attendance; the large productions did not earn at the box office what they had cost to produce and the Hollywood studios were in crisis (Bordwell, 2006). Instead, low-budget and independent productions that in previous years would have been perceived as B films[41] were proven successful, such as spy movies, most famously the Bond films that made Sean Connery an international star (Thompson and Bordwell, 2010). As a result, the style of Hollywood cinema became influenced by the style of films that were commercially successful in this period, which were made in countercultural

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[41] During the 1930s, the movie theatres often screened two films consecutively in order to attract the audience with the experience of getting two films in one screening. The second film usually had a smaller budget, and was referred to as the B film (where the first film was the A film) (Thompson and Bordwell 2010).

environments and often had realist aesthetics and location filming (such as for example *Easy Rider*, USA, dir. Dennis Hopper, 1969). These elements were picked up by major Hollywood productions and the controlled environment of the studio lot was questioned (Belton, 1994; Bordwell, 2006). Hollywood had used location filming previously (as in, for example *The Adventures* (1938)), but the choice of location was often made based on production convenience (it being near Los Angeles) rather than artistic or narrative style or accuracy (it looking like the place it was trying to represent). Furthermore, outdoor scenes were often built in studios, in order to control the environment fully (Nottingham Castle in *Robin Hood* (1922) is completely built indoors, including the scenes in which Fairbanks scales the walls (Knight, 1994)). With the films produced outside Hollywood not having the means to build large scale sets indoors, while also wanting to go against the grain of the major cinematic style of controlled environments, independent films embraced location filming and realistic aesthetics that required less in terms of facilities. Additionally, locations in the US became increasingly expensive to use for filming, which forced productions to move to other countries, often in Europe,[42] further inviting the styles of European cinema into Hollywood filmmaking through the film workers hired in location.

This change of style in Hollywood cinema came about through numerous influences, one of which was the new generation of, often European, filmmakers who had been successful without the backing of the major Hollywood studios, and were thus both familiar with and a part of this other style of film making. One such director was Richard Lester, the director of the 1976 Robin Hood film *Robin and Marian* (1976). Lester had previously worked with The Beatles on their films *A Hard Day's Night* (UK, dir. Richard Lester, 1964) and *Help!* (UK, dir. Richard Lester, 1965), and had developed a style of fast cutting and stylised editing, mirroring the style of the 60s pop music that it accompanied. This style of editing, Thompson and Bordwell (2010) argues, influenced the way in which action scenes were shot in the 1960s, with *Bonnie and Clyde* (USA, dir. Arthur Penn, 1967) as an example that

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[42] The genre of Spaghetti Westerns is an example of a major genre (the Western) moving the production abroad (Italy) in order to access appropriate locations at a lower cost.

did exceptionally well at the box office at the time. After making a name for himself as a director of the Swinging 60s, in the early 1970s Lester was hired to direct the swashbuckler *The Three Musketeers* (UK/USA, dir. Richard Lester, 1973), a film distributed by 20th Century Fox. This move embodied the flow of talent and influence of the era; away from the independent cinemas of Europe and into the major productions of Hollywood. Parallel with this, Lester also moved away from the high-tempo comedy of the Beatles films, and to dramas and adventure films in the early 1970s. After the success of *The Three Musketeers* (1973) and the sequel *The Four Musketeers* (USA, dir. Richard Lester, 1974), Lester moved on to a considerably more serious drama, *Robin and Marian* (1976), starring major Hollywood stars Sean Connery and Audrey Hepburn. While the high editing tempo of Lester's 60s films was abandoned in his 70s films, the realistic style with location filming stayed on, something that distinctly differentiates *Robin and Marian* from previous Robin Hood films. Gone are the indoors scenes built in studios, instead Lester places the cast outdoors, in the woods and in the fields of an imaginary England (filmed in Spain). While Robin/Flynn had swung through the trees and ridden through the underbrush in *The Adventures* (1938), *Robin and Marian* places Robin/Connery in the forest, making him a part of the mise-en-scéne rather than existing on top of it. The layers of the palimpsestic image becomes less distinct, Robin/Connery is *within* the image, acting *within* the space rather than through it.

In the early 1960s, Sean Connery had been cast as the British spy James Bond, in the films based on the novels written by Ian Fleming.[43] Connery's first appearance as Bond was in *Dr. No* (UK, dir. Terence Young, 1962), followed by *From Russia with Love* (UK, dir. Terence Young, 1963) the year after. While the first two films, directed by Terence Young and approved of by Fleming, were successful due to what Benson (2006) argues is the immediate star persona of Connery as well as

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[43] Between the publication of the first novel, *Casino Royale* in 1953 and the first Bond film in 1962, Ian Fleming published nine novels including *Dr. No* (1958), *From Russia, with Love* (1957), *Goldfinger* (1959), *Thunderball* (1961) and *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956), all of which had film versions starring Sean Connery. After 1962, another seven novels were published, the last being *Octopussy and the Living Daylights* (1966).

the originality of the films' style, it was the third film *Goldfinger* (UK, dir. Guy Hamilton, 1964) that established both Connery and Bond (and their interconnectedness) as "household names around the world" (Benson, 2006, p. 7). Connery starred in five Bond films from 1962 to 1967, and then once in the 1970s with the 1971 *Diamonds Are Forever* (UK, dir. Guy Hamilton, 1971).[44] Given the fame of the character as interlinked with the appearance of Connery in cinema, Connery's star persona became saturated with the meaning of the Bond performance; the suave spy who saves the world without a wrinkle in his suit. Additionally, the image of Connery/Bond became further associated with aggressive sexuality, self-confidence and expensive, branded personal style through the intertextuality with the *Playboy* editorials created around Connery/Bond in the 1960s where "Connery's willingness to spend his disposable income on his wardrobe supported the ethos of affluence presented by Playboy" (Cook and Hines, 2005, p. 155). The *Playboy* editorials used the image created of Conner/Bond in the films about the British spy, and featured Connery as the palimpsest of both himself and Bond, further dissolving the difference between them.

Cook and Hines (2005) suggests that the star persona of the actor should not be greater than the star persona of the character, in their case James Bond, if the character has a stronger and more established star persona. The result, they argue, would be risking "being identified with the role" (Cook and Hines, 2005, p. 148), which could hinder international stardom. However, the performance or portrayal of a character does not have an excess in star persona where one cancels out the other, but instead offers multiple readings for audiences (Dyer, 1979). Therefore, the persona becomes layered and the image of the character becomes palimpsestic, resulting in an image of Robin Hood in *Robin and Marian* layered with the meanings of James Bond through the casting of Connery. The combination of two or more personas may become instable and the resulting portrayal could result in a collapsed palimpsest which translates as unreadable, which possibly

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[44] Connery had originally retired from Bond in 1967, but after the recasting of the character with the actor George Lazenby had failed, was asked to come back in the 1971 film. Since 1971 James Bond has been played by Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan and most recently Daniel Craig.

could hinder stardom or a successful career, but more importantly, an unclear performance, which could be a reason why some Robin Hoods have been more successful in terms of audiences than others. Flynn's Robin remains a fan favourite while Egerton's performance has been largely forgotten in the 6 years since the release of *Robin Hood* (2018).

Given the star persona of Connery as linked to the virility of Bond, the performance in *Robin and Marian* (1976) produces a tension between the established star image of Connery as Bond and that of an older, disillusioned and physically weakened Robin Hood, and as a result, the masculinity portrayed becomes strained as Robin/Connery becomes an embodiment of this intertextual dissonance. This version of Robin is however precisely what the film requires; it is a strained Robin who returns to England, an old man whose grey beard hides the young man who used to be underneath. The similarities between a young Robin Hood and James Bond are thus further highlighted by the fact that Connery looks like neither and both at the same time. However, the image of Bond/Connery/Robin remains stable through the themes of the film, where the heroism of Bond lends its credibility to the performance of Robin, as the story of the younger Robin/Connery is never told, only suggested, but can easily be assumed through both intertextual knowledge of Robin Hood from previous performances and through the image of Connery as Bond. It is only natural that Robin/Connery has had a close relationship with Audrey Hepburn as Marian, because Connery/Bond is assumed to have relationships with beautiful women. Equally, it is expected that Robin/Connery returns to England and expects Hepburn/Marian to be there waiting for him, because of the romantic relationship between the two being so powerful it prevails against oppression, be it social, spatial or temporal

5.2. The implications of ageing on actors and characters

In *Robin and Marian* (1976), Connery stars alongside Audrey Hepburn, whose star persona had been established in the 1950s through her performances of Princess Ann in *Roman Holiday* (USA, dir. William Wyler, 1953) and Sabrina in *Sabrina* (USA, dir. Billy Wilder 1954). Through these films, Hepburn had become the female

embodiment of elegance and class, functioning as a combination of "girl/woman, commoner/sophisticate, and innocent/desirable" (Knight, 2013, p. 50) on screen,[45] while Connery had become the embodiment of a pop cultural British icon in the previous decade. In 1968, Hepburn retired from acting after having been "the highest-paid female star" (Watters, 1976) together with Elizabeth Taylor of the 50s and early 60s. Her star persona and assumed femininity became tied to traditional values of domesticity, motherhood, and marriage through her choice to leave Hollywood after the premieres of two films in 1967 for a life with her husband and children in Europe. The role of Marian alongside Connery was Hepburn's return to cinema, bringing the graceful femininity of the 1950s and 60s and traditional motherhood of the early 1970s with her. The values tied to Hepburn/Marian are then similar to those of the 1930s, where de Havilland was considered able to "make a good husband out of Flynn on screen" (Thomson 2017, p. 132). In the case of de Havilland, and arguably Hepburn, the star persona of the female lead playing Marian softened the edge of the personas, on and off-screen, of their male co-stars. For both de Havilland and Hepburn, the femininity of the star persona is crucial for the credibility of the relationship; Marian must be enough for Robin to change his ways, and she must be able to tame him with grace and beauty. The star persona of the actor playing Marian must thus contain an element of "the one for whom he would change", a romantic notion firmly tied to traditional ideals of femininity and womanhood, ideals equally firmly tied to both Audrey Hepburn and Olivia de Havilland. The image of masculinity portrayed by Robin/Connery is thus not only in relation to the image of Connery/Bond, but also the image of Marian as the love interest of Robin Hood, and the portrayal of Marian by Hepburn. This emphasis on both characters, rather than simply Robin is highlighted through the film's title *Robin* and *Marian*, but it does not necessarily equate the characters with each other. Hepburn/Marian, much like de Havilland/Marian, exists for Robin to rescue, to return to, to exist in relation to.

In a publicity interview for *Robin and Marian* (1976) in People magazine in 1976, Hepburn acknowledges her own past in Hollywood and the implications of her

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[45] As her career progressed, the graceful, charming femininity of her first major performances and her star persona was repeated in multiple films in the 1960s.

own star image; "'People associate me with a time when movies were pleasant, when women wore pretty dresses in films and heard beautiful music.'" And she adds "'Now people are frightened by the movies.'" (Watters, 1976). Hepburn does not elaborate on what she believes to be the reason for this new fear in audiences, but similarly to the stylistic changes of Hollywood from the traditional studio system to the more realistic aesthetics of the 60s and onwards, the thematic contents of cinema changed as well. Perhaps Hepburn perceived the audiences to be frightened by the movies in the 70s because movies had moved away from the beautiful romances of 50s Hollywood to the realist, politically critical productions in the wake of events like the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and the Vietnam War. Watters (1976) describes how the production behind *Robin and Marian* (1976) had realised that "female stars don't pull at the box office in 1976 as they once did", where in previous decades, and especially in the golden age of Hollywood of the 1930s and 40s, female stars had been a way in which to ensure commercial success (Walker, 1970). As noted by Bordwell (2006) when discussing the blockbusters of the 1970s, films such as *Star Wars* (US, dir. George Lucas, 1977) did not attract cinema audiences with the cast but rather the premise of the story. Perhaps then, by the 70s films functioned less as escapist fantasies, and more as social and political insights. Even so, the return of Hepburn to cinema indicates a continuation of Hollywood tradition through re-appropriation and a reflection on previous history, as well as attracting Hepburn's as well as Connery's fans, who have aged with the actors, to a new kind of story. Furthermore, Hepburn's pairing with Connery, a star of the new era of cinema of the 1960s, ties the old Hepburnian Hollywood with the new as embodied in Connery, partly echoing the choice of returning to the story of Robin Hood, a story associated with the studio era but reshaped to fit the modern landscape of 1970s cinema. The disillusion thus portrayed in *Robin and Marian* (1976) through the death of Robin by the hand of Marian can thus indicate the struggle between old and new formats of popular culture. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous chapter on *The Adventures* (1938), the star system in which Hepburn had risen to fame did not allow for women to grow old (Gledhill, 1991), which is especially evident in the explicit aging and age of Robin/Connery through grey beard and a receding hairline, while Hepburn/Marian still wears distinct makeup under her abbess costume. Thus, while *Robin and Marian* (1976) attempts to break the Hollywood

mould through portraying the ageing, dying Robin in an overgrown and corrupt England, it does not allow for Robin or Marian to break from intertextual expectations of movie stars: charming and handsome Robin/Connery and beautiful and elegant Hepburn/Marian.

5.3. Fighting in France: Robin/Connery and the loss of purpose

Robin and Marian (1976) opens with Robin, now a Crusades veteran with a deeply wrinkled forehead and a grey beard, having been ordered by King Richard to capture a small castle; he refuses as there are no soldiers there, only women, children and an old man left, people Robin/Connery will not kill. As a result, King Richard (played by Richard Harris) orders his men to burn the castle down with the people left inside to punish their insubordination (see image 11), and arrests Robin/Connery and Little John (Nicol Williamson). Before the castle is burned, an old man throws an arrow from the castle wall at the king, fatally injuring him in the neck. As the king is dying, he pardons Robin and John and after his death, they return to England. Thus, unlike *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) wherein the return of King Richard to England is the finale, the majority of *Robin and Marian* (1976) is set after the death of King Richard. The event leading to the king's death is depicted in the first 10 minutes of the film, an arrow shot during the siege of the French castle Châlus-Chabrol in 1199 hits the English king in the neck. These opening scenes heralds the themes of the film; the castle[46] of *Robin and Marian* sits against the flat horizon, extending the line of sand and dust of the ground by reaching its sand coloured stonewalls toward the clear blue sky. The landscape is dusty and barren, while the bodies of both Robin/Connery and the soldiers, as well as the old man on the wall are dirty and sweaty, and despite Robin's refusal to act out the king's orders, the castle is still burnt and the people within it are killed. Given the themes of disillusion, futility and decay, Knight (1994) points out the "autumnal credibility" (p. 237) of the film, which is both portrayed by the aging stars but also through the imagery of rotting apples and the rough and dirty

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[46] The castle figuring as Châlus-Chabrol is the Spanish 15th century Villalonso Castle, located 134 miles northwest of Madrid in the central region of Castile and León. As the castle is typical of the 15th century style (Junta de Castilla y León 2021), it is at least 200 years younger than the events depicted in the opening of *Robin and Marian* (1976), of King Richard's death in 1199.

costumes of Robin/Connery and the men in colours of the rotting seen in the opening shot of the apples. Richards (1977) similarly notes the rotting apples, and points to the film as allegory for the decline and decay in values and politics of contemporary England, in sharp relief to the bright (American) England of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), again echoing the shift in perspective in Hollywood. In particular, Richards (1977) points to the portrayals of the main characters; "our heroes are not what they were" (p. 209), Merry Robin of the greenwood is now "stiff-jointed, rheumy-eyed and wheezing after every swordfight" (ibid.). These changes are equally portrayed in costume. Robin/Connery's costume is not bright green and apparently immune to the wear of an outlaw like Flynn/Robin's. Instead it is made out of beige and brown, natural fabrics, stained and frayed after long use on and off the battlefield.

Image 11: King Richard (Richard Harris) in front of the burning Châlus-Chabrol (Villalonso Castle) (*Robin and Marian*, 1976)

After King Richard becomes fatally injured at Châlus-Chabrol, he hosts a party with his court, "celebrating our demise". During this last meeting, after Robin and John have been brought up from the dungeons to the party, King Richard tells Robin how he never cared for England and that he will never go back, not even as a corpse. As the king moves out of focus through the frame, the camera focuses on a close-up of Robin who looks on with disappointment. In the hall with dancing

nobles, music and wine, Robin/Connery is portrayed as a hardened man looking on the dying king, and his roughness through his dirtied face, tangled beard and worn costume is juxtaposed against the pale, sweaty and brocade-clad body of the king. Even though Robin/Connery has just spent time in the dungeon as punishment for disobeying the king, he looms above him, Robin/Connery's physicality emphasised through size as well as dirt, where the dirty Robin/Connery appears full of life next to the dying king. Here dirt works to place Robin/Connery as out of place (Douglas, 1966) at court with the king, but it also functions to highlight dirt as it is associated with physicality and labour, and therefore strength. As a result, Robin/Connery is different from King Richard, in the sense that Robin/Connery uses and can use his body, while the king cannot. The film as allegory for the decline and decay of contemporary society (Richard, 1977) becomes visible as the dirty Robin/Connery catches the opulently clad and bejewelled king when he becomes unable to stand, and Robin/Connery holds the king as he dies. These opening scenes introduce the central themes of the film; disillusionment with hierarchical ideals of masculinity and leadership as the king abandons the morality Robin/Connery values, and the futility of nostalgia and the impossibility of restoration of the past as that which has already happened cannot be undone at the death of the king.

King Richard, who embodies the just ruler who frees the land from oppression in *The Adventures* (1938) as he does in later films such as *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991), becomes in *Robin and Marian* the opposite, the monarch who does not care for the people he rules nor the land he does not even wish to return to. Through Richard the Lionheart's statement, Robin Hood's previous purpose, which the audience is assumed to be familiar with, of protecting the people of Nottingham until the return of the true king - and the restoration of just treatment for all - becomes hollow and meaningless, and his sacrifices for the ideals of justice and freedom have been in vain. The early event of the death of King Richard in *Robin and Marian* (1976) positions the film in relation to the myth through a critical approach to the idealistic retelling of other versions wherein King Richard is the liberator and stabiliser Robin and his men are waiting and fighting for. *Robin and Marian* (1976) is instead a film built around challenging these assumptions, seen in films such as Errol Flynn's *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) but equally the British television series also called *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (ATV London,

1955-1959) starring Richard Greene as Robin Hood, where there are assumptions around masculinity as it is expressed through leadership and idealism, where all wait for King Richard to return to set everything right again.

Robin/Connery outside England after the days of the mythical past represents these displaced values and the breakdown of the ideals on which Robin's persona is built. The opening of the film is set in France, but filmed in Spain (as are the scenes set in England). The French(/Spanish) space is exaggerated in its lack of life; the landscape is dry and covered in dust, without trees or vegetation, and as the castle is burned, the procession of King Richard's coffin walks through a stone quarry with the sandy dust swirling with the smoke from the censers around the dark cloaks of the attendants. The opening shots of the film further emphasises the passing of time and life through the first shot of three green apples, to the second of one green and two rotting apples. This shot is then later echoed in the final frame of two rotting apples and the chalice out of which Marian gives Robin the poison that kills him, the shot over which the end credits are shown. While Robin/Connery is only wearing his undershirt on his deathbed, the scene is preceded by the final battle between him and the Sherriff of Nottingham, in which Robin/Connery wears the full armour of the opening scene. The use of the rotting apple thus equally represents the themes as does the wearing of the armour, suggesting the highly conscious thematic approach to the film.

Throughout the film, Robin/Connery wears the same set of pieces to construct his costume, at times adding a layer of leather armour. He wears the full costume, including the armour and a helmet, in the first frame in which he and Little John are seen (see image 12). In the dusty landscape of Châlus-Chabrol, Robin/Connery wears a dark brown leather gambeson over a beige doublet and undershirt, the leather being embellished with circles of hardened leather in a grid pattern created by leather strips studded on to the gambeson. With it he wears a leather coif with a similar grid pattern to cover his head, neck and shoulders. His legs are bare under the skirt of the doublet and gambeson, and he wears leather boots, a style that is consistent throughout the film. The bare legs under the heavy layers of armour stand out as vulnerable, especially as Robin/Connery is on horseback, his knees and calves exposed at the eyelevel of the soldiers around him.

Image 12: Robin Hood (Sean Connery) and Little John (Nicol Williams) outside Châlus-Chabrol (Villalonso Castle, Spain) (*Robin and Marian*, 1976)

In contrast to the smoothness of the English accents of King Richard, Marian (Audrey Hepburn) and the Sheriff of Nottingham (Robert Shaw), the negative connotations of being un-educated or of lower class associated with the Scottish accent (Aitken, 1982; Menzies, 1991) in which Connery speaks, translates onto Robin and further removes him from positions of power. The English hero of Sherwood Forest thus becomes layered upon the Scotsman, a nationality other to the English, through the exposed knees[47] and accent of the lead actor. [48] This makes the image of Robin/Connery as outlaw complex and palimpsestic, as the image of the English outlaw of the legend is mixed with the Scottish/English relation through history and the perception of the Scottish heroes of the past. Robin Hood is not fixed in nationality, in being English, as the films may suggest

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[47] The exposed legs are connected to Connery and his Scottish star persona through the similarity to the style of wearing a kilt. Connery's own persona, separated from Bond, thus translates to Robin's through accent (Connery speaks with a Scottish accent) and costume (the similar length of the skirted doublet to the kilt and the bare legs underneath).

[48] See for example the American portrayal of Scottish people as long-haired and uncivilised freedom fighters in *Braveheart* (1995), 19 years after the premier of *Robin and Marian* (1976).

through the uses of spaces such as Nottingham and Sherwood Forest. He can, as described by Knight (2008) also be Scottish in Medieval texts, sometimes in the form of Rabbie Hood, who "is a nationally conscious freedom-fighter" (p. 111) rather than the locally focused Robin of village versus town, villagers versus sheriff. This, Knight (2008) argues, lends the Scottish Robin to be interchangeable with William Wallace in some stories. *Robin and Marian* (1976) ties into these connotations of national Scottish identity, while also having Robin/Connery return to England (and not Scotland) after the death of the king.

5.4. Returning to England: An old and dirty Robin in the body of Robin/Connery

The change from the dust-covered landscapes of France into the lush foliage of England is abrupt. While the locations are still in Spain, the move to the forest in Navarra, a Spanish region bordering France and the Basque country, from the dusty fields of Castile and León, provides the greenery associated with the Medieval England seen in Robin Hood literature and films such as *The Adventures* (1938). The specifics of space/time, that is Sherwood the Forest in 2024 as opposed to Sherwood the Myth in 1976, contains in themselves meaning, as space is understood through preformed identity and knowledge (Löw, 2016). Sherwood Forest is still a physical space in England, even though it has become a fraction of the size it once was.[49] The actual physical space of the forest is thus influenced by contemporary perceptions, and can for a contemporary explorer be an example of loss of biomass in an environmental crisis, or a manifestation of the development and spreading of human industry through history. In contrast, Sherwood the Myth exists *before* these contemporary layers of Sherwood the Forest, and the (Spanish) Sherwood of *Robin and Marian* (1976), with its lush green foliage, functions not as the Forest, but as the Myth. However, central to the appearance of a Spanish forest as Sherwood the Myth, is Robin, dressed in appropriate clothing, who steps into it. Therefore, the object, that is the costumed body of Robin Hood, creates a layer of the image that overwrites previous meanings. A forest of no particular time but of Spanish Navarra becomes Sherwood in the 12th century, through the eyes of the 1970s Hollywood, as Robin Hood in the body of Sean Connery moves into frame.

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[49] Sherwood the Forest in 2014 was a fraction of the size of the Royal Forest of Sherwood of 10,000 acres it once was a part of (Natural England 2014).

Even so, the body of Sean Connery itself does not suffice for this transformation of meaning; it needs to be Robin Hood, which is partly conveyed through the narrative establishing that Connery *is* Robin, but also that what Connery wears *signifies* Robin. Images and spaces are therefore created with similar tools; what layers are existent informs meaning.

Back in England, Robin and John immediately return to Sherwood Forest. Since they left, the forest has retaken the camp; when Robin finds his old horn in a tree, he cannot make a sound out of it as it is filled with moss. As they work their way through the bushes, Robin/Connery shouts "I can see it! That's the top of my tree!". Through these and other explicit statements, Robin/Connery and John/Williamson attempt to speak Sherwood into existence, and especially the Sherwood of the past. Through speech, action, but more importantly through their existence within the space, Robin/Connery expresses the longing for the symbols of the past and thus equally a longing to return to the pasts to which he is working his way back. But, with Robin/Connery within the forest, Sherwood has already resurrected, it is once again a true space. The costume on Connery's body signals him as Robin, and the body of Robin/Connery in the forest signals the space as Sherwood. It is only the curse of nostalgia, to chase the past to the extent as to be unable to see the present, that blinds Robin/Connery from recognising it, as the forest may have changed, but the change to his own body is too significant for him to overlook.. As Robin tries to make sound out of his old horn, an arrow strikes the tree next to his head. Two other men enter the clearing and they begin to fight, until John suddenly exclaims "Jesus, Rob, mine is an old man!". The men are Will Scarlett (Denholm Elliott) and Friar Tuck (Ronnie Barker), two of Robin's Merry Men who still live as outlaws in Sherwood. If the attempt to speak the past into existence was made earlier, the return of the Merry Men function as objects within the space that indicates a chronotope, which in *Robin and Marian* (1976) is a past long gone by. The others gather around Robin at the campfire and he is framed in the centre of the shot as he has retaken his position as leader of the gang, once again attempting to force the hands of the clock backwards through returning to old habits. As they reminisce about the past, Will Scarlett begins to sing songs about Robin, specifically and ominously about following Robin into the grave, even though, as Robin points out, they never did that which the songs describe. Even so, Robin asks

Will to play another, but this time about Marian. As he has retaken his position as the leader of the gang, he is reminded of the absence of Marian, both as companion and member of the Merry Men and as such as another proof of the return to the past, but she also functions as the stabiliser of heteronormative masculinity, which is expected of Robin/Connery through the intertextuality of Bond/Connery and the associated aggressive sexuality. Marian becomes the final piece of the puzzle for the past to come back together, her existence within the forest is for Robin/Connery as equally important as his own as she makes a home of it in the same manner that she makes a husband out of him; her purpose is to tame Sherwood and through it, him. The task to retrieve her is thus the most important one.

Image 13: Robin Hood (Sean Connery) and his Merry Men back at the Sherwood camp (*Robin and Marian*, 1976)

As they are arranged around the campfire, the costumes of Robin and the Merry Men are displayed according to their status and relationships (see image 13). Both Friar Tuck and Will are wearing dark brown cloaks and hoods, as they have continued living as outlaws for the twenty years since Robin and John left. Equally, John wears a doublet in a lighter shade of brown, but with a similar beige undershirt to Robin's. In contrast, Robin wears a beige doublet with broad brown hems, and a beige undershirt. Both Robin and John wear thicker, padded doublets

to go under their armours, while Tuck and Will's costumes are appropriate for lower ranking clergy and peasants who have no use for padding. *Robin and Marian* (1976) thus positions Robin/Connery as a different kind of leader and man than Robin/Flynn of *The Adventures* (1938), as Robin/Connery does not wear what his men wears, nor are they portrayed as equals through the use of similar colours as the bright green of Robin/Flynn's costume that he shares with the Merry Men of *The Adventures* (1938). Instead, Robin/Connery is raised above the others through his lighter costume, and as it appears considerably dirtier than John's it also indicates an impracticality of the colour, which suggests the impracticality of Robin's idealism, with the excessive dirt functioning as another layer of suggesting Robin's disillusion with his own ideals since he has given up the attempt to keep the costume clean.

Dirt is "matter out of place" (Douglas, 1966, p. 44), and a dirty Robin Hood is an out of place Robin, both physically and ideologically. The dirt of the costume highlights the displacement of Robin/Connery both in terms of a returning, ageing outlaw, but also in relation to being an outcast from society where his ideals no longer belong. However, the dirt more importantly indicates the way in which things *should* be but are not as the dirt draws attention to itself through its wrongness. He becomes strange, not only in relation to himself, the dirty beige tunic indicating the long way he has travelled to reach this point, and the hardship he has faced along the way, making him a stranger to a place he used to call home (even though the people there still recognise him). He also becomes strange in relation to other Robins. The strangeness of *Robin and Marian* is often suggested to be rooted in the age of Connery and the finale being the death of Robin. However, this strangeness is also inescapable in costume, the aged body of Robin/Connery is also the dirty body of Robin/Connery, strikingly dissimilar from the polished, youthful body of the earlier Robin/Flynn.[50] According to Douglas (1966) this is thus evidence of the system in which the Robins function, the perception of which is rendered through the costuming and bodily portrayals, or subversion thereof. The dirty Robin,

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[50] The dirty, ragged costume of Robin/Connery is also somewhat echoed in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) as well as *Robin Hood* (2010). A return to the smooth and polished (while not green) surface is made in *Robin Hood* (2018).

Connery's Robin, is not strangely so when appearing in Sherwood or along his Merry Men. The contrast is the most stark, making the dirt most noticeable and thus most real, when he is standing alongside the dying King Richard, who despite his life-threatening condition is dressed in brocade and velvet. Richard is still the King, despite the shadow of death hanging over him, while Robin/Connery is just a prisoner brought up from the dungeon. Similarly, the dirty tunic, the same one that he wears in the king's dungeon, is drab and grimy next to Marian's starched, white nun's habit. Robin/Connery is clearly not what he used to be, but more importantly he has not kept up with the changes around him: he refuses to accept Marian's attempt to move on through joining the Abbey. The dirty costume thus creates an emotional and ideological context for the performance of Robin by Connery: the perception of his tunic has changed, but it only means that he has not.

Furthermore, the difference of Robin/Connery's costume to both Flynn/Robin's and also to the other characters in *Robin and Marian* (1976) (other than Marian), additionally serves to indicate his inability to come to terms with his identity after the death of King Richard. The skirt of Robin's gambeson opens up into panels around his thighs and from his shoulders straps dangle, a style that emphasises movement, as the gambeson skirt moves around Robin/Connery's legs, and continues to move even when he is not in motion, resulting in a restless costumed body. As Robin/Connery moves around, and tries to put his old world back together through hacking through the shrubbery of Sherwood and climbing his tree, the costume appears to keep moving even when Robin/Connery has stilled, and together with his difference from the calm bodies of John, Will and Tuck whose costumes closely follow the movements of their bodies and become still when they do, Robin/Connery's performance becomes that of a restless, ever-moving character, defined by a past that no longer exists and his attempts to put that past back together. The performance, alongside the film's themes, further emphasises the relative strangeness of the film within the Robin Hood context: it is one of very few in which Robin is showed both aged and more importantly on his death bed. Movement is change, and without the purpose and energy of change Robin lacks an identity; thus his costume needs to keep moving, to keep appearing restless, showing discontent with the circumstances. The movement of costume further separates Robin/Connery from the Merry Men as they are content with the

reunion and with sitting by the fire, while Robin/Connery requires this sense of purpose and something to build his identity around after the death of King Richard. He solves this quite simply: he starts talking about going to find Marian.

Similarly to the return to the canon of the Robin Hood myth through the rekindling of the love story, so too is the continued conflict between Robin and the Sheriff of Nottingham (Robert Shaw). The return to England culminates in a battle between Robin and the Sheriff, a sword fight echoing the one in *The Adventures* (1938), but is one which is portrayed with distinct realism, and with an (both diegetic and film) audience who witnesses the culmination of a conflict between once two great men. Robin/Connery and the Sheriff stumble, fall and struggle to deal out a swift, killing blow due to the heavy armours and weapons, effectively portraying the influence of time and ageing on these mythical characters and their abilities. Unlike the scene in *The Adventures* (1938) where Robin/Flynn and Sir Guy of Gisbourne (Basil Rathbone) move their swordplay through the empty Nottingham Castle, Robin/Connery and the Sheriff have an audience. The Sheriff has brought a party of people similar to a court; tents have been erected, while banners are flapping in the wind and heavy wooden furniture is placed on the grass. The final battle between these old antagonists is to be treated like a spectacle, like any other entertainment. Where Robin/Connery's costume had represented a difference from the Merry Men through the use of light and dark colours, the armours of Robin/Connery and the Sheriff continues to create visual binaries. Robin/Connery's brown leather armour grounds him as part of the forest against the tree line background of the scene of the battle, and of the people, as the brown leather echoes the brown of the costumes of Little John, Tuck and Will. Robin/Connery's legs are, as always, left bare. In contrast, the Sheriff's grey and metal chainmail speaks of industry and wealth, where he is aided by others in putting it on due to its weight and complicated fastenings. However, he does not wear anything underneath the chainmail, which would not only be impractical (and historically inaccurate) as gambesons are worn to protect the skin from chafing, but another layer could also protect the body from impact and injury. Instead, the Sheriff puts on the chain mail jacket against his bare upper body and pulls the hood over his head without a cap to cover his hair, drawing attention to the physical strength of his body and brutality of the act to come. The coldness of

the metal against skin, in contrast to the linens and leathers worn by Robin/Connery again separates them as opposites. When the fighting begins, it is a slow and laborious struggle, where they both manage to injure the other, blood staining their costumes and their skin, further emphasising the mortality of them both despite Robin's continuing attempts to reconstruct the past and refuse to acknowledge the mortality of the human body even when it faces him. As they fight, the Sheriff tires and begs Robin/Connery to yield, but Robin refuses, as he refuses to let go of his ideals even as they aid in his demise, and keeps striking at the Sheriff despite having to crawl to come near him. In the end, the Sheriff manages to injure Robin severely, and Robin/Connery retaliates with one final blow, stabbing the Sheriff through his chest and killing him. Similarly to the viewer, the onlookers in the Sheriff's party witness the culmination of a legendary battle, but the struggle leaves no victor.

5.5. Marian as mirror: Marian as a reflection of Robin/Connery's purpose

In a previous role, Hepburn had played Sister Luke in *The Nun's Story* (USA, dir. Fred Zinnemann 1959), fusing "her already established screen persona of purity and innocence with an unmatched empathy for the inner life of its lead character" (Knight, 2013, p. 107), characteristics which she shares with the previous actor portraying Marian, Olivia de Havilland. Similarly to de Havilland, Hepburn is thus associated with characteristics that are capable of taming Robin. As Marian, the life of service, purity and innocence of a nun (which leaves only two forces in her world, Robin and God), is instantly questioned when Robin returns to England and he asks her "What are you doing in that costume?", to which she responds "Living in it", similar to the way in which he has been living in his costume as a soldier however, Robin does not recognise the irony of the question. It also evokes the impossibility of separating the costume form the costumed body (Entwistle, 2015), Marian *lives* in her costume, as it is a part of her and defines her identity, taking it off for others to see her without it is an impossibility. Even so, Marian's response, the comment that her costume is something which is lived in, rather than protesting the claim that it is a costume to begin with, separates the costume and its associated role from her character. Her role as a nun, a prioress, does not reach into her identity, but is represented through the shell of costume. Since Robin left her without a word, she has reclaimed her life through service as a nun, rejecting

the life in the forest that they had together, all the while not fully recognising it as herself. Even so, her role as a nun is more closely tied to Robin's core values than his own as a soldier; she has remained with the people, helping those in need, while he travelled for war, aiding in the displacement of people. Her costume, a nun's habit, covers her body in a beige tunic and scapular, white coif and wimple and black veil, and instead presents her identity as Mother Jennet, the abbess of Kirkwell Abbey, with a wooden cross around her neck (see image 14). The nun's habit acts as a uniform, providing her with the identity of the uniform rather than allowing her own person to shine through. In the case of Hepburn/Marian's habit, in contrast to the uniforms of the Merry Men in *The Adventures* (1938), the uniform is thus something to hide behind, rather than something that provides strength in numbers and association (Joseph, 1986; Tynan and Godson, 2019). Her appearance is separating her from their shared past, and indicates a change Robin cannot undo. Even so, he tries to do so, through calling her 'Marian', while she insists that she is now 'Mother Jennet' and informs him that the Sheriff will soon come to imprison her as a member of the clergy. When the Sheriff and his men arrive, Robin tries to persuade them that Mother Jennet has already left, and when they do not believe him, Robin throws Marian onto John's horse as she fights and protests and takes her to Sherwood, thus forcing her out of her new identity as a nun and back into the world he represents.

Image 14: Robin Hood (Sean Connery) and Marian (Audrey Hepburn) reunited (*Robin and Marian*, 1976)

Even though Marian asks Robin to "Grow up!" when he refuses to let the Sheriff take her away, it is Marian who becomes more and more like Robin as the film progresses and regresses into her old life next to Robin/Connery. When they have returned to Sherwood, Marian/Hepburn wears her full nun's habit, and dissuades his every attempt to reconnect, mirroring Robin/Connery's long shirt and doublet, with the exception of his uncovered head and exposed knees. Against what initially is Marian's will, they do reconnect, and simultaneously Marian beings to remove items of her habit. The reconnection occurs in stages, in classic Robin Hood manner through, amongst other things, a daring rescue mission of Marian's sister from the abbey. After Robin and John have rescued the nuns from Marian's abbey who had been imprisoned in her stead, the carriage Marian drives tips over and falls into a river. [51] Robin goes into the water after the women, and lifts Marian onto the riverbank. She is dressed in her prioress habit, while Robin/Connery still wears the tunic he wore in France. It is dirty and a stark contrast against the monochrome of Hepburn/Marian's dress. Marian asks Robin to remove his wet clothing to check for injuries, exposing Robin/Connery's bare torso as the undershirt falls open. As Marian runs her fingers over the many scars, she

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[51] As in the medieval ballad retold by Child.

comments on the change from the body he had when he left, acknowledging also the passing of time, both the time in the life of Robin but also in the aging of Connery's body, as the body has gone from hard youth to ageing and scarred softness. Central to the rekindling of their relationship, despite Marian's bitterness about Robin having left her without a word all those years ago, is the washing away of dirt from Robin/Connery's body: the drive with a carriage results in them falling into a river, and on the shore, Robin/Connery's tunic falls open as the water washes away the dirt of France. Washing away the dirt cleans him of some of the strangeness surrounding him since he left France, being more like Marian in cleanliness makes him more like his old self, and like mythical Robin: it is easier to have faith in a clean outlaw than a dirty one as he no longer appears disordered, for "dirt offends against order" (Douglas, 1966, p. 2). Equally, it also emphasises his vulnerability in reconnecting with Marian: the opened tunic, the exposed chest function in opposite to the exposed chests in Tasker (1993) as it does the opposite of providing Robin/Connery with an armour to hide behind, it presents Robin/Connery as naked, rather than nude (Hollander, 1994).

Image 15: Robin Hood (Sean Connery) and Marian (Audrey Hepburn) in different states of undress (*Robin and Marian*, 1976)

Even though the scarred, aged body of Robin/Connery is the physical manifestation of the passing of time, the scars and the changing body are also

mirrored by Marian, as she describes how she 'cut' herself when Robin left twenty years ago. A life without Robin/Connery, according to Marian/Hepburn, is not worth living. Upon hearing how she survived with the help of the abbey, Robin/Connery asks to kiss her and Hepburn/Marian removes her veil and wimple, exposing her short hair. In this process of removing clothing, like Connery/Robin cleaning away dirt, Marian becomes the Marian she was before Robin left, and she mirrors Robin in his attempt to return to the past and what they both were before he left. Both Robin's undershirt and Marian's tunic and scapular are long-sleeved and beige, and drape around their (Robin/Connery's half-undressed) bodies and Marian's bare feet like bed linen, emphasising the intimacy of the moment (see image 15). Thus, Marian becomes the woman she is expected to be alongside Robin/Connery through removing items of her habit and rejecting the purity of the abbess, an act which she performs for Robin/Connery. Her act of confirming Robin/Connery's own wish to relive the past through re-enacting it fuels him. With her again as his companion a puzzle piece is put in its place. However, after the death of the Sheriff, Marian returns to her role as the abbess, as she brings Robin/Connery back to the abbey where she has treated the injuries of those who sought her help before. There Marian quickly realises that Robin/Connery will never regain his full strength and will be crippled for life. Exhilarated by the re-enactment of his youth and the slaying of his old enemy, Robin allows John to remove his brown leather armour (which, after travelling across Europe with him, has failed in protecting his body) and lies down on the narrow cot. The shirt is once again open to expose his chest, but it is stained with streaks of blood, bright red against the beige fabric. Even though Robin has scars from previous wounds, this is the first time the strength of his physical body is portrayed as failing, and he is mortal and vulnerable. As he is only wearing his undershirt, he also goes against the expectations of strong men dying in the battlefield, with their armour on and their weapon in their hand. Instead he resembles someone hospitalised, who has withered away in a hospital gown, and the imagery once again emphasises the futility of nostalgia as time inevitably changes the conditions of life. The return to space cannot alter the film of time, as a space is intrinsically linked to its time. While he talks of the fight, Marian hands him a cup of medicine and he drinks from it. When he returns the cup to her, she also drinks from it. As he begins to lose sensation in his legs, he realises that

Marian has poisoned them both. The bloodstained beige tunic has fallen open along its sides where it has been ripped and reveals his bare ribs, exposing not only his vulnerable body but his soul. Marian acted with the knowledge that Robin without his idealistic opposition (the Sheriff) or motivation (King Richard), or his physical strength, cannot go on living. Her hand is thus the extension of reality; idealism cannot survive without purpose.

5.6. At the end: the death of Robin/Connery and its mythical implications

Central to the revisiting of the Robin Hood myth is the myth's ability to reflect contemporary issues, specifically around masculinity, through the lens of Robin as an outlaw. Indeed, Dyer (1979) has suggested that a star is able to function as reflection and persuasion in terms of charisma, and as I argue, Robin Hood, similarly to stars, contain star texts or cultural and intertextual meaning. The premise of the ageing, change and death of *Robin and Marian* (1976), as Knight (1994) notes, has never been remade nor has it been adapted by another production. This thus argues for the necessity of Robin to live for the myth to function: it is preferable with an open ending indicating a sequel that never comes, rather than the finality of age and death. Indeed, Knight (1994) describes how the film is considered a "radical reworking of the tradition" (p. 238, a perception, according to Knight, defined by its "admitting time and reality" (ibid.), when Robin (and Marian) are usually associated with the unchanging greenwood of a past England. As such, a Robin that changes, physically and emotionally, as well as a Robin that dies, contradicts the foundation of the myth in the idea of an everlasting England, or Robin as a constant symbol for resistance. Or, as Knight puts it "the myth is imprisoned by Lester within a cage of credibility" (ibid.).

Even so, adaptation as Hutcheon argues (2006), is "repetition, but repetition without replication" (p. 7), and themes of *Robin and Marian* (1976) have been repeated in later films, such as returning to a place that is changed as portrayed in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991) and rekindling the relationship with Marian after extended absence in *Robin Hood* (2018). Rather, it would be, as previously noted, the finality of death that is a paradox in relation to the Robin Hood myth, as the myth of Robin Hood is based on the suggestion of living happily ever after, where ever after is not followed by "until dead", as a reward for the honour and

righteousness of action. In *The Future of Nostalgia* Boym (2001) describes the two different ways in which nostalgia may manifest itself in culture and society, through either being restorative, that is, trying to rebuild or recreate the past, or reflective, which focuses on the longing itself. *Robin and Marian* (1976) itself is not nostalgic in the restorative sense of the word. Rather, it is nostalgic in the representation of the longing for the past, but equally aware that the past can and will never manifest itself in the present other than painful reminders of decay and mortality. Instead, it is the characters that are nostalgic in the restorative sense, Robin/Connery moves through the new England with the intention to recreate the old England, the England that he left. However, through the acts of himself and others, this restoration is made impossible, and the passing of time is the central unshakeable hinder; he cannot ever fully clean himself of the physical world, may it be the dirt of the spaces he visits or the blood of his body. Therefore, the paradox of a dead Robin Hood becomes a powerful narrative, as it reconciles with the inevitability of change, the impossibility of restoration, and thus the futility of nostalgia, through the death of Robin at the hands of Marian. The themes that define *Robin and Marian* (1976) may be the reason for why the ending has not been remade in another cinematic version of the myth, and why other major Robin Hood films rather express nostalgia as restorative through attempting to rebuild the world of the past (see for example the return of King Richard to wed Robin and Marian in the end of *Prince of Thieves* (1991)) than through reflecting on the function of nostalgia as such, and the implications of restorative attempts.

The futility of nostalgia is portrayed in *Robin and Marian* (1976) through the impossibility of reliving the past, as Jones (2000) describes it "What we are shown, in fact, is a group of elderly men trying to rekindle memories of a glorious past, which, by their own admission, is largely fabricated." (p. 127). According to the intertextual function of stars, the portrayal of Sean Connery as an elderly man and hero of the past indicates a contemporary disillusion with the 'glorious past', but it also suggests a longing for the ability to revisit the past, which, according to *Robin and Marian* (1976) inevitably fails. As Robin becomes more comfortable with his role as Robin Hood of Sherwood again, and he has gathered his old Merry Men, Marian and villagers who have once again escaped to Sherwood around him, he grows confident in his abilities, as he becomes the Robin he used to be. This

arguably inevitable hubris is quickly punished in the film's ending, through the single combat with the Sheriff that critically injures Robin and leads to Marian poisoning him.

As previously discussed, Robin/Connery's difference to the other male characters and his eventual death, and the numerous attempts to rebuild the past as it once was in Sherwood, portrays an attempt to regain control, and the costume becomes a way to force control through when and where Robin/Connery wears his leather armour. It first appears in the opening scene, in France, as Robin refuses the order to take the castle. In contrast, John wears the same doublet throughout the film, while Robin is the only one of the two to change what he wears according to whether he is expected to act as a soldier, when he dons the uniform of the war, or a leader, with the softer fabrics he wears in the forest. After the opening scene, the gambeson and coif does not appear again until the single combat with the Sheriff, when John helps Robin to put it on before the battle. The armour thus becomes a second layer of identity, as it is worn when Robin is in need of characteristics associated with normative masculinity such as strength, courage and a hard exterior, as well as providing him with physical protection. Similarly to Marian's nun's habit, the armour takes on a quality of uniform at the same time as it functions as both a physical shell to protect Robin's body and an emotional one as it protects that which exists within. As Robin wears the same costume in which he disobeyed the orders of King Richard, as in the final battle with the Sheriff of Nottingham, the armour also becomes a way of starting over, of reclaiming and resetting the possibility of the Robin's future and masculinity. However, the armour fails Robin/Connery as the exterior shell is not enough to protect his ageing body from the Sheriff's blade, nor does it protect him from the passing of time. The failure of Robin/Connery's body is an extension of the failure of his armour, as the ageing body of Robin/Connery functions as the sign for his soul (Baudrillard, 2005). The body of Robin/Connery is still valuable despite its age in relation to the dying king in the film's opening before the return to England, but as Robin/Connery tests his body against that of another, it inevitably fails him due to this impossibility of strength (of body and soul) as suggested by the body he inhabits.

Marian validates the masculine performance of Robin/Connery through not only sexuality but also through idealism. The sand-coloured costumes they both wear stand out in contrast to the other characters, and when Robin/Connery's undershirt becomes stained with blood in the duel with the Sheriff as a representation of the impossibility of regression what one had been in the past, Marian's solution is that neither of them can go on living. The inner layers of their costume represent the inner layers of identity, of purpose, and as Robin's is tainted and destroyed, he cannot go back. Marian, as his companion and costumed mirror, cannot but follow him, as she has adopted an identity of being his companion. Marian thus sacrifices herself as a sign of being a loyal female companion (John goes on living without Robin/Connery), further removing her, as she has removed the pieces of the habit, from her agency as the prioress and into womanhood as being in relation with and to a man.

In Robin's final moments, John comes back into the room, and falls to his knees by the bed, exclaiming "Rob! Look at you!", a reminder of the strangeness of a dying Robin as well as a dying Sean Connery, both of whom who have endured through myths of persona. The personas embodied by Connery in this scene is doubly immortal, through the many bodies and versions of the ever-green Robin Hood, and the incredible ability of James Bond to survive everything he is confronted with. The image of the dying Robin/Connery contains the perceived impossibility of a dying Bond/Robin/Connery through these multiple personas layered as palimpsest, and the moment is emphasised both through John's exclamation but also Marian's silent tears as she looks on the man/men on the bed. As a final act of resistance, and as a final act of trying to regain control, Robin/Connery picks up his bow and shoots an arrow out through the window and into the clear blue sky, leaving the audience without the image of his last breath (see image 16).

Image 16: Robin Hood (Sean Connery) shooting his last arrow to mark the place where he and Marian shall be buried (*Robin and Marian*, 1976)

Not only is *Robin and Marian* (1976) the first major Robin Hood film in decades, but Knight (1994) also notes that it took until *Robin and Marian* (1976) before the death of Robin Hood was portrayed in cinema. The scene is described in the 15th century Robin Hood ballad *The Gest of Robyn Hode* (ballad no. 117 in Child, 1888a) but had not been adapted for cinema before the 1970s. According to the scene in *The Gest*, *Robin and Marian* (1976) portrays the death of Robin by the hand of a prioress, but unlike the ballad, the prioress is not acting in order to claim the reward as Robin Hood's killer, but rather the act is performed out of love. As it is Marian who makes to decision to end Robin/Connery's life, it suggests that Robin/Connery would be unable to handle the essential change to his living conditions and therefore identity, an inability that would likely lead to more suffering, which Marian cannot endure. Marian, as a woman, is thus accepting of inevitable end through death, while Robin/Connery is not, his restlessness does not allow it, and her role as her companion and caretaker (he asks that she makes them a home in the forest again), it is her decision to end both their lives. However, Marian's acceptance of change as death is also a refusal of change as a different life. Her actions lead to the end of Robin Hood at a point where he is the same as he always was, and when he is on the height of his performance: he has bested the Sheriff of Nottingham. Ending the story of Robin Hood at that point rather than

letting him live on is to avoid the difficulty of change and the pain of having a lost purpose. Instead it forces time to come to a standstill, a stasis of story where Robin's values can live on indefinitely.

While Robin/Connery wears a few different costumes, such as leather armour and a disguise as a Jewish tradesman, the dominant costume is a beige linen undershirt and doublet. He wears a pair of brown boots, but does not wear trousers or pantaloons. He wears this costume in captivity in France as well as in Sherwood. In contrast, the costume of Marian changes over the course of the narrative, through the removal of pieces of her nun's habit. On the one hand, Marian/Hepburn's crisp and clean costume is a reflection of her higher status as an abbess, but on the other it is also a reflection of her acceptance of the change of circumstances around her as it forms a protective shell around her. The stains and tears of Robin/Connery's costume reflects the stains and tears to his ideals but equally the inability to accept and embrace change; the film begins with a refusal of King Richard's order, the same king Flynn/Robin considered to be the saviour and protector of England. Furthermore, as Marian/Hepburn removes her veil and wimple as a move backwards and towards Robin, Robin/Connery stays the same but for a cleaner skin, a stasis that Marian ends up setting in stone in the final scene of their death.

Other than the handling of themes, the subdued colours of *Robin and Marian* (1976) provides a visual of the approach, as the 1976 colour scheme differs from the bright colours of Technicolor in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), a colour-scheme which in the 1930s and 40s was associated with spectacle and fantasy (Thompson and Bordwell 2010). Furthermore, the editing style of *Robin and Marian* (1976) differs from the previous films directed by Lester. In contrast to the editing style that had made Lester famous, the shots and tempo of *Robin and Marian* (1976) lingers, visualising once again the themes of change, time and nostalgia. Other than style, Sean Connery as the actor playing Robin Hood further positions the film in terms of thematic approach and contemporary meaning. In both Fairbanks's and Flynn's versions of Robin Hood, Robin had been a virile character of great physical ability and charm. While the star persona of Sean Connery had been established in the 1960s as the British secret agent James Bond, Connery's representation of Robin Hood is not one of acrobatic feats or romantic

gestures. Rather, it is one of disillusion, weariness and wanting to find that which has been lost in time (see image 17). This distinction of Robin/Connery's is not only in relation to Flynn/Robin, or Fairbanks/Robin, but also in relation to Robin in imagery of the Green Man in British folklore.[52] While the Robin Hood portrayed by Flynn ties back to the tradition of the myth through the use of ballads in narrative, it also does so visually through the green colour dominant in the Flynn/Robin costume. In contrast, Robin/Connery does not wear green, and is thus not associated with rebirth and rejuvenation, but rather places the representation in relation to the passing of time through the imagery of leaves as they change after the green of spring and summer to the tones of autumn, as well as the colour of dead earth, sand and dust. Furthermore, the portrayal of Robin/Connery as an old man, is put in contrast to the established star image of Connery as James Bond as physically capable and sexually virile, and thus subverts the established star image of Connery, and as a result providing a different image of Robin Hood, one which is singular in this thesis.

Image 17: Robin (Sean Connery) preparing to face the Sheriff of Nottingham (*Robin and Marian*, 1976)

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[52] See Mythical layers for connections between the Green Man and Robin Hood.

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6. *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (Reynolds, 1991)

After *Robin and Marian* (1976), it took 15 years until the next major Hollywood version of the Robin Hood story, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (USA, Kevin Reynolds 1991), was released. Instead of in cinematic adventures, in the years between 1976 and 1991, the Robin Hood myth had been retold on television through the British television series *Robin of Sherwood* (ITV), aired between 1984 and 1986, created by Richard Carpenter. As such, the most recent instalments of Robin Hood in major American or British film or television before the 1991 film, were the performances of Michael Praed as Robin of Loxley in the first two seasons of the television series, and then Jason Connery as Robert of Huntingdon in the third and final season of *Robin of Sherwood* (1984-1986). Both the casting and the naming of these characters function intertextually. Firstly, Jason Connery is the son of Sean Connery, who 15 years earlier had played Robin in *Robin and Marian* (1976), and who, in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) appears as King Richard. Secondly, Robin of Loxley and Robert of Huntingdon are two variations of the gentrification of Robin Hood's name, meaning that even though the two actors of *Robin of Sherwood* (1984-1986) play different characters, they are both Robin Hood. The influence of the television series can be traced into *Prince of Thieves* (1991); *Robin of Sherwood* (1984-1986) featured a more realistic approach to the medieval time period than the more fantastical, pastoral version in *The Adventures* (1938) as well as introducing a Saracen character, Nasir, to the Sherwood outlaws while linking characters and events to folk culture and religion.[53]

Following the development of the 1970s as a reaction to the instability of the 1960s, the trend within 1980s Hollywood cinema was to rely on blockbusters, films that, based on their genre and subject matter, would likely be commercially successful, a success that often had to happen as early as the opening weekend. As the revenues of these successful films were what kept the larger production

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[53] Robin Hood has alternated between appearing in cinema and television since *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), with the television series *The Adventures of Robin Hood* in the UK during the 1950s, and then followed by the 1980s series starring Michael Praed mentioned here, and in the early 21st century, a third UK television series called *Robin Hood* (2006-2009), starring Jonas Armstrong as Robin.

companies afloat, "the industry sought to minimize the risks" (Thompson and Bordwell, 2010, p. 483), meaning that release scheduling of the films was centred around "the peak leisure periods, summer and Christmas" (ibid.). Likewise, genre proved critical, and in the 1980s one of the most bankable genres was the action-adventure film, with the equally bankable stars Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone embodying the genre through their muscular physiques (Tasker 1993). Other genres that proved worth the investment were the heroic adventure film, often set in the past, such as the Indian Jones film *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (USA, dir. Steven Spielberg 1981), as well as what Thompson and Bordwell (2010) calls the "interracial cop-buddy picture" (p. 672), with *Lethal Weapon* (USA, dir. Richard Donner 1987) starring Mel Gibson and Danny Glover as an example. While Hollywood studios had previously produced their own stars to facilitate the financial pull of their films (Dyer, 1979), in the years after the fall of the studio system the importance of genre became increasingly inescapable and as a result the relationship between star and studio was replaced by star and genre (Belton, 1994). The stars central to Tasker's (1993) work and to cinema of the 1980s, Stallone and Schwarzenegger, are for example not connected with a Hollywood studio in the same sense as Errol Flynn was to Warner Bros. Considering therefore the influential genres of the 1980s, their influence is not primarily because of the studio, and thus the financial and cultural power behind them, that produces them but rather the star that features within them. With stars being freed from the studio-bound contracts of early Hollywood,[54] an actor is free to choose which film to star in without the influence of the studio that created him or her, which in turn has led to stars such as Stallone and Schwarzenegger being associated with genre, and thus imbuing their star images with the meanings of the genre.

While the classic Hollywood studios had lost parts of their power in the years after the collapse of the studio system, Warner Bros. (the studio behind *The Adventures* (1938)) was and still is a considerable player within Hollywood film, and in the 1980s, 50 years after the release of *The Adventures* (1938), they were once again considering a Robin Hood film for production. Warner Bros.' then president for

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[54] It is generally considered that a lawsuit filed by Olivia de Havilland was the reason for why these contracts began to disappear – another link to Robin Hood.

worldwide advertising and publicity, Robert G. Friedman, described the audience surveys collected in the US before the start of production for *Prince of Thieves* (1991) in the autumn of 1990 in a publicity interview (Leydon, 1991). In the survey, the participants had commented on the possibility of a new Robin Hood film simply with "why?" and "who cares?" (quoted in Leydon, 1991). The market for Robin Hood stories, it appeared, had become saturated. Even so, at the time of pre-production for *Prince of Thieves* (1991), two other Hollywood studios, Twentieth Century Fox and Tri-Star, were also considering their own cinematic versions of the Sherwood outlaw (Pearce, 1991).[55] In relation to Warner Bros.' surveys, Friedman acknowledged that the interest in Robin Hood was limited to men over 25 years old, while men under 25 and women of all ages reported little interest in such a film.[56] This men's interest in Robin Hood could possibly be linked to their experiences of the myth as boys; in the late 1980s when the surveys were conducted, it was 15 years since the release of the animated Disney *Robin Hood* (1973), as well as 30 years since the final episode of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (ATV London, 1955-59) aired on ITV in the UK and CBS in the US, encompassing two generations of men over the age of 25 in the late 80s (without even having considered those who had grown up with Flynn's *The Adventures* (1938)). While the primary audience of the film appeared to be the older category of men, the production also had to cater to and attract the other audiences if the film was to be commercially successful, which in major Hollywood studio translates to being successful at all. Even though women over 25 years old were unlikely to see the film at a movie theatre simply because it was a Robin Hood retelling, Friedman suggested that Kevin Costner as lead actor could lure audiences other than older men, as older women at the time were "Kevin's primary audience" (quoted in Leydon, 1991). In 1990, when the audience survey that Friedman referred to was completed, Kevin Costner had starred in the epic Western *Dances with Wolves*

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[55] While both of these production companies considered Robin Hood projects of their own, Twentieth Century Fox decided to make theirs into a movie for television, and Tri-Star dropped their project all together (Pearce 1991). Pearce (1991) suggests that the race to finish their film first led to many rushed decisions during pre-production and filming of *Prince of Thieves* (1991).

[56] 'Older men' and 'older women' as audience categories is used by Friedman in the Leydon article, and refer to men and women who are older than 25. Thus, 'younger' means those under 25 years old.

(USA, dir. Kevin Costner, 1990). The film was a box-office hit and in March 1991, Costner was awarded with the Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Director as well as being nominated for Best Actor for the film. While previous films had featured Costner as the hero (see for example *The Untouchables* (USA, dir. Brian De Palma, 1987) and *Field of Dreams* (USA, dir. Phil Alden Robinson, 1989), after *Dances with Wolves* (1990), in which Costner plays a Union soldier stationed at the Western frontier and who befriends the people of a nearby Sioux village in the 1860s, Costner's star persona had also expanded to include fighting for social justice, an attribute appropriate for a performance of Robin Hood. Costner's star persona thus became central to the construction of the 1991 Robin Hood film, with the film's marketing being built around it, where Costner's film star good looks and charming persona was emphasised in relation to the heroism of Robin Hood (Leydon, 1991). The interplay between the star of Costner and the adventure film format thus played into two different target groups; women for Costner and men for the genre(s) and narrative.

Prince of Thieves (1991) fits the blockbuster format that had developed during the 1980s, including opening in the summer, one of the peak times for the release of blockbuster films (Thompson and Bordwell, 2010). Unlike the predecessor *Robin and Marian* (1976), the 1991 rendition of the Robin Hood story, is once again an adventure film, a genre more like the swashbuckler of 1938 than the drama of 1976 through its focus on action scenes and daring rather than interpersonal relationships and dialogue. This shift and choice of genre is indicative of *Prince of Thieves* (1991) status as a blockbuster, as the adventure and action film genres were popular for and successful in the blockbuster format; "studios concentrated on high-budget pictures based on well-known sources and crammed with special effects" (Thompson, Bordwell and Smith, 2022, p. 649) where possible merchandising, video sales and long runs in the theatres were important factors of the success and indicative of the likelihood of a project going into production. The Robin Hood story had proven commercially successful for the studios in the past, with *The Adventures* (1938) being the prime example, given the project the important quality of "well-known sources" (Thompson, Bordwell and Smith, 2022, p. 649) to facilitate the success. Additionally, and in line with the effort to widen the possible avenues of revenue essential to the blockbuster format, after the

premier of *Prince of Thieves* (1991).[57] As Kevin Costner, who plays Robin Hood in the film and whose image and likeness was central for the merchandising, noted about the tie-ins: "the movie was designed for that kind of thing" (quoted in Leydon, 1991).

Alan Rickman, who plays the Sheriff of Nottingham in *Prince of Thieves* (1991), described the film as "Raiders of the Lost Sherwood Forest" (quoted in Leydon, 1991), a play on the title of the Indiana Jones film *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), an intentional association according to writer and producer Pen Densham (Pearce, 1991). This association explicitly expresses the generic interconnectedness of *Prince of Thieves* (1991) with multiple films; *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) is a successful, both financially and culturally, example of the historic action-adventure film, while the Sherwood reference places this action-adventure film within the context of the Robin Hood myth. The film Rickman describes through these six words is an Indiana Jones-like figure in green tights rather than a hat and a whip, fighting the oppressive force of the Normans rather than the Nazis. Rickman's intention might have been to ridicule, but the observation still highlights elements that Indiana Jones and Robin Hood have in common, and therefore with the ease they are interchangeable: a powerful foe, and an iconic costume. What is created is therefore a palimpsestic image equally as powerful as that of Robin Hood or Indiana Jones themselves, but created through association of layers. Given the audience, and Rickman's,[58] scepticism of another Robin Hood project, it may have been a conscious decision to include elements of all of the three important genres of the 1980s in *Prince of Thieves* (1991), but it might also have been a coincidence, or an effect of the expectations of the cultural climate within cinema. Nevertheless, *Prince of Thieves* (1991) contains elements of all three of these 1980s action genres (see for example Jeffords, 1994; Tasker, 1993); a strong male character physically adept in combat with different kinds of weapons in the style of an action-

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[57] The theme song by Bryan Adams was also nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Song in the 63rd Academy Awards, held in 1992. There were also video games released for Nintendo consoles Nintendo Entertainment System and Game Boy based on the film.
[58] Alan Rickman also commented on the production: "Robin Hood – *again*?" (quoted in Pearce 1991).

adventure film, a hero in a historical adventure who saves the damsel in distress while being morally superior to the adversary, and a white man with a black friend, without whom the day could not be saved. Georgakas (1998) points to how the conditions of *Prince of Thieves* (1991) "are set for a possible medieval version of the white guy/black guy buddy films such as the *Lethal Weapon* series, so successful in the 1980s" (p. 76). The Buddy Cop genre, where *Lethal Weapon* (1987) and *Beverly Hills Cop* (1984) are generically defining franchises, provides a space where masculine growth is possible: the 'buddies' of these films, often a white man (Robin/Costner) and a black man (Morgan Freeman who plays Robin's friend Azeem), work together to grow as men (Harris, 2022), and as a result, save the day.

Thus, *Prince of Thieves* (1991) is a distillation, a model of the cinema of the 1980s, while still having to navigate the Robin Hood myth. In addition to recognising the generic similarities with the hero adventure films, Alan Rickman also notes in an interview with *Entertainment Weekly* that, in contrast to his own, exaggerated performance of the Sheriff, Costner had to be "as romantic and heroic as possible" (quoted in Pearce, 1991). This romanticism, according to this analysis (unfortunately Rickman's meaning is unknown) is expressed through the assumption of leadership of the people of Sherwood, adding the notions of leading with good example as elements of the strong masculinities already established in the 1980s, as these have been defined by muscularity which signifies the "fabrication of identity" (Tasker, 1993, p. 110) through the construction of the body, while also establishing a relationship with the love interest Marian. In contrast to these fabricated masculinities of stars such as Schwarzenegger and Stallone, whose construction becomes explicit performance, the masculinity portrayed in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) strives for a perceived 'natural' masculinity, where traits and attributes such as leadership are not gained but innate (in other words, 'natural'), as this is more in line with the assumed innate qualities of Robin Hood as it has been passed down through myth.

6.1. Arriving in England: Robin/Costner's performance as an English man

Unlike *The Adventures* (1938) but similarly to *Robin and Marian* (1976), *Prince of Thieves* (1991) opens outside of England, specifically in a prison in Jerusalem,

where crusader Robin has been imprisoned with his friend Peter for five years. Their hair and beards are long and shaggy and they are dressed in rags. In an attempt to save his friend from losing a hand, Robin/Costner takes his place before the jailor, but through classic Robin Hood-esque wit and bravery, he manages to overpower the jailors and begins to free his friends. A fellow prisoner, who Robin's friend treats with suspicion because of him being a Moor, warns Robin of incoming threats, and Robin/Costner decides to save the Moor Azeem (played by Morgan Freeman) and the three men escape the dungeon together. Peter, however, does not survive, and Robin/Costner and Azeem/Freeman begin the journey to England without him.

As a small boat moves towards the shores of Dover, Robin/Costner stands at the helm, his long patchwork cloak billowing in the wind behind him, the breeze rustling his hair. As they reach the shore, he falls to the ground and kisses the beach, digging his hands into the wet sand. He rolls over in the shallow water, and calls "I'm home!" (in a distinctly American accent), and kisses the English sand. The struggle of the journey, of having not been in England for years, is washed away by the sea, and is manifested in the soggy costume. *Prince of Thieves* (1991), unlike both *The Adventures* (1938) and *Robin and Marian* (1976), was filmed in England. The dramatic space is thus both narrative and factual England, these spaces informing the chronotope of the generic structure of a Robin Hood film, and therefore the expectations of the audience. However, it does assume that the audience has little to no knowledge of English geography in order to accept the suspension of disbelief; Robin and his friend Azeem travel from the shores of East Sussex, to Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland, to Nottingham in the same day.

Image 18: Robin (Kevin Costner) looks on as Azeem (Morgan Freeman) prays for the first time on English soil (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* 1991)

In this sequence, Robin/Costner wears leather armour; a jacket pieced together from different leathers and suedes in black and brown, decorated with leather thread stiches and brass studs, underneath which he wears a grey, loose-fitting linen doublet and a white cotton undershirt, with brown leather bracers covering his forearms. Over the shoulders, he wears a long, patchwork cloak under which a short, dark brown, hood that just covers his shoulder, also decorated with studs, brown cord embellishments and embroidery is visible, which has dried off after Robin/Costner's embrace of the English beach in the previous sequence (see image 18). The patchwork quality of Robin/Costner's costume echoes the opening title sequence of medieval embroidery of knights and soldiers, emphasising the construct of narrative time and era. Furthermore, Robin/Costner's costume might appear grey and made from rags (an impression heavily influenced by the cloak), but the jacket and hood are richly decorated with sparkling studs and beautiful embroidery, ornamentation associated with femininity (Galt, 2011), as well as suggesting a 'colonial perspective' as 'the perception of ornament as being linked to eastern cultures' (ibid., p. 106) where the ornamentation is a signal of Robin/Costner having been in the East. In Robin/Costner's case however, the effect is primarily that of wealth, and of a placement within an aesthetic loosely tied to a historical era. The result of the layers of costume on Robin/Costner's body is the

image of a rich man who has experienced hardship, as well as having a practical side, where clothing is primarily functional rather than ornamental. This image functions to establish the narrative time in a 'medieval' era, as the hardships of the Crusades are expressed in costume.

Regardless of the star persona of the lead actor, after its release, *Prince of Thieves* (1991) was critiqued by reviewer Roger Ebert for containing "little of the lightheartedness and romance we expect from Robin Hood" (Ebert, 1991), while the audience reception was considerably warmer.[59] Additionally, Ebert (1991) goes on to point out what Costner's performance is not: "He isn't joyous, or robust, or comical, or heroic", a perception that fellow film critic Kenneth Turan (1991) of the *Los Angeles Times* agrees with, arguing that Costner is not "bold or charismatic enough to be a convincing outlaw king", suggesting that these traits are assumed and presumed of Robin, and any portrayal of him. Turan (1991) also adds that, because of this lack of heroic qualities "it is almost impossible to accept him as a leader of men". While the film reviewers were unsuccessful in deterring the audience from going to see the film in theatres, their reviews have survived, and the palimpsestic relationship they describe between the different Robin Hood performances shows the way in which the myth functions to inform itself. The characteristics described by Turan and Ebert are arguably synonymous to the Robin/Flynn of 1938, which, whilst it is not acknowledged by Ebert (1991), is referred to by Turan (1991), who mentions both Fairbanks and Flynn as Robins who were successful in their performances, indicating the assumption that there is a way Robin *should* be, and thus a way in which the myth appears that is the way in which the myth functions properly.

Robin/Costner, despite his desirable star persona, is not that which a Robin *should* be, and instead denotes another *should*, rather that of an action hero and film star of the early 1990s. While containing some of the same elements of the Robin Hood myth as *The Adventures* (1938), such as the battle with Little John in order to cross

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[59] Despite the critics being unimpressed with it, the film was still successful at the box office, earning enough to cover its 48 million dollars budget in less than two weeks after opening (Fox 1991).

a river, *Prince of Thieves* (1991) reworks the story of Robin Hood as required by contemporary politics and its relationship with cinematic genre and masculinity. Writing on the adaptations of Robin Hood in 20th century cinema, Georgakas (1998) calls the period of the late 1980s a time of "cultural confusion and aberrant individualism" (p. 70), and goes on to critique *Prince of Thieves* for essentially being "a clumsy bag of tricks" (p. 75); he attributes the film's commercial success only to fans of *Dances with Wolves* (1990) being tricked into watching the next Costner film. The importance and pull of stars, as suggested by Georgakas (1998), is thus difficult to deny, as the production companies relied on blockbusters such as *Prince of Thieves* (1991), where the formula of Robin Hood, Kevin Costner and an attempt at the medieval aesthetics of the 80s and 90s was successful despite any issues in terms of artistic, historical or narrative qualities, such as Georgakas (1998) accuses the film of having. However, the critique voiced by Georgakas (1998) once again values a film like *Prince of Thieves* (1991) in terms of relative ideas such as authenticity, realism and aesthetics. In contrast, the perception of *Prince of Thieves* (1991) through the palimpsest rids it of value statements as they are not adding value to the palimpsestic image created. Even so, ideas as aesthetics and realism are relevant in the palimpsest of Robin Hood, but only in the way that it changes, and not necessarily in the way it is more or less true than another version. The aesthetics of *Prince of Thieves* (1991) is heavily influenced by the television series *Robin of Sherwood* (ITV, 1984-86), and adds layers to the Robin Hood palimpsest through its distancing itself from previous versions, such as the tights of *The Adventures* (1938) or the austerity of *Robin and Marian* (1976). In 1991 the spectacle which previously had swung through the air in green tights, now takes the form of studs, leather and patchwork cloaks, which allows Robin/Costner to exist in the contemporary cultural context of the 1990s instead of another era. The flexibility and layerability of the palimpsest aids how the myth stays relevant.

In her book on the Hollywood action genre of the 1980s, Jeffords (1994) argues that visibility, and the visible, is central to constructions of national identity, and that Hollywood films thus "offers clues to the construction of American national identity" (p. 6). Furthermore, as Jeffords links the construction of masculine identity during the 1980s to the most prominent man in American culture at the

time, the then-president Ronald Reagan, she adds that during the Reagan presidency nationalised bodies of stars such as the former film star turned president Reagan himself, are examples after which individual bodies model themselves. Thus, the actions of individual bodies become equated with the national identity through the link of nationalised star bodies. As such, the actions of the individual body are the actions of the nation "in such a way that individual failings were to be seen as causes of nation downfall" (ibid., p. 14). Costner, as an American body and a Hollywood movie star, is thus a representation of the American national identity, and his performance is an American one. In contrast, Robin Hood as a mythical character explicitly and repeatedly defined as English, needs to be negotiated in relation to the American masculine persona of Costner. The accent can be an expression of this, whilst costume functions to navigate and make these identities come together in a unified image of nationality as it relates to mythical expectations.

6.2. 90s heroisms: the influence of genre on costumed performances

Prince of Thieves (1991) is a generic hybrid of dominant action genres of the 1980s, and unlike *Robin and Marian* (1976) where Robin/Connery is unable to defeat the Sheriff of Nottingham due to his aged body, in this 90s version of Robin Hood, there is a return to generic conventions similar to the swashbuckler of the 1930s. While the relationship with Azeem lends Robin/Costner power through knowledge, as Azeem's presence provides the Sherwood community with the technical and scientific knowledge he has brought with him, Robin/Costner as an American action hero becomes 'masculine' through events within the mise-en-scène. While Tasker (2015) argues that action films have "no clear and consistent iconography or setting" (p. 2), they often require the use of the hero's physical body in "overcoming enemies and obstacles" (ibid.), such as for example the brawl with the Saracen prison guards in the film's opening sequence where Robin/Costner's physical strength despite years of starvation is essential for his survival and his and Azeem's escape.

In the film's finale, Robin, Azeem and Little John together with some volunteers from Sherwood attempt a rescue mission of their captured friends who are to be

hanged in Nottingham, with the Sheriff and the kidnapped Marian on a castle balcony overlooking the event. In preparation for the mission, Azeem has prepared multiple barrels of gunpowder to be placed strategically for their escape, a technological advantage unfamiliar to the English, similar to the technological improvements made by Azeem in the Sherwood camp. As Robin/Costner and his men arrive at Nottingham Castle, they are all wearing hooded and patched cloaks to hide their identities, while Azeem is disguised as a leper, covered in white gauze to conceal his black skin, in order to pass through the crowd undetected. The hooded cloaks in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) become the uniform of the Merry Men of Sherwood: Robin/Costner wears the hooded cloak around Nottingham to hide his identity when he wants to contact Marian; he chooses to be hooded and hidden in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) as the way to escape the threat against him, and it is the hood that the followers of Robin/Costner chose to wear. As they enter Nottingham Castle, Robin/Costner however, resorts to smearing his cloak with horse manure, scaring the castle guards away with the stench. The physical body of Robin/Costner is thus extended into the air of the space he inhabits, making the hooded cloak a covering under which he not only hides his identity but prevents it from being forcefully uncovered, relying on the distaste of others around the poor and homeless to save him from discovery.

When the Sherwood group has positioned itself around the courtyard, Robin/Costner climbs onto the castle wall where he removes his patched cloak, shedding the identity of the poor beggar, and the intimidation of the stench. Under the cloak he reveals a grey doublet, studded along the vertical panels, worn together with unembellished brown leather bracers on both arms. Strangely enough, around his neck he has got an undecorated loose hood in brown leather, the folds at the front similar to the coiling of the scarf in previous sequences, meaning that he wore a hood underneath the hooded cloak. The hood underneath the cloak is thus assumed to be ornamental, despite the lack of decoration to the piece itself, describing and identifying Robin/Costner as Robin Hood simply through the easy access of a hood. This costume of Robin/Costner is lighter than the ones previously worn, the dark leather and suede jacket has been left behind in favour of the grey doublet. The colour helps him blend into the grey surrounding of the Castle but it also emphasises his role as hero and saviour.

After a spectacular feat of archery, when Robin/Costner splits the rope of a boy about to be hanged, Robin/Costner and his men are detected, and Azeem shoots a burning arrow into the gunpowder, creating an explosion to break through the castle wall. Quickly recovering from the shock of gunpowder in medieval England, the Sheriff orders the hanging to proceed, and as Will Scarlett (Christian Slater) is about to be executed, Robin/Costner grabs a burning arrow from a nearby body of a castle guard, nooks it onto his bow and shoots the executioner in the chest, freeing Will (see image 19).

Image 19: Robin (Kevin Costner) shooting a flaming arrow, unfazed by the explosion behind him (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* 1991)

The sequence alternates between a close-up of Robin/Costner as he aims, and a zoom on the executioner as he raises an axe to behead Will. The costume changes fit from cut to cut, as the close-up of Robin/Costner shows how the doublet and the hood bunches up around his shoulders and over his chin, and partly interfering with the bowstring and the feathers of the arrow, but as Robin/Costner releases the arrow (in slow motion), the hood and doublet is positioned so that his face is fully visible. This sequence shows that continuity is tricky, but more importantly it shows the way in which Robin/Costner is supposed to be perceived: while it might disturb the sense of verisimilitude and suspension of disbelief as it makes the

texture and layering of the cinematic image visible through the removal of a set to contextualise the action, it highlights the stylisation of Robin Hood as Robin/Costner, where Costner's face is the subject of the shot. A few moments earlier, the wall behind Robin had already been destroyed, but is again on fire as Robin/Costner is positioned in the centre of the frame. Robin/Costner is surrounded by flames, both behind him and in front of him, a shot that, without the bow and arrow, might have come from any action or war film of the 1990s,[60] as it removes Robin/Costner from the space of medieval England constructed in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) and places him in a frame without indicators of time (or context), were it not for the costume identifying him as Robin Hood. Furthermore, the shot emphasises the performance through an extreme close-up of Robin/Costner's face as he releases the arrow, as well as the slow-motion of the arrow's flight whilst the fire rages in the background. The arrangement of the costume also indicates the staging of the shot; Robin/Costner is at this point the most *Robin* of the entire film, as the heroism through bravery, capability, physical strength and leadership is expressed through the staging before the exploding background, and the rescue of a friend.

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[60] The use of explosions for their own sake rather than for the sake of narrative became a stylistic tool for director Michael Bay, who debuted with *Bad Boys* in 1995.

Image 20: Robin (Kevin Costner) and the Sheriff of Nottingham (Alan Rickman) in their final swordfight (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* 1991)

However, Robin/Costner's heroic qualities as they are to be performed in an action adventure in the 1990s also require him to express his physical capabilities through hand-to-hand fighting, leading up to the final swordfight between Robin/Costner and the Sheriff of Nottingham.[61] The costume Robin/Costner wears may not change drastically from scene to scene: the same items of clothing are rotated to fit the needs of the scene much like both *The Adventures* (1938) and *Robin and Marian* (1976). Equally similarly to *The Adventures* (1938), however, Robin/Costner's costume functions to differentiate between himself and the Sheriff of Nottingham. The Sheriff is costumed in all black, with black hair and beard. In the final fight, the beige and browns of Robin doublet is the light against the black shirt and hose worn by the Sheriff, explicitly positioning them on opposite ends of the spectrum, and per association, the moral spectrum (see image 20).

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[61] The final swordfight between Robin Hood and his adversary is a common motif with the Robin Hood films. In *The Adventures* (1938) Robin/Flynn fights Sir Guy in an acrobatic feat, while Robin/Connery loses his battle with the Sheriff in *Robin and Marian* (1976).

The position as antagonist of the Sheriff is established through costume and its colour in an early scene which provides a prologue for the England that will meet Robin/Costner upon his return. In this scene, Robin/Costner's father is tricked out of his castle to aid villagers in need. Outside the Loxley Manor gates, a group of people in white robes and with burning torches are waiting for him. In the middle of the group, astride his black horse, the Sheriff of Nottingham removes his mask to reveal his face, and dark hair and beard underneath the white hooded, cloak. The light of the cloak is used to cover the identities and actions of the person underneath, while also functioning technically in the long shot where the white cloaks are easily visible in the night scene. After this prologue, the Sheriff is always dressed in all black, with brocades and furs providing textures to the costume. The opulence of the Sheriff's costume alongside the dark colour is contrasted against the rough textures and simpler materials of Robin/Costner's lighter, beige costume. Even though Robin/Costner has worn decorated clothing before (such as the leather and suede jacket), as he faces the Sheriff he does not, and the difference of character is rendered visible in costume. This contrast between the lighter hero and the darker villain is best embodied in the final swordfight, where Robin/Costner comes from the rescue mission in the castle courtyard and interrupts the Sheriff's attempt to force Marian to marry him. The men move through the space, fencing and throwing furniture and insults at each other, with Robin/Costner's costume still appearing unruffled while the increasing state of undress and dishevelment of the Sheriff suggests he is the more desperate one. It is in the end the distraction of Marian that gives Robin/Costner the opening where he stabs and kills the Sheriff. While the difference in colour between Robin/Costner and the Sheriff is enough to distinguish between the morality of the characters, it is however important to note that in this scene, Marian is the one wearing white, her purity and her honour that which Robin/Costner is primarily fighting for.

6.3. Azeem: generic development to include contemporary perception of representation

In *Prince of Thieves* (1991), Robin/Costner takes on the leadership of the oppressed people, but in contrast to the performances of Errol Flynn and Sean Connery in their respective films, does it neither with a smile and a witty comment

nor nostalgic reverie, but rather with a determination to achieve 'freedom' with his closest friend and right-hand man Azeem, a Moor, played by Morgan Freeman. The men of Sherwood cannot give Robin/Costner the advice and support as the veteran of the opposing forces of the Crusades; instead, this is provided by Azeem. While the film portrays a new kind of leadership for Robin, that is, less of an adventure in the forest as seen in *The Adventures* (1938) and more of a guerrilla war on the oppression of the Sheriff of Nottingham, it also does not portray Robin as an all-knowing leader who would have been able to overthrow the oppressive forces on his own if he had to. Instead, with the introduction of Freeman/Azeem as the ultimate helper, *Robin/Costner becomes dependent on others*, and as such rejects previous versions of the strong masculine heroes that had been portrayed in the 1980s and earlier.

In a scene establishing the relationship of Robin/Costner and Marian, a moment is provided where Robin/Costner and Azeem's interdependence becomes visible through costuming and mise-en-scène. Robin/Costner and Azeem are visiting Marian's estate for the first time since their return to England from Jerusalem, and while Robin/Costner offers his help to Marian who is reluctant to accept due to how ill-behaved he was as a child, Azeem has climbed a wall overlooking the grounds. As Robin/Costner and Marian are talking in the courtyard, Azeem calls for Robin using the nickname 'Christian', which is used throughout the film and functions as a verbal reminder of their original animosity based on Robin/Costner's role as invader of Azeem's homeland, but also Azeem as different in this Christian part of the world. Azeem has spotted the approach of Sir Guy of Gisbourne and his men, a group that Robin/Costner had already antagonised as they arrived in England. Robin/Costner climbs up to join Azeem on the wall, where Azeem has produced a rectangular piece of leather and two glass lenses, making a telescope. Azeem looks through the device and hands it to Robin/Costner, who as expected has never seen a telescope before, given that it was not invented in Europe until the 1600s (even though *Prince of Thieves* (1991) appears to argue that it was invented elsewhere before then); he looks through the tube after which a point-of-view shot cuts in the approaching Sir Guy, followed by a medium shot of Robin/Costner who falls backward in shock, and he draws his sword as he thinks he can reach Sir Guy with it through the telescope lens. Azeem scoffs and pulls the

telescope from Robin/Costner's hands, and exclaims 'How did your uneducated kind ever take Jerusalem?'. Azeem's strangeness is repeated and reinforced throughout the film by other characters as well as through the use of Robin's nickname, and his superior knowledge of science as it is expressed not only through the ease with which he handles the telescope he also aids in the delivery of a baby and constructs a system to provide the Sherwood community with water. Even though the character is played by the Black American actor Morgan Freeman, Azeem becomes a representation of the eastern Other (Said, 1979) in the Robin Hood myth. Even though his knowledge saves the lives of many, his strangeness is never fully forgiven, and similar to how Said (1979) describes the West's representation of the East, Azeem is reduced to his function as helper, and his potential as a character is not fully realised because of his status as 'Muslim' or 'Moor', or even 'Black'. Azeem's dependence on Robin/Costner as that which he is the Other of is most consistently visible in costume.

In the sequence with the telescope, Robin/Costner wears the same leather armour as when he arrived on the English shore, with the addition of around his neck, a mixed fabric scarf in grey and red that is twisted into a circle. In contrast, Azeem does not wear leather other than his black armguards, with his costume in this sequence being a long coat of patched blue, beige and black strips, under which he wears a long blue and purple vest that ties at the waist, and a light blue grey undershirt. Azeem also wears a grey turban that covers his neck and is tucked under the undershirt (see image 21). The coiling of Robin's scarf is echoed in Azeem's turban, but Robin's head is uncovered, even by the seemingly ornamental hood, given that he never wears it. Throughout *Prince of Thieves* (1991), colour is used to differentiate characters, and not only with distinguishing good from bad. Azeem is made different from Robin/Costner through the use of colour as well, but instead of it being light/dark, it is warm/cold, or even earthy/metallic, but they also appear alike through textures, draping and the use of ornamentation which links Robin/Costner to the East (Galt, 2011).

Image 21: Azeem (Morgan Freeman) lending Robin (Kevin Costner) his telescope (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* 1991)

Even though Azeem looks at Robin in disbelief as Robin is surprised by the function of the telescope, the telescope appears to belong to Robin rather than to Azeem; the brown leather of the tube blends with the brown of Robin's costume, while Azeem previously used one of the lenses as a mirror to groom his moustache. Furthermore, the coiling of the scarf suggests how Robin emulates Azeem in the ways that benefit him and for his own purposes. The many ways in which Robin/Costner's costume mimic Azeem's relates to the way in which the American production of *Prince of Thieves* (1991) positions itself in relation to the Eastern och Oriental other (Said, 1979) through mimicry (Bhabha, 1984). Even though Azeem is represented as of a technological and intellectual standard than Robin/Costner, (and perhaps through his knowledge more like the 20th and 21st century viewer of the film), his character is still a result of the mimicry of a colonial power of an Eastern Other, and therefore further emphasises the difference of that other whilst perhaps intending to represent it as 'just like us' (Bhabha, 1984). As these objects and the knowledge appear to belong to Robin/Costner, and defintiely benifits him, it shows the perspective of the narrative; Robin/Costner is the deserving hero, the protagonist, and Azeem, the Other, is just a helper who has his strange uses. Another example of this is the much later scene where

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Robin/Costner and the Merry Men rescue their friends from hanging, when Azeem's preparation of gun powder lends Robin/Costner the exploding impact of a hero through use of technology not yet familiar to the English. Azeem is thus not only different as a black man, he is also different from Robin/Costner's performance of masculinity, as Azeem is literally unable to blend into the neutral English landscape but through this difference, Robin/Costner is highlighted: Azeem's blue coat stands in sharp contrast to the greens, greys and browns of the mise-en-scene, a colour palette that Robin/Costner's costume adheres to, making him visibly fit in with the country and the world he returns to. Even so, the contrast with Azeem's blue colours is softer than the black of Sir Guy of Gisbourne and the Sheriff of Nottingham, and as Robin/Costner lends pieces of Azeem's costume and belongings such as the coiling scarf and the telescope, the two become increasingly similar until that which Azeem has provided for Robin/Costner becomes innately Robin's. The masculinity of Robin/Costner is as constructed as that of other 1980s action heroes, but it appears not to be, as it uses other characters for development and change, which in turn echoes another genre convention from the 1980s: the buddy cop film (Harris, 2022), with examples such as *Lethal Weapon* (Donner, 1987). With the help through assistance and support of Azeem, Robin/Costner grows capable of leading the people and overthrowing the Sheriff.

As the first major Robin Hood production since the Connery film of 1976, this film also provides questions regarding reinforcing the romantic notions of pastoral England in as they were portrayed in heritage films of the 1980s (see for example Higson, 2003), which in turn can be discussed in terms of colonialism and imperialism as they are perceived in the early 1990s. Given the predominantly American production, the film also poses questions around who creates the idea of England, for whom and for what purpose, as well as who inhabits these spaces. The many versions of Robin Hood, as an English myth, are concerned with speaking England into existence, and explicitly embodying Englishness, as seen in *Prince of Thieves* (1991), where Robin/Costner falls to his knees in the English sand and proclaims that he is home. In contrast, Azeem is made to be an-Other through his religion, the colour of his skin, and thus equally explicitly not belonging to Sherwood or even England. Even so, his knowledge is allowed to improve

Robin/Costner's chances of resisting the Sheriff of Nottingham as well as the living conditions of the people of Sherwood, and his presence in England is explained by the vow he gives to Robin/Costner as he is freed from the prison dungeon where they both were kept: to follow Robin/Costner wherever he goes to repay the debt of a life saved. He is through this debt positioned as Robin/Costner's helper, to always be around for the (white) hero to turn to when the need arises, much like the generic example of the buddy cop film *Lethal Weapon* (1987). Within the genre, this relationship between a white hero and a non-white helper/friend is relatively common, but also often subverted, see for example *Beverly Hills Cop* (Brest, 1984) (Harris, 2022). Azeem therefore becomes what Martone (2009) calls an 'integrated Muslim', where his Othering is no longer perceived as a threat against the white community of the forest, but instead as someone useful to have around in times of crises. The debt between Robin/Costner and Azeem, very handily indeed, is paid at the end of the film, after the death of the Sheriff of Nottingham, so that Robin/Costner does not lose his companion until the happy ending.

6.4. Entering Sherwood: appearing alongside the bodies of others to convey meaning

Unlike previous Robin Hood films, *Prince of* Thieves (1991) actively creates the communal space of the forest through the leadership of Robin/Costner. Robin/Flynn's Sherwood is already an established scene in which he appears in *The Adventures* (1938), while Robin/Connery returns to his old home in the forest to find it overgrown in the years he'd been away in *Robin and Marian* (1976). In contrast, Robin/Costner, as a way to escape Sir Guy and his men, flees into the forest, a place which is dark and "haunted", according to the old servant Duncan. Robin/Costner, however, is not fooled by the 'child's toy', the windchimes that create the noise to make visitors believe the space is haunted. As they venture further into the forest, Robin/Costner, Azeem and Duncan come across a river, and there they meet the men seeking shelter in the forest. These men have already created a community within Sherwood, but their lack of structure, strength and cunning make them vulnerable, and they quickly appoint Robin/Costner their new leader. Löw (2016, p. 97) writes that white, heterosexual men are "disembodied in social perception" as they appear as "an empty vessel for mind and reason". As such, the spaces they enter and thus create through their presence is shaped by the

assumption of reason inherent to white men. The moment Robin/Costner enters the forest, Sherwood is imbued with the values of Robin/Costner as a leader and therefore *arranged* into a communal and political space for the men of Sherwood. It is not until after Robin/Costner (with the help of Azeem) that the women and children are allowed to enter and be a part of the community in the forest.

Even though the homosocial community of Sherwood is partially interrupted with the presence of Little John's (Nick Brimble) wife Fanny (Soo Drouet), and other family members of the men gathered there to support and gain Robin's protection, women in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) are objects without their own agency, and as such are reduced to damsels in distress, relying on the(ir) men to save them. As such, the association becomes that men and masculinity as being that which is by nature stronger and more capable, and that their power is natural and innate to their masculinity: their gender is an unavoidable consequence of their sex. Drawing on the work by Kosofsky Sedgwick, Bruzzi (2013) notes that the "notion of homosocialism to men's cinema (a cinema for and by men) is that it enforces the repression of homosexuality by masculinity while still permitting homosexuality to retain a pivotal role in defining masculinity" (p. 60). In action cinema of the 1980s where the hard bodies of muscular men (Jeffords, 1994) dominate the diegetic world(s), it is thus crucial for the definition of masculinity to repress a queer reading, as homosexuality undermines the masculinity of the hero, and for this reason, the women of *Prince of Thieves* (1991) need to be saved; Marian through her being a maiden or damsel in distress when kidnapped by the Sheriff, and Fanny through the dangers of childbirth as pregnant and a mother. Fanny's additional function is also to create a context outside of the forest for the men living there; they have wives and children who need protecting more than they themselves do. Barratt and Straus (1994) argue that the approach of the second millennium, with the influence of feminist theory in the last decades of the 20th century, "individuals, both men and women, are increasingly prone to resort to beliefs in essentialist definitions of masculinity" (p. 39). Essentialism in gender is the perception that "the values of the status quo [are] immune from the call to change" (ibid.). As such, the patriarchal structures described by feminists, are perceived as natural to the human condition and as such "virtually irresistible" (ibid.). However, as Barratt and Straus (1994) go on to note, this argument for

essentialism is little more than a call for a return to "an empowering archetypal imagery, the figurations of a primal nature to which supposedly men must 'return' of they are to be 'true' to themselves" (p. 40). One such archetypal and mythical image is that of Robin Hood, and thus *Prince of Thieves* (1991).

The relationship between feminine and masculine, where the masculine prevails, is traceable in the costumes and costume developments of Robin/Costner and Marian, played by Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio. In the film's opening sequence in Jerusalem, Robin's dying friend asks him to look after his sister Marian, whom Robin/Costner knew as a child. Upon Robin's return to England, he visits the estate of Marian's family, where she has dressed up her lady-in-waiting to impersonate her so that Marian, dressed in all black and with her face covered, can fight off the visitor who they suspect of coming to steal or collect taxes. It is not until Robin pins her to a wall and removes her mask that he realises that he was attacked by Lady Marian, the friend's sister he was asked to protect. Thus, despite having her disguise forcibly removed, she is shown as fully capable of taking care of herself and the people depending on her and the estate, but as the film progresses, the less agency she retains as she becomes Robin/Costner's love interest. Equally, as Robin/Costner's love interest, she is no longer in need of a disguise to aid her in the protecting of herself and those she is responsible for, instead it is Robin/Costner who takes on the role of the protector, according to the traditional gender roles the film repeat, and she is never seen masked again.

Similarly to how the generic expectations of Robin have changed Costner's performance, Marian as played by Mastrantonio is not the active female character of Marian/de Havilland in *The Adventures* (1938), or the Marians of the 21st century. Instead, whilst being most similar to Marian/Hepburn in her existence in relation to Robin, she is regularly used as a diegetic embodiment of the viewer, guiding the audience's gaze and informing their appropriate reactions. One such instance is the scene in which Marian sees Robin naked as he takes a swim under a waterfall, a scene which also functions to remind ourselves of the (hetero-)sexuality of the homosocial, male community in the forest. Marian, a woman who a few seconds previously had held a knife to one of Robin's men's throats now "ends up getting inexplicably misty-eyed at the sight of our hero's undraped rear

end" (Turan, 1991). This scene of nakedness functions in relation to the established conventions of action films of the 1980s, and it relates to the way in which naked bodies are portrayed in art as still dressed, nude rather than fully naked (Hollander, 1994). As Robin emerges from the water, his body glistens from the water in a way similar to the bodies of Stallone and Schwarzenegger covered in sweat and grime, but instead Robin/Costner's body is related to cleanliness through water and as a result not as a result of hard work, making his physicality appear natural and not constructed through hard work (see image 22). The water also adds a perspective of texture against Robin/Costner's skin, dressing the skin in a shiny surface almost like costume. Even so, Robin/Costner's body is a spectacle, whilst not in the same way as the exaggerated physiques of Stallone and Schwarzenegger. Instead, Robin/Costner's relatively softer body is scarred, reminding the spectator of the Crusades that Robin fought in, something that the nudity might have distracted from, while also reminding of the humanity and mortality of a character who rarely dies, or at least not in cinema except for *Robin and Marian* (1976). The camera lingers just as much on a close up of Marian/Mastrantonio as she gazes at Robin, as it does on Robin/Costner, making the sequence rather about the sensation of seeing Robin/Costner naked than the nudity itself. Furthermore, it emphasises the heterosexual, female gaze, rather than a traditional male gaze that would jeopardise Robin's masculinity.

Image 22: Robin (Kevin Costner) after a swim under a waterfall (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* 1991)

As Robin/Costner gets dressed in a cave under the waterfall, Robin's men call his attention to the presence of Marian and her lady-in-waiting, and Marian/Mastrantonio is shown in another close-up as putting herself together and putting on a hard-set face (with a sigh) as not to reveal her attraction to him, and therefore showing weakness in their relationship which until this point has not developed into a romantic one. Robin/Costner puts on a white shirt and a pair of dark red suede hose, and meets up with Marian while the shirt is still partially wet. They walk back to the camp together, and on the way they pass Azeem who has just designed a system for transporting water into the tree houses above them, a system that Robin laughs at.

In the camp they find Little John's son Wulf practicing his archery with a group of men looking on. Robin/Costner challenges the boy to shoot the target while distracted, and Wulf fails. Marian in turn challenges Robin/Costner to do the same, and as Robin/Costner aims and is about to shoot, Marian softly blows air against his cheek. Robin/Costner misses the target, and the men laugh. As he stands to take the shot, one of the men jokes 'Is the shirt coming off or not?', further indicating that this scene is important for the romantic relationship between Robin/Costner and Marian through the vernacular of a group of men wanting to

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remind themselves and each other of the heterosexuality at play. He wears the shirt open with the strings to adjust the neckline untied, the sleeves rolled up to expose his bare underarms, while still wearing the studded leather bracers (see image 23). As Marian leans forward to distract him, her costume is outside of frame, only her face and neck visible as she moves closer to Robin/Costner. The only thing separating their two faces is the leather bracer on Robin/Costner's right arm as he pulls the arrow back, and her soft exhale makes him flinch.

Image 23: Robin (Kevin Costner) showing his men and Lady Marian (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) how to shoot an arrow properly (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* 1991)

The intimacy of the moment in this sequence is created through the lack of costume at the waterfall, and the softness and near-nakedness of the undershirt and the bracer. It also illustrates the physicality of Robin/Costner's masculinity through not only the association to sex in nakedness but also to the physical strain exposed by the rolled-up sleeves, despite how he is unable to focus fully around an attractive woman, once again reassuring the viewer that he indeed is a real man. The heteronormative and –sexual community of the forest and the narrative is the main focus of this scene, as it functions to add layers to the image created of Robin in *Prince of Thieves* (1991), where these issues of sex and sexuality are central to Robin/Costner's function as a hero. After the final swordfight between Robin/Costner and the Sheriff, the film ends with the marriage of Robin and

Marian, securing Robin's masculinity despite his homosocial community in Sherwood. Through the marriage of Robin and Marian under the wooden foliage, the story reflects back on the medieval traditions linked to Robin and Marian's roles within celebration of the May King and pageantry (Matthews, 2016). It also reinforces patriarchal structures of the relationship between men and women; wherein *The Adventures* (1938) Robin and Marian are *going* to marry, the wedding is never seen, while in *Robin and Marian* (1976) marriage is never mentioned, possibly as marriage between Robin/Connery and Marian/Hepburn could never be as their story is about the ends of their lives. In contrast, Robin/Costner and Marian/Mastrantonio are at the beginning of their lives, and the wedding becomes the promise of a happy future, for them and for all. Through her marriage to Robin/Costner, Marian steps fully away from needing to protect herself, and the heteronormative structures are once again enforced. Furthermore, arriving just in time before Friar Tuck has declared them man and wife, King Richard (played by Sean Connery, adding another level of the image of Robin/Costner's performance being endorsed by Robin/Connery) arrives and approves of the marriage. Thus, the stability of the marriage is secured through the approval of both church and the rightful monarch. The fact that Richard the Lionheart never returned to England does not hold any importance when the romanticised ideals are to be upheld.

Image 24: Robin (Kevin Costner) and Marian (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) are wed in Sherwood (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* 1991)

Not only does it function as the end of the film, the wedding in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) also suggests an end to the time in Sherwood. On the existence of commons, Federici (2018) writes that "once the state of economic emergency that had brought them into existence ceased, some of the reproductive commons that had been built were abandoned" (p. 5), suggesting that after the overthrowing of usurpers has been finalised, the world will return to the way it was before the upheaval. In the case of Sherwood Forest: John Little will return with his family to their farm, and Robin/Costner and Marian/Mastrantonio will take their place as landowners and part of the English nobility. The wedding highlights this tension between the return to a class system based on wealth and heritage (further hastened by the return of the king, the symbol of the state and class system) and the idealised community of brotherhood established in Sherwood, as it takes place in the class-less forest, similar to the way in which the tension between the Saxons and Normans in *The Adventures* (1938) is embodied in the dressing of the Normans in rags. As they marry Robin/Costner and Marian wear costumes both associated with their wealth and privilege but also the folk traditions of the forest and the people; in Robin/Costner's case, a richly embroidered hood over his shoulders, reminding the wedding guests of his status and heritage, and for Marian, a white dress and veil with a harvest wreath acting as a bridal flower

crown, her symbols of purity and fertility as a bride (see image 24). Even though the Robin Hood films of the 20th century often argue for the disruption of society for the purpose of social justice, they often end with a return to a status quo that is stabilising the movement of disruption. In the patriarchal structure of the Robin Hood myth as it is retold in *Prince of Thieves* (1991), the only way for society to return to the way it should be, is for Robin/Costner to marry his Marian, with the blessing of the returned King of England, in all his finery.

7. *Robin Hood* (Scott, 2010)

7.1. Actors, directors and 21st century Hollywood

In 2008, 17 years after the premier of *Prince of Thieves* (1991), it was announced that director Ridley Scott would take on the myth of Robin Hood in a new cinematic adaptation of the myth, starring Russell Crowe in the lead as Robin Longstride. In a round table interview from 2016, Scott argues that sequels wear the viewer out and as such undermine the effectiveness and ability of cinema as an industry (The Hollywood Reporter, 2016).[62] Quentin Tarantino, another Hollywood director and interviewee at the table with Scott, disagrees with Scott and notes the pull of sequels and prequels, such as Scott's own *Prometheus* (USA, dir. Ridley Scott, 2012). Tarantino here voices that which Scott does not acknowledge, the pleasure of intertextuality and especially with a cultural text of considerable value such as *Alien* (USA, dir. Ridley Scott, 1979) for which *Prometheus* (2012) is the prequel.[63] Since the interview by The Hollywood Reporter, Scott has directed his own sequel, despite arguing for their ineffectiveness: *Gladiator* 2 (Scott, 2024), the follow-up to *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000) premiered in the autumn of 2024. Writing on auteur theory, Caughie (1981) identifies this other aspect of a director as sender of a text as one of two "pulls" (p. 200), where the first pull is the director as "author-function, the subject constituted in language", where the second pull is "the insistence of the pleasure (and seduction) of the films identified by [the director's] name and marked by his recognizable thematic and stylistic presence" (ibid.). Whilst auteur theory is not applicable to the study of Robin Hood in this thesis, the forces described by Caughie share elements with genre and stars, where the director functions similar to the star in genre (Altman, 1999; Dyer, 1979). As *Robin Hood* (2010) was marketed as a Ridley Scott film, the film is thus explicitly positioned in Caughie's second pull; the marketing promises pleasure and recognisability for an audience

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[62] Since the release of *Robin Hood* (2010), a number of viewers have requested a sequel (a quick scroll through Rotten Tomato and Reddit shows this) – however, a sequel was cancelled due to poor performance at the box office, which could be related to how expensive the film was even though it topped box offices at times.
[63] Tarantino also notes the upcoming sequel for *Blade Runner* (1982) in this interview.

and fans of 'Scott films'. This pull then coincides with another type of pull which refers to the Robin Hood story itself. As the star, or the director in this case, contributes with a pull related to previous works, the pull of the narrative, the myth of Robin Hood, relates to previous works in cinema and elsewhere but more importantly to cultural perception and memory.

However, even before Scott had taken on the project, Russel Crowe had already signed on to star as the lead (Fleming and Garrett, 2007). The initial script was called *Nottingham* and centred around a more nuanced Sheriff of Nottingham with a "less virtuous" (Fleming and Garrett, 2007) Robin Hood in a supporting role. When Scott took on the project a year later, this angle was rejected and the script reworked into *Robin Hood* (2010). With the previous success of Scott's and Crowe's collaboration within historical epics, as well as the return of Academy Award winning costume designer Janty Yates, and even though Ridley Scott and Russell Crowe worked together on multiple films between 2000 and 2010,[64] *Robin Hood* (2010) promised a return to the visual style and themes of *Gladiator* (USA, dir. Ridley Scott, 2000), and the resulting box office success and cult status.[65] As such, the Robin Hood film is situated in relation to intertextual context of the cinematic image created through previous collaborations of the director and lead actor, mythical context (other Robin Hood films), as well as the genre of historical epics. The image that is thus presented in *Robin Hood* (2010) is palimpsestic and containing layers of other cinematic texts, both featuring Robin Hood, and those that do not, but are related to the star persona of Crowe. Furthermore, given the previous success of Scott's *Gladiator* (2000) starring Crowe, the film also promises quality to the audience, as the pull acts on Scott as author-function but specifically in relation to the casting of Crowe. Thus, even before filming had started, the

[64] *A Good Year* (2006), *American Gangster* (2007) and *Body of Lies* (2008). In an interview with *Variety* (2020), Crowe describes how he likes to work with Scott because of the intuitive way Scott works. Crowe also credits *Robin Hood* (2010) to Scott, rather than to a film by himself (*Variety* 2020).
[65] The sequel to *Gladiator* (2000) premiered in November of 2024, having been both anticipated and feared by fans. There are multiple intertextual references to the 2000 film, including costume, indicating the awareness of Scott and the production team of the effect.

appearance of Robin/Crowe was riddled with symbols containing the myth of Robin Hood as well as Crowe's persona in Scott productions.

Unlike previous Robin Hood films, such as *The Adventures* (1938) and *Prince of Thieves* (1991) with Robin of Loxley being a member of the nobility, Robin Longstride in *Robin Hood* (Scott, 2010) is a commoner, and an archer in King Richard's army, without any personal relationship with the king. Continuing the trend of cinematic genre in the 1980s and onward, the 2010 Robin Hood film built on the revival of "classic genres, such as costume pictures set in ancient times" (Thompson, Bordwell and Smith, 2022, p. 658) through the "reinvigorated genre […] the action-adventure film" (ibid., p. 658), the genre of which *Prince of Thieves* (1991) is part. In this new "reinvigorated" (Thompson, Bordwell and Smith, 2022, p. 658) genre, the digital effects of late 20th century cinema are paired with physical action and stunts. The action picture was and still is firmly placed within the blockbuster format, with the function of genre and stars being popular both in cinemas and in the aftermarkets of television and streaming services, as well as promising the possibilities of sequels, being crucial for the likelihood of a project going forward to production. The introduction of video and digital technologies also influenced the use of colour schemes, where the "sensitive film stocks and more powerful theatre projections lamps could bring out details in shadow areas" (Thompson, Bordwell and Smith 2022, p. 659), enabling the style of the 2010 version of the Robin Hood myth. The technological developments permit a new style of Robin Hood, where "the grace and colour of historical costume" (Richards 1977, quoted in Richards 2007, p. 119) in the studio era, as portrayed in *The Adventures* (1938) has since the fall of the studio system and rise of digital era been exchanged with a muted, earthy colour scheme, of which *Robin Hood* (2010) is an example. Similarly, the technological developments of the 21st century enabled materials not possible in previous versions of Robin Hood costuming: the painted fabrics that functioned as chainmail in *The Adventures* (1938) had to replace real chainmail as the movement of the metal disturbed the pick-up of sound on set (Craig, 1938), something which is no longer an issue in the 2000s as metals are worn often and by multiple characters in *Robin Hood* (2010).

The importance of visual style to the director is expressed in promotional interviews with Scott, where he refers to how he was ridiculed when making *Gladiator* (2000), also starring Russell Crowe, and how he had proved himself capable of creating a high-quality epic. The success of the 2000 collaboration between the actor and director, Scott argues, showed his capability of turning the Robin Hood myth into a film that will not "fail to hit the target" (Pearce, 2008), a statement that does not specify what target Scott is referring to; box office success, critical acclaim, cult status, some kind of medieval 'historical' accuracy, or even an archery target? The visual style of the production as it is chosen by the director becomes important to the portrayal of Robin Hood in the embodiment of Robin/Crowe as it suggests a new version of Robin, one that is grittier than previous ones. In the short interview, Scott manages to position the 2010 Robin Hood film in relation to both *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) and *Prince of Thieves* (1991), as well in relation to one of his previous collaborations with Russell Crowe, *Gladiator* (2000), through referring to the performance of the previous actors playing Robin Hood. The production of a Robin Hood film does, it would seem, force these comparisons, as the Robin Hood character, and portrayal, is the purpose of the narrative, and as a result the appearance of Robin is put in contrast to other and previous images adding to the palimpsest. Alongside the positioning against the Robin Hood performances of the past, the relationship between Crowe and Scott, and the intertextual construct of the former's star persona, is highlighted through the mention of another of their collaborations, *Body of Lies* (USA, dir. Ridley Scott, 2008). Thus, as early as two years before *Robin Hood* (2010) premiered, it had already been placed within multiple layers of cinematic context, which would inevitably remain as the film was released. The study of *Robin Hood* (2010) cannot for that reason be done without the acknowledgement of both the tradition of cinematic Robin Hood, nor the previous Scott/Crowe collaboration in *Gladiator* (2000), as it informs the star persona of Crowe and therefore Robin/Crowe as well as the intertextual expectations of the audience from the collaboration.

Moving into the 21st century, the casting and production of this film is, given the pleasurable pull of the directorial context, heavily influenced by the intertextuality

of the Scott/Crowe film *Gladiator* (2000). This link can be seen in the common themes of the fight for freedom, usurpers, the poverty of the people and displacement of the hero. While some of these themes are generally recurring within the Robin Hood mythology, the Robin Hood of Scott's production is not a charming, mischievous outlaw (even though he is a deserter after the death of King Richard on the battle field), as established through the performance of Errol Flynn, but moves towards a seriousness and calming presence. The film is also different from previous versions because of the minor role of the Sheriff, the lack of a Sir Guy of Gisbourne, and the distance of Prince (and later King) John in London, whilst Robin Hood and the action primarily take place in Nottingham and Barnsdale (a place which is central to the myth, but rarely visited in cinema, see for example Harrison, 2000). Furthermore, the primary issue of the film is not the protection of England for the return of King Richard (who, just like in *Robin and Marian* (1976) dies in an early scene), but rather the fight for the freedom of the commoners of England, where the fight against the French is conditioned in return for the requested liberty. The fight for liberty, and Robin/Crowe as a part of the people, albeit an extraordinary part in terms of skills and position, are two motifs *Robin Hood* (2010) and *Gladiator* (2000) have in common.

Robin's capabilities build on motifs and events established in medieval ballads,[66] and have developed over time, which can be traced in the Scott film from 2010. According to an early intertitle in the film, the film is set during "the turn of the 12th century" and begins while Richard the Lionheart is returning from the Holy Land to England with his army. This cinematic rendition of Robin Hood is as an archer in Richard's army, who comes from a humble background, of which he has no recollection at the start of the film. Even so, Robin is as comfortable in his worn archer's uniform, as he later is impersonating the deceased Sir Robert of Loxley wearing the dead man's chainmail, cloak and sword (see image 25). Through the change of costume, Robin/Crowe is thus able to change shape; he is mistaken for the deceased nobleman not through his intellect or personality, but because of what he wears. This power of clothing to change a wearer into someone, or

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[66] Such as, for example, the splitting of the arrow as discussed in the Introduction, as well as the relationship with Little John, as discussed in the previous section.

something, else, refers back to the pageantry of the ballads and folk traditions, but while pageants were also built on the general consensus of the partakers in the event, the disguise of Robin/Crowe is unknown to the people he meets along the way.

Image 25: Robin Longstride (Russell Crowe) kneeling before the dowager Queen, presenting the crowned helmet of Richard Lionheart (*Robin Hood*, 2010)

7.2. Keeping up appearances: The power of costume to grant social status

Instead of being born into a role of heroism through the assumptions of class as it relates to social status, as with the Saxon noble-man which Robin/Flynn is in *The Adventures* (1938) as well as the returning crusader Robin/Costner in *Prince of Thieves* (1991), Robin/Crowe is forced to assume different roles in order to survive, and these roles come with their appropriate dress as they signify different identities through textures, cuts, and colours. He moves with fluidity from an archer, to a knight, to a noble man, and back again throughout the film, each role with its own power and authority, all through the use of costume.

After the death of King Richard when the army returns from the Crusades, Robin and his men begin their return to England, wearing their costumes as soldiers, archers, and commoners, in the King's army. After an ambush in which the real Sir Robert is killed, Robin and his men put on the armour of the dead knights, and travel by the same boat that was supposed to take the King back to England. In the armour, Robin is allowed to approach the royal family, and witnesses the passing of the crown to Prince John, who becomes king after the death of his brother.

Travelling on, to uphold a promise made to the dying Sir Robert, Robin and his men, still wearing the knights' armours, arrive in Nottingham, and he is invited into Loxley Hall. Robin/Crowe is asked to take a bath and Lady Marion (Cate Blanchett) offers him her late husband Sir Robert's clothing to wear, accepting and confirming him as the stand-in for her husband.

This final move from soldier to husband is brought about as an attempt to protect the estate when the only heir is dead, when Sir Walter (Max von Sydow) asks Robin/Crowe to impersonate Sir Robert and pretend to be Lady Marion's husband. The movement from archer to knight, and then to noble man and husband, is justified through necessity; if Robin/Crowe and his men had not put on the armours, they would not have been able to cross the channel and return to England, if Robin/Crowe does not assume the identity of Sir Robert, the estate will be seized and Robin/Crowe will never learn the true identity of his own father. Thus, even though Robin/Crowe changes his costume reluctantly, the changes bring with them a step up the social ladder, and with that an increase in power and control through the association with class. As Sir Robert, Robin/Crowe outranks the Sheriff, and puts an end to the Sheriff's harassment of Marion. The narrative of *Robin Hood* (2010) is driven forward by the perceived necessary actions of the main characters; Sir Walter needs a son, and makes Robin/Crowe into one, Lady Marian needs a husband, and Robin/Crowe is the best available alternative. This separates the Robin Hood presented in *Robin Hood* (2010) from the legacy of pageantry and play, where the playful but driving main character Robin is the one to take charge and inspire change into others. Instead, Robin/Crowe follows along with what other characters expect or need him to be; a knight, a son, a husband, and all through presenting him with new costumes to wear. Robin/Crowe is therefore, before the finale of the film, not his own person, but an extension of a patriarchal society, an embodiment of the power of class and gender that these signs provide him and those connected to him. In the English society presented in *Robin Hood* (2010), the patriarchal structure requires men like those Robin/Crowe embodies, and it is not until he finds his own roots in childhood, that he casts off the costumes of others and fully embraces his own.

In order to adhere to generic conventions, costume is used to convey a sense of verisimilitude (Bruzzi, 1997), to imitate a perception of 'realistic' 'authenticity', within the context of stylised, constructed narrative. As such, costume is also allowed to appear ordinary (Street, 2001), in order to be unspectacular and not disturb the suspension of disbelief. Furthermore, costume and costume as disguise can also function to influence the perception of class (Brownie, 2013). The disguise becomes central to Robin/Crowe's appearance(s), as the disguise as a knight, presenting the crown to the new king, enables not only his and his men's survival in escaping France and returning to England, but also establishing Robin/Crowe with the some of the virtuous attributes associated with Robin Hood. However, the image of Robin/Crowe is almost more saturated with the star persona of Crowe himself, than that of the mythical hero: the elements of stoicism, chivalry and integrity embodied in Robin/Crowe as knight comes from his previous performances, and most importantly that as Maximus in *Gladiator* (2000). Dressing Russell Crowe in armour, even though different from the one worn in *Gladiator* 2000) evokes the intertextual reference, adding the layer of the Roman general onto the English archer. The disguise as knight is therefore not only a physical layer onto the body of Robin/Crowe, but a layer onto the palimpsest of Robin/Crowe, where the former hides the identity underneath, and the latter adds to it.

One of the elements that *Robin Hood* (2010) needs to navigate in order for the character of Robin Longstride to move in to the disguise of Sir Robert Loxley, is the performance of class, and the portrayal of the same through costuming, which according to Brownie (2013) in the visual media of film is that which identifies a character in relation to others. As an archer in King Richard's army, Russell Crowe's Robin Longstride is a commoner, and explicitly placed near the bottom of the class structures in the historical, feudal society in which the film is set: he never meets King Richard, unlike the three previous films studied in this thesis. Alongside the armour and its association with nobility if kings and knights, the way in which Robin has looked in the previous embodiments of Flynn, Connery and Costner, here Crowe/Robin becomes closely tied to the common people , through the muscularity of his body as well as the lack of embellishment and adornment to

his costume as the archer. The representation of class in *Robin Hood* (2010) relates, unlike previous versions of the Robin Hood myth, to physical labour, those who perform it and those who do not, which, together with *Robin Hood* (2018), is the closest the myth comes to a Marxist approach to the feudal class systems of mythical England. The costume of Robin/Crowe relates to class as it signifies taste (Entwistle, 2015), but also the practicality in relation to physical labour. Additionally similarly to *Robin Hood* (2018), Robin/Crowe's physical strength also indicates his moral superiority, a concept that will be further discussed in subchapter 8.7. The shape of Robin/Crowe's body is through the introduction of him as an archer, associated with the need for physical strength and the physical labour it entails to be a part of a Medieval army. Performance and appearance are thus central to the masculinity Robin/Crowe portrays, as he moves through different parts of society with the costume he wears, enabling him to become connected to his masculinity through clothing, despite masquerading as another man. While he became Sir Robert through costume, he removes the clothes of the knight, and returns to the simpler garments of the archer, when the French are about to invade and the lords gather their armies.

As a soldier amongst many others, Crowe/Robin wears a brown tunic, a leather and metal splint chest plate and a brown leather caped hood, colours and items that are similar to the ones of the men around him. While Crowe/Robin as Sir Robert/Crowe/Robin wears different clothing than the villagers around him, he appears as one of them through his actions and physicality. In contrast, when appearing alongside soldiers in an army, his costume as well as physical appearance is similar to the others around him. While in *Robin Hood* (2010) the only merry men present are Little John, Will Scarlett and Alan-a-Dale, in the crowd of soldiers, the image of Crowe/Robin ties back to the image of Robin/Flynn as one of many men in green tights, while not creating a perceived uniform. In *Robin Hood* (2010) the men are allowed to show individuality, even though the group is perceived as such. The strength of the group is therefore not stemming from the leader, as in *The Adventures* (1938), but rather that they are united and therefore have strength derived from numbers.

Image 26: Robin (Russell Crowe) at Sir Walter's (Max von Sydow) dinner table (*Robin Hood*, 2010)

Following the expectations of the performance of a knight when returning from the Crusades, Robin/Robert/Crowe thus removes the garments of war, washes it off and dons the purple, (impractical) brocade tunic that he is provided with by Marion, and is Sir Robert at home (see image 26). In contrast, Marion wears rough garments in linen or wool, signalling the estates financial issues where her clothing is not prioritised while also being indicative of her role as both lady of the house and leader of the workers and community, her costume being more similar to the one that Robin/Crowe wears as the archer than that of the lord Sir Robert. Even so, the purple tunic betrays the lower class from which Robin comes, and thus undermines his impersonation of a noble man, as it does not fit him properly and is therefore betraying that he does not belong: the fabric tightens and strains around his upper-arms and body, suggesting a muscularity the previous owner lacked. The physicality and strength indicated by the size of Robin/Crowe's body, ties back to a previous scene, after Sir Walter has convinced Robin/Crowe to keep impersonating his son for the sake of the estate. Robin/Crowe is sent away to have a bath, and he asks Marion for help with removing the hauberk, coif and haubergeon he wears as the knight Sir Robert. Marion strains to remove the heavy garments from Robin/Crowe's body, with him leaning forward so that she may pull them over his head, revealing his bare, muscular torso, which is placed in the centre of the frame. The clothes Robin/Crowe wears as Sir Robert, be it the knight's armour or the noble man's tunic, betrays the fact that they are not made for him through the body underneath and the need for assistance in removing (and adorning) certain items. The self-sufficiency of the archer is reduced to

dependence as the knight, making an ill-fitting mask for Robin/Crowe to live behind. The risk of the mask slipping is negated however, through modification of the costume: Robin/Crowe reverts back into the costume of the archer as the knight, grounding the performance as Sir Robert in the reality of Robin. The threat of the body of exposing Robin/Crowe as an imposter when he appears as Sir Robert is controlled through this layering of the costume and identity: through adding pieces of Robin and Sir Robert together, Crowe's performance becomes a palimpsest of both. Furthermore, the unease with which Robin/Crowe wears and adopts the costume of Sir Robert, a man of higher social status and wealth, adds to his appearance as a man of the people, capable of leading them. Where the rich spends resources, be they time or money, of appearing as they are expected to, Robin/Crowe does not physically fit into that appearance, dismissing its promise of power as uncomfortable. Instead, Robin/Crowe is the most comfortable when he appears in the same costume as the common people, signalling where his true power lies. Similar to the way in which Baudrillard (2005) argues for the way in which the body functions in modern culture, Robin/Crowe's body thus becomes the extension of his morals, a rejection of wealth and power through oppression, even though Robin/Crowe's morals are anti-capitalist, as they are expected to be.

The balance of this performance is thus constantly having to be negotiated, as the body of Robin/Crowe is accentuated in the scenes in which he is supposed to perform as Sir Robert. One of these scenes is when Robin/Crowe, after having followed Marion around the estate and nearby village as Sir Robert, must jump into a muddy pond to save a goat that has been stuck in the water. Here he is wearing a similar, but blue, brocade tunic to the first purple one. Already in the muddy water is Marion, who failed in freeing the goat herself, leading to Sir Robert/Robin/Crowe having to pull her up out of the muddy water after the goat has been moved onto the pond bank. The blue tunic and the leather trousers, wet and muddy, cling to Robin/Crowe's body, once again highlighting the physicality beneath, and accenting his upper body as he lifts Marion out of the water. She has her arm around his shoulder, and lifting her chin up and away from him, tries not to notice the body of the man beside her. Whilst the pond rescue is a necessary inconvenience for Marion where Robin/Crowe uses his physical capabilities when

she would rather have managed on her own, the muscular body of Robin/Crowe is used by Marion as a protector when the Sheriff of Nottingham arrives at the pond, and Marion presents Robin as her husband Sir Robert. The Sheriff, clad in a voluminous sheepskin and wool coat, who has previously harassed Marion, responding to Robin/Crowe as symbol of power, respects the presence and right of Sir Robert, and backs off. Thus despite the threat of being exposed as an impersonator by the physicality of his body, Sir Robert's clothing hides the truth without raising suspicion. Instead, the strength and integrity of Robin is transferred to the perception of Sir Robert as a good and trustworthy man given his rank. Furthermore, the social position his appearance in muddy and wet clothes and physical strength might undermine is reinforced through Marion's presence, making the physical body of Robin/Crowe a protective shield, again the embodied patriarchy, around Marion and the estate through his assumption of being and appearing as Sir Robert.

Much of the narrative of *Robin Hood* (2010) is centred around Robin/Crowe *appearing* to be someone or something he is not. The assumption of other characters that he is who he claims to be is based on the costume he wears, through which he *appears* as someone else. This assumption is therefore wholly based on the fact that what he looks like (a knight, a noble man) correlates with what he claims to be. Furthermore, the notion of *appearing* also carries with it a sense of uncertainty; something which *appears* to be a certain way may very well turn out to be completely different, which is true in *Robin Hood* (2010). Unlike previous Robin Hood films, the *appearing* of Robin/Crowe is more important than what or who he actually *is*. It only becomes important who is he and what he wants when he has discovered his own roots of being a child of a freedom fighter, after which he carries these values into the role he is playing, or the person he appears to be. The appearance of Robin/Crowe is therefore both literal and figurative; his appearance informs who he appears to be. These assumptions are based on comparison with others: he wears what a knight or a noble man wears, therefore he must be one himself, as costume as dress functions to signal these class belonging (Brownie, 2013). As Robin/Crowe's body physically tries to break out of the costume of the noble man in the brocade tunics, he also does the same out of

the structures that have forced him there, making the appearance of Robin/Crowe palimpsestic again both literal and figurative; the body underneath the tunic is an image of strength while the tunic is restrictive signalling control but also wealth , status, and power. Appearing as something or someone is thus multi-layered, as it suggests both the appearance as surface and that which hides underneath.

7.3. A new uniformity: the importance of looking like those one attempts to lead

Image 27: Robin (Russell Crowe) with Little John (Kevin Durand) to his right, a part of the people gathered (*Robin Hood*, 2010)

As the apparent son of Sir Walter Loxley, Robin/Crowe is asked to join a gathering of the English lords and the new King John (played by Oscar Isaac) to speak about the invading French. As the lords argue with the king about the appropriate course of action, Robin/Crowe steps forward as a spokesman for Sir Walter Loxley, and does this through moving through the gathered crowd, an assembly that he is visibly part of through the armour he wears (see image 27). As one of them, Robin/Crowe speaks for the people gathered, an authority given to him through appearing as the people around him, embodying their collective voice. In contrast, as the camera cuts to a close-up of King John, the king is framed closely, with only the blue sky as a background, his helmet topped with the crown signalling his status as regent, and a heavy fur wrapped closely around his shoulders. The effect being that the king is left alone with only the abstract power of Heaven behind him, whilst Robin/Crowe has the people around him to support his claims. The power of Heaven ultimately triumphs in the scene, however, but visibly separates the

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King from his people and therefore as their leader, leaving a space that Robin/Crowe fills.

The costume(s) of Robin/Crowe and its many changes represents the ability of costume to indicate social belonging (see for example Brownie, 2013) as it makes his appearance like that of other people, if they be King Richard's knights, country nobility, or men of the people. [67] Equally, Robin/Crowe's costume also functions as a reinforcement of strength and stability, as the body underneath the clothing does not change, but the exterior layer of the performance takes on the hardening surface of the breast plate, while still having the soft hood over his shoulders. The relationships between the soft and hard textures of Robin/Crowe's costume shows him as a practical man, someone who understands the requirement of the roles he performs. In the forest, the softer clothing makes movement easier, the soft draping of the hood concealing his identity better than the gleaming metal of a helmet would. Even so, the hardness of the breastplate is equally practical but in the context of battle, the armour has the ability to save lives. The result is thus a very different image than the ones constructed in *The Adventures* (1938) and *Prince of Thieves* (1991) as the softness of the costumes worn by Robin/Flynn and Robin/Costner always remain soft and through its softness highlight the firmness of the body underneath and, especially in the case of Robin/Flynn, almost appear spectacular rather than practical. Through this work with textures, Robin/Crowe further establishes himself as a man of the people, as he speaks for them, so his costume signals practicality, use, and experience, and as a result authority, where his authority is grounded in expression of self that is separated from the trappings of the rich through adornment. However, his authority at this point does not come from the perception of class, as much as it comes from the perception of power and

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[67] The circular movement of Robin from archer to knight, lord and then back to archer is not a movement echoed from *Gladiator* (2000), where Maximus is a general who becomes a slave and a gladiator and dies as such. The issue of class is thus not intertextually connected through these two Scott films, but rather the movement between different groups of people, both Robin/Crowe and Maximus/Crowe move with equal ease amongst kings, Caesars, lords, ladies, soldiers and slaves.

control, the ease with which he embodies his role as the archer translates onto the ease with which he leads the people as one of them.

In the scene where Robin/Crowe blends into the crowd of soldiers listening to the lords and King John speak about war with the French (see image above), and then steps forward as a spokesperson for Sir Walter Loxley but really for the people, and presents the idea of liberty and freedom for all men, which will, if given by the king, grant the king loyalty and strength from the people, the play between power as it is associated with class through appearance comes full circle. Where Robin/Crowe earlier had to wear the clothes of Sir Robert in order for people of high social rank to listen to him, he appears in this scene as the archer but still with the authority associated with the previous rank. The liberal ideology of freedom for freedoms sake is not a part of the Robin Hood mythology, where freedom is considered to exist under the rightful king, who is King Richard and never the younger brother Prince John, but is rather an intertextual references to the speeches made by Crowe as Maximus in *Gladiator* (2000), which then functions to bridge the gap of time and space from a perceived Medieval England onto contemporary (Hollywood) context. The rejection of usurpers and abusive leaders is instead that which is related to the Robin Hood mythology, and while the advocacy of Robin for the people might not always be verbalised to the oppressor as in *Robin Hood* (2010) it is a constant, and in cinema often takes the shape of a rallying speech to the people themselves.[68] Additionally, Robin's speech for liberty centres around the idea of choice, where to be a (hu)man of one's own choosing is freedom and that freedom is always worth fighting (and sometimes dying) for.

While Robin/Crowe's credibility of leadership comes from his appearance of *similarity* to the people of lower status, it is further strengthened through *difference* with the people of higher status, such as the English lords and King John. After having persuaded the king to promise freedom for all,[69] he rides to the coast

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[68] See for example *The Adventures* (1938), *Prince of Thieves* (1991) and *Robin Hood* (2018).

[69] The promise made by King John in *Robin Hood* (2010) appears to be a play on the writing of the Magna Carta. However, the Magna Carta, while agreed to by King

to meet the invading French army, together with King John, the king's adviser William Marshal and the king's army (see image 28). As it is a continuation of the speech, he wears his green tunic, brown leather hood, and splint chest plate on the way to battle. In contrast, the king and William Marshal wear hauberks under surcoats, and with mail coifs, helmets and gauntlets, with the king also wearing a fur-lined, hooded cloak. Especially in contrast to the king, Robin/Crowe's lack of adornment, metal armour and simpler cuts rationalises his appearance where the king's excess becomes a sign of cowardice, as he hides behind thick chainmail and heavy cloaks, and covers his head in a helmet that still signals his rank through the crown encircling it. At this point, Robin/Crowe has forsaken the attempts to appear as the nobility who all wear their rank and wealth openly, and instead distinguishes himself through being different from the nobility through being like and appearing as the people he leads.

Image 28: Robin (Russell Crowe) leading King John's (Oscar Isaac) army (*Robin Hood*, 2010)

Despite Robin/Crowe riding into battle with significantly less armour than the men of higher rank than him, it does not portray him as a weaker, inferior man. The impression is rather the opposite, as Robin/Crowe's exposed head next to the helmeted ones, indicates that he appears on equal terms with the people of lower rank that he tries to advocate for, some of who appear in the background as part of

John, was not signed until 1215, several years after the events of *Robin Hood* (2010). The effect, however, is that the mythical character Robin Hood is placed within a historical context, and one which is significant hundreds of years later.

the army. As they move in the open landscape, the effect of being closer to heaven that the framing gave King John in the previous sequence, is ruined by the helmet and heavy armour he, and the nobility around him, wears. Instead, it is Robin/Crowe who, similar to his belonging to the people, appears at ease in the open air, not using armour or cloaks to shield himself from nature and the space he inhabits, referring to the ease with which he moves and inhabits the forest. While the exposed head could be a sign of arrogance or even ignorance in the face of danger, as the lack of appropriate protection can be dangerous if not lethal, Robin/Crowe's image within the group of people shows him as clear-headed and strong rather than a fool. Furthermore, the lack of metallic shine of chain mail, helmets and gauntlet roots Robin/Crowe in the mythical nature of traditional Robin Hood stories; Robin's power lies beyond the industrially produced or humanly manufactured, rather he is natural and powerful through association with the forest and the softness and strength of the trees.

The rigidity of the hierarchy riding behind Robin/Crowe is evident in the way King John attempts to visualise his position as anointed by God, and thus closer to God than any of the men around him, through wearing the helmet with its encircling crown which he inherited from King Richard. The helmet becomes significant as a symbol in the narrative, as it is Robin/Crowe, appearing as Sir Robert, who hands it to the Queen Mother, upon their return to London with the news of King Richard's death. The Queen Mother then places the helmet on Prince John's head. The helmet as such is thus rather a symbol of King Richard's rule as a warrior king, the strength, rigidity and indifference to matters outside of war of his rule, and the result of King John wearing it before his people is the attempt of the new king to step out of his brother's shadow whilst using the symbol of the warrior king to lend himself the same association. Together with the crowned helmet, King John wears a fur-lined cloak and a surcoat with the royal arms embroidered in gold across the chest, but despite all these symbols of status and monarchical power, the attempt to visualise power fails as the use of these signs are constructed, and thus unnatural. Robin/Crowe, in contrast, appears as he does when he previously had been shown moving through Sherwood Forest with his men and young people of the village; a natural leader who gains his credibility and power from the similarities with the people, his difference from constructed and artificial

hierarchies of power, and who is connected with the mythical naturalness of a man who may also be a spirit of the forest. The motif of identity changing with costume, and the power of costume to disguise, is thus another continuation of the traditional Robin Hood tradition of the Green Man of the forest; the mysticism surrounding the myth is translated into 21st century cinema with the 2010 Robin Hood film, whilst still existing in relation to generic traditions such as realist portrayals of history.

7.4. Appearances of a man: costume signalling gender and maturity

Robin/Crowe moves through the different layers of society with the use of costume, as the disguises of different characters are thrust upon him. As already shown, when he becomes the leader who he is expected to be as the character of the myth, he wears the archer's uniform from King Richard's army, worn at the siege of the French castle Châlus-Chabrol in the film's opening. He wears this costume again when casting off the disguise of the nobleman Sir Robert, as he hunts for game in Sherwood Forest, which he is when he is captured by the runaway boys of Sherwood Forest. The boys moved out into the forest because they had to, they are orphans or runaways, and as the poor community of the village has failed them, they steal from the same village to survive. The children are introduced in the beginning of the film as thieves in the night, shadows who break into the barn to steal the grain to be used for planting. They are barely dressed, just rags hanging from their skinny shoulders, with rough sack masks covering their faces. Necessity is thus that which forces them to act: if they do not steal, they will starve, an act recognised by Marion as she tries to capture them but does not give their location away to the Sheriff (who, it is assumed, would have dealt with them with unnecessary cruelty). When the children manage to capture Robin/Crowe as he is out hunting in Sherwood, they tie him up and bring him to their camp. By the time he arrives, Marion is already there, and she appears to have long since befriended the boys as she is treating the sick amongst them. Robin/Crowe easily breaks free from his restrains, and gives a speech telling the boys that he, Robin/Crowe, can teach them to tie real knots, keep clean, and fight for a cause, preventing them from becoming creatures of the forest but instead becoming what he refers to as 'real soldiers' and per definition real men in his image. The act of stealing is only justified, according to the morals of the Robin

Hood myth and Robin/Crowe, when it benefits the many, not the few. Robin/Crowe and his men, like the boys, have also stolen grain, but takes it from the church, risking the wrath of the Bishop, and helps the village to sow in the middle of the night, so that it cannot be taken back or traced to an individual. The short-sighted act of necessity of the boys, is echoed but with maturity in the acts of Robin/Crowe, providing a template for maturity and masculinity for them to follow.

The aspect of 'keeping clean' becomes significant as it refers to appearance. Robin/Crowe offers the boys knowledge about changing their appearances, and with him as the example. Cleanliness is associated with health in the context of Sherwood, where the dirty boys are sick and the adults, Marion and Robin/Crowe, offers them ways to be strong and no longer vulnerable. Even though Marion introduces Robin as her husband Sir Robert, the way in which he is dressed, in a green woollen tunic, a brown caped hood in leather and a pair of brown leather hose, indicate a similarity with the boys, despite the title. The runaway boys wear different earthy colours such as beige and brown linen tunics, some with brown vests, all garments dirty and torn, some to the point of rags. Given the similarity of colours, as well as the natural fabrics used, the kinship of Robin's costume with the boys' is visible. Even so, the difference, where the boys are dirty and their clothing frayed and Robin clean and his clothing well-kept, presents a goal for the boys to strive for; Robin is one of them as a hunter in the forest, but he is more than them, he is strong, healthy, and the ideal of a man (see image 29), emphasising the form of hegemonic masculinity that should be desired and aspired to by the boys of the forest through its difference to that which is undesirable (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Image 29: Robin (Russell Crowe) shaking hands with the leader of the runaway boys living in Sherwood Forest (*Robin Hood*, 2010)

In the scene, Robin/Crowe embodies the mythical hero of Robin Hood, and the powers of Robin to change and make others better versions of themselves. As those who Robin/Crowe are to make better are boys, the mythical hero also takes on the role of father as provider, further established through his connection to Marion, who takes on the role of mother as caretaker, through their association of marriage. The role of Robin as father is uncommon in mythology, even though there are multiple works where the children of Robin are the heroes of the narrative.[70] In *Robin Hood* (2010) however, the role of father is a sign of Robin/Crowe as a mature man, a counter-weight to the previous embodiment of the patriarchy, where it is not an oppressive force but one of protection, rather than a prankster in the forest. The traditional values of stability and safety rather than an adventures spirit being central to the image, an image that stands in direct contrast to the one painted both in *The Adventures* (1938) and *Robin and Marion* (1976), where the perpetual freedom fighter and idealist is far removed from the stability of the provider.

Given the close associations of Crowe's star persona, the scene with the boys in the forest, like a majority of the scenes in the film, is intertextually connected with Russell Crowe through his earlier performance in another Ridley Scott film,

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[70] See for example *Princess of Thieves* (Hewitt 2001), starring Keira Knightley as Robin's daughter Gwyn.

Gladiator (2000). In this film, Maximus played by Russell Crowe, the Roman general, becomes a slave and a gladiator, and organises the other gladiators into victory in the arena, partly through his knowledge of battle tactics as a former general, but visibly because he looks just like them and provides a visual guide for success, gaining their trust as appearing as one of them. Yet, while he wears the same blue tunic and chain mail as the others, Maximus wears a black leather cuirass, symbolising his superiority as a leader and his former status as an officer in the army. Like Maximus's cuirass, the leather hood and functional costume of Robin/Crowe is that which sets him apart and connotes leadership, strength, knowledge, adulthood and, as a result, a mature masculinity. The boys of the forest can emulate Robin/Crowe's costume, but the hood is his.

Robin/Crowe regularly appears as someone others want to be. To the boys of Sherwood he is a father figure, a strong man who can and will provide for them and others. To his friends, the Merry Men, and the people of the village, Robin/Crowe is a leader, someone who protects and acts without risking the lives of others. The image of Robin/Crowe is therefore not based on the ways in which he gets other characters to look like him, as when the followers of Robin/Flynn wear a uniform in *The Adventures* (1938), but rather the way in which his image evokes values associated with someone other characters trust or believe in. This is partly achieved through the appearing as someone else within the narrative, such as Sir Robert in the knight's armour, but it is also based on what Robin/Crowe wears as himself and how that image creates a palimpsest of ideals and values.

Robin/Crowe moves through a multitude of different space, but only appears in Sherwood when he is hunting, and is then dressed as a hunter rather than the noble knight he has taken the identity of. His authority as Robin Hood or Sir Robert is thus based on his *appearing*, both as hunter/forester, but also as the husband of Lady Marion, and thus a crusader. Robin/Crowe is therefore both an outlaw *and* the embodiment of medieval law enforcement – a peasant knight. The success of appearing as in order to establish trust and confidence in others comes to fruition in the finale of *Robin Hood* (2010) where the men gathered to listen to King John speak rally around Robin/Crowe to meet the invading French. From the fields

another group joins the soldiers; the boys from Sherwood, led by Marion dressed in armour and a helmet covering her face. The armour and the helmet are not something which she should use however, as she falls into the shallows at the beach and struggles to rise out of the water. Robin/Crowe pulls her up, his body capable of carrying the water-heavy weight of Marion in armour, rescuing her from her own mistakes, highlighting the dangers of wearing a costume, a character, which one is not capable of shouldering the (physical or metaphorical) weight of.

8. *Robin Hood* (Bathurst, 2018)

8.1. Colour and its power of signalling belonging

A recurring theme within narrative structure is the main character arriving at or returning to a place they are unfamiliar with, whether it be a new country, new city, or a childhood home unrecognisably different (Propp, 1958). This is a theme also quite popular in the films of Robin Hood made in the 20th and 21st centuries; Robin/Connery returns to England to find his forest home overgrown and Marian now an abbess, Robin/Costner's father has passed since he left and his family estate has been seized by the Sheriff of Nottingham. Similarly, Robin/Egerton in *Robin Hood* (2018) too returns from the Holy Land to find his estate having been seized by the Sheriff of Nottingham to cover unpaid taxes. As he storms through the ruin of his family home, the symbol of his nobility, dust and doves flying through the disturbed air, he calls for Marian, the only other person from his past the narrative has introduced so far. It is her loss that appears to be more keen, keener than the loss of status and wealth. As he cannot find her in the estate, his search takes him to a place called 'The Mines', an industrial village where the poor people of Nottingham have been displaced and disposed of. There, unlike previous versions of the Robin Hood myth, the film becomes an industrial critique rather than a pastoral fantasy. The moving bodies of the workers shuffle through the frame, their coal-dusted faces and clothing making them indistinguishable from one another and the space they inhabit. Their anonymity is both a result of and the reason for their circumstance, and the dark set design further enforces the perception of hopelessness and abandonment. In this terrible place, Robin/Egerton storms in, bringing with him the force of movement of his return to England and the urgency to find Marian. He is visible here not because of the bright colours and textures of his costume as would have been the case in *The Adventures* (1938) or *Robin and Marian* (1976), but rather because he is the only one with a clean face. When he finally finds Marian (played by Eve Hewson), she too is free from the dust and soot of the mines, and surrounded by a homey steam from a cooking trolley, she hands out soup to the poor and hungry inhabitants of the Mines (in slow motion). However, unfortunately, the reunion is not to be: another man, later introduced as Will Scarlett and played by Jamie Dornan, appears by

Marian side. Robin/Egerton is denied his return to his past through his past lover and storms away again, but this time without a destination or purpose.

These scenes wherein Robin/Egerton returns to England and finds Marian again, are nothing like previous versions (see for example *Robin and Marian* (1976)). Due to the way in which mythical texts are dependent on an intertextual reading, those with the appropriate knowledge may shape the perception of the myth through altering the rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) associations in focus in order to change its meaning, resulting in the creation of new significations linked with the previously known signs as it relates to other signs. The reconfiguring of the Merry Men, and Robin himself, in *Robin Hood* (2018), is an example of this: a manipulation of the myth in order to create a new meaning. Most eye-catchingly, the film rejects the mythical and generic standard for Robin as Robin/Egerton does not wear the bright Lincoln green of Robins past, but a black leather coat, which is later cut into a jacket, with different linen tunics in earthy colours underneath. Neither the colour black nor the use of leather garments have been a part of the traditional Robin Hood costume as it has been passed down through ballads and pageantry, with for example Robin/Costner and his studded jacket in *Prince of Thieves* (1991). In *Robin Hood* (2018), the colour green of traditional Robin Hood, associated with regeneration and rebirth[71] (Lurie, 1981) is exchanged for the colour black, the colour of sophistication in the 20th century (Blaszczyk, 2012) but also for centuries the colour of mourning (Lurie, 1981). The wools and woven fabrics of life in the forest are replaced with leather, and with that the connotations of the dead animal from which the leather is produced rather than the rebirth and abundance of life, which fits into the dark sooty space of the Mines. From the start then, Robin/Egerton is not a symbol of life, but a symbol of death, the end of an era rather than the everlasting youth of the Forester, a theme which ties it both to *Robin and Marian* (1976) and *Robin Hood* (2010).

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[71] According to design historian Blaszczyk (2012) the colour green has also been associated with "genuineness and conviction" (p. 220) in advertising, while pale green hues are used in war veteran hospitals for calming purposes.

Furthermore, the leather jacket as a piece of film costume is more often associated with bikers and action heroes in cinema than Sherwood archers,[72] lending it the connotations of these characters' toughness and hardness, rather than the soft accessibility of the tradition leading up to Robin/Flynn's green fabrics. This change from the soft, often pastoral, forest of for example the world of Robin/Connery, to a hard, industrial landscape is further highlighted by the general mise-en-scène of the Bathurst film. The parts of Nottingham to which the people have been removed to are referred to as 'the Mines', a village built on high wooden structures on stone, making narrow alleys covered in clouds of smoke and dust, where the light colours of the forests are impossible in the industrial dystopian structure of labour-infused oppression. Where the poverty of the commoners in previous renditions are portrayed as farmers being unable to pay their taxes as the yield from the farms are already seized by the lords, i.e. a symbiotic relationship with the land that is undermined and destroyed by the greed of the rich, in the 2018 version, the people of Nottingham still live as labourers but not on their own land, and not in symbiosis with nature but as extractors of riches for the rich. The design of Robin/Egerton is therefore not to place him within the context of the forest, and nature, rebirth and regeneration, but to place him within the context of the people of Nottingham. This Robin is not a Forester, a Green Man, to lead the people to a better place, but a man of the people who is the anonymous man in black, a Medieval vigilante, who acts as their arms and hands to retake that which has been stolen from them.

8.2. Text/inter-text: the production contexts and intertextuality of *Robin Hood* (2018)

Released in 2018, *Robin Hood* is in 2024 the most recent attempt at adapting the Robin Hood myth to the cinematic screen, with the lead actor Taron Egerton the latest in portraying Robin Hood (also called Robin of Loxley). The Bathurst *Robin Hood* (2018) suggests the importance of explicit post-modern and non-realist style, in contrast to the other cinematic productions of this thesis since 1976 where

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[72] See for example *The Wild One* (USA, dir. Laslo Benedek, 1953) and *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (USA, dir. James Cameron, 1991) where the main characters wear black leather, and ride motorcycles; they are antiheroes, not heroes.

attempts at realism have been the rule, as in for example *Robin Hood* (2010) and *Robin and Marian* (1976). The style of *Robin Hood* (2018) echoes the style of director Otto Bathurst's previous work, specifically the first three episodes of BBC series *Peaky Blinders* (2013-2022), when the a perception of the past is worked to fit a pop cultural aesthetic, as well as merging a historical narrative with contemporary style elements, which in *Peaky Blinders* is most notably in the music and editing, while costume and set design is most prevalent in *Robin Hood* (2018). Bathurst's style highlights the *re*-telling of the story, rather than simply attempting to reinforce the suspension of disbelief through mimicking history.[73] In its artificiality, *Robin Hood* (2018) is more similar to the studio era of *The Adventures* (1938) than the most recent *Robin Hood* (2010), but, similarly to *The Adventures*, is highly conscious of its aesthetics as it constructs a world explicitly medieval through narrative while highly stylised according to contemporary genre and media expectations. As such, it looks more like a fantasy world, or in the case of *Robin Hood* (2018) even that of a superhero film, than a 'realist' retelling of history, which previous versions have attempted to recreate through mise-en-scéne as well as plot. Equally, the opening of the 2018 film further separates itself from the 'historical' or 'epic' narratives of the previous films studied here through the prologue voice-over (voiced by Tim Minchin who plays Friar Tuck), explicitly rejecting expectations of form and content through describing the thief of the story as not being the thief we, the audience, already know, and assume.

The film appears as a self-aware version of the Robin Hood story, where the style and aesthetics is not concerned with perceived historical accuracy nor narrative requirements, but rather of contemporary implications and meanings for the story, and as such a product of the cultural development in post-modern 21st century. For this reason, it is not surprising that the film, unlike *The Adventures* (1938), is not necessarily in line with the folk traditions in terms of theatre and pageantry of the Robin Hood myth, but rather attempts to be contemporary for 2018 and the generic and stylistic developments in the superhero era. Thus, it tries to separate itself from the expectations of the myth, but is constricted by the limitations of the

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[73] See for example *Robin Hood* (2010) where the mise-en-scene is constructed to appear *like* what history is expected to look like: recognising reality.

mixed genre format, where the medieval terminology of Crusaders and Cardinals appears alongside superhero stunts and leather jackets. This multi-layered film is created through the manipulation of the mythical and cinematic image, and its contents. The cinematic spaces of the film are palimpsests of their own, where the time, space and object within the image co-exist to create meaning to build the myth represented by the film, enabled by the multiplicity of works preceding it, both Robin Hood films and other generic siblings.

Whilst firmly rooted in Hollywood cinema and the US context through its production, the film portrays England and was released in the UK a few years after the Brexit referendum. In Neil Archer's book *Cinema and Brexit* (2021), neither *Robin Hood* (2018) nor the quintessential English mythic hero himself is mentioned, while the Daniel Craig James Bond is on the cover. Would this argue for Robin as no longer part of the narrative and identity of British (or English) national identity of the Brexit era? Or does it suggest that Robin, were he alive and eligible to vote, would vote Remain and is therefore expelled from the Leave culture? The story of Robin can be manipulated (as suggested by many Robin Hood scholars overviewing the multiple forms he has taken in 800 years), and the manipulation usually serves a contemporary purpose, such as *The Adventures*'s (1938) call to stand with Europe on the brink of another world war (Hark, 1976). Thus, if Robin did not appear in favour of the notion of national identity premiered by the Brexiters, it would mean that the Robin of the 2010s has developed beyond it, or is perceived as separate from it. Even so, values connected with Robin is still visible within far-right movements in the UK as the 2024 election had people circulating images of crusaders as they were connected to ideologies on the right (see Introduction).

8.3. Robin/Egerton the Crusader: the war on terror through the Robin Hood lens

Similarly to films previously examined in this thesis, *Robin Hood* (2018) also shows a reflection of the war in which Robin Hood supposedly took part, a historical context that comes from 19th century literature (Barczewski, 2000) and has been established in the cinematic tradition of the 20th century, but is not necessarily related to the versions of the myth of previous centuries – another example of the ever-changing nature of cultural mythology. These cinematic versions of Robin

regularly place him in the late 1100s, during or after the Crusades in which King Richard the Lionheart took part. While *Prince of Thieves* (1991) only shows the prison in Jerusalem where Robin/Costner is being held captive, and *Robin and Marian* (1976) and *Robin Hood* (2010) the final battle of King Richard at castle Châlus-Chabrol where the King dies, *Robin Hood* (2018) separates the crusades from the King and inserts Robin/Egerton into a time in which British soldiers perform raids on Arabic towns covered in sand. Given that the King is not mentioned, nor the reason for the soldiers' being in the specific location of the town, they become separated from a continuous flow of time where causes and effects can be traced. Instead, through this separation, the time Robin/Egerton and his fellow soldiers inhabit is a time *of* the Crusades, without specifying *which* Crusade, and therefore separates it from history but not from politics. Through being set in a generic Crusade, it enables the freedom of which the scene is constructed, where the characters can move around the deserted desert town with their bows drawn and ready to fire at any movement. Equally, the geographical place in which the scene is supposed to be set, the Kebrit Peninsula in Arabia, does not exist,[74] further separating it from a historical time and enables the freedom of interpretation of non-time or fantastical time. This chronotope of *Robin Hood* (2018) in turns means any-time, or even our-time.

As a result, the time and space of this sequence is both the time of Robin Hood, the hero of the Medieval Crusades, while also being similar to the 21st century war films set in the Middle East, such as *Black Hawk Down* (USA, dir. Ridley Scott, 2001), *The Hurt Locker* (USA, dir. Kathryn Bigelow, 2008), and *American Sniper* (USA, dir. Clint Eastwood, 2014).[75] The smatterings of machine guns of modern warfare is, in these Crusades, replaced by the rapid-fire bows of the Saracens, and the destruction of grenades by thuds of a giant crossbow, the arrows of which break through plaster and stone, but still with the result of dust and gravel raining

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[74] The only geographical location of Kebrit is a small village in Iran, either way quite far from the crusades in the Holy Land.

[75] All of these films were awarded Academy Awards: *Black Hawk Down* (Scott, 2001) received awards for editing and sound mixing, *The Hurt Locker* (Bigelow, 2008) director Kathryn Bigelow was the first female director to be awarded Best Director, whilst *American Sniper* (Eastwood, 2014) was awarded the prize for Best Sound Editing.

down on the soldiers beneath. Baker (2015) argues that in the years after the events of 9/11, the action films produced in Hollywood "articulate anxieties about American (or perhaps late capitalist) neoimperialism" (p. 53), where the Crusades of the Middle Ages is replaced by the Crusades of neoimperialism disguised as the war on terror, where the countries and people of a geographic region are treated as a threat to Western civilisation. Equally, *Robin Hood* (2018) treats the space of Arabia as a place to be saved from the lurking shadows of the masked men who are native to the land, but the Crusaders regularly fail through the loss of their own to the superior technology of the Arabs, which forces them to treat the Arabs with cruelty through torture and executions. Robin/Egerton, like the Robins before him, becomes the voice of doubt (and as a result, reason) in an environment without justification as he sees through the actions of the Crusaders, questions them, and as such he becomes the saviour of the Arab. While Robin/Egerton shows compassion where his white friends do not, *Robin Hood* (2018) is made for a market apparently not ready for this limited consideration of equality between men of different races; the Arabs of *Robin Hood* (2018) are played by Black American actors, and bodies who are Brown are simply killed without being given a voice. This places this most recent major Robin Hood film in the contemporary context of the white saviour and its cinematic representations, where white characters are applauded for their efforts to help non-white characters, and where this effort is equalled with their purity of character (Hughey, 2014). Typical for these films is the lack of nuance around the contexts of these actions, and in the case of Robin *Hood* (2018), Robin/Egerton's white saviour actions towards Yahya (the helper/Little John character played by Jamie Foxx) further emphasise the difference between the white English soldiers and the native people of the Holy Land, where the former is unproblematically considered to be the protagonists of the story through Robin/Egerton. This tension is also part of the relationship between Robin/Costner and Azeem in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) where Robin/Costner's heroic rescue of Azeem from a Jerusalem prison awards him Azeem as his most loyal companion, seemingly without Azeem having his own say in the matter.

Image 30: Robin (Taron Egerton) in the Crusades (*Robin Hood* 2018)

Placing the body of Robin/Egerton and his fellow soldiers in a space without time but of politics further disjoints the perception of temporal context. The costumes of the soldiers do not adhere to conventions of representations of crusades,[76] but rather are constructed of sand-coloured linen short- and long-sleeved shirts, scarfs twisted around their necks, and chest plates that appear more like bullet-proof vests than Medieval armour (see image 30). The soldiers look like the unit they are referred to as, they are uni-formed and uniformed, they look alike and they blend into the sand and structures around them, their costume more like the desert camouflage of modern Crusades than the armour and white tunics of films such as *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005). In contrast, the bodies of the natives who Robin/Egerton and his unit are fighting are dressed in long blue robes, with cloth covering their faces. While the Arabs move in the shadows and are shadows that haunt the Crusaders, their costume of both a bright colour and that covers identity show them as less adaptable as well as without their own identity other than the bodies of assassins. In contrast, Robin/Egerton and the Crusaders show organisational skills, teamwork and physical strength as they manage to outwit the technologically superior Other,[77] who appear to be working as individuals. The use

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[76] Other than previously mentioned Robin Hood films, *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005) also dresses the soldiers in reconstructions of historical dress for example.

[77] The Othering of these characters are psychoanalytical in the sense of the antagonism between subject and object (Freud and Lacan), but more explicitly so in relation to national identity, and thus in a Foucaultian sense, where the Other is that other race, who are bad and whose erasure would lead to a better life for the subject (see Martone 2009).

of uniform is thus once again for the first time since *The Adventures* (1938) central for the narrative construct of a Robin Hood sequence. The use of colour and items of dress creates a uniform used to identify the two groups, Crusaders and Arabs/Saracens, both as within the diegetic context but also intertextually to other films set in similar environments, and while the design of the uniform function to give these groups characteristics such as stealth in environment (the sand-coloured linen) versus anonymity (the blue face-covering scarfs), the main function of the uniform is that it is recognisable through its intertextuality. The Crusader's uniform is recognisable as the uniform of American or European soldiers in news images or cinema depicting the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, with the uniform of the Saracen/Arabs, despite its colour-scheme, being similar to the traditional dress of Arabic terror or guerrilla groups. The *Robin Hood* (2018) Arabs even wear turbans, an item of dress quite expressively linked to the Oriental Other, and intertextually with Azeem in *Prince of Thieves* (1991). Even though both of these uniforms are tied to real war and thus real violence, the violence of a Western uniformed body is not violence in the same way that the violence of the Eastern uniformed body, but is rather a civilizing force (Streicher, 2012). The violence of Robin/Egerton's commander in the torture and execution of the prisoners would have passed by uncommented if Robin/Egerton had not been a voice against injustice, and acted as a white saviour in the desert, as that violence is associated with the civilisation, democratisation and the greater good of the Other, and as such is not violence *per se*. Separating this Crusade from the crusades of history enables this perception, as the crusades of history quite easily can be tied back to greed and brutality.

However, *Robin Hood* (2018) quite quickly dismisses the idea of a justifiable Crusade, and as it turns out, this war in the East is also fuelled by greed and brutality. While the scenes in the desert thus argues for the strength in numbers of military operations, the inability of the Crusaders to rise over the cruelty of war once again ties back to the need for Robin/Egerton as the righteous man/white saviour in an unstable environment; he questions the torture of the Arab prisoners and saves the life of one of them through his interference, and his sense of justice is

therefore what is perceived as the trait to admire, rather than the brutality of the other English soldiers. Even so, he is quickly punished through the prisoners trying to fight back against their European capturers, briefly poking holes into the perception of the white saviour, and the injuries Robin/Egerton suffers send him back to England.

8.4. The Mines: industrial landscapes and the power of space

Moving from a space that is created by the Arabs in the Holy Land, Robin/Egerton sails across the Mediterranean and the English Channel into another man-made space tied to difference and change; the Nottingham Mines. Instead of the poor people being peasants of the villages surrounding Nottingham,[78] the poor of *Robin Hood* (2018) have been confined to the industrial space of a coalmine to work and live. The spaces of *Robin Hood* (2018) are thus rejecting the notion of medieval scenography recognisable from previous versions of the action-adventure genre and instead place the body of Robin/Egerton within a time of industry and of manual labour in mining coal, and separated from the creation and cultivation of farming, and as a result, portrays another class structure through its relation (or lack thereof) to labour and land. The space that Robin/Egerton arrives in appears to be as equally dead and non-organic as the one he left in Arabia, where the bright sand of the desert is replaced with the black soot of the mines. As the film explicitly rejects the idea of a temporal position through the prologue voice-over of Friar Tuck: "I could tell you what year it was, but I can't actually remember", the perception of time is instead entrusted to the mis-en-scène and historical events, a temporal construct challenged by the villagers as industrial miners rather than farm workers. This further complicates the perspective of class in *Robin Hood* (2018) as the feudal class-systems of previous versions of Robin Hood assumes a pre-capitalist or non-capitalist system that positions individuals in relation to wealth, heritage, or ethnicity, but does not necessarily tie them to any means of production, whether they have it or not. The Nottingham mines in the 2018 film, in contrast, introduces the perspective of a Marxist working-class, a group of people who do not rely on the land for their income, but rather their labour as it is

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[78] See for example *Robin and Marian* (1976), *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991) and *Robin Hood* (2010).

generating profit for the owner of the mines through that labour. Where Robin Hood in the bodies of Flynn, Connery, and Crowe, have appeared or been associated with a mythical version of the feudal lower-classes through their association with the land, and more explicitly, the forest, Robin/Egerton becomes associated with the people of the working class as a displaced and exploited group, experiences Robin/Egerton can identify with even though he has the power and resources to do something about it.

In several of the previous films, such as *Robin Hood* (2010), the story is claimed to be set in the late 12th century,[79] around 1191 and the death of King Richard.[80] Given the established time in which Robin appears, the mines of Nottingham subvert this notion of time as fixed and replaces the story within another temporal context. According to the University of Nottingham, the earliest surviving record of a coal mine in the Nottingham area dates back to the early 14th century (*Lease of a coal mine*, 1316), over a hundred years after the time in which previous versions of the Robin Hood myth had positioned themselves. Equally, through making the poor of Nottingham into miners rather than farmers, the temporal setting of the film moves into a considerably more recent era; of industrial revolutions and organisations of labour(ers), and becomes a time of oppression of not a general 'the people' as in peasants but of 'the working people' as in labourers. The epithet 'the commoners' used by many of the character within the film is therefore not necessarily referring to the people as being ordinary but rather through the association with the masses.

While the desert town of Arabia had been deserted and only echoed human presence through objects left behind as evidence of the townspeople, the mines are filled with people moving in the same direction, with their heads bent and with their faces anonymised by the black dust, invoking the urban dystopias of *Metropolis* (Germany, dir. Fritz Lang, 1927) as well as *1984* (UK, dir. Michael Radford, 1984). Instead of the objects suggesting human life in the desert, such as

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[79] See *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) and *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991).
[80] See *Robin and Marian* (1976) and *Robin Hood* (2010).

vases, jars and curtains moving in the wind, the people of the mines exist and live in between the coal, their tools and each other, moving as a unit without personal drive or expression. As Robin/Egerton tries to find his way around this place of moving industry unfamiliar to him, the only humanity he sees is Marian as she hands out soup from a trolley to the poor and hungry, an embodiment of femininity recognisable from earlier versions of Marian, such as Hepburn's abbess in *Robin and Marian* (1976) and Blanchett's lady in *Robin Hood* (2010).

The figure of Marian becomes visible within the space as human through her red dress and her clean skin. She is not covered in soot, nor is her clothing worn and dirty as is the clothing of the people around her. She has managed something not many of the others have; to stay clean, and as such, has kept her dignity. The cleanliness of Marian, as both a leading character but also as a leader of the poor, separates her from the working class of the people, while her charity grants her acceptance within their group. Being clean, that is, not covered in soot, is also an identifier of Robin/Egerton as he moves amongst the dust-covered workers, positioning him as someone who is distanced from the mines through class, as he has the resources that lets him escae the labour of the mines, but also through having been physically separated from the space. Still wearing the beige, camel, and olive colours from his desert uniform upon arriving in England, over them Robin/Egerton also wears the long quilted and hooded leather coat, bringing with him the dust and heat from the desert but covering it with the black leather coat, acting as a transition from the uniform of the soldier into one of the people of Nottingham, and, even though it is connected with the dust and sand of the desert, Robin/Egerton's underlayer connects him with nature in his Robin Hood way, in a way the black costumes of the miners do no. The shine of the coat echoes the shine of the waxed canvases of the miners, and with only his back visible in the frame, he blends in and becomes one of and with the people, in a way Marian cannot in her red dress, until he turns around and exposes his clean, pale face, a sharp contrast against the bent heads and soot-covered faces of the miners, and his light skin colour lights up within the darkness of the Mines.

Image 31: Robin (Taron Egerton) at the Mines (*Robin Hood* 2018)

Equally, as through visually separating Robin/Egerton from Marian through colour, the mines are a place for the labours of men. While mines have been worked by people for centuries, the space have become perceived as specifically a place for the labours of men through the 19th and 20th century and through the visibility of unions and the tragedy of accidents (Spence and Stephenson, 2009). Thus, while not a miner himself, Robin/Egerton becomes one of the labourers through the leather coat, the colour of which imitates the coal dust covering the rough fabrics of the miners and his gender, making him a part of a community without having the skills or experience of the community members, unlike the community of the army he has just left, instead it happens through him *appearing* to be one of them. The only indicator of his difference or masquerade is the symbol of class: his clean face (see image 31).

As the film progresses, Robin/Egerton looks less *like* the people, but the people begin to look more *like* him. The use of the hood is central to this shift, an item integral for the name of both the mythical character but also the vigilant Robin/Egerton becomes. In the 2018 version of the Robin Hood myth, Robin/Egerton never receives his second name (he is simply Robin or Robin of Loxley), but rather the people of Nottingham give him a nickname, or the name of his vigilante alter ego: the Hood. The version of Robin portrayed within *Robin Hood* (2018) is thus explicitly dependent on and linked with a garment, the hooded jacket. The cultural context of the hood, or the hoodie, further places Robin within the working-class environment of the miners, costuming them as outcasts. In 2005,

hoodies were banned from a shopping centre in Kent (BBC Kent, 2005), after which a cultural debate followed on the perceived threat of people, often poor and working-class, who wore hoodies (Wade, 2020). Robin/Egerton wearing a hooded jacket thus places him within the class context of the working class, rather than the upper class of his title as Robin of Loxley. The hood enables him to both hide his identity and become a masked vigilante, but it also changes the elements of the persona fixing him to a specific social group. Depending on how the hood is worn, the signal changes: when it is down, it signals approachability, physical activity and casualness. When Robin/Egerton searches the Mines for Marian, the hood is down, signalling approachability, but also urgency, as he needs to be able to scan the crowd unhindered by the hood's covering. A hood worn up in contrast suggests inapproachability and focus, making Robin/Egerton's appearances as the Hood that of the single-minded vigilante on a mission, even if he moves through the same spaces.

The power of the place can thus explain why Robin/Egerton's clothing dramatically changes when he moves from the Holy Land back to England in *Robin Hood* (2018). The costume he wears as a crusader is reminiscent of contemporary American and British army uniforms used in the Middle East and Afghanistan through use of the sandy colour as camouflage in the desert and the breastplate similar to a bulletproof vest, and as such is not like what the audience themselves would wear, nor assume that Robin would wear through the mythical expectations. It is not until Robin returns to England that he begins to wear clothing such as the hood, which is more mythically expected, even though the colour and fabrics are unexpected. What Robin wears, and where he wears his different costumes, are thus connected, as the myth has developed in relation to specific geographical places.

Image 32: Robin (Taron Egerton) as the Hood, stealing money in Nottingham (*Robin Hood* 2018)

The surface and narrative use of the hood and scarf that Robin/Egerton wears in *Robin Hood* (2018) is to protect his identity through the obscuring of his head and face. The meaning, in contrast, is culturally read; it is not until Robin/Egerton puts on the hood that he becomes the man who the people of Nottingham call The Hood, a vigilante and a force of opposition to the oppressive rule of the Sheriff (see image 32). Without the cultural knowledge of the hood as significant and a recurrent feature of the Robin Hood myth,[81] this transition would not have been distinguishable earlier in the narrative, and the effect of dramatic irony would be lost; as the audience knows that The Hood's real name is Robin, it knows before the characters in the diegesis that he is Robin Hood. When a cinematic version of Robin wears a hood or a piece of costume to cover his head and face, one of his motifs, it is thus, according to Dundes's perspective of folklore as cultural language, a way of connecting oneself and this specific representation with the myth of Robin Hood. It is important to note that Dundes as a folklorist would not have equated folklore with myth, but instead defined myth as a narrative related to the creation of the world and of humankind (Dundes, 1997).

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[81] The hood does not only appear linguistically in the name Robin Hood, but also physically through the uses of Errol Flynn's hood to conceal his identity in the archery tournament of *The Adventures* (1938), as well as Kevin Costner's hood while spying on the Sheriff in *Prince of Thieves* (1991).

8.5. The City of Nottingham: the function of space as layering atop the unmasked face

Sitting alongside the industrial landscape of the Mines, the city of Nottingham is constructed out of the sandstone buildings and clean, wide streets of Dubrovnik, Croatia. This is where Robin/Egerton appears as the Hood, the hooded vigilante so firmly rooted in working-class dress. In the expensive clothing of Robin of Loxley whom the people of Nottingham believes to be his only identity, Robin/Egerton hides in plain sight, as he after returning from the Holy Land no longer is the upper-class noble-man that other sees him as, but rather belongs to the working-class people of the Mines. The partaking in society in a dark suit resembles the superheroes of the 20th and 21st century; Bruce Wayne being the mask of Batman, Clark Kent the mask of Superman (Brownie and Graydon, 2015). As such, *Robin Hood* (2018) through the 'no mask as mask' connects itself more closely to the superhero tradition rather than previous Robin Hoods. In *Prince of Thieves* (1991) Robin/Costner disguises himself as a blind beggar to enter Nottingham and speak with Marian, and Robin/Flynn dresses as a poor yeoman for the archery competition set up by Prince John in *The Adventures* (1938). In *Robin Hood* (2018) the disguise is the person that the people around Robin/Egerton see him as, that is Robin of Loxley, while he himself identifies as the Hood or the masked vigilante as the real or true version of him, similar to the way in which Robin/Crowe puts on the disguise of Sir Robin to hide his identity as Robin Longstride. The mask of the hero is therefore not at all a mask, but a liberation, a possibility for self-expression through performance.

Image 33: Robin (Taron Egerton) as Robin of Loxley at the Cardinal's party (*Robin Hood* 2018)

In a later scene showing a party thrown for a visiting Cardinal, a sequence where the Sheriff of Nottingham has invited the Cardinal to Nottingham to discuss the actions of the Hood, Robin/Egerton appears as this other self, Sir Robin of Loxley. Alongside the removal of the physical mask to create another identity to hide behind, Robin/Egerton as Sir Robin of Loxley is defined by the similarity with the luxury jackets of the nobility within the diegetic space. He has previously been seen wearing discreetly plaid thick wools in blues and grey, and at the Cardinal's party he wears a black velvet jacket, with a fur collar and decorative shoulder appliqué in metal embroidery, a show of extravagance in the otherwise bleak narrative, embracing the distaste of mythical Robin towards the consumption of the rich (see image 33). The luxurious connotations of the materials serve to integrate him within the party; the rich velvet and heavy materials carry the sign values of extravagance and wealth, indicating that he is a part of this group through the association of taste and therefore class and status (Entwistle, 2015), where taste relates to the more expensive finer fabrics, materials, and textures. Even so, the image of Robin/Egerton as Robin of Loxley is not fully a mask covering his identity, instead bits of the Hood shine through, as the colour of the Hood's jacket is the same as the one Robin/Egerton/Robin of Loxley wears to the party. Equally, his style is not as extravagant as the people around him; he wears no headdress or hat, no makeup or jewellery. So, while hiding his identity in plain sight, he is also hiding in plain sight through not drawing attention to himself, much as he has to as the Hood. It thus suggests a stability of identity, despite the masking, and a stability of masculinity where the strength of self shines through layers of clothing.

Within the City of Nottingham, Robin/Egerton's costume functions in terms of continuity, and it highlights the evolution of his character from nobleman to outlaw rebel, whilst also enforcing the temporal continuity function of fashion as indicative of passage of time. The fashion mechanism is not always to emulate class differentiation, but to be in fashion, to stay ahead of a changing world (Blumer, 1969). Marking the elite groups through fashion signs that the masses cannot imitate fully (Blumer, 1969) enables this move of Robin/Egerton between the groups. However, while the elite groups may have signs that separate them from

the masses, so do the working-class. Prestige, and the importance of which in regards to fashion, may be most easily applied to elite groups, but can also be applied to subcultural groups, such as the miners of Nottingham. Where mainstream fashion follows the classic trickle-down effect from upper classes and the elite, subcultural fashion attempts to set itself apart from this, and rather comes from rejection than anticipation, while still functioning very much for the wearers to be 'in', while maybe not 'in fashion' but 'in style' (Hebdige, 1979, see also Entwistle, 2015). Therefore, Robin/Egerton is, while highly eye-catching, never extravagant. The fashion signs of Robin are tied to the ethos of his work, that of the vigilante, and good outlaw, while also relating to the social group for which he fights as well as embodying the political ideals of the resistance to the oppression of Yahya.

8.6. Yahya: representation revisited

In the history of the Robin Hood myth, John, or Little John, has been one of Robin's closest men (Phillips, 2008) and the most-portrayed member of the Merry Men in cinema.[82] Following on the tradition first seen in the television show *Robin of Sherwood* (ITV, 1984-86) and more famously through Morgan Freeman's Azeem in *Prince of Thieves* (1991), the 'Little John' of the Bathurst film is a black man and a Muslim, and is as such a character from a different ethnic group to Robin.[83] In this change, Yahya and Azeem, as different from Robin in religion and ethnicity, embody the adversary who becomes the friend through a common enemy. In the beginning of both *Prince of Thieves* (1991) and *Robin Hood* (2018) Robin/Costner and Azeem, as well as Robin/Egerton and Yahya (played by Jamie Foxx) stand on opposite sides of the conflict in the Holy Land. Through the honourable actions of

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[82] Little John is not only one of Robin's best friends according to the tradition of the ballads, he is also Robin's extended presence outside of Sherwood Forest in the classic ballad *The Gest of Robyn Hode* (Harrison, 2000), as well as Robin's companion in the crusades and the return to England in *Robin and Marian* (Lester, 1976). John himself is also a strong leader; in the films *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Curtiz and Keighley, 1938) and *Prince of Thieves* (Reynolds, 1991), Robin has to defeat him in order to cross the river into Sherwood where John is leader of the outlaws.

[83] Despite following the tradition of including a black character amongst Robin's closest men, the Bathurst film takes one step further through making the black man Robin's closest man, John. Traditionally, as seen in for example, *Prince of Thieves* (1991) Little John, as played by Nick Brimble, is native to England and lives in Sherwood when Robin encounters him.

Robin/Costner in saving Azeem's life, and Robin/Egerton in trying to save Yahya's son's life, the enemy, that is the Muslim, becomes a friend in fighting the oppressive forces of unjust rulers, in turn embodied by Sir Guy of Gisbourne, the Sheriff of Nottingham and Prince John.

The faceless assassins of the Holy Land thus takes form in the character of Yahya, and as such he follows on the tradition set by Morgan Freeman as Azeem of being the Black Muslim man whose primary purpose is to aid Robin Hood in his quest to free the people of his English community. Since the first appearance of Saracen characters in the late 19th century literature, Black characters have been reoccurring in Robin Hood film and television. With Sammy Davis Jr. in *Robin and the 7 Hoods* (US, dir. Gordon Douglas, 1964) [84] being one of the first, there have since been several Black characters, with different degrees of Orientalism and Othering, according to Swank (2020, referring to the definitions of these terms by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1979)) (see also Shaheen, 2001). She notes the low-budget movie *Hood* (US, dir. Michael Lansu, 2015), set in Chicago and featuring only actors of colour, and how people of colour in this film are represented without negative stereotypes or Othering, a clear exception to the rule of Robin Hood productions with white actors. However, she does note that "the Black Outlaw has served as a commentary on race relations" (Swank, 2020, p. 18) in culture. Within the Robin Hood context, the characters of colour, either black or Arabic, are either 'treacherous Saracen' or 'integrated Muslim', or both (Martone, 2009). The treacherous Saracen, according to Martone (2009) stems from the Orientalism of the 19th Century (as defined by Said, 1978) and the perceived threat of Asian people at the end of the British Empire, while the integrated Muslim caters to the multicultural mainstream media of the late 20th century. Given the wars in the Middle East in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, this image of the Oriental Other has been perhaps not nuanced but given multiple layers, through the integrated Black Muslim, but treacherous non-Black (terrorist) Saracen. However, while these characters are attempts to increase the cultural relevancy of the films, the relationships with white characters, especially Robin, remain grounded in the

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[84] A Robin Hood retelling with Frank Sinatra as the Robin-inspired Robbo, Dean Martin as John and Sammy Davies Jr. as Will amongst many others.

Black or Muslim character being the helper to the white hero. Especially in *Robin Hood* (2018), the assumed moral superiority of Robin/Egerton and his attempt to save Yahya's son from execution argues for a prevailing white saviour complex (Cole, 2012) of Robin/Egerton towards the Black characters.

In *Robin Hood* (2018), the Muslim character Yahya (or John as he asks Robin/Egerton to call him after having butchered the Arabic pronunciation, another indication that Robin/Egerton's comfort comes before Yahya's person), moves between the different types of Muslim character that Martone (2009) suggests. As the leader of the Muslim warriors defending the city that Robin's party is trying to take in the Holy Land, Yahya is a 'treacherous Saracen', moving in the shadows, with his face and thus identity hidden by a scarf and turban. Later on, after Yahya follows Robin/Egerton back to England after Robin/Egerton is wounded, he becomes an 'integrated Muslim', and a part of Robin's band to take on the Sheriff of Nottingham. This transition is enabled through the removal of the blue scarf and turban of the Saracen, and allows for Yahya to have his own identity. He is no longer simply the 'treacherous Saracen', an anonymous terrorists who fights in the shadows; when the scarf and turban is removed he becomes a person with his own motivations, emotions and opinions. As he later on gifts the scarf to Robin/Egerton, he tells Robin/Egerton that the scarf used to belong to his son, who Robin/Egerton attempted to save but who was executed by the brutal English commander Sir Guy of Gisbourne (Paul Anderson). The scarf is through this context cleansed of the damning associations of terrorism, and becomes a connection between father and son, rather than a symbol of race, politics, or difference. When it is passed on to Robin/Egerton, this symbolism comes with it and it becomes a central aspect of his disguise as the Hood, where the scarf as a hider of identity goes from terrorist indicator to vigilante safekeeper. Even though the hood of Robin/Egerton's black leather jacket is used to cover his head, it is the blue scarf that covers his face and therefore more actively hides his identity.

What Yahya and his items of costume allow for, unlike Azeem in *Prince of Thieves* (1991), is the power to *change* Robin, to be a force to make him a better person, and essentially make him Robin Hood. Similar to *Prince of Thieves* (1991), *Robin Hood* (2018) thus features a Black character around whom the story pivots;

without Azeem, Robin/Costner would not have left the Holy Land alive, without Yahya, Robin/Egerton would not have become the Hood. Azeem however, while technological and scientifically superior to Robin, does not change or influence Robin/Costner's personality or skills. Thus, the character Yahya suggests a next step in Martone's (2009) Muslim characters, the equal, or at least, a helper who is considered valuable enough to pass as an equal. Additionally, Yahya, unlike Azeem, is not explicitly treated as different. Where the witch Mortianna (played by Geraldine McEwan) calls to attention the strangeness of Azeem's appearance as 'the painted man' in *Prince of Thieves* (1991), Yahya is different because he is not English rather than through the colour of his skin; being Black does not make Yahya an Other (Rahman, 2019). As such, Yahya retains enough agency to transcend being a sidekick and instead becomes Robin/Egerton's drill sergeant, the one person who is capable of making Robin/Egerton into that which he needs to be in order to reach his goal (Mayer, 2019; Rahman, 2019). However, while the character does suggest this new type, or rather a non-type in the sense that it is a character in its own right, he does not succeed in fully becoming Robin/Egerton's equal. Throughout the film, Yahya is Robin's sidekick, much like the previous Johns, and his own character development is minimal if not non-existent. Instead, his primary function, much like Azeem, is the helper. From structuring Robin/Egerton's training, to giving him the blue scarf, Yahya creates the required conditions for Robin/Egerton to become the Hood, their version of mythical Robin Hood. Given that John, like all the Merry Men, is rarely allowed character development (the exception being Christian Slater's Will Scarlett in *Prince of Thieves* (1991)), it further suggests the lack of space for multi-layered characters within the relatively limited narrative space of a cinematic Robin Hood retelling; why waste time on other characters when Robin is the star? The colour blue of the scarf further emphasises this, a colour that in the Middle Ages was associated with harmony but most importantly with "the faithful servant" (Lurie, 1981, p. 198).

Through his training of Robin/Egerton to be a guerrilla warrior, Yahya shows his essential position in the development of the narrative and the development of Robin. This process which begun in the 1980s, indicates a shift in not only the inherently flexible nature of the Robin Hood myth, but also, due to the close ties of the myth to contemporary culture, is symptomatic of the social climate in which

the story is retold. The groups for which Robin is fighting are no longer just the poor and destitute villagers of rural England, but people of other religions, cultures and ethnicities who happen to find themselves in places such as Nottingham and Sherwood Forest. Even though this displacement may be unwanted, these characters (Morgan Freeman's Azeem and Jamie Foxx's Yahya) are not helpless or without means; it is through Yahya/Foxx's expertise in guerrilla warfare acquired in the fight against Christian crusaders in the Holy Land, that the aristocrat Robin of Loxley is able to become Robin Hood, the hero of the people. The definition of the 'people' through the inclusion of groups such as Muslims has through this retelling broadened, while still being an indication of Robin's power to unite people despite their differences. As such, the myth is open to change, and these changes are possible within its limits, as long as certain and dominant attributes, characters and functions remain in the language known to the audience, while other aspects are changed, in order to accommodate the intention of the production and contemporary culture. The friendship, and the role of John as helper when Robin is in need, are foremost in those well-established patterns of the myth that are in many ways fundamental for the mythical reading. The changes that are accepted though, are those discussed above; the nature of that relationship where John/Foxx takes on a fatherly role as mentor, as well as John's driving forces and physical attributes. Furthermore, the Bathurst film also builds on the tradition established in *Prince of Thieves* (1991) of making Will Scarlett (Robin's best friend in productions such as the 1938 *Adventures of Robin Hood*) a character who undermines Robin, and ultimately betrays him. While the Will (played by Christian Slater) of *Prince of Thieves* (1991) reconciles with Robin/Costner in the end, the Will (played by Jamie Dornan) of the Bathurst film takes on the role of main antagonist after the death of the Sheriff.

Image 34: Yahya (Jamie Foxx) having cut Robin's (Taron Egerton) leather coat into a jacket (*Robin Hood* 2018)

The influence of Yahya is embodied through his influence on Robin/Egerton's costume, as he is the one to cut Robin's hooded leather coat into a jacket, better enabling movement when appearing as the Hood (see image 34). Furthermore, Yayha gives Robin/Egerton the scarf, an action which for a brief moment gives Yahya the control of Robin's life, where the brevity of it is key as Robin/Egerton needs to be the one in control (Mayer, 2019). Even so, even though Robin takes on the attributes of costume of Yahya's son, and per definition, a young, Black man, he is still fumbling with treating Yahya as an equal. The narrative integration of Yahya the Muslim warrior is thus to become John the sidekick and personal trainer, further emphasised by the loss of his hand, and his inability to do anything other than train Robin and drive the horse and carriage – he is the loyal servant, always supportive and with new ideas, but never the hero himself, which defines the representation of both himself and Azeem as these Oriental (as derived from orientalism by Said, 1979) characters in the hegemonic English culture of the Robin Hood myth in cinema.

8.7. Loxley Manor: masks, muscles and the body as costume

The changes made in the portrayal of a mythical character such as Robin Hood, but also as argued by Moss (2012) in the perception of real-life masculinity, is that the masculine image "always leans on an idealized memory of men, or perhaps of one man, a kind of original" (p. 8). Masculinity is thus self-aware, that is, aware of itself as a re-figuration of another presentation (Silverman, 1996). This self-awareness

as being other than the idealised, 'original' man - who, according to Butler (1990), does not exist - is negotiated through imitation and performance. To convey verisimilitude, or to imitate 'the real', is the way in which costume, according to Bruzzi (1997) is often used, either for generic iconography, or to convey social realism. The costumes of characters such as Robin Hood are for this reason doubly performative; they are worn by an actor (performer) and they enable the performance of something 'authentic' (gender, time, place, characteristics and so on). Even so, the 'authentic' as portrayed by costume may not be that which is 'authentic' according to the history of the myth or its origin, but the costume is instead created in relation to expectations and assumptions of previous signs. In *Robin Hood* (2018), the historic verisimilitude is forsaken for a modern, somewhat more spectacular costuming; a party thrown by the Sheriff of Nottingham in the honour of a visiting cardinal welcomes guests dressed in tight-fitting, one-shoulder dresses with mesh slits to the hip, and Robin/Egerton in a black jacket with short lapels covered in Persian lamb.

In de Lauretis' (1987) description of gender as constructed through social technologies, amongst which cinema is one, gender is also being a result of "practices of daily life" (p. 2). The construction of the body is, while not necessarily performed as such in cinema, a practice of daily life; for example, people of all ages and genders regularly go to the gym in order to shape, change or manipulate their body, even though there is the layer of contemporary culture's relationship with the body as consumer object (Baudrillard, 2005). While the body of Robin/Egerton at war (both in the Crusades of the Arabic peninsula and the streets of Nottingham) is either covered in the scales of a vest or a leather coat, in preparation for the latter war, Robin/Egerton's body is uncovered to be built (see image 36), exposing the body that costume has hidden up until then. The nudity of the scene in which Robin/Egerton builds his body and trains his skills, is not explicitly posed in relation to a heterosexual gaze of an on-looking woman, such as Marian's gaze on the naked body of Robin/Costner in *Prince of Thieves* (1991). Instead, this scene does not put Robin/Egerton in an explicit relation to a perception of sexuality at all, but rather against the notion of a masculine body unrelated to sexuality, a masculine body as a tool and an expression of control (Howson, 2013) (but see also Baudrillard, 2005). The scene is constructed

similarly to training montages of other films where the male protagonist has to become better and stronger to be able to take on the power of the antagonist (Tasker, 1993), as evident in *Rocky* (1976). In contrast to *Rocky* (1976) and the building of Sylvester Stallone's boxer body, Robin/Egerton does not wear anything to cover the strength of his torso and arms. But similarly to *Rocky* (1976) the construction of the body and especially the physicality of the body without leaving it vulnerable, portrays a sense of control as well as strength of will and mind.

Image 35: Robin (Taron Egerton) building muscle (*Robin Hood,* 2018)

This control is important for the perception of Robin/Egerton as a protagonist and hero. Howson (2013) argues that in consumer culture, the body becomes a way in which a sense of self can be constructed without the threats of an unstable economy, which could destroy an identity built around for example a job. Instead, a body that conforms to idealized notions of beauty and youth, fitness and health, instead indicates a disciplined, successful individual who is in control, through the conflation of the inner and outer selves. In relation to clothing, Lurie (1981) also claims that the surface is symbolic or representing that which is underneath, and clothing can thus be used in order to construct an image of the inner self. Through the hardening of the body through enlargement of musculature, the bodily layer underneath the upper layer of costume is made to be similar to items of dress. The stiff, smooth surface of the black leather jacket creates a shell underneath which the skin of Robin/Egerton is just as smooth and firm (while white). Through the training montage, he is armoured against any attack, from identifying him behind his hooded jacket, injuring his body and exposing weakness of mind.

Furthermore, as Tynan (2015) argues around the influence of Foucault on the study of fashion, the bodies of actors such as Schwarzenegger and Stallone, are constructed in relation to dominant social discourses and as such in relation to Foucault's notions of power. Similarly, as Howson claims with reference to Bourdieu, the body that conforms to ideals "represents a form of physical capital" (2013, p. 124), capital which can be spent as socio-cultural power. These action heroes (such as for example Sylvester Stallone as Rambo in *First Blood* (USA, dir. Ted Kotcheff, 1982)) are reliable, knowledgeable, skilled and invariably save the day - simply, they are in control. These traditional attributes of masculinity, argues Faludi (1999), are no longer given to men of the late 20th century, as traditional patterns of employment disappear.[85] Through conforming to contemporary ideals of the physical body, the body of Robin/Egerton also gains physical capital which can be used as social power, and further enables existence alongside different social groups – he, much like Robin/Crowe, can be trusted because he looks like someone who can be trusted. However, drawing on Tasker (1993), Baker (2015) believes that the hard or muscular body is "an anxious body" (p. 55), where the muscles act as another form of armour or a layer to guard the individual from the outside world, or the nation-state from the instability of the changing capitalist world. As visible in *Robin Hood* (2018), Robin/Egerton does not come back to the pastoral landscape traditionally associated with the myth. Instead, he returns to an industrial village, where he cannot belong fully as Robin of Loxley but has to become someone else; Robin Hood.[86]

All the different 'Robins' since 1991, who are studied in this thesis, have scenes in which they are shirtless. Especially noteworthy is the performance of Robin/Egerton, who is trained by Yahya to become stronger, and thus increase his

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[85] In her book *Stiffed*, Faludi (1999) makes the argument that men have become increasingly exposed in the changing capitalist system and growing neo-liberal political climate, which has led to a disillusionment of contemporary masculinity, as the stable notions of gender, which lasted until the 1980s, are continuously destabilised.

[86] This return to a place fundamentally changed from what Robin left is often crucial for the development of the narrative, such as for example in *Prince of Thieves* (Reynolds, 1991); Robin/Costner returns to find his estate seized and his father murdered, which sets him on the path to try and overthrow the Sheriff.

muscularity, which highlights the contemporary conformity to socio-cultural expectations of the performance; Robin of Loxley physically builds and creates Robin Hood through weightlifting and archery training, and through this action he is seen, as in consumer culture, to be disciplined, driven, and in control, fundamental for Robin's masculine performance as a hero and a leader. The creation of the Robin/Egerton image thus conforms to the masculine image on the cultural screen (Silverman, 1996), as the performance imitates the expected behaviours of successful masculinity in consumer culture (Howson, 2013).

Even though Robin works hard to improve his body, his body does not visibly change. The material body is thus not linked to physical ability, but rather the materiality of the body is evidence of the ability of the mind and character (Baudrillard, 2005; Featherstone, 1991). Improvement of the body is therefore just a physical representation of the improvement of character, and this is what Robin/Egerton performs. Yahya pushes him to work harder, under the guise of becoming a more skilled archer, but in reality, Yahya trains Robin to become a vigilante, assassin, and a rebel outlaw. The body is therefore only an obstacle to overcome, and skills are easily learnt when applying oneself. The Robin of Robin/Egerton's performance is thus that which overcomes perceived physical limitations through hard work and a waxed torso, in contrast to the earlier performances where Robin/Flynn naturally is associated with skills that Robin/Egerton has to learn, while Robin/Connery is limited and made vulnerable by his skills leaving his ageing body seemingly without him being able to stop them.

The many different forms Robin/Egerton take through the use of items of dress enables both a personal shift from the nobleman Robin of Loxley to the soldier, but also from the soldier back to the nobleman and more importantly to the hooded freedom fighter. Furthermore, the ordinary colours and types of his clothes enables a move in different class circles, where the colour black is neutral enough for no one to suspect him of being anyone else than who he appears to be in that moment. Unlike so many other Robins before him, Robin/Egerton is thus not primarily Robin who puts on disguises, but the disguises are the layers of him. In 2018, the mask has become the true identity.

9. Conclusion: The Robin Hood palimpsest and its method

9.1. Appearing as and appearances of Robin

What a majority of these different versions of Robin Hood have in common is that heroism is thrust upon them, the exception being Robin/Connery of *Robin and Marian* (1976) who actively seeks out the heroism of the past. The others act as reaction; the taxation of the people, the violence against loved ones, the oppression of the Saxons. Whilst the final push to become a hero comes from outside forces, they all have (or have had) the capability to be heroic. However, how this heroism is adopted and integrated into the character is increasingly problematic as the 20th century progresses and turns into the 21st. By 2018, Robin Hood is unable to become the hero of the stories on his own; he needs the instruction, guidance and leadership of another to mould him into a vigilante. This thus suggests the struggle of masculine identity; the complexity of construction of identity struggles against socio-cultural expectations, where past images restrict as well as influence the expression of self. As *Robin Hood* (2018) did not reach the level of success expected, Mayer (2019) identifies the apprehension of and dislike for this new version of an incapable Robin as a reflection of a white supremacist reading of the film by the viewers. Because Yahya/Foxx's character is central for the narrative, which would suggest that Robin/Egerton (as symbol for white masculinity) is himself incompetent and incapable, it makes Robin/Egerton a lesser version of this white mythical hero. Whilst this may be true, the incapable Robin would be difficult to accept whichever way he was assisted and by whom (whilst to different extents indeed), simply because he is portrayed as incapable which in the Robin Hood myth is a paradox or even impossible outside of parody or satire (see for example *Men in Tights* (Brooks, 1993)). Mayer's (2019) reading might therefore be overly simplistic. Robin Hood as a cultural figure cannot be incapable, just as Santa Claus cannot be cruel, or the Evil Stepmother cannot be compassionate. The way a character is understood is not simply through their actions, but, as argued here, through the way in which they look and the values their appearance contains.

Within the films studied here, there is a clear distinction between the way in which Robin is costumed in relation to other characters. In *The Adventures* (1938), the element of uniform as being of a uniform appearance is central for the

understanding of Robin/Flynn as leader of the Merry Men. In contrast, by the time of *Robin and Marian* (1976), the Robin dresses distinctly differently from the men he tries to lead. Instead, the Robins after the 1970s appear in a way that signals that he 'looks like' other men, or other groups of people, but with a distinction that separates him from the rest. As Robin Hood moves in multiple spaces, the way he looks is influenced by the space he inhabits but more importantly by other inhabiting that space. *Prince of Thieves* (1991) presents a Robin/Costner who returns from the Holy Land with his high-status paraphernalia, even though he had been imprisoned for some time, a social status which makes the inhabitants of Sherwood Forest initially distrust him. In *Robin Hood* (2010), Robin/Crowe dresses as a noble man to blend in with the knights and nobility of the Tower of London or Loxley Manor, while Robin/Egerton in *Robin Hood* (2018), adopts the colour scheme of the people displaced into the Mines in order to signal his belonging to them. Instead of Robin looking like the people around him, Robin/Flynn is the only one who changes the way others dress so that they appear like *him*. Robin/Flynn, unlike the others, does not have to persuade others to follow him through appearing trustworthy through similarity. Instead, the people turn to him and emulate his appearance to associate themselves with his characteristics and his ideals.

Cinematic costume in Hollywood cinema is grounded in the belief of costume being unspectacular (if not necessary for it to be otherwise, see for example Bruzzi, 1997). As films within action and adventure genres, the Robin Hood costumes are therefore supposed to look like something recognisable, and more importantly, diegetically unspectacular. When Robin/Crowe looks like the other soldiers who gather to listen to the king, he signals reliability and safety through being familiar to the people gathered there (*Robin Hood,* 2010). Similarly, when Robin/Connery returns from the Holy Land to an overgrown Sherwood camp, he is still recognised by the people of the community as he still looks like himself (despite having aged) (*Robin and Marian,* 1976), the effect being that they too return to Sherwood, to a safe, reliable and *recognisable* context.

Similar to the way in which costume function socially as safe and reliable to appearing as or being like that of other characters, so do the textures, cuts and

types of costumes worn by the Robins. As the perception of Robin Hood moves away from the freedom through movement of *The Adventures* (1938) and towards freedom through stability (see for example *Robin Hood* 2010), the image of Robin goes from the softness of the tights to the hardness of armours and leathers. As a result, a man in tights, who half a century earlier was a given hero, becomes a ridiculous notion for a hero in the 90s and later (the satire of Brooks' *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (1993) ties multiple jokes to this juxtaposition).[87] Instead the late 20th and early 21st century Robins have to be dressed in other materials, with other textures and colours. Robin/Crowe wears heavy chainmail as a knight and leather and suede as an archer (*Robin Hood*, 2010), while Robin/Egerton's identifier as the Hood is the hood of his black, quilted leather jacket (*Robin Hood* 2018).

An unexpected finding of this thesis was the apparent circular movement of the portrayal of an historical where the explicitly synthetic elements of mise-en-scène in *The Adventures* (1938) return in *Robin Hood* (2018). The synthetic textures of the soft, green tights and Nottingham Castle set designs are reversed in the sleek and shiny black leather of Robin/Egerton's jacket and the equally sleek and shiny limestone of the set. It indicates a relationship with historical time as allegory, which in turn functions as chronotope for the Robin Hood films studied herein. The allegorical elements of Robin Hood's story are suitable, but can be problematic as it refers to real historic time and as a result may warp the perception of this reality. Even so, just because the films bracketed by *The Adventures* (1938) and Robin *Hood* (2018) are not as exactly synthetic in their mise-en-scène, it does not result in an unproblematic perception of history or historical time: the heroism of Robin/Costner in freeing Azeem from a prison in Jerusalem could be argued to function as a contemporary 1990s portrayal of white saviourism. Instead, the way Robin looks signals the way in which he *can* and *should* look according to the contemporary perceptions of the virtues and morality he represents.

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[87] See here also the debate on superhero costume, which similarly to the way in which Robin is costumed has moved away from the tights of earlier decades.

9.2. The palimpsestic image in cinematic costume

The image of Robin Hood, a green-clad man living with his band of Merry Men in the forest is re-enacted again and again in popular culture, including in the Hollywood examples studied within this thesis. What Robin is famous for doing also functions as a metaphor for the method developed in this work: it takes from the rich and gives to the poor. The Robin Hood palimpsest provides a new way in which cultural texts are assessed through their relationship with previous, richer text, building on established theories within intertextuality, cinema, and costume studies. As it is founded on these theories, the method suggested by the thesis works similarly, but as has been shown in the previous chapters, enables a broader whilst also more in-depth analysis of these cultural images. As it relies on the work on costume by Bruzzi and Street, as well as the body by Entwistle, the method argues for a perspective of analysis which does not recognise limitations in scope or applicability – the only limitation is the space of the page and the capability of the researcher. The 'taking from the rich and giving to the poor' of the method refers to the way in which the palimpsest takes from richer (older) texts and provides meaning to 'poorer' (as it stands without intertextuality) more recent texts. The currency of the method is thus meaning, and the transfer of meaning from text to text is equivalent to the transfer of funds from rich to poor with the help of Robin and the Merry Men. The relationship between the topic of the thesis and the functionality of the method is coincidental, but as the thesis has developed and the Robin Hood palimpsest has fully been studied, the relationship has also come into light.

The meaning of Robin Hood is defined by the space he inhabits, the spaces where he comes from, and the people in these spaces, which in turn influences that which he is wearing. Furthermore, the time in which these spaces appear creates a chronotope of expectations and meaning which informs the reading of the costumed body. The costume thus summarises and functions as a palimpsest of the meaning of Robin Hood: it changes and morphs according to the circumstances of the scene, the space, the time and the expectations of the character in a specific narrative. Given the male identity of Robin Hood, the palimpsest also functions as image of masculinity of a character defined by idealism, leadership, loyalty and wit.

Traditions and mythologies are living things, and function as a method for remembrance, establishing continuum and justifying a sense of truth, of self and action. Mythologies that are linked to national identity and perceived traditions are especially sensitive to these rituals, as the development of contemporary society is linked to the way that a mythological past is perceived, much in the same way that Robin/Connery looks at 'his' tree in Sherwood Forest, and remembers the past with unnuanced fondness (*Robin and Marian*, 1976). When a thread of performance is lost only to be picked up years, decades or centuries, later, the performance is indicative of the context of the picking up, rather than of the losing. In *Robin and Marian* (1976), Robin/Connery's fight to pick up the thread of the past is a way to negate the present, and to not become overwhelmed by the futility of destroyed dreams. The understanding of tradition can only be so comprehensive as the tradition is rooted in reality and real time, if the tradition and the performance at one time has been lost, the function, meaning and reason for it cannot then be fully known. This text has shown the incredibly versatility of Robin Hood, because his myth is malleable enough to fit any multitude of agendas. However, the constant of Robin Hood is the sense of otherness while being a leader, the centre of a story. Robin Hood may not always be an outlaw in his stories, but he is always an outsider, fighting for things or those who others frown upon or disregard. The people around him, friends and enemies, cannot always keep up with the pure ideology of Robin, making him appear non-human, other-than-human, even on his death bed, possibly an effect of his roots within folk tradition. In these films, there are multiple attempts to make Robin human, to show that his drive comes from somewhere else, that someone else drives him and gives him purpose, such as for example the death of his father (*Prince of Thieves,* 1991) or the loss of his estate and partner (*Robin Hood,* 2018). But it regularly fails. The innate myth of Robin as a hero, makes him both unlikely as a human, but his roots in the forest separates him from the influences of others – he is an idea and an ideal. The way in which that idea and that ideal are treated informs the performance and constructs the palimpsestic image through layering of context and meaning, but the sublayers cannot be negated.

Every version of Robin needs to negotiate the previous appearances, having to either reject or rely on elements to inform the new image. As a mythical text, the Robin Hood story has been continuously revisited in popular culture for over half a millennium, and every new version contains new meaning which is relevant in that circumstance. Constant within these retellings is the character of Robin Hood, and his function as resistance to oppressive forces. However, similarly to the way in which a palimpsestic image does not exist without other images of the character, so an image of a character does not exist without other characters. As these characters all move in a diegetic world, the appearance of each is informative of the layers of the palimpsest. Therefore, the characters of Marian, John, Yahya and Azeem in the films studied herein are all important elements against which Robin is defined, their inter-relationships informing the way in which Robin himself is perceived.

Equally, the actor starring as Robin adds his own layers to the image. But, given the strength of the myth of Robin, perhaps, as soon as an actor takes on the role, it is not the actors starring in the films who are the stars, but Robin himself. The meaning of Robin transcends and overlaps the meaning of the star, indeed even the narrative and the space. Robin is not the only image or character which transcends the medium or context in which he appears, Charlie Chaplin's tramp is another, where the character no longer is dependent on the body of the actor, but appears and contains meaning outside of it too (Perez, 1997). In contrast to the tramp however, Robin was never connected with a body of an actor before he become an image in his own right. Instead, it is the actor who becomes associated with the character, rather than the other way around.

9.3. Avenues for further and future research

The perspective of this work has not previously been explored to this extent, and as the object of interest is an internationally retold myth, the contribution to knowledge is not limited to studies on Robin Hood or cinema costume studies, but also encompasses the study of myth in culture and in portrayals of gendered cinematic figures as cultural, palimpsestic images.

In the introduction, I described the events of early 2021 when the trader Robinhood turned on the investors in an attempt to control a fevered market. The use of the name Robin Hood in the company name is not only indicative of the values as established by cinema in the cultural mythology of the character, but also the applications, and the uses of Robin outside of the narrative context. In the first debate in parliament after the Swedish election in 2022, one of the leaders of the Swedish Green Party (Miljöpartiet), Per Bolund, accused the newly elected conservative government of reversed Robin Hood politics by taking from those who have little and giving to those who already have ("omvänd Robin Hood-politik, att ta från de som har minst och ge till de som redan har", TV4 Nyheterna 2022). In December 2024, the suspect of the murder of an American health insurance company CEO is referred to as a "modern day Robin Hood" (10 Tampa Bay, 2024) by a man being denied healthcare due to the system the victim has become a symbol for. The values of Robin are thus so greatly established within social contexts and cultural language that the reference goes uncommented – because no matter if in Sweden or in the US, everyone understands the reference. Avenues for future research projects could therefore continue to map the impact and influence of Robin on cultural language, and the shifting values in the wake of re-application, in and outside of the American and European contexts. The history of Robin Hood lives on in British and other cultures, even though some of the references to Robin may be intertextual, for those in the know.

Decoding Robin Hood has focused primarily on the figure of Robin Hood, but as what is essential for his stories, he is not alone. Future areas of research could therefore attempt a similar analysis to uncover the meaning(s) of Marian, together with or separated from the meaning(s) of Sherwood as a place and as a haven. Marian, especially but not exclusively in the form of Audrey Hepburn, is related to the witch and the woman of the forest, in her role as abbess, homemaker in Sherwood and later the poisoner of Robin. Sherwood, as the space in the periphery that allows for the magic of the myth, is a significant character in all of the films studied herein, except for *Robin Hood* (2018) where Robin/Egerton is only entering what could be the forest in the final shot.

Furthermore, in the wake of post-colonial studies, and the call for diverse representation within cultural texts, the same theory and questions can be put around Robin and his adventures. What is accomplished (or perhaps ruined) through adding the character Azeem in *Prince of Thieves* (1991)? And what is the significance of remaking Little John into Yahya in *Robin Hood* (2018)? Questions around how these non-white character and their portrayals in terms of colonialism have bene asked by several researchers cited herein (see for example Martone, 2009), but further study on their interrelationship with Robin Hood and if he can even be separated from the colonial past in English literature and American cinema could be developed.

Furthermore, leaving the focus on the individuals and instead thinking about the community of the forest, there is value in considering the fabrication of synthetic communities through the constructed spaces of capitalism and technology and how social life is constructed through webs of power, perspectives that are especially interesting given the technological innovations featured in the narrative attributed to Azeem's superior scientific knowledge as a Moor in *Prince of Thieves* (1991). Equally, considering the interplay between costume and space, the hood of Robin and the hoodie considered in *Robin Hood* (2018) could also be studied in relation to the hoods as a geographical space in urban cities. Has the hoodie's status changed through association with popular, and celebrity culture, and if so, has another item of dress replaced it?

Finally, and fittingly, there are rumours of a new Robin Hood film being considered for production. The actor tied to these rumours is Hugh Jackman (who in 2024 is 55 years old, compared to Sean Connery's being 46 in *Robin and Marian,* 1976), and the title being mentioned is "The Death of Robin Hood" (Variety, 2024). This new film, with a return to the death of the myth, can therefore also be the grounds for additional research: the death of mythical characters, the death of heroes, and the way in which this is performed and constructed. Is this a sign of disenchantment with the heroes of our youths, or does the old have to die for new stories to take shape?

As the previous paragraphs indicate, the possibilities to keep working with Robin Hood and the elements touched in this thesis are numerous. However, the true scope of this thesis is related to the suggested method herein. The method, considering an image palimpsestic and approaching it through the layers of costume within the image, is applicable to any study of image, not only the cinematic. Therefore, the avenues of further and future research also entail those covered by the method; how would this method fair in studies of art and media other than that of film and cinema? With the future uncertain as to the implications of AI onto cultural images, it is the hope of this work that the method can be useful to decoding the artificially created images just as effectively, as it has those created by myth.

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