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THE 'GODE' OF ROBIN HOOD: PERFORMED COURTESY, YEOMANRY, SOCIAL
BANDITRY, AND DISNEY'S CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

BY

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ABSTRACT

THE 'GODE' OF ROBIN HOOD: PERFORMED COURTESY, YEOMANRY, SOCIAL
BANDITRY, AND DISNEY'S CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

BY GIAVANNA FOSTER

I am investigating the ambiguous 'gode' throughout my Medieval primary texts: *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, *Robin Hood and the Monk*, *Robin Hood and the Guy of Gisborne*, *Robin Hood and the Potter*. In the first section, I focus on Robin Hood's exilic rank of outlawry. As an anti-hero, he resorts to two forms of extortion: performed courtesy and loan agreements. For example, in the *Gest*, Robin steals eight hundred pounds from a monk of Saint Mary's Abbey after coercing the knight into a 400-pound loan agreement. Secondly, I analyze Robin Hood's yeomanry through disguises that subvert the concept of agency as a direct measure of one's rank. For example, in *Guy of Gisborne*, Robin Hood defeats Guy before claiming ownership of his horse-hide robe and confronting the sheriff. In *Robin Hood and the Potter*, Robin Hood uses the money he stole from the sheriff to compensate the potter as an economic form of social retribution. Lastly, I challenge the good-versus-evil binary in Disney's *Robin Hood*; Robin's image of a likable red fox contrasts with Prince John and the sheriff's mischievous personas. But Disney filters Robin Hood's Medieval complexities by oversaturating his courtly love with Maid Marian. Interestingly, Disney's film adaptation obscures the social ambivalence of Robin Hood's disguises while establishing a questionable hero with no visible imperfections. However, Robin Hood's multifaceted 'gode' reveals his economic savvy as a lender and tradesman who challenges the social structure of Medieval theft through his clever disguises and coercive loan agreements.

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INTRODUCTION

When you hear the word ‘good’, do you only associate it with the excellent quality of an article of clothing, the meal you ate yesterday, or your favorite hero’s bravery? Do you see ‘good’ and ‘bad’ as polar opposites of morality and immorality? Interestingly, this pervasive dichotomy was used by townsmen and women during the late-fourteenth century to establish the city of God as well as the quotidian affair of community stewardship: “Norms of civic conduct thus distinguished good from bad behaviour and showed what it meant to live as a hardworking, God-fearing and useful member of society. Such members supported the common or public good, as variously formulated by governing elites. Bad conduct was the opposite of these things: disruptive and detrimental to the urban civic body”¹. My thesis challenges this absolute notion of the good by exploring its interpretive dimensions, showing Robin Hood’s ambiguous status as a yeoman, outlaw, and landowner who navigates his rank with economic precision. An Old English transitive verb, the good describes one’s choice to “help, benefit, or do a service to (a person)”². By contrast, Robin Hood’s ‘gode’ of performed courtesy functions as the catalyst for his agreements with the knight and king. The cultural significance of Robin Hood’s complex identity is established through the ‘gode’, appearing often in my primary texts: *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, *Robin Hood and the Monk*, *Robin Hood and the Guy of Gisborne*, and *Robin Hood and the Potter*. Because the ‘gode’ appears in *Gest* forty times, I claim that it’s essential for understanding Robin Hood’s rank and economic exchanges that subvert the norm of ownership in England’s Medieval hierarchy. However, you might have one question: *Who is Robin Hood?*

¹ Janna Coomans, Making Good and Breaking Bad: Materiality and Community in Netherlandish Cities, 1380–1520 (*The English Historical Review*, 2022), 1054.

² Oxford English Dictionary, ‘gode’. © 2026.

Robin Hood is recognized as a legend, vigilante, and outlaw hero who redistributes financial wealth by seizing valuable possessions from members of the medieval upper class (e.g., the king, and the sheriff) before giving them to members of the lower economic ranks (e.g., his twelve merry men, and the potter). The first section of my thesis analyzes Robin Hood's economic exchanges in the Medieval ballads depicting robbery and theft; to specify, his transactions with the knight and king challenge the Medieval norm of ownership as a direct measure of one's rank. In fact, Robin Hood redistributes wealth through two forms of extortion: performed courtesy and coercive loans. This unfolds in *Gest* through Robin Hood's verbal agreements with the king and the knight Sir Richard. First, Robin's contract with the knight exposes the truth behind the Virgin Mary's alleged miracle; in fact, Robin Hood steals four hundred pounds from the abbot of Saint Mary's Abbey. Robin's exchange with the king is questionable because he steals twenty pounds before transferring this money to his merry men. This exchange exemplifies how Robin Hood's extortions escalate the conflict between Medieval law and courtesy, as they directly raise legal concerns about establishing financial agreements without any verbal consent. Importantly, Robin Hood's extortions challenge the economy of England's Medieval class inequality.

The association between the good's material connotations and financial wealth is presented in *A Gest of Robyn Hode* and *Robin Hood and the Potter*; in both texts, Robin Hood uses the ambiguity of his rank to steal from the corrupt sheriff and abbot in order to strategically redistribute this money. My primary texts explore the value of Robin Hood's agreements as a 'gode' of presiding wealth: "1.a. Old English– A yellow precious metal, the chemical element of atomic number 79, which is resistant to tarnishing and corrosion and relatively malleable and ductile, and is used in finance (to guarantee the value of currency

and formerly in coinage), and to make jewellery and ornaments. Symbol Au (cf. aurum n.)”³. For example, in the first fyfte of *Gest*, Robin Hood expresses his intent of targeting bishops as well as archbishops and the sheriff to rebel against civil and ecclesiastical oppression. He also targets the monk by lending money at exorbitant interest rates, imitating his abuse of authority; this is shown in *Robin Hood and the Monk* when the monk reports Robin Hood to the sheriff. Indeed, the monk violates the Medieval law of sanctuary which protects outlaws such as Robin Hood. This instigates a chain reaction, as my thesis will discuss Little John’s incredible show of loyalty. An incomparable archer, Robin Hood challenges the sheriff and monk through disguises and battles that magnify the conflict between Medieval law and courtesy. However, Robin Hood also challenges the knight and his merry men (e.g., Little John) by testing the strength of their loyalty. This is also explored in other texts such as *Everyman* and *Le Morte d’Arthur*; the protagonists of both texts reinforce my main argument by drawing more attention to the timeless importance of fellowship.

The second section of my thesis analyzes Robin Hood’s disguises in *Robin Hood and the Guy of Gisborne*, *Robin Hood and the Potter*, and *A Gest of Robyn Hode*; I also explore the extensive scholarly research on Robin Hood’s ambiguous yeomanry. By camouflaging his identity with clothes, Robin Hood self-promotes his agency while imitating roles of authority such as the abbot, sheriff, and king. For example, in *Guy of Gisborne*, Robin Hood exchanges his Lincoln green livery for Guy’s horse-hide robe before besting the sheriff at his game of power. Robin Hood defies the gravity of his rank in *Robin Hood and the Potter* wearing the disguise of a potter’s outfit by overcompensating the actual potter through a payment that exceeds the value of his pots. Lastly, Robin Hood sells green Lincoln livery to

³ Oxford English Dictionary, Sense 1.a. © 2026.

the king in the eighth fyfte of *Gest*; after purchasing this garment, the king rides with Robin Hood's merry men. Arguably, Robin Hood uses clothing to redefine his yeomanry as a transformative language of agency, circumventing the sheriff's power boundaries while using his incomparable intellect to metaphorically checkmate members of the elite.

Throughout *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, Robin Hood's courtesy exposes his inferior physical prowess and symbolic truth games with the knight and king. In *Gest*, Robin Hood loans four hundred pounds to the knight Sir Richard, who acknowledged the twelve-month term of this agreement. But the Virgin Mary's ostensible miracle adds a figurative layer to this exchange, as she was rumoured to have added eight hundred pounds to Robin Hood's treasure chest. However, Robin Hood steals eight hundred pounds from the abbot in Saint Mary's Abbey! My thesis investigates Robin Hood's complex 'gode' as an archer, outlaw, tradesman, and yeoman from the Medieval ballads to Disney's *Robin Hood* film adaptation; this version focuses on Robin's outlawry, contrasting Robin's nuanced Medieval image.

The final section of my thesis will investigate Disney's cultural transmission of Robin Hood's persona. Robin Hood's cultural significance extends from the Medieval ballads to Disney's 1973 film adaptation, which contrasts the complex image of his social banditry. But Disney's *Robin Hood* obscures this issue by showcasing Robin Hood's archery as a hobby used to impress his love interest, Maid Marian. Disney's adaptation displays a dichotomy of good and evil by depicting Robin Hood as a flawless outlaw whose persona contrasts with the malicious behavior of Prince John and the sheriff. As a result, Disney also removes Robin Hood's complexities that added nuance to his characteristic image in the Medieval ballads. Disney's cultural transmission reinforces the idea that Robin Hood is a heroic outlaw because of his courtesy, even though it functioned in the Medieval Ballads as a tool to coerce the king

and sheriff and secure his profit margin as a tradesman. This adds to the social satire of Disney's adaptation by mocking and challenging the sheriff's covetise.

In fact, Robin Hood's character is widely discussed by a list of accomplished scholars including Dobson and Taylor and Cartlidge. Dobson and Taylor respond to the Holt-Hilton debate on yeomanry by stating that Robin Hood's yeomanry is ambivalent and encompasses the social space between gentlemen and peasants; whereas Holt claims yeomanry represents a household status, Hilton argues that it represents his social status as an embodiment of peasant ideologies. Notably, Robin Hood's layers of mystery accumulate through the impact of literature and film adaptations that reflect multi-generational perspectives: "Rather, the story of Robin Hood, and his various supporting characters have been told in a wide range of communication mediums which have changed and evolved over time with cultural norms, public interests, and technology"⁴. By focusing on Disney's *Robin Hood*, I question how we merely define goodness as an absolute notion of morality; in fact, the 'gode' can also represent currencies of money and clothing, subverting the rigid Medieval hierarchy.

However, not all scholars agree that Robin Hood is a hero, as Cartlidge associates Robin Hood's view of Medieval justice with the subjective collectivity of his merry men. This highlights the conflict between Medieval law and courtesy, while reinforcing the impact of operating outside of these legal boundaries to challenge corrupt authoritative figures such as the sheriff. In light of the ongoing scholarly debate about Robin Hood's heroism, my paper explores how Robin Hood's roles as a tradesman and leader of his merry men deviate from the concept of morals while revealing a judicial view of his courtesy. While doing so, I

⁴ Kenneth R. Bartlett, Soebin Jang, Ying Feng, and Eniola Aderibigbe. "A Cinematic Analysis of the Leadership Behaviours of Robin Hood." 2021. *Human Resource Development International* 24 (2): 151–72.

will also investigate the Virgin Mary's secularized depiction in Disney and its impact on the sanitization of Robin Hood's image. This thesis argues that Robin Hood, a protagonist with irrefutable flaws that diminish the ethics of his ambiguous image, subverts the Medieval norm of ownership through his ambiguous exchanges as an outlaw and yeoman. Although Robin Hood is celebrated as a hero in modern films, he behaves like an insouciant criminal by using performed courtesy, the longbow, and the two-handed sword to steal from select members of the elite (e.g., the monk, the sheriff, and the king) while circumventing legal punishment. However, Robin Hood's strategies of generosity, theft, and inconsistent loyalty to the Virgin Mary draw more attention to the. Although I argue that Robin Hood embodies the anti-hero archetype, I also claim that he challenges the function of Medieval theft as a criminal mastermind by exposing insufferable individuals like the sheriff and abbot through transactions that metaphorically function as their social checkmate. This is shown in *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, *Robin Hood and the Monk*, *Robin Hood and the Potter*, and *Robin Hood and the Guy of Gisborne*; importantly, these texts display the impact of Robin Hood's clothing, performed courtesy, and retribution. However, Disney filters Robin Hood's nuances by oversaturating his love affair with Maid Marian; Robin Hood's complex rank displays his intellect and transformative range of agency in Bernesdale and Nottingham.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research focus for my thesis revolves around the ‘gode’ of Robin Hood. In order to investigate this ‘gode’, I am including close readings from the following texts: *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, *Robin Hood and the Monk*, *Robin Hood and the Guy of Gisborne*, and *Robin Hood and the Potter*. My selection of Medieval primary texts and scholarly articles will help me closely analyze the nuances of Robin Hood’s cultural significance, which is not only reflected throughout my Medieval primary texts but also Disney’s film adaptation. For my thesis, I explore the contrast between the characteristic images of Robin Hood to analyze the depth of his ongoing conflict with law and courtesy. Importantly, these contrasting images of Robin Hood’s persona are essential towards helping me gain a better understanding of the social structure of the Medieval hierarchy and the interpretive nuances of Medieval theft. I am also drawing more attention to how Medieval theft shifts the social classification of the status quo. Interestingly, Disney’s *Robin Hood* interprets the social structure of this hierarchy while presenting a binary of good and evil and producing a cautionary message resonating with the twentieth-century zeitgeist. Disney’s cinematic image piqued my curiosity because it was very sanitized. Thus, I am closely analyzing Disney’s adaptation, my primary texts, and scholarly articles to get a better understanding of how both representations of England’s Medieval social structure challenge Robin Hood’s methods of distributing money.

Importantly, I acknowledge the extensive scholarly research contextualizing the rank of yeomanry. This research is essential to understanding the historical significance of Robin Hood’s rank. Scholars Almond and Pollard investigate the status of yeomanry as a Middle English word linguistically derived from *yongman* or *yongerman*, which translates to valet as a rank of service; during the fifteenth century, England’s yeomanry was associated with the

ideologies of service and squirehood⁵. To specify, in Medieval England, the rank of a squire was the last stage before entering knighthood. However, both scholars point out that the challenge of precisely identifying this rank lies in the historical interpretations.

But how did Robin Hood's yeomanry become a central topic of extensive scholarly research? I noticed that many scholars responded to Holt and Hilton's 1958 debate, which explored the nuances of Robin Hood's yeomanry in *Gest* as an intermediary space between peasantry and gentility. For this reason, I claim that this debate is essential for understanding Robin Hood's ambiguous rank in the Medieval hierarchy. Whereas Holt believes yeomanry represents a "description of household status, not one's social status"⁶, Hilton conceptualized the "ballad hero in terms of medieval class conflict"⁷. In response, Maurice Keen and Stephen Knight join the list of scholars who have published insightful research relating to the conceptual rank of yeomanry. Interestingly, Keen agreed with Hilton's view before siding with Holt's perspective. In response, my thesis explores the ways in which Robin challenges England's Medieval social structure. Arguably, I believe Robin Hood's yeomanry represents a principal space of agency; his use of clothing and disguises brilliantly confronts amoral characters such as the sheriff while creating a collective movement of legal reform.

In fact, Robin Hood's yeomanry is the subject of an ongoing debate because of its interpretive nuances across different historical eras. Namely, Dobson and Taylor observe that "the precise associations of yeoman status at different times and in different contexts are

⁵ Richard Almond, A.J. Pollard. "The Yeomanry of Robin Hood and Social Terminology in Fifteenth-Century England." 52.

⁶ Richard Almond, A.J. Pollard. "The Yeomanry of Robin Hood and Social Terminology in Fifteenth-Century England." 55.

⁷ Richard Almond, A.J. Pollard. "The Yeomanry of Robin Hood and Social Terminology in Fifteenth-Century England." 54.

difficult to pin down”⁸. This scholarly disputation in “The Yeomanry of Robin Hood and Social Terminology in Fifteenth-Century England” presents a constellation of perspectives revolving around the dimensions of this complex rank that my thesis will explore further. This debate stems from the Holt-Hilton debate, which attempts to delineate the description of yeomanry through theoretical associations that lie in a grey area of social status. Whereas Holt claims the description of a yeoman aligns with a household office, Hilton argues that the rank of a yeoman directly aligns with that of a landowner. However, after initially siding with Hilton in this debate, Keen now disagrees with Hilton’s views.

Robin Hood’s cultural significance is also discussed among many scholars. *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, which circulated in the fifteenth century, is one of the first Medieval ballads. Ohlgren states that *Gest* is “only in five printed texts and fragments of the sixteenth century, the two earliest versions being those of Jan Van Doesborch of Antwerp around 1510...”⁹. In addition, Almond reveals a research gap by stating that “commentators... elide the yeomanry of Robin Hood and his men”¹⁰. Indeed, their research findings are significant because they closely analyze the nuanced link between Robin’s yeomanry and the forest. Since 1958, Robin Hood’s significance as a yeoman of the forest¹¹. These research findings reinforce the connection to ‘thre’ as an important concept of Robin Hood’s rank; in fact, it creates a complex intersection between Robin’s outlawry and yeomanry.

⁸ Richard Almond, A.J. Pollard. “The Yeomanry of Robin Hood and Social Terminology in Fifteenth-Century England.” 52.

⁹ Thomas H. Ohlgren. “Edwardus redivivus in *A Gest of Robyn Hode*”. 1.

¹⁰ Richard Almond, A.J. Pollard. “The Yeomanry of Robin Hood and Social Terminology in Fifteenth-Century England.” 56.

¹¹ Richard Almond, A.J. Pollard. “The Yeomanry of Robin Hood and Social Terminology in Fifteenth-Century England.” 57.

Among the list of scholars who researched Robin Hood's social satire is Hoffman, whose peer-reviewed research essay, "[I Wyll Be Thy True Servaunte / And Trewely Serve Thee](#)": Guildhall Minstrelsy in the "A Gest of Robyn Hode", discusses how *Gest* could be interpreted as a Medieval text with theatrical connotations. Interestingly, Hoffman points out how the first, third, fifth, and sixth fyttes of *A Gest of Robyn Hode* start with the "lyth and lystyn" repetition¹². *A Gest of Robyn Hode* is recognized as one of the earliest known verse narratives about Robin Hood, a legendary English outlaw. However, there has been little scholarly exploration regarding how it may have been performed originally. In his analysis, Hoffman examines the text's possibilities as a satirical, performed narrative that emphasizes the power of community through Robin Hood and his merry men. Hoffman analyzes *A Gest of Robyn Hode*'s significance as a Medieval poem that also reads as a performance piece with an allegorical social commentary utilizing sophisticated storytelling techniques to magnify the socioeconomic inequality Robin Hood challenges through his use of weaponry.

Although Robin Hood's characterization in *A Gest of Robyn Hode* implies that Robin Hood could be a lender, Disney's *Robin Hood* has altered Robin Hood's yeomanry to reflect a cultural message of romance and chivalry resonating with the twentieth-century zeitgeist. Interestingly, Disney's film adaptation focuses on Robin Hood's outlawry more than his yeomanry. Bartlett draws more attention to the undeniable impact of Robin Hood's cultural transmission from my primary Medieval texts to Disney's adaptation. Bartlett states: "It is important to note that there is no single literary text that enshrines the 'real' version of the Robin Hood story... with over 50 films and numerous television series based on this folk

¹² Dean A. Ho. 2005. "'I Wyll Be Thy True Servaunte / And Trewely Serve Thee': Guildhall Minstrelsy in the 'A Gest of Robyn Hode.'" 49 (2): 119–34.

legend produced over the last 100 years”¹³. Although I agree with Bartlett’s statement, I also claim that the multiplicity of versions of Robin Hood’s story reflects an evolving shift in the cultural norm of resistance. This cultural shift is shown in modern Robin Hood remakes like *Prince of Thieves* (1991) and *Robin Hood* (2018), who present different versions of Robin Hood with distinct imagery contrasting with Robin Hood’s characterization in my primary text. Importantly, I am analyzing Disney’s *Robin Hood* (1973) because it is essential for the purpose of my thesis. Disney’s cultural transmission sanitizes Robin Hood’s outlawry and yeomanry that added significant layers of complexity in my primary texts. The impact of Disney’s cultural transmission has also influenced the ways in which people think about not only Robin Hood but also the concept of morality today. Therefore, I am investigating the trajectory of cultural transmission from my Medieval primary texts to Disney’s adaptation while challenging its animated black-and-white moral dichotomy.

Although the good is associated with benevolence and helping others¹⁴, Robin Hood’s ‘gode’ of performed courtesy twists this originary meaning through deeply unethical actions of robbery and theft that embodies the image of an outlaw anti-hero. In the first fyfte of *Gest*, for example, Robin vocalizes his intent to “bete and bynde” members of the elite, including the sheriff. Robin Hood’s measures of extortion (e.g., his 400-pound loan to the knight Sir Richard, robbing the king in *Gest*) reveal a contrast between the good’s ethical and material senses. By doing so, Robin Hood’s exchanges showcase his ambivalence as a yeoman and outlaw who wields weaponry and disguises to subvert class roles of the Medieval hierarchy.

¹³ Kenneth R. Bartlett, Soebin Jang, Ying Feng, and Eniola Aderibigbe. “A Cinematic Analysis of the Leadership Behaviours of Robin Hood.” 2021. *Human Resource Development International* 24 (2): 151–72.

¹⁴ Oxford English Dictionary. ‘gode’. © 2026.

The link between the good's material connotations and financial wealth is shown in *Gest* through Robin Hood's ownership of green Lincoln livery and treasure holding the sum of 800 pounds. The value of this currency is explored throughout my primary texts as a 'gode' of power and financial wealth: "1.a. Old English– A yellow precious metal, the chemical element of atomic number 79, which is resistant to tarnishing and corrosion and relatively malleable and ductile, and is used in finance (to guarantee the value of currency and formerly in coinage), and to make jewellery and ornaments. Symbol Au (cf. aurum n.)"¹⁵. My primary texts magnify the weight of Robin Hood's social currency as a good that shows escalating socioeconomic tensions, especially in the first fyfte of *Gest*, which are explored through Robin Hood's order; his "bete and bynde" instructions function as an intentional rebellion against civil and ecclesiastical oppression, targeting the sheriff and monk due to their abuse of power by lending money at exorbitant interest rates. However, Robin Hood also challenges the knight and his merry men (e.g., Little John) during outbursts that magnify the test of loyalty as the metaphorical glue of their collective fellowship.

Inspired by the extensive scholarly research, I claim that the 'gode' of Robin Hood's rank challenges the function of Medieval theft in England. Ireland explores the historical context of this function: "In 950 or 1350 a thief would look to dispose of or consume stolen goods in a safe manner and the victim of theft would be obliged to confront both the loss of goods which he would presumably rather still have had and the wrong of the person who had removed them"¹⁶. To specify, this function is social because it emphasizes the power of a community (e.g., a king that represents the state) as a key element of Medieval law. In fact,

¹⁵ Oxford English Dictionary. 'gode', Sense 1.a. © 2026.

¹⁶ Richard Ireland. "Law in Action, Law in Books: the Practicality of Medieval Theft Law.", 310.

the social community determines one's levels of agency in the Medieval hierarchy. Money, for example, is associated with the hierarchical measure of wealth; however, the monk and sheriff abuse this social function by committing theft to create a power leverage in their favour. Arguably, Robin Hood imitates the monk and sheriff to question England's disparate Medieval hierarchy through his strategic exchanges. As shown in my Medieval primary texts, namely *Gest*, members of the elite, including the sheriff and abbot, use Medieval theft as a means of control and hierarchical superiority. Arguably, in *Gest*, the abbot commits theft by holding the knight Sir Richard's land in perpetuity as if it were his own land. Whereas the abbot already owns plenty of land, the knight is at risk of cessation without an abode because the abbot usurped his land due to the weight of his son's crimes.

For example, Robin Hood challenges this social structure in *Gest*, which preserves Robin Hood's yeomanry as a form of social reconfiguration by challenging the abbot as well as the sheriff's place of authority. Through disguises of clothing, Robin Hood blurs social boundaries while subverting the rigid Medieval hierarchy and status quo, intensifying the conflict between law and courtesy through his physical prowess, which not only fuels the economy of violence but raises concerns about the relationship between the social function of Medieval theft and rank in the Medieval hierarchy. Arguably, Robin Hood's characteristic flaws are essential because they challenge the Medieval dichotomy of good and evil.

Professor Nagy's research has also inspired my research project, as he thoroughly investigates the weight of Robin Hood's characteristic paradoxes. I find his research to be insightful because of how he draws more attention to the complexity of his character. One detail that stands out to me is his statement relating to the concept of Medieval theft. Nagy states: "Rarely in the ballads do Robin or his men commit an outright act of theft; the taking

of goods is often described, albeit whimsically, as the collecting of a debt, or a matter of indirect reciprocity... In the *Gest* Robin takes the monk's money as payment of the debt which the knight owes the outlaw - the monk is from an abbey dedicated to Mary, who is the surety in the transaction between Robin and the knight. Thus, Robin is taking what belongs to him"¹⁷. In response, my thesis investigates Robin Hood's ongoing conflict with law and courtesy inspired by the list of questions I had about the social structure of Medieval theft. Because Robin Hood is known for robbing from members of the elite, my hypothesis is that Robin Hood committed theft in order to redistribute wealth to members of the lower class.

One significant source that frames the historical significance of Robin Hood's conflict with law and courtesy is Richard Ireland's "Law in Action, Law in Books: the Practicality of Medieval Theft Law." Ireland's analysis is insightful, as he explores a direct link between the law of Medieval theft and communities such as the state. Importantly, Ireland: "Furtum est contrectatio rei fraudulosa vel ipsius rei, vel etiam usus eius possessionisve":3 'A person is guilty of theft if he dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it'."¹⁸. One important question that reappears in my primary texts is the question of property, as *Gest* raises this when the abbot holds the knight Sir Richard's land in perpetuity. After securing a loan agreement with Sir Richard, Robin Hood steals eight hundred pounds from the abbot of Saint Mary's Abbey. Because of this transaction, Robin Hood saves the knight from cession.

However, in order to save the knight, Robin Hood redistributes wealth from members of the elite, such as the monk and sheriff. The topic of Medieval law has piqued my curiosity;

¹⁷ Joseph Nagy. *The Paradoxes of Robin Hood*. 206.

¹⁸ Richard Ireland. "Law in Action, Law in Books: the Practicality of Medieval Theft Law.", 310.

for this reason, I am investigating the ways in which Robin Hood operates outside of the law. Richard Ireland analyzes two types of Medieval theft: manifest and non-manifest theft. After drawing attention to one argument stating that the manifest thief is in the position of the outlaw, Ireland thoroughly describes how manifest theft is a crime in which the offender takes the stolen property and keeps it indefinitely. Arguably, in Disney's *Robin Hood*, Prince John's character commits manifest theft by collecting exorbitant amounts of money from townspeople, including the residents of Nottingham. Then, Ireland explores the concept of the non-manifest thief. This form of theft is distinguished as a crime in which the offender takes the stolen property before redistributing or discarding it. Non-manifest theft is almost like a brokerage; however, it's more nuanced because the offender conceals their robbery of goods before deciding to transfer or dispose of the property.

This research on Medieval theft is important for Robin Hood because it aligns with my thesis's research focus, revolving around Robin's conflict with law and courtesy. As an outlaw, Robin Hood actually does keep some money but he also selectively redistributes it through transactions of theft. One example of this is shown when Robin Hood steals from the sheriff before compensating the potter through a monetary transaction that exceeds the value of his pots. And in *Gisborne*, Robin Hood steals Guy's horse-hide robe. He's usually praised when he commits non-manifest theft, but he does a lot of manifest theft as well. For example, in *Gest*, Robin Hood commits manifest theft by taking twenty pounds from the king before transferring to his merry men. Importantly, Robin's method of wealth redistribution draws more attention to the class disparity of England's Medieval legal system.

SECTION 1: OUTLAW ANTI-HERO AND LEADER

This section argues that Robin Hood is a selfish outlaw and antihero because he resorts to two forms of extortions: loans and performed courtesy. As a result, Robin steals money from the king and coerces the knight into agreeing to repay him four hundred pounds. Throughout *Gest*, Robin Hood's social banditry functions as a 'gode' that helps him acquire more wealth; however, his outlawry also functions as a symbol of fellowship with his merry men. Throughout *Gest*, Robin Hood's outlawry helps him acquire property such as the pound as a key currency. Although Robin Hood internally mismanages people, especially his twelve merry men, he also inspires the loyalty of a collective fellowship. This section articulates the importance of both parts of Robin Hood's leadership, which are essential to understanding his identity as an antihero challenging the absolute dichotomy distinguishing good and bad behavior as polar opposites; Robin Hood proves that he does not fit the mold of a simple hero or antagonist because his complex exchanges reveal nuances of the Medieval hierarchy.

Regarding Robin Hood's social banditry, *Gest* introduces him as one who resides in a forest in Bernesdale while presenting a correlation to Medieval law. In lines 5-6 of *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, he is described by the narrator as "a prude outlaw"¹⁹ who travels by foot. This description establishes the impact of Robin Hood's rank as a functional engine of mobility. The narrator frames Robin Hood's outlawry as a primary motif before introducing a direct association with his courtesy: "Robyn was a prude outlaw, Whyles he walked on ground: So curteyse an outlawe as he was one / Was never non founde"²⁰. This line establishes Robin Hood's outlawry as a concept that shapes not only the text's plot, but also solidifies the

¹⁹ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 1.

²⁰ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 1.

cultural significance of his reputation. To add, the trysting tree is a significant setting that also magnifies the conflict between Medieval jurisdiction and Robin Hood's outlaw rank: "...The sentence of outlawry was reserved for those criminals who refused to appear for trial in court: "They become outlaws when, having been lawfully summoned, they do not appear, and are awaited and even sought for throughout the lawful and appointed terms, and yet they do not present themselves for trial" (David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway, eds., *English Historical Documents 1042-1189* [London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1968] II, 552). Given the harsh punishments that awaited the convicted felon - blinding, loss of limb, or castration - it is not surprising that many fled to the forest or abroad to escape judgment"²¹. Because Robin Hood resides in the forest, the trysting tree frames his outlawry as a central location of settling agreements while subverting the Medieval law's boundaries.

On that note, Robin Hood arranges agreements ranging from loans to exchanges of clothing that redistribute wealth. My thesis investigates this further, while also focusing on the weight of Robin's truth games verifying the amount of one's financial reserves. This is shown in *Gest*, when Robin technically steals from the king but provisionally lends money to the knight before luring him into a coercive loan with a twelve-month term, mandatory return payment, and obligatory acquiescence to this contract. Robin Hood's truth games frame the motif of payment while highlighting the impact of Robin Hood's performed courtesy. They highlight Robin Hood's selective agreements, which reconfigure the Medieval economy.

Robin Hood's performed courtesy reveals an associative link between the number three, religion, and economy, which is featured prominently throughout my primary texts.

²¹ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 49.

This association is framed in the first fyfte of *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, through Robin's devotion to the Virgin Mary. In lines 33-35, Robin Hood listens to three masses: one for the Father, one for the Holy Ghost, and one for the Virgin Mary. This draws more attention to Robin Hood's religious practice as a decoy for violence and treachery while framing the motif of payment as an ambiguous 'gode' and social currency. Throughout *Gest*, the 'thre' also reinforces a link between leadership, weaponry, and faith that not only establishes Robin Hood's social banditry but also the fellowship of Robin Hood's merry men.

In fact, Robin Hood plays the role of a lender whose contracts reflect his intelligence and result in wealth redistribution that accommodates his merry men and the potter. I argue that Robin Hood doesn't help any of the characters (e.g., the knight Sir Richard) without ensuring that he receives a material good of compensation. Robin Hood's agreements are designed with a calculated leverage of payment that reflects his measures of extortion; for example, in *Gest*, Robin Hood creates a coercive loan by asking the knight to pay after joining him as the guest-in-waiting at dinner. As shown below, Robin Hood's transaction metaphorically challenges the boundaries between yeomanry and knighthood:

"If I come ageyne, Robyn,
 Here by thys contré,
 As **gode** a dyner I shall the make
 As that thou haest made to me."
 "Gramarcy, knyght," sayde Robyn,
 "My dyner whan that I it have;
 I was never so gredy, bi dere worthy God,
 My dyner for to crave.
 "But pay or ye wende," sayde Robyn;

"Me thynketh it is **gode** ryght;
 It was never the maner, by dere worthi God,
 A yoman to pay for a knyght."²²

Robin Hood was fasting during the first fyte until he found a guest to join him at dinner; after welcoming the knight as the domesticated guest in waiting, Robin's conversation in lines 137-148 frame the motif of payment during this transactional meal. This discourse is significant because it shows how Robin Hood uses the social ambivalence of his yeomanry to lure the knight Sir Richard into a coercive loan agreement. By pointing out the hierarchical difference between himself and the knight, Robin Hood reveals his motive of helping the knight to receive a return payment. This distinction of ranks creates a classist leverage of payment while pressuring the knight to cover the costs of this meal because of his superior rank. The motif of payment is emphasized in lines 145-146, which is largely significant to this text because it draws more attention to the material sense of the 'gode'; Robin Hood's social currency of extortion is shown through his prioritization of financial wealth.

The first fyte of *Gest* frames Robin Hood's ability to use his 'gode' of courtesy to acquire more money as a financial property. Specifically, Robin's feast with the knight leads to a four-hundred-pound loan agreement. Before the knight receives a loan payment, Robin Hood plays a truth game to test his loyalty:

"Tel me truth," than saide Robyn,
 "So God have parte of the."
 "I have no more but ten shelynges," sayde the knyght,
 "So God have part of me." (155-156)
 "If thou hast no more," sayde Robyn,

²²Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 4-5.

"I woll nat one peny,
 And yf thou have nede of any more,
 More shall I lend the.
 "Go nowe furth, Littell Johnn,
 The truth tell thou me: (161-162)
 If there be no more but ten shelinges,
 No peny that I se."²³

This conversation has a vehement tone because Robin Hood commands the knight Sir Richard and Little John to verify that Sir Richard is telling the truth. Although the knight tells Robin Hood that he only has ten shillings, Robin Hood does not believe him. If Robin Hood steals money from the rich, then he should already have an abundance of material goods. But the knight is not rich because he is indebted to the abbot for four hundred pounds! Arguably, Robin Hood's decision to lure the knight into this loan agreement stems from a multifaceted motive that does not merely involve trying to secure more wealth. To add, Robin Hood seizes the opportunity to test the knight's loyalty through the structure of his contract reconfiguring the association between debt, rank, and power. This proves that Robin Hood strategically mirrors the monk of Saint Mary's Abbey by also committing theft to help the knight Sir Richard secure his land. I will discuss this in more detail shortly.

Importantly, *A Gest of Robyn Hode* reveals a causal relationship between the knight's debt to the abbot and the weight of his son's crimes; in lines 209-210, the knight states that his son had slain a knight of Lancaster as well as a squire. Due to the weight of these crimes, the knight's land was pledged as security to an abbot in Saint Mary. This pledge magnifies socioeconomic tensions, highlighting the contrast between the knight's and abbot's ranks as a

²³Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 5.

measure of their levels of power. The difference between their ranks is magnified through the abbot's superior land ownership and financial wealth. Because his rank is inferior, the knight Sir Richard faces the dilemma of repaying four hundred pounds to the abbot. Then, he tells Robin Hood that he is unable to repay the abbot and at risk of losing ownership of his land. He states: "And to the abbot of that place / Foure hondred pounde I must pay; / And but I be there upon this nyght / My londe is lost for ay"²⁴. After Robin Hood is joined by the knight at dinner, he informs the knight that he must repay 400 pounds by the end of the twelve-month term. Arguably, Robin Hood's trading agreement magnifies the ongoing tension between courtesy and law by emphasizing the hierarchical value of money as a reflection of power.

I argue that Robin Hood is an anti-hero because he selfishly lures people into a trap of trading agreements that secure his wealth and reputation as a banker/loan agent. We see this in three ways during Robin's encounter with the Knight, Sir Richard of the Lee: securing the right borrow (e.g., loan guarantee), creating a strict loan agreement with the hard deadline of twelve months, and negotiating the loan of 400 pounds, to be repaid with interest. In order to secure this agreement, however, Robin Hood asks Sir Richard to name the proper guarantee:

"Hast thou any frende," sayde Robyn,
 "Thy borowe that wolde be?"
 "I have none," than sayde the knyght,
 "But God that dyed on tree."²⁵

After finding out that the knight is indebted to the abbot, Robin Hood requests that the knight names the right guarantee to secure this verbal agreement. Then, the knight provides a direct

²⁴ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 10.

²⁵ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 7.

answer in hopes of conditionally gaining Robin Hood's trust; however, as stated in the next passage, Robin Hood does not accept the knight's first answer. For Robin Hood, only one answer will suffice: the Virgin Mary. However, Robin Hood's dialogue with the knight raises legal concerns about his motive to provide a loan payment. For instance, why didn't Robin Hood simply give the knight four hundred pounds? Arguably, Robin Hood's decision to ask the knight to name a "borowe" complicates the recurring conflict between law and courtesy by trapping the knight in a loan agreement. In fact, Robin Hood's decision to imitate a predatory lender through his coercive loan with the knight and show of performed courtesy proves that he is willing to circumvent the law to question corrupt figures such as the abbot.

Fynde me a better borowe," sayde Robyn,
 "Or money getest thou none."
 "I have none other," sayde the knyght,
 "The sothe for to say,
 But yf yt be Our dere Lady;
 She fayled me never or thys day."²⁶

The intersection between the good's ethical and material senses unfolds as Robin Hood states that the knight will not receive any money unless he acknowledges the same religious guarantor. According to the Middle English Compendium, the word "borowe" can refer to: "a thing deposited as security, a pledge; leien feith (trouth) to ~, to pledge (one's) honor... one who guarantees that another will perform an oath or fulfill an agreement; guarantor, surety"²⁷. The first two lines reaffirm that Robin Hood will only accept one guarantor for this agreement: the Virgin Mary. This is grounded in line 249, after Robin

²⁶ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 8.

²⁷ Middle English Compendium. "borgh – ". © 2026.

Hood refuses the knight's first answer before calling it a joke, or "japis"²⁸. His tone does not change until after the knight acknowledges the Virgin Mary, creating a direct association between Robin Hood's religion and his coercive loan agreement with the knight. Although Robin Hood starts to trust the knight, his agreement complicates the conflict of law and courtesy because Sir Richard only has to name a religious borrow before receiving a payment from Robin Hood. But if one were to request a loan payment today, then they would need to first provide proof of identification as verification.

After the knight names the Virgin Mary as the financial guarantor, Robin Hood orders Little John to bring four hundred pounds from his treasure. :

"By dere worthy God," sayde Robyn,
 "To seche all Englonde **thorowe**,
 Yet fonde I never to my pay
 A moche better **borowe**.
 "Come nowe furth, Litell Johnn.
 And go to my tresouré,
 And bringe me foure hundered pound,
 And loke well tolde it be."²⁹

In this passage, Robin Hood's response indicates that the knight correctly named the Virgin Mary as the only "borowe" or guarantor; by doing so, the knight has fulfilled this financial agreement with Robin Hood. Because the knight also acknowledges the Virgin Mary, Robin Hood tells Little John to bring four hundred pounds from his treasure in order to provide a loan payment. This action directly implies that the knight has now earned Robin Hood's trust—adding literal and figurative weight to the four hundred pound loan. The treasure holds

²⁸ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 7.

²⁹ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 8.

the weight of Robin Hood's trust, which is earned after the knight also acknowledges the Virgin Mary. I noticed that the first four lines of this passage are repeated in lines 997-1000. This magnifies Robin Hood's questionable devotion to the Virgin Mary which gradually reveals his progressive style of leadership that counteracts the abbot's blatant amorality through the reciprocated crime of manifest theft.

In fact, Robin Hood's style of leadership functions as the engine for his disruptive movement that encourages a sense of collective unity among his outlaw merry men. This engine operates through three concepts that establish the importance of consistent loyalty, team leadership, and meetings that subvert the traditional idea of goodness. By strategically applying the concepts of tryst, trust, and trystle, Robin Hood dismantles the sheriff and abbot's amoral agenda while working towards the progression of legal reform in a corrupted hierarchical society. These concepts are established through the trysting tree, which "embody central concepts of the outlaw band, with its meetings, fidelity, and occasional addresses by the leader"³⁰. To specify, the tryst signifies the trysting tree, which is the location in which Robin Hood holds meetings with his merry men and negotiates agreements. Also, the trust represents fidelity that functions in the Medieval ballads as a collective sense of fellowship. Lastly, the trestle represents the significance of leadership. This is reinforced through the impact of Robin Hood's dialogue, as it not only shapes his exchanges in the Medieval ballads but also navigates the collective unity among his merry men.

³⁰ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Guy of Gisborne*. 2.

In *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, Robin Hood loans four hundred pounds to the knight. This monetary exchange displays the complex association between the trysting tree and Robin's trestle. Little John acknowledges Robin Hood's loan as an act of charity:

Furth than went Litell Johnn,
 And Scarlok went before;
 He tolde oute foure hundred pounde
 By eightene and two score.
 "Is thys well tolde?" sayde litell Much;
 Johnn sayde, "What greveth the?
 It is almus to helpe a gentyll knyght,
 That is fal in poverté."³¹

Notice that Little John listens to Robin Hood's request, which conveys a sense of respect and hierarchical trust. The four hundred pounds feels symbolic because it represents a measure of power, mobility, and ownership. With an abundant sum, Robin Hood uses this payment as leverage to maintain his profit margin while redistributing wealth from the abbot. Arguably, though it falls into the category of theft, Robin Hood thwarts the knight's risk of cessation as the abbot was going to sell all of his land before this agreement was secured. Although Robin Hood loans four hundred pounds to the knight, he also acknowledges the Virgin Mary; this adds a figurative and literal weight to the four hundred pound transaction by revealing an emphasis on material abundance as a priority above consistently attending Mass. Little John brings four hundred pounds from Robin's "tresouré"; significantly, this treasure represents a rock-solid trust that forms after Sir Richard abides by Robin Hood's terms and conditions.

Arguably, Robin Hood's performed courtesy reflects the hierarchical weight of inequality imposed by corrupt figures such as the sheriff and abbot. Although Robin Hood

³¹ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 8.

implies that his rank is lower than that of the knight's, Robin manages to own more land and money than the knight. Robin Hood reinforces the motif of payment by voicing his belief that the knight should pay for the meal: "Me thynketh it is gode ryght; It was never the maner, by dere worthi God, A yoman to pay for a knyght."" (line 148). This repetition draws more attention to the weight of Robin Hood's social currency as a token of extortion with a return good in mind; in line 139, the knight tells Robin Hood that he will prepare a good dinner as a way of repaying him. This, along with Robin's statement in line 148, proves that Robin Hood is an anti-hero who sometimes gives to receive a 'gode' in return (e.g., the knight).

This questioning of the "gode" also informs other medieval texts while drawing more attention to the good's dimensions, which are displayed through the journeys of Everyman and Robin Hood. For example, the ethical and material 'gode' is presented as a key symbol of the play *Everyman*; this 'gode' functions as a dual catalyst for Everyman's introspection and spiritual transformation. The main character, Everyman, receives a message from God that he will transition soon. As the protagonist, Everyman is fully aware that material wealth cannot change this predicament. A moralizing play, *Everyman* magnifies the causal impact of charitable deeds regarding the emergence of one's good conscience during a transformative path of introspection. Notably, these "goods" build the oppositional link between the good's material and immaterial senses. This link establishes Everyman's bildungsroman as a person who grows to realize the ethical good's substantive power. But these 'goods' actually hinder Everyman's transformative quest for spiritual fulfillment through an account book filled with a list of his "good" deeds. Indeed, Everyman represents an allegorical commentary regarding the account book's link to the progression of humanity, magnifying the importance of one's spirituality while emphasizing the weighted concept of consequence through Everyman's

penance. *Everyman* forces readers to shift from the material good of one's financial wealth to the ethical good of one's journey of spirituality and self-conscience. Thus, the substantive 'gode' of *Everyman* reinforces the need to reckon the permanence of God's truth.

In fact, I see a direct connection between the weight of this 'good' and a Latin term with ethical connotations: *summum bonum*. This term refers to the supreme good that all other goods are derived from³², forming a direct connection to the concept of goodness and spiritual reckoning. This aforementioned supreme good is ambiguous because the Webster Dictionary associates it with kindness, benevolence, wealth, or the highest economic class in a hierarchical system; this is shown throughout *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, which highlights a power tension between Robin Hood, the knight, the sheriff, and the abbot. One example of this is shown in *Gest*, when Robin Hood loans four hundred pounds to a knight who is in debt to the abbot. But *Everyman's* conversations with Goods and Good-Deeds, who are two characters in this text, help him discover an opportunity to create his spiritual path towards self-growth and salvation. Like Robin Hood, *Everyman* shows the oppositional relationship between the good's material and immaterial senses. Importantly, *Everyman* establishes the value of the 'gode' while also illustrating an underlying connection between the substantive concept of ethics and one's conscience that can facilitate the progress of humanity.

Effectively, the late medieval *Everyman* and *A Gest of Robyn Hode* emphasize the weight of the 'gode' by showing how its material and ethical senses can metaphorically shape one's journey either towards (e.g., Good-Deeds) or away from (e.g., Goods) ethical goodness. Similarly, in *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, *Robin Hood and the Monk*, *Robin Hood and*

³² Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. © 2026. *summum bonum* definition and meaning.

the Potter, the complex ‘gode’ is established through its ambiguous connotations establishing the link between Robin Hood’s oppositional relationship with the good’s ethical and material senses. This ‘gode’ is the Medieval spelling of good, as this multifaceted word is essential to understanding Robin Hood’s complexity. The ethical connotations of this good can represent abundance or: “[I.1](#). Having in a large or adequate degree the qualities or properties desirable in something of the specified kind; of high or acceptable quality, standard, or level”³³. For example, Robin Hood is a yeoman, outlaw, and landowner who created a 400-pound loan agreement with the knight. My primary texts frame Robin Hood’s devotion to the Virgin Mary as a tool merely used to acquire his material ‘gode’ of financial profits. Robin Hood’s inconsistent devotion to the Virgin Mary unfolds in my primary texts, revealing a direct link between his religious practice and exchanges of clothing and money that secure his power.

Robin Hood is a master of theatrical forms of courtesy, but they cannot be trusted. Robin’s performed courtesy is a tool of manipulation effectually marking robberies that form his legal revolution of power. Robin Hood uses his social ambivalence to create a structured transaction with the motive of transferring money as a material good of wealth and power from the monk. This is shown in the first fyfte of *Gest*, especially when Robin lowers his hood before welcoming the knight to join him as his guest at dinner:

They brought hym to the lodge door,
 Whan Robyn hym gan see,
 Full curtesly dyd of his hode
 And sette hym on his knee.
 "Welcome, sir knight," than sayde Robyn,
 "Welcome art thou to me;
 I have abyden you fastinge, sir,

³³ Oxford English Dictionary, ‘good’, sense I.1. © 2026.

All these ouris thre."³⁴

This passage is largely significant because it shows the façade of Robin Hood's performed courtesy, which functions as a vehicle of manipulation that steers his strategic agreements of extortion and robbery. Arguably, Robin's courtesy is not merely a show of courtesy because it facilitates a conditional exchange of ownership. Before the knight joins Robin Hood at dinner, he is not informed that he will have to pay for his meal. By not stating his expectation of a return payment, Robin Hood subverts the norm of ownership by using their rank differences to lure the knight into a coercive loan agreement. One who walks into a restaurant knows they will pay for a meal after seeing the prices for each item on the eatery's menu; by contrast, Robin Hood does not foreshadow any sort of metaphorical menu. Instead, Robin Hood tells the knight that he will have to pay after joining him at the dinner feast.

"Whan shal mi day be," said the knight,
 "Sir, and your wyll be?"
 "This day twelve moneth," saide Robyn,
 "Under this grene-wode tre."³⁵

In this passage, the knight speaks to Robin Hood; he asks Robin when he must repay the loan of four hundred pounds. Robin Hood loans four hundred pounds to the knight after informing him he must repay this amount twelve months later. Interestingly, Robin Hood mentions an important setting: the greenwood tree. This setting is significant, as it is linked to the motif of payment because it is the location in which Robin Hood meets with his merry men and other characters to discuss and negotiate financial agreements. (This setting, which is used in all of my Medieval primary texts, functions as the ambiguous foundation of Robin's outlawry.) I

³⁴ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 4.

³⁵ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 9.

argue that Robin Hood uses performed courtesy as a mask that, through the 'gode,' reveals his motive of being repaid by a list of characters, including the knight. Robin Hood sets a hard deadline for the return payment of this loan agreement to exert pressure on the knight Sir Richard and reinforce the twelve-month term to secure his wealth.

Although Robin Hood acknowledges the Virgin Mary as a financial guarantor, he redistributes wealth in *A Gest of Robyn Hode* by questionably stealing from the king. I argue that Robin Hood's decision to nonconsensually steal twenty pounds reinforces my claim that he is an anti-hero who redistributes money to secure more financial wealth. This transaction occurs in the seventh fyfte of *Gest*, after Robin Hood plays a trust game with the king:

"Than bespake our cumly kynge, Anone than sayd he: "I brought no more to grene wode But forty ponde with me. "I have layne at Notynggham This fourtynyght with our kynge, And spent I have full moche good, On many a grete lordynge. And I have but forty ponde, No more than have I me; But yf I had an hondred ponde, I vouch it **halfe** on the." Robyn toke the forty ponde, And departed it in two partye; Halfendell he gave his mery men, And bad them mery to be. Full curteysly Robyn gan say; "Syr, have this for your spendyng; We shall mete another day." "Gramercy," than sayd our kynge.³⁶

The narrator reinforces this conflict of law and courtesy by informing readers that Robin uses half of the king's forty pounds to pay his team of merry men. But this passage also implicitly raises more concerns about the legal structure of medieval trading agreements, as it does not name or mention the king's consent to donate half of his money to Robin Hood's merry men. In fact, the king does not explicitly permit Robin Hood to take twenty pounds from him. But in lines 1523-1524, the king tells Robin Hood that he would only be willing to donate half of his money if he were carrying one hundred pounds. This conditional statement carries the implication that the king did not want to donate any money to Robin Hood. But if the king's

³⁶Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 41.

rank is superior to Robin Hood, why didn't he stop this transaction? Although the king implies that he was not willing to donate any money, he also creates a nonverbal appearance of consent to save face. This symbolic transaction emphasizes the inconsistent association between rank and power, as Robin Hood overrides the king's status straightaway.

By bending the social structure of England's Medieval hierarchy, Robin Hood challenges the link between crimes such as robbery and theft and Medieval law as the functional engine of inequality. Scholar Neil Cartlidge elaborates: "Robin's perceptions of justice are directly equivalent to the values... generally accepted by his gang"³⁷. However, I claim that Robin Hood's merry men do not always agree with his perspective of interpersonal justice; sometimes, Robin Hood strikes his friends during confrontations.

In fact, Robin Hood is sometimes a bigger get to those who are inside. In order to be a good outlaw hero, one has to be better at outlaw relations. However, Robin Hood proves that his outlaw relations are not stronger than his comrades because of his tendency to strike his merry men during disagreements. Little John chooses not to retaliate because of his role in the master-servant hierarchy: "'Were thou not my maister," seid Litull John, "Thou shuldis by hit ful sore; Get the a man wher thou wille, For thou getis me no more."'³⁸. This statement is significant, as it frames the theme of internal strife by shaping Robin's character arc; whereas Little John travels to Sherwood, Robin Hood goes to Nottingham separately.

The conflict of law and courtesy unfolds in *Robin Hood and the Monk* through 'thre', which is consistently used as a decoy for perfidy. Indeed, Robin Hood tends to extort people

³⁷ Neil Cartlidge. Robin Hood's rules: *Gang-culture in early-modern outlaw tales?* (2016). 21.

³⁸ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Monk*. 3.

inside by physically attacking members of his merry men. This becomes evident as Little John notices how untrustworthy Robin Hood is before travelling separately to Nottingham. Prior to this moment, Little John subverts the master-servant hierarchy by defying Robin Hood's orders. But the 'thre' consistently highlights a deceptive association between Robin Hood's faith, agency, and the hierarchical power of leadership reflecting his superior rank as the leader of the merry men. In *Robin Hood and the Monk*, Robin's motive of reaffirming his superior rank as the leader of his merry men is revealed after he states his plans to attend mass in Nottingham. But the miller's son suggests Robin travel with his twelve merry men:

"Of all my mery men," seid Robyn,
 "Be my [feith](#) I wil non have,
 But Litull John shall beyre my bow,
 Til that me list to drawe."
 "Thou shall beyre thin own," seid Litull Jon,
 "Maister, and I wyl beyre myne,
 And we well shete a peny," seid Litull Jon,
 Under the grene wode lyne."
 "I wil not shete a peny," seyde Robyn Hode,
 "In [feith](#), Litull John, with the,
 But ever for on as thou shetis," seide Robyn,
 "In [feith](#) I holde the thre."³⁹

Arguably, Robin Hood's faith represents his belief of holding superior power as the leader of his twelve merry men. The material 'gode' of power is magnified through Robin Hood and Little John's dialogue, revealing the tensions of their hierarchical relationship. Ultimately, Little John's assertive response in lines 39-40 presents the subversion of hierarchical norms, especially through the connotations of two words: "own" and "myne". After Robin Hood

³⁹ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Monk*. 2-3.

states that Little John will carry his bow, Little John responds by stating that Robin Hood will actually carry his own bow. Little John's assertive response disregards Robin Hood's order before starting an archery wager. The connotations of the word "own" raise a question of agency regarding the hierarchical ranks of fellowship: Is Little John or Robin Hood the superior leader? In line 40, Little John confidently states that he will carry his bow. By doing so, Little John declares his agency as a strong foil character to Robin Hood with virtuous restraint and comparable archery skills. Little John and Robin Hood's longbows figuratively represent the material 'gode' of power; through their use of weaponry, fighting not only becomes a form of friendship but also the extent of their strength and physical prowess.

The complex motif of friendship is explored throughout *Robin Hood and the Monk* and Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*; Robin Hood and King Arthur's battles with Little John and Lancelot reinforce the 15th-century power tensions in England while contrasting the good's ethical and material senses through their broken swords. Their powerlessness draws more attention to the gravity of norms associated with the power of one's respective hierarchical ranks. Because both falter during their matches, they expose their insubordinate leadership and physical prowess. This inadequate leadership is reinforced in *Robin Hood and the Monk*, especially when Little John wins the wager before he is attacked by Robin Hood. By striking Little John, Robin Hood instigates an argument, framing the theme of internal strife. Their disagreement starts when Little John refuses to carry Robin Hood's longbow: "Thou shall beyre thin own," seid Litull Jon, "Maister, and I wyl beyre myne"⁴⁰. It escalates in line 47, after Robin Hood insists on increasing the wager of the bet, which eventually becomes five shillings. As stated in lines 49-50, Little John is named the winner of this wager: "Til Litull

⁴⁰ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Monk*. 2.

John wan of his maister/ Five shillings to hose and shone"⁴¹. However, Robin Hood refuses to accept the outcome of losing the bet to Little John: "Litull John seid he had won five shillings, And Robyn Hode seid schortly nay"⁴². Robin Hood not only overestimates his archery skills but also his navigational range of power, especially during his ensuing sword fight with the sheriff and his army of twelve in Nottingham.

Interestingly, Robin Hood also works with a team of twelve merry men; however, he isolates himself by travelling alone to Nottingham's Seynt Mary church. As a result, Robin Hood becomes outnumbered after the monk reports him to the sheriff. Robin Hood's sword breaks shortly before he is captured by the sheriff, exposing his vulnerability. Robin Hood's sword represents an allegory, with imagery that unfolds during his battle with the sheriff:

But Robyn toke out a too-hond sworde,
 That hangit down be his kne;
 Ther as the schereff and his men stode thyckust
 Thedurwarde wolde he.
 Thryes thorow at them he ran then,
 For sothe as I yow sey,
 And woundyt mony a moder son,
 And twelve he slew that day.
 His sworde upon the schireff hed
 Sertanly he brake in too;
 "The smyth that the made," seid Robyn,
 "I pray to God wyrke hym woo!
 "For now am I weppynlesse," seid Robyn,
 "Alasse! agayn my wyll;⁴³

⁴¹ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Monk*. 3.

⁴² Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Monk*. 3.

⁴³ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Monk*. 5.

Importantly, this passage frames the motif of the broken sword by drawing attention to its weighted meaning as a powerful tool of survival and agency. However, in line 115, Robin Hood is aghast at his own miscalculation after his two-hand sword breaks while it's above the sheriff's head. This broken sword links Robin Hood's extent of authoritative power to his sword that reflects Robin's emotional disposition. As a result, Robin wields his two-hand sword recklessly without any restraint. Arguably, Robin's two-hand sword represents an allegory for the lack of regulation in England's medieval system. This flawed system of Medieval law is shown as Robin Hood's sword breaks during battle while it is above the sheriff's head. This directly juxtaposes the contrast between law and social order, as the sheriff walks into church to battle Robin Hood after the monk reports him...

Robin Hood and the sheriff's sword battle magnifies power tensions that reflect an authoritative abuse of power. The monk directly violates the Medieval law of sanctuary by reporting Robin Hood to the sheriff. However, the Medieval law of sanctuary actually grants protection for all outlaws and felons who are inside of a church including the Saint Mary's Church in Nottingham: "...whence they must not be drawn or thrust forth, lest laymen who draw them forth incur sentence of excommunication or clergy who thrust them forth incur the taint of irregularity by their rash act. For it has been enacted that the English church shall have its rights and franchises unimpaired and also that the peace of the church and the land shall be preserved inviolate and that equal justice shall be dispensed to all men alike" (Henry Rothwell, ed., *English Historical Documents 1189-1327* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1975] III, 567)"⁴⁴. To add, Robin Hood was attending Mass when the monk reported him to the sheriff. This raises more concerns about the abuse of power, as the monk neglects

⁴⁴ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Monk*. 15.

Robin Hood's legal protections in church while reporting him. However, Little John emerges as a leader who avenges Robin Hood by executing the monk. He directly reverses the monk's social disorder resulting from his violation of the Medieval law of sanctuary.

Likewise, Arthur breaks his first sword in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, a 15th-century romance that explores the motif of inconsistent loyalty. As shown in chapter twenty-three of book one, King Arthur's combative battle with the knight Sir Pellinore explores the motifs of power, brutality, and fragility through. As this sword fight progresses, King Arthur's power tension with the knight is magnified through the contrast between their weaponry:

"And there began a strong battle with many great strokes, and so hewed with their swords that the cantels flew in the fields, and much blood they bled both, that all the place there as they fought was overbled with blood, and thus they fought long and rested them, and then they went to the battle again, and so hurtled together like two rams that either fell to the earth. So at the last they smote together that both their swords met even together. But the sword of the knight smote King Arthur's sword in two pieces, wherefore he was heavy. Then said the knight unto Arthur, Thou art in my daunger whether me list to save thee or slay thee, and but thou yield thee as overcome and recreant, thou shalt die."⁴⁵

The figurative language in this passage stands out to me, especially the simile comparing the knight and King Arthur to rams. Indeed, both swords carry the weight of their vigor and determination to vanquish their opponent. Neither of them wants to lose this battle, as a defeat would visually display a loss of power and subordination. Arguably, King Arthur's battle with the knight extends the figurative allegory for England's Medieval system. King Arthur's broken sword emphasizes the imbalance of power, resulting in unstable leadership.

Both texts, *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, draw more attention to the systemic instability in England during the 15th-century through two allegorical swords that

⁴⁵ Sir Thomas Malory. *Le Morte D'Arthur*. 64.

highlight the sharp power imbalance. King Arthur and Robin Hood's ill-considered attacks result in broken swords, showing their recklessness and overconfident leadership. But Robin Hood demonstrates that he's not just a bad archer or leader, but also a bad outlaw who risks the safety of his merry men and himself in ill-considered contests, archery wagers, and battles between the Sheriff and Little John that prove his inferior prowess.

However, Robin Hood also inspires a rock-solid bond of loyalty. Even if Robin is in the greenwood, Little John will remain faithful to him. This complex friendship is shown in *Robin Hood and the Monk*, especially after Robin Hood is captured in Nottingham. The strength of this friendship is shown when Little John executes the monk and successfully uses the jailer's key to rescue Robin Hood from prison. This is a significant moment, as Little John avenges Robin Hood while counteracting the monk's violation of Medieval law. Under the law of sanctuary, Robin Hood technically had the right of protection while he prayed in church; however, the abbot violated these rights by reporting him to the sheriff.

If Robin Hood is a questionable leader, then it raises the question of why his merry men remain loyal to him. Something else is going on besides his subpar leadership, which leads to the notion that friendship must be one of the elements that unites the twelve merry men. In fact, Robin's outlaw antihero mirror to society has the power to inspire gestures of loyalty that keep the game interesting while subverting the structure of the master-servant hierarchy. During the repeated chorus of *Robin Hood and the Monk*, Little John and Robin Hood use the 'gode' to reunite and reaffirm their hierarchical bond:

Then bespake gode Litull John,
To Robyn Hode can he say,
"I have done the a gode turne for an ill,

Quit me whan thou may.

"I have done the a gode turne," seid Litull John,
"For sothe as I the say;
I have brought the under the grene-wode lyne;
Fare wel, and have gode day."⁴⁶

This scene is highly significant because Robin Hood recognizes Little John's potential as an amazing leader who possesses courage and resourcefulness. Although Robin Hood tells Little John that he could be the new leader of twelve merry men, Little John refuses. Arguably, Little John demonstrates a superior degree of outlaw relations. Why doesn't he accept Robin Hood's offer? Little John's willingness to remain the second-in-command speaks volumes by revealing his loyalty to Robin Hood. The 'gode' is reassuring because it not only reinforces Little John and Robin Hood's hierarchical relationship, it rebuilds their friendship.

⁴⁶ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Monk*. 12.

SECTION 2: YEOMANRY: A MARKET OF AMBIGUOUS EXCHANGES

I argue that, although Robin Hood proves he is not an outlaw hero but rather an outlaw antihero, his actions actualize an essential component of his dual rank and identity: his yeomanry. Robin Hood's ambiguous status affiliates him neither to the wayside nor the battlefield but to the marketplace, which functions as a symbolic vehicle of exchange and power. Robin Hood's calculated exchanges of clothing challenge the Medieval hierarchy's rigidity by reinforcing the idea that one's wit can transcend the boundaries of social ranks, including the agency of nobility, as a superior form of power.

Inferentially, I am claiming that Robin Hood's yeomanry redefines the "good" as a transitive verb of performed courtesy that is designed to secure his wealth while magnifying the Medieval hierarchy's unstable economy of violence and threat. The transitive qualities of this good are established through Robin Hood's trading agreements and extortions that target corrupt authoritative figures such as the sheriff and abbot. Robin Hood's yeomanry has been investigated through extensive scholarly research, along with the social transmission of his complex rank. Almond elaborates further: "As a yeoman forester, he straddles the social boundary between gentleman and commoner"⁴⁷. Although I agree with Almond's statement that Robin Hood straddles social boundaries, I also claim that Robin Hood creates his social currency by using courtesy to navigate his social boundary between the hierarchical ranks of the knight and the king; through these complicated exchanges, Robin subverts traditional norms of power by creating his principal space of agency and social mobility. This space defies the traditional mold of Robin's rank, and adds complexity that matches his persona.

⁴⁷ Richard Almond, A.J. Pollard. "The Yeomanry of Robin Hood and Social Terminology in Fifteenth-Century England." 75.

Arguably, Robin Hood's yeomanry can be figuratively equated to a pawn piece that reaches the opponent's side of a chessboard; just as a pawn can become a bishop or knight upon crossing this visible threshold with cunning strategy, Robin Hood promotes himself by exchanging these labels of power through clothing while forming his own symbolic norm of agency. Ultimately, Robin Hood's use of clothing functions as a tool that subverts Medieval class boundaries and the traditional notion that one's power is a product of their rank. In fact, the sheriff of Nottingham has a superior rank to Robin Hood, yet he still feels threatened. As a yeoman, Robin Hood redistributes goods and wealth by seizing possessions belonging to members of the aristocracy (e.g., the king, the abbot). By doing so, Robin Hood theoretically reconfigures nuances of the Medieval social hierarchy while redefining the status quo and its association with medieval class ranks and power. The impact of this reconfiguration is shown in *Robin Hood and the Potter*, and *Robin Hood and the Guy of Gisborne*, highlighting Robin Hood's oppositional relationship between the 'gode' of clothing and rank.

In particular, Robin Hood's 'gode' of strategic intelligence is shown in *Guy of Gisborne* through his cunning exchange of clothing. Robin Hood swaps his Lincoln green livery for Guy's horse-hide robe, which allows him to enact payback against Guy's employer, the sheriff, and claim new, disruptive currencies of power. However, Robin Hood's 'gode' also highlights the ongoing conflict between law and performed courtesy through his method of calculating stealth vengeance against the sheriff. In *Guy of Gisborne*, Robin Hood's 'gode' uses Guy's clothing and weapons in an insurrectional power grab, while maintaining his loyalty to Little John and his men. This loyalty forms a catalyst shaping the weighted impact of Robin's gamesmanship and vengeance that not only breaks the tie but also forms a metaphorical anchor of fellowship coordinated level of mobility.

More broadly, *Guy of Gisborne* uses clothing exchange through Guy's, Little John's, and Robin Hood's strategic disguises as a transferable 'gode' – claiming forms of social mobility to ensure survival. In line 45, the narrator reveals that Little John has travelled to Bernesdale. After Robin Hood and Little John travel separately, he is found by Guy of Gisborne straightaway in the greenwood forest. Hypothetically, Guy's anonymity reflects the figurative clothing of his name as an indicator of his powerlessness and social permeability (e.g., like a "John Doe" but with minimal agency). Interestingly, Guy's degree of anonymity creates more ambiguity in this text while highlighting a direct association between one's name and the extent of their power. The Guy of Gisborne goes by Sir Guye, but his first name is never mentioned. This anonymity establishes Guy as a foil character to Robin Hood whose clothing and first name magnify the multilayered societal inequality in England.

Although Guy of Gisborne is an assassin, I claim that his identity is compressed to magnify the consequences of following the sheriff of Nottingham's orders and attempting to murder the criminal mastermind that is Robin Hood. The sheriff is a corrupt, authoritative figure and antagonist whose extreme measures of taxation and coercion reflect his greed. In fact, the sheriff hires Guy because he is threatened by Robin Hood's prowess and intellect. By abiding by the sheriff's command, Guy loses his agency while becoming a disposable pawn in this metaphorical chess match of power against Robin Hood. But before I explore the obscurity of Guy's identity, I want to draw more attention to Guy's figurative layers of disguise shown through the anonymity of his moniker and camouflage. Clothes function as a transferable currency and symbol of one's agency: "Guy pretends to be another forester, who also seeks Robin Hood; Little John uses the same maneuver in *Robin Hood and the Monk*,

lines 162-82.”⁴⁸ However, Robin Hood emerges as the criminal mastermind who stands by Little John and works with him to subjugate the sheriff. The clothes reveal power tensions resulting from external class disparities that Robin Hood.

Although clothing is used as a transferable marker for identity in *Guy of Gisborne*, it also represents the extent of one’s metaphorical skin of recognition in England’s Medieval hierarchy. Throughout *Guy of Gisborne*, Guy’s identity is also shrouded in the hypothetical connotations of his first name, as well as the visible disfiguration by Robin Hood. The sheriff hires a hitman named “Guy”, and these power tensions between Robin Hood escalate through an archery match amplifying the good’s material sense. It should be noted that “Guy” mirrors the sheriff’s deception and malevolence through his aggressive demeanor and motive of receiving the financial good of money in exchange for merely attempting to execute Robin Hood. As a result, he is confronted by the Guy of Gisborne before they aggressively spar with their longbows. These power tensions escalate further after Robin Hood defeats Guy:

Saies, "Lye there, lye there, good Sir Guye,
 And with me be not wrothe;
 If thou have had the worse stroakes at my hand,
 Thou shalt have the better cloathe."
 Robin did his gowne of greene,
 On Sir Guye it throwe;
 And hee put on that capull-hyde,
 That cladd him topp to toe.⁴⁹

This passage shows a double-exchange of clothes as a material ‘gode’ of wealth as well as a label of one’s superiority. Robin Hood changes from his green livery to Guy’s robe after

⁴⁸ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Guy of Gisborne*. 4. (Gloss.)

⁴⁹ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Robin Hood and the Guy of Gisborne*. 6-7.

winning the archery match. Essentially, Robin Hood's identity is transformed through this symbolic exchange of clothing because it equips him with a stealth weapon of mobility.

Whereas Guy's robe is associated with elitism and a superior social status, Robin Hood's green livery indicates his inferior and exiled dual rank. This moment in *Guy of Gisborne* is significant because it frames the motif of clothes as a transferable currency of weaponry.

Robin Hood exercises his agency by donning Guy's robe after disfiguring his face with an Irish knife until he becomes visibly unrecognizable. Notably, I claim that Robin compresses Guy's identity by using the Irish knife to erase all traces of his human recognition. Robin's weaponry directly relates to the good's material sense, as shown by his arsenal of tools that he equips to not only escape threat but also to infiltrate the sheriff's camp. It should also be noted that Robin Hood's green livery indicates his fellowship with his twelve merry men.

But Guy's horse-hide outfit, which is mentioned in line 177, adds layers of figurative imagery to this economy of violence. It should be noted that Guy wears a robe made of horse hide, which arguably creates a double meaning relating to this economy of violence. This economy is visually shown here, as Guy unabashedly wears a robe made of horse hide; this is a visual display of animal cruelty and theft. However, Robin Hood makes a powerful statement by using the sheriff's threat of dehumanization to question the absurdity of his greed.

Robin Hood deepens this hierarchical tension through his stratified battle with the sheriff of Nottingham that reveal socioeconomic tensions in 15th-century England. Through this direct exchange of clothing, Robin Hood is able to impersonate Guy while deceiving the sheriff and magnifying his economic threats of dehumanization through the horse-hide robe. In essence, Robin Hood uses clothing as a pawn to redefine the definition of yeomanry as a

social label of power. He redefines yeomanry through clothing as an aesthetic mask that helps him bend class rank boundaries and question corrupt authoritative figures such as the sheriff of Nottingham. Guy's role in *Gisborne* highlights the cyclical gravity associated with this economy of threat as one that magnifies the layers of chaos associated with amorality. Just as Guy invades the greenwood to deprive Robin and the men of their goods, Robin uses Guy's clothes to stage a rapacious raid on the Sheriff as well as his men and acquire his cloak of stealth mobility. By doing so, Robin overrides the sheriff's rigid leverage of authority.

Other moments in the *Gest* and *Monk* reveal how unbalanced economies of exchange can be leveraged in favor of the outlaws, not only for Robin Hood but also Little John. As Robin Hood's faithful follower, Little John is a foil character with more social mobility and comparable physical prowess. For example, in the third fyfte of *Gest*, Little John proves his outstanding archery skills by demonstrating sharp precision: "Thre tymes Litell Johnn shet aboute, And alwey he slet the wande;"⁵⁰. In fact, this proves Little John's significance as a major character who, like Robin Hood, uses his intellect to challenge the sheriff. While he is disguised as Greenleaf, Little John questions the sheriff's economy:

'Sey me, Reyno[I]de Grenëlefe,
Wolde thou dwell with me?
And euery yere I well the gyue
Twenty marke to thy fee.'

'I haue a maister,' sayde Litell Johnn,
'A curteys knight is he;
May ye leuë gete of hym,
The better may it be.'

The sherif gate Litell John

⁵⁰ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 16.

Twelue moneths of the knight;
 Therfore he gaue him right anone
 A gode hors and a wight.

Nowe is Litell John the sherifës man,
 God lende vs well to spede!
 But alwey thought Lytell John
 To quyte hym wele his mede.

'Nowe so God me helpë,' sayde Litell John,
 And by my true leutye,
 I shall be the worst seruaunt to hym
 That euer yet had he.⁵¹

I claim that Little John makes his mark by using his performed courtesy to take advantage of the sheriff in a way that mirrors the strategy of his master Robin Hood. Indeed, Little John's conversation as Grenëlefe with the sheriff of Nottingham significantly shifts the economy of exchange by showcasing his inversion of the master-servant hierarchy. In lines 601-602, Little John uses Robin Hood's name to create his power leverage and gain access to the sheriff's horse. The horse is described as a 'gode', which figuratively highlights the direct association between ownership and one's rank. However, Little John inverts this association by gaining access to this horse and receiving the payment of 'twenty marke' for services that he never did. Like Robin Hood, Little John questions the sheriff's amorality.

In *Robin Hood and the Potter*, Robin Hood compensates the potter by providing a payment that is more than the pots' value. But Robin Hood's social ambivalence unfolds in this text through the element of his disguise as a potter. This monetary compensation adds

⁵¹ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 17.

another layer of ambivalence, as Robin Hood intentionally redistributes financial wealth to the potter while indicating in line 318 that he feels perpetually indebted to him.

"They wer worthe to nobellys," seyde he,
 "So mot Y treyffe or the;
 So cowde Y had for tham,
 And Y had be there."
 "Thow schalt hafe ten ponde," seyde Roben,
 "Of money feyre and fre;
 And yever whan thow comest to grene wod,
 Wellcom, potter, to me."⁵²

Robin Hood's unique transaction exemplifies the impact of wealth distribution, as he deposits ten pounds to the potter. Importantly, the noble is a monetary currency that highlights class tensions while showing the 'gode' of Robin Hood as a strategic lender who overcompensates the potter. In fact, two nobles can be converted to "thirteen shillings and four pence (i.e., two thirds of a pound), quite a considerable sum. The ten pounds Robin provides would have been something like a year's wages."⁵³. By compensating the potter with a payment of ten pounds, Robin Hood apparently redistributes more than wealth; in this text, Robin Hood finds a way to outsmart the sheriff of Nottingham through his disguise that challenges the rigidity of socioeconomic inequality in the Medieval hierarchy. Two nobles are the equivalent of two-thirds of a pound; therefore, Robin Hood's payment to the potter is really ten times the actual value of his pots. Through this transaction, Robin Hood subverts the Medieval status quo and uses money as a vehicle of wealth redistribution. This passage exemplifies Robin Hood's economic 'gode' of tradesmanship as the catalyst of his cunning strategy helping him rob from the elite to give to members of lower ranks such as the potter.

⁵²Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 12.

⁵³ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 18.

SECTION 3: DISNEY'S *ROBIN HOOD* AND SOCIAL SATIRE

I am analyzing Disney's 1973 *Robin Hood* adaptation because this film's impact is undeniably groundbreaking. Because Disney is a powerful media conglomerate, it has the direct power to influence the zeitgeist's perception of what constitutes a good hero. As a result, Disney normalized this sanitized image of Robin Hood's character while producing a family-friendly movie resonating with the generational zeitgeist; through this widespread broadcast, Disney's adaptation raises new questions about the role of media, the contrast between text and media, and the constructed binary of good and evil. Furthermore, Disney depicts Robin Hood as a chivalrous and romantic fox who uses light-hearted trickery to outsmart Prince John. Through this dichotomy, Disney instills the notion that one is either entirely heroic or antagonistic. However, Disney overlooks Robin Hood's deceitful antics designed to acquire material wealth, as shown in my primary texts. Although I am claiming that Robin Hood is an outlaw antihero, I also argue that Robin Hood's disguises and planned robberies create an allegory that visually questions corrupt, authoritative figures like the sheriff of Nottingham and Prince John while exposing the fragmented Medieval society.

Disney's *Robin Hood* presents a diluted version of Robin Hood's character, as he is transformed into a red fox with a filtered personality and aspiration to win Maid Marian's love. As a result, viewers see a one-note version of Robin Hood that focuses on his outlawry while presenting virtues of altruism, chivalry, and morality. Arguably, Disney's *Robin Hood* only preserves two aspects of Robin Hood's yeomanry: his disassociation with nobility and his theatrical shows of courtesy. But Robin Hood's precise archery skills are depicted in this movie, presenting a romantic image of his heroism. Although some aspects of Robin Hood's yeomanry are preserved, I argue that Disney's adaptation omits all important aspects of this

ambiguous rank that are essential for understanding the contradictions of his character. For example, Robin Hood and Little John never quarrel in Disney's film adaptation; however, as shown in *Robin Hood and the Monk*, Robin Hood's decision of physically striking Little John shaped the plot's complexity. Furthermore, Disney's version does not show how Robin Hood uses clothing as a functional disguise of survival; in *Guy of Gisborne*, Robin shields himself from the sheriff by wearing Guy's horse-hide robe. However, Disney depicts Robin Hood as a brave outlaw while secularizing the Virgin Mary through the image of Maid Marian, Robin Hood's love interest. As a result, Robin Hood's image is commercialized and likened to that of a chivalrous prince whose main goal is to impress and marry Maid Marian.

Robin Hood stars as the protagonist, a red fox, who lives in Sherwood Forest with Little John, a bear and six-foot-tall outlaw. As the leading characters, Robin Hood and Little John work together to outsmart the pompous lion named Prince John who aims to "rob the poor to feed the rich." Because of his insatiable desire to gain financial wealth, Prince John's greed becomes an insurmountable problem as the film's antagonist and former illegitimate King of England. Because they outsmart the pompous lion with cunning strategies, Robin Hood and Little John restore order while redistributing wealth again by stockpiling tax payments that Nottingham's rulers collected before reimbursing this city's taxpayers.

Although Robin Hood is depicted as an outlaw and a fox who gives to the poor after stealing from the rich, this depiction of an outlaw is largely associated with courtesy and benevolence. Questionably, Prince John is the only corrupt ruler in Nottingham. This creates a localized form of corruption, as Prince John symbolically represents corrupt authority and illegitimate methods of ruling. To add, King Richard's return directly leads to England's restored system. Any trace of social tension is subdued in Disney's *Robin Hood*. Instead,

Disney's *Robin Hood* presents a light-hearted cautionary tale with a different tone and a wife for Robin Hood. Indeed, Disney's interpretation does not compare to Robin Hood's image in the medieval Robin Hood ballads (namely, in my primary texts) that highlight his ambiguity.

So how can we make sense of the medieval Robin Hood, an outlaw antihero, whose yeomanry allows him to question social norms? I argue that Robin Hood's blatancy and ambivalence function as a form of social satire that figuratively reflects the tension between the Medieval class structure and one's power as a measure of wealth. This satire is displayed through the cultural transmission in the medieval Robin Hood ballads and Disney's *Robin Hood*, which filters the fake economy and infantilizes the complex concepts of yeomanry and outlawry. As shown in my primary texts, Robin Hood plays two roles. First, Robin Hood's outlawry represents an alternative to predatory, authoritative figures who keep acquiring more wealth themselves. Second, Robin Hood's yeomanry is used in a calculated manner as he plays the role of a lender who traps characters such as the knight into loan agreements with a mandatory return payment that secures his wealth as a landowner. Although Robin Hood challenges the sheriff and the king, his behavior also mirrors the antagonism associated with villainy. Ultimately, this behavioral imitation creates a domino effect by emphasizing the severity of one's greed and neglect for the Medieval law.

Throughout *Gest*, the economy of violence and threat unfurls during exchanges of clothing that function as an aesthetic marker of associative authority. Just as yeomanry is interpreted by some scholars as a shared group status, the Lincoln green livery functions as a subcultural affiliation of mutual values that question traditional norms of clothing and rank. The king has a superior rank to Robin Hood, yet he shows a degree of allegiance by buying and wearing Lincoln green livery that matches the attire of Robin's merry men. By wearing

the Lincoln green livery, Robin Hood and the king nonverbally communicate a message of exclusivity and connection through a mutual form of allegiance that transcends rank.

Arguably, *Gest* emphasizes Robin Hood's ability to navigate his dual rank while also manipulating the king through a transactional exchange of clothing subverts the traditional notion of Medieval fellowship. One notable exchange between Robin Hood and the king occurs in the eighth fyfte of *Gest*, after the king orders "thyrty yerdes and thre"⁵⁴ of green livery cloth from Robin Hood. Normally, clothing signifies wealth and exclusivity of superior ranks such as abbots and archbishops. But Robin Hood subverts this notion of Medieval clothing as payment through a Latin formula: *cum robis et foedis*⁵⁵. This phrase is translated in line 426, as the justice responds: "'I am holde with the abbot," sayd the justyce," Both with cloth and fee.'"⁵⁶. This highlights a connection between the motif of clothing and the value of Robin Hood's ambiguous rank. This value is displayed through Robin's ability to bypass hierarchical borders of power. I argue that Robin Hood plays the role of a monk in *A Gest of Robyn Hode* by selling thirty yards of green livery to the king. This highlights the reversal of norms regarding one's rank and the commodification of clothing in the Medieval hierarchy. This is shown when the king takes on Robin Hood's clothing of Lincoln green livery, bending the association between outlawry and rank:

The kynge kest of his cole then,
A grene garment he dyde on,
And every knyght had so, iwys,
Another hode full sone.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 45.

⁵⁵ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 53.

⁵⁶ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 12.

⁵⁷ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 7.

Disney's *Robin Hood* extends this social satire through several characters, including the king and the sheriff, who add substantive and complex layers of introspection to the plot. This social satire is also shown in Disney's *Robin Hood* through the placement and imagery of animal symbolism. Robin Hood is a fox, and Little John is a bear. Prince John is a lion who can't stop sucking his thumb during his vulnerable moments when he cannot acquire the wealth and power he seeks. Interestingly, Disney's film adaptation prominently features the Sheriff of Nottingham as Robin Hood's significant adversary. One example of this is visually shown during the archery battle between Robin Hood and the sheriff, in which the sheriff is depicted as a wolf and a mischievous antagonist whose predatory schemes instantly make him unlikable. One example of the sheriff's schemes is shown as he hits a character's leg cast with his left hand shortly before three gold coins fall into his right hand. If the sheriff of Nottingham already has a superior rank, why would he need to steal money from peasants?

In Disney's *Robin Hood*, Prince John's introduction is memorable because he starts laughing while playing with gold coins that nearly overflow the bag holding these coins. While Prince John laughs in this wagon, he talks about his decision to collect outrageously large tax payments by robbing the poor to feed the rich. Importantly, this detail is important because it frames the motifs of payments and power that are echoed throughout the Robin Hood ballads (including the *Gest* and *Potter*). By depicting Prince John as a lion who wears a gold crown and seeks to gain gold coins, Disney's *Robin Hood* directly contrasts Prince John's and Robin Hood's motives to commit the crime of robbery. Whereas Prince John wants to rob the poor, Robin Hood selectively steals from members of the elite. I see a syntactic parallelism that, like a double-A battery, highlights the contradictory depictions of both characters. Ultimately, Prince John is portrayed as an antagonist and childish lion with no redeeming

qualities or likability. However, Robin Hood is depicted as a clever red fox and hero who vanquishes Prince John (e.g., albeit with Little John's help). Prince John and Robin Hood are depicted as polar opposites in Disney's *Robin Hood*; ultimately, their characters' intentional decisions to rob suggest one should rethink the associative relationship between one's heroism and selfishness and how it can characteristically reflect one's societal outlook.

My primary texts display the full extent of Robin Hood's mimicry, with ambiguous layers of social satire that are mirrored in Disney's film adaptation. Although one could argue that Robin Hood displays selfishness through predatory lending agreements, Robin Hood's way of challenging Medieval society is shown in *A Gest of Robyn Hode* and *Robin Hood and the Potter* as he robs from the rich to give to the poor. In other words, Robin Hood steals just as the monk and sheriff do to directly reflect the unethical greed.

Notably, Robin Hood and Little John are able to deceive Prince John by dressing up as female bandits. This scene is significant because it highlights Robin's figurative mirror to Medieval society, as Robin Hood outwits Prince John by telling him a fortune that results in a reverse subjugation. Although Sir Hiss tries to warn Prince John, he is dismissed instantly. The irony unfolds after Prince John listens to Robin Hood's fabricated message:

Robin Hood: I, uh... I see, um... your illustrious name.

Prince John: I know my name! Get on with it!

Robin Hood: Your name will go down, down... down in history, of course.

Prince John: Yes! I knew it! I knew it! Do you hear that, Hiss? Oh, you can't... He's in the basket. Do-Don't forget it.

Little John: Hmm. What have we here? Solid gold hubcaps. Oo-de-lally. The jackpot.

Prince John: Robbed! I've been robbed! Hiss! You're never around when I need you. Ahem, I've been robbed.

Sir Hiss: Of course, you've been robbed!

Robin Hood: Oo-de-lally! Oo-de-lally!

Little John: Fortunes forecast. Lucky charms.

Prince John: After them, you fools!

(Robin Hood and Little John in disguise as Fortune Tellers, Disney's *Robin Hood*⁵⁸)

The repetition of “Oo-de-lally!” is a humorous device, creating a light-hearted tone in Little John and Robin Hood’s dialogue. Also, I see the situational irony of this fortune-telling experience unfold in two ways. First, Robin Hood tells Prince John that his name will go down in history. But the irony lies in the way Robin Hood communicates this message, as he repeats the word “down” three times. It’s as if Robin was implying the real fortune is that he was going to rob Prince John. Eventually, Prince John realizes his jewelry has been stolen; then, he repeats the word “robbed” three times! Lastly, Prince John claims that Sir Hiss was not around after completely disregarding Sir Hiss’s warning shortly before he was robbed. This scene makes Prince John look like the real halfwit. Thus, Robin Hood and Little John’s disguise functions as an allegory that exposes Prince John’s subordinate leadership.

This allegory extends to the eighth fyfte of *Gest*, highlighting the figurative power of clothing that transfers one’s sense of authority in the Medieval economy of violence while permeating the extent of power that is linked to their social status. Robin Hood’s fluidity is shown through his ability to bend these links through clothing and disguises. Specifically, the Lincoln green livery reinforces the notion that Robin Hood has redefined the yeomanry of England by subverting social norms as a tradesman who sells Lincoln green livery to the king. Green becomes a symbolic color of wealth, yeomanry, and a nonlinear form of authority that embodies the economic nuances of the Medieval hierarchy:

All the people of Notyngham

⁵⁸ “Robin Hood (1973)/Transcript | Moviepedia | Fandom.” Moviepedia.

They stode and behelde;
 They sawe nothyng but mantels of grene
 That covered all the felde.
 Than every man to other gan say,
 "I drede our kynge be slone:
 Come Robyn Hode to the towne, iwys
 On lyve he lefte never one."
 Full hastly they began to fle,
 Both yemen and knaves,
 And olde wyves that myght evyll goo,
 They hypped on theyr staves.
 The kynge loughe full fast,
 And commaunded theym agayne;
 When they se our comly kynge,
 I wys they were full fayne.⁵⁹

Indeed, this threatening moment is significant because it draws more attention to the inverted master-servant hierarchy. Although the king has a superior rank to Robin Hood, he also buys Lincoln green livery from him and wears this expensive livery; by doing so, the king and his men can disguise themselves as outlaws before travelling to Nottingham. After observing the arrays of green, the residents of Nottingham flee because they are convinced that Robin Hood has slain the king. Because of this perceived threat, the residents of Nottingham feel that their safety is compromised. This magnitude of fear directly inverts the master-servant hierarchy, proving that Robin Hood's intellect and cunning strategy is a superior power to the concept of rank as a product of acquired authority: "Compare the action of Robin Hood's Progress to Nottingham (p. 507), which also shows townspeople in fear of the outlaw. Adam Bell has a similar scene, where the townspeople capture the hero William of Cloudesley,

⁵⁹ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 46.

lines 141-48. This, like the hue and cry in line 1181, seems a sharp form of opposition between forest and urban values, and suggests a stronger sociopolitical conflict than the usual notion of Robin Hood as a universal hero”⁶⁰. This directly connects to the ‘gode’ of Robin Hood because it establishes the complex symbolism of Lincoln green livery. This good of livery has material and ethical senses. To specify, the mantle symbolically represents authority and, in the Bible, it represents a superior sense of responsibility and authority that only few are chosen for. To go more into specific detail, Robin Hood highlights the Medieval hierarchy’s socioeconomic instability through this livery because its color indicates not only social status and economy but an emotional recognition of permeability - especially in terms of the interchangeable association between one’s rank and authority. This sociopolitical conflict unfolds through clothing because it highlights the unstable economy of threat while proving that the associative power of rank can be directly transferred through one’s garments.

To specify, Robin Hood and the sheriff vie for the top prize in the archery tournament after they are named as the top two contenders. The sheriff does not wear a disguise in this scene, but Robin Hood is cleverly disguised as a spindle-legged stark. Ironically, while Robin is in disguise, the sheriff tells him that Robin Hood is intimidated by him: “He's scared of me, that's what he is. You notice he didn't show up here today. I could spot him through them phony disguises”⁶¹. This scene becomes remarkably interesting after the sheriff vocally delivers this response to Robin Hood, after Sir Hiss is trapped in a barrel. The sheriff’s facial expressions are fitting because they complement the predatory nature of his wolf image. For example, when the sheriff frowns or raises a brow, it directly indicates that he plans a

⁶⁰ Stephen Knight, Thomas H. Ohlgren. *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (1997). 60.

⁶¹ Disney’s *Robin Hood*. 1973.

mischievous scheme to enact his vengeance. Although the sheriff of Nottingham cheats by executing a roguish scheme to attempt to secure his win during the archery tournament, Robin Hood undeniably emerges as the winner of this tournament. After he and Robin Hood were named as the final contestants, the sheriff orders the vulture to wear the target and move accordingly to ensure his arrow hits the bull's eye mark. The sheriff prematurely declares his victory, falsely believing that his mischievous tricks would thwart Robin Hood's upset in the making. However, Robin Hood maneuvers the flight of his arrow straightaway after the sheriff sneakily hits the arrow. Robin Hood's arrow splits the sheriff's arrow in half before being declared the winner of this tournament and receiving a kiss from Maid Marian.

Unlike Disney's *Robin Hood* adaptation, the Medieval ballads preserve Robin Hood's complex image as a legendary yeoman and outlaw. For example, *A Gest of Robyn Hode* presents the complexity of Robin Hood's yeomanry through his social interactions with the knight, sheriff, and the king. By contrast, Disney's *Robin Hood* presents a family-friendly version in which Robin Hood restores social justice to a monarchical system with unjust taxation rates; Prince John is depicted as a villain with no redeeming qualities and an unjust taxation system that Robin Hood ultimately dismantles. Disney's film adaptation does not visually show the complexity of his dual rank or intersection with his yeomanry, as Robin's rivalry with the sheriff is only shown during the wager of an archery competition. However, Disney's remake also recycles footage from *Snow White* and *The Jungle Book* while filtering Robin Hood's yeomanry that added layers of resonance and depth to the medieval ballads⁶². Thus, Disney's *Robin Hood* projects the image of a prince-like hero whose romance and chivalry widely resonate with the twentieth-century zeitgeist. Upon further investigation, I

⁶²Kyle Ball. 2020. "Disney's Recycled Animation — The Disney Classics." The Disney Classics.

claim that Robin Hood's 'gode' reveals a social ambivalence and reckless use of weaponry that further magnifies a sharp distinction between ethical and material goods.

Although Disney's film adaptation acknowledges some aspects of Robin Hood's yeomanry, I argue that Disney's *Robin Hood* simplifies his rank and form of medieval outlawry by presenting an ultra-edited persona while removing his association with the Virgin Mary and Mass, and his team of twelve merry men; for example, in *Gest*, the merry men work with Robin rob from members of the elite. Disney's *Robin Hood* filters the outlaw's imagery through Robin Hood's material sense of the 'gode,' which establishes the value of wealth through the value of money and jewelry. The protagonist is Robin, a fox, who lives in Sherwood Forest with Little John, an outlaw bear who is six feet tall. The leading characters, Robin Hood and Little John, work together to outsmart Prince John, a pompous lion who unfairly taxes the residents of Nottingham.

Because Prince John always strives to gain more power and wealth, his greed becomes an insurmountable problem as the film's antagonist. The medieval incarnations of Robin Hood's yeomanry display the blueprint of his performed courtesy, loan agreements, and direct exchanges as a criminal mastermind. However, Disney's remake merely shows how the motifs of compassion, courtesy, and archery construct the image of Robin Hood's romantic persona. The contrasting perspectives of the late Medieval and twentieth-century zeitgeists magnify the significance of the 'gode' of Robin Hood. Importantly, as an outlaw, Robin Hood circumvents the law to manipulate the monk and sheriff while demonstrating the importance of legal reform in England's Medieval hierarchy.

CONCLUSION AND FINAL THOUGHTS

My thesis thoroughly investigates Robin Hood's exchanges, social relations, and money economies while exploring the ongoing conflict of law and courtesy. First, I argue that Robin Hood is a greedy outlaw and antihero because he uses two forms of extortion: coercive loan agreements and performed courtesy. We see this unfold throughout *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, when Robin Hood creates a coercive 400-pound-loan agreement with the knight. This loan frames the motif of payment while reinforcing the importance of Robin Hood's courtesy as the catalyst of his wealth redistribution. We see this unfold in *Gest* when Robin Hood steals four hundred pounds from the monk of Saint Mary's Abbey, who unethically holds the knight Sir Richard's land and belongings. Robin Hood's performed courtesy unfolds in conditional truth games, as he robs the king but coerces the knight into agreeing to repay him four hundred pounds. However, Robin's courtesy also functions as a tool that establishes his fellowship and collective sense of belonging with his merry men.

Next, I investigate Robin Hood's yeomanry as a socially ambivalent rank of mobility. Robin Hood uses clothing as a self-promoting tool of agency; just as a pawn can be promoted after entering the last row of their opponent's board, Robin Hood infiltrates the sheriff's area to exercise his acquired power that rivals or equals his hierarchical rank. For example, in *Guy of Gisborne*, Robin Hood does away with his green Lincoln livery to wear Guy's horse hide robe. This clever art of disguise is also shown in *Robin Hood and the Potter*, when Robin Hood outsmarts the sheriff in two ways. First, Robin Hood wins the archery contest and defeats the sheriff's army of twelve; Second, Robin Hood steals the sheriff's money and uses it to compensate the potter after they travel to Sherwood Forest. Robin Hood redefines the

concept of yeomanry as a transformative rank of agency and retribution. Arguably, Robin bypasses the boundaries of all ranks including the king and monk while asserting his power as a criminal mastermind who exposes amoral perpetrators like the sheriff.

Lastly, I analyze Disney's *Robin Hood* to question the absolute notion of goodness as a reflection of morality. This film explores the good's economic dimensions through Robin Hood's wealth redistribution. For example, when Robin Hood and Little John dress up as fortune tellers, they are able to outsmart Prince John. Their disguises reveal situational irony, as Prince John ignores all the red flags because of his infatuation with vanity and financial greed. As a result, Robin Hood and Little John are able to rob Prince John. Notably, Prince John punishes Sir Hiss after he tried to warn him but was ignored straightaway.

My thesis contributes to the ongoing scholarly debate on Robin Hood's heroism by investigating the complexity of his exchanges, social relations, and reconfiguration of money economies. Robin Hood's yeomanry is transformative, as his disguises allow him to bypass the boundaries of all ranks including the knight, sheriff, and king. Robin Hood self-promotes himself through clothes to mirror the sheriff's greed while questioning the abbot's blatant greed. My thesis aims to correct the tendency to over-heroize Robin Hood; the Medieval ballads to Disney's adaptation establish Robin Hood's cultural significance as an intriguing character with complex origins and agreements that function as a transformative language of agency. Also, Robin's methods of challenging corrupt figures such as the abbot and sheriff expose the sharp social inequity of England's Medieval system. Although I claim that Robin Hood is an antihero, I acknowledge the importance of his teamwork with his Merry Men (especially Little John). Together, they outsmart the sheriff in my Medieval ballads and

Disney's adaptation. Importantly, Robin Hood is a distinguishable outlaw as he bends the boundaries of rank to question the sheriff and monk's amorality and abuse of Medieval theft.

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