

Access Issue Focus Statement: Queer Intersectionality in Robin Hood

The problem with the Robin Hood ballads is that they contain a large amount of violence in them. This violence, I argue, is a product of the compulsively masculine environment the characters create and maintain—which in turn leads to destructive behaviors committed by the male characters. In the Middle Ages, masculinity was inspired by Christian doctrine, classical literature, and scientific writings that proved men's superiority over women (Bullough 31; Stuber 5). These medieval ideas about masculinity created an environment where "compulsive masculinity"—which Sociologist Tim Beneke defines as "the compulsion or need to relate to, and at times create, stress or distress as a means of both proving manhood and conferring on boys and men superiority over women and other men" (36)—existed. If one fails to prove his maleness through distress, he is casted feminine and can never be considered a man (39).

Robert McRuer's groundbreaking article, "Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence" adds a discussion of disability into the conversation of masculinity and heterosexuality:

Compulsory heterosexuality is intertwined with compulsory able-bodiedness; both systems work to (re)produced the able body and heterosexuality. But precisely because they depend on a queer/disabled existence that can never quite be contained, able-bodied heterosexuality's hegemony is always in danger of being disrupted (97).

McRuer suggests that able-bodied identity and heterosexual identity are both "linked" due to their unobtainable nature (93). Compulsory able-bodiedness offers a way to examine how normative identities see queerness as disability: "people with disabilities are often understood as somehow queer...while queers are often understood as somehow disabled..." (94). McRuer introduces a way to access queerness through the lens of disability.

In "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," masculinity and heterosexuality both function in compulsive ways that in turn creates an environment where violence, oppression and repression are present themes in the ballad. In reading the ballad with compulsory able-bodiedness, these themes are able to be analysed with an intersectional attention. My brief analysis of "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" seeks to provide examples of how power is obtained through the maintenance of another's disabled identity.