

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Olga B. Rodriguez-Walmisley for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in English and Spanish presented on May 25, 2011. Title: How the Portrayal of Women Characters in the Zorro and Robin Hood Stories Has Changed Over Time.

Abstract approved: _____
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This thesis explores how female characters in the Zorro and Robin Hood stories have changed throughout time, from beginnings until present day. I began my analysis by first researching whether Zorro and Robin Hood existed, and found that Robin Hood was most likely a real man who lived during the 1300s, while Zorro was created by the author Johnston McCulley in 1919. Then I investigated five sources from the Robin Hood canon and five from the Zorro canon, looking for patterns and differences in the female characters. I found that both stories started out with a strong female character, both fluctuated between a strong a weak female character, and both, at some point, split the main female character into two characters, one strong and one weak. In the latest versions of the Robin Hood and Zorro stories, the female characters are blended together again to form a character stronger than ever before. I conclude that the characters were split because it was unacceptable at the time each story was set for women to display both strength and weakness. The blending of different aspects of personality, such as masculinity and femininity, beauty and strength, allow for the development of a multi-faceted person.

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May 25, 2011
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How The Portrayal of Women Characters in The Zorro and Robin Hood Stories Has Changed
Over Time

by

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A PROJECT

submitted to

Oregon State University

University Honors College

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in English and Spanish (Honors Scholar)

Presented May 25, 2011
Commencement June 2011

Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in English and Spanish project of Olga B. Rodriguez-Walmisley presented on May 25, 2011.

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Olga B. Rodriguez-Walmisley, Author

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my committee members, Caterina Tadlock and Professor Anita Helle, for all of your help, and most of all to my mentor Professor Kayla García, for all of your input and support throughout the thesis process.

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How The Portrayal of Women Characters in The Zorro and Robin Hood Stories Has Changed Over Time

Chapter One: The History of Zorro and Robin Hood

The similarities shared by the Zorro and Robin Hood archetypes seem obvious, but some people may not realize that the female characters in these two legends also mirror each other to a certain extent. The patterns of the female characters' involvement or reticence within their respective stories are also similar, especially as time goes by. However, before I began to investigate the complicated path trodden by female characters in the two stories, I decided to investigate the histories of the two heroes.

Many parallels can be found between the Robin Hood and Zorro characters; it is clear that the Zorro character is mostly derived from the Robin Hood character judging by his actions and personality. Both heroes are famous for being elusive, mysterious men who are respectful of women and help the oppressed. However, there is one major difference between the two legendary characters: one may have actually existed, while the other is entirely fictitious.

According to J. W. Walker, Robin Hood was a real man who lived during the early 1300s in Barnsdale, England. Walker says in the introduction to his book, The True History of Robin Hood, that the antiquary Joseph Hunter was the first to notice that the name Robert Hood appears in the court rolls of the manor of Wakefield in the reign of Edward II. Apparently, the early ballads and the details in these rolls correspond closely, and include mention of Robert's wife, Matilda. Robert Hood followed his lord, the Earl of Lancaster, in rebellion against King Edward II. For this Robert was outlawed after the Battle of Boroughbridge. In the ballads, after taking to the woods, Robert Hood changed his name to Robin, and his wife Matilda changed hers to Maid

Marian. Robin can also be found in the national archives: in 1323 he was in the royal service, which is also in accordance with the ballads. The rest of Walker's book chronicles Robert's exploits, connecting history with episodes from the ballads.

The first mention of Robin Hood in literature is in William Langland's epic poem *Piers Plowman*, when Sloth, the representation of the Seventh Deadly Sin, admits to being a bad priest: 'If I shulde deye bi this day/ me list noughte to loke;/ I can noughte perfilty my pater-noser/ as the prest it syngeth,/ But I can rymes of Robin hood/ and Randolf erle of Chestre,/ Ac neither of owre lorde ne of owre lady/ the leste that evere was made' (B-text, Passus V, lines 400-3). *Piers Plowman* dates back to 1362, just a few years after Robin Hood was supposed to have lived. The legend of Robin Hood has been handed down through the oral tradition of the ballads, which were passed down from father to son, and were not necessarily true, but were usually based on actual events. Walker comments that John Seldon, jurist and Keeper of Records in the Tower of London, once said that "'There is more historic truth in many of our old ballads than in many modern histories'" (Walker, xi).

William Langland, author of *Piers Plowman*, began writing the poem in 1362, and in 1377 wrote the B text, which contains the reference to Robin Hood (Walker, xii). The presence of Robin Hood in *Piers Plowman* is significant because in the 1300s the more popular ballads were regarded as the truth; therefore, people believed that Robin Hood actually existed, and in fact there is a good chance that he did. The "Randolf erle of Chestre" mentioned by Sloth in the same line as Robin Hood, was born before 1172 and was the son of Hugh de Kyvelioc and Bertrande, who was Simon de Montfort's daughter. He was the fourth Earl of Chester in 1181 and married Constance, the Dutchess of Bretagne. Randolph died in 1232.

After being mentioned in *Piers Plowman*, Robin Hood appears in many ballads and other works, including *Dives and Pauper*, which was written by Henry Parker, an inmate of the Carmelite Friars at Doncaster, in 1493, Brant's *The Ship of Folly* in 1508, *The Caledonian Forest* by John Hepwith in 1641, and the play *Robin Hode*, which was popular to perform in the May games from as early as the 1400s (Walker, xv).

Walker concludes that *A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode* and the Wakefield Manor Court Rolls, along with the Household Expenses Accounts of Edward the Second are proof enough of Robin Hood's existence. In the last three "fyttes" of the *Geste*, "Edward our comly kyng" is mentioned, who could only be Edward the Second, so, according to the *Geste*, Robin Hood lived during the reigns of the first two Edwards, and died during Edward III's reign. *A Lytell Geste* also makes it clear that Robin Hood was a yeoman, and was not of noble birth nor was he the Earl of Huntington (Walker, xx).

It is true that other researchers argue that the legend of Robin Hood was based on several outlaws, or that the connections that have been made were found out of a sort of desperation to prove Robin Hood's existence due to a romanticized vision. As John Bellamy says in the introduction to his *Robin Hood: An Historical Enquiry*, "The direct approach being deemed impractical, twentieth-century historians...have usually sought to establish the audience, the setting and the social significance of the Robin Hood ballads, rather than pursue a shadowy outline whose very name, so it has recently been suggested, may have been a pseudonym." Bellamy proceeds to provide examples of various people who historians have claimed to be Robin Hood with a slightly different name, and argues that, due to the profusion of possibilities, all of them unconnected and conflicting, the Robin Hood character is fictional.

Bellamy mentions Walker's thesis, saying that although it provides a few good points it is "of little historical value" with "little logical connection" (17). However, it is difficult to contend with the information Walker presents; historical records that concur with the most complete source on Robin Hood, the *Geste*, are hard to dispute. Bellamy also says that Walker's evidence was not widely accepted, for whatever reason, perhaps because so many different historians had already tried to prove Robin Hood's existence and had contradicted one another. I believe that Robin Hood probably existed, but that perhaps the ballads are based on several people, or on a succession of people, rather than just one man. The existence of so much evidence must have had some factual beginning.

While the existence of Robin Hood is questionable, the existence of Zorro is definitely fictional. The Mark of Zorro (originally titled The Curse of Capistrano.) was written in 1919 by Johnston McCulley. It started out as a five-part serial in the pulp magazine "All-Story Weekly," and became so popular that McCulley later wrote four novels and fifty-seven novellas and short stories about Zorro, publishing the last story in 1959.

According to S.R. Curtis, Zorro is usually placed in California in the 1820s. During the first years of this decade, it was still part of New Spain (Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1822). However, The Curse of Capistrano is set in the years when California was part of the Mexican Republic, between 1822 and 1848. McCulley confuses the years, saying that the Zorro story happened "more than 100 years ago," which would have made it earlier than 1822. Because of this, it is not clear whether the Zorro story was supposed to have happened when California was under Mexican or Spanish rule (Curtis, 55).

Curtis says that the California in McCulley's stories is a romanticized version set during California's "Romantic Period," between 1782 to 1810. California is described as being full of dashing dons and beautiful, exotic señoritas, and life is described very quaintly. The relationship between the indigenous people and the Spanish is glossed over to make it seem as though the two groups lived in perfect harmony, and the indigenous people did not mind being subordinate to the Christians, while the reality was very different.

Although Zorro was imagined by Johnston McCulley, he may have had some basis for his imaginings: the Zorro character is similar to the bandido Tiburcio Vásquez, a robber and outlaw who lived in the mid-eighteen hundreds (Curtis, 74). Tiburcio became legendary thanks to stories of his romantic escapades, on the run from the authorities after being unfairly outlawed. Another Californian bandido who Zorro could have been modeled after is Jack Powers, who was famous for having some of the skills Zorro had, such as using a whip and being very athletic. Powers also stole from the rich in order to give to the poor, and befriended the underdogs of society, which makes him seem like a more modern version of Robin Hood (Curtis, 78).

From this research, I conclude that Robin Hood most likely existed, either as one man or as many, and that Zorro may have been loosely based on a few stories, but probably did not actually exist as a man who wore a mask and a cape. As for the women who accompanied Robin Hood and Zorro, very little or nothing is known. Most likely, if Robin Hood existed then so did Maid Marian, perhaps under a different name, but Lolita, Zorro's love interest in McCulley's The Mark of Zorro, is just as much a figment of McCulley's imagination as Zorro is, if not more so.

Chapter Two: Maid Marian Through the Ages

This chapter will explore the Maid Marian character as presented in *Robin Hood and Maid Marian*; *Ivanhoe*; the film “The Adventures of Robin Hood;” the 2009 comic book *Outlaw: the Legend of Robin Hood*, and the 2010 film “Robin Hood.”

The earliest mention of Robin Hood was in the poem *Piers Plowman* in 1377, after which he was mentioned sporadically throughout literature, including by Chaucer, but the largest and most famous Robin Hood story is the *Gest of Robyn Hode*, a collection of ballads. The *Gest* was printed during the second decade of the sixteenth century, but was probably compiled as early as 1400, according to Dobson and Taylor. Unfortunately, Maid Marian is only mentioned in passing in most of the Robin Hood ballads, and as Dobson and Taylor note, the ballad *Robin Hood and Maid Marian* (not included in the *Gest of Robyn Hode*.) is “[t]he most extreme and implausible attempt ever made to combine the unusual theme of Robin Hood as a lover with the more traditional motif of his single-handed fight against an opponent unaware of his identity” (176). In 1795, the ballad *Robin Hood and Maid Marian* was rediscovered and published by Joseph Ritson. Apparently “this is the only serious attempt to provide Maid Marian with an independent role in the Robin Hood ballads” (176).

In the ballad *Robin Hood and Maid Marian*, Maid Marian is described as “A bonny fine maid of a noble degree” (1.1), and “[a] gallant dame” (1.5). She is described as being more beautiful than Helen of Troy; a “country lass, / Beloved of lord and knight” (3.4), but the only man she is interested in is Robin Hood. They are blissful together until Robin Hood is forced to live in the forest away from Maid Marian, which causes her to cry often. Therefore, she disguises herself as a page and wanders the forest searching for him, because he is “[t]he bravest of men in that age” (8.4). Apparently Robin Hood and Maid Marian are matched in braveness, then,

because it would have taken a tremendous amount of courage for a woman to do that. Maid Marian is well prepared, too: “With quiver and bow, sword, buckler, and all,/ Thus armed was Marian most bold” (9.1-2). Maid Marian was clearly not the kind of soft maiden who was willing to wait around for Robin to reappear from the woods to save the day.

Unfortunately, Maid Marian’s disguise is so good that it fools Robin, causing him to attack. They fight, and Robin admires his foe’s skill; then they swordfight for “an hour or more,” until Maid Marian is wounded. Robin stops and invites Marian to join his band of men in the forest; hearing his voice causes Marian to reveal her true identity, and they make up with kisses.

Maid Marian’s search for Robin as a page and the fighting scene makes it clear that she can only display strength, and be Robin’s true equal, when dressed as a man, perhaps because that was the only way a woman could be a man’s equal in the 1600s. The second part of *Robin Hood and Maid Marian* tells of the banquet they have to celebrate their being together again, and then concludes with a happily-ever-after sort of ending, in which Robin Hood and Maid Marian live in the forest “by their hands, without any lands” (21.2). This quote tells us that Robin and Maid Marian do an equal amount of work, living “by their hands,” and that neither of them is in the relationship purely for economical reasons, which was a common arrangement in those times.

In the ballad, Maid Marian is a determined, brave, imaginative woman. She loves Robin Hood and wants to be with him, so she finds a way to do that by disguising herself and roaming the forest alone, and even fights Robin for a while before finally attaining what she wants: to be with Robin again. Once back with him she presumably sheds her manly persona, but she most

likely does not go back to being a helpless, beautiful woman since life is hard in the woods, and everyone most had an equal part in the group's survival.

In Sir Walter Scott's romantic novel *Ivanhoe*, written in 1820, the "Maid Marian" figure is Rowena, the noble-born ward of Cedric of Rotherwood. This conserves the original Maid Marian character who is born into a noble family. However, in *Ivanhoe* the couple is in a Romeo and Juliet situation at first, since Cedric wants Rowena to marry a Saxon nobleman in order to forge a stronger bond between the two men, as well as revive the royal line.

Rowena seems to have a less active role than Maid Marian from the ballad. Throughout the course of the novel, she is simply being fought over by various men. Towards the beginning of the novel, Ivanhoe, (the Robin Hood character,) wins a tournament against his worst enemy, the Templar Knight Brian de Bois-Gillbert, and then names Rowena the Queen of Love and Beauty. Prince John then comes up with a scheme to marry Rowena to one of his own advisors as part of a plot to prevent King Richard from taking back power when he returns from captivity in Austria, and soon after, Rowena is kidnapped by this same advisor to Prince John.

After Rowena and the rest of the people who were kidnapped are freed by Ivanhoe and a mysterious Black Knight, Rowena and Ivanhoe get married to live happily ever after, with Ivanhoe continuing to serve King Richard (the Black Knight). Rowena is clearly a pawn in this story; her only virtues are being of noble blood and refusing to marry the Saxon nobleman whom Cedric wanted her to marry. She is less independent than the Maid Marian of the ballads.

In the 1938 film "The Adventures of Robin Hood," Maid Marian, played by Olivia de Havilland, is also nobly born. She and Robin Hood first see each other when Robin goes to see Prince John to tell him that he will do all he can to restore King Richard to power. During this

scene, Robin bursts through the doors carrying a deer on his back and openly defies Prince John. Maid Marian has been told that Robin is a rogue and a cutthroat, and this goes with her first impression of him. She wittily throws his own words back at him when he greets her despite his rough appearance, and says, "I am afraid of nothing, least of all of you." This version of Maid Marian is much like the brave Maid Marian presented in the first ballad.

A while later in the film, Robin and his band capture a band of Normans transporting taxes through the forest, and Maid Marian happens to be in the party. She dismisses Robin Hood and his men as a band of "cutthroats," but eventually realizes that Robin has good intentions even though he is stealing after Robin shows her the poor people who live with his band in the forest, who would otherwise die of hunger. Maid Marian in this film has a much more active role than Rowena in *Ivanhoe*, since she has opinions and acts on them. Maid Marian in "The Adventures of Robin Hood" even goes so far as to save Robin Hood's life when he is sentenced to be hanged; she warns his men so that they are able to rescue him.

When Dickon Malbete, a disgraced former knight, is sent by Prince John to assassinate King Richard, Maid Marian takes action and writes a note to Robin Hood. Her note is discovered and she is arrested and sentenced to death for treason. In the end, she is rescued by Robin Hood when he and his men sneak into the castle to interrupt John's coronation, and they end up getting married.

In this film, Maid Marian and Robin Hood are equals: she saves his life by going to the tavern where his band meets and telling them that Robin will be hanged, and then coming up with a plan to sneak them into the castle. Later, Robin saves her life when she is sentenced to execution for having tried to help him.

The 2009 graphic novel Outlaw: The Legend of Robin Hood follows virtually the same plot as *Ivanhoe* and the motion picture “The Adventures of Robin Hood”: Marian is a countess and a nobleman’s widow living in Nottingham castle. She is stuck there with an evil Prince John until one of Robin’s men comes disguised as someone else to help her sneak out. When she goes with Robin’s accomplice, he brings her to their headquarters in the Sherwood Forest, where Robin shows her the community of peasants he leads. He asks her to help him free King Richard by transporting his ransom, which Robin and his men have been robbing from the corrupt tax collectors.

Marian is arrested for treason because of her connection with Robin’s man John Little, who had escorted her to the Sherwood Forest. Robin is arrested after winning an archery competition, and both are sentenced to hanging; however, Robin manages to escape, and saves Marian from hanging by breaking the rope with an arrow. In the end, King Richard returns, and Robin and Marian are married. The Maid Marian of the graphic novel has less of an active role than in the 1938 film, but she still has a slightly active role in that she helps to transport King Richard’s ransom, and she rejects the advances of Prince John while she is in Nottingham Castle.

More active and independent than any other Maid Marian seems to be that of the 2010 “Robin Hood” film. Played by Cate Blanchett, Maid Marian has been running a manor with the help of her father-in-law for ten years, waiting for her husband to return from the crusades. When Robin shows up, she is very skeptical at first. Her noble birth and pride keep her from becoming close to Robin at first, because he comes from a lowly background and also because he is a stranger claiming to be her husband. After a few weeks, however, she realizes that if everyone believes her husband has returned, the manor will be safer against corrupt officials who might come and harass her. Throughout the course of the movie, Maid Marian and Robin Hood fall in

love, but Maid Marian is almost never the classic “damsel in distress:” she defends herself and the peasants as best as she can, stabbing a man who makes advances. She even saves Robin’s life in the great battle on the beach near the end of the film, in which she participates disguised as a man.

It appears that the only way Maid Marian and Robin can be equal is when Maid Marian makes herself as manly as possible. In the early ballads, she is intrepid, living in the forest with Robin and his men, as good an archer as any of them. In the recent 2010 movie, she runs a household virtually alone for ten years, and then goes to battle dressed as a man. She does ultimately have to be rescued by Robin near the end of the battle, but on the whole the two are equals in intellect and determination throughout the film.

One possibility for why Maid Marian must sometimes take on a manly role in order for her to be a strong, independent woman is because, during the time that Robin Hood was supposed to have existed, circa 1323, it was unacceptable for a lady to be that independent. Because of the social restrictions of the times, the Maid Marian character in the 2010 film reflects the position a woman would have had in the 1300s, but it also presents aspects of women’s more independent position in society today.

Chapter Three: Lolita, Isabel and Juliana

As I mentioned in Chapter One, the original Zorro story was written in 1919 with the title *The Curse of Capistrano*, in a pulp fiction magazine. The Lolita of this story is an eighteen-year-old girl born into an influential family in the California of the early 1800s, the daughter of Don Carlos Pulido. She is dignified, but comes across as naïve and very young: “a dainty little thing with black eyes that snapped, and black hair that was wound around her head in a great coil, and dainty little feet that peeped from beneath skirts of bright hue” (34). Perhaps her appearance and dress are meant to be misleading, however, because her “black eyes that snapped” hint at a defiance and strength of character that are incongruous with “dainty little feet.” This dual aspect to Lolita’s character gives her a complex personality; even in 1919, the heroine of the Zorro stories was not simply a flat, stereotypical character, but someone who had depth and a measure of defiance.

Lolita’s sense of dignity manifests itself when don Diego comes to ask for her hand in marriage. He refuses to serenade her or put any effort into making her like him, since he is in his spineless don Diego persona, so she becomes angry and sends him away. Lolita tells him, “The man who weds me must woo me and win my love...send your servant to play the guitar beneath my window? Oh, I heard, *señor!* Send him, *señor*, and I’ll throw boiling water upon him and bleach his red skin! *Buenos días, señor!*” (35).

Lolita is not interested in the spineless Don Diego, but she ends up falling in love with his alter ego Zorro, who shows courage and daring when he comes to her family’s ranch just to visit her. Lolita is not as helpless and timid as her clothes and physical appearance at first make her seem, which makes one wonder if maybe her entire public attitude is simply a façade meant to

make her seem harmless. If that is the case, then Lolita deserves more credit than she is usually given, and has more control over her life than it would seem.

When the evil Captain Ramón tries to force her to marry him, she says, “I wed a *caballero*, a gentleman, or no man! And I cannot say that you are such!”(78). She even goes so far as to slap Captain Ramón when he accuses her of wanting to marry don Diego for his money: “Like a flash of lightning her hand went forward, and came against Captain Ramón’s cheek with a crack” (78). Luckily, Zorro shows up before the discussion gets any uglier.

Later in the novel, Lolita and her family are arrested, supposedly because of her father’s political standing, but really because Lolita will not marry Captian Ramón. Lolita and her family are rescued by Zorro and his followers, and Lolita is hidden in a priest’s house, but then she is discovered by troopers. Her only defense is to threaten to stab herself; she gives away her hiding place under a pile of skins by moving. With the help of the priest she manages to escape and gets away on horseback. This scene shows her growing independence and her tendency to take action instead of being passive. When, near the end of the novel, Lolita and Don Diego are trapped and surrounded by enemies, they promise each other that they will always stay together, even if that means dying together.

In the original 1920 motion picture starring Douglas Fairbanks, Lolita has a decidedly more pathetic role. She says that if she were a man she would like to be like Zorro, but she doesn’t have quite the same spark that the Lolita of the book has. She does slap Zorro when he steals a kiss from her when they are sitting together in the garden, but she seems to be waiting to be rescued when Captain Ramón tries to kiss her. Every time Lolita is in trouble in the film, she

must ultimately be rescued by Zorro, while in the novel, she is sometimes able to save herself, such as the time when she escapes from the priest's house.

The Lolita character of Isabel Allende's 2005 novel Zorro is much more independent and intelligent than Lolita. Allende's character, called Isabel, and her sister Juliana are the two halves of the Lolita character: Isabel represents her fiery, independent side, while Juliana represents the beautiful, softer side. With this division, Allende seems to be making the statement that both personalities cannot be mixed in women, or perhaps she is simply pointing out that men seem to think this. In the novel, Juliana ends up marrying a pirate who has kidnapped her, while Isabel ends up being Zorro's helper, sometimes dressing up like Zorro.

This shows that society only accepted women who were beautiful but not opinionated or prone to action; the only way Isabel could do what she wanted was by dressing up as a man. Although this is obviously commenting on the way society was during the 1800s, when the novel takes place, Allende's novel must be taken as a comment on modern society as well, especially since the Isabel of the novel is based on Isabel Allende herself as a girl. Since Allende must also be commenting on modern society, her message is that smart, independent women are still seen as incongruous with being beautiful.

While Isabel and Juliana are opposites in attractiveness and intellect, they are both noble and proud, expecting a certain amount of respect. They have this in common with Lolita, who also comes from an aristocratic family. Juliana seems to be practically the same character as Lolita, dreamily awaiting rescue but also demanding a certain amount of respect and occasionally showing a spark of character, while Isabel represents only the tough, independent side.

By 1998, in the film “The Mask of Zorro,” Lolita has been transformed into Elena, again the daughter of a wealthy don, but this time both beautiful and brave. She is a combination of Isabel and Juliana from Allende’s novel: she’s intelligent, drop-dead gorgeous, and almost beats Zorro in a swordfight. Zorro, (whose real name is Alejandro,) is obviously physically stronger because he is a man, and has trained to become the athletic Zorro, but he and Elena are intellectual equals. Elena is also as brave as Zorro, as well, or perhaps braver since she goes against the damsel-in-distress stereotype. Zorro and Elena work together to expose corrupt officials, and at the end of the movie they set free hundreds of indigenous people who had been used as slaves to mine gold, just in time to save them from being blown up.

Seven years later, the second film, “The Legend of Zorro,” came out. In this movie, Elena and Alejandro have been married for ten years, and have a ten-year-old son named Joaquín. Elena spends most of the movie trying to convince Alejandro to give up his Zorro alter ego and focus on their son, but she is still the same character that she was in the first movie: headstrong and independent. She even threatens to kick Alejandro out of the house if he doesn’t give up being Zorro, since she can see that their son is not receiving enough attention from his father.

Elena is good at defending herself; when she notices that she is being pursued through town by a couple of suspicious-looking men who follow her into a side street, she beats them both up before they manage to tell her why they were following her (they know Zorro’s identity and proceed to blackmail her.) She also defends herself when she is cornered on a train near the end of the film, killing the man who is attacking her by pushing him off the train with a bottle of nitro stuck in his trousers. These brave actions, along with her ability to almost beat Zorro in a swordfight in the 1998 “Zorro” film, show that the Lolita character has come a long way from the docile character she was in McCulley’s 1919 book.

Chapter Four: Portrayals of Women in the Early Robin Hood and Zorro Stories

In the ballad *Robin Hood and Maid Marian*, from the year 1795, Maid Marian is of noble birth and very beautiful, and is compared in physical appearance to Helen of Troy. Likewise, in the first Zorro story, *The Curse of Capistrano* by Johnston McCulley, Lolita Pulido, who is Zorro's love interest, is of aristocratic birth and exceptionally beautiful. Her family is wealthy and has influence in California, which is partly why there is pressure for her to marry Don Diego: her family wants to stay in its position of wealth and influence. If they fall out of favor with the aristocracy, they risk losing their position in society.

Both women are also prideful; Maid Marian is sought-after by many men, but she will only have Robin Hood, who is supposedly the bravest man in the country. Lolita refuses to be courted by Don Diego, who comes across as a spineless fool, even though he is wealthy. She would rather have Zorro the poor and socially inferior outlaw, who at least has a backbone and the same level of morality as Lolita herself; they are both the enemies of the evil and selfish Captain Ramón.

Bravery is a clear connecting characteristic which Maid Marian from the ballad and the original Lolita share. When Robin Hood is exiled to the forest in the ballad, Maid Marian disguises herself as a man to travel alone through the forest searching for him, a brave thing to do for a woman at the time. In McCulley's Zorro story, Lolita appears to be helpless, but stands up to Captain Ramón and later helps Zorro by covering up for him when he visits her house, and by helping him elude capture. Maid Marian shows the same level of loyalty when she joins Robin Hood in the forest, risking her life and her social standing.

Sir Walter Scott's 1820 novel *Ivanhoe* goes on a different path by dividing the character of Maid Marian into two women, Rowena and Rebecca, which clearly divides her personality. This division shows the belief that a desirable woman is beautiful, passive, and of high social standing, because in the end the hero, Ivanhoe, marries Rowena, who is the more passive, aristocratic half, representing the noble aspect of Maid Marian. The division seen in *Ivanhoe* is also seen in one version of the Zorro story, which I will discuss in Chapter Five.

Rowena is the ward of Cedric of Rotherwood, (Ivanhoe's father,) who wants her to marry to a man called Athelstane, a Saxon lord, in order to rekindle the Saxon line. It seems that the theme of forced marriage to a man she does not love but who will ensure her social advancement and financial security, is common to the leading female characters in *Ivanhoe* as well as in the original *Zorro* story.

The other woman in *Ivanhoe*, Rebecca, is also beautiful but she is not from a noble family. She is a Jewish girl who falls in love with Ivanhoe while tending to his wounds after he wins a tournament. Rebecca is a tragic, strong-willed woman who wants what she cannot have, first of all because Ivanhoe does not love her back, second because she is Jewish and he is not, and third because she and Ivanhoe are of different social statuses.

Rebecca criticizes the institution of knighthood while she tends to Ivanhoe's wounds, since there is a battle going on outside and Ivanhoe asks that she describe to him everything that is happening. This demonstrates that Rebecca is not only beautiful and maidenly, but she also has strong opinions, something which Rowena does not have, beyond her willfulness in not marrying Athelstane.

When Maurice de Bracy, one of the wicked Prince John's advisors, ambushes and kidnaps Cedric's party as they cross through the forest, Rebecca and Rowena are kidnapped. They are then put into similar situations: Rebecca is pressured by Brian de Bois-Guilbert, one of the Knights-Templars, to marry him, and de Bracy tries to get Rowena to marry him.

Rowena is eventually rescued by Ivanhoe, while Rebecca is tried as a witch, accused of making de Bois-Guilbert become so infatuated with her that he kidnapped her. At her trial, she is accused of having supernatural healing powers and of causing de Bracy to break the law. Interestingly enough, Rebecca is also rescued by Ivanhoe, who becomes her champion in order to combat de Bois-Guilbert and save her life.

Although Rebecca undergoes more trials and shows more practical affection towards Ivanhoe, it is still the noble, virtuous Rowena who marries Ivanhoe in the end, since he fell in love with her before he even met Rebecca. Rebecca is effectively removed from the scene when she moves to Granada with her father, while Rowena and Ivanhoe are married and live happily ever after.

Lolita Pulido of the 1919 *Zorro* novel is a blending of Rowena and Rebecca, mixing nobleness, beauty, bravery and action, which re-unites the two sides of the Maid Marian character into one woman. However, Lolita herself is split into two characters in the 2005 *Zorro* novel by Isabel Allende, to be discussed in Chapter Five.

I believe the Maid Marian character was split in *Ivanhoe* because it made it easier for her to be more desirable to the hero. Rowena is beautiful, noble and not very active, and gets the guy in the end. Rebecca, on the other hand, is equally beautiful but of lower socioeconomic class and not from an aristocratic, Saxon family, and she is also more active in the storyline than Rowena;

however, she does not get to be with the man she loves in the end. This is partly because Ivanhoe does not love her back, but also partly because Rowena's character probably seemed the more "fitting" bride that a hero would choose. The fact that Ivanhoe should marry Rowena rather than Rebecca leads me to believe that the ideal bride at the time *Ivanhoe* was written, in 1820, would be from an aristocratic family and would not voice her opinions, but instead would simply look pretty.

Chapter Five: Late portrayals of female characters in Robin Hood and Zorro

The progression from strong, to weak, back to strong female characters is cyclical, but at the moment, it seems that stronger, well-rounded female characters are favored, especially in films. There is the exception of Maid Marian from the 2009 Robin Hood graphic novel, who does not have a very fleshed-out personality, but the Robin Hood film produced a year later exhibits a much stronger female character who is comparable with Elena from the 2005 Zorro film.

Tony Lee's 2009 graphic novel *Outlaw: The Legend of Robin Hood* portrays a mourning, trapped Maid Marian who is virtually a prisoner until Robin Hood comes back from the Crusades and enlists her help in raising King Richard's ransom. This version of Maid Marian is a continuation of Rowena from *Ivanhoe* rather than Rebecca, since Rebecca is more opinionated and does not spend as much time moping around a castle. The Maid Marian of the graphic novel is beautiful but not very active in the plot.

Maid Marian, played by Cate Blanchett in the 2010 movie "Robin Hood," is very comparable in personality and action to the original Maid Marian from the ballad *Robin Hood and Maid Marian*. The original Maid Marian is a strong, independent woman who takes to the woods when Robin Hood is exiled, disguising herself as a man. Maid Marian in the film is equally resilient. She runs her household alone for ten years waiting for her husband to come back from war, living with her husband's aging father. Because of her father-in-law's condition, Maid Marian is the one who makes most of the decisions and keeps the manor together. The only problems are the thieving "wild boys" who live in the forest, and the marauding forces of

soldiers that occasionally come through and harass her, asking for taxes and generally making trouble.

It is clear that everything would be fine if it were socially acceptable for a woman to run a household and manor, but it is not, so Maid Marian in the 2010 film does not receive the respect from the government necessary for her to do her job. However, she overcomes this with Robin Hood's help, who shows up at the opportune moment to pretend to be her dead husband come back from war. She takes the opportunity to accompany him to battle disguised as a man; this masquerading is similar to what the Maid Marian of the ballads did when she dressed as a man to go looking for Robin.

At the end of the battle scene in the film, Robin must save Maid Marian when she falls from her horse and is about to be stabbed. However, although Marian and Robin are intellectual equals, both helping to run the manor, Marian is overcome because she is unused to fighting, since she has not had the same combat training and experience that Robin does, and so is not physically the equal of her opponent.

The 1998 film "The Mask of Zorro" and its sequel, "The Legend of Zorro," show a much more independent version of the Lolita character than McCulley's original Zorro story. In both movies, the Lolita character, Elena, played by Catherine Zeta-Jones, is Zorro's intellectual equal the same way Maid Marian is Robin's equal in the 2010 Robin Hood film. She does not know the true history behind her father in the first movie; the previous Zorro was her real father, but the man who she calls her father killed her mother and took her away from the old Zorro to raise her as his own. However, the new Zorro, played by Antonio Banderas, is equally unable to take action against injustice in the beginning of the film: he needs to be trained by the old Zorro for

months, and is even outwitted by Elena a few times. It is clear in both films that Elena and the new Zorro are intellectual equals if not physically equal, since he defeats her in a swordfight.

In her 2005 novel, *Zorro*, Isabel Allende does not create one strong female heroine who contains all of the desirable features, but instead does the same as Walter Scott with *Ivanhoe*, and creates two characters with different sets of virtues: Juliana and Isabel. Isabel is the strong, rebellious and ugly sister, the “Rebecca” character (although Rebecca is beautiful,) and Juliana is the beautiful but flighty sister, more similar in temperament and actions to *Ivanhoe*’s Maid Marian, who is noble and beautiful but not inclined to action. Isabel even dresses up as Zorro in the end, helping him on some of his missions and becoming a confidante, making them both intellectual and physical equals. She also saves his life more than once, which puts them on an equal field as heroes.

In both the Robin Hood and Zorro legends, the portrayal of female characters neither improves nor deteriorates with the passing of the years. It would be logical to think that, like the role of women in modern society, the role of the women in legendary tales would have progressed from the “damsel in distress” mode to an independent woman, but the reality is that strong women characters such as Maid Marian and Rebecca already existed in the past, and modern versions of female characters have little chance of improving on these strong, independent personalities.

Conclusions: The Splitting and Dual identities of Maid Marian and Lolita

A fascinating pattern I found in this literary analysis is the splitting used in both the Robin Hood and the Zorro stories, as the main female character is split in half in order to accommodate both her damsel-in-distress side and her active side. It is seen in *Ivanhoe*, when the original tough, independent Maid Marian is split into two characters in order to preserve these two halves of her personality, and again in *Zorro*.

Because of her active role and her outspoken personality, Rebecca (from *Ivanhoe*) can be considered a heroine, but not a hero, since heroines are often considered passive. In the end Rebecca disappears from the story when she moves to Granada with her father, while Rowena and *Ivanhoe* are married. The splitting of Maid Marian has the effect of providing both a stereotypically weak female character and a stronger, more interesting female character, giving the impression that maybe in those times, women were expected to be one extreme or the other, but not express both weakness and strength.

It seems that in the 1820s, when *Ivanhoe* was written, it was better for the hero to end up with a slightly more helpless, less opinionated and less brave woman than the Maid Marian of the ballad that was written in the 1600s, "Robin Hood and Maid Marian." The original Maid Marian was a blending of Rebecca and Rowena, as she was brave and opinionated; however, she still needs to dress as a man in order to follow Robin into the woods. This implies that if only society would allow women to be strong, and sometimes display masculine qualities, they could fully be the equals of men.

The Maid Marian of the 1938 film "The Adventures of Robin Hood" is also a good blending of Rowena and Rebecca; moreover, she does not need to resort to dressing as a man in

order for her to be useful. This suggests that she is a more fleshed-out character, as she is able to stay in her own gender but still display stereotypically “masculine” qualities. She plays a very active role by alerting Robin’s men when he is sentenced to be hanged so that they can rescue him, and writes a note to Robin alerting him of a plan to assassinate him. These acts of bravery are especially notable because she does not put on a different persona to carry them out. She also has strong opinions, since she refuses to marry Sir Guy, is opinionated about Robin, and eventually has such a strong belief in helping King Richard and the poor people in the forest that she risks her life for her beliefs.

In the 2009 graphic novel *Outlaw: The Legend of Robin Hood*, Maid Marian seems to revert to the same character she was in *Ivanhoe*, except the Rebecca character has been omitted. She shows a bit of backbone when she refuses to marry Prince John and later helps Robin and his men transport stolen tax money, but she spends most of her time moping about a castle or being someone’s prisoner.

Maid Marian undergoes a complete transformation back to her old self in the 2010 “Robin Hood” film: she is once more independent, fierce, and opinionated while also being beautiful, noble and aristocratic. However, again she must dress as a man in order to be completely up to Robin’s level of independence; this must be attributed to the fact that society (in the time the film is set) would not have accepted a woman joining in battle.

Interestingly, the doubling technique is not seen in the Zorro stories until the novel *Zorro* by Isabel Allende, written in 2005. In both the original 1919 Zorro novel, *The Curse of Capistrano*, and the original 1920 motion picture, “The Mark of Zorro,” there is only one main female character, Lolita. She is, again, beautiful and aristocratic, just like the original Maid

Marian. Lolita also resists the evil Captain Ramón, refuses the spineless don Diego, helps out Zorro, and in the end is even willing to risk death in order to stay with Zorro. Although socially she has less power because she is a woman, she and Zorro are equals intellectually.

In Allende's novel, Isabel, the young, ugly sister, is everything the beautiful Juliana is not. They have a few small details in common, such as both being of aristocratic birth and wealthy (at least in the beginning of the novel), and they are proud and strong-willed. However, Isabel is much more prone to action and heroism, and always speaks her mind, while Juliana is more reticent and usually keeps diplomatically silent. Clearly, Juliana is the Maid Marian from *Ivanhoe*, while Isabel is the Rebecca.

Juliana and Isabel are blended together again into a new Lolita in the 1998 film "The Legend of Zorro," when Zorro's love interest is Elena, who is just as beautiful as Juliana, but with a spark of Isabel's daring thrown in. Elena is similar to the original Maid Marian, as well, because she almost beats Zorro in a swordfight; however, she does not have to dress as a man to do what she wants to do, as Maid Marian does. Elena and Zorro are intellectual equals even if he is physically stronger; they work together and contribute to common projects. Later, in the 2005 film "The Mask of Zorro," Elena is the same character: beautiful, headstrong, independent, intelligent, and still Zorro's equal.

Throughout the blending together and the division of female characters in both these stories, a pattern becomes clear: both stories start out with a strong, definable female character, (Maid Marian from the ballads and Lolita from the first Zorro story,) then fluctuate between a strong and a weak character. Then they turn into two characters, one weak and one strong

(Rowena and Rebecca; Juliana and Isabel,) before coming together once more. When the two characters come together again, however, they form a character stronger than the original.

The only piece of evidence that does not signal the growing strength of the women characters in the Robin Hood and Zorro stories is the 2009 graphic novel *Outlaw: The Legend of Robin Hood*. The non-involvedness of this very recent Maid Marian is worrying, but perhaps can be attributed to the fact that this graphic novel focuses on Robin Hood's beginnings, and wanted to focus only on Robin Hood and not be distracted by Maid Marian.

Maid Marian in the 2010 Robin Hood film, and Elena from the 1998 and 2005 Zorro films, are examples of these stronger characters formed from the blending of different aspects of personality. Both contain aspects of femininity, such as beauty and grace, but also include more stereotypically masculine characteristics, like leadership and strength. This blending of different aspects of personality not only adds depth to the characters on-screen, it also reflects the way many women are sometimes perceived. By presenting dynamic, multi-faceted female heroes, Elena and Maid Marian show that women of today have the power to break away from stereotypes.

On the other hand, the increase in both beauty and strength demonstrated by these women characters could result in unrealistic expectations of real-live women. Both Maid Marian and Elena are unusually beautiful and powerful among their peers in their respective films, because their respective societies (Great Britain in the fourteenth century, California in the nineteenth century) did not allow women to be very independent or possess very much power. However, it is difficult for modern women, in the twenty-first century, to rise to the same level of accomplishment and appearance. For example, the latest image of Maid Marian in the 2010 film

“Robin Hood,” brings to mind a single mother trying to play both parental roles, both bringing up the kids and being the primary breadwinner. Maid Marian manages to run her manor alone and look stunning, but there are few single mothers who could take care of all of their responsibilities and still look as beautiful as Maid Marian. Therefore, perhaps the ultimate female hero cannot be called as such, until she can be like Isabel from Allende’s *Zorro*: strong and independent, but not necessarily gorgeous.

I invite other scholars to make note of the changing roles played by the women characters in the *Zorro* and Robin Hood stories; I am sure that, with the investigation of more sources and as time passes, more patterns, such as the splitting, will emerge. I continue to be fascinated with these characters, particularly those in the *Zorro* stories, and am strongly considering doing more work with *Zorro* in the future, for my Masters’ thesis.

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