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"NOTHING IS EVER FORGOTTEN": ROBIN OF SHERWOOD AND SYMBOLIC IMMORTALITY

The death of Robin Hood. On 13 April 1985¹, something unheard of happened: Robin Hood met his death in a hail of crossbow bolts. In the cul-de-sac where I grew up, the children talked about it for days. About Robin's death and the open ending of the season finale: Did Robin really die? Or is he the masked saviour who frees the Merry Men? Has he risen from the dead? Has someone else taken his place? Will there be any more episodes, or is the series over?

When the episode aired, I was about seven years old. At that time, we had no background information apart from TV magazines; we didn't even know that series were produced from season to season. We were in no way prepared for the hero of a series to die, and we didn't know if there would be more episodes.

The shock was profound. Until then, we had believed that good guys do not die. Especially not in a production for children – of course, we were mistaken, because Robin of Sherwood was not made for children; but in the 1980s, we considered all programmes in the early evening slot to be children's programmes. The good guys do not die. No matter how bad the odds may be, fate will turn around at the last second.

But this is precisely the mercy that is withheld in the seventh episode of the second season of Robin of Sherwood: the situation seems hopeless. Robin says goodbye to Much and Marion, handing her the magical sword Albion. He is surrounded, the Sheriff and his men are closing in. With his last arrow, he proves to his arch-enemy, the Sheriff: I could have hit you. But he shoots far above him. Then he breaks his bow. The rest is history. A harrowing piece of television history that has found its way into the hearts of many fans.

Today, 40 years later, we are no longer so easily surprised. With series such as "Game of Thrones" we have grown accustomed to the fact that no character is safe from death. Looking back, British audiences in particular may have been accustomed to the fact that the main character can die, regenerate and be replaced by a new actor thanks to "Doctor Who". The Doctor's first regeneration was seen on British television back in 1966, when William Hartnell handed over the role to Patrick Troughton. Robin Hood also died in 1976, played by Sean Connery in "Robin and Marian". As a seven-year-old, I didn't know any of this. To this day, the scenes surrounding Robin's death still evoke strong emotions in me, and I know from conversations with fans that many feel the same way.

¹ First broadcast of the episode "The Greatest Enemy" in the United Kingdom on 13 April 1985, first broadcast of the episode "Der Hinterhalt" in Germany on 17 October 1986

The death of Robin of Loxley had not been planned. It was the decision of lead actor Michael Praed to move to America that made this step necessary. Richard Carpenter had to change his plans at short notice and wrote one of the most powerful television episodes of all time. In doing so, he touched – consciously or unconsciously – on psychological mechanisms that are deeply ingrained in human nature.

Gods with anuses. We are all going to die. This is an uncomfortable and inescapable truth: we ourselves, everyone we know, everyone we love, will die. From the perspective of anthropologist Ernest Becker, this realisation leads us to the central conflict of human beings: as living creatures, we want one thing above all else: to survive! But thanks to our ability to think, we know that we must die – and that we cannot prevent it, no matter how clever we may try (Becker, 1973).

Becker understands humans as consciousness with a desire for immortality in a mortal body – and exaggerates this image by describing humans as "gods with anuses" (ibid., p. 51). Humans always have two sides – the divine, which makes us strive for higher things, and the "creatureliness" (ibid., p. 4) in our biological functions and the vulnerability of the body. Excrement, wounds, blood and illness constantly remind us that we are not divine – but as mortal as any animal.

This dual nature of human beings is clearly reflected in Robin of Sherwood in the character of Herne. In the third episode of the second season, "Lord of the Trees", the divine Herne is wounded by a crossbow bolt and must be tended to by Robin, bleeding, wounded and without his headdress. He explains: "You see your god become man. An old riddle, my children" (minute 40). In the episode that contains the death of Robin of Loxley, the following dialogue unfolds: "Herne is a spirit – and you?" – "I am a man" (S2E7 minute 46). Herne is therefore both god and vulnerable human being – just as Ernest Becker describes the conflict of man.

Symbolic immortality. Becker understands the knowledge of mortality as an unbearable horror – if we were to constantly grapple with it, we would be left almost unable to cope with everyday life. He sees a sanctuary from this horror in the idea of "symbolic immortality": as biological beings, we cannot overcome death, but we can live on as a symbol in the memory of the living.

The desire for symbolic immortality is expressed in the attempt to create something that will outlive one's own death: this could be children who survive my death; an impressive work that will remind people of me long after I am gone – a building, a book, a work of art or a powerful empire. Such "personal immortality projects" are intended to carry the memory of me and my work into the future: I will die, but I will leave traces that even death cannot erase.

Another way to achieve symbolic immortality is to see oneself as part of a larger whole that will outlive one's death. Here, I see myself less as an outstanding personality and more as an important part of a worldview, a culture that will still exist in a hundred years' time – and as part of a larger whole, my personal work will continue to have an impact in

the larger context: I will die, but the things I have worked for throughout my life will continue to exist.

In addition to symbolic immortality, there are cultural and religious worldviews that promise actual, not just symbolic, immortality, with ideas of rebirth, an immortal soul and life after death. According to Becker, such concepts can also reduce the fear of mortality.

The terror management theory. A few years after Ernest Becker published his ideas, a group of social psychologists came together to test these ideas empirically. As plausible, or implausible, as man's ways of seeking to strive for immortality may sound, can it be proved that this truly impacts people's behaviours? Since they wanted to investigate how people deal with the terror of mortality, they called their approach the "terror management theory" (Solomon et al., 2016).

Their experiments generally follow a similar structure: half of the test subjects are confronted with their mortality, while the other half are not. Both groups are then given the same task or questionnaire, and the extent to which the two groups differ in their behaviour is examined. Do people who are aware of their mortality actually strive more for symbolic immortality?

Experiments from terror management theory. In an early experiment, researchers asked American judges to set bond for an alleged prostitute. Judges were selected as test subjects because they follow a clear set of rules and one would expect them to be less likely to be swayed from this course by their current mental state. Half of the test subjects were asked to write beforehand about what would happen to them at the moment of their physical death and what feelings the thought of death triggered in them.

The usual fine for the specified offence was \$50, and the judges in the control group actually imposed penalties of this amount. However, the judges who had written about their mortality before making their decision imposed significantly higher penalties – on average more than nine times the usual amount: \$455. In the face of death, they adhere more strongly to the norms and rules of their cultural worldview and punish deviant behaviour more harshly. From the perspective of terror management theory, they thus strengthen their affiliation with their ideological reference group and its values in order to cope with their fear of death (Rosenblatt et al., 1989).

In an experiment in Germany, passers-by were asked to rate German food, German cars, German travel destinations and German show hosts in comparison to those of other countries. The survey took place sometimes in a shopping centre and sometimes in front of a cemetery, within sight of the gravestones. The people who were surveyed next to the cemetery – in the face of death – rated the German objects much more positively than the people in the shopping centre. Just like the American judges, they increased their sense of belonging to their cultural group (Jonas et al., 2004).

Numerous experiments have shown that awareness of one's own mortality leads people to increase their affiliation with national and religious groups (Solomon et al.,

2016). In line with the idea that children can also represent an immortality project, it has been proven that awareness of death increases the desire to have children (Wisman & Goldenberg, 2005).

The desire to stand out as a person has also been experimentally induced: it has been shown that people who are made aware of their mortality drive more recklessly – but only if reckless driving is a source of their self-esteem (Ben-Ari et al., 1999). Intuitively, one might expect people to drive more carefully when they are made aware of their mortality. But in line with the prediction of terror management theory, people try to increase their self-esteem in the face of death. It is possible that the prospect of symbolic immortality can motivate people even more than the desire for real survival.

Results. Today, terror management theory can look back on several decades of international research. In their experiments, researchers have repeatedly confirmed Ernest Becker's predictions (Routledge & Vess, 2018). When confronted with their mortality, people use two strategies to reduce their fear of death:

1. They strengthen and emphasise their belonging to a group whose values and goals they identify with – because this group will carry their work into the future.
2. They try to achieve high status within the reference group by meeting or even exceeding the group's requirements and standards.

In the words of Ernest Becker: "Man wants to know that his life has somehow counted, if not for himself, then at least in a larger scheme of things, that it has left a trace, a trace that has meaning." (Becker, 1975, p. 4).

There is a saying: "Every man dies twice – once when he is buried and once when his name is mentioned for the last time"². This aphorism identifies being forgotten as final death. Physical death represents the end of biological life, while being forgotten represents the end of symbolic life. Symbolic immortality, on the other hand, is expressed when nothing is forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten.

Nothing is ever forgotten. Alongside "Herne protects us", "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten" is probably the most famous quote from Robin of Sherwood and is often cited as a catchphrase. In the audio commentary for episode 9 of season 3, "Adam Bell", author Anthony Horowitz and actor Nickolas Grace (Sheriff of Nottingham) credit this line as the creation of Richard Carpenter: "Nothing's ever forgotten. That's a Richard line." They emphasise the popularity of the quote and assume that it appears in every episode: "The fans love that line." - "Yeah, that's right. It's always in there in the episodes" (minute 48). But is this impression correct?

In fact, the famous phrase only appears in eight of the 26 episodes. In some episodes, it appears several times, resulting in a total of ten mentions. Two mentions are flashbacks,

² The authorship of this saying cannot be clearly determined; it is often attributed to Yalom, Hemingway or Banksy, but none of these attributions can be substantiated.

i.e. repetitions of a scene, leaving eight independent uses of the phrase. In several instances, only the first half is spoken: "Nothing's forgotten." If we count only the occurrences of the complete phrase "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten", there are only six instances in total (see table). Nevertheless, the quote has become firmly established in the memory of fans.

Episode	Title	Time	Wording
S1E1	Robin Hood and the Sorcerer - Part 1	minute 12	"Nothing's forgotten." - "No, nothing's forgotten. Nothing."
S1E2	Robin Hood and the Sorcerer - Part 2	minute 46	"Nothing's forgotten, Will."
S2E2	The Children of Israel	minute 20	"Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten."
S2E7	The Greatest Enemy	a) minute 42 b) minute 47 c) (minute 48, reference) d) (minute 50, flashback)	a) "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten." b) "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten." c) (Reference: "It's not over. It'll never be over.") d) flashback: "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten."
(S3E1)	Herne's Son - Part 1	a) (minute 0, flashback) b) (minute 9, reference)	a) (Flashback: "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten.") b) (Reference: "Some things are better forgotten, hm?" - "Some things, my lord.")
S3E2	Herne's Son - Part 2	minute 24	„Nothing's forgotten. Nothing's ever forgotten.“
S3E9	Adam Bell	minute 48	„Nothing's forgotten. Nothing's ever forgotten.“
S3E13	The Time of the Wolf - Part 2	a) minute 44 b) (minute 48, flashback)	a) „Nothing's forgotten.“ - „No. Nothing's ever forgotten.“ b) (flashback: identical)

Table: Occurrence of the phrase "Nothing's forgotten" in the 26 episodes of the series

Meaning. People forget birthdays, umbrellas, wallets and keys. So this phrase cannot be meant literally – what is the intended meaning? In what contexts does the phrase appear in the series? And do these contexts actually fit with the pursuit of symbolic immortality proposed by terror management theory?

The phrase first appears in the first episode when Robin and Much meet Will Scarlett in the dungeon. Robin introduces himself as "Robin of Loxley", to which Will replies: "Loxley? There's no such place." Robin dismisses this as propaganda from the Norman occupiers: "That's what they tell us," and counters: "Nothing's forgotten." Will confirms: "No, nothing's forgotten. Nothing" (S1E1, minute 12). The saying stands for the memory of the victims of the Loxley massacre – and this memory in itself represents an act of rebellion, because those in power want to erase the memory of the place and its inhabitants. Keeping the memory of the victims alive does not bring them back to life – but it does give them symbolic immortality. The victims live on in memory.

The phrase appears for the second time in the second episode. After the battle at Castle Belleme, the Merry Men and Marion sit together on a hill in the forest and talk about their fallen comrades Tom and Dickon. "They were going to Lincoln, remember?" asks Will, and Robin replies rather sternly: "Nothing's forgotten, Will!" Once again, the phrase here is used to commemorate the dead. This time, it is the memory of the fallen comrades and their life plans, which will now never be realised (S1E2, minute 46).

After the first two episodes, the phrase does not appear again in the first season. It is not until the second season that we hear it again, in the episode "Children of Israel" (S2E2). Here, for the first time in the series, we encounter the complete phrase, consisting of both sentences: "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten". The context is unusual: Robin and his men come to a village seeking help; Tuck is injured and needs care. But the villagers turn them away. Robin, disappointed and angry, uses the phrase as a threat, followed by an accusatory raised index finger (minute 20). Here, the phrase is not related to remembering the dead or symbolic immortality but rather expresses a "tit for tat" or "eye for an eye" kind of justice.

It is not until the last episode of the second season, the episode that confronts us with the death of the series hero, that the phrase appears again, twice in this episode and both times in its complete form. First at minute 42: Little John, Will and Tuck arrive at the forest in good spirits, mistakenly believing that Robin has freed them from the sheriff's captivity. They find Much and Marion mourning in a forest clearing, Marion holding Robin's sword Albion in her hands. Robin's death becomes apparent to the Merry Men. To the sounds of Clannad's "Now is here", the camera pans to the treetops and we hear Robin's disembodied voice: "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten." Here, Robin's statement is clearly related to his physical death and his symbolic survival – in the memories of his friends and the continued impact of his deeds. It is as if he were calling out to them: "Even though I have died, our struggle was not in vain." The manner of presentation supports this view: Robin has died, but we hear his voice from off-screen, as if he were living on after death.

In minute 47, we hear the phrase again: the new Hooded Man – whose identity is still unclear at this point – seeks out Herne. He reports that he heard a voice. And that voice said: "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten." Herne replies: "So he is free." Here it becomes clear that this phrase is a hallmark of Robin of Loxley – Herne can attribute it directly to him. As is so often the case with the mystical utterances of the forest god, it remains unclear what kind of freedom he means: Is he freed from life? From oppression by his powerful enemies? Freed from the task of the chosen Hooded Man?

The episode also contains a reference to the phrase; after the Merry Men are freed by the unknown Hooded Man, the Sheriff expresses his disappointment: "It's not over. It'll never be over" (minute 48). This play on words can only work because the audience is already familiar with the saying – and here, too, it is about symbolic immortality: Robin of Loxley may have died, but the fight he fought will continue. The values he stood for will

be carried on by others. For the Sheriff as his adversary, this means that the fight will never end.

This concludes the episodes in which Michael Praed plays Robin of Loxley – the role of the Hooded Man as Herne's son is passed on to Robert of Huntingdon, played by Jason Connery.

In the first episode of the third season, we encounter the phrase in a flashback right at the beginning of the episode, which shows the scene in which the Hooded Man visits Herne (minute 47 of the previous episode).

The phrase is referenced again in another scene. Lady Marion's father introduces her to the Earl of Huntingdon, Robert's father. He compares Marion to her mother, describing her as "only rather more headstrong". He alludes to Marion's time with the outlaws – but explains, in a clear departure from the original quote: "Some things are better forgotten, hm?" – to which Marion replies, "Some things, my lord". She emphasises the first word to make it clear that there is little to forget – she holds on to the memory of her time with Robin and the outlaws and clearly wants to undo very little of it (minute 9).

In the second episode of the third season, it is Robert of Huntingdon, the new Hooded Man, who utters the phrase for the first time: Will complains that the Merry Men have lost what made them special under Robin's leadership. Robert of Huntingdon counters with the familiar saying. Will looks at him in alarm and objects that he did not hear Robert ("No, it wasn't you I heard," minute 24). Here it is emphasised once again that these words are associated with Robin of Loxley: "No, it wasn't you I heard" – but Robin of Loxley, Will could have said. But Robert asks, "Does it matter?". Robert separates the content from the person and identifies himself as Robin's successor: it makes no difference who fulfills this role. It is not about the person, but about the cause, the goals and values that Herne's son stands for. The famous saying does not belong to Robin of Loxley, but to Herne's son, the Hooded Man, and this task has now passed to Robert of Huntingdon.

Interestingly, Michael Praed pronounces the "is" in the second sentence of the phrase in full: "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing *is* ever forgotten". Jason Connery on the other hand always shortens "nothing is" to "nothing's" in the third season: "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing's ever forgotten". It is only a slight and quite probably unintentional variation, but it does change the rhythm of the phrase.

It is not until seven episodes later, in episode 9 of the third season ("Adam Bell"), that the phrase appears again. At the end of the episode, Little John explains that Adam Bell had "forgotten what he was, what he used to be" – to which Robert replies: "No, nothing's forgotten. Nothing's ever forgotten" (minute 48). Here, too, it is about values, the values that Adam Bell stands for or stood for: while Little John assumes that Adam Bell has lost or betrayed his convictions, Robert clearly regards these moral values as something superior and enduring.

The phrase reappears in the final episode of the series (S3E13: The Time of the Wolf Part 2). Robert and Marion say goodbye to each other in the monastery. Robert assures her that he will carry the memory of their time together in his heart forever. Here it is Marion who points out, "Nothing's forgotten," to which Robert replies, "No. Nothing's ever forgotten" (minute 44). The lovers seal the end of their relationship, but they agree that their love will live on in memory.

Just four minutes later, this dialogue is repeated in a flashback when Robert shoots a flaming arrow into the lake while thinking about his farewell to Marion (minute 48). From previous episodes, we know that the ritual of shooting flaming arrows into the lake in memory of lost friends is only used in situations of mourning, when the dead are remembered. Robert treats the end of his relationship with Marion here like a bereavement, the separation of love as a farewell to a deceased person. And just as the dead live on symbolically, he allows his love for Marion to live on symbolically.

It may be unusual to use a scene that took place only four minutes earlier as a flashback, but this device makes the famous phrase the last text spoken in the entire series. This special position emphasises the importance of this phrase. At the same time, it represents a farewell to the entire series and its portrayal of the Robin Hood legend. The series, too, is not forgotten. And will never be forgotten.

Terror management and Robin of Sherwood. Looking at how the phrase is used, it is clear that it almost always revolves around death, loss, grief and farewells. The only exception is when Robin levels it as a threat against the ungrateful villagers.

In terms of content, we find both strategies that terror management theory predicts for dealing with death and mortality: The sentence emphasises the memory of people such as the inhabitants of Loxley, the fallen companions Tom and Dickon, the memory of Robin of Loxley, as well as the continued work in the spirit of shared values when Robert of Huntingdon makes it clear to Will Scarlett that it does not matter who fights for justice – whether it be Robin of Loxley or Robert of Huntingdon. We find the heroic emergence of individuals as well as the belonging to a group that stands up for shared values and will continue to do so even after the death of individuals.³

The depiction of Robin Hood's death thus becomes an examination of death and mortality itself. With his phrase "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten", Richard Carpenter has succeeded in summing up an existential theme of human existence: we must acknowledge death and mortality; even heroes must die. But we can find some

³ It is also noteworthy which strategy for dealing with the fear of death is *not* depicted: Becker (1973) explains that many religious worldviews offer the prospect of actual immortality in order to overcome the fear of death. The plot of Robin of Sherwood takes place in the Christian-influenced Middle Ages; on both sides, there are representatives of the Christian church in the form of Brother Tuck and Abbot Hugo. However, the idea of an immortal soul, actual immortality, resurrection on Judgement Day or reunion in the Kingdom of God is never offered as consolation. This approach fits in with the motif of the outlaws, who live outside the legal framework in Sherwood Forest and, as a pagan religious community, also outside the Christian context.

comfort in the fact that people will remember us and our deeds, and that groups that stand up for our values will continue to exist beyond our death, so that our contribution can have meaning even after we are gone. This particular depth will have contributed to this phrase becoming so deeply engraved in the memory of fans, even though it does not appear as often in the series as one might assume.

The death of Robin of Loxley confronts us with our own mortality; at the same time, the series offers us symbolic immortality as a way of dealing with this horror with the phrase "Nothing's forgotten. Nothing is ever forgotten."

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