Adaptations without Sources: The Adventures of Robin Hood

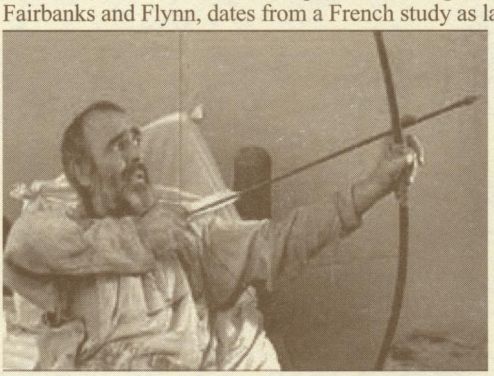
Viewers unhappy about the liberties recent Robin Hood films from *Robin and Marian* (1976) to *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991) have taken with the familiar story might be heartened to know that as far back as 1922 Allan Dwan's *Robin Hood*, apparently produced without a screenplay, treated it just as freely. Fairbanks's Robert of Huntingdon—not Robin of Locksley, as he should have been called—began the story, as he confessed, "afeard of women." Although he conquered that fear soon enough with the help of Lady Marian Fitzwalter, he spent the entire first half of the film as King Richard's loyal and valued retainer, so that the film might as well have been called *Robin Hood: The Prequel*. There were no scenes showing him robbing the rich and giving to the poor. Instead, he spent most of the time even once he had come out as Robin Hood prancing through the greensward or leaping around the gigantic Nottingham Castle set Dwan had constructed for him as if he were a circus acrobat rather than the defender of England's downtrodden. How could such a successful and highly regarded film break faith so openly with its great subject?

The history of my own very limited exposure to the Robin Hood story helps explain both why viewers are so ready to dismiss adaptations of the outlaw's story as unfaithful and why fidelity to an original text is impossible. Before I watched Dwan's monumental silent, the only time since my childhood that I had encountered the rogue of Sherwood Forest and his merry men was in the 1938 Warner Bros. film directed by William Keighley and Michael Curtiz and starring Errol Flynn. And all the Robin Hoods of my youth—the Classics Illustrated comic book from 1944, the British television series Sidney Cole had produced for ITV from 1955 to 1960, even the stamped-tin Robin Hood castle manufactured by Louis Marx around the same time—took the Warner Bros. film as their models. At length I realized that the comic book, which closely followed the story, the visual design, and even the look of particular characters in the Keighley/Curtiz film, had lodged itself in my mind as the authoritative Robin Hood from which other versions departed at their peril, even if they had been produced twenty-two years earlier.

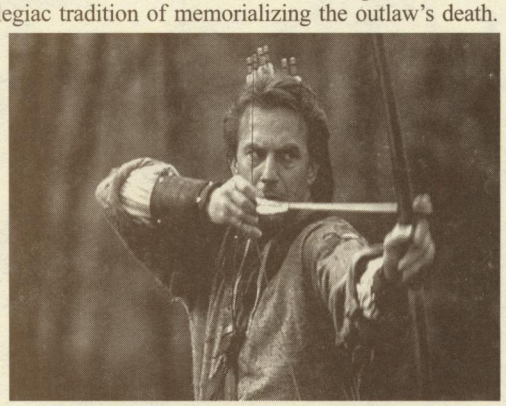
I recount this story in order to suggest that although my choice of an authoritative Robin Hood may have been unfortunate, my principles of selection were thoroughly logical because there is no single definitive account of Robin Hood and almost certainly never was. When he first appears in a surviving text, in William Langland's passing reference to the popularity of "rymes of Robyn Hode" (BV.402, Langland 49) around 1377, he is already a well-known figure, an established fact in the landscape whose origin is beyond conjecture. Many of the features we associate most closely with Robin Hood—his characterization as a nobleman outlawed by the king who lives in the forest with a like-minded band who avenge injustice through disguise, trickery, and force of arms, who rescue their hero when he is captured, and who eventually see the king pardon him and restore his estate—date back to earlier tales of historical outlaws like the late-eleventh-century Hereward, Eustache the Monk (c. 1170-1217), and the early-thirteenth-

century Fouke le Fitz Waryn. It is impossible to define a clean break between Robin Hood and these real-life ancestors or contemporaries.

Nor can we find a single version of Robin Hood that includes all the best-known features of his story. From his earliest surviving starring roles in ballads written down some time after 1450, Robin Hood is an anti-authoritarian trickster who robs from the rich, usually corrupt bishops and abbots. But he does not start giving to the poor until his sixteenth-century incarnations, which also make him more respectable by giving him an aristocratic pedigree as the former Robin of Locksley or, yes, Robert of Huntington. Although his earliest mates include Little John, Will Scarlet, and Much the miller's son, it is not until the end of that century, in Anthony Munday's 1595 *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* and *The Death of Robert, Earle of Huntington*, that he is allowed to woo Maid Marian, establishing beyond cavil his heterosexual virility. It is around the same time that Robin Hood, who had always opposed Prince John and his minions Guy of Gisbourne and the Sheriff of Nottingham, is first aligned with King Richard, whom the outlaw champions after he is captured on his way home from the Third Crusade. In Munday's hands, as Stephen Knight observes, "the story has been reduced in political tension and become an all purpose myth, in that Robin in many later stories [...] is more or less a gentleman, never really one of the common people and never at all opposing true hierarchy" (Knight, *An Anthology* 10). Although Robin Hood is always an accomplished archer, he is not much of a fighter in his first starring roles. Indeed, he is constantly getting captured and requiring rescue. Robin Hood's well-known status as a Saxon patriot resisting illegitimate Norman rule, a mainstay of both Fairbanks and Flynn, dates from a French study as late as 1830.



More recent treatments of Robin Hood have used equal freedom in handling the well-known story. Douglas Fairbanks, as I have already indicated, makes Robin Hood acrobatic. Wolfgang Reitherman's 1973 animated film for Walt Disney not only turns Robin Hood and Maid Marian, his childhood sweetheart, into foxes but substitutes a group of worshipful animal children for his merry men, who all vanish except for Little John. *Robin and Marian* makes the outlaw, in the person of Sean Connery, old and disillusioned and kills him off along with Maid Marian—hearkening back to Munday's elegiac tradition of memorializing the outlaw's death. Kevin Reynolds follows the 1984-86 HTV series *Robin of Sherwood Forest* in giving the politically correct hero of *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, played by Kevin Costner, a revered Saracen friend to illustrate his political enlightenment and emphasize a sensitivity to family values that had presumably already paid off at least in the three films about his son: *Bandit of Sherwood Forest* (1946), *Rogues of Sherwood Forest* (1950), and *Son of Robin Hood* (1958).



Because the Robin Hood myth has been available for cinematic adaptation for a hundred years, it is hardly surprising that no definitive articulation of the myth can be identified. In some ways, however, his case seems unique. When audiences watch a movie that tells the story of Macbeth, they commonly assume that the movie is based on Shakespeare's play rather than Shakespeare's sources, no matter how free that adaptation may be (for example, *Joe Macbeth*, 1955; *Men of Respect*, 1991; *Scotland, Pa.*, 2001), even though Shakespeare's plays themselves are adaptations of earlier works. These adaptations are invariably labeled as based on Shakespeare rather than his sources,

not only because they are more likely to borrow individual images and scenes and characters from Shakespeare, but because Shakespeare's prestige elevates his adaptations above competing versions and gives them a cultural capital that makes him the ideal source for adapters.

When we turn to Robin Hood, the situation is more complicated. There is no lack of canonical authors who have treated him. He appears as an exemplary figure—a featured role, casting directors would say—in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1818), as the male lead in Thomas Love Peacock's romance *Maid Marian* (1822), and as the hero of Lord Tennyson's *The Foresters* (1892). Yet no Robin Hood scholars have claimed that Scott's or Peacock's or Tennyson's use of him carries any special canonical authority. Indeed the most influential of all literary treatments of the outlaw may be John Keats's 62-line poem "Robin Hood. To a Friend" (1818), which establishes him as a focus of nostalgic yearning for a vanished English past:

> On the fairest day of June
> You may go, with sun or moon,
> Or the seven stars to light you,
> Or the polar ray to right you;
> But you never may behold
> Little John, or Robin bold. (217)

For better or worse, there is no single authoritative source for the Robin Hood stories because, as his biographer Stephen Knight has observed, the outlaw tradition he exemplifies makes him the anti–King Arthur:

> Where the noble adventures of the Round Table have often been enshrined in monumental prose and verse in many a prestigious genre, the stories of Robin Hood have always been more ephemeral—songs, short plays, proverbs, and place names; in our time, TV serials and films (some unmemorable) have been the media that have transmitted a tradition which is, like the outlaw himself, both fugitive and flexible, hard to pin down, whether in a sheriff's jail or under the ponderousness of canonical texts. (Knight and Olgren 1)

The broad implication of Knight's observation, which is widely accepted among scholars of Robin Hood, is that instead of one source for the story of the outlaw's adventures, there are a hundred sources. In an obvious sense this is undoubtedly true, because there is no single Robin Hood as authoritative as Shakespeare's Macbeth. The same evidence, however, suggests an alternative and more heretical conclusion: that the most authoritative versions of Robin Hood are not medieval literary texts but modern American visual or audio-visual adaptations, and that instead of saying that these adaptations have a hundred sources, it would be fairer to say that they have none.

The best way to lay the groundwork for my claim that Robin Hood movies are adaptations without a source is to present in greater detail the evidence for my less outrageous arguments, beginning with the claim that the most authoritative incarnations of Robin Hood are visual rather than literary. Of all the nineteenth-century literary representations of the outlaw I cited—Scott, Keats, Peacock, Tennyson, even the 1890 Reginald de Koven/Harry B. Smith opera version, the principal source for the Warner Bros. film—none was as influential as the illustrations of Howard Pyle and N. C. Wyeth because Robin Hood's appeal is less psychological or even situational than iconographic. The reasons why are obvious to anyone willing to take a moment to think about Robin Hood. The most likely result is a visual image of the outlaw in Lincoln green and a peaked hat, a quiver of arrows on his back. In this idealized mental image, Robin Hood may well assume an action pose—

nocking an arrow, brandishing a rapier, swinging from a well-placed vine—but he will not be doing anything in particular to compass what Aristotle would have called an action. In other words, whatever he is doing in this mental image, he will not be engaged in a purposive, decisive activity with a beginning, a middle, and an end, like claiming responsibility for shooting the King's deer whose death makes him an outlaw, pledging his troth to Maid Marian, or rescuing King Richard. He certainly will not be talking, because Robin Hood has no distinctive voice, no special way of expressing himself in speech. Years after he became one of the most successful of all silent film heroes, Warner Bros. had to work hard to figure out how Robin Hood ought to speak as the hero of a sync-sound film.[1]

The poses Robin Hood assumes in our mental images of him are best remembered as characteristic tableaux rather than stages in the accomplishment of any particular action. Because, as Aristotle puts it in his famous distinction in Chapter 8 of the *Poetics* between stories unified by their action and stories told about a single hero, "infinitely various are the incidents in one man's life which cannot be reduced to unity; and so, too, there are many actions of one man out of which we cannot make one action" (1451a, 33). Robin Hood is an action hero in the double sense that Indiana Jones or the Masters of the Universe are action heroes. He is both a hero from whose life adventures can be drawn and a figure whose idealized image implies physical activity. But although an Aristotelian narrative can be fashioned from his life by presenting him as an outlaw whose anti-authoritarian revolt will ultimately be ended by the return of his liege King Richard and his own marriage to Maid Marian, he is more properly an adventurer than an action hero. So the title *The Adventures of Robin Hood* is quite as precise as the title *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.[2] For this reason Robin Hood, as one of my students once told me, is the perfect Halloween costume, based as it is on a figure that is easy to impersonate, instantly recognizable, and bright with the promise of swashbuckling action that always looks great regardless of what it is up to, or whether it is up to anything at all.

Just as the earliest stories of Robin Hood circulated in the fugitive media of ballads, songs, plays, and games that preceded or bypassed the literary culture established by printed texts, the most influential visualizations of the outlaw depended on technologies that could reproduce images on a large scale. The mass production Walter Benjamin found so indispensable in establishing the distinctively modern notion of high art helped propel Robin Hood to unprecedented popularity courtesy of Howard Pyle's 1883 illustrations. Defined by a high visual profile at once nostalgic, heroic, and populist, Robin Hood became an obvious candidate for teaching in elementary classrooms because his story, unlike the competing myths of King Arthur and Tristan and Isolde, was devoid of explicit sex. At the same time, what Knight has called "the heavy coding of sexuality in the story, from splitting the arrow to the forest world of a hunter" (Knight and Olgren 16) made it a natural for films aimed at general audiences but designed to provide erotic pleasures to those who sought them, for example, in the well-toned bodies of Fairbanks, Flynn, or Cary Elwes and the rest of Mel Brooks's men in tights. Driven by mass-produced images targeting an audience brought up on the outlaw as the very model of courteous civil disobedience, modern Robin Hoods could tap into a combination of sentimental nostalgia, anti-establishment feeling, and erotic potency of which the ballad hero could only dream. Since Robin Hood offers a challenge to institutional authority likely to be at once more compelling and more empathetic to modern than to medieval audiences, and capable of reaching a much larger audience, he can fairly be called a modern hero in medieval clothing.

Just as Robin Hood is a medieval hero shaped most influentially to appeal to modern audiences, he is an English hero whose most celebrated incarnations have been American. This is not to say that the definitive Robin Hood speaks in Kevin Costner's American accent. But the most successful modern Robin Hoods are stage Englishmen created specifically to appeal to Americans. Before he assayed the role, Douglas Fairbanks, "the quintessential American film star" (Harty 91), had to overcome his distaste for playing "a flatfooted Englishman walking through the woods" (Richards 429). His solution was to play the Robert of Huntingdon of the first half of the film as a "pre–World War I American hero, who [...] returns from the continent with all the exuberance that we have come to associate with the Roaring Twenties and the Jazz Age" in what Fairbanks himself called the "rehabilitation of Robin Hood as a national hero."[3] The slippage from playing a typical American hero to rehabilitating Robin Hood as an English national hero is eminently consistent with an ambiguously Anglo-American identity that persists in the Warner Bros. film. Warners' hero, played by the Tasmanian-born star Errol Flynn when the studio's original

choice for the role, James Cagney, withdrew over a contract dispute, coded its effete Norman villains as Nazis in order to affirm its Saxon hero's defense of the democratic, constitutional values the United States shared with its mother country.[4] Even the 1955 British television series, which was soon picked up by ABC and broadcast in America, had unexpectedly transatlantic roots. Its pilot had been co-written, during a time of rising British-American co-production, by American Ring Lardner, Jr., and Ian McLellan Hunter, his longtime British collaborator. Both writers remained uncredited because they were blacklisted. In fact, Lardner, as Peter Lev has noted, suggested that the hero's anti-establishment individualism might have "subverted 'a whole new generation of young Americans.'"[5]

Given the movies' proclivity for presenting Robin Hood as an archetypal English hero seen through American eyes, it is thoroughly logical that Cary Elwes, in *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (1993), twits Kevin Costner by telling Prince John that the people will listen to him because "unlike some Robin Hoods, I can speak with an English accent." What is more surprising is that Mel Brooks, who directed and co-wrote the film, not only mercilessly ridicules Costner's performance and Reynolds's film generally, but consistently uses the Warner Bros. film as a corrective model for what he sees as its risibly self-serious acting, posturing, and production design. Brooks, at least, would seem to agree with Jeffrey Richards that "*The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) must be regarded as the definitive Robin picture" (431). It seems more reasonable, however, to conclude that both the Fairbanks and Flynn films are equally definitive because the qualities their very different heroes share—virility, good humor, insouciance, and a frankly mischievous attitude toward their status as heroic outlaws that constantly reminds viewers that they are playing a role—have become far more important than their relatively incidental differences (Fairbanks's boisterous athleticism, Flynn's understated gentility) in defining Robin Hood for our time, even though he is likely to continue developing to meet the needs of later generations in search of an outlaw hero.

But to say that there are multiple definitive Robin Hoods, that the most distinctive articulations of the myth have arisen within the past century because of its popularity among visual artists, mechanically reproduced images, and schoolchildren, and that the story is likely to continue developing because it has never reached a single authoritative form—all this acknowledges that there is no one version of the story that exerts anything like the regulatory functions we associate with a source text. If there are so many Robin Hood stories so varied in their particulars that adaptations are not obligated to follow any particular one of them, then the whole legend of Robin Hood is an adaptation without a source. Fairbanks noted as much when he recalled the number of "intelligent people deploring the fact that the film wandered so far from the book": "'If these critics know what book they are talking about,' he said, 'they have a distinct advantage over me'" (Brownlow 254).

It might be objected here that I am ascribing a coercively regulatory power to literary sources that is actually optional, so that some of them exercise this regulatory function and some do not. Although Graham Allen notes that "in the Postmodern epoch, theorists often claim, it is not possible any longer to speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object" (5), the theorists Allen surveys have adopted a wide range of attitudes toward the putative authority of source texts. The subtitle of Gérard Genette's *Palimpsests*, which defines its subject as "literature in the second degree," broadly implies a literature in the first degree that is neither (to use Genette's categories) intertextual, paratextual, metatextual, architextual, or hypertextual, even though Genette acknowledges "transtextuality in general," along with "its diverse components," as "aspects of any textuality" (8). Roland Barthes, by contrast, has urged literary scholars to celebrate "the death of the author" (142) by reimagining all literary works, traditionally defined

by their discrete meaning and their author's individual accomplishment, as texts that engage in a ceaseless intertextual play of meaning. And Harold Bloom, in a series of monographs from *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) to *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998), has argued that all poems are marked by belatedness, an indebtedness to strong precursors whose work informs their own willy-nilly. Of these writers, only Bloom has made any serious attempt to define what makes a source—a strong poet like Milton (for the English Romantic poets) and Shakespeare (for modern writers generally)—a source for later poets rather than simply another intertextual iteration, and his account is precisely a definition of what makes strong poets strong. Sources are by definition or presumption authoritative, and it is precisely their coercive or regulatory function that makes them so.

Nor have adaptation theorists, for all their talk of sources and adaptations, ever developed a convincing definition of sources that does not base their authority on their alterity. The line of adaptation studies descending from George Bluestone regularly invokes the power of literary sources without defining it in any terms apart from alterity. Although Bluestone aptly notes the "reciprocity" (2) of the relationship between novels and films, which typically boost the sales of their source novels even as they refract their meanings, the very title *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* accurately indicates that his analysis is limited to the movement from novels to films, not the other way around—as in the case of novelizations of films, which have attracted the attention of more recent theorists from Ken Gelder (164-68) to Linda Hutcheon (38-39). For Bluestone, the novel is an institutional genre at once more settled, more various, more mature, and more tentative about its representational abilities. "Where the film has not yet begun to question its ability to render certain types of physical and even psychological reality," he suggests, "the novel is no longer so confident" (14). In his introduction to *Novel to Film*, whose title is similarly unidirectional, Brian McFarlane encapsulates this tendency to ascribe unnamed powers to the novel by virtue of its alterity: "As soon as the cinema began to see itself as a narrative entertainment, the idea of ransacking the novel—that already established repository of narrative fiction—got underway" (6). It is no wonder that Kamilla Elliott, in discussing the myriad and shifting relations between novels and films, refused even to use the word text in order to "oppos[e] the colonizing application of terminology derived from language and linguistics to film and pictorial arts" (8).

Because the most persistent researches have failed to turn up a historical Robin Hood, the character might well be described as a copy of a nonexistent original. The same can be said for adaptations of Robin Hood in all media, from songs to stories to prints to films to comic books. If Errol Flynn can portray the definitive Robin Hood six hundred years after the figure first appears, his film becomes at most an ad hoc source text, one more suggestive analogue rather than an original source that must be followed on pain of heresy.

Nor is Robin Hood the only hero who flourishes in sourceless adaptations. Precisely the same argument could be made on behalf of his apparent institutional opposite King Arthur. Everyone agrees that the authoritative source for the King Arthur legend is Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, a cycle of adventures completed sometime before 1469 and focusing on the pivotal figure of Lancelot. But a brief consideration of Malory's claims to canonical status shows how tenuous they are. For one thing, no one outside graduate English departments is likely to read his book, which has been preserved in two versions of dramatically different length, only one of which, William Caxton's printed edition of 1485, carries the title *Le Morte Darthur*—a title presumably not intended by Malory, since the opening leaves of the Caxton manuscript have been lost. Even the best-read non-specialist modern readers, while acknowledging the canonical preeminence of Malory, are far more likely to have encountered King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1859-85), Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), or T. H. White's tetralogy *The Once and Future King* (1938-58), the acknowledged source for both the Lerner and Loewe musical *Camelot* (1960) and the Disney animated film *The Sword in the Stone* (1963). Richard Wagner's operas *Tristan und Isolde* (1865) and *Parsifal* (1882), which remind us that King Arthur, unlike Robin Hood, often suffers the indignity of being edged out of his franchise by a subsidiary character, continue to maintain a popularity unrivaled by Malory. An unread classic may still have canonical status, but its authority is clearly limited.

The readers most likely to have encountered King Arthur in Malory are most likely to know other weaknesses in his canonical claims. *Le Morte Darthur* is not by any means the first, the longest, or the most intricate of Arthurian romances. It is a translation, condensation, and reorganization of several English and French romances, notably the *Prose Lancelot* written in French in the early thirteenth century as part of the so-called Vulgate cycle of Arthurian romance. By cutting long passages of theological rumination and disentangling the intricately interwoven stories of Arthur's knights so as to present each one as a discrete adventure filled with combat, adventure, and action, Malory repurposes and repackages his sources in a way calculated that make them more appealing to modern secular audiences. But he invents nothing himself. Even his emphasis on Lancelot is borrowed from the Vulgate cycle.

The Arthurian legends predate Malory by some eight hundred years. Before Malory and the Vulgate cycle come Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* (c. 1210), the Saxon poems of the parish priest Layamon (1190-1200), the French romances of Chrétien de Troyes (1160-90), the French poem *Le Roman de Brut* by the Norman poet Wace (1155) and its source, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Brittaniae* (1136), and a number of Welsh legends from the eighth through the tenth centuries. The earliest surviving reference to Arthur, the Welsh poem *Gododdin* (c. 600), uses him as a touchstone to whom the dead hero can be compared. Like the bandit of Sherwood Forest, Arthur first enters literary history as a hero whose most distinctive qualities can already be referred to a vigorous pre-literary existence.

Not even the pedigree of Robin Hood's most institutionally respectable opposite establishes the claim of Malory or anyone else as his single authoritative source. The process of continually readapting Robin Hood might be recuperated in terms of modern adaptation theory's assumption that every adaptation must have a source by writing a history of each Robin Hood adaptation's attempt to be faithful to a single authoritative source that is impossible to identify. But it is both more suggestive and more accurate to say that the adaptational counter-tradition Stephen Knight finds in Robin Hood has its seeds in the corresponding history of Arthurian adaptations, and indeed in the adaptations of any number of other franchise heroes: detectives like Sherlock Holmes, monsters like Dracula, superheroes like Batman.[6] These figures, most of them as iconographically powerful as Robin Hood, have by and large floated so free of the literary or sub-literary sources in which they were once embedded that their allegiance to those sources is nominal. Instead of providing a single text to which all adaptations are responsible, stories about King Arthur and Sherlock Holmes and Batman provide a grammar of narrative possibilities, an anthology of characters and situations, and a wardrobe variously stocked with costumes, props, and special effects. Instead of establishing a coercive master text, they establish a set of rules and regulations that particular adaptations feel increasingly free to adapt until the new rules become either just as authoritative, more authoritative, or utterly unrecognizable.

Imagining a substantial number of adaptations without sources would pose obvious problems to the presumptive model of adaptation that stipulates a single source text offering a formal, thematic, or ethical imperative to any text that seeks to adapt it. But in fact there is an even larger class of films we can usefully think of as adaptations of nonexistent sources: genre films like Westerns, musicals, gangster films, romantic comedies, film noirs, war films, and science-fiction films. Nor is this class limited to films. It includes such formulaic literary genres as the whodunit, the paperback romance, and the Choose Your Own Adventure fantasies marketed to young readers. In each case the genre establishes rules that are never definitively articulated by any single example but derived from a wide array of texts in some unspecified way. In each case, as Andrew Tudor has observed, the genre is perceived as a "criterion [...] meant to emerge from the empirically established common characteristics of the films" on which it is in turn imposed.[7] In each case the genre maintains its authority by instituting norms that cannot be broken—unless and until they can by films like *High Noon* and *The Godfather* and *Alien* that redefine their genres.

I assume that the reason we do not think of all genre films as adaptations is that it would be too difficult and messy. The one-to-one model whereby a literary text begets a cinematic text, then lives six hundred more years before it dies, is more hygienic, even though there are many adaptations it does not adequately cover. The tale of Robin Hood is valuable precisely because it challenges this regulatory model of ownership, whereby narrative or thematic meaning attaches in a uniquely privileged way to a source that is willing to loan it out to adaptations only if they

are willing to obey its rules. In its place it proposes alternatives that deserve closer attention. In concluding his examination of the interplay between Robin Hood's carnivalesque play and the institutional orthodoxy it challenges, Peter Stallybrass, borrowing from Bakhtin and Pierre Bourdieu, proposes four models of the relationship. Two of these he labels "*strategies of the dominant*" designed to recuperate or neutralize the outlaw's challenge to the established order. The first is "*Heterodoxy is produced by orthodoxy*. Orthodoxy produces Robin Hood as a form of licensed misrule, colonizing conflict through ritual contestation organized from above and separated off in time and space from the quotidian." The second is "*Heterodoxy is excluded by orthodoxy*. Orthodoxy suppresses Robin Hood and his misrule." Stallybrass identifies his other two models "*strategies of the subordinated*." In its weakest form, "*heterodoxy negotiates/contests orthodoxy*," disputing "only the workings of orthodoxy, not its principles. This perspective constructs a Robin Hood who punishes oppressive landlords but is loyal to the monarch." Finally comes the process by which "*heterodoxy interrogates the boundaries between Doxa* [Bourdieu's "universe of unquestioned assumptions"] *and Opinion* ['the universe of the discussable"]" (321-23).

All four of these models are illuminating for the study of adaptations in general. The first produces authorized adaptations like the BBC Shakespeare that are issued with a virtual guarantee not to provide any pleasures that might exceed those authorized by their hallowed sources. The second is represented by the authors who forbid adaptations, from Thomas Pynchon to Sue Grafton, because of the fear of what violence Hollywood might wreak on their beloved progeny. The third is the realm of the so-called creative adaptation, variously dubbed "analogy" by Geoffrey Wagner (227), "transformation" by Dudley Andrew (101), and "radical translation" by Linda Costanzo Cahir (17). But the fourth has scarcely been considered. Robin Hood's sharpest challenge to the institutional order in which he arises—a challenge successively muted, as Knight points out, beginning at the end of the sixteenth century—is not his demonstration that Prince John never had a legitimate right to the throne of England, but the more fundamental questions he raises about the very provenance of decorum, wisdom, class identity, and property rights. These questions, which constitute Robin Hood's most distinctive contribution to adaptation study, are, as Stallybrass notes, exceptionally difficult to separate from the simple negotiation of orthodoxy: "Did challenges to the game laws work within a reformist problematic, appealing against specific grievances, or did they subvert the very concept of property through which class differentiation was produced?" (323). The most radical question Robin Hood adaptations pose for adaptation studies is not what kinds of transformations adaptations have the legitimate right to work on the sources assumed to hold property rights to their stories, characters, figures, or lessons, but rather why this question should be cloaked in the moral language of legitimacy in the first place. The outlaw of Sherwood and his merry men open an intoxicating prospect for adaptation theorists who are willing to challenge the abiding authority of canonical literary sources without simply seeking to substitute their own.

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Author's Note

I wish to thank Eliza Stoner for alerting me to the intertextual opportunities Robin Hood offers adaptation theory and Lois Potter for providing me with background material.

Notes

[1] For producer Hal B. Wallis's disapproval of the flowery dialogue in Rowland Leigh's first draft continuity, see Behlmer 443.

[2] Precise, that is, for Arthur Conan Doyle's 1892 collection of twelve stories about Sherlock Holmes. The 1939 Fox film of the same title is unfaithful to Doyle in two ways revealed by its misleading title: It does not include any of the twelve adventures in Doyle's collection (or anywhere else in Doyle), and its focus on the duel between Holmes and Professor Moriarty, whose diverse schemes are all a smokescreen for his climactic attempt to steal the Crown Jewels, is too highly organized around a single Aristotelian action to warrant the label *Adventures*.

[3] Harty 91. Fairbanks is quoted from Sherwood 43.

[4] For more on Warner Bros.' ideological agenda in the film, see Hark.

[5] Lev 158. The quoted passage is from Lardner 141.

[6] For an especially perceptive examination of Batman's different incarnations, see Brooker.

[7] Tudor 138. Hernadi (2) traces this articulation of genre's hermeneutical circle to a 1928 essay by Günther Müller.

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