THE HOODED MAN REBORN: THE POST-APOCALYPTIC ROBIN HOOD OF PAUL KANE'S *HOODED MAN* NOVELS

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INTRODUCTION

Paul Kane's *Hooded Man* trilogy is a post-apocalyptic Robin Hood retelling at once familiar and incredibly foreign. Robert, called the Hooded Man, leads a group of men and women who not only battle the Sheriff of Nottingham and other threats (mundane and mystical) but also collectively negotiate the aftermath of an apocalyptic Blight virus which killed all but those with blood type O negative. Robert is an outlaw hero—despite being neither an outlaw nor much of a hero—who establishes a safe new space for survivors of the Blight by implementing medieval practices and mentalities in post-apocalyptic Nottingham. This article explores how Kane's trilogy adapts traditional Robin Hood narratives within and to the genre of science-fiction dystopia, and my analysis of Kane's Robin Hood retelling draws on two major critical perspectives, those of Mark Wolf and Julie Sanders. I use Wolf's work on the structure and creation of imaginary worlds to analyze Kane's post-apocalyptic science-fantasy setting, one that is based on a fictionalized-yet-contemporary Earth that engages with a constructed Robin Hood mythos as well as the established post-apocalyptic "extended universe" of *The Afterblight Chronicles*.[1] I read Wolf through the lens established by Julie Sanders, by and through her definition of appropriation via adaptation, as initially defined by Linda Hutcheon. I will use the concept of the "rhizomatic Robin Hood" established by Stephen Knight to show how Kane is carefully recreating the concept of Robin Hood within the *Afterblight Chronicles*, retelling and reconstructing elements of the tradition drawn from Richard Carpenter's television series *Robin of Sherwood* (1984-86)[2] and Howard Pyle's novel *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883).

In post-apocalyptic fiction, the medieval world—or, at least, a pseudo-medieval word—is a frequent "reset" setting. Indeed, as a colleague observed, "feudalism is humanity's default state."[3] Thus, for authors and analysts of post-apocalyptic fiction alike, describing a secondary world's baseline is vital. The fiction must show how an apocalyptic event has altered the secondary world from what the audience knows; the story must also show how the secondary world has developed what Wolf describes as its own "culture,"[4] showing reminders and markers of its past Wolf notes fictional "Cultures ... provide important structural frameworks for the worlds in which

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[1] *The Afterblight Chronicles* is a series of shared-world novels published by now-defunct Abaddon Books, an imprint of Rebellion Publishing. The Abaddon imprint, in addition to the Afterblight series, also published two trilogies of novels*, Malory's Knights of Albion,* marketed as dark, supernatural stories that Malory cut from his Arthurian romance, and *Hunter of Sherwood*, a series following Guy of Gisborne as he hunts a mysterious cult with the aid of a Robin Hood who is far more bandit than lovable rogue.

[2] *Robin of Sherwood: The Complete Series*. Written and created by Richard Carpenter (1984-86; London: ITV, 2018) DVD.

[3] Christopher Kuipers, personal conversation with author, December 4, 2018.

[4] Mark J. P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

Carl B. Sell, "The Hooded Man Reborn: The Post-Apocalyptic Robin Hood of Paul Kane's *Hooded Man* Novels," in "Explorations in Realism and Verisimilitude in Post-Medieval Robin Hood Texts," in Alexander L. Kaufman, ed., special issue, *The Bulletin of the International Association for Robin Hood Studies* 7 (2025): 32-45. DOI: 10.33043/BIARHS.7.1.32-45.

they are integrated" alongside mindsets, norms, and social mores.[5] Feudalism provides that culture, that structure, for Kane's fiction: the new feudal state is the new norm and establishes how the characters interact. In post-Blight Britain, each region is protected and run by their own small, spatially-defined communities, which are often led by a single person or a small group of leaders with status in the community—nobles in all but name.

One such leader is De Falaise, Kane's answer to the Sheriff of Nottingham: a sociopathic tyrant, he is not only positioned to fill the narrative position of Sheriff, but he is also so much crueler and more inclined to violence and retribution that he evokes other classic post-apocalyptic despots. [6] Robert (Rob) and his allies are narrative foils to De Falaise, and their resistance shows the danger of absolutist rule, even after an apocalyptic event. Consequently, Kane's Robert is seen as "one of the people," and his eventual overthrow of the Sheriff is both noble deed and victory for the common man. The Matter of the Greenwood has always had its medieval and modern elements intermingled in the public consciousness, so Kane's populist Robin Hood is something of a departure from the common modern trope of Robin Hood as a disgraced nobleman and loyal monarchist. Kane's engagement with the tradition is not via the medieval/early modern materials but through modern texts that that incorporate the medieval and the popular: the result is a pastiche of definitive Robin Hoods of modern popular culture.

Kane's Robin Hood is a pastiche, but one that is primarily drawn from Pyle and Carpenter. Though Stephen Knight accurately notes that there is not "a single authentic text" when we think of Robin Hood, individual authors, like Kane, frequently make clear connections to the versions that they draw from in their own works.[7] Pyle and Carpenter thus provide Kane not only with key frameworks and adapted plot points, but they also supply the author with a kind of "canonical authority" for his Hooded Man.[8] These are the versions of the character and the tradition that writers, filmmakers, and audiences have experienced as their "real" Robin Hoods, and these form a storyworld, or a new canon, by which other versions are judged.[9]

The *Hooded Man* trilogy adds post-apocalyptic elements to the traditional trajectory of Robin Hood retellings across *Arrowhead* (2008)*, Broken Arrow* (2010)*,* and *Arrowland* (2010). Kane creates the secondary world's culture by adapting familiar versions of the modern Robin Hood story, using Pyle as the basis and the mystic flair characteristic of *Robin of Sherwood.* Kane is operating in the shared world of the *Afterblight Chronicles*: entries in the series share a singular apocalyptic event and worldstate, but they are otherwise disunified from each other. Kane changes that disunity within the *Hooded Man* trilogy, and with the extended space to work he also forces a doubled suspension of disbelief by connecting the setting with the fantasy of the past. Robin Hood is the structure, onto which Kane adds the connection between the post-apocalyptic setting; in a third turn the Robin Hood stories elevate reader enjoyment to the fantastic enjoyment of pulp.

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[5] Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 182.

[6] The connections to *The Walking Dead* are prominent, particularly the Governor and the town of Woodbury (vol. 5-8) and Negan and his Saviors (vol. 17-21) in Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore, *The Walking Dead*, ed. Aubrey Sitterson (Portland: Image Comics, 2003-2019).

[7] Stephen Knight, *Reading Robin Hood: Content, Form and Reception in the Outlaw Myth* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 225.

[8] Knight, *Reading Robin Hood*, 227.

[9] The concept of the storyworld is articulated by Lesley A. Coote, *Storyworlds of Robin Hood: The Origins of a Medieval Outlaw* (London: Reaktion Books, 2020), and applicable outside medieval contexts, too.

Readers must "buy in" to both an apocalyptic event *and also* a supernatural force that mystically selects who will become Robin Hoods (plural).

ADAPTATION AND APPROPRIATION AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hutcheon argues that as long as adaptations are "acknowledged as adaptations *of specific texts*," then adaptations pulling from multiple sources will also be clearly recognized as an adaptation.[10] Kane acknowledges his sources via the narrative structures he selects from Pyle and the nature-based mysticism and descriptive name "Hooded Man" from Carpenter. Kane does not fully buy in to the mysticism of Carpenter's "Son of Herne" trope, allowing readers to question whether the spiritual elements actually occur within the narrative or whether those components are an extended coping mechanism that allows Robert to soften the traumatic loss of his family and stressors involved in involuntary leadership of a new community of survivors.

However, Kane's story, while adaptive in nature, is something slightly more than that, too: it is an attempt at a version of the Robin Hood narrative structure superimposed on a shared setting.[11] This is Robin Hood in an unexpected genre and setting; Kane's works showcase the ubiquitous nature of the heroic outlaw not only in traditional texts but also within popular culture shared worlds. Kane's reliance on source texts for adaptation are vital, but he also uses a general mythic structure and framework that pulls together all tales of Robin Hood in our collective consciousness. In this way, we can begin to see what Knight refers to as the "literary succession" of Robin Hood tales, a kind of textual lineage, which culminates in Kane's novels, and one that stems from Pyle and Carpenter, but inevitably includes prior and subsequent texts.[12] While Knight notes that such a lineage is difficult to define and follow through most of the Robin Hood corpus, authors who embrace pastiche overtly make prominent those narrative lines of descent.[13]

The Robin Hood "rhizome" is a popular framework for analysis of those connections.[14] To help identify the "rhizomatic links" between Kane and his sources, and understand the categories of borrowing, I will use Julie Sanders' understanding of *appropriation*, which builds upon Hutcheon's theory of adaptation. Sanders defines adaptation similarly to Hutcheon, as a work signaling relationship to source(s) though overt or "embedded references."[15] Sanders further defines appropriation as a product that "frequently reflects a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product and domain," but one that "may certainly still require the kinds of 'reading alongside' or comparative approaches that juxtapose (at least) one text against another."[16] Consequently, Sanders sees appropriation as its own product, one that relies on adaptation but also is distinct in its deviance from source text(s): "certainly appropriations tend to have a more complicated, intricate and sometimes embedded relationship to their intertexts rather than a straightforward film version of a canonical or well-known text would suggest."[17] Kane does not directly replicate either of his primary sources in a one-to-one relationship; instead, he appropriates the two sources and embeds them into a third source, the shared world of the *Afterblight Chronicles*, thereby creating a Robin Hood text through appropriation.

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[10] Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 21.

[11] Kane's effort finds a natural comparison to the Arthurian Tradition's use in the *Warhammer* and *Warhammer 40,000* shared tabletop storyworlds in games and novels.

[12] Knight, *Reading Robin Hood*, 228.

[13] Knight, *Reading Robin Hood*, 231.

[14] Knight, *Reading Robin Hood*, 228. Here, Knight provides the definition for a "rhizome" as "simply a different form of organic structure with a variant but operative force of creation and dissemination." This provides a kind of linear model from which to trace connections and to find a "culmination point" for the links between texts and rhizomes.

[15] Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 35.

[16] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 35.

Consequently, Kane is also able to draw upon the shared storyworld of the *Afterblight Chronicles* alongside the Robin Hood story mythology and textual lineage (its literary history). This inclusion of the *Afterblight Chronicles* speaks to Sander's point that "[m]ythical literature depends upon, incites even, perpetual acts of reinterpretation in new contexts, a process that embodies the very idea of appropriation."[18] Kane's use of formulaic Robin Hood components in the context of a post-apocalyptic world engages the processes Sanders calls a use of "mythic templates," wherein "Myth is continuously evoked, altered and reworked, across cultures and across generations."[19] Kane alters the tradition just enough to fit the *Afterblight* world and minimizing reinvention in *Arrowhead*, the first novel in the trilogy.[20] Thus, Kane fuses two distinct "mythic templates" and produces something that further connects both traditions.[21]

THE ECOSYSTEM OF ROBIN HOOD AS HERO

While King Arthur[22] may be the mythic figure most closely associated with heroic return, Robin Hood is more aligned with the needs of the people.[23] Both King Arthur and Robin Hood, as Stephanie L. Barczewski notes, are inherently linked to aspects of British national identity, and they are purposely used by authors and artists to bolster unity in the face of foreign enemies.[24] Robin Hood's link to British national identity serves as a rallying point in the wake of the Blight, helping Britain transition from the apocalypse and re-create, or return, to a society that retains some core essence of its pre-apocalyptic history. Only Arthur can be King, but—as Richard

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[17] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 36.

[18] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 80.

[19] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 81-82.

[20] *Arrowhead* uses the Pyle framework to full effect; subsequent novels deviate considerably.

[21] While the post-apocalyptic aspects from contemporary *Walking Dead* comics are certainly not "mythic," especially not in the same way a figure like Robin Hood is, they themselves are texts that have established certain genre expectations,in the same way readers expect Robin Hood to become an outlaw or to be an archer. Readers familiar with the post-apocalypse genre will also expect to encounter a villainous tyrant who operates like a monarch. Kane's novels deliver both.

[22] Stephen Knight also connects Robin Hood and King Arthur, especially in the linking of textual adaptation and "lineage" (what we might also term "literary history"); see Knight, *Reading Robin Hood*, 227-28 and 353-54.

[23] At Abaddon Books, individual authors produced tales of the post-Blight world for *The Afterblight Chronicles*, a series that was never concluded due to the decline of the press. Paul Kane told me in our 2016 email exchanges that he was interested in following up the *Hooded Man* trilogy with an Arthurian variant, drawing on Scott K. Andrews's short story "The Man Who Would Not Be King," published in the *Afterblight* omnibus *School's Out Forever* (2012).

[24] Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Myth and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Barczewski elucidates this point throughout her monograph as the impetus behind the continual re-use and recycling of King Arthur and Robin Hood: both figures are key British identifiers and are used for nationalist reasons. Kane, even if he does not knowingly participate in this discussion, chose Robin Hood as a figure to fight a French invader and reclaim Nottingham from oppression, an effective rallying point for the survivors of the Blight.

Carl B. Sell, "The Hooded Man Reborn: The Post-Apocalyptic Robin Hood of Paul Kane's *Hooded Man* Novels," in "Explorations in Realism and Verisimilitude in Post-Medieval Robin Hood Texts," in Alexander L. Kaufman, ed., special issue, *The Bulletin of the International Association for Robin Hood Studies* 7 (2025): 32-45. DOI: 10.33043/BIARHS.7.1.32-45.

Carpenter envisioned in *Robin of Sherwood*—anyone can take on the mantle of Robin Hood. Kane adds that elective element to the "nature" of the *Afterblight Chronicles*, in which the "Blight" or "Cull" viral event killed anyone without O negative blood and shattered society. The Cull is the "nature" of the *Afterblight* shared narrative world, a default worldstate into which Kane introduces Robin Hood. Wolf defines a world's "nature" as both its physical setting and also the "laws" that govern it, noting that nature "deals with the materiality of a world, its physical, chemical, and biological structures of the ecosystems connecting them."[25] The Cull is very much a biological structure for the story and provides the "ecosystem" in which British police officer Robert Stokes finds himself: the Cull kills his wife and son before his eyes, and the Cull is the reason his home is burned by those seeking to quarantine the virus.

This ecosystem returns neo-feudalism to a worldstate previously defined by modern democracy, a common trope in post-apocalyptic fiction. Audiences expect a return to the familiar, "simpler" time of the neo-medieval past in such stories, but this perpetuates a medievalism, an anachronistic rupture between the fictional and real medieval pasts—a similar rupture operating in all Robin Hood stories, what Knight refers to as its traditional "date and place," and a reimagined neomedieval "real."[26] While Knight is referencing "the historicist obsession with the real Robin Hood,"[27] Kane is complicating what is "real" by creating an imagined framework. Though Kane does tie his Robin Hood to the same expected physical setting (Knight's "place"), Sherwood Forest and Nottingham, he reinterprets the time. The physical nature of Robin Hood, though, matters a great deal, and so Robert Stokes makes his way to Sherwood Forest. In Sherwood, he eventually takes up the mantle of another Robert: the Hooded Man himself, Robin Hood. From there, Robert seeks to restore a sense of order to Nottingham with his band of allies, survivors from the United Kingdom and the United States who most willingly fill their roles as Kane's stand-ins for the Merry Men of Pyle's, and who have also responded to the mystical call of Sherwood and its Hooded Man.

Kane's Hooded Man framework uses Sanders' idea of appropriation for clarity, because this Robin Hood becomes a "mythic template" engaged via "reinterpretation," a process that Sanders defines as the use and diffusion of stories and characteristics that exist in a myth or other story, and which are used to draw audiences into a new, updated version of the narrative.[28] *Arrowhead* sets up the fall of the modern world and the resurgence of the medieval way of life, demonstrating the principles James Lovegrove finds in apocalyptic narratives that "allows humankind to make a fresh start by rediscovering old ways. We can dispense with the machinery and industrialization, which have put us at odds with the demands and rhythms of Nature, and embrace a simpler, purer form of existence."[29] For non-specialists, this "simpler, pure form" is often imagined as medieval, which reasserts itself after the modern comforts of contemporary living have been scrubbed away by the Cull. As Kane notes, "The virus [that creates the secondary world's setting] basically levels the playing field again and forces us to start almost from scratch—

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[25] Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 172.
[26] Knight, *Reading Robin Hood*, 242.
[27] Knight, *Reading Robin Hood*, 242.
[28] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 4.
[29] James Lovegrove, "The World at the End of the World: Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Science Fiction," in *Strange Divisions and Alien Territories: The Sub-Genres of Science Fiction*, ed. Keith Brooke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 97-111, 99.

Carl B. Sell, "The Hooded Man Reborn: The Post-Apocalyptic Robin Hood of Paul Kane's *Hooded Man* Novels," in "Explorations in Realism and Verisimilitude in Post-Medieval Robin Hood Texts," in Alexander L. Kaufman, ed., special issue, *The Bulletin of the International Association for Robin Hood Studies* 7 (2025): 32-45. DOI: 10.33043/BIARHS.7.1.32-45.

as the novels progress, we see that even the use of vehicles and [modern] weaponry starts to tail off—so we just fall back into patterns that are familiar to us on some level."[30]

For an appropriated narrative to be successful, there must be identifiable, yet distinct, patterns and figures for readers to recognize, and Kane's correspondence jumpstarted my thinking about how his Hooded Man connects to what Sanders shows is the characteristic appropriation of a template, a reinvention of myth. Knight's rhizomatic model also clearly indicates the need for familiarity with variance: for a reinterpretation succeed, audiences must first make clear connections to the familiar and De Falaise is consequently the first major character readers meet in *Arrowhead*: a powerful French gunrunner and mercenary leader, De Falaise is drawn to Britain's vulnerability:

> Something about that definitely appealed to De Falaise ... Just like in 1066, when William the Conqueror's Norman army had landed at Pevensey beach and then defeated Harold at Hastings, De Falaise would claim [Britain] as his own. William had quashed all the rebellions after he was crowned king, so why shouldn't he do the same? It was also the chance to put right a few wrongs. The outrages of the Hundred Years' War, for example, when repeated attempts to take over France had failed—and then, of course, there was Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. That still stung ... A war which, at its heart, went back much further [than Napoleon himself].[31]

De Falaise uses medieval history and his own nationalistic grievances to justify his conquest of Britain, planning a conquest of Britain by the French to reverse the indignities of the Hundred Years' War. This is a use of historical facts from our own timeline, what Wolf terms the "Primary World,"[32] to inform and fill in the gaps for the created "Secondary World" of the *Afterblight Chronicles*, building a foundation of genuine national difference into the animosity that exists between sheriff and outlaw.

Wolf describes the "secondary world infrastructures" for created and shared worlds, and one of those infrastructures is "Philosophy," which Wolf argues is brought to the fore "through characters' points of view; through statements made explicitly in dialogue or implicitly in characters' behavior and choices."[33] Certainly, the new Sheriff's philosophy is clear: the strong rule and the past should be rectified. While De Falaise's philosophical outlook is connected to post-apocalyptic genre expectations, his ideas are also inherently informed by the tyrannical Sheriff of Nottingham from the legends of Robin Hood (which Kane introduces to his readers by way of Pyle). De Falaise's overt cruelty and sociopathic oppression create the secondary world's "infrastructure" for the opposing philosophy of a new Robin Hood. In short, by setting up a feudal overlord, Kane is keeping the secondary world's myth of the Hooded Man and his adversaries alive and relatable to a modern audience by way of their familiarity with the primary world's modern Robin Hood tradition and post-apocalyptic genre conventions. Kane thus relies on an established primary template to create the secondary philosophies that govern his version of Nottingham.

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[30] Paul Kane, email exchange, November 8, 2016.

[31] Paul Kane, *Hooded Man: An Omnibus of Post-Apocalyptic Novels* (Oxford: Abaddon Books, 2013), 46.

[32] Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 53.

[33] Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 192.

The new Sheriff starts his rule in Nottingham Castle,[34] specifically playing into the racial tropes of Norman (French) oppression of Saxons (British) that have dominated Robin Hood retellings since the nineteenth century. The symbolism behind his choice does not escape De Falaise: he knows the history of oppression associated with Nottingham and its Sheriff under "Bad" King John via (primary and secondary world) Robin Hood stories, and he relishes the grandeur associated with the mythic importance of the site. I assert that this kind of mythologizing of the past fits with what Maurice Keen calls a "part of the great medieval legacy" of modern-day stories.[35] While Keen specifically meant "nursery stories,"[36] like those of King Arthur and Robin Hood that were told to children, a post-apocalyptic, neo-medieval fantasy series also falls into this category. Keen shows how the past is romanticized through such tales, and Kane's novel reveals the consequence: De Falaise has become who he was meant to be through his appropriation of history, a new medieval oppressor, a modern (yet medieval) Sherriff of Nottingham.

REINVENTING ROBIN HOOD NARRATIVES

In the same way that *Robin of Sherwood* reworked the stories of Robin Hood to allow for two men to hold the same title as the defender of Sherwood, Kane works within our established primary world storylines—both the surviving premodern poems of Robin Hood and modern retellings—to situate his novels. A drastic change to the Robin Hood mythic template, however, is the fact that Robert, unlike the Hooded Men that came before him, is not an outlaw. Robert was a policeman before the Cull made a police force redundant; as he was an officer of the law himself, the best parallel to Robin Hood as a character that we can draw here is neither that of an outlaw, nor truly one who is a noble, but instead the premodern yeomen Robin Hoods of the ballads. A. J. Pollard explores the historical connotations of yeomanry, noting that "[t]he first and oldest is that of household rank, the second and more recent was the extension of the term to describe a social status" and more fully defines a medieval yeoman as "a respectable local worthy."[37] While ambiguous, this best describes Robert Stokes before his election as the Hooded Man: as a police officer, Robert enjoyed some measure of general deference, if not outright respect, before the Cull. Robert also renounces any rank he may have to any existing police or army when he abandons the ruins of his home for the refuge of Sherwood: this is a fundamental separation of the Hooded Man from mainstream society, a core element to the Robin Hood tradition. While Robert is no outlaw, until he forms the Rangers he is also no longer an authority figure.[38] Pollard's assertion that, by the twenty-first century, "Robin Hood was the personification of non-gentry aspirations" fits well with Robert's origins, which are somewhere between humble and authoritarian.[39]

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[34] Kane, *Hooded Man*, 50.
[35] Maurice Keen, *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend*, rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1.
[36] Keen, *Outlaws of Medieval Legend*, 1.
[37] A. J. Pollard, *Imagining Robin Hood: The Late Medieval Stories in Historical Context* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 30, 35.
[38] "Rangers" is a reference to the Dúnedain of Tolkien's Middle-earth. Robert's Rangers, like Aragorn's Rangers, travel the breadth of Nottinghamshire and, later, Britain and the United Kingdom, forging alliances and delivering justice. Robert's men carry bows, arrows, and swords, and they wear hooded cloaks like their leader. This is a double reference: S. M. Stirling's series the *Novels of the Change* also uses the term "Rangers" to identify the peace-keepers of Stirling's own post-apocalyptic America, who also wield bows as a nod to Tolkien. Tolkien himself sought to establish a mythic past for England, so these authors' references are particularly apt.

Stephen Knight notes that "Robin Hood represents principled resistance to wrongful authority," observing that the "mythic figure of the good outlaw" characteristic of Robin Hood need not be negative or even truly official, especially if named outlaw by an unjust or illegitimate ruler.[40] Certainly, De Falaise considers Robert an outlaw in the most literal sense: the Rangers operate outside of the "law" that the new Sheriff maintains. Robert is a cultural deviant, according to De Falaise, and that is all the outlawry needed for a heroic protagonist. But Robin Hood can also be a "lord of misrule," providing "some type of resistance to authority," whether lawful, benevolent, or malevolent.[41] De Falaise is lawful only in as much that he decreed that he is the law; Robert's resistance to De Falaise is thus resistance to "law," and he is therefore an "outlaw."

When Robert takes over Nottingham, he is, by virtue of defeating a tyrant and assuming leadership, no longer an outlaw: he replaces De Falaise's tyrannical rules with his own communal laws, treating all as equal and establishing a new form of common law, a reversion to tradition that plays into the nostalgic idealization of feudalism. When Robert embraces his role as a leader, others respect his rules and customs in Nottingham: this includes his staunch refusal to use guns or modern weaponry of any sort in favor of bows and swords. Respect for Robert's conventions and insistence on pre-modern customs is a plot point that initiates the ending of the cycle of outlawry and rebellion, what Pollard refers to as "legitimate rebellion against a regime that is undermined by an evil and corrupt minister."[42] For the remainder of the trilogy, threats to Nottingham are solely external. Robert has recreated a feudal state that is a break with the current "natural" order vis-à-vis Wolf. With the social norms that are in place in this alternate timeline, and with De Falaise defeated, the entirety of Nottingham now is outside of the natural order of the new, post-apocalyptic world, thus making the whole region an out*lier* if not exactly the zone of an out*law*.

Robert's role as the Hooded Man is, as a result, inherently more complex than Pyle's Robin Hood. Pyle's Hood is a man surviving after an incident placed him outside of the natural order; Kane's Robert, on the other hand, must reclaim that natural order and reassert it when the entire structure of modern civilization falls away, thereby embracing the past to pacify the future. Robin Hood must fight for justice, but only until such a time that the king returns or the Sheriff is overthrown; the Hooded Man, however, must fight in perpetuity against the growing darkness of the post-Blight world, and those he leaves behind when he passes must also continue that fight. Robert is much like the version of Robin Hood that Knight describes as having "[t]he image of the hero that is a war leader, a Wallace rather than a fugitive outlaw,"[43] and this is prominent in the final novels, *Broken Arrow* and *Arrowland*, where Robert and the Rangers must defend Nottingham. While they fight De Falaise in *Arrowhead*, the Hooded Man is more a reluctant resistance leader than a reigning general.

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[39] Pollard, *Imagining Robin Hood*, 31.
[40] Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), xi.
[41] Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography*, 10.
[42] Pollard, *Imagining Robin Hood*, 216.
[43] Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography*, 81.

All of Roberts's actions, though, are based in Robin Hood's desire to right the wrongs of a corrupt government and to reassert a just reign. While De Falaise uses medievalism to his own ends and to establish power, Robert and his followers revert to what might be considered medieval-ish[44] ways of life for long-term survival. When Robert flees to Sherwood, he lives in the forest, eking out a living hunting and gathering, living off of the land, making his own bow and arrows, and honing his craft and practicing until he is a dead-shot. His life is sustainable in the new world order, and a few years after the Cull, Robert comes across a clearing:

> A couple of cars, a couple of vans, but these were few and far between. He guessed petrol was a rare commodity these days, with nobody to keep refilling pumps, without anyone to bring it over from abroad.
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> Some had reverted to using horses for transportation ... Set up here and there were makeshift tables, trays with legs, or blankets laid on the ground. People were getting things out of their bags, arranging them carefully.
>
> ... It was more like a market ... Except that here the traders were swapping items rather than paying money for them ... This part of England, at least, appeared to have regressed back to the barter system.[45]

The regression to trade and market days harkens back to what many perceive as medieval: merchants and craftsmen buying and trading goods and services with one another. After the break-up of modern society, the people of Nottingham returned to the ways that had worked for hundreds of years before standardized money (and the capitalist world systems) became the dominant social structure—again, this echoes Wolf's description of the "culture," "nature," and "philosophy" of created worlds, and in this secondary world the characters have themselves created a shared world for themselves to inhabit.[46] The post-apocalyptic trope of becoming "medieval" again is put to two very starkly different uses, in De Falaise and in Robert.

ROBIN HOOD'S ROLE IN THE APOCALYPSE

Robert leads; De Falaise rules. The contrasts are made extremely overt when Robert declares, "De Falaise rules through terror, not trust ... that's not how it will work here."[47] Roberts's philosophy is the new (old) way of the world: Robert values trust and equality over all, and this cultural principle is central to his Nottingham. De Falaise's philosophy is the old (new) way of the world, a tyrannical version of the feudal world, ruling through fear and oppression, modeling himself after

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[44] Stephen Knight uses the term "quasi-medieval" to describe Pyle's Robin Hood, which is also a phrase to consider here; see Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography*, 134.

[45] Paul Kane, *Hooded Man: An Omnibus of Post-Apocalyptic Novels* (Oxford: Abaddon Books, 2013), 36-37.

[46] The markets and trade systems are also reminiscent of the Woodbury of *The Walking Dead*, with its Wal-Mart McDonald's, racetrack, and fighting arena used to lift the spirits of the populace and to provide them with entertainment reminiscent of the time before the zombie outbreak. However, it is the arena that evokes medievalism: while the pit fights and celebration of violence have closer links to the historical Roman arena fights, contemporary audiences see these fights synonymous with the Middle Ages. See Kirkman and Moore, *The Walking Dead*, esp. issues 27-43. The Governor, much like De Falaise, uses his own convenient interpretations of the past to exert his absolutist reign on his community, and while there is a social hierarchy both in Woodbury and in post-Blight Nottingham, the world of the *Hooded Man* leans more toward an idyllic version of the medieval past while Woodbury conforms to the grimy barbarism that many people see as being truly medieval.

[47] Kane, *Hooded Man*, 96.

Carl B. Sell, "The Hooded Man Reborn: The Post-Apocalyptic Robin Hood of Paul Kane's *Hooded Man* Novels," in "Explorations in Realism and Verisimilitude in Post-Medieval Robin Hood Texts," in Alexander L. Kaufman, ed., special issue, *The Bulletin of the International Association for Robin Hood Studies* 7 (2025): 32-45. DOI: 10.33043/BIARHS.7.1.32-45.

the Sheriff of legend. Robert's philosophy and laws position him as a heroic savior and a modern-thinking Robin Hood—the two men present ideologies that are inevitably at odds with one another and yet were present in the medieval Robin Hood mythos.

This dichotomy also extends beyond the immediate pairing of sheriff and outlaw. While De Falaise and his troops use modern weapons—assault rifles and guns of every sort, tanks, and grenades—Robert and his Rangers ban the use of such technology and rely only on medieval weaponry—bows, swords, shields, and the like—all save Bill, who will not part with his shotgun or his helicopter, for which he eventually receives special dispensation. This is, essentially, the final, telling battle between modernity enabled by feudalism and medievalism fueled by justice and community.

De Falaise is of a distinctly medieval mindset and uses touchstones of modernity—specifically his weapons and means—to force Nottingham back to the "Dark Ages." In contrast, Robert remains a modern thinker—wanting justice and shared power for all—and he uses medieval means to attain his ideal way of life. De Falaise uses the oppressive connotations of medievalism, those ideas linked to the use of the word "medieval" as barbarous, as an option that is least desirable to attempt to assert his authority. It is Robert, with his justice-for-all philosophy, who embodies the romantic hope of an entire people as the Hooded Man, a nationalist rallying point to defeat foreign oppression.[48] De Falaise uses these same nationalist leanings to enact a kind of revenge plot in the name of France to punish England for the nation's abuses during the Hundred Years' War. It is clear, however, that the medieval history between France and England is only a justification that the new Sherriff of Nottingham uses in order for him to gain power if for no other reason than it is his desire to do so. Robert, on the other hand, uses medievalist elements (bows, armor, swords, and shields) to fight a contemporary war; in this instance, we see the kind of nationalist "spirit,"[49] one that Amy S. Kaufman and Paul B. Sturtevant describe as a particularly worrisome trend among those who employ the Middle Ages for their own end.

De Falaise and Robert's personal and methodological oppositions allow Kane to fully explore the "medieval nostalgia to promote and defend two very different forms of nationalism."[50] While Kaufman and Sturtevant refer to the far-right, with an example in Turkey, the attribution of "far-right extremist" could also be applied to De Falaise, who actively wishes to rule over the people of Nottingham and believes that his use of terror tactics is fully justifiable. The complication is that the Hooded Man uses similar tactics, but they are idealized—both by Kane and most other Robin Hood novelists and creators—because these acts of terror are perpetrated by those seeking to unseat the tyrant rather than to become one. In fiction, intentions matter. Indeed, when Robert fills the power vacuum left by De Falaise's death, he does not want to govern Nottingham, but he knows that someone must lead its people. However, Robert chooses to rule by the application of humanistic laws rather than brute force—the latter of which so many audiences associate with the governing tactics of medieval rulers.

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[48] Amy S. Kaufman and Paul B. Sturtevant, *The Devil's Historians: How Modern Extremists Abuse the Medieval Past* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 30-32. Kaufman and Sturtevant's book makes a key point in Chapter 2, "Nationalism and Nostalgia," about the dangers posed by those who embrace the nationalist spirit of the medieval heroes and stories.

[49] Kaufman and Sturtevant, *The Devil's Historians*, 32.

[50] Kaufman and Sturtevant, *The Devil's Historians*, 45.

THE HOODED MAN AS LEADER

Robert's justice is very similar to that seen within television representations of Robin Hood, notably *Robin of Sherwood* (1984-1986) and BBC's *Robin Hood* (2006-2009), and his followers draw on Pyle, as well, in their endorsement of his leadership. Kane appropriates Pyle for Jack Finlayson (Little John)'s membership pledge, in a scene that parallels nearly word-for-word:[51]

> "Word's spreadin' about what's gone on here. Stories about a hooded man helping the communities, about how he took on a bunch of men single-handed at a market and won. About how he gave back food and supplies to those that had been robbed by that son of a bitch holed up at the castle, pardon my p's and q's. I figure that you've got a cause I wouldn't mind fighting for."[52]

The Hooded Man's cause is inherently connected to the Robin Hood of legend, especially the stories that were reworked, edited, refashioned, and illustrated by Howard Pyle, but they are presented through the context of television-style democratic justice. Because of Kane's adherence to Pyle as his main literary foundation—Pyle as reimagined through the lens of Richard Carpenter's *Robin of Sherwood*, at that—the ending of *Arrowhead* is extremely predictable. By following the familiar template of Robin Hood stories, specifically reliving Pyle's "quarterstaff episode" of the meeting between Robin Hood and Little John, events have already been written, and the story already has already been told. As J. C. Holt notes, "[t]he legend [of Robin Hood] endured through adaptation. In each generation it acquired new twists from shifts in composition, outlook, and interests of the audience."[53] It is because of this reworking and rewriting of the established mythic template of Robin Hood that *Arrowhead* readers know that, by the end of the novel, the Hooded Man will rise and the Sheriff will fall: tyranny under the guise of government will be defeated, and true rule of law will be re-established. The medieval(ist) world of "Merrie England"[54] is thus reasserted through a series of reworked and appropriated narratives, though the mystical elements add an additional layer, what Knight would call a "random inclusion of material," to a post-apocalyptic recovery story.[55]

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[51] Howard Pyle, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (New York: Penguin., 2006) 8-13.

[52] Kane, *Hooded Man*, 115.

[53] J. C. Holt, *Robin Hood*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 3.

[54] Barczewski discusses the creation of an idealized English national identity tied to the adoption of the legends of Robin Hood and King Arthur, an imagined medievalist world where these two figures are used to create cultural unity around their stories of nationality and the defense of Britain. Inherently, the idea of a combined identity that showcases these heroes as the predominant glimpse of medieval England is a subject that her monograph explores writ large, but her conclusion, "'We shall be one people': King Arthur and Robin Hood in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," points to the use of Robin Hood and Arthur as defenders of England against invaders (233), which Kane echoes in Rob's defense of his home from the new Sheriff De Falaise; see Barczewski, *Myth and Identity*, 233.

[55] Knight, *Reading Robin Hood*, 250. While Knight is, of course, not thinking about mysticism and post-apocalyptic literature, the inclusion of these two elements of fantasy that are not necessarily unified in single texts could be a part of both innovation to the textual history of Robin Hood and also something that moves the narrative beyond the traditional Robin Hood story.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: REINVENTING THE OUTLAW

Kane's trilogy is simultaneously new and familiar due to his appropriative adaptation of the tradition within the shared world of the *Afterblight Chronicles*.[56] The "readings alongside" that Sanders shows are necessary in appropriations, Howard Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* and Richard Carpenter's *Robin of Sherwood*, are part of the "mandatory" intertextuality at play, alongside other generic tropes that common in post-apocalyptic fictions. By inexorably linking key elements of their storylines to his own narrative, Kane's novels are a new vehicle for the Robin Hood tradition and also an introduction to Pyle and Carpenter for readers familiar with apocalyptic fantasy, fusing neomedieval stories to tales that chronicle the downfall of modernity.

Medievalized Robin Hood stories, such as those in Kane's trilogy, keep Robin Hood prominent in audience consciousness, which in turn contributes to periodic media booms, which we are in at the moment: Kane's novels were published 2008-2010 (and drew upon the momentum from Minghella and Allen's BBC *Robin Hood* series that aired from 2006-2009),[57] Perter DeLuise's 2009 television movie *Beyond Sherwood Forest*, Ridley Scott's 2010 feature film *Robin Hood*, the *Doctor Who* episode "Robot of Sherwood" from 2014, and culminating in more recent media works, such as Otto Bathurst's *Robin Hood* (2018), Bill Thomas's *The Adventures of Maid Marian* (2022), MGM+'s streaming series *Robin Hood* (2025), and Michael Sarnoski's forthcoming film *The Death of Robin Hood* (2026). Kane's contribution is thus an active contribution in a lengthy adaptive and appropriative tradition that has continually revived in the twenty-first century. Adaptive and referential texts, like Kane's novels, showcase the literary lineage of textual works and add popular film and television innovations; they demonstrate that the true Robin Hood is inherently adaptable.

The Matter of the Greenwood continues to enchant and reenchant audiences, whether viewers or readers, and while Kane closely followed his sources in *Arrowhead*, the novel marks the end of the traditional Robin Hood narrative informed by Pyle. Kane's series continued past that end-point, and while the first novel is self-contained, with an internal conclusion, the book is part of a trilogy as well as a shared universe. Loose ends from this book's plot, and the extension of the series into further novels, means that there is a lack of a "culmination point or external end" to the narrative, which is what Knight considers a "rhizomatic plateau": the shared lineage of a rhizomatic text creates a connection that extends the material but does not reach the "peak," leaving audiences unsatisfied by the story's failure to adhere closely to the textual tradition.[58] Arrowhead's sequels do make Hoodian connections, but the main rhizome, the Pyle narrative, ends with *Arrowhead*. This leaves Carpenter, and consequentially the mysticism associated with his show, the main throughline of the greenwood. Reliance upon the Carpenter rhizome does not culminate in the death of Kane's Robert Stokes: the Hooded Man is himself not able to die, as it is a title (like Carpenter's Son of Herne) that existed long before Robert himself and will eventually pass to another. Kane's innovation to the mythic template, the Robin Hood rhizome, is not only this link to Robin Hood's continued existence, but also to the shift beyond the "reality" imposed by Pyle and Carpenter's Hoods to an ethereal moniker that can and will continue, much as our interest in the legendary outlaw lives on.

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[56] Wolf states that "Imaginary worlds are inevitably incomplete," *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 38. This is doubly true of the *Afterblight Chronicles*: while Wolf refers to the need for reader/audience participation and the world's continued existence based on reception, Kane's third novel was the last one published in this line before the closure of Abaddon Books. A few reprints and collected short stories were released, including "Flaming Arrow," a final afterward for Kane's *Hooded Man*; it is unknown how the stories in these novels would have continued.

[57] The 2006 series also had its brushes with mysticism or mystic-adjacent storylines that felt more out of place than Carpenter's likely due to the audience not necessarily having the carry-over from the sword and sorcery epics that were popular around *Robin of Sherwood*'s run.

[58] Knight, *Reading Robin Hood*, 236.

Robert Stokes does not call himself Robin Hood, nor consciously play upon the identity, but he remains recognizable as the outlaw, particularly for audiences familiar with Pyle and Carpenter. Readers are never meant to truly believe in a post-apocalyptic narrative, especially one that tends to stretch even the dubious credibility of something like the Cull; but the addition of a neomedieval setting and a (post)modern-day Robin Hood narrative encourages readers to believe that good can still triumph in times of great struggle and upheaval. Perhaps, for a moment, we are even allowed to believe that the mantle of the Hooded Man is merely awaiting a champion to claim it in our own lifetimes.

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