Robin Hood and the Creation of a New Chivalric Archetype

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Introduction

The English Broadside Ballad Archive (EBBA) at UCSB focuses on archiving English Broadside Ballads, as well as offering transcriptions and further increasing the ballads' overall accessibility. My role as an undergraduate research assistant primarily focused on creating facsimile transcriptions, in which the original ballad's text is replaced in Times New Roman typeface, allowing for easier readability. As a common element of English popular culture in the 17th century, working with the ballads has expanded my familiarity with Early Modern culture and society, as well as given me a new appreciation of the importance of remediation process.

Discussion

Before joining the EBBA project, I had no prior experience with remediation, nor had I heard the word before. However, throughout the quarter, I consistently found the remediation process forcing me to think through the ballads in ways I would not have otherwise. Rather than focus on the text itself, format and presentation instead served as the focus of the ballads. Balancing consistency amongst the ballads with improving accessibility while remaining as true to the original ballads as possible reminded me of the importance of presentation when dealing with media outside the typical novel. Furthermore, remaining consistent as far as bolding or italicizing the fonts reminded me of an aspect of the creative process often overlooked.

Remediating ballads of Robin Hood and his misadventures offered an opportunity to examine the formation of a new form of chivalric hero than previously was perpetuated. Earlier expressions of the chivalric hero emphasized the importance of honor and dignity, as well as ability to govern effectively while maintaining fairness and faith. However, Robin Hood's ballads that I worked on suggested different moral lessons of equal importance. As a prototype of the anti-authority hero figure, Robin Hood acts as a medium through which to encourage more practical morality for the common folk. The ballads I worked on emphasized not taking that which one has not earned (The Noble Fisher-Man), quick wit and originality in conjunction with valuing women (ROBIN HOOD'S Chase), and discouraged arrogance or braggadocio (Robin Hood and the Shepherd). As Robin Hood is a timeless character spanning cultures and centuries, accessing these ballads and creating facsimile transcriptions of them gave me new insight as to the origins of satire and comedy writing. Interestingly, ROBIN HOOD'S Chase brought me to recall a similar happening occurring in multiple Robin Hood films I've seen, and it is fascinating that these tales continue to exist in the greater cultural consciousness.