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THE CHAPBOOK AND THE PACE EGG PLAY IN ROCHDALE

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Since 1975, we have been researching into the pace egg tradition in the Lancashire town of Rochdale. In this paper, we intend to present a summary of our findings so far. Firstly, we will describe the plays as they were performed by children between the turn of the century and the 1930s and following this will be a description of the plays from 1930 to the present day as performed by various institutions. We will then examine the changes that have occurred in the tradition during this century. However, our main consideration is to study the part played by printed texts in bringing about these changes in the tradition. We hope to show that statements made in past scholarship concerning the influence of chapbooks on play traditions are too simple, and the amount of attention given to them has overshadowed other important factors.

The following description of the pace egg plays in Rochdale concerns the period from the turn of the century until the 1930s. These dates have been chosen because performances of the plays began to decline in number from the 1930s onwards, and there are few known references to pace egging earlier than the turn of the century. Furthermore, there is a comparative abundance of references to the period in question. These references come mainly from the Rochdale Observer which often reported on performances, and from fieldwork undertaken in the area in the last few years.¹

This fieldwork has shown that pace egging is still extremely well known in the town and is remembered by a great many people in their fifties and over. This suggests that it must have been well known during the first three decades of this century, and the yearly reports in the Rochdale Observer seem to bear this out. There were certainly a great many performances given by a great many teams at any one Eastertime. The teams were made up of boys aged between seven or eight to the mid-teens, who came from the same street, streets, neighbourhood or school, or in the case of the older boys, the same mill. It was generally considered wrong for girls to participate in the plays, although in some cases, they did. The Rochdale Observer in 1909 printed a photograph of an all-girls team,² and one man remembered a team of girl cotton operatives from John Bright's Healey Mill performing around the same time.

Of considerable importance to this study is the fact that most of the teams from the period in question used the text printed in "The Peace Egg", published by the local firm of Edwards and Bryning. This chapbook could be bought at newsagents shops in the town originally for 4d, later 1d. The firm did not start



PLATE 1 "The Pace Egg and its Origins", Rochdale Observer, 14 April 1909

"The picture we reproduce is rather an exceptional one, as girls do not usually take part in the game, only boys. It will, however, serve to show the popularity of the pastime."

printing until 1900, when they took over a printing house in the centre of the town. They first published the chapbook sometime during the first decade of the century, and they subsequently reprinted it several times over the years.³

It is not clear exactly why Edwards and Bryning chose to print the chapbook at this time. A chapbook other than theirs was apparently in use in Rochdale prior to their first edition,⁴ so it is possible they decided to cash in on the existing market. In fact, before 1900, Edwards and Bryning owned a newsagents shop in the town, and one of their suppliers was the Manchester printer Abel Heywood, who also published a Peace Egg chapbook. It may be that Edwards and Bryning sold Heywood's chapbook and then used it as the basis of their own text. Certainly, the two chapbooks are textually virtually identical.

Although most teams used the chapbook, there were exceptions. For example, a team in the 1930s performed a text almost identical to that in the chapbook without actually using the printed text. New members of the team learnt it by heart from those who already knew it. Other ex-pace-egggers have said that the text stuck in the mind once it had been learned, suggesting that it was learnt by any means available, whether from the chapbook or another performer.

The number of boys who made up a pace egg team varied. Although the chapbook contains nine characters, often only six or seven boys took part, and in one case, as few as four. This cutting down on actors was achieved by one boy taking two or more parts. For instance, Hector and the Fool were usually played by the same lad, as were Beelzebub and Devil Doubt. The boy who took this latter part often called himself Dirty Bet, a character who does not appear in the chapbook. This character will be studied in more detail later.

The usual explanation given for the doubling up of parts was that it meant any money or eggs collected would go round five or six better than nine. However, there are examples of teams consisting of more than nine, the rest being made up of helpers and collectors of money and eggs. The number of performers also depended on the availability of actors. In some cases, not enough performers were to be found, which meant they had to double-up on parts or let girls join in. If girls did take part, they usually played Dirty Bet. Different actors, however, preferred different parts. Some liked to play St. George, others Slasher. Two consecutive letters in the Rochdale Observer point to this variation, one saying how Dirty Bet was "the most timid of the neighbourhood and thrust into his part",⁵ the other how he was "always the favoured younger brother of one of the other characters who gloried in the dressing-up and the burnt cork."⁶

Costuming usually depended on what was available. The four fighters, the King of Egypt and the Fool wore their usual clothes - woolly jumper, short or long pants, knee-length socks, clogs, and sometimes a cap. Some teams made card-

board helmets or breastplates, painted silver to look like armour, and dressed in clothes that were too big. Sashes made of coloured ribbon were worn diagonally over the shoulder, with a different colour for each character. These were either made by the boys, their sisters or mothers, or they could be bought with rosettes on them from newsagents. Edwards and Bryning supplied them along with the chapbooks. They also supplied swords, but most teams generally made their own from two pieces of boxwood, or persuaded a local blacksmith to make a cheap tin sword. All the characters blackened their faces with soot or lamp-black, either daubed on all over or as moustaches and beards. The Doctor and Dirty Bet differed in costume from the other characters. The Doctor usually wore a black top hat and either a frock coat or a long outside coat, probably his dad's. He carried a bag in which he kept a bottle to revive Slasher. Dirty Bet was dressed as a woman in a long dress tied round the middle or in a skirt and blouse. He blackened his face, wore a bonnet, and carried a sweeping brush and a basket in which he collected eggs and money donated by the audience.

Performances were given anything up to a fortnight or as little as a day before Good Friday, with some teams performing on Good Friday alone. The widely-held rule was that all performances ceased at midday on Good Friday, although not all did. Some teams rose at six o'clock in the morning on Good Friday to get in as many performances as possible before midday and so earn more. One team had the habit of performing the whole play during Easter week but only half of it, Act I in the chapbook, on Good Friday, for the same reason as above.

Performances were given in the streets with teams moving from one to another, performing once in each one. Some teams visited specific houses where they knew they would be welcomed, invariably houses owned by the well-off, where the financial rewards were that much better. When they were ready to begin the performance, the actors stood around until a crowd gathered round them. Each actor then stepped forward to take part in the play or deliver lines. The fights generally consisted of crossing swords a few times until St. George won. The speeches were delivered in a loud voice, for as the Rochdale Observer suggested in 1912, "what most of them lacked in dramatic talent they made up for in lung power..."⁷. The audience often participated in the performances by making comments or jokes to each other or the boys, which invariably stopped the performance in its tracks while the actors returned the comments. John Trafford Clegg, the Rochdale dialect writer, thought these remarks by audience and pace eggers alike to be such an important part of a performance that he included them in a text he wrote out and published in 1895.⁸

Towards the end of the performances, two elements occurred which do not appear in the chapbook. After the third and final sword fight, Dirty Bet enters and

speaks some or all of the lines attributed to Beelzebub and Devil Doubt in the chapbook. After these, he adds his own speech - one recorded example of which is:

"I've got a basket for my eggs and a pocket for my brass
And two bonnie lips to kiss a bonnie lass
If there's any one wants to kiss me
They'd better be sharp before they miss me"⁹

After these lines, several rhymes are sung; again none of these appear in the chapbook.

"After the actual performance of the play, after all the characters'd completed their spoken parts, the Dirty Bet, or Beelzebub, used to squat down holding his sweeping brush aloft, and the other characters used to form a small circle round and walked round in a clockwise direction and they each chanted a little ditty. Some of the ditties were chanted by all the characters and then each special part was sung by one person. Let me give you an example and then you'll know:

Owd Tossopot, owd Tossopot, owd Tossopot you see
With a bunch of blue ribbon tied under his knee
He's a wary old man, he wears a pigtail
And he's always delighted in drinking codd ale
Fal a day, fal a day, fal a diddle i dun day

Jack the sailor kilt his wife
Cut her throat wi' a carvin' knife
Weep away, weep away
Play the fiddle we're all so gay, we're all so gay

Down in Bent meadows there's plenty of bugs
They climb up your stockings and down in your clog
We'll get a sharp knife and cut their yeds off
We'll have a good supper of bugs' yeds and broth
Fal a day, fal a day, fal a diddle i dun day

Li falera laddy, li falera laddy
Tis our noble George
An' lads if you believe me, I wear me mother's drawers

Li falera laddy, li falera laddy
Tis our noble Slasher
An' lads if you believe me, I make a good egg smasher

Li falera laddy, li falera laddy
Tis our noble Hector
An' lads if you believe me, I make a good collector

Li falera laddy, li falera laddy
Tis our noble King
An' lads if you believe me, I taught 'em how to sing

Li falera laddy, li falera laddy
Tis our noble Prince
An' lads if you believe me, I taught 'em how to fence

Li falera laddy, li falera laddy
Tis our Doctor Jones
An' lads if you believe me, I mend your broken bones

Li falera laddy, li falera laddy
Tis our Dirty Bet
An' lads if you believe me, I get me petticoat wet

Now, that's all the ditties, I think, that we used to sing."¹⁰

There are other rhymes as well as different versions of those given above.

For example:

"The next shop we came to was an old baker's shop
We spied on the cornish some muffins red hot
We pocket them all, one, two, three and four
And turned up our noses and peed on the floor
Fol a day, fol a day, fol a diddle i dun day"¹¹

"There was an old quaker, he was a shoemaker
He went to the petty with a piece of brown paper
The paper was thin, so his finger slipped in
Oh what a mess the poor quaker was in
Fall a day, fall a day, etc."¹²

Generally, different teams sang different sets of rhymes. One team sang different rhymes on different occasions, for example dropping the ruder rhymes at houses where the occupants were known to object. Furthermore, some teams would only sing what they considered to be their own set of rhymes, even if they knew others.

Neither Dirty Bet nor these rhymes appear in the chapbook. However, Dirty Bet is known to have been a character in a play from Failsworth, near Oldham,¹³ as Bessy in a play from Ashton-under-Lyne,¹⁴ and as a character attached to the rushcart ceremonies and morris dance in Rochdale.¹⁵ Some of the rhymes are similar to verses in a cob-coalin' song from Oldham,¹⁶ and Owd Toospot is like the first verse of several pace egg songs from the North West.¹⁷

After the songs were finished, a collection of eggs and money was made. Dirty Bet swept up with his broom and then went round the crowd asking for donations which he placed in his basket. The boys often saved up their collection until after the final performance on Good Friday, so they could spend it all at the annual Easter fair at Hollingworth Lake in the afternoon. Some boys even made a holiday out of it and camped out at the Lake over the weekend.

Performances of the pace egg plays as described apparently became fewer and fewer from the 1930s onwards, although they were last known in the 1950s. Why the performances should have gradually declined like this is not clear - two World Wars were not responsible, because the plays thrived during the First and had already begun to decline before the Second. Some factors which may have been responsible are as follows: firstly, it may be that the performances began to decline as Edwards and Bryning ceased to publish the chapbook. However, this is by no means certain because it is not known when the various editions of the chapbook were printed. The last printing was around 1960, but this was due to a special request from someone interested in the plays who wanted a copy. Edwards and Bryning suggest that prior to that edition, the chapbook had not been printed for some years. However, it seems more likely that Edwards and Bryning ceased printing because they noticed a decline in the number of perfor-

mances. It is unlikely that they would cease printing something that was still popular.

Secondly, the growing popularity up to the 1940s of such entertainments as cinema, football and Bank Holiday day trips, may have provided an alternative means for children to enjoy themselves. Credence is given to this possibility because the pace egg play was regarded by the children involved as just such a form of entertainment. Invariably, ex-pace-egggers talk of the play in the same breath as games such as marbles, whip and top, duckstones, and peggy, as well as Bonfire Night, April Fools' Day, Mischief Night and the May Queen. This lack of distinction between customs and games is not too far-fetched, for games were seasonal just like the customs. For example, football was played in the football season, conkers when horse chestnuts ripened, and invariably one game was in fashion at one moment and out of fashion the next. All these games added up to a full year's entertainment, and they were affected when alternative entertainments appeared.

A further reason why the plays declined may lie in the fact that the pace egggers became involved in a little controversy, at least as far as the Rochdale Observer was concerned. Every Easter, from 1905 to 1919, the Observer reported the pace egg plays. These reports show a gradual change of attitude towards the pace egggers. In 1905, they were praised for "adding much wanted colour to an otherwise dull aspect, and providing considerable amusement in return for the coppers they had collected."¹⁸ In 1908, however, the Observer claimed the plays were "received with almost wearisome reiteration."¹⁹ In 1909, the complaints were stronger: "Of pace egggers, the public had more than enough. They seemed to be more numerous than ever. Wherever one went on Thursday night or yesterday morning, whether into a main thoroughfare or into a side street, there they were regaling the longsuffering inhabitants with the soul-stirring story of St. George, Slasher, the doctor, the black Prince, and Dirty Bet. Generally it was a very realistic performance. Sometimes the thread of the story was temporarily interrupted to allow an angry altercation between some of the actors, but peace was as a rule restored and the 'play' was resumed."²⁰ In 1914, the play "often dinned the long-suffering householders into a state of intense mental distress."²¹ In 1919, "...the pace egggers were more numerous, and truth to tell, a greater nuisance than ever. We have nothing to say in deprecation of any good old custom, but this has degenerated into little more than an excuse for house-to-house begging by raucous-voiced lads who are not content with their 'dramatic' efforts on Good Friday morning, but are perambulating the streets for a week beforehand. It is time it stopped."²²

This series of reports suggests that the pace egggers were making enemies as the years went by. Although the reports end in 1919, it may be that during the

1920s and 30s, the public dislike of the pace eggers eventually assisted in their decline. If this is so, performances ended because people considered them as excuses for cadging, for being wearisome after so many hearings, and even for containing violent confrontations. Assuming that there were a great many teams, the accusations of cadging and being wearisome may well be true, but the altercations are another matter. Some teams doubtless did go looking for trouble and had skirmishes, but others went out of their way to avoid trouble. This is probably a case of a few giving the rest a bad name.

It is possible that there may have been a further factor involved in the decline of the plays, and this was due to the appearance in the late 1920s of a different type of pace egg play which has flourished to the present day. These plays are not given by boys from the same street, but they are organised and performed by institutions, mainly schools. Nine of these are known to have given performances during Easter 1977. These plays are the subject of the second part of this paper.

The start of the new pace egg tradition in Rochdale can be traced to a play text printed in A Play of St. George, the knights and the Dragon, being a Mummung Play for Pace eggers, compiled by John Priestnall M.A. and William E. Mitchell. It was printed by Munro and Scott Ltd. of Perth, and the introduction bears the date 3rd March 1930. At the time it was written, John Priestnall was head of French at Rochdale Municipal High School, and William E. Mitchell was an undergraduate at Manchester University and an old boy of the school, later to become a Rochdale Councillor. In a speech given to the Rochdale Rotary Club in 1963 and reported in the Rochdale Observer,²³ Mitchell explained that he was approached by Priestnall about any ideas he had for a play to be performed by one of the School houses, Royds House, of which Mr. Priestnall was housemaster. Mr. Mitchell suggested the Edwards and Bryning chapbook, but they thought it too short. They used instead the text printed in The Peace Egg in 1884 by Juliana H. Ewing, a children's book writer.²⁴ This was performed by the schoolboys at Easter 1928 and 1929. Priestnall and Mitchell then compiled their own play by following Mrs. Ewing's storyline and using much of her text. To this they added lines from several other texts taken from manuscripts, local history books, scholarly works and chapbooks, including Edwards and Bryning. Considering that Mrs. Ewing had compiled her own text from five other versions, four of which were apparently chapbooks and the other a manuscript copy of the Silverton Mummers' Play from Devon,²⁵ the Priestnall and Mitchell text has quite a mixed pedigree. This, however, was intentional, for Priestnall and Mitchell believed that all mummers' plays had developed from one original play, so by combining the most common lines from as many texts as possible, they intended to recreate this original form.²⁶ The result was a half hour long play featur-

ing the exploits of the four Patron Saints of Britain, including nine sword fights and a dragon.

The first performance of Priestnall and Mitchell's text was given at Easter 1930 on the Cattle Market Ground in the town centre. The performers were the schoolchildren from Royds House at the High School, from now on referred to by its present name, Balderstone Community School. Priestnall produced the first performance and continued to produce the play each year until his death in the early 1940s. Performances have been given every Easter since then, making this year's the forty-ninth in succession.

The play has changed little in form over the years, but the following brief description concerns the years 1976 and 1977.²⁷ The performers are mainly boys from the Upper School, the sixteen to eighteen year olds. The costumes are designed to fit the characters. For instance, the four patron saints wear white surcoats, tied at the waist, coming down to the knees, and they have no facial disguise. They carry wooden swords and fibreglass shields bearing their respective insignias. The Fool is dressed in a jester's suit of red and yellow halves and he carries a stick with balloons tied on to the end with which to hit the other actors. The antagonists are all dressed variously in shirts and tunics. In 1977, apparently to emphasise their difference from the white-clad patron saints, the antagonists were all played by coloured boys. The doctor is dressed as a wizard in a long black cloak and a pointed hat, while Father Time has a long white beard, is dressed in long white robes, and carries a scythe. There is also a four-piece band to provide music, and two prompters in case they forget their lines.

In recent years, the Balderstone School performances have been given towards the end of the last week of the term before the school breaks up for the Easter holidays. There are generally three or four performances which are given in the school gym before an invited audience of children from the same or another school, or old folk from the area. In the past, performances were given in the open air on the Cattle Market or outside the Town Hall in the centre of the town, but these outdoor performances ended when the present producer took over.

The play is acted like a conventional drama and lines are spoken naturally rather than shouted. For instance, the Doctor in 1976 sounded as if he was impersonating Frankie Howerd, albeit unintentionally. The centre of interest in the play revolves around the swordfights. These are very carefully rehearsed and can last several minutes. They generally involve the two fighters standing at opposite ends of the arena and running at each other emitting blood-curdling screams and clashing swords noisily against each other's shields as they pass. This is repeated a few times, often with lines spoken

in between jousts, until they begin to fence, sometimes so fiercely that they invariably break their swords.

Along with these rehearsed battle tactics are rehearsed comedy spots. For instance, during the first cure, the Doctor demonstrates his talent by turning water into wine. He does this by pouring water from one beaker into another where it changes colour. He then pours it into a third beaker and it returns to water. The Fool tries the trick and fails. There is also the joke Priestnall and Mitchell never intended but which every schoolboy knows, when St. Patrick declares he has 'come from the bogs'. The audience are generally asked to participate in the play by singing along to the songs, cheering St. George and giving money to the collection at the end of the performance which covers production costs and goes to charity, usually the Rochdale children's fund.

The Priestnall and Mitchell play has been used in one form or another by several other schools in Rochdale, and four of them gave performances in 1977.²⁸ Furthermore, schools in Keighley (West Yorkshire) and Bollington (Cheshire) have also performed in recent years.²⁹

However, not all the recent performances in the town have been of Priestnall and Mitchell's text. The Wardle Methodist Church Amateur Dramatic Society, the only adult team of pace eggers in the town, have given performances of the Edwards and Bryning text every Easter since 1958. Their play also includes Dirty Bet and several songs remembered by some of the older members of the Society who went pace egging in their youth. Wardle is a village a mile or two from Rochdale and the Society perform their play around the village houses and streets on Good Friday morning many times. They achieve this usually by only performing half the play at any one time, either Act 1 or Act 2 in the chapbook, followed by the songs.

Since 1972, the eight to ten year olds at Greenbank Primary School in Rochdale have given performances of a text compiled by a teacher at the school from fieldwork she was undertaking in the area. This text is, not surprisingly, like the chapbook text, only shorter and including Dirty Bet and several songs, as well as a dragon, influenced by the dragon at Balderstone School. The actors dress in character, wear sashes and blacken their faces. Performances are given during the last two weeks of term, some in the School Hall for an invited audience of old folk, some in the town centre for passers-by. The other schools are known to have given performances of texts other than Priestnall and Mitchell's in the last few years - one of these performed a play compiled from Alex Helm's Five Mumming Plays for Schools.³⁰

To sum up: during the first three decades of this century, the pace egg

tradition in Rochdale consisted of teams of children from the same street or area giving performances of a text similar to that in the Edwards and Bryning chapbook, and including certain rhymes and the character Dirty Bet. The regularity of these performances apparently began to decline around the same time as the Priestnall and Mitchell text was first performed by Balderstone School in 1930. Since then, various schools have performed the Priestnall and Mitchell text, and in the last few years, performances have been given of both texts, as well as combinations of the two, and in one case, a different text entirely.

This paper set out to examine the changes which have taken place in the tradition over the years. The main difference appears to be that the present day plays are all organised by institutions. Indeed, if the differences between the plays performed by children earlier this century and the plays organised by institutions are examined, it is noticeable that the organisational ability of the institution is responsible for most of them. For the purposes of this analysis, the plays performed in the streets earlier this century will be referred to as children's plays, and the plays organised by institutions will be termed institutional plays.

The main difference between the two is that the institutional plays are organised by adults, whether teachers or amateur dramatic society members, whereas the children's plays were not. Consequently, the actors in the institutional plays are under specific instructions on how to act and do not stray far from the text, while the actors in the children's plays had no one but themselves to impose rigid acting rules. They could therefore ad lib if they wanted. This means that the institutional plays do not alter as much from performance to performance as the children's plays did. The institutional plays are sometimes performed in the institutional buildings, rather than outdoors, and generally in front of an invited audience who participate in the performance far less than an outdoor crowd do, except when asked to by the producer. Costumes tend to be more elaborate in the institutional plays, probably because they are supplied by the institution, whereas costumes in the children's plays were generally simple. The institutional plays collect for charity or production costs, whereas performers in the children's plays collected for themselves. And finally, while the children's plays were regarded by the children as games, the institutional plays are seen more as plays or customs and are often performed with an aim in mind, such as perpetuating the tradition.

It would appear therefore that there has been a change in the tradition in Rochdale towards institutionally-organised plays where control over the performance has passed from the actors to the institution. This change has caused such differences as those listed above. In consequence, is it possible to

provide an answer to the problem mentioned at the beginning of this paper - namely, what has been the part played by printed texts in bringing about this change? This question has been posed mainly because it has been at the forefront of previous scholarship. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the influence of chapbooks, in particular on play traditions.³¹ However, a distinction has been made in the past between chapbooks, such as Edwards and Bryning's, and other printed texts, especially literary concoctions, such as Priestnall and Mitchell's. This distinction has meant that while chapbooks have been studied in some detail, the literary texts have often been ignored completely, as having no relevance to the study of traditional plays. Consequently, the hypotheses that have been made in past scholarship concern only the influence that chapbook texts have had on play traditions. Bearing this in mind, the hypotheses are as follows:

In general, a distinction can be made between "chapbook versions" and "traditional versions" of plays.³² These two types are distinguished as using different methods of transmission - the former print, the latter orality. However, these distinctions are not rigid, for the chapbook versions can pass into the oral tradition and thereby become traditional versions.

By these definitions, the children's plays at Rochdale appear to be chapbook versions. However, there is a major problem with this assumption. To call the children's plays "chapbook versions" is to imply that the only method of transmission used was print. But this was not so. To begin with, not all teams used the chapbook. Some knew the play by heart and each new member of the team learnt the play from the other actors. Furthermore, the songs in the children's plays were not printed in the chapbook, nor were Dirty Bet's lines. These could not have been transmitted by print. And again, in the past a great deal of importance has been placed on the collecting of texts, often at the expense of not considering other important elements in the tradition. For example, beliefs about girls taking part, stopping at midday on Good Friday, the blackening of faces and costuming, methods of performance, etc. These elements were just as much a part of the tradition as the text, and these could not have been learnt from a printed source. It appears therefore that the tradition was passed on by any method of transmission the actors chose, whether print, orality, or indeed aural. That all methods of transmission should be equally acceptable in the tradition is understandable in a literate society where print and writing perform the same communicative function as speech.

In this case, the evidence presented concerning the Rochdale plays must throw doubt on the validity of the distinction between chapbook versions and traditional ones. If all methods of transmission are equally valid in a tradition, it cannot be possible to make distinctions based on these methods. It

is therefore incorrect to separate chapbook versions from traditional versions because whether a team uses a chapbook text or not, the play is still traditional. Alex Helm was beginning to realise this when he stated that chapbook versions become the traditional versions.³³ His mistake was to distinguish between the two in the first place.

So bearing all this in mind, what can now be said concerning the part played by printed texts in the changes that have occurred in the Rochdale tradition? In the past, this question was always asked in order to ascertain the effect that a printed text had when it was used in an oral tradition. However, if printed texts are now considered as a valid part of the tradition, the question becomes a little academic. To ask what part a printed text has played in changing the tradition is like asking what part an orally transmitted text has played.

It is still possible to answer the question, albeit not in relation to the problem of transmission. To begin with, a printed text is unique because it is permanent and does not change. So it would be expected that the use of a printed text in a play tradition should cause that tradition to be perpetuated longer than one which does not use a printed text. This, however, may not be strictly true with plays in general, although it appears to be true of the Rochdale children's plays. These continued into the 1950s and it seems likely that they were aided by the regular editions of the chapbook printed by Edwards and Bryning.

Furthermore, because the printed text is fixed in form and cannot change, it would be expected that it would help to stabilise the form of the tradition in which it was used. In other words, there would be less change from performance to performance than in a tradition not using a printed text. The problem with this assumption is that it only refers to the text. However, even if the text is stabilised, this does not mean that the other elements of the play tradition are stabilised also. This is what has occurred in Rochdale, where performances of the children's plays did change continually from performance to performance, with ad libbing, different audience participation, and the performing of only half the play on occasions.

However, the most important part played by the printed texts in the play tradition in Rochdale lies not in their direct effect upon the plays but in the fact that they provided the means for institutions to begin performing plays. Institutions do not perform plays unless they write down the text from the mouth of a performer or use a printed text to learn from. This fact has caused a major change in the Rochdale tradition. The Edwards and Bryning text, amongst other printed texts, influenced Priestnall and Mitchell to write their own play. This in turn influenced other schools to begin performing plays using various printed texts.

Finally, there is one more effect that the printed texts may have had on the tradition. Priestnall and Mitchell stated that the reason for writing their text was to recreate what they believed to be the "original" play. It was to have a more understandable storyline than the children's plays and was to be better, apparently in the literary sense of the word. Some people in the town today believe this to be true. Others, who acted in the children's plays regard the Priestnall and Mitchell text as "sophisticated", "classic or polite", and "modern", while their own plays were "the old original", "natural" and "old-fashioned". No matter how right or wrong these views may be, the important fact is that they existed. It is possible therefore that Priestnall and Mitchell's belief that theirs was the better play influenced some people to believe them. This in turn may have caused these people to stop performing the children's plays which they had now been told were inferior. This conclusion is not stated with any degree of certainty, but the inference is that the outspoken beliefs of the two scholars, once they appeared in print, could have affected the existing traditions.

Finally, we hope this paper has shown three things. Firstly, that in-depth examinations of single traditions are needed to further our understanding of all traditional plays. Secondly, that the accuracy of past theories concerning chapbooks must be questioned - specifically the belief that plays which use chapbook texts are different from other plays. Thirdly, that institutional plays must be studied along with traditional plays, for to study only the latter is to get a one-sided view of the tradition.

NOTES

1. In these notes, acknowledgement will be made where information given in this paper is taken from printed sources or private collections. Any information which is not acknowledged is taken from fieldwork material in the possession of the authors. It is not possible to list the sources of all this material here, mainly due to the brevity of this paper, and also because we have translated much of the material into our own words, rather than giving quotations. Admittedly, it would have been preferable to have used the original references rather than our own versions of it, but this would have considerably increased the length of the paper. This therefore is only a precis of the material we have.
2. Anon., "The Pace Egg Play and its Origins", Rochdale Observer, 14 April 1909, p.8.
3. Four separate editions are known to have been printed. See M. J. Preston, M. G. Smith and P. S. Smith, An Interim Checklist of Chapbooks containing Traditional Play Texts (Newcastle: History of the Book Trade in the North, 1976), p. 27.

4. The assumption that chapbooks were used in the town prior to 1900 is based on the following references: John Trafford Clegg, "Bowd Slasher", Sketches and Rhymes in the Rochdale dialect. Vol. 1 (Rochdale, James Clegg, 1895), pp. 76-83. This features a text written in dialect which is similar to chapbook texts and even includes chapbook stage directions it also mentions the use of a "book". Anon., "Rochdale Page Egg Group of Over Sixty Years Ago", Rochdale Observer, 4 August 1956. This features a photograph of a team of pace eggers showing chapbook characters in the 1890s. Anon., "The Peace Egg", in the "Rochdale Observer Literary Supplement", Rochdale Observer, 5 March 1910, p. 8. This states that a chapbook published in Manchester was in use in the town in 1910, so it may be that Manchester chapbooks were used prior to that date.
5. Tom Bedford, "The Pace Egg Play", Rochdale Observer, 19 April, 1958.
6. Alan Wood, letter in Rochdale Observer, 26 April, 1958.
7. Anon., "Good Friday in Rochdale", Rochdale Observer, 6 April 1912, p. 12.
8. Clegg, 1895, pp. 76-83.
9. Frank Rothwell, from a text he wrote out and gave to P. Stevenson on 5 January 1976.
10. George Mainwaring, from a recording, 16 March 1976.
11. Frank Rothwell, from a recording, 13 February 1976.
12. Ed Blackstone, from a letter dated 7 January 1976.
13. Sim Schofield, Short Stories about Failsworth Folk (Blackpool: Union Printers, 1905), p. 127.
14. William E. A. Axon, The Black Knight of Ashton (Manchester: John Heywood, 1870), pp. 44-53.
15. For example, William Robertson, Old and New Rochdale and its People (Rochdale: By the Author, Preface dated 1881), p. 43.
16. For example, "Down in Bentmeadows" and "The Next Shop we Came To" are similar to verses in a Cob Coaling song labelled as "Cob-Coaling, Lancs., Oldham, Ms. Major A. W. Boyd", University College London, Department of Manuscripts, in Alex Helm Collection.
17. For example, see many of the references given under Lancashire and Westmorland in E. C. Cawte, Alex Helm and N. Peacock, English Ritual Drama: A Geographical Index (London: The Folk-Lore Society, 1967), pp. 48-49 and 61. One example is given in Alex Helm, Eight Mummers' Plays (London: Ginn, 1971), p. 45.
18. Anon., "Good Friday in Rochdale", Rochdale Observer, 22 April 1905, p. 8.
19. Anon., "Good Friday in Rochdale", Rochdale Observer, 18 April, 1908, p. 10.
20. Anon., Rochdale Observer, 10 April 1909, p. 10.
21. Anon., "Good Friday in Rochdale", Rochdale Observer, 11 April 1914, p. 7.
22. Anon., "Notes and Comments", Rochdale Observer, 19 April 1919, p. 6.
23. Anon., "The Origins of the Pace Egg Play", Rochdale Observer, 30 March 1963.
24. Juliana Horatia Ewing, The Peace Egg (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1884).
25. *Ibid*, p. 40.
26. This is stated in the introduction to the Priestnall and Mitchell text.
27. The years 1976 and 1977 are described because it was during these years that we witnessed and recorded several performances of the play.

28. The four schools were: Redbrook Middle School, Littleborough High School (Littleborough), Queensway Primary School and St. James School (Thornham).
29. These two schools were: St. John's Church of England Primary School, Bollington and Holycroft Primary School, Keighley. (Information concerning the latter is from the P. S. and M. G. Smith Collection).
30. Alex Helm, Five Mumming Plays for Schools (London: English Folk Dance and Song Society and the Folk-Lore Society, 1965). The school which used the texts in Helm's book was Cronkeyshaw Primary School. The school which used the Edwards and Bryning text was Smithy Bridge Primary School.
31. For example, Alex Helm, The Chapbook Mummers' Play (Leicester: Guizer Press, 1969), pp. 24-26 and 30-33. Alan Gailey, "Chapbook Influence on Irish Mummers' Plays", Folklore, LXXXV (1974), 6 and 32-33.
32. Helm, 1969, p. 6 and 32-33.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.