TRADITIONAL DRAMA STUDIES

VOLUME 4 1996

URBAN FOLK DRAMA*

Peter Stevenson

In England, the term "folk drama" has often been used to refer to plays which were performed by the inhabitants of small, usually rural communities. However, folk drama was not only confined to villages and small market towns. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there are many reports of plays being performed in several cities and large towns. The geographical index in English Ritual Drama(1) shows how common and widespread these urban folk dramas were during this period. Many of them occurred in two particularly large urban areas, the first of which is the industrial area of South Lancashire and West Yorkshire. Plays were performed in all the large cities in these areas, as well as in many of the smaller mill towns. For example, English Ritual Drama lists plays from Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Wakefield, Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham, and Rochdale. The second major area of play distribution is Greater London(2) where plays are listed as being performed in some twenty districts. There is also a handful of references to plays in the Birmingham and Wolverhampton areas, and the suburbs of Nottingham and Newcastle. Plays are also listed in such places as Stoke, Leicester, Oxford, Southampton, Rugby, and Peterborough. It appears from this list, therefore, that it was certainly not unusual for plays to be performed in urban areas.

In this paper I intend to examine the play traditions in two urban areas which had particularly dense play distributions, namely Greater Manchester and Greater London. I will concentrate mainly on the former, specifically on the relationship between the plays and the use of chapbook texts. Ultimately I hope to be able to show whether there are any factors which distinguish urban folk plays from those in rural areas.

However, before examining the plays in Greater Manchester, there remains a problem to be answered. Despite the large body of evidence which points to the existence of folk drama in urban areas, past scholarship has tended not to study it. Indeed, the first major

study of urban folk drama did not appear until Alex Helm's The Chapbook Mummers' Play was published in 1969.(3) Helm's study was concerned primarily with chapbooks and their influence on urban folk drama rather than with the drama itself. Nevertheless, prior to the publication of that work, scholarship concentrated on those plays performed in non-urban areas. This imbalance seems to have been due to two reasons.

Firstly, this lack of study appears to suggest that most folk drama scholars either did not look to see if folk drama existed in cities, or else they looked but considered what they found to be sufficiently different from the rural plays to warrant their not being studied. The following extract is from an article by T.F. Ordish in The Home Counties Magazine, 1899:

> It was my lot a few years ago to witness a very interesting piece of folklore in a Surrey district now very closely associated with London. On the evening of November 30th, 1891, I walked down the village street of Barnes - it is now the High Street, but new shop fronts cannot even disguise its original character as a typical village street. It was, if I remember rightly, a Saturday night, and a well-known butcher's shop in the village was very brightly lighted up. Within the circle of illumination there was a small crowd standing in the roadway. In front of these folk and between them and the shop, were some lads and boys in fantastic and quaint attire going through some antics. Happily, I paused to look and to listen. In a moment or two I recognised that a traditional folk-play was in course of enactment; the Christmas mumming-play, once a prevalent feature in rural winter festivities, still existing here and there in various parts of the country; but here in Barnes! Yet so it was, and the version of the play was not the most debased or attenuated in my collection.(4)

This epitomises the approach to folk drama scholarship at that time, namely that it was unusual or surprising to find a living example of

folklore in a city street. Fortunately, Ordish overcame his surprise and wrote down and printed what he had seen in some detail. He even accepted that the play he saw "was not the most debased or attenuated in my collection", which nevertheless suggests that he thought it ought to have been. He was also at pains to point out that Barnes High Street, no matter how close to the centre of London, still looked like a village street.

This viewpoint was fairly prevalent amongst folklorists around the turn of the century. It stemmed from the general theory that folk dramas were thought to represent the enactment of rituals connected with the ensuing fertility of the harvest. Consequently, because folk dramas were thus connected to agricultural ideas, they should not be found in non-agricultural areas. So when plays were discovered still being performed in urban areas, they were considered as having no relevance to the townsfolk who performed them -- after all, what use was an agricultural custom to a person who worked in a cotton mill? Consequently, if the play had no relevance to its performers, it could not be a true folk drama, but a degenerate or debased form which was of little interest to the scholar. It was this belief that may well have caused folklorists to ignore the urban plays. It is not within the scope of this paper to criticize these theories.(5) Their importance lies in the possibility that they caused some folklorists to believe that the urban plays were a more degenerate form of folk drama than the rural ones, and not worthy of study.

The second reason why the urban plays have generally been left unstudied is of more relevance to this paper than the first. It concerns the relationship between the urban plays and the use of printed chapbook texts in play traditions. Almost all known chapbooks that contain traditional play texts were printed in cities or towns, the main ones being Manchester, Leeds, Otley, Bradford, Preston, Sheffield, Glasgow, Belfast, Rochdale, Whitehaven and Newcastle.(6) The general view has been that where these chapbooks were published they were used to form the basis of the texts in the plays from those areas,(7) hence the assumption that urban folk drama has tended to rely on printed texts rather than texts transmitted by any other method.

Until recently, chapbooks have been considered as being

different from orally transmitted texts, as indicated, for example, in such comments as the following:

> From the standpoint of the real play these prints are degenerate, and they have successfully misled popular opinion for well over a century. Nevertheless, they are not without interest, for they must have originated in something, while their likeness to each other, their uniformly metropolitan English, their lack of any local form of speech made an origin in sustained oral tradition from the remoter regions of Britain unlikely.(8)

This distinction between the real play and degenerate prints, like the theory that all folk drama comes from a rural setting, is a product of early folklore scholarship. Folklore was considered to have survived over the years from an earlier era when man could neither read nor write, so it was believed that it could only be kept up in modern times by those members of society who were illiterate. Consequently, folklore was assumed to be the sole property of the poorer, less educated folk who lived in out-of-the-way rural areas, as far away from the city as possible. The folk, therefore, were thought to transmit their lore from generation to generation by word of mouth only. Indeed, folklore became defined as being passed on by oral transmission. Inevitably, any folklore transmitted by the medium of print was considered degenerate. As chapbooks were printed in towns and cities and were thought to have been used in the plays in such areas, neither the plays nor the chapbooks were considered to be "real" folk drama, and were therefore not studied in any great detail.

As with the theories of folk drama being a rural pastime, it is not within the scope of this paper to examine the theories concerning methods of transmission.(9) However, it is intended to examine the belief that where chapbooks are published, i.e. in urban areas, they are used by the performers in those areas as the basis of their plays. For if this is so, it suggests that the presence of chapbooks in certain towns and cities could have created a unique urban folk drama, different in form from rural plays. With this in mind, it is now intended to describe the play tradition in Greater Manchester, where five publishers

are known to have printed chapbooks from the 1830s onwards.(10)

Almost all the references to folk drama in the Greater Manchester area concern the nineteenth century. There is only one known reference to a play prior to 1800, and this occurred in the Northenden area, which at that time was no more than a small village some eight miles from the city centre. There are a few examples of performances of plays continuing into the twentieth century, but most of these refer to before World War I. The exceptions are the strong tradition in Rochdale which continued into the 1950s, and the unusual report of a family in Pendleton, near Salford city centre, who performed a play in their own house on and off until the 1950s. In recent years several folk clubs and schools have begun to perform plays as a result of academic interest. However, this examination will deal with the tradition which lasted just over one hundred years, from the turn of the nineteenth century to the turn of the twentieth.

Several types of folk drama are known to have existed in Greater Manchester during this period, the most common of which was the Easter Pace Egg play. There are a considerable number of references to these plays, although the information they give is often of a generalized nature. A fairly typical example is the following, which gives a basic idea of what a Pace Egg play was like in the 1850s:

> Fifty years ago the country lanes and suburbs were at Eastertime invaded by various troops of boys called Peace Eggers and consisting usually of about half a dozen to a troop. Their appearance was rendered as martial as it was possible for them to be when attired in coloured calico blouses, trousers to match and decorated with as many gaily-coloured ribbons as they had been able to lay their hands on. They were armed with cross handled tin swords, very primitive in their workmanship, and thus provided they assumed as fierce and warlike an appearance as they were able to do under the limited circumstances. The drama they enacted was supposed to have something to do with St. George and his enemies, but I was never able to unravel the mystery they represented. There was a

> combat or two, fought in the usual penny-show style, three cuts above and three cuts below, a thrust and then a verse of doggerel, closing with a death scene where one of the combatants falls to the ground and dies. There were a number of verses accompanying the affecting tragedy....After this followed a most important item in the entertainment, namely, the collection after which the troop "moved on."(11)

This account makes the important point that "the country lanes and suburbs were at Eastertime invaded by various troops of boys called Peace Eggers". Several other references also state that there were a great many teams of pace eggers at any one Easter and some reports suggest that a particular town or suburb produced far more than one team.

The performers were boys or young men, invariably from the poorer families. There are no references to girls or women participating in the plays last century, although there are accounts of them helping to make the costumes for the performers. The number of performers varied from team to team. Although the reference given above mentions "about half a dozen", which is apparently the average number, there is one reference to as many as twelve or fourteen individuals.

Preparation and practice for the performance are comparatively well documented, highlighting the importance that was placed on getting these right. There are reports of teams beginning to practise during the winter in preparation for the performance at Easter. The following item refers to Ashton-Under-Lyne in the 1850s, and is one example of the trouble to which the teams were prepared to go:

> Thirty years sin' pace-eggin' wur mich moar practiced nor it is neaw. Yo' scarcely ever yer tell uv ony fun uv that mak' neaw-a-days, bu' then there never a Aister past witheawt every farm-heawse bein visited by Slasher an' St. George, an' ther merry men all. Rare fun it wur for us lads, and put moar spendin' brass i' eawr pockets nor we could ha' gettin' wi' hard work i' a year. For wicks an' wicks afore Aister we thowt uv nowt else bu' pace-eggin'. Every neet we ust to meet i' Jone uv Tummie's barn, an' goo o'er eawr parts - th' feightin' wur asier to larn nur th' speeches, aw recollect varry weel. We ust to let th' wenches coom to th' barn an' watch eawr capers, for they're as busy as us, i' makkin' us o mak' uv gay-coloured clooas, till we're o as foine as fiddler's foo's. Chape calico uv every colour i' th' rainbow, an' yards uv ribbin, red, yallow, an' blue, tin swords, or happen nobbut a switch, made us think eawrsels grayt men an' grond i' thoose days, an' th' felly wi' most wynt, at could roar eawt his speeches an' fairly gi' it bant, wur thowt th' best acthor. Bu' th' felly at're gooin' to be Beelzebub, Lankey Jim, a strappin' young fellow uv nineteen, we did envy him aboon a bit: for he'd bin a seein' some friends i' Monchester, an' he'd feawnd eawt some pleck near th' Theayter, wheer they sowd dresses for th' play-actors, an' he'd saved up his brass, an' bowt sich a foine scarlet dress, as yo' nevor seed nobbut at a pantomime. He lookt th' varry image uv th' owd lad when he'd getten' it on, horns, tail, an' o. It're enough to mak' onybody hot aw over to look at him. He're as good as a sarmon.(12)

This reference also mentions the costumes that teams made or acquired for themselves. It states that apart from Beelzebub's special dress, costumes were made of coloured calico. The following description from Mossley in the 1880s suggests something similar:

> When each lad could say his part, then came the preparation of the costumes. These were brilliant in colour-glazed calico shirts of red, green, and blue; a tin sword for St. George, specially made by Roylance, a tall hat for the Doctor and a black bag; some discarded hats of sisters with huge feathers completed the array.(13)

Unfortunately, many references are a little vague concerning costuming. On the whole, they suggest that most of the characters

carried swords and wore variously coloured shirts and trousers, decorated with flowers and ribbons. The Doctor is usually mentioned separately as wearing a top hat and in one case "with his blackened face, stove pipe hat and magenta whiskers".(14) Where characters such as Devil Doubt and Beelzebub appear, they are generally referred to as being dressed in rags and carrying a broom, or as in the case given above, in a devil costume. In some cases, men dressed as women are mentioned as participating. The following reference suggests that the team in question dressed in a more uniform manner:

> Peace Egging. This was generally done either in Easter week or on the Saturday previous... In the arrangement of these matters great skill was displayed, the performers being dressed out somewhat in the style of the morris dancers, having white shirt sleeves and white trousers; the partisans of St. George having blue stripes, sleeves, and red ribbons: whilst the opposite used blue ribbons, the handkerchiefs with which the arms were bound round being of a similar colour. But this, I think, has become a matter of fancy. High caps of pasteboard, decorated with gold and beads and other trinkets, were worn, and they invariably carried a sword, the weapon of knight errantry.(15)

Although this reference states that the actors were dressed in a similar fashion, there is a further reference to the late nineteenth century which suggests the opposite. It says that St. George wore his coat inside out, his father's overall trousers, clogs, a helmet, a badly made wooden sword, and he carried a large rubber dragon. The other characters are said to have worn a variety of garments.(16)

The importance of costuming is made strikingly apparent by the following report concerning the 1830s:

> J.B. gives a very different account of the pace egging to what I remember used to take place some forty odd years ago in Manchester or just at the outskirts. A company was formed and subscriptions, as far as possible, were raised. Money certainly came in slowly, but each member did what he could towards

> making the dresses, or getting sisters to do so. Cardboard, tinsel, ribbon and calico formed the greater part of such dresses. Sometimes they were tawdry and sometimes they looked well. After dresses and studies were complete, there was another important matter to arrange, viz. a bodyguard. The roughest and strongest were chosen for this post, and had often to fall back on such qualities. Their duties were to march with the pace-eggers to protect them from attacks or raids which neighbouring districts or village lads often made on them for the purpose of securing the dresses or properties for their own use. Many tussles and some very awkward knocks were given and taken on such occasions. Escaping these, the pace-eggers visited each others' houses, then the public-houses round about, keeping it up for some two or three nights each week, and for two or three weeks each year....(17)

The performances of the plays were given at various times, but always around Easter. Some are referred to as being performed only on Good Friday, and some only on Easter Monday. The above references state that performances were given two or three nights a week for three weeks. Performances were given mainly outdoors, either in the streets for passers-by, or at individual houses, while some teams were allowed to act inside houses. There are some examples of teams visiting specific houses where they knew they would be welcomed. Here is one example from the 1840s, where a team were expected to give a performance at the Manor House in Middleton:

> I do not know whether it was a fondness for the play, or a liking for the lads, which induced the old steward to give them a hearing; but the pace eggers always met with a favourable reception when they presented themselves at the hall. I have heard it said that it was the custom, if the day was fine, for them to go through their performance on the lawn in front of the hall, in which case the family and servants come out to hear them; but when the weather was inclement they were

> permitted to go inside and act out their little piece before a small but delighted audience there. At the conclusion they were cordially thanked for their entertainment and received something more substantial in the shape of money by way of encouragement in their day's proceedings.(18)

The following comment from Stalybridge in the mid-nineteenth century confirms the fact that teams visited specific houses in order to collect money and gifts from sympathetic folk:

> A veteran, lately passed away, during a visit paid by the writer, referred to his experiences as follows: "We were always sure of getting something at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Platt, not from Mr. Platt but from his lady. Sometimes there would be 12 or 14 of us, and a rough lot we were. Ranged against the wall of the yard near the house, we went through our play-acting and on its conclusion we each got a gill pot full of milk and a new-laid egg together with a three-penny bit. Ah! Masters were masters in those days."(19)

This implies that teams received quite generous payment for their performances, for certainly a gill full of milk each, a newly laid egg and a threepenny bit is good business even by today's standards. Unfortunately, although many references state that teams received eggs and money, only one gives the amount that one member of a team earned in a day - one shilling and ninepence and three eggs.(20)

The collection is invariably mentioned as being the prime reason for a team performing a play, although there were doubtless other reasons which were either left unmentioned or taken for granted. One interesting function of the plays is suggested by the following:

> When I look back to my "Pace Eggin" days, I am reminded of the happy hours we lads spent in the preparation of our annual turnout. For weeks before the time I would go round and collect ribbons and artificial flowers from young women who were noted for their finery in hats or bonnets. With such I would decorate myself and strut forth on Easter Monday as proud as any peacock. Being a bit of a favourite with the village lasses, they would willingly supply me with ribbons and flowers in order that I might pose as their hero in the play, and at the same time supply myself with pocket money to treat them to Knott Mill Fair. Those were happy times, never to be forgotten. In my youthful eyes, Lord Nelson was not to be compared with the heroic part of "St. George" and "Slasher."(21)

It may well have been that taking part in the play was considered prestigious in the eyes of certain beholders. Unfortunately, very little information is given about acting methods. Indeed, the only fleeting mention refers to the 1870s and says that they repeated the rhymes in a peculiar sing-song style.

Finally there is the problem of texts. As was stated earlier, the general view has been to assume that the Manchester plays are all based on chapbook texts. So to begin with, are there any references which specifically mention the use of chapbooks? In fact, there are six. The first of these refers to Mossley in the 1880s:

> When lads of some years back wanted to get "spending money" for Eastertime they banded together and formed a company to visit the surrounding houses of their district as "Pace-eggers." There was a little dialogue published, the full title of which read: THE PEACE EGG or ST. GEORGE'S ANNUAL PLAY for the AMUSEMENT OF YOUTH. When each lad could say his part, then came the preparation of the costumes.... (22)

This does not actually state that chapbooks were used, but it certainly implies it. It also gives several quotations from a text apparently copied or remembered from a chapbook. The second reference also does not directly state that chapbooks were used, but again implies this by the writer's knowledge of them:

> ...Books of instructions were printed at the time, the back of the cover containing a picture of St. George in armour, with his shield and sword, in a fighting attitude; and, if my memory serves me correctly, they

were called Peace Egg and not Pace Egg books. The season of Peace Egging in those days was Easter....(23)

The third extract refers to Rochdale in the last few decades of the nineteenth century and it gives a text in dialect that is similar to the chapbook texts. In the midst of it appears the following:

SLASHER.

Sang George, aw yer yon silver thrumpet seaund.
Deawn yon is the way pointin (wipes)
Farewell, Sang George, we con no longer stay.

KING OF EGYPT (aside to SLASHER).

Tha shouldn't say pointin, leatheryead.
It myens tha should stick thi finger eaut, so.
(Points toard Know' Hill)

SLASHER.

It's deaun i' th' book shuzheaw;
so will that do for thee?
(Poo's his book eaut an' finds it for him)(24)

This clearly suggests that the team was using a chapbook text or printed text of some kind. However, the same reference also states that "It's bin honded deawn moore bi word o' meouth nor printin', aw think, as far as Rachda gwoes, shuzheaw."

The fourth reference states that a chapbook was definitely used:

The words are so well known, we need not introduce them here, but we may observe they vary according to the customs of different localities. Mr. J. Heywood of Manchester has published those used in this locality.(25)

The Manchester printer John Heywood is not known to have published a Peace Egg chapbook, although it is quite possible that the firm did publish one and no copy has survived. Heywoods published two play texts which were called The Peace Egg, and it is quite possible that the writer was referring to one of these.(26) A further possibility is that the writer was confusing John Heywood with his brother Abel Heywood who also ran a publishing and printing firm in the city and published a Peace Egg chapbook at around the time the reference was written.(27)

The next two references are of considerable interest. The first was written in 1905:

...this "mumming play" is still performed at Christmas in Manchester. The last time the little performers visited the Deanery, tricked out in cocked hats of paper manufacture, I followed the words in Mrs. Ewing's book and found they were line for line identical. And yet, when I asked the "Valiant Slasher," panting from his exertions after an encounter with the all-conquering "St. George," where the text could be found, he replied that they had no books but learnt it by word of mouth from one another....(28)

Mrs. Juliana H. Ewing was a children's book writer who had compiled a play text from various printed and written sources and had published it in the late nineteenth century under the title The Peace Egg.(29) The reference clearly states that although the text used by the team was line for line identical with that in Mrs. Ewing's book, the performers did not use a printed text. The next reference says much the same thing:

In reply to Mr. S.F. Simons, I have to say that when I come to recall the words of the rhymes of the Easter Play which I often took part in, I find them so faulty that I dare not venture to put them in print. I learnt the parts I played from the other lads and not from any book. I can see now that the version in which I was a player is most imperfect....(30)

It is, of course, possible that in both cases chapbook texts had been used at one time by the teams, but that the children had come to use any method of transmission to pass on the text. It is equally possible that chapbooks had never been used. Unfortunately, we cannot ascertain the truth because neither reference gives any text and only the latter mentions a few characters.

It has become apparent that the use of chapbooks was certainly known, but not necessarily in every case. Examination of the snippets of text and characters given in each reference bears this out. To begin

with, there are some ten references which include texts, or extracts from texts, or which mention characters that appear in the chapbook. These are listed below, together with the place and the time of performance:

Ashton-Under-Lyne:	1850s.(31)
Ashton-Under-Lyne:	late nineteenth century.(32)
Middleton:	1840s.(33)
Mossley:	circa 1880.(34)
Monton:	1880s.(35)
Worsley and Swinton:	1860s.(35)
Oldham:	1879.(36)
Oldham:	1890s.(37)
Rochdale:	1890s.(38)
Saddleworth:	1871.(39)
Stockport:	n.d.(40)

Several points of interest emerge from this list. Firstly, considering the comparative abundance of references to plays in the Manchester area, it is perhaps a little surprising to find only ten references which appear to show similarities with chapbook texts. However, many references have not been considered because they do not contain sufficient information, since they provide little or no text or names of characters. The second point concerns the validity of some of these references. The evidence in several of them must be questioned: for example, where it appears that the writer may have copied his text from a chapbook or from another writer's description. Furthermore, many of the references do not correspond exactly with the chapbook texts; for instance, some contain non-chapbook characters or speeches while still bearing a close resemblance to the chapbook. Thirdly, the list assumes that all plays which show similarities with the chapbook text were influenced by the chapbooks. However, this may not be necessarily so, for they may be similar purely by coincidence. Alternatively, there are the two references mentioned above that stated the teams in question did not use chapbook texts, even though the evidence suggests they could have done. Consequently, neither of these have been included. Despite all these problems, the list at least serves to show that chapbooks were used in several cases.

However, not all plays show similarities to the chapbook texts. There are two references which do not. These occur at:

Chorlton:	1830s.(41)
Radcliffe:	circa 1900.(42)

These are notable because the latter gives a complete text and the former a large portion of one, and neither bears any resemblance whatsoever to a chapbook text. The characters in the Radcliffe play are: Precentor, St. George, Slasher, Doctor, Bighead, Beelzebub, and Johnny Jack. There is only one fight, in which St. George slays Slasher. In the Chorlton play, the characters are Open the Door, St. George, Bold Slasher, Black Morocco King, Doctor, Devil, and Doubt. The text given is unlike any chapbook text, and there are two fights in which Slasher and Black Morocco King are slain. Although these are the only two references that do not show similarities to the chapbooks, they nevertheless suggest that the influence of chapbooks was not conclusive. There is also further evidence which points to this being the case, because the Easter pace egg plays were not the only type of folk drama present in nineteenth century Manchester.

To begin with, there are a handful of references to Robin Hood plays. The most complete report is contained in the following letter in the Manchester City News of 11th March, 1905:

> When I was young, pace egging was practised on Easter Monday. There were two pieces played, St. George and Robin Hood. The former was called the old act and was seldom used. Several months before the time a band would be organised, the different parts being assigned generally according to merit. At that time there were many folk who had swords hung across their mantel-pieces and the lads used to borrow them. They would meet together to practise their parts, and when the time came, set out elaborately dressed in such apparel as they thought Robin Hood and his companions used to wear -- wide hats, horns (some of them very beautiful) slung across their shoulders with coloured ribbon and long staffs the shape of a mammoth potato crusher. The characters,

> as I remember them, were Robin Hood, Little John, Will Scarlet, Maid Marion, a tinker cased almost in tin, a tanner decked with different skins, and Dirty Bet. The idea was that Robin Hood would not have any in his band except those who had conquered him in fighting, which they all did during the piece except Maid Marion and Dirty Bet.(43)

This seems to suggest that, in the area to which the writer was referring, "Robin Hood" was used more often than "St. George" which he calls the "old act". The following also suggests that the Robin Hood play was a more recent type of folk drama than the pace egg play. It concerns the Failsworth and Hollinwood area and was written in 1863, although it refers to the author's youth.

> Easter was always our "peace-egg" time and Hazelworth was never behind other villages in its display of motley on these occasions. We generally mustered three sets of performers, who were selected to their various corps according to their ages and capabilities. There was the "don" set, or "lump-yeds", composed of youths from 10 to 12 who carried real swords and fenced three up and three down. Then there was a younger set who expected to be "lump-yeds" sometime and longed for the period when they could exchange their tin scimitar for the formidable broadsword, and the old threadbare "peace-egg" rhyme for the new-fangled "Robin Hood and his Merry Men of Sherwood". But I dare say that the happiest crew of all were the thorough juveniles who were content with "traddlepins" for sidearms and carried the traditional besom to sweep all to perdition who refused to contribute their moiety of eggs to the customary peace offering. There came a time when we had graduated through the 3 degrees of mock chivalry - from poor Devil Doubt to the Bold Outlaw. We had some mincemeat of the black Morocco King, brought Slasher to the dust and slain all who had challenged our prowess. We had followed our forest chief through the merry greenwood, and made our imaginary leafy haunts ring with song and shout. We were of an age now to give up such trifles, if trifles they may be called, for we thought ourselves boys no longer. Accordingly we divided our basket of eggs for the last time and resigned our paper wideawakes to those whose brows were aching for them, whilst the cognomen of "lump-yeds" was transferred to the next lower grade of the rising generation.(44)

Here the suggestion is that the younger boys performed the "old threadbare 'peace-egg' rhyme" and the elder boys the "new-fangled 'Robin Hood and his Merry Men of Sherwood'." The following, written in 1879, makes the same point about folk drama in Oldham:

> The observance of the old custom seems now to be relegated to mere lads, and although I never took part in "plays" myself, I can well remember that young men used to join in them, for there were more "plays" than one, and several versions of the same "play". The youths of the time to which I am now referring generally took the play of "Saint George of Merrie England" and their elders enacted the characters of "Bold Robin Hood and ye Merrie Men of Sherwode" .... (45)

In the next reference, published in 1926 but referring to the "lads of some years back" in Mossley, the writer describes in detail a pace egg play, and then says:

> To make for variety, some other "gang" of "tax-gatherers" would recite a dialogue based on "Bold Robin Hood and his Body of Men!" They were equipped with the recognised bows and arrows.(46)

Another reference to Robin Hood plays concerns Ashton-Under-Lyne in the 1850s and makes a further point:

> Sometimes, its th' "Jolly Tradesmen" at's acted, an' sometimes its "Robin Hood," bu' eawr lads made up ther minds to stick by th' good owd pace-egg....(47)

This suggests that the same team of boys could perform any play if they wished, but apparently only one play per year.

These are the only references to Robin Hood plays in Greater Manchester, and they leave a great deal unanswered. They suggest that in the mid-nineteenth century, Robin Hood plays were considered to be newer dramas than the pace egg plays. Exactly where the texts came from is not known, although a chapbook containing the text of a play called "Robin Hood & little John; or, the Merry Men of Sherwood Forest" is known to have been published by William Walker of Otley.(48) However, the snatches of text given in the above references to the Robin Hood plays bear no resemblance to the text in Walker's chapbook, so it appears that these plays were either learnt from an as yet undiscovered printed source which was available in Manchester at the time, or they were learnt by word of mouth.

The above reference to the Robin Hood plays in Ashton-Under-Lyne stated that the team of pace eggers in question performed the pace egg play, the Robin Hood play, or "th'Jolly Tradesmen". "The Jolly Tradesmen" refers to the pace egg song typical of the North West, but which is only mentioned twice around Greater Manchester, in two consecutive letters in the Manchester City News in 1905:

> ...I well remember, as a boy, the village lads in Prestwich going on their rounds at Easter-time and enacting their "play". One of the verses they sang was the following:
>
> The next that comes in, Lord Nelson you'll see,
> With a bunch o' blue ribbons tied under his knee.
> And a star on his breast like silver doth shine,
> I hope you'll remember it's pace-eggin' time.
> Folderiddle - dol Folderay, Folderiddle
> - dol - di - day...(49)
>
> In my village days at Summerseat I used as a lad to go pace eggin'. It was the week of Good Friday, we met in the wood near Brooksbottoms where our coats were turned inside out, faces painted and clothes generally adorned with bright ribbons. Sauntering into "Brox" as our beloved village is familiarly called, we sung the Lord Nelson verse printed in last week's City News. We had no play but walked round in a ring singing away. Brox being a Methodist village we always had a collection.(50)

The first letter suggests that the song may have been performed with the play but gives no concrete evidence. The second states that the song was performed without the play. However, both these references mention that the performing of the song was called pace egging.

The next reference shows that there was yet another type of folk drama present in Manchester at the beginning of last century:

> Christmas...The Mummers were young men of the village who would "go acting" as they called it. The troop consisted of 4 or 5 young men dressed in cocked hats and soldiers' coats, and each had a tin sword in his belt. Thus prepared, one of the party, called Hector, rushed into the neighbour's house which they intended to visit and brandishing his sword, he recounted some of his wonderful exploits. St. George then stepped forward and in the same humorous, bombastic style proclaimed his own unrivalled feats:
>
> I am St. George, as I would have you know,
> I killed a dragon at one mortal blow.
>
> A fight ensued. St. George killed Hector who fell to the ground and the conqueror exclaimed, "A Doctor! A Doctor!" Instantly, another member of the company appeared carrying his cocked hat under his arm. He introduced himself by reciting:
>
> I have travelled through Italy, France and Spain,
> And now I am returned to cure the man this knight has slain.
>
> Taking out a box, he said, "Hector, take this pill and thou'lt be well". At this, the dead man returned to life and the Doctor, proud of his skill, gave in low verse a ludicrous account of the great cures he can perform. The young men and other members of the family having enjoyed the fun, were then refreshed with the

> contents of the can from the cellar and the actors having received their reward, took their leave with very low bows and proceeded to another house. This was evidently an imitation of "Whitehaven" and other mumming plays of olden times.(51)

This reference mentions neither pace eggers nor Easter. The performers are called mummers and the time of performance is Christmas. The following two references make this distinction clearer:

> The Pace Egg Mummers. Though from its title this piece of rustic pageantry and mumming apparently belongs to Easter, it is evident from the fourth, fifth, and sixth lines of the doggerel that it was a piece written for and enacted at Christmas. The writer had seen and heard it performed in the open air, before country houses, at both seasons....(52)
>
> (Rev. William Whitelegge of Northenden)... clearly distinguishes between the pace eggers who begged for eggs at Easter and the mummers who performed the "tragedy" of King George at Christmas: while my mother was equally clear that at Bury the pace eggers performed the King George play at Easter....(53)

Apparently, plays were performed by pace eggers at Easter and by mummers at Christmas. Here is a lengthier reference which mentions both these types of play. The first is mentioned under Easter customs, and the second under Christmas customs:

> At pace egging time the youth of the villages round about our district dressed themselves up with tinsel and finery, and went morris-dancing and partly acting, in the old farm houses, or on the lawns, or in the servants' halls of the gentlemen's houses, the old mummers play of St. George and the Dragon. A real horse's head was got from the neighbouring tanyard, that snapped its jaws (worked by strings) at the legs of the girls, who would scream and want to be taken care of, or a sham horse would be made round a youth who was apparently riding, curveting about, banging others

> with a bladder, and sometimes called "Tosspot". The horse was called Old Hob or Old Ball....(54)
>
> ... The time honoured custom of mumming or acting plays in our country houses must be referred to, as well as the waits and the carol singers, for it is probably the original of our Christmas pantomimes. The mummers, masquers, or guisers go from house to house, demanding admission, and acting a rude play in which St. George fights with the Dragon, alias the Slasher, who is slain and brought to life again by the elixir of life. The most sensible man of the party, who is generally called the fool, goes round with a ladle for a collection and if contributors are not forthcoming, he gets a broom to sweep the floor and make a dust, saying -
>
> "It's money I want,
> and money I crave,
> Give me some money,
> or I'll sweep you to your grave."
>
> He then sweeps towards the fire, and sometimes scatters the ashes as if he were making a raid upon the house fire, perhaps a survival of some long-forgotten attack on the household gods. A witty actor could make many personal and political allusions that were entertaining to the company. Their politics were inspired by the local Tory newspaper published once a week in a remote country district, and as saints and kings were considered to be very much alike, St. George became King George of glorious memory. The Slasher did duty for Bonaparte, or old Boney, as he was familiarly called.(55)

The writer is not particularly explicit, but he clearly states that mummers performed a play at Christmas, while at "pace egging time" the "old mummers play of St. George and the Dragon" was performed, apparently with a hobby horse. He is referring to the area of Greater Manchester which is in the former county of Cheshire, and he could

therefore be confusing the pace egg play with the Cheshire souling plays. However, there is another reference, from quite the opposite side of Manchester, at Stand near Bury, which also mentions the hobby horse with the pace eggers:

> ...at Easter the pace eggers were admitted into the kitchen, and went through their performances in the presence of the family. A group of young men dressed in frightful masquerade, some in women's clothes, one with a horse's head and each furnished with a flat wooden sword, went through a sort of drama, the plot of which at this distance of time seems somewhat complicated: but I know that one was St. George and fought the Dragon with the horse's head and slew him; then everybody fought with St. George. And there was a little man called Jack that they all struck with their flat wooden swords and the blows had a particularly cheerful sound suggestive of harlequin; Jack fell down dead and then a cry was raised of "A doctor! A doctor! Ten pounds for a doctor." The doctor arrayed in a wig and spectacles, came in at the back door with a bottle in his hand which he applied to Jack's mouth with:
>
> Here Jack, take a little out of my bottle,
> And let it run down thy throttle.
> And if thou be not quite slain,
> Rise, Jack, and fight again.
>
> So Jack rose up and the performance was concluded" (56)

Whether these two examples of the Easter pace eggers should be considered as different from the normal pace egg plays simply because they contain a hobby horse is debatable and not particularly important in the present context. They are of interest because they provide a link between the pace eggs plays and the hobby horse which, as the following references show, is more often found separately from the play in Greater Manchester. After describing a pace egg play, the first of these references continues:

> The middle aged men of the village also formed themselves into companies, generally about half a dozen, placing a white shirt over their ordinary dress, tied at the bottom and stuffing it with hay or straw, with masks over their faces to disguise themselves. They promenaded the village with the skull of the horse's head fixed on the top of a short pole, carried by a person concealed under a horse cloth who worked the jaws of the horse's mouth with a small lever. One of the party was dressed as a lady, as in the other case, to carry the gifts received.(57)
>
> Paste egging was, and remains still, a popular amusement in Passion Week. Two kinds of paste eggers were common - the white and the black. The white paid their visits in the day, as well as the night. They were decorated with ribbons and acted a sort of drama in which one Boldslasher was the hero, who fought and was slain; and there was a learned doctor who, in travels to distant lands, had discovered a medicine that would bring back the dead to life. This he applied to the dead Boldslasher who instantly rose up to life again. Our Lord's resurrection is evidently commemorated in this drama which is probably a relic of the old mystery plays the Church of Rome was wont to represent at this season prior to the Reformation. The black paste eggers made their calls in the evening after dark. They were simply mummers, masked or with blackened faces and dressed as hideously as they could devise. One in each band was surmounted with a stuffed horse's head and was covered with a horse cloth, the representative, doubtless, of the ancient hobby horse.(58)

Here, the difference between the play team and the hobby horse team is apparent. The first reference makes it clear that boys performed the pace egg play while middle-aged men took the hobby horse round, whereas the second reference says that the play was

performed during the day and the horse was paraded at night. One interesting observation is that the writer of the second account refers to both teams as "paste eggers". There are two more references to the hobby horse team, who in each case are called "pace eggers" or "peace eggers":

> The Hobby Horse at Easter. Many people in Barton and Eccles can still remember the hobby horse that used to come from Flixton attended by a strictly select party of roysterers. The strongest of the party, gaily carolling and bounding within the figure of a horse, with an automatic mouth, garnished with an enormous tongue of red flannel, was the terror of both the children and adults of Barton. "The horse is coming" was quite enough for the shopkeepers in Barton, who immediately made fast the doors and themselves "scarce." If the pace eggers succeeded in getting in anywhere, they took as a memento of the visit anything in the shape of tobacco or drink they could lay their hands on, and if any resistance was made it was speedily suppressed by a kick on the shins or some other violence.(59)

> I have heard of a party of pace or peace eggers perambulating the neighbourhood of Wigan who were known as Ball's (or perhaps Baal's) party. The season in which they made their annual appearance was, I think, Passion week, and they wore horse's heads. The party was composed of men or elderly youths who were a terror to the neighbourhood from their threatening attitude in demanding money. They have been extinct since about 1850.(60)

So now there are pace eggers who perform a play at Easter, pace eggers who sing "The Jolly Tradesmen" at Easter, and pace eggers who take a hobby horse round with them, also at Easter. And there is yet another type of pace egging:

> Easter was a more important holiday time at Middleton. On Good Friday children took little baskets neatly trimmed with moss, and went "a peace-egging" and received at some places eggs, at some places spiced loaf, and at others half-pennies, which they carried home to their mothers, who would feel proud that their children had been so much respected. On Easter Monday, companies of young men grotesquely dressed, led up by a fiddler, with one or two in female attire, would go from house to house on the same errand of "peace-egg-ing". At some places they would dance, at others they would recite quaint verses, and at the houses of the more sedate inhabitants, they would merely request a "peace-egg". Money or ale would in general be presented to them, which money they afterwards divided and spent.(61)

> Easter Monday was Pace-egging Day. Children used to go round and knock on doors saying to the occupant "If you please, a pace-egg" and they would be given money. Eggs were dyed with vegetable dyes (e.g. onion skins wrapped round) and hard boiled, then rolled down a grassy slope (as in the Park at Preston, Lancs.) and the owner of the egg remaining intact the longest was the winner.(62)

These two references do not mention plays. Nevertheless, the children are referred to in the former as going "peace egging" and in the latter as asking for pace eggs on Pace Egg Day.

There is one further type of mummers in Greater Manchester, apart from those who performed plays at Christmas:

> I see my aunt mentioned mumming. Here she was a little confused as this occurred on New Year's Eve. Local boys who dressed themselves as "coal black mommas" from the deep South (America), complete with dresses, blackened faces and scarves made into turbans (as worn by women during the war in this country) would burst into the house and with their brooms or brushes would pretend to sweep the house. They were, of course, sweeping out the old year ready

> for the new one. They did not speak but kept up a monotonous "mmmm-ing" sound as they worked. They would then leave as abruptly as they came."(63)
> In East Lancashire in the early 1920's there was a custom, usually on Christmas Eve, or sometimes including a day or two prior to that, which was known locally as "mumming", although it was a variation on the mummer's play. The participants, usually women (sometimes men would take part, dressed in women's clothing) would black their faces and don "working" clothes. Armed with a small handbrush and one or two dusters, they would enter a house and proceed to clean and tidy around the fireplace and hearth. No words were spoken at all, but the "mummers" would be humming in a monotone all the time - similar to the droning of a bee. Possibly there was some connection between the bee sound and being busy on the cleaning and sweeping. When the job was done, they would move to another house, nothing being said the whole time. From my recollections the houses visited were usually occupied by elderly people, but not exclusively so.(64)

In Greater Manchester this custom is only known to have existed in the Rochdale and Littleborough areas, although it has been reported from elsewhere in the North of England.

Finally in this examination of folk drama in Greater Manchester, there is a particularly interesting play from Pendleton, near Salford city centre. This was kept up by a family who performed their play in the family home at New Year. The play itself is unlike any other in Greater Manchester. There are only four characters: Stirup, King George, Dr. Brown, and Maid, and only one fight, in which Stirup slays King George.(65)

To sum up, folk drama in the area consists of the following: pace eggers who perform a play at Easter; pace eggers who take round a hobby horse at Easter; pace eggers who sing "The Jolly Tradesmen" at Easter; pace eggers who beg for eggs at Easter; mummers who perform a play at Christmas; and mummers who sweep out houses at New Year.

It appears from this examination of folk drama in Greater Manchester that the influence of chapbooks was not quite as widespread as has generally been thought. It has been shown that there are some ten references to the Easter pace egg plays which suggest the presence of chapbook texts. On the other hand, there are two Easter pace egg plays which do not. Furthermore, there is no evidence of chapbook influence in any of the other forms of folk drama in the area, notably the Christmas mumming plays, the Easter pace egg plays which include the hobby horse, and the family play from Pendleton. There are also the Robin Hood plays which may or may not have been taken from a printed source. However, they were certainly not taken from Peace Egg chapbooks.

It is clear from this study that while chapbooks were indisputably used by some teams in Greater Manchester from the 1830s onwards, they were not used by all teams. The conclusion, therefore, must be that the use of the chapbooks in the area where they were published was not automatic and should not be assumed.

This paper set out to discover whether the plays found in one particular urban area are similar to each other. It appears from the evidence in the Manchester plays that on the whole they are not. There are several different types of folk drama in the area, some of which used chapbook texts, while others did not. There is considerable textual and character variation between the performances of some teams. Costuming varied, with some teams dressing alike, some in any old clothes, and some attempting to dress the part they were playing. Differences between teams are also apparent in such factors as time and place of performance. Some teams performed on Good Friday, others on Easter Monday, and some on one or more days before Easter. Some teams performed inside or outside individual houses, while others performed in the street for passers-by. And then there are the fascinating reports of several teams coming from the same area, yet performing different plays depending on the ages of the performers.

Despite the differences between plays there are also some notable similarities. For example, the appearance of the hobby horse

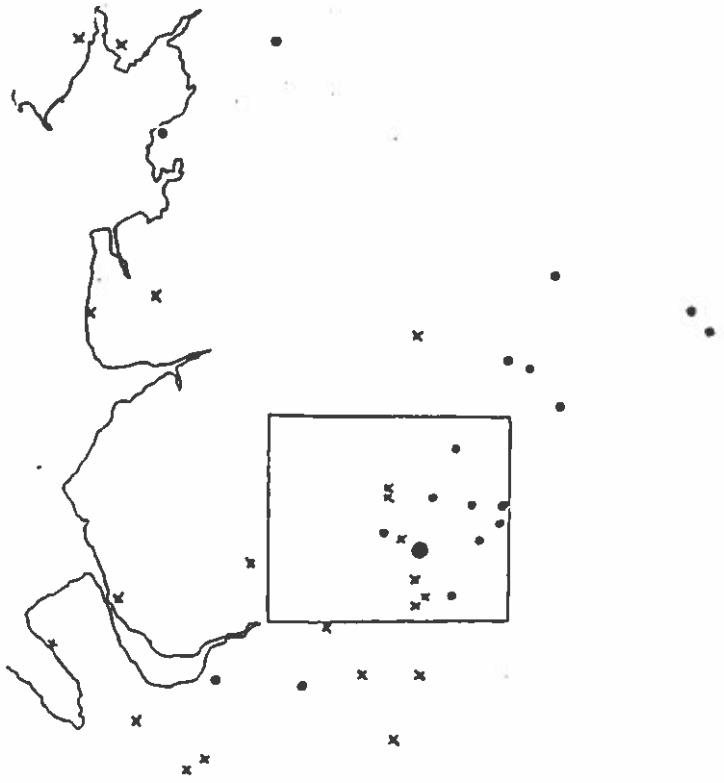
both alone and in the Easter pace egg play; the sweeping up with a broom by a character in both the Easter pace egg play and by the mummers of Rochdale and Littleborough; and the man dressed as a woman who appears in many different types of folk drama. Nevertheless, the variation amongst the Manchester plays is considerably more striking than the similarities. Furthermore, these differences become even more apparent if some of them are plotted on distribution maps. If the references indicating both the presence and absence of chapbook influence are plotted on a map of Greater Manchester, they can be seen to fall into two fairly distinct areas (see map 1). The plays which show chapbook influence are concentrated mainly in the northeast and east of the area, with the exception of a brief reference to performances seen at Monton, Swinton and Worsley. Plays which do not show chapbook influence occur to the south, west, and northwest of the city, but not in the northeast or east.

The existence of these two areas of play distribution is further highlighted by plotting the distributions of other types of folk drama. The hobby horse custom occurs only in the non-chapbook area to the south, west and northwest (see map 2). The five references to the Robin Hood plays occur only in the chapbook area to the north and northeast, (see map 2) as do the few references to the mumming custom at Rochdale and Littleborough (see map 2). However, the distribution of the pace egging custom which does not feature a play, shows no such division into two areas (see map 3).

Why there should be two comparatively distinct areas of play distribution is difficult to answer. The chapbook area of the northeast and east contained the bulk of Manchester's textile industry during the nineteenth century, with the mill towns of Rochdale, Oldham and Ashton-Under-Lyne. The non-chapbook region to the west and south of the city was and still is more of a residential area than that to the north and east. In the early part of last century much of the south of what is now Manchester was still composed of villages and towns.

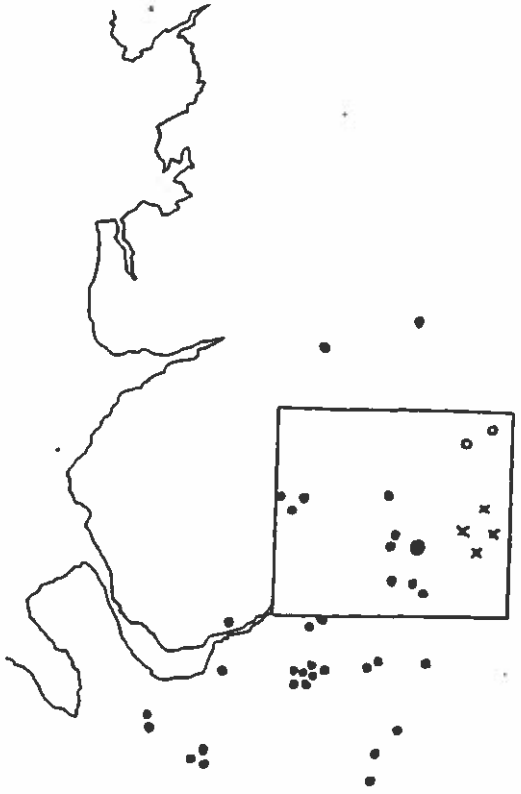
It is also interesting to note that the plays which show the presence of chapbooks were all extant during the second half of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, most of the non-chapbook plays were extant during the first half of that century, the two notable

Map 1: Distribution of Folk Plays and Chapbook Influences in the Greater Manchester and North West Region.



● - Manchester.
• - Folk Plays Showing Chapbook Influences.
× - Folk Plays Not Showing Chapbook Influences.
Scale: ½" = 10 Miles.

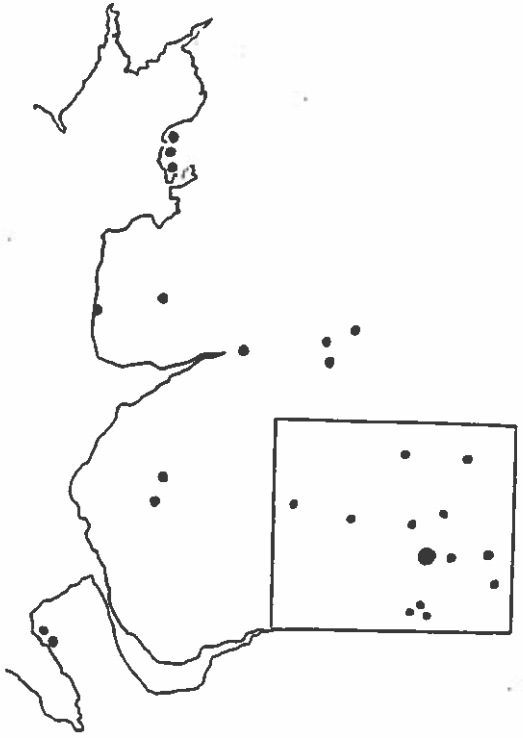
Map 2: Distribution of Horse's Head Customs, Robin Hood Plays, and Mumming Customs in the Greater Manchester and North West Region.



● - Manchester.
• - Horse's Head Customs.
× - Robin Hood Plays.
o - Mumming Customs

Scale: ½" = 10 Miles.

Map 3: Distribution of Informal Easter visits in the Greater Manchester and North West Region.



● - Manchester.

Scale: ½" = 10 Miles.

exceptions being at Radcliffe and Pendleton. The presence of two distinct areas of play distribution is further highlighted if the maps are enlarged to include all Lancashire, Cheshire and West Yorkshire (see map 1). It is noticeable that the influence of chapbooks is most prominent in the Calder Valley and the West Riding, the area which joins directly onto the chapbook area to the northeast and east of Manchester. The rest of Lancashire shows little evidence of chapbook influence, except for isolated examples at Lancaster and Kirkby Lonsdale. There is equally little evidence in Cheshire where the presence of chapbooks is only seen in parts of the texts at Antrobus, Comberbach and Frodsham.

As before, the distribution of some of the other types of folk drama also points to a division into two areas. The hobby horse occurs mainly in Cheshire's souling plays and as a separate custom in the Burnley and Blackburn area (see map 2). The Robin Hood play does not occur outside Greater Manchester, and the mumming custom is known only in a handful of places, mainly in West Yorkshire. The pace egging custom which does not feature a play is relatively widespread, just as it was within Greater Manchester, and does not show any distribution pattern (see map 3).

In conclusion, it has been shown that chapbook influence occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly in the northeast and east of Manchester. However, there is little evidence of the influence of chapbooks in the rest of Greater Manchester, where most of the plays were extant during the first half of the century. This distinction into chapbook and non-chapbook areas is important for two reasons. Firstly, it expands once again on the statement that the people of the northwest depended on printed copies for their play texts. This may have been true of some areas of Manchester, but not of the south and west. Secondly, it has already been pointed out that amongst the various types of folk drama in Greater Manchester there are more differences than similarities. This suggests that if plays performed within one city can be so varied, it is likely that urban areas have not given rise to a distinct type of folk drama. Indeed, the distribution of those plays which show the influence of chapbooks lends support to this view. The region in which these plays fall adjoins the only other area

around Manchester where chapbooks were used to any major extent, namely in the Calder Valley and other parts of West Yorkshire. This suggests that the plays which reveal chapbook influence are more closely related to these Yorkshire plays than to those in Greater Manchester where chapbooks were not used. If the plays from an urban area have less in common with each other than with plays from the surrounding region, it implies that the distribution of distinct types of folk drama is not governed by the distribution of urban areas.

This conclusion is borne out by a brief examination of folk drama in the largest urban area of England, Greater London. English Ritual Drama lists about twenty references to plays from the London area. Whereas most of the Manchester plays were extant during the whole of the nineteenth century, the earliest report of a play in London refers to the 1850s. In fact, the majority of the London plays were extant between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, with a couple of teams on the outskirts continuing into the 1950s.

The ages of the performers are not given in any of the London references, although a couple of reports say that they were boys and one states more specifically that they were "bigger boys".(66) Other references imply that the performers could have been somewhat older by stating that particular actors had taken part in the plays for several years. One report talks of "6 men" while another makes the only reference to "women" by saying: "If a woman's voice issued from the beard of the Turkish Knight or of the Doctor....- well, it was just how they used to do it,..."(67)

Costuming was apparently quite elaborate, the most concise description referring to a team from Pinner around the turn of the century:

> In some old sketches by R.N. Brock, Father Christmas is shown in three-quarter length cloak or gown, wearing gaiters. King George has a paper crown made of gold paper. The Turk has a turban and the Doctor has a head gear rather like a scout's hat. The Turk has a horse's head and tail and a small pair of legs protruding from a voluminous "skirt" to suggest being on horse back. Little John should be dressed like a

> monk, but looks uncommonly like an old woman with skirt, bonnet and shawl and carrying a long pole. The rest of the make-up appears to be numerous streamers or ribbons hanging loosely from neck to knees. Billy the Sweep has various shovels and brushes tied round his waist.(68).

Another example comes from Mill Hill in 1900:

> All the characters were disguised, i.e. were masked and elaborately and fantastically attired, those members of the troupe not provided with masks having their face blackened.... Apart from the various modes of "disguising", in which the customary paper ribbons figured conspicuously, some of the characters were provided with "properties". Lord Beelzebub was furnished with a formidable "club" and he wore suspended across his chest what was described in the text as "a dripping-pan"... Big Head was very short; he wore a large mask, surmounted by an immense hat. The Doctor was like a conventional medico as rendered by a nigger-minstrel : he was furnished with a professional-looking case, and he wore an ordinary top hat. The man with the tambourine put it to no other use than to collect money at the close of the performance. Long Broom wielded his appropriate implement... Now, at Mill Hill the Dancer was - a doll!(69)

A further reference talks of the characters wearing "hats with long paper streamers, and some attempt to dress in character."(70) The wearing of paper ribbons seems to have been quite common. Another reference mentions that "the performers merely had pieces of coloured paper fastened to their ordinary clothes."(71) Masks too, were worn in some cases, although there are no descriptions of exactly what these masks looked like. A typical example is: "They dress in masks, and bedizen themselves in coloured ribbon and paper...."(72)

The teams were invariably called mummers, although one team was "mummies" and another "Beau Slashers". Performances were given around Christmas, and according to many references the teams began several weeks before. One team was even seen performing on November 30th, although mid-December and Christmas Eve are the most usual times. Performances were given either in the street for passers-by or "from shop to tavern".(73) In the following example, the team called at individual houses:

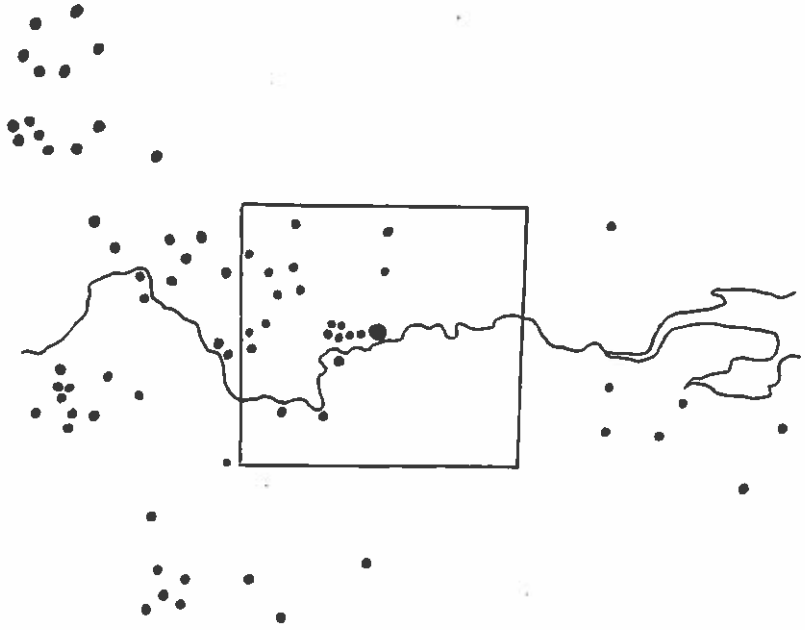
> The mummers of Mill Hill, like the similar bands of maskers in various parts of the country, perambulate the residences and public places where their experience leads them to expect a kindly welcome for their seasonable diversion. Their procedure is quaint, and marked by a total absence of diffidence. At Highwood House, where I was a guest on the evening in question, they announced their arrival by a loud knocking resembling the sounds which herald a performance by the Elizabethan Stage Society. When the door is opened there is no hesitation, but the players march in file into the hall, a fine, spacious apartment in this instance, admirably suited to the purpose in hand. As soon as the family and guests were assembled, with the servants of the household as an outer fringe to the auditory, the performance began....(74)

The following reference to a team from Acton shows that the mummers often visited specific houses for a reason:

> About a month before Christmas, a band of "mummers" who made for themselves wonderful dresses of ribbons and paper, and acted a strange performance, always visited Pritchard's Yard, and had a good audience....There was much recital of doggerel verse, and after the performance Mr. Pritchard's home-brewed ale was served round.(75)

The text and characters in the London plays vary from team to team, having several factors in common with each other and just as many differences. It is not intended to examine the textual differences and similarities here, but one example of a character and his speech will suffice to show this variation. A character with a broom, who

Map 4: Distribution of Plays in the Greater London and Surrounding Area.



● - London.

Scale: ½" = 10 Miles.

sweeps up at the beginning or the end of the plays, appears in many of the London folk dramas. He is known variously as Sweep, Billy the Sweep, Johnny the Sweep, Long Broom, a Snow Sweeper, Molly, and Girl with a Broom. However, in no two plays does this character have the same name. Furthermore, no two speeches by the character are alike.

This examination of the London plays has been brief because, in the context of this paper, its importance lies not in the plays themselves but in their distribution as shown on the map provided (see map 4). The map clearly reveals that all the plays are situated to the west of the city centre. If it is enlarged to include the plays from the surrounding area of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Kent, Surrey, Hampshire and Oxfordshire, this curious distribution is borne out (see map 4). To the east of London, there are no more plays in Hertfordshire, only one in Essex, and a handful in Kent and Surrey. To the west there are a considerable number of plays in Hampshire, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire. Again, this suggests that the plays which occur in the London area are more closely connected with their neighbouring rural plays than with any distinct type of "London folk drama". This appears to bear out the conclusions arising from the study of the Greater Manchester plays, namely that urban areas have not given rise to a unique type of folk drama. Furthermore, it again shows that the distribution of similar types of play is not governed by boundaries created by the outskirts of large urban areas. In fact, it even appears as if the centres of urban areas, rather than the perimeters, act as dividing lines between two different types of play in Manchester, and the presence or absence of plays in east and west London. Again, the conclusion is that urban folk dramas seem to bear a close resemblance to plays from the surrounding countryside, and that consequently, folk drama should not be considered as just a product of rural areas.

NOTES

* Originally presented at the Traditional Drama 1979 conference.

1. E.C. Cawte, Alex Helm and M. Peacock, English Ritual Drama: A Geographical Index (London: The Folklore Society, 1967).
2. English Ritual Drama was compiled before the council boundaries were altered to create Greater London. Therefore the list of Greater London plays is obtained by combining the plays listed under London and Middlesex, along with the relevant areas of Hertfordshire, Surrey and Buckinghamshire.
3. Alex Helm, The Chapbook Mummers' Play (Leicester: Guizer Press, 1969).
4. T. Fairman Ordish, "Folklore in the Home Counties - How the Camera can Help", Home Counties Magazine, 1 (1899), 27-8.
5. For criticisms of past theories in folk drama, see Roger D. Abrahams, "British West Indian Folk Drama and the 'Life Cycle' Problem", Folklore, 81 (Winter, 1970), 241-65. See also Tony Green and Sue Pattison, Soulcaking at Antrobus (University of Leeds, n.d.), pp. 4-7, (this booklet accompanies the film of the same name made by Leeds University Television Services and the Institute of Dialect and Folklife Studies).
6. For a complete list of Chapbooks, 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).
7. See Alex Helm, The Chapbook Mummers' Play (Leicester: Guizer Press, 1969), pp. 30-33. Helm states on p. 30 that "the people of the North West depended on printed copies for their texts".
8. Margaret Dean-Smith, "The Life-Cycle or Folk Play: Some Conclusions Following the Examination of the Ordish Papers and Other Sources", Folklore, 69 (1958), 248.
9. For an examination of transmission, see P.S. Smith, "Tradition - A Perspective, Part II, Transmission", Lore and Language 2:3 (July, 1975), 5-14. For an examination of transmission and chapbooks in a play tradition, see P. Stevenson and G. Buckley, "The Chapbook and the Pace Egg Play in Rochdale" (Paper presented at the Traditional Drama Conference 1978, University of Sheffield).

10. These five publishers are listed in M.J. Preston et al. (1976).
11. Louis M. Hayes, Reminiscences of Manchester (London and Manchester: Sherratt and Hughes, 1905), pp. 65-6.
12. William E.A. Axon, The Black Knight of Ashton (Manchester: John Heywood, 1870) pp. 44-45.
13. Alfred Holt, The Story of Mossley Ancient and Modern (Manchester: John Heywood, 1926), p. 90.
14. Little John, "Easter Customs", Oldham Evening Chronicle (Notes and Queries), April 26th, 1879. Also in a book of newspaper cuttings in Oldham Library, Vol. 3, p. 66.
15. E.H., "Manners and Customs of Old Stockport. Peace Egging", Stockport Advertiser Notes and Queries, I (1881), 103-4.
16. J. Barlow Brooks, Lancashire Bred (Headington: the author, 1951), pp. 109-116.
17. W.H., untitled letter, Manchester City News Notes and Queries, I (1878), p. 326.
18. J. Tholhon, "Early Recollections of Middleton, IV, The Steward of the Manor", Middleton Guardian, January 7th, 1888. Also in the Dean Scrapbook, Vol. I, p. 13, in Middleton Reference Library.
19. Samuel Hill, Bygone Stalybridge (Stalybridge: the author, 1907), p. 142.
20. Sim Schofield, Short Stories About Failsworth Folk (Blackpool: Union Printers, 1905), p. 127.
21. Sim Schofield, untitled letter, Manchester City News, March 11th, 1905), p. 2.
22. Alfred Holt (1926).
23. Nemo, untitled letter, in Manchester City News Notes and Queries, Vol. II (1879), p. 9.
24. John Trafford Clegg, "Bowd Slasher", Sketches and Rhymes in the Rochdale Dialect, I (Rochdale: James Clegg, 1895), pp. 76-83.
25. E.H. (1881).
26. These chapbooks are listed in M.J. Preston, et al. (1976), 31, 44.
27. Ibid., 28.
28. A. Mabel Maclure, untitled letter, Manchester City News, March 4th 1905, p. 2.
29. Juliana Horatia Ewing, The Peace Egg (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, n.d.).

30. Sim Schofield, untitled letter, Manchester City News, March 11th, 1905, p. 2.
31. Axon (1870), pp.44-53.
32. Winifred M. Bowman, 5,000 Acres of Old Ashton (Ashton-Under-Lyne: J. Andrews, 1951), pp. 31-32.
33. Tholhon (1888).
34. Holt (1926).
35. John Clarke, untitled letter, Manchester City News, March 18th 1905, p. 2.
36. Little John "Easter Customs", (1879).
37. D. Morris, letter to N. Peacock, 8th May 1961, in Norman Peacock Collection.
38. Clegg (1895).
39. Joseph Bradbury, Saddleworth Sketches (Oldham: Hirst and Rennie, 1871), pp. 74-75.
40. E.H. (1881).
41. W.H. (1878).
42. Brooks (1951).
43. James Wood, untitled letter, Manchester City News, March 11th 1905, p. 2.
44. Benjamin Brearley, Tales and Sketches of Lancashire Life (Manchester: John Heywood, 1863), pp. 113-4.
45. Little John, "Easter Peace or Pace Egging", Oldham Evening Chronicle (Notes and Queries), April 12th 1879. Also in book of newspaper cuttings, Vol. 3, p. 60, in Oldham Library.
46. Holt (1926).
47. Axon (1870), p.45.
48. This chapbook is listed in M.J. Preston, et al. (1976) p. 43.
49. S.F. Simons, untitled letter, Manchester City News, February 25th, 1905, p. 2.
50. William Tattersall, untitled letter, Manchester City News, March 4th, 1905, p. 2.
51. W.H. Shercliff, ed., Wythenshawe: A History of the Townships of Northenden, Northen Etchells and Baguley, I (Didsbury: E.J. Morten, 1974), p. 281.
52. John Harland and T.T. Wilkinson, Lancashire Legends, Traditions, Pageants, Sports, &c. (London: Routledge, 1874), p. 101.

53. Charlotte S. Burne, "Reminiscences of Lancashire and Cheshire when George IV was King", Folklore, 20 (1909), 207.
54. Fletcher Moss, Folklore, Old Customs and Tales (Didsbury, the author, 1898), pp. 40-41.
55. Ibid., pp. 67-68.
56. Louisa Potter, Lancashire Memories (London: Macmillan, 1879), pp. 80-81.
57. Anon, untitled, South Manchester Gazette (n.d.). This cutting is in a book of newspaper cuttings in Manchester Central Library, Local History, by George Simpson, covering May 2nd 1885 to the end of 1886, p. 12.
58. John Leyland, Memorials of Hindley, Part 1 (Manchester: John Heywood, n.d.), (Preface dates December 31st 1873), p. 106.
59. David Herbert Langton, History of the Parish of Flixton (Taylor, Garnett and Evans, 1898), pp. 98-99.
60. M.A., untitled letter, Manchester City News, February 7th, 1903, p. 2.
61. Samuel Bamford, Early Days (Manchester: John Heywood, 1859), pp. 138-139.
62. Mrs. Gertrude Hallowell, archive card A, L.I. No. 9, August 23rd, 1969, collected by Mrs. Mary Constable, Archives of the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, University of Sheffield.
63. Mrs. Wendy Nimz, letter to P. Stevenson, January 25th, 1976.
64. Mr. F. Hacking, archive card A, L.I. No. 115, November 29th, 1974, Archives of the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, University of Sheffield.
65. Rosemary Leonard, letter dated 1959 and added to in October 1970, Archives of the Centre for Cultural Tradition and Language, University of Sheffield.
66. Edwin Ware, "Memories of Old Customs", St. Edmunds Review [Parish magazine] No. 97 (January 1966), 9-10.
67. Anon, "Christmas Mummers", Morning Post, December 18th, 1919.
68. Ware (1966), 9-10.
69. T. Fairman Ordish, "Replies", Home Counties Magazine, III (1901), 246-247.
70. Vale of Aylesbury, "Topical Notes", The Bucks. Herald, December 29th, 1923, p. 5.

71. Alex Helm Collection.
72. G.W. Septimus Piesse, letter, Notes and Queries, 2 Ser, X (1860), 466-467.
73. Ibid.
74. Ordish (1901), 246-247.
75. Henry Mitchell, Records and Recollections of Acton, Middlesex (Ealing: County Times Printing and Publishing Co., 1913), p. 45.

A PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NORTH AMERICAN THESES ON TRADITIONAL DRAMA AND RELATED TOPICS

Paul Smith

Over the past several years, I have been accumulating references to American and Canadian M.A. and Ph.D. theses which have traditional drama as their focus. In an attempt to consolidate this research, I have recently undertaken a systematic search for relevant material - initially using the following sources:

- My personal bibliographic files; some of these entries have already been listed in Roomer.
- A computerized database search of Dissertation Abstracts.
- Alan Dundes. Folklore Theses and Dissertations in the United States. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976.
- Michael Heisley. An Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Folklore from the Southwestern United States. Los Angeles: Centre for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, 1977.
- Fredric M. Litto. American Dissertations on the Drama and Theatre: A Bibliography. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1969.
- Sue Samuelson, ed. Twenty-five Years of the Department of Folklore and Folklife of the University of Pennsylvania: A Dissertation Profile. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Department of Folklore, 1983.

In searching these sources, some one hundred and sixty-two references, spanning approximately seventy-seven years, have so far been identified. In the main, these theses were generated within departments of English - although work has also emanated from such departments as Anthropology, Theatre Arts, Romance Languages, French, Spanish, and Political Science.

The earliest thesis located was by Marie Caroline Lyle, "Relation of the Lucifer Traditions in the Literary Compositions of the Middle Ages to the Story of the Fall of the Angels in Mystery Plays"