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A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH
TO
ENGLISH FOLK DRAMA

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
Barry James Ward, A.B., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1972

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"As a start, we need more information on points which the older collectors ignored either because they did not know of their existence, or because they seemed too obvious to record. One suspects that the social class and preconceptions of folklorists may have limited both their view of what seemed significant and even what they were able to observe..."

--Herbert Halpert, "A Typology of Mumming, "Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland, p.44.

"The Muse of History hath encumbered herself with ceremony as well as her Sister of the Theatre. She too wears the mask and the cothurnus, and speaks to measure. She too, in our age, busies herself with the affairs only of kings; waiting on them obsequiously and stately, as if she were but a mistress of Court ceremonies, and had nothing to do with the registering of the affairs of the common people."


"I tell of festivals, and fairs, and plays,
Of merriment, and mirth, and bonfire blaze;
I tell of Christmas-mummings, new year's day,
Of Twelfth-Night king and queen, and children's play;
I tell of Valentines, and true love's-knots,
Of omens, cunning men, and drawing lots--"

--Robert Herrick
INTRODUCTION

Preface

This dissertation makes no claims to, nor was it intended to, "cover" the topic of the English Folk Play. Its business is primarily to record in as thorough and accurate a fashion possible some contemporary manifestations of this traditional form of drama and to offer one kind of explanation for its persistence and relative vitality in the twentieth century. In this volume is a collection of nearly every Folk Play current in England in 1971-72, accompanied by contextual information based on my first-hand experience. In attempting to account for the tenacity of the Play, I bring to bear relevant functional theory of sociologists such as R.K. Merton and Melford Spiro, and the analytical and interpretative techniques acquired in my own study of English literature. It is my hope that the result will provide fresh insight into questions of how a particular piece of folklore functions for those engaged in its performance and the larger community of which they are a part, and, more broadly, into the philosophical quandary of the relationship between folk literature and the literature of art.

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I regret that the Marshfield Mummers are not included here.
The limitations of my approach undoubtedly will appear to some of my readers as a glaring fault. I feel, however, that a narrower focus at this stage of scholarly investigation into the English Folk Play is very much more an asset that otherwise. In spite of the excellent work done by Messrs. Cawte, Helm, Peacock and other current critics of this tradition, we simply do not know enough as yet about a myriad of issues associated with the Play to attempt a definitive study: its pre-19th century past is for the most part silent; the attitudes of those who performed and witnessed the Play at an earlier time are a mystery; that it did not go the way of so many other customs during the fragmentation of the agricultural life-style which nourished it still perplexes us.

Some questions, of course, have been satisfactorily dealt with. Sir E. K. Chambers has given us in *The English Folk Play* a thorough guide to literary sources of certain speeches and characters. The compilers of *English Ritual Drama* have supplied an invaluable geographical index of where Plays have been performed in the past. Recently, Alan Brody in *The English Mummers and Their Plays* has pursued Alex Helm's lead and pointed to some classical analogues of the Play. In this, my effort, I hope to provide evidence that the tradition is not moribund, and that,
barring another catastrophe world war, the Folk Play as it presently functions in English society has excellent prospects for continued longevity.
A Local Legend

In the local legend which follows only the idiom differs from the way the story circulates in a small English village with which I am intimately acquainted. I present it not because it is an aberration or because the inhabitants of the village are somehow different from other people: in fact, I do so because quite the reverse is true. The temptation to saddle the tale with a dogmatic title like, "Verify, Verify, Verify," was, I admit, overwhelming. But, as a caveat for drawing room folklorists, it stands on its own merits.

Tale of a King

This is a tale of a king, not a Fraserian scapegoat king, not a king of a folk tale, not even a king from our written literature. He is, or rather was, a real live king, the exiled king of Yugoslavia who during the Nazi occupation of his country found refuge in a little English village.

With this king came his mother, for, you see, the king was only a boy at the time. They had for their home in this village, the king and his mother, a very pleasant place indeed, set on a small hill just outside of the village center itself. But kings (and kings' mothers) seldom are entirely without servants and gardeners and chauffeurs and guards, and this king was no exception. But since the pleasant place in which the king and his mother lived was far too small for the staff as well, another building--the garage and some small flats--was built at the bottom of the small hill outside the village center, and in it lived the servants and gardeners and chauffeurs and guards.

One day, after the war, the king and his mother left. But the tale isn't over because, you see, the buildings stayed. And to this day a rich old man lives in the one on the top of the hill just outside the village center. The other building, the garage, has changed, however, and now a man on the parish council which decides on local appointments such as librarians and teachers lives in the garage.
(so altered you would have to know it had been a garage to recognize it).

Now this interesting little village has a schoolmaster who is writing a history of the exciting events which have taken place in the village: of fetes and of teas and of the time the King of Yugoslavia stayed you know where. But what of the garage from which the servants, gardeners, chauffeurs, and guards scurried to serve His Majesty? There is no such place, or do you mean the other house of royalty where the king's mother herself lived, the one at the bottom of the small hill just outside the village center?

It is easy to indulge our moral indignation in situations such as this in which the facts have so obviously been accommodated to satisfy the needs of those involved. The parish councilor may not know about the house in which he lives and its place in the village's royal history, and who will cast stones at the schoolmaster caught in the dilemma of recording what he knows to have been the case and what had better be the case? What the tale does illustrate (as I intimated in my rejected title) is the need to verify the facts, at first hand whenever possible. In my opinion, many of the commentators on the English Folk Play have not taken that vital step of acquainting themselves first hand with the living materials on which they base their

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2 I am not alleging any conscious wrong doing or pressure from the parties involved. Indeed, the present owner is probably not aware of the influence he is exerting. The danger signals were communicated indirectly through the former postmaster. I doubt that if the issue came into the open, the councilor would exert pressure or the schoolmaster back down. The process works because it is understood and not articulated directly.
conclusions; the Americans are particularly to blame, but some English scholars as well are quite removed from the material. It is not enough to have a grasp of the criticism and printed texts of the Play since so much of the criticism is based on unreliable and distorted evidence.

That I feel obliged to raise the issue of the accuracy and authenticity of Folk Drama materials collected in the past does not, I am sure, surprise anyone familiar with the history of the scholarship and collection techniques. What should trouble us is that, to my knowledge at least, few British field workers are now systematically and scientifically collecting materials. Venetia Newall has persuasively told us about the anti-traditionalism, anti-rationalism, and in some cases anti-scholasticism of many British in regard to their own heritage. The social class of "...gifted dilettantes, private scholars, self-supported, pursuing an intellectual pastime that flourished because its conception coincided with an increasing interest in so-called lower classes" has ceased to exist and no one has stepped forward to fill the gap. A small number of dedicated scholars

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4 Venetia Newall, p.329.
superior in their field such as Venetia Newall and a few private scholars such as Dr. E. C. Cawte carry on with their research, but there appears to be little depth in the ranks. Leeds and Sheffield Universities have made beginnings in correcting the existing situation, especially by promoting dialect and folk life studies. Perhaps the new fieldworker-scholars will come from this source.

A Living Tradition

Some attempts, the squire informs me, have been made of late years, by men of both taste and learning, to rally back the popular feeling to these standards of primitive simplicity; but the time has gone by, the feeling has become chilled by habits of gain and traffic, the country apes the manners and amusements of the town, and little is heard of May-day at present, except from the lamentations of authors, who sigh after it from among the brick walls of the city:

'For O, for O, the Hobby Horse is forgot.'

--Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (Washington Irving), Bracebridge Hall, 1822, pp.52-53.

The obituary of the English Folk Play has been written so many times one hesitates to record that the reports of its demise are greatly exaggerated. In spite of economic disasters and various hostile external forces—enclosure acts, bad harvests, the decline of the woolen industry and

---These factors are discussed in Alex Helm's The Chapbook Mummers' Play in the chapter entitled "The Decay of the Ceremony" and elsewhere in his writings.
the subsequent depopulation of certain rural areas, the inroads of the mass media, the catastrophic loss of men during two wars—the Folk Play exhibits a tenacity and resilience not unlike that of its oft revitalized victim who, with the application of a drop of elecampane, rises to fight once more. The fact that the Folk Play is not only alive but at present enjoying a popularity not equaled in this century is cause enough for us to take a close look at this revitalized tradition.

The Folk Play's origin, encrusted as it is in prehistoric seasonal ritual, has long been the subject for scholars interested in tracing drama to its source. It is generally supposed that the function of the original ritual was to renew and sustain the community which performed the ritual act(s) by ensuring abundant crops, fertile livestock, and, in general, good luck; on the broader plane, the performance of the ritual act revitalized the larger cosmos as well by renewing the life-cycle so clearly operating on a seasonal basis.

As Gaster has pointed out, a revitalized 'Topocosm' was not the province of divine forces alone. Men, too, were required to perform acts of 'Kenosis' (emptying) and 'Plerosis' (filling). 6

It is among the latter rites of Plerosis, of the replenishment of life, that the mock combats of the Folk Play had their genesis. The original ritual lying behind the Folk Play was a pure, purposeful action intended to bring about a specific goal, "the revitalization of man's immediate world."7

The locus of the ritual, the representative of the community "who fights the noxious powers, and who serves as the bridegroom in a 'sacred marriage',"8 is, of course, the king:

What the king does on the punctual plane, the god does on the durative. Accordingly, all the ceremonies performed by the king are transmuted, through the medium of myth, into deeds done by the god.9

Even when the pure action of the ritual ceases to retain its effect upon man and nature in the eyes of its practitioners, the act is still performed even if its urgency is no longer paramount. The seed of this perpetuation of the ritual rests with the initial relationship between king and god:

8 Theodor H. Gaster, p.16.
9 Theodor H. Gaster, p.16.
This transmutation in turn gives rise to the idea that the king and the other performers of the seasonal rites are merely impersonating acts originally performed by the gods, and the tendency develops to represent what is really a parallel situation on the durative plane as something that happened primordially—the archetype of what may be periodically repeated with the same effect. Presentation then becomes representation; the ritual turns into drama.  

Or, as Brody has said, the performer "...is not only performing an action, he is imitating one...The idea of performing a task 'in order to' is supplanted by the idea of performing it 'as if.'"  

The ritual act having lost its original functional significance is treated in a less serious, burlesque vein. Elements of farce and ribaldry, perhaps even part of the original ceremony, take on greater significance as the performance acquires new meanings for its participants. Also, other elements leave their mark on the original action.  

Among the forces which altered the functional significance of the ancient ritual was Christianity. Though we do not know how the old ceremony was changed in its structure during the disintegration and re-evaluation it went through in contact with Christian thought, we can be sure that the impact was significant. Though I earlier lay stress on the tenacity and persistence of the Folk Play, I should make clear that it was the ability of the Play to

\[^{10}\text{Theodor H. Gaster, pp.16-17.}\]

\[^{11}\text{Alan Brody, p.121.}\]
adapt and assume forms and meanings beyond its origins which enabled it to survive. As E. O. James has indicated, "...for unless customs and beliefs can acquire a new functional value by taking on a new existence through the impact of extraneous cultural influences, they tend to disappear."\(^1\) The Church has a long history of absorbing any endeavor in the least compatible with Christianity, and as we shall note in a minute, the clergy played its considerable part in sustaining ancient customs. "The necessity of securing means of subsistence by the performance of vegetation ceremonies centring in the maintenance of the physical vigour of the king, and driving away evil by an expulsion ritual, may not have been pressing practical considerations in the peasant culture of medieval Europe, as was the case when folk drama first came into being, but, nevertheless, the ancient customs survived in the popular round of fast and festival..."\(^2\)

The Folk Play today bears little resemblance to the ritual we have been considering. Not only have the texts been exposed to ecclesiastical and literary influences but also there predominates virtually without exception, among actors and audience alike, the idea that a play is being

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\(^{2}\) E. O. James, p.269.
presented, not a ritual re-enacted. Because the Folk Play is a burlesque of what we suppose it once to have been, because some see a gross incongruity between style and subject, there has been the temptation to call it a "relic" and "a decrepit artifact." But the fact remains that the Play apparently has appeals and uses for both audiences and players beyond any ritual.

Problems Related to the Study of the English Folk Drama

The first difficulty facing the student of the English Folk Drama is deciding which of the plays are traditional performances and genuine revivals, and which have no traditional basis. English Ritual Drama employs the following criteria for inclusion in its geographical index, in addition to the obvious basis that the team has performed continually with no known breaks:

(a) "a team stops for a period and then starts again, with all or most of the original team"

(b) "as with (a), but all, or nearly all of the performers are new, taught by an old performer, but still in the same village," and the revival must be spontaneous, not the result of outside influence

(c) "as with (b), but in a different village." 14

These criteria are useful as a general guide, though I found them inadequate upon application in many specific

cases. At the same time that they help us to exclude mumm­
ing teams which learned their play from a printed sources, they beg the question of our ignorance of pre-20th century influences on the Play. By these standards not only must we rule out the Brighouse Children's Theatre Pace-Eggers, the Bury Mummers, and the Coventry Mummers, all groups with no claim to a traditional basis, but we must also dismiss the Bampton Mummers who use a text re-worked by a local vicar in the 1840's, the Antrobus Soul-Cakers who were regrouped by the outside influence of Major Boyd in the 1920's, and the Midgley Pace-Eggers which were resuscitated by local men for a radio broadcast. Only the Ripon Blue Stots qualify as a traditional team and even their text is derived from a chapbook.

In other words the term "traditional", if it means somehow being continuously linked with the original ritual, is pretty meaningless. We have to look at who is perform­­ing the Play now and judge in each case if its history warrants calling the performance traditional, a folk club exercise, a commercialized exploitation, or whatever. 15

15 For instance, contemporarily written examples such as Peter Nalder's The Uckfuss Mumming Play, sometimes presented by local acting groups and children.
Some cases are easy. The Philadelphia Mummers' Parade, no matter what its relationship to the English Folk Play may have been, is as far removed from it as the queen of the Rose Bowl parade is from the king and queen of the Castleton, North Derbyshire, Garland Day. The question of Bampton, Antrobus, and Midgley is not so easily answered.

Another problem faced by the student in the field is that of reactivity, his influence on the performance given. The effects of his very presence, much less his effect once he begins to pursue his investigation, is real, and no matter what is claimed, nothing can be done to totally eliminate it. The best thing to do is accept one's influence and try to make use of it in collecting and later in analyzing the materials.

Also, one discovers that there is a regular following of people from the Folk-Lore Society, folk clubs, and so forth who are more or less taken for granted by performers and are often on rather intimate terms with them because of years of association. In my experience these collectors tend to stand to the side and not take part in the experience of the performance. At first I was unknown to many of the regulars, a situation which presented some problems in meeting performers. Later, once I came to be identified

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with some of the members of The Folklore Society, I met with other difficulties, especially isolation from the rest of the audience, and, I discovered, I had a different, more formal relationship with the performers.

Third, we can only make limited historical comparisons of English Folk Play materials since there is very little documentation. The earliest record of the Folk Play refers to an Irish version in 1685 and this citation does not supply a text. Many earlier references to hobby horses, Morris dancers and mummers give us extensive circumstantial evidence, but none of it is very detailed. For the most part we have to rely on Continental analogues for pre-17th century evidence; the dangers of over-stressing the analogies where the English material is concerned are obvious though not always needed.

Hand in glove with the absence of historical documentation is the problem that, until recently, there has been an unsystematic gathering of materials, especially of related contextual information. Country parsons, as George Herbert says in A Priest to the Temple, are lovers of old customs, "if they be good and harmlesse," and these

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parsons are often the men we must look back to. Unfortunately, they also held that "...if there be any ill in the custome, that may be severed from the good, he [the parson] pares the apple, and gives them the clean to feed on."  
Thus, though the vicar may, as was reported at Abbot Bromley, keep track of the horns, old pot for collecting money and other accoutrements, or, as we know was the case at Bampton, actually write out a text for the players to use, he had the duty to be selective and to pare off whatever was undesirable, in some cases what may well have been the core. In fact, there is a long "tradition" of bowdlerization and alteration of the texts by all sorts of collectors with special interests or sensitive moral codes at stake.  

Finally, among the special considerations we must keep in mind is the role of the chapbook in both altering and sustaining the Folk Play tradition. In my collecting I found no plays whose present text did not derive from a chapbook. "The normal effect of tampering with tradition is to cause it to decline if not vanish completely: the chapbooks had the opposite effect, producing a blend of

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19 The Works of George Herbert, pp.283-84.
20 P.H. Ditchfield, Old English Customs (London, 1901), pp.139-40.
tradition and re-writing which was apparently acceptable."21

Description of the Subject Matter

The English Folk Play--drama that is traditionally transmitted for performance at seasonal celebrations, festivals, and religious holidays--is part of a worldwide phenomenon.22 In its English manifestations it appears to have taken three distinct though related forms, what we now have come to call the Sword Dance; the Wooing, Bridal, or Plough Play; and the Hero-Combat Play. It is important to note that the types of the Play as so named reflect the definers' stress on action, as opposed to say transmission, geography, function, etc., and that we must always be aware that the Play is a composite of concurrent phenomena. From the point of view of the contemporary performances of the Play, only the last, the Hero-Combat, is immediately important since it is the only form still in existence.

(1) The Sword Dance

"...combines highly developed dance movement with an involved dramatic action. In some examples there is a wooing as in the W/ (Wooing) plays. The dance follows, and the swords are woven into a star, which is put round the neck


of the supposed victim; the swords are withdrawn, and the victim falls as if dead. He is later restored to life, usually by a comic doctor."

Though the Folk Play at Ripon is called a Sword Play, there is no dance movement or use of swords as described above. For an account of the Sword Dance and its ritual origins, Violet Alford's *Sword Dance and Drama* is the most thorough; for the technicalities of the dance itself, E.C. Cawte's *Rapper at Winlaton in 1955* is the most helpful source.

(2) The Wooing or Bridal Play

"The wooer of a young 'Female' is rejected in favour of a clown, and enlists in the army. The Clown is occasionally accused of being the father of the bastard child of an older 'Female.' This he rejects. The action then normally follows the [course of the Hero-Combat Play described below]. Characteristic performers include: The Recruiting Sergeant, Ploughboy, Lady, Clown, Dame. Costume: ordinary clothes with appliquéd(sic) farm animals. Shirts often worn outside trousers; headgear often tall and decorated with jewelry, watches, etc. Time of Appearance: Christmas to Plough Monday."

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23 *English Ritual Drama*, pp.24-25.

This type of the Folk Play was known in Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Rutland. The first person to recognize it as a separate type was Charles Read Baskerville in "Mummers' Wooing Plays in England."\(^\text{25}\) The type has occasionally been revived, but the only group performing any version of it on a regular basis is the Coventry Mummers (their version is a collation). The remnants of a plough ceremony (not a play) with a few verses from a chapbook Hero-Combat Play are still remembered in sections of East Anglia (see appendix).

(3) **The Hero-Combat**

"The action consists of one or more champions overcoming one or more opponents who are revived by a doctor. Characteristic performers include: Saint George, Turkish Knight or Black Prince, 'Female', Doctor, Jack Finney, Devil Doubt, Beelzebub, Big Head, though these names are subject to endless variation, and the last three (among others) do not carry the action further. Costume: latterly dressed to correspond with characters, but formerly according to area, strips of paper or ribbons over ordinary clothes. Faces blackened or raddled, or covered by the headress.

Time of Appearance: All Soul's Day to Easter."^{26}

This is the only type in traditional performance today. Its ties to the chapbooks of the 19th century make it the most "modern" of the three types. The category includes Soul-Caking and Pace-Egging Plays.

**Costume and Disguise**

Most commentators agree with Margaret Dean-Smith that the purpose of the disguise performers of the English Folk Play wear is "to conceal identity, even humanity, from friends and neighbours,"^{27} and that the prevalent tendency to dress the part represents a decadence in the custom from the days when paper and strips of cloth attached to the clothing or even earlier "straw and greenery" marked the proper ritual dress.^{28} My qualification of this conclusion is that it should now be stated in the past tense. Though the Ripon Blue Stots still wear a few knots and ribbons of cloth attached to their smocks and many performers blacken all or part of their face, there is now no attempt to remain anonymous in order to bestow "luck" on

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^{26} *English Ritual Drama*, p.37.

^{27} Margaret Dean-Smith, "Disguise in English Folk-Drama," *FolkLife*, 1-3 (1963-65), 97.

^{28} Margaret Dean-Smith, p.100.
waiting recipients. Indeed most take pride in their newly acquired stature and visibility in the community.

The costume functions only to identify and sometimes characterize the role of a particular player.

**Acting Style**

A great deal has been said about the rude and untutored acting style of the performers. It has even been cited as evidence that rituals, not plays, are being enacted, that "the ceremony is preserved in the presentation." Brody claims that two different staging traditions co-exist, one a declamatory, inflectionless delivery, the other an improvisational style. The first style, according to Brody, is closest to ritual intonations and is not the result of the actors being unable to give to or make sense of their lines as Helm claimed. It is not concerned, he says, with communication with the audience, the words having rather a magical, purposive import. The second style, he claims, shows that words themselves are unimportant and only act to stress the burlesque action.

In contemporary presentations Ripon utilizes this declamatory delivery. To say that it is uncommunicative to the audience is not supportable, however. Acting style goes beyond inflection of words, and anyone who has witnessed Ripon performing will know that gestures, grimaces,

grins, winks—the whole range of non-verbal movements—communicate very effectively with the audience. But Ripon is unlike the other plays in its declamatory style and we ought not look just at it.

In the other performances there is a conscious, and, I think, often successful endeavor to play a part, to act the role. Although this can be abused since in many ways the Play is the perfect vehicle for the egotistical "ham" actor, the lines are usually delivered in a competent amateur way. If anything, the delivery could almost be termed conversational, and what seems forced and unnatural is the improvisation, not the traditional lines.

The Ritual as Play; The Play as Ritual

The Anthropologist may discredit his science if he fails to recognize that man at a very early period indeed was an artistic animal and not merely a religious one. 30

It can be gathered from the foregoing that one of the scholarly controversies surrounding the Folk Play is whether it is indeed a "Play" at all or if we should more correctly align it with its ritual antecedents and call it, as Brody does, a "men's dramatic ceremony," or a "Mummers' Ritual" as Alex Helm does in "In Comes I, St. George." 31 Their


31 Alex Helm, "In Comes I, St. George," Folklore, 76 (Summer 1965), 126.
insistence on the terms "ceremony" and "ritual" rather than
"Play" in the conventional way we think of it derives from
ritualists' reaction to the view that the English Folk
Play is a degenerate survival of medieval drama, garbled
and distorted by the ignorant folk. Though we can
sympathize with their desire to push back the origins, they
perhaps have misled many people about the Folk Play as it
is performed today.

Drama is not "a mere set of descriptive terms." It
implies standards, values, and preferences. We no longer
are limited to directly equating "drama" with "plays" and
"dramatic" with "characteristic of plays"; Brody's own
substitute term, "men's dramatic ceremony" illustrates that
point or renders his argument nonsensical. By asking us to
deny that the English Folk Play is a "Play", ritualists ask
us to adopt a very narrow definition of drama indeed,
limited to the conventions, in Brody's own words, "of the
realistic proscenium theater." It is redundant to add
that this is too limited a view. That does not mean, how­
ever, that we have to deny "the parallelism of narrative and

\[32\] S.W. Dawson, Drama and the Dramatic (London:

\[33\] S.W. Dawson, pp.ix-x.

\[34\] Alan Brody, p.14.
a pattern of ritual" which seems present. But we can emphatically deny that the Folk Play today has a direct literary genealogy with the revitalization ritual.

In *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy* M.C. Bradbrook has described literary drama as "...the co-operative creation of author, actors and audience. It exists, when completely realized, in a mutual relationship between these three, an intercourse from which it issues and on which it depends." Though in the English Folk Play the "author" has no part in the "co-operative creation," it is clear as Bradbrook implies that the proof of the play is in its performance, the relationship between actors and audience. If the Folk Play has a parallel in the literary tradition it is to the Bertold Brecht type of drama rather than the theater of realism, though even this would have to be qualified as the contemporary performances seem to be striving for greater and greater realism.

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35Theodor H. Gaster, p.464.

I. THE PREOCCUPATION WITH ORIGINS

Early Views: The Sanctity of the Text

I recall that once, even as a student, he said to me that the nineteenth century must have been an uncommonly pleasant epoch, since it had never been harder for humanity to tear itself away from the opinions and habits of the previous period than it was for the generation now living.

--Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus

Until recent years, most fieldwork and scholarship on the Folk Play reflected the limitations of the doctrines of Romanticism and literary evolution. One view, widely held in late 19th century England, and still, one suspects, serving as the underlying assumption of some contemporary commentators, proposes that all men passed through three identical stages of evolution--savagery, barbarism, and civilization. Folklore was supposed to have come into being in the initial stage of savagery; as man ascended the evolutionary scale, he carried with him bits and fragments

\[1\]Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Modern Classics, 1968), p.29.
of a once complete social and belief pattern. Confronted by the survivals of a past age and stimulated by Romanticism and its adjunct, a worship of the past, local historians and antiquarians, soon followed by contributors to *Notes & Queries* and the earliest members of the Folk-Lore Society, collected among other fragments texts of the Folk Play in an effort to capture before lost forever these survivals so conspicuously out of place in "civilized" times.

Unlike the popular ballad and the folktale, the Folk Play did not immediately excite those interested in folklore. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries two groups of collectors who were interested, however, were writers of local histories and antiquarians. Indeed, it is in his *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (published posthumously in 1810), an expanded, re-edited version of Henry Bourne's *Antiquitates Vulgares* (1725), that John Brand makes the first known allusion to the Revesby Play. George Ormerod's *The History of the County Palatine of Chester* (1818) not only includes fragments of a Hero-Combat play recorded from the author's own experience but also it includes observations that he considered the play in Cheshire is decadent, that the actors dressed in


\[ ^3 \text{British Museum Add. MS 44870.} \]
character. Other histories such as Hone's *The Everyday Book* (1826) and Robert Chambers' *Book of Days* (1869) also include texts of plays, primarily of the Hero-Combat variety. 19th century enthusiasts, inspired by Romantic attitudes towards the folk, decided that the Play was a primitive example of dramatic literature, the remains of medieval cycle plays and moralities, and as such deserved publication. What followed was the appearance of a number of chapbooks having significant circulation. These chapbooks emphasized the St. George legend and intensified the Chauvinistic elements of the Play. Others were aimed at

4 Margaret Dean-Smith, "The Life-Cycle Play or Folk Play: Some Conclusions Following Examination of the Ordish Papers and Other Sources," *FL*, 69 (1958), 247-48. "The St. George form of the Combat fragment is clothed with a text of which the earliest known print was issued as a Newcastle chapbook in 1788 under the title *Alexander and the King of Egypt*, a mock play, as it is acted every Christmas by the Mummers. It was familiarized to a later generation through Hone's *Everyday Book*, and Sandys' *Christmastide* (1852). The 'same' text was also published at Whitehaven in 1826 and is transcribed in the Ordish papers; numerous variations upon it were published as small plain or coloured chapbooks in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the 1830's and '40's under such titles as *The Peace-Egg, St. George's Annual Play, The Pace-Egg or St. George and the Dragon* (sic), *Walker's New Mummer or the Wassail Cup*, all intended for 'the Amusement of Youth', and exhibiting such trimmings from the supposed age of chivalry as might tempt the expenditure of pocket money." The part these chapbooks played in transplanting the Play to Ireland will be discussed in a later publication.

schoolboys and a youthful male audience. Margaret Dean-Smith has shown us that the texts of these chapbooks were frequently mistaken by collectors, contributed to Notes & Queries, and printed as authentic folklore survivals. However, in spite of the occasional unauthentic text which slipped by W.J. Thoms and Notes & Queries, that journal did from 1849 publish a number of eye-witness accounts and valuable texts of the Play. Along with the Folk-Lore Societys' own series, County Folk-Lore from Printed Sources, Notes & Queries has provided us with some of our most important 19th century material. “From the standpoint of the real play these prints are degenerate, and they have successfully misled popular opinion well over a

6 E.g., The Peace Egg, Walker's Series of Juvenile Plays for Christmas and Easter Tide (Otley: William Walker and Son, n.d.). Also, the Ordish Collection contains prints of these chapbooks:

The Peace Egg, or St. George: An Easter Play (Manchester: Looney & Pillerig, Spear Street, n.d.).

The Peace Egg, or St. George: An Easter Play (Manchester: Abel Heywood & Son, Oldham Street, n.d.). Text identical to previous item.


The Peace Egg (Leeds: J. Johnson, Bookseller, &c., n.d.).


7 Margaret Dean-Smith, "An Unromantic View of the Mummer's Play," Theatre Research, 8 (1966), 97.
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 make an origin in sustained oral tradition from the remoter regions of Britain unlikely."

Serious study of the English Folk Play commenced in the late 1880's when Thomas Fairman Ordish, hitherto primarily devoted to German and Scandinavian mythology, began assembling extant versions and accounts of the Play from correspondents. The Folk-Lore Society supported Ordish in his efforts, the fruits of which are three articles in The Folklore Journal and Folk-Lore, and the Ordish Collection now housed in the Folk-Lore Society library at University College, London. It is easy to undervalue Ordish's contribution to subsequent study of the Play, especially if one realizes that the only book length works on the Play until 1970, those of R.J.E. Tiddy and of E.K.

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8 Dean-Smith, "The Life-Cycle Play," 248.
10 "Folk-Drama," Folk-Lore 2 (1891), 314-35.
"English Folk-Drama," Folk-Lore, 4 (1893), 149-75.
Copies of this collection organized by Alex Helm in the 1960's are held by English Folk Dance and Song Society and Dr. E.C. Cawte.
Chambers, did not draw upon Ordish's collection. Ordish's classification of the Play into Mummers, Plough, and Pace Egg, and his conclusion that the sword dance was the formative influence on the Play, have over the years been superseded. But, virtually all contemporary scholarship has been based on the Ordish Collection. Indeed, it was in studying the Ordish Collection that Margaret Dean-Smith formulated her influential Life-Cycle thesis, of which more will be said in a moment.

Ordish was to have published a monograph on the Folk Play in 1902. For some reason, however, he abandoned his work, leaving further collection and analysis to others, among them Cecil Sharp. Sharp's three volumes, *The Sword Dance of Northern England*, reflect his interest in the Sword and Morris dances. Sharp, it is said, was more interested in the dance than the Play, though the texts he included were utilized by E.K. Chambers in producing *The English Folk Play* in 1933, and thus his influence was assured. Whether this influence was entirely to the good is debateable since, as Alan Brody has gone to some length to show, Sharp's bowdlerization of texts was extensive and in need of exposure. Brody concludes that these alterations and deletions of the text "upon investigation...emerge more clearly as concessions to a Victorian sense of decency"; we are reminded "of how fragmentary our knowledge of the men's ceremonial will be if we rely on the

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printed text as anything more than a sketchy guide to the action." The extent to which other collectors have altered their texts to fit their preconceptions of decency is not known, though editorial deletions are common in printed copies of the Play, and one suspects a great deal of Rabelaisian humor as well as countless "diversions" have been omitted. The danger for us in reading the plays is not so much that we will lose sight of the "action", by which Brody means the combat and revival, but that we will get a false impression of the actions if we literally expunge part of the text or close our eyes and minds to the entire performance in preference to one part of it.

In 1914 R.J.E. Tiddy delivered a series of lectures to his students at Oxford on the Folk Play. These lectures were to become the pioneer book length effort dealing with the origins of the Play and relating it to medieval cycle plays and moralites. Because Tiddy was killed in World War I, he never completed his study which was published posthumously in 1923 as The Mummers' Play. The book, though necessarily incomplete and burdened with the prejudices of 19th century archaeological and class views, still remains the single most interesting work on the Play, if only because it is so suggestive of avenues of study. Like

12 Alan Brody, p.86.
Chambers after him, he pursues medieval and subsequent literary origins; like Margaret Dean-Smith and most contemporary critics, he sensed the ritual origins and introduced into the discussion of the play the concepts of the old year in conflict with the new year, the assurance of fertility, and the ritual killing of a scapegoat. The extent to which Tiddy edited out Rabelaisian elements from his thirty-three texts is not known. However, nearly every text is introduced by a brief statement of Milien and Thompson, the editor, claims to have left them as unaltered as he found them.

The prolific E.K. Chambers followed up Tiddy's *The Mummers' Play* and his own earlier comments in *The Mediaeval Stage* (1903) with his publication of *The English Folk Play*. That he regarded the Folk Play as a rudimentary literary text is clear from the sort of analysis he pursues. He meticulously identifies literary sources for a number of passages in the texts and in the main comes to cautious conclusions. For example, few would argue, I think, when he says, "Putting it all together, one may perhaps judge that the evidence permits, rather than compels, the conjecture of some give and take between the Mummers' Play and the religious drama, at least in its later stages."  

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It is commonplace to fault Chambers for his emphasis on the literary elements of the Play. Margaret Dean-Smith called his book "a strange, confused work, and one which its author seemed not to realize was long out of date before it was written."14 Brody is more tolerant than Miss Dean-Smith when he asserts that "in finding literary sources like Love for Love, his clarification of where certain peculiar fragments originate is not half so important as his clarification of where they do not originate. He helps us separate the traditional from the literary."15

There is some truth in each assertion. The established tendency to view the text essentially, if at all, as a sophisticated drama in the state of becoming was by 1933 pretty well discredited, though one could see, as did Brody, the merits of the approach. And, just because a text has assimilated to and indeed been shaped by literary influences, does not exclude the fact that these "literary" texts circulated long enough to consider them traditional. Indeed, even the criterion of oral transmission may be too arbitrary when determining what is traditional folklore.16

14 Dean-Smith, "Unromantic View," 90.
15 Alan Brody, p.93.
16 The role of the chapbooks in circulating the Play is worth considering in this regard.
Chambers' fault was not that he identified literary sources but that the patronizing, negative view of the folk and its accomplishments which he projected and the evolutionary approach which he espoused are objectionable, discredited, and divert our attention from what I consider to be the important fact—that regardless of its origin, the Play has attractions and functions which keep it alive today.

B. Life-Cycle and Fertility: The Emphasis on the Action (the combat)

The theories of the German scholar Mannhardt and his follower James George Frazer were to eventually upset the established idea that the Folk Play had its origins in medieval mysteries and moralities. Central to The Golden Bough is the conception of the Dionysus figure, the dying god who must perish and be resurrected to bring about the redemption of the world and the renewal of life. Members of the British School at Athens, in particular Alan Wace, R.M. Dawkins, and Professor H.A. Ormerod, pursued the study of comparative religion and Greek customs, eventually producing a number of influential works on Greek festivals, processions, and dramatic productions, which, while making no comparative references to Britain, did move others.

to pursue the analogies. The view that the Mummer's Play was "a survival of the Primitive Ritual Pattern combining the twin elements of (a) the combat of the seasons and (b) the Death-and-Resurrection of the god of fertility"\textsuperscript{18} was quickly disseminated. Chambers in 1933 could confidently equate the modern folk play discovered by Wace and Dawkins in Macedonia, Thrace, and Thessaly, with the English Folk Play.\textsuperscript{19}

Alan Wace's idea that the intention of the Greek folk play is the portrayal of the Life-Cycle through which the peasants express their vision of life and death has preoccupied nearly all the students of the English Folk Play since Margaret Dean-Smith made the assertion in "The Life-Cycle Play or Folk Play"\textsuperscript{20} in 1958. She considers it, as she says in a later article, "...only part of a larger play in which primitively figured the life-cycle of man from cradle to maturity, from marriage to death, from death to resurrection."\textsuperscript{21} In seeing an archetypal play underlying

\textsuperscript{19}E.K. Chambers, pp. 206-10.
\textsuperscript{20}Dean-Smith, "Life-Cycle," 244.
\textsuperscript{21}Dean-Smith, "Unromantic View," 89.
the surviving variants, she argues that little can be gained from studying too closely the recorded texts of the play since "...any significance the Play may have resides in the action: the text is a local accretion, often both superfluous and irrelevant. The Play can exist in action alone, without a word spoken." E.C. Cawte, Alex Helm, and Norman Peacock in their indispensable *English Ritual Drama: A Geographical Index* second this view when they state in their criteria for inclusion in the Index that they have examined the Plays "as a traditional ceremony rather than as a series of literary texts", and that they "classified the ceremonies in terms of the basic action, and have ignored not only the nonsense of the text, but also the local names used by the performers and witnesses...".

Finally, the most recent exponent of this view, Alan Brody, restates the theory that remnants of ancient fertility ritual underlie the Folk Play (or, as he prefers, "men's ceremonial") and develops the comparison between Greek plays as discovered by the British School at Athens and the English Folk Play. Brody feels that too close attention to the text is misleading since it distracts us from the basic

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22 Dean-Smith, "Life-Cycle," 244.

action, the death and resurrection. I think that Brody has done us service in our study of the Play by taking his position to its utmost limit. He is not dissimilar in this to E.K. Chambers. Little was left by way of searching out literary origins in the Play after Chambers; little is left by way of pursuing the Life-Cycle/Fertility view of the Play after Brody. Yet, there is more to be said about the Play, but first we deserve an assessment of what the Life-Cycle view contributes to our knowledge of the Play.

If we realize that any examination of this kind into pre-history for origins is bound to be tentative, we still can appreciate what this approach might tell us. By analogy to other cultures, it is possible to construct a descriptive Life-Cycle model resembling what might have been the Ritual in its nascent form. And our comparisons of this descriptive model with what may be contemporary manifestations of it is often revealing, though this approach is self-gratifying and a misuse of evidence if we claim too much for it. What this descriptive model does not do is to provide the cultural associations and contexts of the Play. It is, as has been said in a different context, "...repeating the error of Frazer to accept descriptive similarities at their face value, and not to seek the local context of the symbol."24

I have no particular argument with those who wish to pursue origins by relating the play to the Life-Cycle, but to deny that significant textual variations exist and that they often reveal functions of the Play beyond simple ritual is, I believe, to plead a special cause. The form of the Folk Play has been tenaciously maintained, which suggests to me that the Play has appeals and uses for both audience and players beyond the ritual which may have been its source. The value of the Life-Cycle view is that it introduced the functional approach. Ritual, says Brody, is pure action performed to bring about immediate results (function), but he is of course speaking of a theory of ancient origins. But the problem of survival, and there is ample survival, demands a concern with present as well as past function. Tragedy has progressed beyond the goat-song. With the present plays we are dealing with drama, not pure ritual, and the function is no longer the same. I intend to explore the functional shift of the Play from Ritual to its contemporary form, burlesque drama.

C. Alternative Views

"The Cure, not the combat, is the basic element of the performance."
--E.T. Kirby, p.278

A vigorous challenge to the Frazerian interpretation of the Folk Play has recently been voiced by E.T. Kirby in
his article, "The Origin of the Mummers' Play." Kirby expresses dissatisfaction with the view which he considers "no more than a fiction, a romanticization and, in method and its application, an egregious error of considerable consequence (p.276)." According to Kirby, shamanism (especially the curing seance), and not the Life-Cycle, is the ultimate origin of the mummers' play, and the trance dances which accompanied the shaman's activities those of the hobby-horse dances which have become associated with the mummers' play in many regions of England.

The argument rests on certain similarities between the actions of the shaman as represented by Mr. Kirby and those of the doctor in the mummers' play. The doctor was once the shaman, whose "primary function... [was] to deal directly with the obscure causes of man's most crucial eventualities, sickness and death." (p. 276) The combat between the heroes so central to the Life-Cycle interpretation becomes merely a means" to supply someone on whom the Doctor can practice his miraculous cure (p. 278)." The Doctor of the Folk Play resembles the shaman in two other ways. First, the Doctor traveled ("Italy, t'Italy, France and Spain"): "These themes were based upon, and derive from, the travels of the shaman's soul during

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trance which he elaborated in his songs and narratives (p.279)." Secondly, the Doctor frequently speaks gibberish: "The speeches have derived from the confused and ecstatic utterances of the shaman, a style of expression that was often unintelligible and was sometimes thought of as a secret language. (p. 280)."

Once the original shamanistic beliefs were no longer believed, an elaborate process of parody, begun to protect beliefs and practices connected with the shaman, altered the practices. The shaman was parodied by having his role duplicated and his cure made farcical. The Fool, the Devil, the Man-Woman, all derived from parodies of the shaman. In order to protect their privileged position in the society, the shamans parodied, or allowed to be parodied, their own rituals. In this way "the 'ritual' of a shamanistic curing session was transformed into a 'drama', a performance for its own sake (or for the sake of the audience)"
(p. 285). Pursuing this line, Kirby comes to the following conclusions:

(1) these performances were not related to the calendar and were not seasonal in nature; (2) the combat of the Seasons nor any variant thereof; and (3) they in no way referred to, or derived from, a Death-and-Resurrection of a god of fertility and were not related to fertility rites. (p. 276)

Whereas one can sympathize with Kirby's desire to find a more satisfactory theory of origins than the Life-Cycle Ritual, few will see the shamanistic session as a credible alternative. Though Kirby says the Play was not related
to the calendar and had no seasonal links, the fact remains that it is seasonal in its presentation now and has been so throughout recorded history. Why? Though the idea of the shaman indicates how the Play could be so universally widespread, it doesn't adequately explain how the transfer took place from shaman to folk or indeed the remarkable tenacity with which the folk clung to this parody. There is something too neat, too compact, too convenient about the explanation. It claims too much for shamanism:

We have a fairly clear indication that shamanistic substratum informed and produced not only the mummers' plays and mummings but much of the whole spectrum of folk customs and festival observances that characterized the survival of the primitive throughout Europe. (p.287.)

Like the Life-Cycle view which equated customs and activities of various societies without respect for cultural differences, Kirby's approach runs the risk of creating a new etiological myth no more satisfactory than the old one.

Yet another alternative view, and one which to my mind presents a more serious threat to the established position on origins than Kirby's shaman, is that held by Roger D. Abrahams in his two articles based on research done in the British West Indies.26 Abrahams' collecting in the West

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----, "British West Indian Folk Drama and the 'Life Cycle' Problem," Folklore, 81 (Winter 1970), 241-57.
Indies has led him to doubt the Life-Cycle interpretation and to suggest that we need to look for "other, equally valid community strategies in the playing of festival drama." 27 The folk, he contends, have not viewed the seasonal progression as a totality; rather "the passing of each season is embraced and celebrated individually." 28 The Life-Cycle is the construct of a sophisticated, urban perspective, not the view of the agrarian society to which it is attributed. The alternative strategy is clowning, which "is always done at the expense of power-figures within the social structure (license, by definition, is directed against the constraining features of society)." 29 More thought-provoking than conclusive, Abrahams' speculations based on the limited evidence he supplies, apply only directly to the British West Indian Folk Drama, not necessarily to that of the British Isles. But they show that the drama is not always hooked to European seasonal ritual.

Abrahams recognizes the value of the Life-Cycle argument and the contribution it has made to our understanding and appreciation of the Play. 30 My objection to him is that the strategy which he substitutes, though a valid one.

27 Abrahams, "Life-Cycle," 244.
30 Abrahams, "Life-Cycle," 244.
from my own experience with British Folk Drama, is just one of a number of equally valid strategies he might have employed. The clown may indeed by the most important of the figures in British West Indian Folk Drama and does provide one important function in British Folk Drama, but there is more.

The way in which these strategies may be extended is well illustrated by Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland edited by Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story. The authors in this study discuss how the mumming "Luck-Visit" in Newfoundland functions as a holiday departure from routine. Class barriers, they indicate, are relaxed to allow both open hospitality, in a closed society highly suspicious of strangers, and direct and oblique social criticism.

What remains, then, is to investigate the dynamics of function, to determine what aspects of this study apply to the Play and its performance, and to conclude with a study of the functions of the English Folk Play, contributing, one hopes, to our knowledge and understanding of this complex topic.

31 Margaret Dean-Smith, of course, has had a great deal to say about the "Luck-Visit" in relation to the Life Cycle theory. Michael J. Preston in "The British Folk Play: An Elaborate Luck-Visit?" Western Folklore, 30 (January 1971), No. 1, 45-48, presents what appears to me to be a misleading explanation to a non-problem. Clearly troubled by "some of our problems with the folk play" (p.47), presumably the Life Cycle theory, he concludes that the Play is not a play, but a luck visit--"It is not a matter of bringing fertility, but
rather of a broader scope of good or bad fortune to which the ritual action of the drama has been added." (p.48) How that solves our problems, I'm at a loss to see. What it does do is reiterate what has been evident for some time; the play as we know it has experienced changes over its life history. Some of these changes involved the merging with other traditions (e.g., the hobby horse). We are still left with explaining, if origins are our concern, "the ritual action of the drama" and indeed the origin of that luck visit.
II. **FUNCTIONAL STUDIES AND THE LITERARY FOLKLOREST**

Before moving to the texts of the Folk Plays, perhaps a few comments are in order about the functionalist approach. In part these comments should help to explain why in the contextual information I include so much of what social scientists term "motive," "purpose," or "intention." Also I hope to indicate why a student of folk literature should choose a functionalist approach to Folk Drama in the first place. The latter point is not so factitious or irrelevant as it may at first sound, especially to teachers of literature who, though they do not always use the terminology of the social scientist, often practice a kind of functionalist approach in relating the literature of art to its milieux. In fact, a study of function is considered by most students of folklore to be outside the scope of the literary folklorist.¹ For instance, Alan Dundes in his preface to "The Functions of Folklore," a chapter in his collection of essays, *The Study of Folklore*, asserts the

¹The term "literary folklorist" is, I am afraid, unavoidably ambiguous at this point since it includes folklorists whose main concern is the verbal art of the folk (ballads, folk tales, riddles, tongue twisters, etc.) and students of literature who regard folklore as a discipline like any other which may provide answers to their questions about the literature of art, just as theology or even geography might. In the following pages I hope to etch more deeply the line between the two, but here it is sufficient to indicate that I mean both groups.
The aspect of folklore of least concern to literary folklorists but perhaps of greatest concern to anthropological folklorists is function. The important question is not what is folklore nor where does folklore originate, nor how is it transmitted? The important question is what does folklore do for the folk? Why do singers sing and audiences listen when they do?  

He then goes on to indicate some commonly discovered functions of folklore, and it is here that a hierarchy of interest in functional studies (while it perhaps reflects the situation in folklore scholarship) proves itself more apparent than real. Dundes suggests that folklore aids in education; yet literature certainly instructs as well as delights. Folklore promotes a group's solidarity; the work of a poet laureate often fulfills the same function. Folklore provides socially sanctioned means for individuals to act superior to or to censure others; the satires of Dryden, Swift, and Pope do the same. Folklore serves as a vehicle for social protest; literature has been the vehicle for Shelley, Richard Wright, and D.H. Lawrence among others. Folklore offers an escape from reality; Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland and Ian Fleming's James Bond novels offer that same outlet. If these common functions of folklore can

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3 Dundes, p.277.
so easily be fulfilled by literature, as indeed they clearly can, perhaps literary folklorists ought to be interested in functional studies. Just as students of literature want to know why novelists write and poets compose and their audiences read and listen, so literary folklorists, to echo Dundes, should want to know why folk singers sing and their audiences listen when they do, if only to see what differences in function, if any, finally emerge between folk literature and the literature of art.

Obviously, however, the kind of functional study the literary folklorist is best able to make, the kinds of questions he asks himself, and the kinds of answers he seeks to find, are not those of his anthropological or sociological counterparts. Nevertheless, it is the social scientists who have provided the essential theoretical framework for functional studies, and it is to them that we must first turn.

The sociologist Robert K. Merton has been a leader in the systemization of functional analyses in sociology, and his conclusions, especially his Paradigm for Functional Analysis in Sociology, have a broader application than for that discipline alone. In Social Theory and Social Structure he explains how functional analyses have "developed on many intellectual fronts at the same time: and consequently have grown in shreds and patches rather than depth" (p.73).

As a social scientist he stresses that functional analyses should come to conclusions reproducible and testable by others. Before he can tell us how to go about making such an analysis, he first determines just what "function" means to the sociologist.

To begin with he discusses and dismisses four widespread connotations of the word which he believes have led to foggy thinking in the past: (1) as a popular usage referring to a public gathering or festive occasion, usually with ceremonial overtones (p.74); (2) as an equivalent of "occupation" (p.74); (3) as the activities assigned to the occupant of an office or political position (a "functionary"), or indeed of any social status (p.75); (4) as in mathematics "where it refers to a variable considered in relation to one or more other variables in terms which it may be expressed or on the value of which its own value depends" (p.75).

It is the fifth connotation in which function is derived and adapted from the biological sciences and refers to "vital or organic processes considered in the respects in which they contribute to the maintenance of the organism" (p.75), that Merton feels best fits the sociologists' and anthropologists' concern with holistic studies of society. And it is this connotation which leads him to a conclusion which we shall have cause to investigate:

...the concept of function involves the standpoint of the observer, not necessarily that of the participant.
Social function refers to observable objective consequences and not to subjective dispositions (aims, motives, purposes). And the failure to distinguish between the objective sociological consequences and the subjective dispositions inevitably leads to confusion of functional analysis...The subjective disposition may coincide with the objective consequence, but again, it may not. The two vary independently.  

Before presenting his Paradigm for Functional Analysis in Sociology, Merton deflates three highly questionable postulates which have buoyed up many functional analyses: "standardized social activities or cultural items are functional for the entire social or cultural system"; "all such social and cultural items fulfill sociological functions"; "these items are consequently indispensable" (p.79).

The first postulate is applicable enough to a number of non-literate societies, but one should resist assuming that complex and highly differentiated literate societies would present such a high degree of integration. The functional unity of society as a whole, with its corollary of "uniform functionality," is obviously insupportable, and in fact obstructive "since [it diverts] the analyst's attention from possible disparate consequences of a given social or cultural item (usage, belief, behavior pattern,  

5Merton, pp.78-79. For a philosopher's discussion of concepts used by social anthropologists (especially the concept of social function when purpose is unrecognized) see Dorothy Emmett, Function, Purpose, and Powers (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1958).
(institution) for diverse social groups and for individual members of these groups."\(^6\) In a functional study of a contemporary literate society, there must be a "specification of the units" concerned; and the functional and dysfunctional consequences for individuals, sub-groups, and the dominant culture must be taken into account.\(^7\)

The postulate of universal functionalism "holds that all standarized social or cultural forms have positive functions" (p.84). The conclusion above that is a functional study one must specify the units concerned to account for dysfunctional as well as functional consequences discredits this questionable assertion. One only needs to add that this postulate emerged as a reaction to the commentators on "survivals" who attempted to account for customs seemingly inexplicable in their present context by reference to their past "history", which, as Merton indicates, was "usually fragmentary and often conjectural..." (p.86). Anyone familiar with the scholarship of the English Folk Play will recognize how appealing this postulate can be since the history of the Play before the 17th century is pure conjecture.

The third postulate, that of the indispensability of certain functions and of certain cultural or social

\(^6\)Merton, pp.81-82.

\(^7\)Merton, p.84.
forms to fulfill these functions, falls along with the others. In answer to the alleged indispensability of certain forms and functions, Merton in turn proposes a major theorem of functional analysis--one which we have applied to Dundes' listing of commonly found functions of folklore and which we shall have occasion to apply later:

...just as the same item may have multiple functions, so may the same function be diversely fulfilled by alternative items. Functional needs are here taken to be permissive, rather than determinant, of specific social structures. Or, in other words, there is a range of variation in the structures which fulfill the function in question.

We are left now with Merton's Paradigm, which, as he says, "presents the hard core of concept, procedure and inference in functional analysis" (p.104). I shall reproduce each item in his codification, then show briefly where I can utilize his Paradigm in the problem at hand, and finally indicate what modifications, qualifications, and additions are necessary.

1 The item(s) to which functions are imputed

The entire range of sociological data can be, and much of it has been, subjected to functional analysis. The

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8 Merton, pp.87-88.

9 This is not a duplication of Ernest Nagel's examination of Merton's Paradigm "in light of a scheme of distinctions derived from an analysis of functional explanations in biological science" (p.247) as pursued in Logic Without Metaphysics, pp.247-83. However, Nagel's discussion of possible ambiguities in the Paradigm and the problems raised by the special subject matter of sociology are much to the point.
requirement is that the object of analysis represent a standardized (i.e. patterned and repetitive) item, such as social roles, institutional patterns, social processes, cultural pattern, culturally patterned emotions, social norms, group organization, social structure, devices for social control, etc.

BASIC QUERY: What must enter into the protocol of observation of the given item if it is to be amenable to systematic functional analysis?

Folk Plays tend to be performed seasonally, by the same people, and in the same locations. The audiences at given performances will vary, but the same people are disposed to see the Play, either because they live in a certain area, frequent a certain pub, or have professional (folklorists, clerics, and academics) or personal reasons (perhaps a relative of the actors). The extent of reactivity is important to note here since the presence of an analyst, no matter how unobtrusive he may try to be, definitely influences the performance given. The Play’s text, location, players, and audience have historically been more or less stable, though with the increasing number of revivals and the attentions of television and radio (and in some cases of folklorists), this situation is changing.

II Concepts of subjective dispositions (motives, purposes)

At some point, functional analysis invariably assumes or explicitly operates with some conception of the motivation of individuals involved in a social system. As the foregoing discussion has shown, these concepts of
subjective disposition are often and erroneously merged with the related, but different, concepts of objective consequences of attitude, belief and behavior.

BASIC QUERY: In which types of analysis is it sufficient to take observed motivations as data, as given, and in which are they properly considered as problematical, as derivable from other data?

This is an especially thorny question for sociologists but not so difficult to answer for literary folklorists who, in the kinds of questions they seek to answer, are concerned with both the causally relevant motives for a custom and the problematical motives derived from other data. Nagel rightly points out that as a state coordinate, motive ("subjective disposition") is identical to other co-ordinates (in the case of the Folk Play such things as seasonal performance), and should not have a special category in a "general paradigm of functional analysis." I think he is right to de-emphasize this category not only from the point of view of logical consistency but also from that of sociological method, but more on that in a moment.

III Concepts of objective consequences (functions, dysfunctions)

We have observed two prevailing types of confusion enveloping the several current conceptions of "function":

10 Nagel, pp.265-66.
(1) The tendency to confine sociological observations to the positive contributions of a sociological item or cultural system in which it is implicated; and

(2) The tendency to confuse the subjective category of motive with the objective category of function.

Appropriate conceptual distinctions are required to eliminate these confusions.

The first problem calls for a concept of multiple consequences and a net balance of an aggregate of consequences.

Functions are those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system; and dysfunctions, those observed consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system. There is also the empirical possibility of nonfunctional consequences, which are simply irrelevant to the system under consideration.

In any given instance, an item may have both functional and dysfunctional consequences, giving rise to the difficult and important problem of evolving canons for assessing the net balance of the aggregate consequences. (This is, of course, most important in the use of functional analysis for guiding the formation and enactment of policy.)

The second problem (arising from the easy confusion of motives and functions) requires us to introduce a conceptual distinction between the cases in which the subjective aim-in-view coincides with the objective consequence and the cases in which they diverge.

Manifest functions are those objective consequences contributing to the adjustment or adaptation of the system which are intended and recognized by participants in the system;

Latent functions, correlativey, being those which are neither intended nor recognized.

BASIC QUERY: What are the effects of the transformation of a previously latent function into a manifest function (involving the problem of the role of knowledge in human behavior and the problems of "manipulation" of human behavior)?

The relationship of latent functions to manifest functions is a central issue in my paper. Also, I will be dealing with (1) a phenomenon, though called by us "Folk Play" (or "men's ceremonial" or "Mummers' Play" or whatever), which has in fact been an accomplished shape-changer;
and (2) with several different social systems linked because they have existed in the same geographical location--so we cannot assume that latent and manifest functions have been the same at all times. The functions and dysfunctions have altered and continue to alter with the society and with its constituent members.

Since I am not making the fast distinction between function and motive that Merton is, the apparent contradiction between recognizing manifest functions "which are intended and recognized by participants in the system" and discounting subjective dispositions (aims, intentions, motives, purposes) as independently variable, does not present any hazards.

IV Concepts of the unit subserved by the function

We have observed the difficulties entailed in confining analysis to functions fulfilled for "the society," since items may be functional for some individuals and subgroups and dysfunctional for others. It is necessary, therefore, to consider a range of units for which the item has designated consequences: individuals in diverse statuses, subgroups, the larger social system and culture systems. (Terminologically, this implies the concepts of psychological function, group function, societal function, cultural function, etc.)

The particular groups I discuss are identified in the contextual information and analysis which follows.

V Concepts of functional requirements (needs, prerequisites)

Embedded in every functional analysis is some conception, tacit or expressed, of the functional requirements of the system under observation. As noted elsewhere, this remains one of the cloudiest and empirically most debatable
concepts in functional theory. As utilized by sociologists, the concept of functional requirement tends to be tautological or ex post facto; it tends to be confined to the conditions of "survival" of a given system; it tends, as in the work of Malinowski, to include biological as well as social "needs."

This involves the difficult problem of establishing types of functional requirements (universal vs. specific); procedures for validating the assumption of these requirements; etc.

BASIC QUERY: What is required to establish the validity of such a variable as "functional requirements" in situations where rigorous experimentation is impracticable?

The particular item under analysis, the Folk Play, cannot with a sense of balance be considered a prerequisite for the survival of the given system (England) as a whole, though it is cohesive for some small societal units which will be defined.

VI Concepts of mechanisms through which functions are fulfilled

Functional analysis in sociology, as in other disciplines like physiology and psychology, calls for a "concrete and detailed" account of the mechanisms which operate to perform a designated function. This refers, not to psychological, but to social, mechanisms (e.g., role-segmentation, insulation of institutional demands, hierarchic ordering of values, social division of labor, ritual and ceremonial enactments, etc.).

BASIC QUERY: What is the presently available inventory of social mechanisms corresponding, say, to the large inventory of psychological mechanisms? What methodological problems are entailed in discerning the operation of these social mechanisms?

Included in my analysis is a statement of procedure. An account of the performance of the designated functions is interspersed in the contextual information and analysis which follows. It will include psychological as well as social mechanisms.
VII Concepts of functional alternatives (functional equivalents or substitutes)

As we have seen, once we abandon the gratuitous assumption of the functional indispensability of particular social structures, we immediately require some concept of functional alternatives, equivalents, or substitutes. This focuses attention on the range of possible variation in the items which can, in the case under examination, subserve a functional requirement. It unfreezes the identity of the existent and the inevitable.

BASIC QUERY: Since scientific proof of the equivalence of an alleged functional alternative ideally requires rigorous experimentation, and since this is not often practicable in large-scale sociological situations, which practicable procedures of inquiry most nearly approximate the logic of experiment?

The impracticality of validating functional equivalents or substitutes allows me to propose only general functional alternatives to the existent Folk Play custom and practice.

VIII Concepts of structural context (or structural constraint)

The range of variation in the items which can fulfill designated functions in a social structure is not unlimited (and this has been repeatedly noted in our foregoing discussion). The interdependence of the elements of a social structure limits the effective possibilities of change or functional alternatives. The concept of structural constraint corresponds, in the area of social structure, to Goldenweiser’s "principle of limited possibilities" in a broader sphere. Failure to recognize the relevance of interdependence and attendant structural restraints leads to utopian thought in which it is tacitly assumed that certain elements of a social system can be eliminated without affecting the rest of that system. This consideration is recognized by both Marxist social scientists (e.g. Karl Marx) and by non-Marxists (e.g. Malinowski).

BASIC QUERY: How narrowly does a given structural context limit the range of variation in the items which can
effectively satisfy functional requirements? Do we find, under conditions yet to be determined, an area of indifference, in which any one of a wide range of alternatives may fulfill the function?

I will approach this category by focusing on the shift from performing the "Play" in a non-literate society to performing the Play in a literate contemporary society.

IX Concepts of dynamics and change

We have noted that functional analysts tend to focus on the statics of social structure and to neglect the study of structural change.

This emphasis upon statics is not, however, inherent in the theory of functional analysis. It is, rather, an adventitious emphasis stemming from the concern of early anthropological functionalists to counteract preceding tendencies to write conjectural histories of non-literate societies. This practice, useful at the time it was first introduced into anthropology, has disadvantageously persisted in the work of some functional sociologists.

The concept of dysfunction, which implies the concept of strain, stress and tension of the structural level, provides an analytical approach to the study of dynamics and change. How are observed dysfunctions contained within a particular structure, so that they do not produce pressure for change in such directions as are likely to lead to their reduction?

BASIC QUERY: Does the prevailing concern among functional analysts with the concept of social equilibrium divert attention from the phenomena of social disequilibrium? Which available procedures will permit the sociologist most adequately to gauge the accumulation of stresses and strains in a social system? To what extent does knowledge of the structural context permit the sociologist to anticipate the most probable directions of social change?

In addition to speculations on the Folk Play's future, I will employ some of Wendy Reich's observations in "The Uses of Folklore in Revitalization Movements,"\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{11}\)Wendy Reich, "The Uses of Folklore in Revitalization Movements," *Folklore*, 82 (Autumn 1971), 233-44.
particularly her idea that "...in periods of rapid social change, folklore operates instrumentally to help members of the society to adapt to changing circumstances" (p.234). Also, I will consider the dysfunctional violence attendant upon so many folk customs, including the Play, as it has affected the social structure.

X Problems of validation of functional analysis

Throughout the paradigm, attention has been called repeatedly to the specific points at which assumptions, imputations and observations must be validated. This requires, above all, a rigorous statement of the sociological procedures of analysis which most nearly approximate the logic of experimentation. It requires a systematic review of the possibilities and limitations of comparative (cross-cultural and cross-group) analysis.

BASIC QUERY: To what extent is functional analysis limited by the difficulty of locating adequate samples of social systems which can be subjected to comparative (quasi-experimental) study?

The number of active members performing the Folk Play has provided me with a relative wealth of cross-group checks and balances in my analysis. The work of the Cambridge scholars in general and lately of Alan Brody in particular has supplied me with ample information for cross-cultural comparisons.

XI Problems of the ideological implications of functional analysis

It has been emphasized in a preceding section that functional analysis has no intrinsic commitment to an ideological position. This does not gainsay the fact that particular functional analyses and particular hypotheses advanced by functionalists may have an identifiable
ideological role. This, then, becomes a specific problem for the sociology of knowledge: to what extent does the social position of the functional sociologist (e.g., vis-a-vis a particular "client" who has authorized a given research) evoke one rather than another formulation of a problem, affect his assumptions and concepts, and limit the range of inferences drawn from his data?

BASIC QUERY: How does one detect the ideological tinge of a functional analysis and to what degree does a particular ideology stem from the basic assumptions adopted by the sociologist? Is the incidence of these assumptions related to the status and research role of the sociologist?

In many ways I found this category to be the most interesting of all. The Narcissistic pleasure of contemplating my own impression on people I encountered in my role as "folklorist" aside, I did feel the pressure upon me to "justify" the research grant given me by my university to pursue this project by discovering something new and significant about Folk Drama. Since Ph.D.'s (and achieving one being part of the exercise) are seldom awarded to people whose only contribution is re-proving someone else's findings (especially if they admit that is all they have done), I sensed the additional personal need to make what I have said sound important indeed. Also, being a foreigner and relatively young (or, in the cases of the Midgley Pace Eggers and Brighouse Children's Theatre, being relatively old), I found I had to interpret what I was told and what I saw with regard to my status. Not that the pressures of the academy or my status as foreigner and aging youth always worked against me—quite the contrary, since in the first place I was forced to overcome a natural
reticence to ask personal questions, and in the second, I was given a view of the performers behind the scenes which they wouldn't ordinarily allow a fellow countrymen or peer.

In discussing the second category of Merton's Paradigm, "Concepts of subjective dispositions (motives, purposes)," I indicated that I felt both logic and sociology would be better served if Merton were to provide a place for subjective dispositions in his scheme. As the proponents of the American School of Culture-and-Personality have pointed out, a study of the forms of society without taking into account the dynamics of behavior leaves one with inadequate answers to the important problems of maintenance, persistence, and internal change in social systems. In short, a social system can operate only if its constituent roles are performed. But people do not "perform constituent roles"; they are motivated to act by the expectation of satisfying needs, both biological and personality. And, in acting they not only serve their needs but also perform their role(s) in the social system. Thus, "personality [here especially "subjective disposition"] not only serves its own functions but it becomes a crucial

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variable in the functioning of social systems as well.\textsuperscript{13} I intend to extend this last statement of Melford Spiro by adding that motive is a crucial variable in the functioning of folklore (here the Folk Play) as well, and we must consider it in answering our questions about the maintenance, persistence, and internal change of the form.

Though, as Merton has indicated, the connotation of "function" as related to "vital or organic process" in the biological sciences best fits the needs of those conducting holistic studies, we need not be bound by the limitations of the implied analogy that society is exactly like an organism. Society is more than the sum of the observable patterns of behavior and observable objective consequences of that behavior. People perform actions not just in response to observable stimuli; what Silverman calls the "internal logic of the situation," the meanings people assign to situations and to the actions of others, and the interpretation they make of these meanings, all this leads to action. "Thus [people] may respond differently to the same objectively defined stimulus..."\textsuperscript{14} Motive, rightly


considered, can help us to appreciate this internal logic.

Diagrammatically, the kinds of information I have collected can be thus represented:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conscious Need</th>
<th>Intended &amp; Recognized Functions</th>
<th>Personal Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intended &amp; Recognized Functions</td>
<td>Personal Function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unintended &amp; Recognized Functions</td>
<td>Personal Function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance of Folk Play</td>
<td>Intended &amp; Recognized Social Function</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social scientists, desirous though they are to advance our understanding of human society and culture, have by in large separate literature, both folk and art, from their own sphere of interest. Sociologists, looking for the verifiable and the universal in social systems, and anthropologists, emphasizing craft, belief and custom in their fieldwork, have realized the special requirements of a study of the verbal arts and have reasonable left it to other hands. This situation would not be quite so unfortunate if, as one commentator has remarked, we were not "still heirs to the British country vicar school, which was convinced

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15 Those familiar with the work of Melford Spiro will recognize that I have freely borrowed and adapted this diagram from his diagram representing Ifaluk (Micronesian) rituals which attack and exercise malevolent ghosts. It is also worth noting here that by introducing personality as a variable, Spiro is able to say that Manifest Functions may be unintended and Latent Functions may be intended, thus resolving in another way the issue of logical consistency raised about these two terms earlier.
that the 'vanishing survivals' must be recorded at once--and method be hanged. The result so far as the Folk Play in particular is concerned (with a few notable exceptions) has been haphazard collection, inadequate description, doctrinaire analysis, and in at least one case malicious bowdlerization of texts and contextual information.

What is required in the study of the Folk Play is a collection utilizing as far as possible the theoretical contributions of sociologists, the in-depth field work of the anthropologist with his overview of the entire cultural setting, and the analytical and interpretative techniques of the student of literature. What to some is unintelligible in the Folk Play considered in and by itself will become meaningful when seen as a part of or as exemplifying wider systems, that is, when placed in an appropriate context. And one need not, indeed should not, limit the context to any hypothetical history when it is possible to locate the Folk Play in its contemporary setting. And, finally, it is not enough to separate the verbal arts from the rest of culture; we must also be prepared to explore

philosophically the differences between folk literature and the literature of art. The Folk Play, with its inclination to move in and out of oral tradition since at least the nineteenth century, is ideally suited subject matter for such an exploration. In spite of the inexactitude of determining function we saw earlier in Dundes, it may be that functional analysis is after all a key to understanding the essential differences between the two.

It is an exciting, if impossible, order to fill. The limited success of this preliminary study merely underscores how much more there is to be done. But the inadequacies of what follows should not dissuade others similarly disposed from making more profitable use of the functionalist orientation in studying folk literature.
III. CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH FOLK PLAY PERFORMANCES:

Contextual Information and Texts
The nearest large city to the village of Antrobus, Cheshire, is Northwich with a population of around 19,000. By all appearances Northwich is in a period of growth and expansion; formerly a center for salt extraction, its economy is now diversified, and with this diversification has come a greater, cosmopolitan population. The city center has been rebuilt, and the suburban sprawl has begun engulfing a number of tiny, once remote and autonomous villages. In the context of 20th century urbanization of what was once primarily an agricultural county, it is curious indeed that Antrobus, a straggling village a mere four miles northeast of the city, should have retained to such a degree the folk heritage either rejected by many people today as foolish and simpleminded or buried with the agricultural communities which gave it meaning under slabs of concrete superhighway in the name of progress. Yet it is now only in and around Antrobus at the time of All Souls that the traditional Soul-Caking Play is performed.

My initial enquiries were made in Northwich to see the extent of familiarity and the position of the Antrobus gang within the larger community. I found that in spite of a recent B.B.C. production on the Antrobus Soulers the existence of the Play was virtually unknown in Northwich itself. Even city functionaries such as policemen were unacquainted
with the Play, and I met with amazement and disbelief that there was such a thing or that any one would come from Cambridge, much less America, to see it.

The Wheatsheaf Inn in Antrobus, pub base of the Soulers, was quiet Sunday, October 31, as I made my way to a corner seat and tried to be as inconspicuous as I could over a pint. But a stranger cannot remain anonymous for long in a local pub, and as the alcohol flowed, the local patrons quizzed me about my presence there. I asked after the Soulers, but nothing was forthcoming. [Since it was Sunday, the Soulers weren't to be out that night, so I went home.

I don't know if it was their general open hospitality or what was to them the curious phenomenon of seeing an impoverished American which endeared me to the proprietors of the Wheatsheaf, but the next night I was readily accepted by all, shown a fascinating collection of old photographs of the Soulers, and informed that 8:00 p.m. that night would be the first performance. As I had arrived early in the evening, there was little to do but wait and enjoy the free flow of ale.

At approximately 7:30 p.m. Mr. Tom Lafferty, clad in his "Beelzebub" costume strolled up to the bar, handed a frying pan to the publican, Mrs. Elsie Tuson, downed two pints to "prepare" for the evening, and completed a few details of his costume. At this early point in the evening,
only the regulars of the pub were present, and none of these seemed at all surprised by Lafferty's outlandish garb. The conversation shifted to his arrangements for going to work later that evening. His job presented a special problem since he was employed on the night shift in a local plant. Because he knew he would be in no condition to drive to work once the evening began, he had left his car in the company parking lot, sensibly concluding that a night of factory maintenance after Souling would sober him up enough to avoid a traffic offence.

As the players began to assemble, the word was spread that "Liverpool" had called—should they go? "Liverpool", it seems, was a pub cum folk club in the city of Liverpool at which they had performed by request the previous year. They decided to stop first at the nearby Holly Bush in Weaverham, then to drive to Liverpool. My romanticized notions of roaming bands of mummers (Soulers) walking from pub to pub were quickly dispelled as I realized how mechanized they had become. They had a hearty laugh at my expense when I asked if they didn't walk about at all. My real plight, however, lay in the fact that I myself had no automobile. Fortunately, I was rescued by the solicitous Wild Horse who arranged a ride with his granddaughter (the wife of Derry Doubt) and her friends from Northwich (who, by the way, had not heard of the Play before this year).
By now the crowd at the Wheatsheaf had grown substantially as new faces, mainly young people in the eighteen to twenty-five year old range, gathered for the evening's performances. Perhaps twenty to thirty people in a caravan of automobiles followed the Soulers as they motored to the Holly Bush. A humorous story told me by Mr. Lafferty suggests the Soulers' attitudes towards the large crowds which often follow them about. Two years previously they were plagued by folk club enthusiasts who had hired a coach to transport them from pub to pub along the Soulers' route. One performance before this audience was enough to convince the Soulers, however, that they preferred smaller, local groups. The simplest expedient was the most effective: they said they would go to one pub but went to another in the opposite direction. No coaches followed them this year.

The Soulers had telephoned ahead to the Holly Bush asking if they might perform. This, I was informed, was the "modern" way of announcing oneself, as indeed it is among people with middle class status or aspirations, a label which applies to the contemporary performers of the Antrobus play if not to their earlier counterparts.

The Play was performed outside to an audience of approximately seventy-five people, mainly local residents, their children, and the young people and university students who followed them about.
The performance at an end, the players and most of the audience adjourned to the pub, after which the Soulers left for Liverpool.

In the course of the evening I arranged to meet Adrian Peters (Derry Doubt) at the Wheatsheaf the next day for lunch. He wanted to satisfy my curiosity about the Soulers by showing me a book they used as a primer. The book, as I had expected, turned out to be Major A.W. Boyd's *Country Parish* and the text that of the defunct Comberbach, Cheshire, play. Major Boyd, a member of the Folk-Lore Society, had been instrumental in reviving the Souling tradition in the mid-1920's, and his influence was still obviously felt.

In talking with Mr. Peters, a relative newcomer to the gang, having been involved only four years, I found he had some definite ideas of how the Play fit into the community and what the players' attitudes towards it were. He felt that first of all they considered it entertainment and tried to give us smooth and polished a performance as possible (though he indicated that they never practice). But also,
and Major Boyd's role is reflected here, they had as well a sense of preserving something unique from the past, or, as Mr. Peters put it, "Town people don't know there has been a past" and he feels the Play is one way of helping them learn. Other long time members of the gang in my talks and correspondance with them expressed similar sentiments. For me, this missionary-like antiquarianism (notwithstanding their actions in misdirecting the coach from the visiting folk club) characterized the Antrobus Soulers most markedly.

Though they were revived, I want to emphasize that the Antrobus Soul-Cakers are not a revival folk club enterprise like the Bury Pace Eggers or Coventry Mummers whom we will consider later. Though Major Boyd did restore interest in the Play, he was not tilling alien soil. Alex Helm's Cheshire Folk Drama contains ample documentation of the vitality of the Play up to the First World War. And, in Antrobus, strong family ties have ensured traditional transmission of the Play and account for much of its present durability.

For instance, Wilfrid Isherwood (Letter In) has been Soulcaking nearly forty-five years and has at one time or another taken every part. His son, Edward (Mary), started in 1947 and has played a number of parts besides his present one including Wild Horse and Beelzebub. Wild Horse is played by Adrian Peters' wifes' grandfather who started
eleven years previously as Letter In. Two uncles of Adrian's wife also perform: Cecil Bland plays Quack Doctor, the only part he has taken since he started in 1947, and Edward Thompson plays King George, though he started thirteen years ago as Letter In. Mr. David Goulborn (Black Prince), a neighbor I am told of the Isherwoods, has been Souling since 1947 and has played King George and Derry Doubt. Jim Wright (Driver), a twenty-year veteran and custodian of the horse's head, is not related to the other players, nor is Tom Lafferty (Beelzebub) who has been in the gang twenty-four years, during which he has played the Doctor and Letter In. Apparently once when the gang was one player short, he did his bit as Doctor and then got under the horse later on.

Though my informants could not verify if it was the same family, the Isherwood name has been associated with Souling since at least 1805 in the vicinity of Antrobus. Major Boyd quotes from a dedication in an unnamed book which read:

This to remember when John Isherwood the Brewer drank his souling cap this day November 27th, 1805 of a pint of Rum and Gin. (p.76)

Boyd reports that John Isherwood lived in Stockton Heath, where, by the way, Wilf Isherwood himself first started
souling.\textsuperscript{1} The connection between the brewer John Isherwood and the present Antrobus play is further reinforced by the fact that the Wheatsheaf was once the old Brew House.

The Wild Horse, a most distinctive feature of the Cheshire Play, has received extensive treatment in recent publications and I do not think it necessary to do more than indicate a few of the most important conclusions reached. Helm points out that the plays containing the Wild Horse were confined mainly to the agricultural area of north and central Cheshire. The Horse's role in the origin of Souling plays is open to question: he may have been integral or he may have been the representative of a different tradition which was amalgamated with a standard Hero-Combat text. Horse ceremonies which formerly existed in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, and continental traditions (the Roumanian Calusari and La Soule Horse and play), suggest possible links between the Horse and Folk Play beyond amalgamation, but there is no conclusive evidence.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}Tom Chambers, "Further Notes on Antrobus Soulcakers and Other Cheshire Souling Plays," \textit{Lore and Language: The Journal of the Survey of Language and Folklore}, No. 5, University of Sheffield, Departments of English Language, Extramural Studies & the Language Centre, p.11. Also from personal interviews.

The most complete information on the Antrobus horse is provided by Tom Chambers. He emphasizes that Soulcaking, like Pace-Egging in Lancashire and Yorkshire, existed as a separate tradition from the Folk Play. The Souling tradition was, he feels, merged with chapbook versions of the Play, perhaps to make it more interesting. Though he does not say so directly, he implies that a Wild Horse custom merged with this Souling Hero-Combat play to produce the present Cheshire Soul-Caking Play. He might have added that the Antrobus Play begins with a Pace-Egging song, thus bringing in at least four traditions. It is two features, however—the Wild Horse and the Autumn performance—which give the present Soul-Caking Play its particular flavor.

The Antrobus horse's skull, said by the Soulers to be more than one hundred and fifty years old, has had an eventful history. Wilf Isherwood has reported how in his teens he snatched the head from the rival Hatton gang for the Stockton Heath Soulers during a melee. Ultimately, after a few years with the leader of Stockton Heath, the skull came back to Wilf, and it has been used by the Antrobus Soulers since shortly after the revival. The Driver's comments—"Every time he opens his mouth his head's half off" and "Every tooth in his mouth stands rink, tink and jank like a regiment of pickled onions"—are not only humorous but descriptive as well. The skull now has

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3 Tom Chambers, 13
4 Tom Chambers, 13-14.
fibreglass teeth to replace those lost by opening beer bottles in its mouth, and the jaw is so fragile that the Soulers no longer stick Beelzebub's frying pan into its mouth to take the collection.5

The scraps and fights over the Horse's head described by Wilf Isherwood no longer occur, in part, or course, because no rival gangs exist to challenge the men of Antrobus. Beyond that fact, however, lies a shift in the meaning of the Horse's head to those who perform the Play. It has been satisfactorily documented that to the Soulers at one time possession of the skull meant possession of "luck" for the year, hence the ambushes and thefts.6 The violence, though no doubt pleasurable to some for its own sake, was mainly directed at one end, securing the Horse's head of a rival gang. The skull now has come to represent the custom itself and the collective effort of the group to keep it alive. The same sorts of precautions are taken as before—it is hidden away except at Souling time, no one except a few trusted friends is allowed to touch it, and so on. But it is as a relic of an era relentlessly drawing to a close, when Antrobus and villages like it had an agriculturally based economy, and "luck" meant good crops and fertile livestock. It is this past about which Adrian Peters

5 Tom Chambers, 14.
6 Alex Helm, pp.11-12.
and the Antrobus gang want to teach the town folks.

The text and notes which follow were collected by me on November 1, 1971. Though a version of the Play was printed as recently as 1968 by Alex Helm in *Cheshire Folk Drama*, the text he uses from Mr. J.S. Sutton was collected in 1949, over twenty-three years ago; and does not record the most recent adaptations. Also, I attempt to provide here fuller notes on acting style, props, and audience response than has previously been reported.
ANTROBUS

SONG

We're one, two, three jolly good hearty lads, and we're all in one mind,
For this night we come a-souling, good nature to find;
For this night we come a-souling, as it does appear,
And it's all that we are souling for is your ale and strong beer.

For the next that steps up is Lord Nelson you see,
With a bunch of blue ribbons tied down to his knee,
And a star on his bosom like silver doth shine,
And I hope you will remember that it's soul-caking time.

For the next that steps up is a miser you see,
He wears his old rags to every degree,
And when he does sell them he sells them so dear,
That no one will buy them until this time next year.

Three knocks at door

LETTER IN stepping forward

Ladies and gentlemen, make a fire and strike a light,
For in this... there's going to be a dreadful fight
Between King George and Black Prince.
I hope King George will win.
Should he win, stand, fight, or fall,
We'll do our best to please you all.
Now, if you don't believe these words I say,
Step in, King George, and clear the way.

King George enters

In comes I, King George, champion bold,
Won ten thousand pounds in gold.
It was I who fought the fiery dragon and brought it to a slaughter
And by these means I won the King of Egypt's daughter.
Travelled the whole world round and round,
And not a man equal have I found.
And if you don't believe these words I say,
Step in Black Prince and clear the way.

BLACK PRINCE shouting in threatening manner

In comes I Black Prince of Paradise, born of high renown.
This night I come to bring King George's life and courage down. If that be he that standeth there
That slew my master's son and heir, If that be he of royal blood, I'll make it flow like Noah's flood.

KING GEORGE as a sharp challenge
Mind what thou sayest.

BLACK PRINCE very slowly and deliberately
What I say I mean.

KING GEORGE
Stand back, thou black Morocco dog, Or by my sword thou'll die. I'll pierce thy body full of holes And make thy buttons fly.

BLACK PRINCE
How canst thou pierce my body full of holes And make by buttons fly? My body is made of iron, My head, my sword, they're made of steel. Even my fingers and toes are double-jointed (Aside: "And they are, too.") I challenge thee to yield. Prepare!

Vigorous sword fight: Black Prince falls

MARY enters screaming in high falsetto voice
Oh, King George, King George, what hast thou done? Thou hast killed and slain my only son, my only heir, See how he lies dead and bleeding there. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! etc.

KING GEORGE
Well, Mary, he challenged me to yield; Better to fight than to die. Five pounds for a doctor, ten for a quack, Who can raise this man from off his back, And if you don't believe these words I say, Step in Quack Doctor and clear the way.
QUACK DOCTOR enters

In comes I that never cometh yet, **PAUSE; LAUGHTER**
The best Quack Doctor that you can get.
Why straight from the Continent I came
To cure this man which King George has slain.

MARY continues throughout in high falsetto voice

How comest thou to be a doctor?

DOCTOR

By me travels.

MARY

Oh, where hast thou travelled?

DOCTOR

I travelled through Icky Picky, France, and Spain,
Three times to the West Indies,
And now, Mary, I've returned to England again.

MARY

What can you cure?

DOCTOR

I can cure all sorts.

MARY

All sorts? What's all sorts?

DOCTOR

All sorts? I can cure the umph, the gump, the Ger, and the gout,
The pain within and the pain without.
If a man has nineteen devils in his heart, I'll cast twenty-one out.
Well, in this bag there are crutches for lame ducks, 
Plasters for broken backed earwigs,
And there's bottles of pickled frogs eyelashes.

MARY
What is thy fee to cure him?

DOCTOR
£5

MARY
£5! Oh, dear! screams

DOCTOR
Look, Mary, since you're such a decent old woman, I'm only going to charge you £10.

MARY
Oh, that's better.

DOCTOR
Performs mock examination--reaches into his undergarments, draws out a hammer and taps Black Prince on head; produces a saw which he sharpens; rolls Black Prince over on his side.

Aye, Mary, he's dead. Mary screams

Now, John, take three sips at this bottle
Down thy thrittle throttle
And arise and fight thy battle.

Administers liquid, but Black Prince does not move

MARY
You silly man as green as grass, the dead man never stirs.

Doctor gives him another dose

BLACK PRINCE sitting up
Oh, my back!

MARY

What ails thy back, my son?

BLACK PRINCE

My back is broken, my heart is confounded. I've been knocked out of seven senses into fourteen score; It's never been known in Old England before.

MARY

Oh, what have you done?

DOCTOR

I've taken the wrong cork off the right bottle, or the right bottle off the wrong cork, but never you mind. I've another bottle in my inside--outside--round about my backside pocket. My father brought me this from Spain, and it will make dead men to life again. Here, John, take a three sips from this bottle, And let run down thy thristle throttle, And rise and fight thy battle.

Black Prince rises up; he and King George fight again.

LETTER IN stepping in between the two men

Lay down those swords and rest. Pease and quietness is the best. He that fights and runs away, Will live to fight another day.

If you don't believe these words I say, Step in Derry Doubt and clear the way.

DERRY DOUBT runs in shouting and screaming like a madman

In comes I, little Derry Doubt, With my shirt flap hanging out. Five yards in and five yards out, Out goes little Derry Doubt.

If you don't believe these words I say, Step in Beelzebub and clear the way.
BEELZEBUB Enters

In comes I, Beelzebub,
Over me shoulder I carry me club,
And in me hand me dripping pan,
And I reckon me self a jolly old man.
With a rin tin tin, and a bottle of gin,
I'll sup a pint pot dry with any old man--
If you don't believe me, try me downs a pint of beer.

It was early Monday morning, or was it late on Saturday night?
I stood 10,000 miles ahead, and saw a house just out of sight.
The doors projected backward, the front was at the back.
I stood alone between two more, the walls were white-washed black.
I've just done six months up in Warrington jail for making a whip crack out of a mouse's tail.

If you don't believe these words I say,
Step in, Wild House, and clear the way.

DRIVER enters with Wild Horse; Horse bucks and rears much to the delight of audience
Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen.
In comes Dick and all his men,
We've come to see you once again.
Once he was alive, but now he's dead,
And nothing's left but a poor old horse's head.
And as you know he's getting old,
We've put on this bag to keep his rump from cold.
Stand round, Dick, and show yourself.
Whoa! horse snaps, rears, and prances
Stand still, will you?

Now ladies and gentlemen, just look around
And see if you saw a better class beast stand on England's ground:
He's double-lined, sure-footed, and works well in any gear,
But, by God, ride him if you can.
He's an eye like a hawk, a neck like a swan.
We had his ears made from an old lady's pocket book,
So read it if you can. Every time he opens his mouth, his head's half off.
Every tooth in his mouth stands rink jink and jank like a regiment of pickled onions.
I'll tell you what--if you look down his mouth, you can see holes in his socks. Whoa! Stand still.
He has as many jinkles and wrinkles in his forehead as there are furrows in an acre of new plowed land.
He's a very fine horse, he's very fine bred.
On Antrobus oats this horse has been fed.
He's won the Derby and the Oaks,
And finished up pulling an old milk float.
Stand round, Dick, and show yourself.

*horse rears and bucks* Whoa! Come here. Have you done?

Now ladies and gentlemen, this horse was going the other day and saw a caravan backed along the side of the road. So what did he do? He ran into it. Knocked a wheel off, broke one or two mahogany fire-irons, horse squats down and lays an egg; brief disruption, but driver continues story.

As I was saying, he saw a caravan backed by the side of the road. So what did he do, he ran into it. Knocked a wheel off, broke one or two mahogany fire-irons, and the glass wheelbarrow what they bring sticks in with.

But that's not all this horse's career, by God no. Why, ladies and gentlemen, this horse, he's travelled high, he's travelled low,

He's travelled Asia Minor, Spain, Acton Bridge, China,
He's travelled the whole world round.
He's even travelled in the land of Icky Picky, that's North Germany,

Where there's neither land or city,
Where houses are thatched with pancakes,
Walls are built with dumplings, streets paved with penny loaves.
Black puddings grow on apple trees and we pluck them just as we want them.
Little pigs run about with knives and stuck forks in their backs,
Crying out, "Who'll eat me?" I said one, and me horse another.

So stand, Dick, and show yourself. *horse snaps, and rears up* Whoa! Stand still!

Now ladies and gentlemen, this horse was born on Antrobus Moss,
Probably you don't know, but that's where crows fly tail first.

But just before he was found,
He shot his mother to save it being drown.
He was fed night and day with a spoon,
And at one time could dance to any tune.
But now you see, he has but one leg horse raises front leg
And with that leg he's forced to beg. *horse raises leg to audience*--Driver: "All right, I'll tell 'em."

All he begs, it is but small,
But that's obliged to serve us all.

Now all you kind ladies and gentlemen, won't you open your heart,
We're collecting for Dick a new spring cart.
And it's not one for him to draw, it's one for him to ride in.

And if you don't believe these words I say,
Ask these chaps at the back here, they're bigger liars than me.

Turn around, Dick, and show yourself.
Now, Dick, make your obeisance to your best friends. horse bows to audience
Now to your worst. Horse turns on driver and tries to bite him

ALL SING to tune of "Flanagan's Band"

And now our play is ended and we can no longer stay,
But with your kind permission, we will come another day,
But before we go, we'll have you to know, we'll have you to understand,
We're a credit to Old England, we're the boys of the Antrobus gang.

Doctor, Beelzebub, and King George collect money
MIDDLE CLASS MUMMING: THE BAMPTON PLAY

A third attempt at festivity is made at Christmas, when all the officials of the parish are on the move; bent--as are their betters at all times--upon gain, and with honest and smiling faces claiming their Christmas boxes. A troop of lads, also, as mummers, parade the streets during three of four evenings in succession, endeavouring, but, alas with less success than their great-grandfathers, to gain admission into the houses of the respectable inhabitants for the performance of their knightly deeds of prowess. These are the only vestiges of ancient public customs now remaining, and little else ever occurs, except the arrival of some stray lecturer, conjurer, or other performer, to disturb the repose which generally prevails in this little town.

--Rev. J.A. Giles, History of Bampton, p. 60.

Upon entering Bampton, Oxfordshire, one is immediately struck by the comfortable prosperity of the place. It is the kind of town in which relatives of important people live. Located a little over ten miles from Oxford and on the South-Central skirt of the Cotswolds, one of Britain's most famous tourist areas, Bampton has benefitted from the influx of capital to nearby tourist centers such as Burford and Cirencester. The town is dotted with expansive old stone mansions and attractive new bungalows. Any poverty is effectively disguised, appearing only infrequently in the agricultural workers who, however, do not live in or near the town center.

Morris dancing in May is certainly the most dominant folk custom prevailing in the town, with the Folk Play a distant second in the minds of the town's commercial interests. People by the hundreds converge on Bampton in May to witness the color and excitement of the dancing, but in contrast the mummers' play is very much a local affair for local people. The Tourist Information Centre in Oxford was quite at a loss for information concerning the Play, but went on at some length about the Whit Monday dance festivities. This year perhaps only ten people besides the pub patrons and select home owners and their guests who were visited by the mummers saw the Play on Christmas Eve, the usual night of performance.  

Though not, as I said, the predominant representatives of folk tradition for the inhabitants of Bampton, the performers of the Play have been appropriated, as their Morris dancing counterparts, by community forces to support the ends and values of the community. On 23 December the mummers presented a charity performance in the town square to benefit old age pensioners. Though a substantial sum was collected, the primary benefactors appeared to be

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2They formerly mummed two or three nights, according to Doctor Good, but their wives objected and encouraged them to limit their activities to one evening.
the children of the town who were not able (or in some cases allowed) to see the traditional Christmas Eve peregrinations. In fact, the atmosphere of the evening and the planning which went into it suggest that an intention to please the children, and only incidently to aid the pensioners, was the underlying motive behind this special performance. It amounted to an activity suitable for the entire family, and as such highlighted the prevailing respectability of everything associated with Bampton. A poster which appeared in several prominent locations in

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3 Has there ever been a society so preoccupied with old age pensioners as Britain in the 1970's? A mere mention of them and unions strike, governments open the purse, and students agitate. Helping them has become the fashionable means for those who want to secure favorable public opinion. There is a parallel in folk customs as well. Helping them (that is, turning over the proceeds of the evening's collection) has become a rationale for continuing folk customs, something which people want to do but often do not because they fear they may be ridiculed. An interesting variation of this situation exists with the Padstow Hobby Horses. The Blue Ribbon Ossers collect on May Day for local charities and the aged, whereas their rivals, the Old Ossers, keep any money they collect and distribute it among themselves. After the May festivities, however, the Old Ossers dress as blackfaced minstrels and sing in pubs to raise money for the Red Cross, thereby disarming any potential censure.
the village captures the homey spirit of the evening:

BAMPTON YOUTH CLUB
XMAS FESTIVAL
TOWN HALL 23rd DEC 7:00 P.M.
GUIDES AND BROWNIES
'THE MUMMERS'
MORRIS DANCERS
CAROL SINGERS
UNITED LEGION WOMEN'S SECTION
SERVING COFFEE & HOT DOGS
PROCEEDS TO OLD AGE PENSIONERS

The playing area was the center of a large circle comprised of the crowd and the tables holding the electronic equipment used by the Master of Ceremonies. The mummers clustered at one corner of the circle and made no attempt to disguise themselves. Introduced as "What we've all been waiting to see!" by the town council representative, the mummers gave a remarkable performance directed at the children.

The costumes, grotesque and eerie by the glare of the overhanging blue florescent lights, obviously fascinated the children, and there was full interaction between this audience
and the performers, especially Doctor Good. He called them by name and cracked harmless jokes gleaned from the week's *T.V. Times*. St. George and the Turkish Knight won instant approval as well with their blustery boasts and slapstick prat falls.

The community spirit was high as parents openly welcomed this harmless good fun. The crowd was generous, too, in aid of the pensioners as the rattle of the collection can amply testified. Though this was the first year in Bampton when the mummers were used in a special performance such as this,\(^4\) the success will undoubtedly encourage them to try again and will help perpetuate the tradition, albeit in this altered form.

The Bampton Mummers no longer have little chance of gaining admission into the better houses of Bampton as the Rev. Giles records in 1848; indeed, the leader of the group, Arnold Woodley, is a city official, and local people of prominence vie for the honor of a special performance. By and large, the owners of Bampton's "Big Houses" guard the visit jealously, and some, the local doctors in particular, as Mr. Woodley said, "regard it as a private thing." The actor, Richard Todd, who formerly lived in Bampton and entertained the mummers yearly, positively relished the visits.\(^5\)

\(^4\) The Bampton Mummers do occasionally give special performances for military personnel stationed nearby and have played at the Buckland Club, but as far as I know these are not charity performances *per se*.

\(^5\) Private discourse with Arnold Woodley.
That is not to say there is no social distance between players and audience-- Lady A, who was "at dinner," summarily turned them away this year, and some hosts re­legated them to the kitchen for after-performance refresh­ments while other guests stayed safely isolated in the living rooms.

The question of social distance is a useful one to consider if we are to see how the Play functions in Bampton. To do this it may be relevant at various points to look at the performances of Bampton's Play in relation to the kind of acting area employed, first briefly in the town square, then in private homes, and finally in the public houses. In general the proposition holds that in a dramatic performance one can reduce social, temporal, moral distance and the like between players and audience by reducing physical distance. Put simply, the closer they are, the closer they are. We all know that a number of con­temporary productions in the "Dinner plus Show" circuit in the United States contrive to have seated in the audience an actor who finally comes forward much to everyone's sur­prise. Though often this device is irrelevant to the play itself, the audience usually becomes more attentive after it is employed, if only to see who will pop up next. More seriously, in Peter Brook's production of Marat-Sade the audience becomes, as it were, an audience within an audience viewing a play within a play as the entire theater is
transformed into an asylum and the actors move freely on and off the stage, thereby involving the audience in the Marat-Sade debate without the comfortable luxury of physical, temporal, or moral distance. And anyone who has been confronted fact literally to face by Guerrilla Theater must have experienced the grip of total participation (even if it only meant exhausting every means of escape) produced by close actor-audience contact intended to bring each one's moral sensibilities into accord.

At Bampton the staging, though not so engrossing perhaps as Marat-Sade or unnerving as Guerrilla Theater, does tell us something about the relationships of Bampton's actors and audiences, and consequently about function. The old age pensioners'/children's benefit performance closely approximates the staging of theater-in-the-round, as the diagram illustrates. The performers and audience, however, were on the same level (no raised stage or seating) and they mingled freely, though the perimeter of the circle was respected by most. Children continually moved in and out of the action of the Play, whereas their parents stood at a slight physical and greater mental distance from the interplay between the actors and their sons and daughters. In the public houses there were no boundaries, in part because of the densely crowded conditions (in which case the proposition does not always apply), in part because the people in many pubs considered they were integral to the performance, which indeed they were. Pleas by Father
Christmas for "room to rhyme" went unheeded. Here, if St. George of Bold Slasher hesitated with a line, a customer would be ready to prompt him or, just as often, to tease and taunt him. The result was often a spontaneous, free-wheeling performance, enhanced by witticisms, disgressions, familiar jokes, and general good humor.

But at most of the private homes visited, the players performed in a well-defined area and the audience behaved much as they would if watching a curious television program; they remained seated as much as twenty feet away, directed their comments to each other, and on the whole responded passively to the experience. Before moving on to examples of this passivity, I should like to mention an exception, the first stop of the evening at the home of Miss Thomson, a local councilor herself interested in the Play and its history in Bampton. Two years ago she aided the county archivist in obtaining a transcript of the Play from Mr. Woodley for the Oxford County Record Office. She is quite skeptical of the mummers' claim that theirs is an unbroken tradition in Bampton, but none the less seems actively to support their efforts to keep it alive at present. Interestingly enough, though she was aware that the text varied from performance to performance, and especially that the Play as given in public houses bore scant resemblance to the version presented in her sitting room, I doubt that she ever considered going to a pub to see the Play.
At her home, the audience was a small one, Miss Thomson, her sister and niece, an English couple and their American guests, and my wife and myself. The response to the Play was in part conditioned by my acts of approval (laughing at the "right" places) and involuntary gestures (an ironic smirk when Robin Hood unconsciously directed his "I'll choose an alderman's fat liver" speech at the discomforted Miss Thomson). When the mumbers had finished, Miss Thomson served everyone wine. The guests and players remained chatting for nearly half an hour. With some difficulty I managed to turn the discussion away from myself; I, not the mumbers, was the curiosity there. Miss Thomson and her sister wanted to know if the same mumming tradition persisted in the United States and if I had a regular job back home; everyone, including the other Americans, wanted to express their incredulity that I had come to England to study Folk Drama.

All the mumbers were sober and quite articulate at this point. Doctor Good told how he had begun in 1949 by playing Robin Hood and had switched to the role of the Doctor in the mid-1950's. He explained how "We play to our audience" and the principle of determining how he varied the text for children, the "gentlefolks" (Miss Thomson, for instance), and the public house. To him the players' function was simply to entertain, and he deplored the form of tradition which demanded a rigid adherence to the text.
The playing area at Miss Thomson's was a comparatively small, narrow room. The players were never more than a few feet from the audience when delivering their lines (Doctor Good even stepped accidently on an American visitor's foot when delivering a line with emphasis), though they did enter and exit through a hallway.

DIAGRAM

Whatever spatial and social differences there were soon disappeared after the performance itself, especially as the mummers stayed an abnormally long time. The unusual 50% American composition of the audience, the small room, and Miss Thomson's attitude towards the players, helped to make the performance one of the few successful ones given in private homes.

An English friend remarked as we approached the Baxter's, the mummers' seventh performance of the night, that some homes were so exclusive "the only way you get into them is by recording, filming, or performing the Play." This was just such a home. The atmosphere inside was
relatively casual, however, as we intruded yet again into a festive Bampton cocktail party. I got off badly by refusing a proffered drink, a *faux pas* which nearly cost me my credibility with the host. Fortunately the mummers soon appeared, and following a brief introduction by the hostess, began their performance. The room was enormous, and the audience was scattered throughout it in small clusters of two and three, some twenty to thirty feet from the action and often separated from it by many pieces of furniture.

**DIAGRAM**

At first everyone was attentive, but soon they were discreetly looking bewilderedly at one another, not quite knowing what was going on. They chuckled when Doctor Good mildly chastised them about drinking ("My 'imple pimple pills are better than that stuff.") and smiled patronizingly when Little John appeared dressed as a woman. Mrs. Baxter tried to help by laughing occasionally, a lead gratefully
and politely followed by most guests near to her. The after-performance stay was short, though the players had the sense to accept a round of mixed drinks from their host.

The "closer they are" proposition is best illustrated in private homes, however, by a look at the last performance before the gang began its rounds of public houses. The "stage" at the Smith's was the hallway-entrance of the home; the audience sat above and away from the actors on the stairs.

The Smiths were also having one of the many cocktail parties in Bampton that evening. They had evidently invited out of town guests whom they felt would be impressed if during the evening a troupe of local people in their harmless finery appeared to entertain them. What they had not counted on was the condition of the mummers by that time in the evening and the response of their uninitiated guests.
The mummers, presenting themselves to act the Play for the eighth time that evening, were not quite drunk but certainly well on their way. They also knew their next stop was the first pub and they were impatient to be there. The guests straggled out of the living room and up the stairs, glasses poised as if by looking into them, they would somehow find an explanation for the lunatics and the American with the camera and tape recorder who for inexplicable reasons was religiously following them about. The Play began and ended; it was the worst performance of the evening. Father Christmas, who was not effective in making eye contact at any time, never looked up from the floor to the audience above his head. St. George and Slasher tumbled about nearly destroying a vase and picture. Doctor Good's jokes were flat without audience reaction, and Robin Hood had to be steadied to complete his slurred speech.

When they were finished, one woman uttered the typical and predictable, "Never saw anything like it in my entire life" and fled to the living room. The hosts attempted to rescue the day with a round of applause, but two or three people out of twenty clapping only made everyone more uncomfortable. The final blow to the novice guests was the plea for money. The mummers (and followers) were directed into the kitchen where they were served beer (the more experienced hosts in Bampton provided wine—it was not so
vulgar as beer, yet not quite mixed drinks either). The guests, except for a doctor friend, filtered from hallway to living room to refill their martini glasses.

Homer Sykes, a photographer friend of mine, told me afterwards that he now knew how serfs must have felt when they visited the manor house. The problem was not so much with the people who owned the house, though they should have coached their guests on what to expect, but with the guests not really understanding what the players said, the direction of their meaning, or in fact the whole concept of a tradition at all. Here was a performance in which the genteel audience failed to play its part as well as the mummers did theirs. When in doubt, they could have followed the lead of the hosts, seeming to understand the allusions, laughing when it was expected of them, and pretending to understand, or at least be moderately curious, if they really did not get the point at all or indeed care. The unfortunate situation was compounded by the physical makeup of the hall-stage which effectively blocked interaction between players and audience during the production. The mummers would have been affronted by the reception if they had not been moving from that point on to the pubs of Bampton, and to an audience which loved the well-traveled jokes of the Doctor and the mumbling of Jack Finney. Most importantly, however, it was going to confront them fact to face.

By and large there was, as one might expect, much
greater audience participation in the public houses, especially at the New Inn, than at any of the private homes. This participation can be attributed to the close physical contact and to the players' freedom from a strict adherence to the text imposed in private homes by a sense of decency and a crowded schedule (sixteen performances in five hours), allowing them to incorporate numerous local and topical allusions, and to banter with the willing audience. The performance at the New Inn is such a case of their deviation from the basic text. Freed from the hypergenteel atmosphere of Bampton's Christmas cocktail set, they shouted and caroused their way through their lines, deviating whenever possible to emphasize lines with sexual overtones and spicing up otherwise prosaic speeches with off-color jokes and comments. The audience, prompted by the leading remarks of Doctor Good ("Have you ever had it?") and Bold Slasher ("Rigor Mortis has set in!" as he held his wooden sword in phallic position), responded in kind. The quick-witted Doctor kept control, however, and indeed improved with each verbal challenge from the audience. At the New Inn, his classic jokes ("Doctor! Doctor! I've been graped! 'Surely you mean raped.'" etc.) were still fresh, and the other actors regained enough sobriety to conclude their best performance of the evening.

Briefly this is an account of their subsequent stops.
The Jubilee Victorian was too crowded and the call for acting space was not heeded. In part this was the mummers' fault; Father Christmas, though sincere and deliberate in his part, did not project well and he was halfway through his lines before anyone knew he had started. St. George brought them around by slapping his sword on the top of a nearby table, but only he and the Doctor were really effective from this point on. The former's exaggerated and inappropriate Italian dialect when delivering the Royal Apprussia King speech and the Doctor's word play ("'T Italy' Oh, said that word, didn't I") kept the audience attentive, but whenever the others were speaking, the patrons were easily diverted and normal pub activities resumed.

At the George and Dragon, home base of Arnold Woodley, they received a friendly reception. Some effective banter with a fellow in the audience helped them out here, in this case the Doctor implying a homosexual relationship between the patron and the Turkish Knight who, though prostrate on
the floor having been felled by St. George, had recog-
nized his friend, as Doctor Good said, by looking up his
trouser leg. Obviously everyone enjoyed the fact that
nothing was beyond ridicule, not even the mummers them-
selves.

The performance at the Talbot was a poor one. Like
the Jubilee Victorian it was hot and overcrowded, there
was no place to perform, and they were constantly inter­
rupted. My inquiries revealed that this audience, like
that at the last private home, was not native to Bampton
and did not have any idea of what they were witnessing.
The players themselves were exhausted by this time, and
the whole enterprise was becoming mere routine. And, of
course, they were quite drunk.

About halfway through the performance at the Horseshoe
the Play completely broke down and they were unable to
finish. This pub was the nearest thing to a working man's
establishment in affluent Bampton. Some men knew the
words and could have taken some parts themselves. They
prompted the stumbling mummers, but the players could not
finish. Determined to end the day as they had promised,
they made their way to the Elephant and somehow managed to
walk through their parts one last time.
The following is a copy of the Bampton text as reported in Rev. John Allen Giles' History of the Parish and Town of Bampton (1848). The Rev. Giles' preliminary comments are important in the history of text, since it is clear that he is responsible for the text as we know it today:

"The following verses are principally the author's own composition being written in imitation of what he remembers to have heard in Somersetshire many years ago, when Mumming and many other customs were still in use. The lines which are enclosed between inverted commas are the only ones which he remembers as thoroughly genuine."

History of Bampton, p. 176

A CHRISTMAS MUMMERY

Father Christmas
"Here comes I Old Father Christmas; welcome or welcome not,"
"I hope old father Christmas will never be forgot."
There is a time for work, and there is a time for play.
A time for to be melancholy, and for to be gay:
A time for to be thrifty and a time for to be free:
But, sure enough, at Christmas tide we all may jovial be:
This is the time when Christ did come that we might happy be.
So listen, all ye gentles, to what we now shall say,
And take in kindness what we do to celebrate this day.
St. George, the Doctor and the Turk are here together met;
The Doctor has his physic and the knights' swords are sharp set:
The one will kill the other and the Doctor raise him up,
And then we all shall happy be with each his Christmas cup.
And Robin Hood and little John will pass the beer-pot round,
For two more jolly chaps on earth there never yet were found.
So ladies all and gentlemen we pray you give good cheer
To Old Father Christmas, for he comes but once a year!

Saint George
"Here comes I, Saint George the knight,"
Who with the pagans used to fight.
And with my sword and spear and valiant shield
Can make a host of adversaries yield,
I swear 'tis true, for though I am so pliant,
In battle I'm as stout as any giant,
And though I am so thin, can eat a calf,
And yet not fill my belly--no, not half.
Whoever doubts my word, just let him come,
I'll slice him till he's blind and deaf and dumb.
The Turkish Knight

"Here comes I, the Turkish Knight,"
"Come from Turkish lands to fight,"
With brave Saint George, if he is here:
And, if his heart don't quake with fear,
I'll cut it out with my sharp sword,
And eat it,—that I will upon my word.
So let him come, if he will be so bold,
And if his blood is hot, I'll make it cold.

--They fight--the Turkish knight falls--

Saint George

Is there no doctor in the land?

Doctor

There is a doctor in the land,
Skillful both in head and hand,
For if a man has got a cough,
I'll cure him without cutting his head off;
And if a man has lost his head,
I'll put a Donkey's on instead,
And, if he will but pay me well,
The secret I will never tell,
But, if he will not pay, I'll leave the sinner
To eat a bunch of thistles for his dinner.

Robin Hood

And here comes I, bold Robin Hood,
With bended bow of yew—tree wood,
And arrows sharp, for my quiver
I choose an alderman's fat liver.

Under the green wood tree,
Merrily come with me,
To hunt the deer with horn and hound,
We take our joyous way,
And when we've done, with nut-brown ale
To cheer the hunting day,
With Little John and friar Tuck,
We roast and eat the slaughter'd buck.

Little John

And here comes I, brave Little John.
With quarter-staff I play the don,
I'm not the man to cheat or cozen
But knock men's brains out by the dozen—
But hold, my jolly comrades, by your leave,
All here are friends and this is Christmas eve,
Put up your swords, brave knights, and, Robin Hood,
Slacken your bended-bow of yew-tree wood,
And, Doctor, no more physic, for to-day
I hope will prove a feast and not a fray,
And that all who are here, and friar Tuck,
Who's ill in bed at home, may have good luck.
So, if what we have said should please this quorum,
We'll drink to all their honours in a jorum!

Bampton Text as recorded at "The New Inn" 24 December 1971

THE BAMPTON MUMMERS' PLAY

I Enter Father Christmas

In comes I old Father Christmas, welcome, or welcome not.
I 'ope old Father Christmas will never be forgot.
There is a time for work, there is a time for play,
A time to be melancholy and to be gay.
A time to be thrifty, a time to be free.
And sure enough this Christmas time we all shall jovial be,
For this is the time when Christ did come, that we might happy be.

So listen all ye gentiles to what we have to say.
St. George, the Doctor and the Turk, are 'ere together tonight,
The Doctor has 'is physicks [the Doctor at this point surrounded by several young ladies, interjects, "Ya, here she is. I'll give her some physic, I'll tell ya."]], the Knights have their swords sharp set,
One will kill the other and the Doctor will raise him up.
Now all we shall happy be with each 'is Christmas cup:
There's Robin Hood and Little John will pass the beer pot around,
For two nobler chaps on earth there never yet were found.
So Ladies an' Gentlemen I pray you give good cheer
T'old Father Christmas, he comes but once a year.
Come in St. George the Knight.

II Enter St. George the Knight

In comes I St. George the Knight who with my pagans used to fight,
With my sword and spear and valiant shield
I'll make an 'ost of adversaries yield. [Doctor: "Don't tell my wife!"]
I'll swear t'is true although I am so pliant in battle [Doctor: "You're a skinny little runt!"]
I'm as strong as any giant and although I am so slim I can eat a calf and then not fill my belly. Oh no, not 'arf.
Come in the Turkish Knight.

III Enter the Turkish Knight

In comes I the Turkish Knight, I come from Turkeyland to fight
With brave St. George if 'es 'ere, and if 'is 'eart doesn't quake with fear,
I'll cut it out with my sharp sword and eat it
That I will upon my word.
Just let 'im come if he be so bowld,
If 'is blood is 'ot, I'll make it cowld.

IV They Fight a Burlesque Sword Fight

V Gasp, Turkish Knight Falls

Ahhhh!

VI St. George

Is there a doctor in the land?

VII Enter Doctor Good to Laughter

There is a doctor in the land [girl in audience to Turkish Knight: "You shouldn't laugh. You're supposed to be dead."] If you'd keep your legs together, he would die. I told you to put some drawers on...[speech directed to audience] It's the permissive society. I reckon I missed out on it somewhere. Cure him? [Turkish Knight: "Don't rush him. I'm enjoying myself."] [Doctor pointing to Turkish Knight's sword which he is holding in phallic position] Rigor mortis has set in already! There is a doctor in the land, skilful both in yead and hand,
And if a man has got a cough, I can cure him without cutting 'is yead off,
And if this pays me well, I'll leave the sinner, the old landlord over there, to eat a bunch of thistles for his dinner,
And if this pays me well, Shhhhh, the secret I shall never tell. [Doctor: "What have you been having in my bottle?" Turkish Knight: "You pee-ed in it" Doctor: "Hey! If a centipede a bucket full, how much would a precipice? PAUSE "A sheer drop!"
Being the case as it was before, rise up thy yead and fight once more.

VIII THEY FIGHT, BUT STOP IMMEDIATELY

IX Doctor Good
Come in bold Robin Hood.

X Enter Robin Hood

In comes I bold Robin Hood, with bended bow of yew tree wood, And arrows sharp for my quiver, I'll choose an alderman's fat liver.

Under the greenwood tree merrily come with me To hunt the deer with horn and hound, we take our joyous way,
And when we've done with nut brown ale we'll cheer the hunting day.
With Little John and Friar Tuck we'll roast and eat the slaughtered buck.
Come in bold Little John.

XI Enter Little John
In comes I bowld Little John, with my quarterstaff I'll play the don
I'm not the man to cheat or cozen, but knock men's brain's out by the dozen.
Now all I ask you in this quorum, I'll drink your honor in the jorum.
Last Christmas Eve I turned the spit, burnt me fingers, and finds ant't it.
The sparks fled over the table, the skimmer ran arter the ladle,
I said to the grid iron, "Can't you two agree,
I'm the justice, bring 'im to me."

ACT II

XII Enter Father Christmas
Good Master and Good Mistress, I 'ope you're all within,
For we've come this Merry Christmastime to greet you and your kin.
But if you are offended we'll take it as offence,
And if you do not own us, we'll quickly go you hence.
A room, a room to rhyme, please give me and my brave gallant boys a room
To rhyme this Happy Christmastime,
Active youth, active life,
Life that's never seen or done before upon a common stage;
Stage or no stage, off St. George.
Come in the Royal Apprussia King.

XIII Enter the Royal Apprussia King
In comes I the Royal Apprussia King, bound to defend all nations,
Cares for no man, neither Austrian, Spanish, French, Dutch nor Turk.
An' I'm sure no man can do me any hurt.
So let all your noble voices ring,
For I'm the Royal Apprussia King.
Come in Soldier Bowld.

XIV Enter Soldier Bold (Slasher)
In comes I, Soldier Bowld, Slasher is my name,
With sword and sash hanging by my side, I'll swear I'll win the game.

Who is this man who wi' me stand? I'll swear I'll Kill him sword in hand,
I'll kill' im, I'll cut 'im, maul 'im into small slices,
I'll send 'im to the cookshop to make mince pies.
Mince pies 'ot, Mince pies cowld,
I'll send 'im to the cookshop before 'es nine days old.

PAUSE
[to the Royal Apprussia King] Count myself as good a man as thee.

XV Royal Apprussia King
Same as I to thee.

XVI Soldier Bold (Slasher)
Where in the forelife I value it not,
Must give it up sooner or later or no more room for mortality.

XVII They Fight. Royal Apprussia King Falls.

XVIII Knocking

XIX Soldier Bold (Slasher)
Who's there?

XX Doctor Good From off the stage

Doctor.

XXI Soldier Bold (Slasher)
Come in then, Good Doctor.

XXII Enter Doctor Good

In comes I Doctor Good, with my 'and I'll stop his blood.
[Doctor aside: "Now old Bullen couldn't do that, could he?"
GENERAL LAUGHTER]
And my pills will work 'im through, better than Epsom salts,
cure both body and stomach too.

XXIII Soldier Bold

Where dost thou come from then, Good Doctor? [Raucous Laughter in Audience at Sexual Implications]
XXIV Doctor Good

Italy, t'Italy--Leave my girl alone!--Germany, France and Spain,
That's my 'ome and I shall return again.

XXV Soldier Bold (Slasher) Momentarily Forgets Lines and is Chided by Doctor

What sort of diseases do thy pills cure then, Good Doctor?

XXVI Doctor Good

These are the best birth pills. You know what, I've just been investing in birth pills. One weight three ton. You put it against the key hole [he is interrupted by a female in the pub: "Ya, to stop your old man coming through the door." ] I've got one for your husband, too. He sticks it in his boot. PAUSE He goes limp! And I know an oral contraceptive. PAUSE No. Just think on that a little bit.

[To an older female pub patron] In your day they used to say "no", didn't they? [Woman: "No." Soldier Bold: "They didn't have telly in them days." ]
The itch, the stitch [To another female patron] Have you ever had it? LAUGHTER That's a leading question, watch how you answer it.
Pains within, pains without [In reference to Soldier Bold who was taking a drink] Hey! Doesn't he have lovely kissable lips? Watch when he does that. Pains within, pains without, hard carns, soft carns.
Young girl came running to me--"Doctor! Doctor! I've been grabbed! Surely you mean raped. "No, there was a bunch of them."

I can cure a magpie with the toothache.

XXVII Soldier Bold (Slasher)

How does'th thee do it then, Good Doctor?

XXVIII Doctor Good

Cut 'is yeard off and chuck 'is body in the ditch.
Also John Jenkins and his wife, I cured they, but they died. LAUGHTER
What are you laughing about? That's bloody serious.
Bring unto me an old woman, seventy years of age and lying in her grave,
She'll be able to raise her head and crack one of myimple pimple pills,
I'll be bound a Fifty Pound bonfire for her life.
Hey! [To Soldier Bold] I reckon my brother's in trouble.
I just got a letter from my brother, but I can't read it. Forgot my glasses. Is that an "o" or an "i"? [Soldier Bold: "An 'i'."] Thank goodness. I thought he shot himself. LAUGHTER That's filthy.
If there's another quack doctor in the land who can do as well as I can, Just let 'im come here and raise this dead man. Come in Jack Finney.

XXIX Enter Jack Finney

In comes I as aint ben 'it. Wi' my big yead and little wit. [Doctor: "Teat!"]
Me yead's so big, me wits so small, I will endeavour to please you all.

[To Royal Apprussia King who has his sword in phallic position] What do you have your sword like that for? Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is not Jack Finney.

XXX Soldier Bold (Slasher)

What is thy name then, Jack?

XXXI Jack Finney

Mr. Finney. A man of great pains,
Can do more than thee, or any other man.

XXXII Soldier Bold Misses his cue and Doctor shouts out This Line

What cans't thee do then, Jack?

XXXIII Jack Finney

Cure this man if not quite dead,
Being the case as it was before,
Rise up thy yead and fight no more.
Come in old Tom the Tinker.

XXXIV Tom the Tinker

In comes I ol' Tom the Tinker. Now I beant no small beer drinker.
I told the landlord to 'is face, the chimney carner was 'is place.
There us set and dried our face, Old Tom Giles and I.
Me face was black, me beard was long,
Me hat tied on with a leathern thong.
So if you please all ye ladies and gentlemen,
Will ye give me a copper or two
To get me beard cut to go to church on Sunday? LAUGHTER
Now as I was walking down a wide, narrow, straight, crooked lane

I met a pig with a horse's mane.
I went down a little bit farther, I come to a pig sty built
with pancakes and thatched with apple dumplings.
Now I thought it all very well for trade,
I knocked at the maid, open fled the door,
The pig began to shake and the 'ouse began to roar.
Now she asked me if I could yet half a pint of ale
And drink a piece of bread and cheese.
I said, "No thankee, but just if thee please."
I went down a little bit further, I came to two owld women,
    snipper snapping.
One cut a barley corn through a ten foot wall,
Knocked the bottem out of a caste iron pot,
And Killed a poor dead dog.

XXXV Soldier Bold

What was it, Tom, a pedigree?

XXXVI Tom the Tinker

No, a bitch.
I turn 'im inside outerds, slap bang outerds,
Set 'im at the top of Buckland Hill barking back'ards.

XXXVII FINAL SONG

Now for the music and now for the fun,
The feast is ready and Christmas is come,
So welcome us now, and give us a cheer,
For Ol' Father Christmas comes once in a year.

During the evening there were a number of minor variations from the text of the play as recorded at the New Inn Pub. Virtually all of the extrapolation was the doctor's, Speeches VII and XXII (and often XXVI) most frequently expanded with witticisms, personal barbs at the audience or other members of the gang, or off-color jokes. The following are four further examples recorded December 24, 1971.

1) Speech VII-- The Doctor administers his tonic from a bottle he draws from his rear pocket. The Turkish Knight coughs and sputters violently. Doctor: "That's funny. He shouldn't cough like that. I got it from a little village up the road, what they call Loo. That's Loo water, that's what it is."
2) Speech VII--The Turkish Knight lying prostrate on the floor greets a friend in the pub, "Hello, Fred." Doctor: "He recognized you, Fred, by looking at your trouser leg. LAUGHTER Turkish Knight (rather lamely): "We live on the same street."

3) Speech VII--Having just embarrassed the Turkish Knight, the Doctor continues: "It just isn't his week, poor old devil. Sixteen years ago he went an got a young girl in trouble and had to go to court. Judge said to him, 'Here, you'll have to pay a pound a week until the kid's sixteen.' And you know what, as that kid grew up old enough to collect the money, that old woman she sent the kid around every Friday night to collect the money. Kid went knocking on the door and Albert used to pay up, no sweat. Come when little old boy was sixteen. Little old boy knocks on the door and Albert there he comes up very brave and says, 'Here's the last bloody quid. Tell your old woman I ain't your dad any more.' LAUGHTER That's funny, my mom just told me to tell you that you never bloody was." LAUGHTER

4) Speech VII--Young girl come running to me, "Doctor! Doctor! I've been raped!" Surely you mean 'raped.' "No, there was a bunch of them."
The City of Ripon lies almost half-way between London and Edinburgh in the Northern regions of English Folk Drama. The yearly emergence on Boxing Day of four or five bizarrely clad men onto the streets, the Market Square, and into the pubs, seems well suited to a tradition-conscious city which still is soothed at 9:00 o'clock every night by the announcement a Hornblower in a three-cornered hat and fawn colored coat that the city is in the Wakeman's care. The performance of the Play is accepted matter of factly by the local citizenry, and officials of the city do not promote it or exploit its commercial possibilities. The official guidebook to the city, for instance, discusses the city's collection of silver and the history of the Fountains Abbey at some length, but makes no reference to the Play at all. No folk clubs hire buses (as at Antrobus) and follow them around. Except for the usual faces from the Folk-Lore Society, most enthusiasts find Ripon beyond their scope, preferring Marshfield or some revival in a more hospitable climate. Because of their isolation and because they have not been commercially publicized, the

1The Wakeman probably dates back to Saxon times. The city was the Wakeman's responsibility once the Watch was set. He not only apprehended criminals but also was required to recompense victimized householders. For the Wakeman's services the citizens were assessed a small yearly fee.
Ripon Sword Dancers, or Blue Stots as they are sometimes called, quite probably offer the closest approximation to a genuine traditional performance of the Folk Play in England today, with a history going back 200 years in one family alone. They thus provide us with an excellent opportunity to study Functional Shift.

I arrived in Ripon Christmas morning. As one might expect, the town was absolutely deserted at that time, and at first I encountered difficulty making contacts. Finally I engaged a local policeman in the Market Square. He proved willing and extremely helpful in locating Edward (Eddie) Hardcastle, the leader of the group. The officer knew Mr. Hardcastle and considered him to be the last remaining member of the old troupe which formerly performed around the city. The officer's comments were the first indication, of many to come later, I had of the division within the Ripon Mummers, the point of divergence being their motives for performing. Through the officer's efforts, which included a radio-phone talk with Mr. Hardcastle, I learned the performance would begin Monday the 27th at 9:30 a.m.2

2Boxing Day is the day after Christmas, except when it falls on a Sunday. There is, in fact, an almost universal absence of Sunday festivities in Britain, and the Ripon Sword Dance is no exception. Eddie informed me that he had no objection, but the police will not let them on the streets on Sunday. There is no statutory restriction I could discover, but whether the bann is an informal, ad hoc one or the "law" is a rationalization of a long standing folk custom, remains an open question.
On Boxing Day I encountered the Sword Dancers just as they were beginning their rounds. Though it was still early, they had already begun drinking, perhaps to fortify themselves against the abysmally dreary, rain-threatened day. There were five altogether—Edward Hardcastle; Walter Hardcastle, his brother; Tony Chambers, a relative by marriage; Bill Chapman, a 19 year veteran who joined the troupe one year when they were short-handed; and Norman Carter.

Eddie Hardcastle has been a mummer for nearly sixty years. He was between 8 and 13 years old when he began.3 "I don't know who started it," Eddie has said, but he does know that members of his family back to his great grandfather have led the team with no break in annual performances.5 His father Bill Hardcastle participated with the swordman for 67 years until he was 80 years old.6

Walter Hardcastle, Eddie's brother and the St. George of the Play, of course has the same hereditary relationship to the performance as Eddie, but with a difference. Neither so well-spoken nor outspoken as his brother, when quarrels arise, as they invariably seem to do among the group members,

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3 At various times he has reported 13 years old (in the Darlington & Stockton Times, 2-1-53), 8 years old (to Dr.E. C. Cawte in 1957), and 10 years old (to me in 1971). It is possible that he simply doesn't remember, but with an alert mind like his, he could be enjoying himself at our expense. He has also indicated that he is somewhere between 65 and 74 years old.

4 Darlington & Stockton Times, 2-1-53.

5 Information from E.C. Cawte.

6 Darlington & Stockton Times, 2-1-53.
Walter aligns himself with Chapman, Carter, and his son-in-law Tony. Tony, in 1971 at least, served as a peace-maker between Eddie and the others; this almost always meant convincing the others to give in to Eddie. The dissension was mainly about where they would perform next, Eddie surprisingly not too dogmatic about the route (that is, until he had determined it), but the others insisted that no opportunity to collect "half a quid" escape them.

The presentation takes place on residential streets (often those on which a group member lives), in the Market Square, and in the pubs and working men's clubs in the city. The town is too large for the mummers to cover in one day, but over the years they have established a number of regular stops. Generally they play in working class areas before friends and family, who supply them generously with drink, and before those willing to pay. No "Big Houses" are on their agenda (as at Bampton), and although children follow them around the streets, they do no "youth" performances or charity shows. Rain did not daunt them in the least this year. Eddie was occasionally frustrated by interrupting automobiles and banged one with his sword after he had dispatched St. George in the middle of an intersection. The driver's glaring disgust at being delayed quickly became terror, then relief, as he sped away. Fortunately, soon after this incident we neared the Market Square, left the street, and began performances in pubs.
During the performances there is no noticeable variation from the text, except when the gang wanted to hurry things along by intentionally dropping the "Hieland Laddy" and "Big Head" verses. Norman Carter emphatically informed me, "Can't do all Ripon if you don't" [leave out verses]. There is no attempt to incorporate social comment or criticism.

The performance involves the minimum of dramatic movement. After the initial song Norman Carter and Tony Chambers, the "Cadgers" or collectors, circulate among the pub patrons or, if outside, to the houses in the vicinity. Eddie Hardcastle, Walter Hardcastle, and Bill Chapman walk in a circle, pausing briefly to deliver their lines.

The five Sword Dancers in a circle  The cadgers leave the acting area.

Two actions, the sword fight and revival, receive the most extensive treatment, but even that is limited. For instance, when St. George is struck his mortal blow, he merely bends his head
The lines are delivered in a vigorous, shouting fashion. There is no pretense on their part that they are acting in the conventional meaning of the word. Eddie is remarkably convincing in his delivery, mainly because he is so at ease and recites in the most natural fashion. His gestures and grimaces reveal the intensity with which he goes about his performance. On a more conventional stage he might be called a ham actor because of the way he delivers his boast as doctor and sings the songs. But when one sees him enough times, one realizes the sincerity with which Eddie goes about his acting. Those revival mummers who bring only slapstick and prat falls to their performances could learn much from Eddie's approach to the Play.

By 10:30 everyone was drunk and soaked through. Eddie was coughing and spitting all the time, obviously in some physical discomfort. It was clear, however, that they had no intention of quitting: Eddie because it was his day to be a personality, even a celebrity on a limited scale, and because he was determined to satisfy the tradition as he had for sixty odd years; the others because, as they said, they "needed the pocket money." They wanted to make just as many stops as possible, and nothing was going to deter them.

The reception they received at each pub varied considerably. At one of the first, most of the pub patrons
were not directly involved. Some of the more "sophisticated" people left before the collection began in the next pub, following one man who had escaped, as he said, before the "rubbish" began. The following stop was the Ripon Bowling Club. They have a restricted membership, and so far as I could determine, this was the only stop at which Eddie asked first if they could enter. The crowd as a whole pretty much ignored them, though they were met with incredulous disbelief by those who had never seen anything like it before. Some people were curious, but for the most part there was no interaction with the audience. A few patrons clapped nervously at the end. Ye Old Alma Inn was obviously one of their local pubs, and they were well received. In contrast to their previous stop, Eddie confidently refused to begin until the television set had been turned off. The continual drinking was beginning to affect their performance quite noticeably by now, as slurred speech rendered the Play unintelligible.

The last pub they customarily visit on their rounds was the climax of the day. The crowd of this working man's establishment was quite familiar with the Sword Dancers and expressed their real appreciation with genuine laughter and applause. One customer, however, obviously as inebriated as the players themselves, became beligerent outside and made the mistake of taunting Eddie. A fight was inevitable.
Sword drawn, Eddie looked for a moment as if he might engage the man in a one-sided ritual combat, but he took the more moderate course of bouncing the man's head off a nearby door, a move which brought everyone to his senses, including the now pacified antagonist. Perhaps he had at the back of his mind the unconfirmed allegation I heard in Ripon that Eddie had once stabbed his father in the heat of the St. George combat.

After the pubs, they went back onto the street again until the dinner hour, when they retired to divide the contributions. How many more years the Ripon Sword Dancers will play on the streets and in the pubs of Ripon is difficult to determine. Certainly as long as Eddie Hardcastle is able to perform his part, the play will continue. It is unlikely that the monetary incentive of the other four mummers is enough to keep the Play going by itself. It is a bad omen that the most promising candidate to provide leadership in the future, Eddie's grandson, has moved from Ripon to Newmarket.
RIPON SWORD DANCE TEXT

All Sing-

I Make me a-room for I am coming,
All for to make you understand,
That Christmas time is now been approaching
Since we left yon foreign land,
Since we left yon foreign land.

Oh!

II The first that comes is General Warrington
As to you the truth I'll tell,
For he's gone marching against the victory
On the plains of Waterloo,
On the plains of Waterloo.

Oh!

III The next that comes is the Hie-land laddie
Who's got sheep on yonder plains,
Romping and roving amongst the bonny lassies,
Now he's gone and spent it all,
Now he's gone and spent it all.

Oh!

IV The next that comes is Tom the Tinker
Who comes he your kettles for to mend,
For lassies if you do not know in venture
[For lassies if you dare not, Tom will venture]
Tom will stand to be your friend,
Tom will stand to be your friend.

Beelzebub (first Actor)

V In comes I old Beelzebub
Over my shoulder he carries a club;
In his hand a warming pan
And calls himself a jolly old man.

Big Head (?) (Second Actor)

VI In comes I that never come yet,
With my big head and little wit.
Though my head be big and my wit be small,
I'll do my best to please you all.
Leader (Edward Hardcastle)

VII A room, a room, a gallant room, a room to rise,
We've come to show activity upon a Christmas time.
Activity you (youth?), Activity aye (age?), freeman Spain,
I'll spend my blood for Old England again.
Step in St. George and clear the way.

St. George (William Hardcastle)

VIII I am St. George, Bold Bluster (Hector, Brector, Actor?)
   is my name.
   Broad sword and buckel by my side,
   I hope to win the game.

Leader (E.H.)

IX Hooks, Crooks, thou lie,
   Thou can not do but die.
   [I care not if I die]
   If I draw my sword, I'm sure to break thy head.

X They fight--remain standing stationary, but clash swords
together at a rapid rate.

St. George (W.H.)

XI How canst thou break my head?
   My head is made of steel,
   My fingerbones and knucklebones,
   I'll challenge thee to yield. [to feel]

XII St. George "slain"--remains standing; drops head and
   bends over at the waist.

XIII First Actor Placing his hand on St.George's shoulder
   Doctor! Doctor! 5 for a doctor!
   10 for a Doctor!
   Is there a doctor to be found?

Doctor (E.H.)

XIV Yes, I am a doctor.
First Actor

XV By why?

Doctor (E.H.)

XVI By my travels.

First Actor

XVII How far hast thou traveled?
Doctor
XVIII I've traveled from Italy, T'Italy, France and Spain, [Titterly]
And I've journied back again.

First Actor
XIX What can thy cure? [canst thou]

Doctor (E.H.)
XX I can cure all sorts.

First Actor
XXI What's all sorts?

Doctor (E.H.)
XXII I can cure the young, the old, the hot, the cold, The lovesick maid, living or the dead, The itch, the stitch, the gallop, the gout, The plague within and the plague without, And the plague that flies around about. If there be seven evils in that man, I'll bring seven and seventy out.

First Actor
XXIII Out with them then!

Doctor (E.H.)
XXIV Here, Jack. I have a little bottle in my right hand pocket called Joy and Elegant Plain [Jollup-an-Plain, Every Complaint]. Torches for blind bumble bees, Spectacles for broken-backed mice. Here, [Jack], have a nip from that bottle, Let it go down thy throttle. Rise, Bold Jack, and fight agins.

St. George (W.H.)
XXV Oh, my back!
Doctor (E.H.)

XXVI What's wrong with thy back?

St. George (W.H.)

XXVII My back is wounded, my heart is confounded
From a horrible [horrible], terrible stroke,
My seven senses knocked in forty-four score,
What was never done here before.
[This life has never been acted here before]

All Sing

XXVIII All gentry, all sentry, all stand in a row,
I bid you no manner of ills.
But I wish you all sweethearts and you and me jackets,
So ladies, I bid you farewell,
So ladies, I bid you farewell.
Contemporary productions of the Midgley Pace Egg Play and the Brighouse Children's Theatre Pace Egg Play owe their existence to radio broadcasts in 1931 and 1932 of the Play revived by adults who had gone "pace-egging" as youths in Midgley before the first World War. H.W. Harwood and F.H. Marsden, authors of The Pace Egg, The Midgley Version (1935), were responsible for the broadcast, and their short pamphlet has not been superseded for those interested in this play and its history in the Calder Valley of Yorkshire. It will be worth while here to briefly recall some of their observations in 1935 before considering subsequent developments.

It is not certain when the first Pace Egg Play was performed in Midgley, as no written evidence has been uncovered. Harwood and Marsden conclude, however, that it was certainly well-established by 1800, a date verified by an elaborate wooden sword circa 1780 known to have been used in the Play. A chapbook published about 1840 by William


Walker and Sons, Otley, entitled *The Peace Egg*, reproduces a local version of the Play; this publication is taken by Harwood and Marsden to indicate that the Play was quite popular at the time and that the chapbook was the product of public demand. This printed version apparently gradually supplanted the extant Midgley text with its variations and local allusions, and is the basis of the revival play inspired by the authors. In their discussion of *The Peace Egg*, they point out a few local elements in the 1935 text not in the chapbook, most notably the singing of verses at the end by the whole company.

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4 Harwood and Marsden, pp.5-6.

5 For more information on this chapbook and its effect see also Alex Helm, *The Chapbook Mummers' Plays*: "For some reason this chapbook appears to have been the most popular of all; it is certainly the one on which the present Midgley, Yorkshire, version is based, as it is known to have had a wide circulation in the West Riding circa 1840 onwards, supplanting Pearce's Sheffield text completely in this area." (p.20)

6 Though the singing of songs was not included in *The Peace Egg*, this practice as well as skits and satires were a part of the Midgley tradition. Harwood and Marsden cite the following political skit (p.11):

"Bad cess be ta'en Lord Hartington,
Be Gladstone an' John Bright,
An' all the rest belonging to t'same crew;
Bad scrat to all the lot,
An' may they go t'pot--
Was the dying prayer of Benjamin the Jew."

The revival of the Midgley Pace Egg Play by Harwood and Marsden and the offshoot of it performed by the Brighouse Children's Theatre have been remarkably successful and enduring. Acted as they are, however, under the watchful eyes of Calder High School and the Brighouse Children's Theatre, they are non-controversial and rigid, and consequently often dull and fragile. One feels they yearly resurrect but a fleshless skeleton.
The Midgley tradition, then, was altered by the imposition of a printed version of the text but not broken to World War I, after which the Play was not given until 1931. The youths of sixteen to twenty years of age who pace-eggled in Midgley before the war and who survived the decimation did not forget the Play, however, and when it was decided to revive it some twenty years later, there was a core of traditional performers ready to act. It was these Pace-Egg veterans who acted the Play the night before Good Friday in 1931-32 over Leeds radio.

That same year, Mr. J.E. Akroyd, then headmaster of Midgley School, introduced the Play to his students, and trained and outfitted them in time for Parent's Day at the school in 1932. This nucleus of young people under the sponsorship of the school introduced the Pace-Egging Play to the streets of Midgley once more.\(^7\) The revival was an immediate success, and, as Harwood and Marsden proudly relate, "On Good Friday, 1934, when they gave it on the streets they also had the great honour of broadcasting the play from Lacy Fold, Midgley, in the presence of a great crowd, not only to the nation, but to the Empire..."\(^8\)

The Play was performed for sixteen years by the boys of Midgley School without interruption when a new school, Calder High School in nearby Mytholmroyd, absorbed youths

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\(^7\)Harwood and Marsden, p.12.

\(^8\)Harwood and Marsden, pp.12-13.
over eleven in the area. After a hiatus of just one year (1949), the Play emerged again, this time under the aegis of the new school. Since 1950 the Play has been regularly performed on Good Friday in the villages served by the Calder High School. The performances this year (Easter 1972) were as follows:

Banksfield Estate 9:30 a.m.
Dusty Miller Pub (Mytholmroyd) 10:00 a.m.
Holme Street (Hebden Bridge) 11:00 a.m.
St. George's Square (Hebden Bridge) 11:30 a.m.
Midgley Bus Terminus 2:00 p.m.
Luddenden Village 3:00 p.m.
White Hart Fold (Todmorden) 4:00 p.m.

The transfer of older youths from Midgley Day School to Calder High School and the possibility that this would mean the discontinuation of the Pace-Egg tradition prompted Mr. T.E. Tyler, Chairman of the Brighouse Children's Theatre, to revive the Brighouse Pace-Egg Play from a version published by J. Horsfall Turner in *Yorkshire Folk-Lore Journal*, I (1888). In 1950 the Brighouse Children's Theatre included it in a program of plays they performed in Germany, and since then have regularly presented it on the streets of Brighouse.

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9Mary Robinson, p.235.
Huddersfield, Cleckheston, Heckmondwike and other nearby communities on Easter Saturday mornings. For five years they have also visited old people's homes and given special performances at festivals around the country.¹⁰

The Midgley Pace-Eggers, associated as they are with the local school, are well-known to the local inhabitants who still attend the performances throughout the district in substantial numbers. The residents were joined this year as well by many folk club enthusiasts and the usual party of folklorists with portable tape recorders and cameras. Whether the young men were affected by all the attention, or, as it seemed, distracted from their acting by the young ladies in the audience, I cannot judge for certain, but they did give a self-conscious performance broken by giggling and some embarrassed interplay with the audience. However, the spectators did not appear to have high expectations about the boys' acting ability and there was obvious goodwill and report between them.

In contrast, the Brighouse Children's Theatre players do not have the advantage of being known to their audiences. They drive from town to town in a small flat-bed truck announcing themselves and their next place of performance over a loudspeaker. Though the potential for a spontaneous

¹⁰ From personal interviews and a handout sheet the Brighouse Children's Theatre distributes to explain the Play.
production is present, the result is often disappointing. Crowds of curious bystanders naturally gather around them, but no one seems to know how or when to respond. It has been reported that, "It is obvious in several ways that this Play is directed by someone with a sense of theatre." In the sense that each word is enunciated precisely, every vowel rounded to perfection; that the actors display a sense of timing and have a stage presence; that conventional acting styles (particularly 19th century melodramatic styles) are used as models, this assertion is correct. What Brighouse does not have, however, is a sense of the Play which they are presenting, especially the important relationship which must exist between actors and audience. They perform as if on a stage and do not interact at all. Unlike Bury Pace Eggers and the Coventry Mummers, two other revival groups with similar problems to overcome, they give their audiences no cues to when and how to respond. At a large shopping center in Huddersfield, they trooped in, performed, and ran off without so much as a clap or laugh from the mystified shoppers. Only at a bus station in Brighouse did people actually respond at all to their efforts.

The costuming of the Midgley Pace Eggers remains today much as it was in 1935 when Harwood and Marsden described 

11Mary Robinson, p.235.
it, and as they reported it was in a photograph taken fifty years previous to that.\textsuperscript{12} The Fool, St. George, The King of Egypt, Slasher, and Hector all wear orange-red tunics, paper rosettes, trousers (no longer with strips down the seams as reported in Harwood and Marsden), and large, cardboard-frame headgear approximately one to two feet square with rising and crisscrossing arches from each corner. The headgear is entirely decorated with colored paper rosettes, bells, and beads. The Fool carries a large bell, a Union Jack, a stick with a bladder attached to the end, and what appears to be a salt shaker, the contents of which he sprinkles on Tosspot's "tail" during the final songs. The others carry wooden swords, the King of Egypt's cut in the shape of a scimitar. The Black Prince of Paradine dresses as the others, except that his costume is entirely black and white. The Doctor wears a black frock coat, a top hat, and carries a small bottle.\textsuperscript{13} Tosspot dresses in ragged gear—a crushed top hat, an ill-fitting suit coat, and baggy pants. He carries a cane, a small straw basket, and a kind of stick doll about three feet

\textsuperscript{12}Harwood and Marsden, p.7.

\textsuperscript{13}Harwood and Marsden report that before the 1931 revival, the Doctor dressed as the others (p.7).
long with a mop head and some material fitted on it to look like a dress.

Though costuming described above appears to have been established at Midgley by the last quarter of the 19th century, there is some evidence that not all areas served by the contemporary Pace-Eggers had players attired similarly. In nearby Todmorden as late as the 1920's the costume reportedly consisted of blackened faces and strips of colored paper pinned to the clothing. 14

The Brighouse Children's Theatre Pace-Eggers dress as the contemporary Midgley Pace-Eggers in most ways. The Fool does not carry a flag or salt shaker, and his bladder is a balloon. The Black Prince of Paradine carries a large scimitar, and Hector meets St. George with a stubby sword only a foot in length. The Doctor carries his implements in a medical bag. Beelzebub has his usual club and pan, and the Brighouse Devil Doubt wields a stick broom as tall as himself. Finally, when St. George encounters The Black Prince, both are astride hobby horses (stick horse about five feet in length).

14 Letter to me from Mr. Geoffrey Baron of Todmorden, June 1972.
MIDGLEY PACE EGG PLAY

**FOOL runs in from side of playing area ringing bell**

Room, room, brave gallants, give us room to sport,  
For in this room we wish for to resort---  
Resort and repeat to you our merry rhyme,  
For pray you remember, 'tis Pace-Egging Time.

continues to ring bell

A ring, a ring, I enter in,  
I hope this famous fight to win,  
Whether I rise, stick, stand, or fall,  
I'll do my best to please you all.  
At the sound of the trumpet (trumpet sounds),  
At the beat of the drum (tap on drum),  
Make room, brave gentlemen, and let our merry actors come.

ALL players enter and form circle chanting in unison

We are the merry actors that traverse the town,  
We are the merry actors that fight for renown,  
We are the merry actors that show pleasant play.

**FOOL**

If you don't believe in what I say,  
Step in, St. George, thou champion and clear the way.

trumpet blast

**ST. GEORGE steps forward into circle**

I am St. George who from Old England sprung,  
My famous name throughout the world hath rung--after each boast the others mock and ridicule St. George  
Many bloody deeds and wonders have I made known,  
And made false tyrants tremble on their thrones.  
I followed a fair lady to the giant's gate,  
Confined in dungeon deep to meet her fate.  
There I resolved, with true knight-errantry,  
To burst the door and set the prisoner free.  
When, lo! A giant almost struck me dead,  
But by my valor I cut off his head.  
I've sought the world all round and round,  
But a man to equal me I've never found.

133
trumpet blast

SLASHER steps into circle with St. George and Fool

I am the man to equal thee!

ST. GEORGE
Who art thou?

SLASHER
I am a valiant soldier, Bold Slasher is my name.
With sword and buckler by my side, I hope to win the game,
And for to fight with me, St. George, I see thou art not able,
For with my trusty broadsword, I soon would thee disable.

ST. GEORGE in disbelief

Disable! Disable! It lies not in thy power.
For with my trusty broadsword I soon will thee devour.
Stand back, Slasher, and let no more be said,
For if I draw my glittering sword or spear,
I'm almost sure to break thine head.

SLASHER

How canst thou break mine head,
Since mine head is made of iron,
And my body made of steel,
My hands and feet of knuckle bone,
I challenge thee to field.

They charge at one another and engage in a brief sword fight. The others encourage them. Slasher falls.

FOOL

Alas! Alas! My chiefest son is slain.
What must I do to raise him up again?
Here he lies in the presence of you all.
I, lovingly, for a doctor call.

ALL chanting

A doctor! A doctor!
The pounds for a doctor!
Who'll go fetch a doctor?

FOOL

I'll go fetch a doctor. Trumpet Blast
DOCTOR steps forward into circle

Here am I.

FOOL

Are you the doctor?

DOCTOR

Yes, that you may plainly see
By my art and activity.

FOOL

Well, what is your fee to cure this poor man?

Doctor performs mock examination on fallen Slasher.

DOCTOR

Ten pounds be my fee, but, Jack, if thou be an honest man,
I'll only take five of thee.

FOOL

Aside You'll be wondrous cunning if you get any.

to Doctor Well, how far have you travelled in doctorship?

DOCTOR All groan after each country mentioned

From Italy, Titaly, High Germany, France and Spain.
And now I'm returned to cure diseases in Old England again.

FOOL

So far and no further?

DOCTOR

Oh, yes, a great deal further.

FOOL

How far?

DOCTOR

From the fireside cupboard, upstairs and into bed,
Where I eat my cheese and bread,
That make my nose and cheeks so red.
FOOL
What diseases can you cure?

DOCTOR
All sorts.

FOOL
What's all sorts?

DOCTOR
The itch, the stitch, the palsy and the gout.
If a man has nineteen devils in his soul,
I can cast twenty of them out.
I have in my pocket reaches into bag and holds up items
Spectacles for blind hummer-bees PAUSE
Crutches for lame ducks PAUSE, and pack-saddles for broken-backed mice.
I once cured Sir Harry of a hang-nail almost fifty-five yards long,
So, surely, I can cure this poor man.

Doctor stands over Slasher; removes bottle from bag; makes
Slasher drink a large quantity of fluid

Here, Jack, take a little out of me bottle,
And let it run down thy throttle.
And if thou be not quite slain,
Arise, Jack, and fight again.

SLASHER rising

Oh, my back!

FOOL
What's amiss with thy back?

SLASHER
My back is wounded,
And my art confounded--
To be struck out of seven senses into five score--
The like was never seen in Old England before.

Trumpet blast
Oh, hark, St. George, I hear the silver trumpet sound
Which summons me from off this bloody [sometimes "wet"] ground.
Farewell, St. George, I can no longer stay,
Out yonder lies the way.

Slasher returns to circle as St. George moves to center of playing area

ST. GEORGE All groan and taunt him as he delivers boasts -
Trumpet blast: FOOL rings bell

I am St. George, that noble champion bold,
Who with my trusty broadsword won ten thousand pounds in gold.
'Twas I that fought the fiery dragon and brought it to the slaughter,
And by those means I won the King of Egypt's daughter.

BLACK PRINCE STEPPING FORWARD

I am the Black Prince of Paradine born of high renown.
Soon I'll fetch St. George and all his lofty courage down.
Before, St. George, thou departest from me,
St. George, thou'll die to all eternity.

ST. GEORGE

Stand back, thou Black Morocco dog,
Or by my sword thou'll die.
I'll pierce thy body full of holes
And make thy buttons fly.

BLACK PRINCE

Draw out thy sword and slay,
Pull out thy purse and pay,
For I will have a recompense before I go away.

ST. GEORGE

Why, thou Black Prince of Paradine, where hast thou been?
Pray, what fine sights has thou seen?
Dost thou think no man of mine age
Dare such a black as thee engage?
Lay down thy sword, take up to me a spear,
And I'll fight thee without dread or fear.

Engage in sword fight; Black Prince slain

ST. GEORGE

Now that Black Prince of Paradine is dead,
And all his joys entirely fled,
Take him and give him to the flies,
That he may never more come near my eyes.

Trumpet Blast

KING OF EGYPT steps forward

I am the King of Egypt, as plainly doth appear (Slasher: "Get back to your pyramid.")
I come to seek my son, my only son and heir.

ST. GEORGE

He is slain.

KING OF EGYPT

Slain! Who did him slay? Who did him kill?
And on the ground his precious blood did spill?

ST. GEORGE

I did him slay, I did him kill,
And on the ground his precious blood did spill.
Please you, my leige, my honor to maintain,
Had you been there, you might have fared the same.

KING OF EGYPT

Cursed Christian! What is this thou has done?
Thou hast ruined me, and slain my only son.

ST. GEORGE

He gave me challenge; no one it denies (ALL: "No!")
How high he was, but see how low he lies.

KING OF EGYPT

Oh, Hector! Hector! Help me with speed!
For in my life I never stood more in need.

Hector steps forward

And stand not there with sword in hand,
But rise and fight at my command.

HECTOR a whining and whimpering coward
Yes, yes, my liege, I will obey,  
And by my sword I hope to win the day;  
If that be he that doth stand there,  
That killed my master's only son and heir,  
Though he be sprung of royal blood,  
I'll make it run like Noah's Flood.

ST. GEORGE

Bold Hector, do not be so hot,  
For here thou knowest not who thou'rt got.  
*Tis I can tame thee of thy pride,  
And lay thine anger, too, aside.  
I'll inch thee and pinch thee as small as flies,  
And send thee overseas to make mince pies.  
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold,  
I'll send thee to Black Sam before thou'rt nine days old.

HECTOR though his words are bold, Hector moves around the circle looking for a way to escape--the others push him back towards St. George

How canst thou tame me of my pride  
And lay mine anger, too, aside,  
Inch me and pinch me as small as flies,  
And send me over the seas to make mince pies?  
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold,  
I'll send thee to Black Sam before thou're nine days old.  
Since mine head is made of iron,  
My body is made of steel,  
My hands and feet of knuckle bone,  
I challenge thee to field.

Hector is pushed towards St. George. He is quickly wounded, leaving him in a sitting position.

HECTOR shouts out lines while seated

I am a valiant soldier, Bold Hector is my name.  
Many bloody battles have I fought and always won the same,  
'Til from St. George I got this grievous wound.

Trumpet Blast

Hark! Hark! I hear the silver trumpet sound  
Which summons me from off this bloody ground.  
Down yonder lies the way,  
Farewell, St. George, I can no longer stay.

Hector returns to circle: Fool rings bell; Trumpet Blast.
ST. GEORGE haughtily to Fool who walks towards him
Here comes from his post Old Bold Ben.

FOOL
Why, master, did I ever take thee to be my friend?

ST. GEORGE
Why, Jack, did I ever do thee any harm?

FOOL - superciliously
Thou proud and saucy coxcomb, begone!

ST. GEORGE furious
A coxcomb! A coxcomb! I defy that name,
And by my sword thou ought to be stabbed for the same.

FOOL
To be stabbed is the least I fear.
Appoint your place and time, and I'll meet you there.

ST. GEORGE
I'll cross the water at the hour of five,
And I'll meet you there, sir, if I be alive.

FOOL
I cross the water at the hour of six,
And I'll meet you there with great knobsticks.

Tosspot moves into playing area; others return to circle and walk counterclockwise chanting

ALL
Hold up your hands, hold up your hands,
And let your quarrels fall.
Peace and quietness is the best,
Any ye shall end it all.

ALL SING
Oh, the next that steps in is Old Toss Pot, you see,
He's a gallant old man, and he wears a degree.
He's a stick in his hand, and he wears a pig tail,
And he takes his delight in drinking mulled ale.

**TOSSPOT**

In step I, an old coffee grinder,
I've lost me wife and cannot find her.
If any of you see her, you must turn her back,
She's two broken legs and a hump on her back,

_Tosspot skins around circle singing_

I've some eggs in me basket, although I appear,
Eggerspecting (expecting) some time to come in for me share.
Although I am ragged, and not so well dressed,
I can kiss some bonny lasses as well as the next.

Stops singing and with the aid of St. George and others selects a girl whom he kisses; then returns to circle and resumes singing

They powdered my hair with a dredging-tin box,
And I've got a pig tail and you see how it cocks.
I've a stick in my hand and a pipe in my snout,
And my old tally wife is better ner 'bout.

ALL SING all move counterclockwise around Tosspot

Come search up your money,
Be jubilant and free,
And give us your Pace-Egg
For Easter Monday.

Go down in your cellars,
And see what you'll find.
If your barrels be empty
I hope you'll provide.

I hope you'll provide
Sweet eggs and strong beer,
And we'll come no more to you
Until the next year.

These times they are hard
And money is scant,
One Pace-Egg of yours
Is all that we want.

And if you will grant us
This little small thing,
We'll all charm our voices,
And merry we'll sing.
Just look at St. George,
So brisk and so bold,
While in his right hand
A sword he doth hold.

A star on his breast
Like silver doth shine.
And we hope you'll remember
It's Pace-Egging time.
FOOL runs in from side of playing area; rings bell

Room, room, brave gallants, give us room to sport,
For in this room we wish for to resort--
Resort and repeat to you our merry rhyme,
For pray you remember, 'tis Pace-Egging Time.

continues to ring bell

A ring, a ring, I enter in,
I hope this famous fight to win,
Whether I rise, stick, stand, or fall,
I'll do my best to please you all.
At the sound of the trumpet - trumpet sounds
At the beat of the drum - three taps on small drum,
Make room, brave gentlemen, and let our merry actors come.

ALL players enter and form circle while chanting in unison

We are the merry actors that traverse the town,
We are the merry actors that fight for renown,
We are the merry actors that show pleasant play.

FOOL

If you don't believe in what I say,
Step in, St. George, thou champion, and clear the way.

St. GEORGE steps forward into circle

I am St. George who from Old England sprung.
My famous name throughout the world hath rung.
Many bloody deeds and wonders have I made known,
And made false tyrants tremble on their thrones.
I followed a fair lady to the giant's gate,
There confined in dungeon deep to meet her fate.
There I resolved, with true knight-errantry,
To burst the door and set the prisoner free.
When, lo! A giant almost struck me dead,
But by my valor I cut off his head.
I've sought the world all round and round,
But a man to equal me I've never found.

SLASHER STEPS into circle with St. George and Fool
I am the man to equal thee!

ST. GEORGE

Who art thou?

SLASHER

I am a valiant soldier, Bold Slasher is my name. With sword and buckler by my side, I hope to win the game. And for to fight with me, St. George, I see thou art not able, For with my trusty broadsword, I soon will thee disable.

ST. GEORGE incredulously

Disable! Disable! It lies not in thy power. For with my trusty broadsword I soon will thee devour. Stand back, Slasher, and let no more be said, For if I draw my glittering sword or spear, I'm sure to break thine head.

SLASHER shouting and blustering

How canst thou break my head, Since my head is made of iron, And my body made of steel, My hands and feet of knucklebone, I challenge you to field.

Sword fight; Slasher wounded. As he staggers, the Fool follows him carrying a plastic sheet. Just as Slasher falls, the Fool draws the sheet away.

FOOL

Alas! Alas! My chiepest son is slain. What must I do to raise him up again? Here he lies in the presence of you all. I, lovingly, for a doctor call.

ALL chanting

A doctor! A doctor! Ten pounds for a doctor! Who'll go fetch a doctor?

FOOL

I'll go fetch a doctor.

DOCTOR steps forward into circle

Here am I.
FOOL disbelievingly

Are you the doctor?

DOCTOR

Yes, that you may plainly see
By my art and activity.

FOOL

And, what is your fee to cure this poor man?

DOCTOR

Ten pounds is my fee, but, Jack, if thou be an honest man, I'll only charge five of thee.

FOOL

Aside—You'll be wondrous cunning if you get any.
To Doctor—Well, how far have you travelled in doctorship?

DOCTOR

From Italy, Titaly, High Germany, France and Spain,
And now I'm returned to cure disease in good Old England again.

FOOL

So far and no further?

DOCTOR

Oh, yes, a great deal further.

FOOL

How far?

DOCTOR

From the fireside cupboard, upstairs to bed
Where I eat my cheese and bread
That make my nose and cheeks so red.

FOOL

What diseases can you cure?

DOCTOR

All sorts.
FOOL mocking the doctor's voice

What's all sorts?

DOCTOR

The itch -(All: Oh!), the stitch (All: Oh!), the palsy (All: Oh!) and the gout.
I have in my bag crutches for lame ducks - Reaches into bag and holds up items--all respond as if impressed.
Spectacles for blind hummer-bees, and pack-saddles for broken-backed mice.
Why I cured Sir Harry of a nang-nail almost fifty-five yards long,
I can cure this poor man.
Here, Jack, take a little out of my bottle,
And let it run down thy throttle -doctor performs a brief mock examination on Slasher, then pours liquid down his throat.
And if thou be not quite slain,
Arise, Jack, and fight again.

Slasher does not move

Arise, Jack, and fight again. Doctor irritatedly pulls at Slasher attempting to get him up

SLASHER rising

Oh, my back!

FOOL

What's amiss with thy back?

SLASHER

My back is wounded,
And my art confounded--
To be struck out of seven senses into five score--
The like was never seen in Old England before.

Trumpet blast

Oh, hark, St. George, I hear the silver trumpet sound
Which summons me from off this muddy (bloody) ground.
Out yonder is the way.
Farewell, St. George, I can no longer stay.
Slasher returns to circle as St. George moves to center of playing area. Fool rings bell.

**ST. GEORGE**

I am St. George, that noble champion bold,  
Who with my trusty sword won ten thousand pounds in gold.  
*Twas I that fought the fiery dragon and brought it to the slaughter,  
And by those means I won the King of Egypt's daughter.

**BLACK PRINCE stepping forward**

I am the Black Prince of Paradine born of high renown.  
Delivered in haughty, arrogant manner  
Soon I'll fetch St. George and all his lofty courage down.  
Before, St. George, thou departest from me,  
Thou'll die to all eternity.

**ST. GEORGE**

Stand back, thou black Morocco dog,  
Or by my sword thou'll die.  
I'll pierce thy body full of holes  
And make thy buttons fly.

**BLACK PRINCE**

Pull out thy purse and pay,  
Draw out thy sword and slay,  
For I will have a recompense before I go away.

**ST. GEORGE**

Now, thou Black Prince of Paradine, where hast thou been?  
Pray, what fine sights hast thou seen?  
Dost thou think no man of mine age  
Dare such a black as thee engage?  
Lay down thy sword, take up to me a spear,  
Then I'll fight thee without dread or fear.

Each antagonist moves to the perimeter of circle, steps astride a stick horse, leaps high in the air, and charges---after several passes, the Black Prince falls.

Now that Black Prince is dead,  
And all his joys entirely fled,  
Take him and give him to the flies,  
That he may never more come near my eyes.
KING OF EGYPT stepping forward

Attempting to sound like an old man-I am the King of Egypt
as plainly doth appear.
I come to seek my son, my only son and heir.

ST. GEORGE mocks King of Egypt's voice

He is slain.

KING OF EGYPT

Slain! Who did him slay? Who did him kill?
And on this mucky ground his precious blood did spill?

ST. GEORGE Still mocking King of Egypt

I did him slay, I did him kill,
And on this precious ground his mucky blood did spill.
Please you, my liege, my honor to maintain,
Had you been there, you might have fared the same.

KING OF EGYPT

Cursed Christian! What is this thou has done?
Thou hast ruined me, and slain my only son.

ST. GEORGE

He gave me challenge. No one it denies. (All: "No!")
How high he was, but see how low he lies.

KING OF EGYPT

Oh, Hector! Hector! Help me with speed.
For in my life I never stood more in need.

Hector steps forward

And stand not there with sword in hand,
But rise and fight at my command.

HECTOR Prancing forward in effeminate manner

Yes, yes, my liege, I will obey,
And with my sword I hope to win the day.
If that be he that do stand there,
That slew my master's only son and heir,
Though he be sprung from woyal (royal) bwod (blood),
I'll make it wun (run) like Nowa's Fwod (Noah's Flood).
ST. GEORGE

Bold Hector, do not be so hot,
For here thou knowest not who thou'st got.
*Tis I can tame thee of thy pride,
And cast thine anger, too, aside.
I'll inch thee and pinch thee as small as flies,
And send thee overseas to make mince pies.
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold,
I'll send thee to Black Sam before thou'rt nine days old.

HECTOR

How canst thou tame me of my pwide (pride),
And lay mine anger, too, aside,
Inch me and pinch me as small as flies (flies),
And send me over the seas to make mince pies?
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold,
I'll send thee to Black Sam before thou'rt nine days old.
Since mine head is made of iron, taps his head and staggers
My body made of steel, strikes chest and coughs
My hands and feet of knuckle-bone,
I challenge you to field.

He is pushed forward by King of Egypt. At first holds hand
over eyes, then flees St. George. Struck across seat of
pants; sits down.

HECTOR Shouts out lines while seated

I am a valiant soldier, Bold Hector is my name.
Many bloody battles have I fought and always won the same,
Till from St. George I got this bloody blow.

Trumpet blast

Hark! Hark! I hear the silver trumpet sound
Which summons me from off this bloody ground.
Out yonder is the way,
Farewell, St. George, I can no longer stay. Delivers last
line rapidly; runs back to circle

ST. GEORGE To Fool who walks toward him

Here comes from his post Old Bold Ben.

FOOL

Why, Master, did I ever take thee to be my friend?
ST. GEORGE

Why, Jack, did I ever do thee any harm?

FOOL

Thou proud and saucy coxcomb, begone!

ST. GEORGE Shouting and in a fury

A coxcomb! A coxcomb! I defy that name,
And by my sword thou ought to be stabbed for the same.

FOOL

To be stabbed is the least I fear.
Appoint your place and time
And I'll meet you there.

ST. GEORGE

I'll cross the water at the hour of five,
And I'll meet you there, Sir, if I be alive.

FOOL

I cross the water at the hour of six,
And I'll meet you there with great knobsticks.

ALL Both hands raised over heads; St. George and Fool
return to circle

Hold up your hands, hold up your hands,
And let your quarrels fall;
For peace and quietness is the best,
And ye shall end it all.

BEELZEBUB Steps forward

In come I, Beelzebub,
And over me shoulder I carries me club,
And in me hand a dripping pan,
And I thinks meself a jolly old man.
And if you don't believe in what I say,
Enter in, Devil Doubt, and clear the way.

DEVIL DOUBT

In come I, little Devil Doubt.
If you don't give me money, I'll sweep you out.
swings broom in circle--others jump in air shouting
It's money I want, and money I crave.
If you don't give me money, I'll sweep you all to the grave.
repeats action with broom

ALL SING Devil Doubt returns to circle; everyone moves
counterclockwise

Come search up your money,
Be jubilant and free,
And give us your Pace-Egg
For Easter Monday.

Go down to your cellars,
And see what you'll find.
If your barrels be empty
I hope you'll provide.

I hope you'll provide
Sweet eggs and strong beer,
And we'll come no more to you
Until next year.

These times they are hard
And money is scant,
One Pace-Egg of yours
Is all that we want.

And if you will grant us
This little small thing,
We'll all charm our voices,
And merry we'll sing.

Just look at St. George,
So brisk and so bold,
While in his right hand
A sword he doth hold.

A star on his breast
Like silver doth shine.
And I hope you'll remember
It's Pace-Egging time.
The Bury Pace-Eggers, one of the most recently formed revival groups, took its first tour the week before Easter 1970. Like their fellows from Coventry, they derive from a local folk club and are now members of the Morris Ring of England, having been accepted in February 1972. Unlike Coventry, which freely adapts and rewrites its play, the Bury Pace-Eggers keep close to an original text which had been presented in the Bury area years before. The source of the text is J. Barlow Brooks' *Lancashire Bred; An Autobiography*1 which records a play performed in Radcliffe, about four miles south of Bury. Brooks supplies a considerable amount of contextual information in the form of a fictionalized scene set in a country cottage during the days immediately before Easter. The account and text are written in a local dialect, only a small vestige of which is apparent in the contemporary performance.

The Bury Pace-Eggers first became interested in the Play about five years ago when three of the present members who

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were associated with the Bury Folk Club took part in a series of Lancashire folk concerts, consisting of songs, dances, stories and a mumming play. The text they used in these concerts was not a Lancashire one, however, and they treated it exclusively as a comedy item. Most of the present team used to meet in the same pub, and, in the course of discussing the Lancashire folk concerts, decided to revive the tradition using a local text and songs.

Mr. Alan Seymour, the Bury group's leader and himself interested in Lancashire customs for many years, offered to do the research, finally deciding on Brooks' text because of its close proximity to their homes. Mr. Seymour has tried to remain faithful to Brooks' account of the text, costumes, and associated props. For instance, St. George still carries a substantial rubber dragon such as Brooks describes, and they sing the Wren Hunting Song, "Ribbins o' Robbins" which was included in Brooks's account, though the appropriate tune was not supplied. Mr. Seymour searched the vicinity for someone who could help him, finally locating a Mrs. Barlow who lived in Woolfold.  

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2 Mr. Seymour has been a most willing and helpful informant. He has provided me with most of the information regarding the inception of the Bury Pace-Eggers.

3 As far as I know, she is no relation of J. Barlow Brooks.
Mrs. Barlow, at that time eighty-six years old, remembered the song sung by Pace-Eggers in Bury over sixty years previously. She also reported how they would turn their jackets inside out, blacken their faces, and sing for whatever money they could collect. "Ribbins o' Robbins" was one of their songs, though by her account they did not perform a play.

The only major change in Brooks' account is the addition of Pace-Egging songs once used by the local Rochdale Pace-Eggers, who, it is reported, were still performing until at least the 1930's. Mr. Seymour learned of these songs, from Mr. Fred Brierly and Mr. John Davies of Rochdale. Both men had performed in the Rochdale play, and Mr. Brierly, who at the time was seventy-six years old, remembered his great-grandfather singing the tunes. Thus, the songs are indigenous to the area if not specifically to the Bury play. The Ordish collection contains just such a Pace-Egging rhyme reported in West Lancashire in 1907 by an informant of E.H. Binney. It is interesting to note how very close this song is to the present Bury production, though I am sure Mr. Seymour and the others were not aware of its existence.  

4 Ordish Collection, "Staffordshire" folder, item 14.
We are two or three jolly lads all in one mind;
We have come a paste-egging if you will prove kind.
If you will prove kind with your eggs and strong beer,
We'll come no more here till this time next year.

Chorus  Fol-da-diddle-ol-dy-day

The first that comes in is Lord Nelson you see
With a bunch of blue ribbons tied down to his knee;
He's a star on his brest (sic) like gold it doth shine
And I hope you'll remember it's past egging time.

Chorus  repeat

The next that comes in is a bold British tar
He has sailed with Lord Nelson; during the war,
The war is all over, all England to view,
He has come a paste egging with our jovial crew.

Chorus  repeat

The next that comes in is a Lady so gay,
And from her own country she has run away,
With her hat, cap and feathers she looks very fine,
And all her delight is in drinking red wine.

Chorus  repeat

The next that comes in is old Tosspot you see.
He's a valiant old man in every degree;
He's a valiant man and he wears a pig's tail,
And all his delight is in drinking mulled ale.

Chorus  repeat

Good master and mistress that sit by the fire
Put your hands in your pockets--its all our desire;
Put your hands in your pockets and pull out your purse,
And give us a trifle; you'll ne'er be no worse.

Chorus  repeat

During the week before Easter, the Bury Pace-Eggers give
forty to fifty performances, cumulating their rounds on
Easter Saturday night with their parent organization, the
Bury Folk Club. The play is put on mainly in pubs and folk
and youth clubs according to a prearranged, if approximate,
time schedule. They do not limit themselves to Bury, but
perform in many nearby villages and towns. I myself saw them in Rochdale on four different occasions and in four separate settings—a local pub, a restaurant catering to the local family trade, a working men's club, and a local folk club.

The Commercial Pub was not a particularly eventful stop. The performance given and the collection taken, no one seemed interested in what was occurring, except a few young couples who wandered in afterwards. The second stop, The Woolpack (restaurant), contained a dinner crowd which had come out with the children for an evening meal. Curiosity on the parents' part and excitement on the children's made this an attentive audience. The relatively polite surroundings and the attendant code of conduct for such places seemed to me to stifle overt response. Children, straining to get closer, were held in their seats by their parents, and the overall response—guarded applause—seemed uncomfortably inadequate and inappropriate. The Pace-Eggers quickly left without the usual round of drinks.

The Milnrow Working Men's Club, the next stop, could hardly have supplied a more radical shift in tone and response. The club, which derived its distinctive personality from a gigantic billiard table set in the center of a huge room, was expecting the Pace-Eggers, and a crowd of over one-hundred people was seated around the perimeter of the room. St. George proved most popular with the audience,
especially when he tossed the red rubberized dragon to the ground during his initial speech. Encouraged by the howls of approval, he kicked it across the floor, a move which inspired two patrons to smash their beer glasses in gleeful imitation. The group stayed on for several minutes after the performance, drinking and chatting with the men and women in the club until one of their wives (many of whom accompanied them during the evening) reminded them of their folk club date.

The folk club performance at the Kingsway Pub was not a good one from either the performers' or the audiences' point of view. The Pace-Eggers had reached a peak already that evening, and they seemed merely to be going through the motions. The folk club, like so many of its counterparts, seemed to be just another of those numerous loose groups of individuals mainly interested in popular songs accompanied by the guitar. The candlelit room offered some interesting effects--the players' costumes appearing quite mysterious and fascinating, but the spell was broken by a local enthusiast who insisted on softly strumming Tom Paxton tunes in accompaniment.

The Bury Pace-Eggers make no pretence of being traditional and thus are free to handle their material as they choose. Just as the Coventry Mummers see their role as entertainers first, so the Bury Pace-Eggers keep the audience foremost. But they seem to draw the line at
altering the text just for an effect. More so than any group I've seen, the players help the audience by clapping, laughing, and breaking in with comments to elicit what they see as a "proper" response to the play. Whether they are merely at an earlier stage of development leading to the slicker, highly polished Coventry example, or if they are on another path, I cannot say. Those interested in revivals will be interested to watch them in the future.
BURY PACE EGGING PLAY

Recorded Easter 1972

Initial Song They enter and form a line facing the audience

We're one, two, three Jolly lads all in one mind,
We've come a Pace-Egging and I hope you'll prove king,
And I hope you'll prove kind with your eggs and strong beer,
And we'll come no more neigh you until the next year.
Refrain Fol-a-day, Fol-a-day,
Fol-a-diddle-i-dum-day.

Fool Stepping forward

I open the door. I enter in.
I hope your favor we shall win.
Stir up the fire and strike a light.
Now watch my merry lads act tonight.
Whether we stand or whether we fall,
We'll do our best to please you all.

Spreads arms overhead

So, Room! Room! brave fellows all.
Pray give us room to rhyme.
We've come to show you visions
This happy Easter time.
And if you don't believe what I say,
Step in St. George and clear the way.
Moves to side

St. George Steps forward brandishing weapons; bravado and buffoonery in characterization

In comes I, the man of courage bold.
With this broad axe and sword
I won a crown of gold.
I fought this fiery dragon

Hurls rubber dragon onto floor, then kicks it aside to general delight of audience which usually cheers him on

And drove him to the slaughter.
And by these means I won the King of Egypt's daughter.
Show me the man that bids me stand
And I'll cut him down with my right hand.
Turkish Knight (also called Slasher) Steps forward
In comes I, the Turkish Knight,
Come from Turkish land to fight.
I come to fight St. George,
This man of courage bowld (bold),
And if his blood be hot,
I soon will make it cold.

St. George Turns to face Turkish Knight
Stand back, Slasher, and let no more be said;
For if I draw my sword, I'll surely break thy head.
Thou speakest bold to such a man as me,
I'll cut thee in small pieces, and bend thee at the knee.

Turkish Knight
How can thee break my head?
My head is made of iron, my body's made of steel,
My hands and feet are knuckle bone,
No man can make me kneel.

St. George
Then draw thy sword and fight
Or draw thy purse and pay.
For life or payment I must have
Before I end this day.

Turkish Knight
No life or money shall thee have
For with this sword thy head I'll cleave.

St. George
Then here we'll settle who shall fall,
So sword to sword with thee I'll go.

Turkish Knight
And sword to sword with thee I'll go (give?)
To see who on this ground shall live.

St. George
Then guard thy body and mind thy head,
Or else my sword shall strike thee dead.
Turkish Knight

One shall die and the other live;
This is the challenge I do give.
(Adds parenthetically, "I'll get this bugger yet tonight.")

As he readies to fight St. George, Slasher has trouble
drawing his sword from its sheaf. This difficulty usually
elicits a laugh. Also, St. George has trouble extracting
the wooden sword from Slasher after he had dispatched him--
played broadly for the comic effect.

Fool

O Cruel Christian! Now what hast thee done?
Thou hast wounded and slain my only son.

St. George

He challenged me to deadly fight,
And never shall St. George deny it.

Fool Calling out to the audience

Oh! Is there a doctor to be found
To cure this deep and deadly wound?
Doctor! Doctor! Where art thee?

My son is wounded to the knee.
Doctor! Doctor! play thy part,
My son is wounded to the heart.
I would put down a thousand pound
If here a doctor could be found.

Doctor Steps forward at the mention of the money;
avaricious look
Aye! There is a doctor to be found
To cure his deep and deadly wound.
I am a doctor, pure and good,
And with his hand I'll staunch his blood.

Holds hand up to audience

Fool

Oh! Where hast thee been, and from where hast thee come?

Doctor

Italy, Sicily, Germany, France and Spain,
Three times round the world and back again.
Fool

What can you do, and what can you cure?

Doctor

All sorts of diseases,
Just what my physic pleases.
The itch, the stitch, the palsy (sometimes "pox") and gout,
Pneumatics inside and pains without,
If the devil's inside, I can fetch him out. (or, "I'll drive the bugger out.")
I've a little bottle by my side,
Its fame has traveled far and wide.
The stuff in there's Elecampane
It'll bring anybody to life again.

Steps up to Turkish Knight who is prostrate on the floor

A drop on his head, a drop on his heart,
Up, bold fellow, and take thy part.

Turkish Knight groans and rises

Big Head steps forward as others return to line

In come I, as hasn't been in yet,
With my big head and my little wit.
My head's so big and my wit being small,
I'll dance a jig to please you all.

Places a sounding board on floor and proceeds to dance a jig on it

Beelzebub steps forward as Big Head returns to line

In come I, Beelzebub.
On my shoulder I carry a club.
In my hand a dripping pan;
Don't you think I'm a jolly old man?

Others all shout "No!"

Oh, bugger you then. Muttered under his breath

Johnny Jack As Beelzebub skulks back to the line,
Johnny Jack steps forward

In come I, little Johnny Jack,
With two or three young ones on me back.
Removes his top hat and turns back to audience to show dolls hanging there

It's money we want, of your goodness crave, 
Then we'll sing a song and take our leave.

All Sing Beelzebub stands in center of circle formed by others who move clockwise around him, then reverse themselves. Mr. Seymour reports, I think one of the most interesting things about our play is when Beelzebub stands in the centre of the circle with his club in the air, whilst we walk round him singing the three, short songs. When we are walking round him we touch the club, the phallic symbol, this seems to have some connection with a reference I once read of a May-pole dance where the girls went to the centre and touched the pole to receive the life-hiving power of the phallus. This seems to date farther back than the text or the songs. Both Mr. Brierly and Mr. Davies told me they did it this way."

Owd Tosspot, Owd Tosspot, Owd Tosspot, you see, 
With a bunch of blue ribbons tied down to his knee. 
He's a wary owd man, and he wears a pig tail, 
And all his delight is in drinking owd ale. 
Refrain Fol-a-day, Fol-a-day, 
Fol-a-diddle-i-dum-day.

Jack the Sailor killed his wife, 
Cut her up with a carving knife, 
Weep away, Weep away, 
Play the fiddle, we're all so gay, 
All so gay, all so gay, 
Play the fiddle, we're all so gay. 
Refrain repeat

Down in Bunt's meadow there's plenty of bugs, 
They jump in you pocket and out of your lugs. 
We'll take a sharp eye and cut their yeds off, 
And we'll have a good supper of bug yads and broth. 
Refrain repeat

All Sing They stand in line; each character steps forward when singled out, then reforms line.

^5 Personal letter to me from Mr. Seymour.
First that does step in, is our noble Fool,
And lads if you believe me, he's never been to school.

Refrain  Right-Fal-ler-a laddie
Right-fal-ler-a laddie

Next that does step in, is our noble George,
And lads if you'll believe me, he wears his mother's drawer.

Refrain  repeat

Next that does step in, is our noble Slasher,
And lads if you'll believe me, he makes a good egg smasher.

Refrain  repeat

Next that does step in, is our Doctor Quack,
And lads if you'll believe me, he cured poor Slasher's back.

Refrain  repeat

Next that does step in, is our Beelzebub,
And lads if you'll believe me, he's neer seen washing tub.

Refrain  repeat

Next that does step up, is our Big Head gay,
And lads if you'll believe me, we're all going away.

Refrain  repeat

The next that does step in, is our Johnny Jack,
And lads if you'll believe me, next year we're coming back.

Refrain  repeat

All Sing  Not sung at every performance. When Mr. Seymour
thinks the audience would appreciate it (as at
the working men's club), he gives the group a
signal.

There's a hen up the owd lone, says Ribbons o' Robbins
There's a hen up the owd lone, says Ribbons o' Robbins
So Johnny come home

Let's catch it, let's catch it, etc.
It's copt, etc.
Let's kill it, etc.
It's killed, etc.
Let's cook it, etc.
It's cooked, etc.
Let's et it, etc.
It's et'en, etc.

Fool Steps forward and addresses audience

Ladies and Gentlemen, our play is ended,
And our money box is recommended.
Five or six shillings won't do us any harm,
Gold and silver if you can.

Thank you very much.
COVENTRY MUMMERS

Revival Mumming used to be something done by schools, Morris sides and Folk Song Clubs around Christmas-time for a bit of a giggle. We like to think that we have helped to raise the image of Mumming and that in showing that it can be a respectable, entertaining and rewarding pursuit, we have helped to preserve this uniquely traditional form of folk drama.

--Coventry Mummers information Bulletin

Thus far, with the exception of the Brighouse Children's Theatre Pace-Eggers, we have been dealing with mumming teams which are traditional, or, at least, with mumming teams which consider themselves traditional. There are as well a number of revival groups in England which mumm regularly, and their number appears to be growing; they include the Coventry Mummers, The Bury Pace-Eggers, the Darlington Mummers, the 'Owd 'Osse Mummers (Nottingham), and the City of Gloucester Mummers. Also some Morris sides are reported to perform occasionally, among them Headington Quarry, Chingford, Shakespeare Morris Men, Jockey (Birmingham), Redcar, Herga (Watford), and Southport Swords.

The practice of revival mumming in England today is very much the province of folk clubs. These clubs take a variety of approaches to the Play from license to a strict adherence to the text of the Plays as originally collected. An example of the former is the Coventry Mummers. This accomplished, entertainment-conscious group was formed in
1966 "to promote the performance, research, study and public knowledge of English Ritual Drama." Emerging initially from the Coventry Folk Song Workshop, they have zealously expanded their repertory over the years to include the T'owd Tup or Derby Ram ritual, a Hero-Combat Play, a Wooing Play, and a Long Sword Play.

Their success was apparently immediate. As early as 1967 they represented the city of Coventry at a festival in its twin city, Kiel, in Germany, receiving, as they proudly relate, a standing ovation from the Germans and subsequently the right to incorporate the crest of Coventry into their own insignia. In 1970 they were the first non-dancing side to be admitted into the Morris Ring of England, and they are regular participants at folk festivals throughout the country. They even performed at the dedication of the new cathedral in Coventry, an occasion marking a triumph of new-found respectability never imagined (or, I expect, sought after) by traditional mummers (even the middle class Bampton men) or the host of country vicars who gave their support to traditional mummers throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

No small part of their success is the result of an impressive public relations format which includes advertisements in English Dance and Song, the house organ of the

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1 Coventry Mummers Information Bulletin. Produced and distributed by the Coventry Mummers.
English Folk Dance and Song Society, as well as a program of lectures, workshops, and seminars on mumming and related customs. The following is an extract from a circular they provided me when I made my initial contact with Mr. Ron Shuttleworth, their "bagman" and spokesman:

Although Coventry Mummers lay no claim to infallibility or high academic erudition, the members possess (sic) sufficient practical experience, factual knowledge and informed opinion to provide any club or group with an informative and entertaining introduction to the subject.

Such events are tailored to suit individual requirements and can vary from a 90 minute talk to a full-day seminar with lectures and discussions and the teaching of a play to the students.

We can also participate in educational events of a cultural or artistic nature where Mumming or Calendar Ritual is a relevant subject.

My only opportunity to see the Coventry Mummers was at the four day Lacock (Wilts.) Folk Festival sponsored by the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Coventry was scheduled to perform, as were the traditional Marshfield (Glos.) Mummers. This, I anticipated, would be an excellent opportunity to observe a revival and a traditional side performing before the same audience and to evaluate how each was received. I was also interested to observe how the EFDSS would conduct a folk festival in the face of pressure from rock groups and various popular singers to be included in the program. Unfortunately, the first was not to be, and the second realized my pessimistic expectations.
The Marshfield Mummers, allegedly very unhappy about the arrangements made for them by the festival's organizers, refused to participate after the first day. Actually, their only performance was at a "Medieval" Banquet, a pretentious affair costing its supporters 4.00 for a place at the table. The other issue was also unfortunate in its result since no folk singers chose to participate in the festival, though a number of people who sing folk songs did perform, some of them quite entertainingly.

The Coventry Mummers, the Shakespeare Morris Men, and a talented group of children called the Combe Raleigh Country Folk became the central attractions of the program. One organizer I heard rationalized Marshfield's withdrawal by telling Ron Shuttleworth how Marshfield had "bombed" at the Medieval Banquet and "Thank God" Coventry was there to take up the slack. Consequently, at Lacock I was able to observe Coventry Mummers during several performances of both its Hero-Combat and Sword Play.

The Coventry Mummers' philosophy and style of performance are well-suited to the conditions and audience of a pseudo-Folk festival such as that at Lacock. Let's look at three statements of policy distributed by the group to determine how they fulfill each one.

(1) We could perform in the strict letter of tradition by sticking closely to the costumes, texts and delivery styles of the Plays as first collected.
We choose, rather, to interpret its spirit which to us means that every show must be fun for both us and our audiences.

The Coventry Mummers dress in character, a practice perhaps not in accord with the ideas of those who think leaves, or at least strips of paper, are the traditional garb, but certainly a development which is so widespread and time-honored that we must consider it traditional in 1972. The question of text will be considered in a moment. The delivery of lines is not the shrill, monotone style of Ripon or the Marshfield Mummers, a style which is probably closer to the earliest than any other contemporary delivery. Rather it is casual, conversational, even off-hand at times; it is not unlike that of Bampton and meets with the same approval from the audience. And, just as dressing in character is a well-established practice, so too is acting in character. Though only strict traditionalists would argue about Coventry's costuming and delivery, many would question that the "spirit" of mumming was, or indeed is, exclusively "fun", even though entertainment is in the minds of most contemporary mumming groups. Admittedly, however, the Coventry Mummers did elicit more laughter during their production of a Hero-Combat Play than did any other mumming team I have encountered.

(2) In order that each part is represented at its fullest and best, our plays are collations from several sources; all the speeches are, however,
traditional and to this framework we add improvisation and topical ad-libbing.

The texts of the Hero-Combat and Sword Play are, as the Coventry Mummers indicate not traditional, and, to their credit, they take pains to make this known. Somewhat misleading, however, is their statement that to the framework of traditional speeches they add improvisation and topical ad-libbing. This sort of expansion does indeed occur, but most often at the expense of the traditional framework, not in addition to it. For instance, a tendency which we've seen at Midgley and Brighouse to play the King of Egypt as effeminate and Bold Hector as cowardly becomes in the Coventry effort a guiding principle. The King emerges as "The Kink of Egypt" and the Turkish Knight is included in his entourage as his "only son and queer." The Hero-Combat text which follows this account provides other such examples of alteration. My impression is that the Coventry Mummers are always looking for ways to change their text to extract a laugh from the audience.

(3) In order to draw interest from, say, a crowd of urban shoppers, we aim to give our plays humour, pace, slick production and visual impact.

Though I did not see them perform before a crowd of urban shoppers, perhaps a folk festival audience will do just as well. Judging from the response, the Coventry
Mummers seem to have struck the correct formula for popular success. Their humor mainly focuses on sex, though more on deviation than fertility. The production is indeed fast-moving and "slick", with the perjorative connotations of that word. "Visual impact" is exploited as often as possible; for instance, the "wolf's tooth" they extract from the Turkish Knight has securely attached to it by a long sinewy string what could only be the unfortunate victim's testicles.

Doubtless the Coventry Mummers have done much to publicize the existence of Plays to an audience which was previously unaware of their existence, and for this they should be commended. As astutely aware comedians and entertainers they have brought to bear on the Folk Play a kind of humor very much attuned to the expectations of contemporary audiences. But, in my opinion, they have crossed over the line from a burlesque of the traditional folk play to burlesque of the vaudeville and music hall variety. As such, they have not "raised the image of mumming" as they claim, but they have changed the image; they preserve in an entertaining way a tradition worth preserving, but it is not the tradition of the Folk Play.
STAGING: COVENTRY MUMMERS

I. The diagram represents the outdoor staging utilized by the Coventry Mummers in their production of a Sword Play at the Lacock Folk Festival, 1972. The playing area was a slightly raised platform surrounded by the audience. The Man-Woman walked counter-clockwise around the platform interacting with the audience until the beheading scene in which she was the victim.

II. This diagram represents the staging arrangements utilized by the Coventry Mummers in their production of a Hero-Combat Play in the medieval tithe barn at the Lacock Folk Festival, 1972. The playing area was not raised, but most of the audience was seated or standing around the perimeter of the room. The Coventry Mummers entered from the bar area and faced the audience. The audience was mainly composed of young folk enthusiasts, many of whom were performers themselves.
COVENTRY MUMMERS TEXT (Revival) recorded at Lacock Folk Festival, May 1972.

Hero Combat, or St. George Play, a collation by Mr. Ron Shuttleworth, collected by B. Ward.

Beelzebub walking in along side of audience to stage area

In comes I, Beelzebub,
And over me shoulder I carries me club.
In my hand a dripping pan,
Don't you think I'm a funny old man?

Pointing to other actors

There's half a score at that door,
They think they'll please you more.
For some can dance, and some can sing,
By your consent they shall enter in.

All Sing Mummers walk into acting area singing

refrain We're one, two, three jolly boys all in one mind,
And we've come a guizing, and we hope you'll prove kind,
And we hope you'll prove kind and buy us some beer,
For we come no more neigh you until the next year.

The first that comes in is St. George don't you see,
...from fair Coventry,
With all of the citizens who in that city do dwell,
When we all are guizing, St. George comes as well.

refrain repeat

The Black Prince of Paradise...
And he comes a-guizing a bottle to win.
He's a very large thirst, and it's never known to fail,
And all his delight is in drinking strong ale.

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1This omission and any which follow are the result of the vociferous audience response and poor acoustics of the tithe barn theatre.
**Refrain** repeat

The next that comes in is our bold Turkish Knight,
And he's just...
He'd like a drink his thirst for to quench,
And all his delight is in courting some wench.

**Refrain** repeat

And here is our doctor...
...on the National Health.
He's a very large practice, he looks after them well,
But when we come a-guizing, they can all go to hell.

**Refrain** repeat

**Beelzebub**

Well, there we all have entered in,
We hope your favor we shall win.
Stir up a fire and strike a light,
See my jolly boys act tonight.

Oh, whether we rise, or whether we fall,
We'll do our best to please you all.

If you don't believe in what I say,
Step in Devil Doubt and clear the way.

**Devil Doubt intentionally stumbling over his lines and cues**

Room, room, you gallants all (pause), Room to rhyme,
We've come to show activity upon a ...time.
Activity of youth, activity of age,
Never performed before upon a common stage.

Step in, St. George, and clear the way.

**St. George shouting**

I am St. George, who from old England sprung! (All: "Sprong-g-g-g-!")
My famous name throughout the world hath rung (All: "Ring-a-dung!")
Many bloody deeds and wonders have I made known,
And made false tyrants to tremble on their thrones.
Voice from audience: "Take off your helmet, we can't hear ya!"
I followed a fair lady to the giant's gate,
Confined in dungeon deep to meet her fate.
There I resolved, with true knight-errantry,
To burst the door and set the prisoner free.
When, lo! A giant almost struck me dead,
But by my valor I cut off his head.
I've sought the world all round and round,
But a man to equal me, I've never found.

Black Prince of Paradise

In come I, the Black Prince of Paradise by name,
And with my might chopper - audience and actors snicker, I
mean to win this game.
There is no man who can against me stand.
I'll knock him down with my all-conquering gland.
And for to fight with me, St. George, I see thou art not able,
For with my trusty broadsword, I soon would thee disable.

St. George

Disabled, disabled, it lies not in thy power.
With this trusty sword, I soon will thee devour.
Stand back, Black Prince, and let no more be said,
For if I draw this sword, I'm sure to smash thy blinking head.
Audience growls: "Kill, Kill."

Black Prince of Paradise

How can you break my head,
Since my head is made of iron, -pauses, hits own head, stumbles
My body made of steel,
My hands and ass are made of grass (glass?),
Here, have a feel.-speaks last two lines rapidly with saucy tone

St. George attempts to say something here, but audience
Laughter too loud. Slapstick sword fight. St. George is struck
down.

Beelzebub virtually impossible to hear as audience cheers
and jeers the Black Prince who is strutting around playing
area.

Horrible, horrible...
Is there a doctor to be found
To cure this deep and deadly wound?

Sound of toy whoop horn as doctor steps forward

Doctor

In comes I, the seventh son of a quack doctor.

Beelzebub

Are you a doctor?
Doctor
Yes, by my travels.

Beelzebub
Where have you traveled, then?

Doctor
... and the Dead Sea,
Italy, Sicily, France, and Spain,
And now back to cure the diseases of old Lacock again.

Beelzebub
What kinds of diseases can you cure then?

Doctor
All kinds of diseases, just as my physic pleases:
Coughs, colds, sore holes, pimples on your what'sit,
The itch, the stitch, the palsy and the gout,
Pains within and pains without.
Give me an old woman four score and seven, and I'll make
her young and plump again.
And if she falls downstairs and breaks her neck, I won't
even charge my fee.

Beelzebub
Ten pounds is my fee, but as thou art an honest woman, I'll
take ten guineas of thee.
I have a little bottle by my side,
The fame of it's spread far and wide.
The stuff therein is called Newcastle Brown,
And it will make the dead to rise again.
I'll put a drop on his fly, a drop on his heart,
He'll soon be able to play with his part.

You see your champion is not quite slain,
Rise up, St. George, and fight again. St. George staggers up.

Black Prince of Paradise
Draw out thy sword and slay,
Pull out your purse and pay,
For satisfaction I shall have before thou goes away.

St. George
...I will leave you in thy grave.
Black Prince of Paradise
...to see who shall fall,
...in this folk hall.

St. George
...to see who in this folk hall shall fall.

Black Prince of Paradise
On: shall die and one shall live. This is the challenge that I do give.

Black Prince and St. George fight again. St. George draws a toy cap revolver and shoots the Black Prince.

St. George to the accompaniment of audience cries of "Kill!"

Now the Black Prince of Paradise is slain, And all his joys entirely fled
shoots the Black Prince in the crotch
Take him and feed him to the flies, And never more bring him before my eyes.

Turkish Knight stepping forward

In come I, St. Patrick, And you've all got five minutes to get out.

No, actually, in come I, the Turkish Knight, I come from Turkeyland to fight A man of high renown pause, general laughter, prompted by others And I forgot the bloody line.

St. George to laughter and booing from audience

In come I, once again, a man of courage bold, And by my valor, I won a crown of gold. I fought this fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter, And by this means I won the King of Egypt's daughter.

Turkish Knight

Hold, St. George, though thee be a man of courage bold, aside-remember me words, And I soon will fetch it cold. He strikes St. George

St. George

Right!
They have a short sword fight. Turkish Knight falls; he does a series of leg lifts during his death throes.

**King of Egypt effeminate manner**

In come I, honkey-tonk, the Kink of Egypt, as finally doth appear.
I've come to seek my son, my only son and queer.

**St. George**

He is slain.

**King of Egypt high-pitched delivery**

Whom did him slay, and whom did him kill, And on the ground his precious blood spill?

**St. George**

He gave me challenge, Who would now deny it? How tall, no, how medium he was, And see how low he lies.

**King of Egypt**

Cursed Christian, look what thou hast done. Thou has gone and killed my only son, My one and only heir, Look at him lying, bleeding there.

I'll bring my boldest champion in the realm, This cursed christian's blood to overwhelm.

Enter, don't just stand there with your weapon in your hand. Rise it up and fight at my command.

**Hector cowardly**

I come, my liege, I will obey, And by my sword, I'll win the day. If that be he standing there, Killed my master's son and heir.

**St. George**

Bold Hector, be thou not so hot. Thou knowest not whom thou hast got. For I will cure thee of thy pride, And lay thy anger, too, aside.
I'll inche thee and pinch thee as small as flies,
And send thee overseas to make mince.
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold,
And send thee to the devil before you're one more day old.

Hector

How can you tame me of my pride
And lay my anger, too, aside,
Inch me and pinch me as small as flies
And send me to the devil to make mince pies?

St. George

Lay down thy mace and take up thy spear,
And I'll fight thee without any fear.

Two spears, Hector given a very short one by St. George
Points to spear. That's a fallacy. Audience boos goodnaturedly

During the ensuing fight, Hector runs away--finally struck
in seat of pants.

Hector seated

I am a valiant knight. a man of noble fame,
Many battles have I fought, and always won the same.
Till from St. George I received this bloody wound.
Down yonder is the way,
Farewell, St. George, I can no longer stay.
Leaves playing area

King of Egypt

Is there a doctor who's a queer, I mean, standing near,
Who can cure the Turkish Knight, my son and heir?
I'll give ten pounds for a quack doctor, five pounds if he's
a good one.

Doctor from off stage: "No, I won't come."

Three pounds plus a pint of the beer they stopped selling
a half hour ago?

Doctor stepping forward

In come I the doctor, brave and good,
With my hand I can stop his precious blood.
Come in, Jack Finney, and hold my horse.

Jack Finney growling

My name ain't Jack, any har.
My name is Mr. John Finney, Esq.

Actor, thespian to the trade (to the King of Egypt)
"Thespian", Ducky, and inspector of rude ladies.

Doctor
Come in, Mr. John Finney, Esq., and hold my horse.

Jack Finney
Will he bite?

Doctor
No.

Jack Finney
Will he kick?

Doctor
No.

Jack Finney
Take two to hold him?

Doctor
No.

Jack Finney
Hold him thyself.

Doctor
What's that?

Jack Finney
I have him, sir.

Cough! Cough! I feel a little horse. General hissing and booing.

Doctor
I have a box of pillics, can cure all illics.
If a man be dead and lying in the grave,
If he can crack one of my pills, his life I'll save. Hammers on pills.

Jack Finney

I can cure diseases.

Doctor

What diseases can you cure?

Jack Finney

I once cured a magpie with a toothache.

Doctor

How did thee do that?

Jack Finney

Pulled his old head off and chucks it in a ditch.

Doctor

I'll examine this man and take his pulse. Straddles Turkish Knight's leg and checks his foot

Turkish Knight

I'm not a horse, you know.

Doctor

I see this man's trouble. He has a large wolf's tooth growed in his head, giving him toothache awful bad. Hand me my toothpick (Jack Finney: "What's that?") tooth-puller, don't you know. Give me your midlin leg if you please. Turkish Knight raises his sword

We aren't going to hurt each other are we?

Doctor jumps on Turkish Knight. Pulls "tooth" amidst screams and laughter. Tooth has Turkish Knight's testicles attached--two balls at the end of a blood colored string.

Doctor

Are these all your worldly goods? Would you cough please? Look at the root on that tooth, big enough to kill any man, let alone a Turk. You're all right now; rise up good fellow.
**Turkish Knight**

Oh, my back!

**Doctor**

What ails thy back?

**Turkish Knight** in slow measured speech

Nothing, it is all behind me now.

Oh, pardon me, St. George, upon my kidney, I pray,
Oh, pardon me, and I will be forever, your Turkish delight.

**St. George**

Arise, arise, you Turkish Knight,
Go back to Turkeyland there to fight.
And tell them there what I have done.
I've slain ten hundred billion to your one,
Arise and go to Turkeyland and tell them
What a wonderful, marvellous, magnificent,
Stupendous, emaculate...*booed off the stage*

**Devil Doubt**

In come I, little Devil Doubt,
With me shirt tails hanging out.
Five yards in and five yards out.
It's money we want and money we crave;
If you don't give us money, we'll sweep you all to the grave.

**All Sing**

Ladies and Gentlemen who sit by your fire,
Put your hands in your pockets and give us our desire.
Put your hands in your pockets and treat us all right,
If you give us none, we'll take none, farwell and goodnight.

We're one, two, three jolly boys all in one mind, *exeunt*
And we've come a-guizing and we hope you'll prove kind,
And we hope you'll prove kind and buy us some beer,
For we come no more nigh you until the next year.
ANALYSIS

In attempting to analyze the functions of performances such as I have just described, I feel we need to move away from the early Folk Play critics who approach the English material as if it were being performed in a totally integrated, static society. The Gemeinschaft, communal, or 'fixed-membership' group\(^1\), which is assumed by advocates of the Life-Cycle theory has given way to a Gesellschaft, associate, or 'flexible-membership' group.\(^2\) The small kinship groups and villages which performed the Play no longer are the close-knit, permanent social organizations they once were. The social and physical mobility attendant upon the relentless urbanization of the English countryside has made it easier for the performers of Folk Plays to alter their values, their ideologies, their culture, because they are provided with many new alternatives from which to choose.\(^3\) The associative groups of men who now perform the Folk Play do so because, like members of political parties and other voluntary organizations, they continue to support the basic

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2. Leonard Plotnicov, 97.

3. Leonard Plotnicov, 100.
values of the group.

The situation is analogous to that found by Herbert Passin and John W. Bennet in their study of changing agricultural magic in Southern Illinois. As the group becomes increasing more urban, it becomes less homogeneous and well integrated. The folklore which survives, in our case the Folk Play, usually fulfills a function other than its original one. As Alan Dundes has commented, "One reason for the persistence of folklore is that old forms can be used to fit new functions...".

Each group now performing the Play has its own set of values and goals. In analyzing each of the Play's performances it is necessary to employ a different focus to truly represent what was characteristic of individual performers and performances. At Antrobus, an antiquarian sense of the past prevailed. At Bampton, the Play's relation to the village's middle class values and the way in which the townspople exploited it are central.

In recording the contextual information I kept in mind (with allowances for the particular kind of folklore I was


collecting) Bascom's statement on the facts needed in determining the social content of folklore:

(1) when and where the various forms of folklore are told
(2) who tells them, whether or not they are privately owned, and who composes the audience
(3) dramatic devices employed by the narrator, such as gestures, facial expressions, pantomime, impersonation, or mimicry
(4) audience participation in the form of laughter, assent or other responses, running criticism or encouragement of the narrator, singing or dancing, or acting out parts of a tale
(5) categories of folklore recognized by the people themselves
(6) attitudes of the people towards these categories.

I placed myself as objectively as I could into the subjective situation. I realize that my perceptions and what I saw, even was able to see, were not the same as those of other people, even those present at the time of the performances. It might be possible that our perceptions were identical, but that situation is more unlikely than not.

First, then, to the Personal Functions served by the performance of the Play.

It entertains and amuses. Ask any performer or local member of the audience in Bampton, or Antrobus, or Midgley or wherever the Play is performed and he will volunteer

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this answer. In spite of negative aesthetic judgments by outsiders, clearly the Play does operate on this level, and very successfully, too. Its durability as a function is open to question, however, since it is so easily fulfilled nowadays by other activities.

The Play serves, as well, as a platform for articulate people without other acceptable means of expression. This goes on not only on stage during the Play itself, but also in what Goffman calls the entire Performance —that is, initial preparations for the Play, all the interaction with people in pubs and private homes before and after the Play, and even their attitude towards the Play at other times of the year. This function most clearly applies to Eddie Hardcastle in Ripon who relishes the freedom to speak and the personal prestige which the Play's "Performance" confers upon him, and to the farmer/actor playing Doctor Good at Bampton, but there are parallels in every performance.

For some of the individual players, the Play serves as a vehicle for achieving esteem and recognition from "socially superior" people in a society which allows contact but not communion between its members. The perception that England is "status" oriented, not "achievement"

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oriented, still applies despite government social reform programs. Nonetheless the "genteel" and "vernacular" classes do not meld so easily nowadays because of the shake-up of customary social roles: How, for instance, do you act to your social equal when he assumes a subservient role but you know full well that he expects to be treated genteely, especially in the presence of outsiders such as myself? Or, as in the case of Bampton, how does one cope with socially inferior people playing roles which represent them as even more socially inferior, and all this being complicated by the fact that as artists of sorts, they have prestige conferred upon them? Miss Thomson, one successful hostess in Bampton, circumvented the morass by treating everyone as an equal; for others less in tune with the situation, the result was dysfunctional ill-will and embarrassment as I have illustrated.

And finally, more broadly on the level of personal functions, we have what I will call the Pastoral Perspective. This operates for both audience and players. There are different stages in a kind of hierarchy of awareness. Even the least aware of the performers know that they are taking a backward glance to a 'simpler' time in performing and being part of the audience of the Play. Nostalgia is a function, we would agree, but nostalgia is an emotion of those who are conscious of having experienced a loss. To take it a step further, for relatively aware performers
from folk clubs which revive the Play from written sources such as we have at Bury in Lancashire, the Play becomes a vehicle of parody allowing them to be a part of "Arcadia." Some of the revivalist performers such as the Coventry Mummers are even more aware and are in the Play as a way of exploring an experience alien to themselves--it is a way of knowing another way of life by assuming a role. In the vernacular, they want to groove with what it is like to be of the folk. The application of the Pastoral Perspective, of course, goes beyond traditional players, revivalists, and indigenous audiences to folklorists and various academicians who don the traditional costumes and make the rounds of the pubs and "big houses" during the season.

The positive functional aspects on the Social level of the Play's performance are, I think, apparent enough. As a familiar custom the Folk Play provides cohesion for small groups within the community who come to identify with its performance. And, as the humorous comments of Bampton's Doctor Good illustrate, it is an outlet for social criticism, though in this it is seldom very subtle and not very revealing beyond the obvious.

The plea for money at the conclusion of the performance which has had an important part in preserving the Play now also serves a significant functional purpose in the
a-social level. Historically, folk customs of many descriptions have had as their rationale the collecting of money of food. This economic motive is, and was, in good part responsible for the continuation of customs which might otherwise have ceased for lack of function. It was commonplace in severe winters for frozen-out bricklayers and quarrymen in Shropshire, especially during the hard winters between 1878 and 1881, to assemble a Morris dancing party and to dance in neighboring villages to collect money. Agricultural workers, always an underpaid segment of the population, continually felt the pinch of poverty, and parties of Morris dancers and Plough Boys were a usual adjunct to the Christmas and spring holidays. Audiences of discerning and knowledgable villagers kept the standards of performance high.

The commercial success of some customs has led to a deterioration of the quality of performance. In Bacup, Lancashire, for instance, the Britannia Coconut Dancers once performed their intricate dances from village border to border and pub to pub, dancing all the many hours and miles. These days, as a local woman recently complained to me, the money comes easy from the crowds of strangers

8Lisa Warner, "The Russian Folk Play 'Tsar Maximillian': An Examination of Some Possible Origins and Sources," Folk-Lore, 82 (Autumn 1971), 188. In her article Ms. Warner indicates that impecunious students would earn money performing "Tsar Maximillian" (a play like the English Folk Play), just as their ploughman counterparts in Britain.

9Ordish Papers, "Shropshire" folder, item No.5.
and tourists; the dancers now walk from pub to pub and only occasionally dance in a less than polished fashion.

The other mummers discussed in this dissertation also collect whatever they can on their rounds. For the most part begging has been nationalized by tying it into charity drives and aid to old age pensioners. Bampton's money goes to charity and towards expenses, Bury's towards expenses, Midgley's to charity, Antrobus' to a New Year's dinner and expenses, Brighouse's to the Little Theatre from which they derive. But at Ripon the motive for everyone but Eddie Hardcastle is all-consuming and productive of endless energy to perform again and again. This economic function, as I have said, is a time honored, widespread one. At Ripon, however, for four of the five members it appears to be the only function. Eddie, of course, has his share of the take, but his relationship to the performance of the play is more complex.

Less obvious, but of greater importance is what was formerly considered a dysfunctional social aspect of the Play-violence. Violence on the part of the players historically speaking has been dysfunctional and helped to lead to a decline in the Play in the 19th and early 20th centuries. And, one cannot escape the fact of the violence which attended the Ripon Sword Dancers this year. Though actual physical confrontations are, I'm sure quite exceptional nowadays, there is an atmosphere of licence and
freedom from societal restraints (taboos about public drunkenness, for instance) which encourages the kind of fighting experienced by the Ripon Sword Dancers at the last public house on their rounds. We should remember that violence has long been a feature of mumming.

Sometimes the violence was of a relatively mild nature and directed mainly against other revellers. A Lancashire newspaper reports, for instance, that

After dresses and studies were complete there was another important matter to arrange, viz., a body guard. 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 neighboring 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 other's 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.10

We remember too that the rival gangs around Antrobus used to contest over the other's horse head, the winning side stealing and burying the loser's head until the next year.

Another report of the mummers (here called Plough Bullocks) in South Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire records the usual rowdiness, prompted by excessive drink and a feeling of being free from the restraining power of the law:

10Ordish Papers, "Lancashire" folder, item No.16.
I well remember the mummeries in Nottinghamshire as they were when I was a lad, but I don't remember any songs that were sung, though I know there was rude singing and dancing, and horse-play in plenty.

My father discouraged the mummers' visits as much as possible, and we children were somewhat afraid of them. They were generally more or less in liquor. They wore masks, and were fantastically dressed, and were usually rough and mischievous, in some cases even dangerously so. It was customary for them to take a plough round, and I have heard of them ploughing up gardens, doing all the damage they could without horses, when money was refused them. My niece, Mrs. H.N., tells me that she was once when a child stopped by a party of them when returning from school at Long Eaton to her home at Toten. They made her give up all the money she had on her—and she adds bitterly that she had eightpence, a most unusually large sum.—under a threat of throwing her into the canal if she refused. This would be about twenty years since [i.e. about 1881], I suppose.

Contemporary newspaper articles and letters to the editor in the nineteenth century indicate that the practice was widespread and widely condemned by the upstanding members of the community, who recommended legal prosecution for the outrages of these men.

Weak and ignorant people commonly suppose, that persons calling themselves Plough Bullocks, have legal authority, on a certain day, wantonly to commit depredations upon the premises of all who refuse to give them money; but nothing can be more contrary to truth, or more reproachful to the laws of the country. The depredators now alluded to, who, from year to year, infest this part of the country, extorting money from the ignorant and unwary, are a great public nuisance; therefore, to suppress such-disorderly and outrageous proceedings, we cannot help recommending all persons

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11Ordish Papers, "Nottinghamshire" folder, item No.4, from Ms. of Mabel Peacock.
to withstand their violence, by summoning them before the magistrates. All such legal prosecutions will obtain the sanction and desired redress from those in authority; and will certainly be a public benefit to society.\textsuperscript{12}

But the violence of the contemporary English Folk Play cannot rightly be viewed here as deviant or a-social behavior. Instead, violence has been "tarted up" for the middle classes; it has been domesticated until it is seen through that Pastoral Perspective I mentioned as a relic of the lost golden age. Minor destruction to property and bullying of the pub patrons is greeted with approbation by an appreciative audience. This comment, by the way, applies especially to the hypercivilized people from both sides of the Atlantic, including the folklorists.

So we have to look for dysfunctional aspects elsewhere, perhaps to the "cultist mentality" which prevails. Certainly the formation of an elitist "in" group which retains the Play as its special province and keeps out certain members of the community causes tension in some of the villages I visited. Usually it produced no more than a grudging ill-will, but in one case at least, at Ripon, the result was a fight between Eddie Hardcastle and a pub patron. Along this line, too, and from the point of view of the women in the community, the Play provides a socially accepted outlet for male chauvanist behavior such as expressions of male supremacy and exclusiveness.

\textsuperscript{12} The Staffordshire Advertiser, 27-1-1816. Ordish Papers, "Staffordshire" folder, item No. 13.
In conclusion, commentators on ritual function make no distinction between function for individuals, for society, and for the culture in presenting the Life-Cycle theory. Perhaps if they had, we would not continue to discuss the Folk Play as if it were that decrepit relic some think it to be. But there is something inherently conservative about the Play, and in this underlying conservatism, I feel, lies the cultural function of the Play. In every performance the English Folk Play serves to validate the culture by celebrating the continuity of the present with the past, thereby reaffirming the present. It reaffirms the status quo each time it is presented.

The durability of this cultural function is dependent upon how long actors and audience believe in the myth of historical continuity, how long they look to the past for authority as an ethical model. Once they perceive the irony of performing their Play for shopkeepers and university teachers, the function will shift again, perhaps this time, as Robert Langbaum says about the Romantic poets, to see "the past as different from the present and [to use] the past to explore the full extent of the difference, the full sense of [their] own modernity."13

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APPENDIX

From interview of Mr. J.J. Searle, taped April 19, 1972 in Great Gransden, Huntingdonshire:

Mr. J.J. Searle--82 years old; oldest person in Gt. Gransden; lived in Little Gransden, Cambs., until 1914 when he married and moved to a farm in Gt. Gransden. Still active in church and civic affairs. Personal acquaintance with Vicar A.J. Edmunds, author of History and Edmund's son and daughter, Ursula (both dead now--left Searle copies of History at their deaths).

During our talk four customs were discussed: Plough Boys, Old Hub, Christmas Singers, Widow's Mumming.

A) Plough Boys

Mr. Searle remembers the Plough Boys but relies on History to quote Plough Boys' verse. He recalls they wore ordinary working clothes of the period and that they did not blacken their faces (as in Old Hub). They pulled a plough behind them, but he does not recall that it was decorated. He does not remember them as being particularly destructive as they went to people who could and would pay. The men themselves were poor people--no dole then and only resource was to go to Board of Guardians who might give them a loaf of bread.

B) Old Hub

Old Hub men essentially same group as Plough Boys; Searle acquainted with them, though they were somewhat older than himself. In Gt. Gransden between autumn and Christmas. "It was an old thing they used to do to get money." Blackened faces; working clothes; one had a tin tray on his back; one had a whip; one or two others carried sticks.

MEN WALK INTO KITCHEN:

Old Hub In comes I, Old Hub,
    On his shoulder he carries his club.
    Under his nose a dripping pan,
    Don't you think he's a handsome man?
    Jack, fetch my horse out of the stable.
Jack Sir, I am not able.

Old Hub Able or not able,
    The work must be done,
    So strike up, Bob and John.

ONE MAN CRACKS WHIP: OTHERS BANG TIN TRAY ON OLD HUB'S BACK.
COLLECT MONEY AND PUT IT IN (?) TRAY.

C) Christmas Singers

Sang at midnight Christmas Eve right up to World War I.

D) Widow's Mumming

Searle reports that in November the widows of Great Gransden went "mumming" to collect money. He said he never did know what they said or sang, but it was called mumming by everyone [perhaps by this time "mumming" and "begging" were totally identified]. The practice was stopped by Vicar Edmunds—he didn't think it was right for old people to go around begging. He went around himself, collected money, and gave the widows a tea and entertainment each year—became called the "November tea"—Searle concludes, "That's how the mumming got stopped."

During World War I nineteen men from the village were killed. Gt. Gransden had no Old Hub or Plough Boys after 1914.
The Driver, clad in his bowler, pink hunting jacket with green collar, riding breeches, riding boots presents Wild Horse to the audience in a pub. The Letter-In wearing his top hat and evening dress has become part of the audience himself. This picture shows clearly the fiberglass teeth in the black painted horse's skull. The actor playing Wild Horse bends at the waist, holding a stick which serves as Wild Horse's front leg.
I. WILD HORSE AND DRIVER (ANTROBUS)
All the actors assemble to sing the final song. Beelzebub in the left is wearing old torn clothes. His trouser legs are tied round with a cord at the knees; he carries a blanket roll, clog, and frying pan. Also apparent is a long, false beard. The Doctor just to the right of him also wears a false beard, this one also sporting a plastic nose. He is dressed in tails, wears a top hat, and carries a stethoscope, alarm clock in his waist, a hammer, a saw, and a bottle. Black Prince in the center of the photograph sports a black military jacket, spiked helmet resembling a German war relic, but actually reported to be a Cheshire Constabulary helmet capped with what might be part of an old coffee perculator. His face is blackened, and he carries a wooden sword. Derry Doubt is just visible behind the Driver; he is dressed as a boy with short pants and shirt tail hanging out. His cheeks are rouged red.
II. FINAL SONG (ANTROBUS)
Knee length smocks or trench coats bedecked with cloth strips; worn over trousers, hat decorated with buttons, badges, flags, and an occasional feather. Walter Hardcastle (St. George) and Bill Chapman (Beelzebub) had small yarn dolls sewn on their coats. Walter Hardcastle also had a black cat applique with "Good Luck" stitched on his back. Eddie Hardcastle wore a sheepskin strip, like a wig, under his hat. Both Eddie and Walter carried old French bayonets, one dated 1860 the other 1872, which Eddie claims he bought many years ago for half a crown. Real weapons had been used before (they had four in their 1957 performances), but they had been borrowed from local people. Norman Carter and Tony Chambers each carried a money box.
III. THE CHALLENGE (RIPON)
IV. THE CURE (RIPON)
Slasher and Little John (left) converse with audience after a performance. Slasher, who also doubles as the Turkish Knight wears a red fez cap, military uniform, black penciled beard and mustache, carries a wooden sword painted red and gold, and a shield with gold background and red star and moon. Little John (Tom the Tinker) is dressed as a woman with a blue blouse, shawl, granny cap, and purple skirt allegedly over 100 years old. He also is bedecked with a false beard and mustache and carries a cudgel-walking stick.
V. THE CURE (BAMPTON)
PHOTOGRAPH VI.

In this pub scene Doctor Good ministers to the fallen Turkish Knight as Father Christmas in his red suit and money box, Robin Hood in his green woodmen's suit and peaked cap, and Little John look in amused.
VI. AFTER A PERFORMANCE (BAMPTON)
PHOTOGRAPH VII.

Led by the Fool carrying a British flag and "bladder" the Midgley Pace-Eggers move to another playing area. Their elaborate head gear described earlier is apparent here.
VII. PROCESSION (MIDGLEY)
PHOTOGRAPH VIII.

The Fool successfully holds the attention of the youthful audience as his fellowing players stand in a circle around him.
VIII. THE FOOL (MIDGLEY)
The Fool, trying to sprinkle salt on his "tail" pursues Tosspot around the circumference of the circle formed by the players. Tosspot carries a stick doll and cane.
IX. TOSSPOT (MIDGELEY)
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