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THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH FOLK PLAYS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns those English folk plays whose plots are centred on the quack doctor character. Earlier researchers proposed three possible origins for these plays: a non-specific mystery play from the time of the crusades, some pre-Christian fertility ritual, and primitive shamanism. All three proposals were based on over-general comparisons, and relied on the key assumption that a continuous history can be traced back from before modern plays to the relevant era. However, in contrast with other customs, no evidence can be found for these plays before the 18th century, despite diligent searching. These theories are therefore disproved.

Instead, it is proposed that the plays were attached in the early to mid 18th century to existing house-visiting customs. These were probably the source of the non-representational costumes that are sometimes worn. There is also evidence for the influence of the conventions of the English Harlequinade. The provenance of the scripts is unknown, but similarities between them suggest they ultimately derived from a single proto-text.

A full-text database of 181 texts and fragments was built for investigation using cluster analysis, distribution mapping and other computerised techniques, some of which are novel. The cluster analysis has generated a new classification for the play texts that both confirms and extends the established typology. Comparison of the attributes of the clusters, aided by distribution mapping, has resulted in a putative genealogy for the plays that is presented for discussion.

Trellis graphing has revealed a core of common lines that can be assembled into a viable script. This represents a reconstructed proto-text, although it requires consolidation with further evidence. Bibliometric analysis suggests that more archival research is needed in the century ending about 1750, which is the key period for the genesis of the plays.

To compare is not to prove.

French proverb

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PREFACE

In one way or another I have been researching English folk plays since 1970, and I have many people to thank for their help and encouragement.

Firstly I wish to thank Roy Dyson, who first introduced to me folk play performance in 1968, and generally encouraged my interest in traditional music and customs. Ultimately he is the person to blame for this thesis. My nascent interest in research was cultivated by Roy Harris, and I received encouragement from members of the folk clubs that he founded - the Nottingham Traditional Music Club, and Traditions at the Tiger, Long Eaton, Derbyshire. During my time as a revival folk play actor, my friends in Nottingham's Owd Oss Mummers, and the Tiger's Guysers actively encouraged my research interests, and made sure I did not take myself too seriously. In particular, I wish to thank Idwal Jones. He and I worked together to seek out material on Nottinghamshire folk plays, and he generously let me share the results of his long trawl through Nottinghamshire local newspapers.

As a student, Tony Green of the University of Leeds gave me much moral and material support, all the more remarkable because I was studying at a rival educational establishment. At the same time, I began a long friendship with Paul Smith and Georgina Boyes of the University of Sheffield, and I am grateful for all their generosity and encouragement over the years. Later on, the members of Traditional Drama Research Group were also a source of much stimulating discussion. Steve Roud and Eddie Cass have been particularly supportive.

Back in my home county, I was engaged by Suella Postles of the Brewhouse Yard Museum, Nottingham to stage an exhibition on Nottinghamshire folk plays and related customs in 1993. This provided a great stimulus for me to organise my material and to reach out to the general public. This project also brought me into contact with numerous folk play performing groups, of whom the Calverton Real

INTRODUCTION

Setting the Scene, or What is a Folk Play?

Imagine you are sitting in your living room of an evening in the run up to Christmas. There is a knock on the door, and when you answer it you find five or more boys with blackened faces and in fancy dress - perhaps wearing cardboard armour and carrying sticks for swords. "Do you want the Guysers?" one asks. "OK", and you lead the way back to the living room.

Their leader steps forward and starts:

> "I open the door, I enter in,
> I beg your pardon to begin,
> Whether we rise, stand, sit or fall,
> We'll do our duty to please you all..."

What follows is a short play, perhaps five or ten minutes long, most of which is in rhyme. Next in is that courageous knight Saint George, bragging about his famous deeds. This is too much for "Slasher", a valiant soldier, who reckons St. George could not knock the skin off of rice pudding. A sword fight ensues. "Watch the light shade!"

Slasher is killed, but do not worry. A Doctor is on hand, and he boasts, "If this man's got nineteen devils his skull, I'll cast twenty of them out." A drop of nick nack applied to his tick tack soon brings Slasher back to life.

Finally, Belzibub and Devil Doubt step forward to ask, in verse, for money. Well, you have had some fun. They have put on a good show. Why not? The hat goes round as they finish with a carol, and then they move on to the next house.

This then is a stereotypical English folk play - rather like a mini-pantomime, but performed in pubs and private houses rather than on the stage. Like pantomimes, folk plays have rhymed texts, incorporate songs, often have a "Dame", may include topical allusions, and are traditionally performed at certain festive times of the year

- ranging from Halloween to Easter, but especially around the Christmas and New Year period. (see Appendix A for sample full texts).

Costumes are worthy of note. Many actors dress in part, meaning that they wear costumes intended to portray the character being played as realistically as possible, within the constraints of available materials. However, some teams wear non-representational costumes instead, typically smocks or shirts covered with patches, ribbons, paper strips, straw, etc. Also, the face is commonly disguised, either by blacking up or by obscuring the face with the headgear. The result bears little or no relation to the character being played, and is usually not intended to.

Types of Folk Play

Most English folk plays belong to one of three interrelated types. The vast majority are Hero-Combat plays such as the St. George play described above. Next most frequent are the Plough plays, so called because most of them are performed around Plough Monday (the first Monday after Twelfth Night). They are found in the English East Midlands, and are further subdivided into Recruiting Sergeant and Multiple Wooing plays. The third type is the Sword Dance play, mostly hailing from north eastern England and Yorkshire, and of which there are barely a couple of dozen examples. These three types form a distinct group and have normally been studied together. There are also other types of folk play, to which I will make reference, but these are not the subject of my thesis. I will describe the three main types in more detail.

The **Hero-Combat plays** start with an introductory prologue by one or more characters, which is followed by challenges and a sword fight between a hero and an appropriate adversary. As a result of this, one of them (not always the villain) is "slain" and a quack doctor is brought in to revive the victim. This is usually achieved with a degree of comedy, and the cure may be the major scene of the play. The plays finish with one or more supernumerary characters coming in to ask for money, in a scene sometimes termed the *quête* by scholars. Often the whole affair concludes with a seasonal song or carol.

Some hero-combat plays have multiple combats and cures. The most common hero is Saint/King/Prince George, but others may be found in subtypes of the play. These include Robin Hood, the Royal Prussian King, Galoshins, Scotland's typical hero, and others. The most frequent antagonists are Slasher, the Turkish Knight and the Black Prince of Paradine. The most prominent supernumerary is Beelzebub.

The **Plough plays** of the **Recruiting Sergeant** subtype are introduced by a fool called Bold Tom or Tom Fool. His introduction is followed by a three-way operatic scene between the Recruiting Sergeant, the Farmer's Man (or Ploughboy) and the Lady Bright and Gay. The Recruiting Sergeant calls for recruits, and Farmer's Man is torn between enlisting in the army or staying with his Lady Bright and Gay. The army wins, and on the rebound, the Lady accepts a perfunctory proposal of marriage from Bold Tom. Dame Jane enters next and argues with either Bold Tom or Beelzebub over the parentage of a bastard baby. This results in the Dame being knocked to the ground, and the Doctor is brought in to cure her. The Doctor's interrogation and cure are particularly intricate and comical in these plays. The piece ends, after the cure, with a special song that asks for money and beer.

A variety of supernumerary characters may be introduced at any point in the play, although they usually appear before the entry of the Doctor. These include Threshing Blade, Indian King, Hopper Joe and others. However, when he occurs in these plays, the rôle of Beelzebub is more than supernumerary. King George and other hero-combat characters may also be incorporated.

Only a handful of the **Multiple Wooing** Plough plays are known, mostly collected in the 1820s and published by C.Baskervill (1924). Although they are clearly recognisable as a group, their structures are more heterogeneous. They share some features with the Recruiting Sergeant plays - the Dame Jane scene and the quack Doctor, for example - but there are distinct differences, particularly in the "wooing" of the Lady. The wooing scene is the main action of these plays. Thus we see the Lady being courted by a series of suitors: the Fool (Noble Anthony), the Husbandman or Farming Man, a Lawyer, the Father's Eldest Son, and an Ancient

Man. In each case, the suitor states his case and is then rejected by the Lady, who finally chooses the Fool. The Dame and Doctor scene may follow thereafter.

Although some of the principal characters in the respective "wooing" scenes of the two types of Plough play are superficially similar, there are significant differences in the cast. The two fools, for instance, have different names, and their respective lines are almost totally dissimilar. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that far from the Lady rejecting her suitors, in the Recruiting Sergeant plays, it is she who is rejected by the recruit.

The **Sword Dance plays**, as the name implies, combine a linked sword dance with a drama. Here, the characters are the dancers, whose lines are normally spoken in single or double verses one character after the other. Their names are highly varied. During the dance, the Fool is "executed" in a mock beheading. This is done by placing the interlocked swords around his neck and withdrawing the swords simultaneously. After this, the dancers repudiate their guilt by presenting their alibis and excuses in turn. A Doctor is brought on to cure victim, in a scene that is usually indistinguishable from the equivalent Hero-Combat scene.

It should be obvious that the common factor linking these plays is the presence of a quack doctor. It is the presence of the Doctor that distinguishes them from other English folk plays, chief of which are the Christmas plays called "The Derby Tup" and "The Old Horse". These are much more localised plays, mostly found in an area around Sheffield.

The **Derby Tup** is based around the familiar folk song "The Derby Ram". This starts with the verses of the song that say how gigantic the Tup was. The song is interrupted for a brief spoken sketch in which a butcher is found and the Tup killed ("stuck"). The rest of the song then follows, with verses describing the uses to which the different parts of the body were put.

There is usually no dialogue at all in the **Poor Old Horse** (or in dialect t'Owd Oss). The song is about a decrepit old horse, played by a man bent over and covered in a blanket, with a horse's head on the end of a stick. The head was often a real

equine skull, with jaws rigged to open and snap shut. The main entertainment came from the horse playing up - quite literally horseplay - while a blacksmith tried to shoe it and the leader strained to keep it under control.

The Tup and Horse plays are quite distinct from the Hero-Combat, Plough and Sword Dance plays. Consequently, most scholars up to the 1970s have excluded them or dealt with them separately in their discussions of English folk drama (e.g. E.C.Cawte et al, 1967, pp.14-15 and E.C.Cawte, 1978).

Definitions and Terminology

Hitherto, the Hero-Combat, Plough and Sword Dance plays have usually been grouped together under the terms "Mummers' Play" or "Mumming Play". Until recently, English folk drama studies were so focused on these plays that, following the practice of E.K.Chambers (1903 and 1933), they were often refereed to as *The* Mummers' Play or *The* English Folk Play.

The term Mummers' Play comes from the fact that in many parts of England (or indeed the other countries to which these plays have spread) the performers are called Mummers. There are two reasons why continued use of this term is inappropriate.

1. Whilst "Mummers" is the most common name used for the players, it is by no means universal. Names derived from or including the name "Guisers" are also quite common, and are distributed over an equally wide geographical area. In addition, there are more localised names such as "Soulers" (Cheshire), "Pace Eggers" (Lancashire and West Yorkshire) and "Plough Jags" (Lincolnshire), etc.

2. There are other non-play house visiting customs whose participants are also called "Mummers". Practically all the other names used for folk play performers are also used for non-play customs.

On both counts, the use of the term "Mummers' Play" distorts the subject by implying that all the performers should be called "Mummers" and that all

"Mummers" performed plays. Furthermore, the word "mummer" (with a lower case "m") is used generically to denote any sort of play actor, making its use as a term even more confusing.

The Oxford English Dictionary (J.A.H.Murray et al, 1933) defines "folk play" as "A play written for acting by the people of a town". There is no accompanying quotation or example of use. This definition is more general than the narrow usage established by Chambers. It is too generic to be applicable to the Hero-Combat, Plough and Sword Dance plays alone, but it remains convenient as a descriptor for these and all the other types of traditional play. I discuss the scope of the term more fully in a later chapter.

I propose to use the term **Quack Doctor play** to cover the Hero-Combat, Plough and Sword Dance plays. This is the first significant proposal of my thesis, although it has already been published (P.Millington, 1989a, p.10). The advantage of this term is that it objectively refers to the one character who above all else typifies the *genre*, and whose ubiquity is universally recognised. It therefore circumvents the problems just discussed.

The term Hero-Combat play was first used by Alex Helm (1965), developing a proposal from Margaret Dean-Smith. She suggested calling them "Combat or Hero Plays" (M.Dean-Smith, 1958, p.245), because with the advent of more information, the prior tendency to call them Mummers' plays had become confusing and unhelpful.

E.K.Chambers introduced the term Plough Play in *The English Folk Play* (1933). Earlier, Baskervill (1924) had used the term Wooing Play or Mummers' Wooing Play for these plays. Dean-Smith (1958) preferred Bridal Play, but the group of scholars centred around Alex Helm in the 1950s and 60s kept to Wooing Play, which came to be used interchangeably with Plough Play. I first used the term Recruiting Sergeant Play in the 1978 conference preprint of P.T.Millington (1988), and explained the distinction between these and the Multiple Wooing plays in my article "Mystery History" for the *American Morris Newsletter* (P.Millington, 1989a, pp.9-10). Beth Shaw (1993) objected to the term Recruiting Sergeant Play because

she felt it introduced a gender bias. In replying to this objection, I explained the distinction between the two subtypes more fully, and rationalised the terminology. I proposed that Plough Play should be used as the generic term, with two subtypes - Recruiting Sergeant and Multiple Wooing Plays. Multiple Wooing Play was suggested because (a) it truly reflected the nature of the action, and (b) it prevented any confusion with previous terminology (P.Millington, 1995).

Links between sword dances and plays were discussed regularly from the end of the 19th century (T.F.Ordish, 1893), but the term Sword Dance Play or Sword Play surprisingly did not appear until 1930, when it was used by Douglas Kennedy (1930). However, the term did not become well established until its re-proposition by Helm (1965). Previously, they were simply referred to as Sword Dances (which happened to have plays).

In this thesis, I will refer to plays using the following classification:

Quack Doctor Plays

    Hero-Combat Plays

    Plough Plays

        Multiple Wooing Plays

        Recruiting Sergeant Plays

    Sword Dance Plays

Other Folk Plays…

My Interest in Folk Plays

I was first introduced to folk plays as a performer by my teacher and fellow folk enthusiast Roy Dyson, who staged a Pace-Egg play at one of my school's summer fêtes. I became further aware of folk plays through participation in folk club performances in my late teens. Such background information that I gained was acquired orally from my peers, and as such was of uncertain accuracy.

In 1970, I attended a Halloween event at the English Folk Dance and Song Society's country house, Hallsway Manor, Somerset. Its library held a copy of *English Ritual Drama* by E.C.Cawte et al (1967), which contained a geographical index of all known English folk plays. Looking up my native county of Nottinghamshire, I was surprised to learn that the plays had still been extant in 1960 in the village of Underwood - only two miles from my home. As I had been educated by my peers to believe the plays were a man's custom, my immediate thought was that the parents of some of my school friends might have taken part in the plays at Underwood.

Inspired by this discovery, I started collecting folk play texts and information from library sources. I followed this up with field collecting, with the short-lived Research Group of the Nottingham Traditional Music Club. For obvious reasons, my first collecting expedition was to Underwood, and success was instant, in that I learned that the local play tradition was still alive.

The nature of the Underwood custom was contrary to nearly everything I had been led to expect of a Nottinghamshire play by my peers. It was a children's custom (and always had been). It was performed at Christmas, not Plough Monday, and the actors were called Guysers or Bullguysers, not Plough Bullocks. Although I was to learn later that such variance on a national scale is normal, it sowed the seeds of scepticism about the received wisdom concerning the plays.

From this point onwards, I specialised in collecting information on Nottinghamshire folk plays. In this I was helped and encouraged by various friends, including Roy Harris and later by Idwal Jones, a fellow performer in Nottingham's Owd Oss Mummers.

From an early stage, I tried to build an exhaustive bibliography and index of the Nottinghamshire plays - inspired by the need to update both the Nottinghamshire section of "English Ritual Drama", and M.W.Barley's list of Plough Plays (M.W.Barley, 1953). This collection continues to grow, and forms a computerised database holding over 500 references, ranging from brief mentions to full texts and descriptions.

While I was studying for my B.Sc. in Information Science at Leeds Polytechnic (1971-1974), I established unofficial contacts with the now defunct Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies at the University of Leeds, and the Survey of Language and Folklore at the University of Sheffield (later to become the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language - CECTAL). These institutions provided me with valuable material support and encouragement, and I received particular encouragement from Paul and Georgina Smith at Sheffield, and Tony Green at Leeds.

The initial motivation for my research was twofold. Firstly, I wanted to record as much as possible of the tradition - which was perceived as being lost. Secondly, I was sceptical of the then current theories regarding the origins of these plays, which were based on the life-cycle theory, and I wished to re-examine them.

The Traditional Drama Research Group

I was one of several active folk play researchers to be contacted by Paul and Georgina Smith (now Boyes) in the early 1970s, and as a result, a loose network of workers started to emerge. This became firmer with the advent of the annual series of one-day conferences on Traditional Drama, run by CECTAL from 1978 to 1985.

It soon became apparent that several of us were trying to compile county-based indexes to the plays, and in 1979, the idea of a cooperative indexing scheme was born. I organised a Cooperative Indexing Workshop in Long Eaton in 1981, which was attended by eight researchers. At that meeting we formed ourselves into a body called the Traditional Drama Research Group (TDRG), and we then met every six months or so until 1985.

The initial aim of the TRDG was the publication of an indexing periodical, to be called "Traditional Drama Abstracts". There was much fine-detailed discussion of the conventions and procedures needed to produce such a publication, but very little in the way of material results. To a degree, this was because successful publication required the use of computerised tools. These were then in their infancy, and the availability of machines and limited technical understanding caused us difficulties.

On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the group members learned a great deal from the shared discussions.

The TDRG soon strayed from the indexing path into new areas. Various publications which had previously been published individually were brought together under the TDRG imprint. Most notably, there was the research newsletter *Roomer*, which had originally been launched by CECTAL. A number of brief research guides were issued, based on group discussions of particular aspects of fieldwork and technique (e.g. P.T.Millington, 1983, and D.Schofield et al, 1985). Group discussions also acted as a sounding board for the presentation of preliminary research findings. Most of these presentations went on to be given at the annual Traditional Drama conferences in Sheffield, which were now held under the Group's umbrella.

In general, a lasting legacy is that TDRG members introduced methods into the subject that were more rigorous than their predecessors, and that they placed more emphasis on historical and social context than hitherto.

The Group eventually petered out as people moved on to other interests, but perhaps especially because Paul Smith - the main motive force - left the country to take up a position at Memorial University, Newfoundland. Tape recordings of the Group's meetings, and attendant documentation have been deposited in the Archives of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, University of Sheffield.

One unifying factor for the TDRG was that the original members all shared a scepticism of the life-cycle theory of origins for the plays. It would be fair to say that some of us were embarrassed by these views, and by the people who espoused them. Such people were effectively discouraged from joining the Group, and this probably have caused some alienation and conflict, although it did allow members to focus on new areas of research.

The Importance of Origins

It would be fair to say that English folk play scholarship has had an obsession with origins. As pointed out by Georgina Smith (1978), this had mixed effects. On the positive side, this interest has been a major factor, if not *the* major factor that motivated people to seek out and record the plays. However, once the theory of ritual origins became established, there were negative effects.

Firstly, there appears to have been a tendency to collect evidence that fitted the theory, and to ignore evidence that does not. So for instance, there has been a tendency, often explicit, to reject or sideline records showing identifiable literary or commercial influences. For example, chapbook and chapbook-derived texts were often considered non-traditional, because *traditional* meant oral transmission only.

Secondly, because of the pre-eminence of "death and resurrection" in the ritual theories, plays without this theme were largely ignored. Consequently, the English folklorists' view of what constituted a folk play became very narrow - a situation first highlighted by Sam Richards (1983). The English view also contrasts with continental European definitions, as evidenced for instance by Leopold Schmidt's (1965) compilation of texts for the Council of Europe.

Thirdly, research has focused on the action or theme of the plays, and to a lesser extent the texts (since paradoxically, the texts were seen to be unimportant). Consequently, until recently, there was little if any study of the context of the plays - e.g. the social milieu, contemporary theatrical practices, and the relationship of the plays to non-play customs with the same name or time of occurrence.

While we can be truly thankful for the collecting activities of earlier scholars, I concur with the view that the obsession with origins has had a deleterious effect on the scholarship. I therefore also sympathise with the view that questions of origins should be set aside so that neglected areas of research can be pursued. Nevertheless, origins keep re-appearing, rather like the proverbial bad penny. To some degree this is because recent scholars have tended to concentrate on demonstrating flaws in the established theories, methods and sources, while neglecting to propose alternative

theories, or at least not on a coherent front. In the resulting vacuum, the old theories have continued to be propagated (see P.T.Millington, 1989a).

My Research

My original approach to origins was a decision to put aside the existing theories, examine the evidence afresh, and see if I would come to the same or different conclusions. I believe I have managed to adhere to this principle, and in the process apply some lateral thinking, and employ some new methods - especially computerised analytical tools. However, it has become clear to me that there is still a need to lay old skeletons to rest, otherwise the old theories will continue to return to haunt us.

In this thesis, I firstly present a history of the various theories of origin that have arisen. Secondly, I bring together the criticisms that have been raised against these theories, adding some of my own. Thirdly, I explore alternative theories. Lastly, I present a major textual analysis study that has generated an improved classification of these plays and a suggested genealogy for the texts.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Surveying the history of English folk drama scholarship, and chronicling the concomitant views on the plays' origins are in many ways the same thing. The general history of the subject has been reviewed several times, most recently in summary by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud (2000, p.252), and in detail by Eddie Cass et al (2000), Ronald Hutton (1996, pp.70-80) and by Paul Smith (1985) in this Ph.D. thesis. Alex Helm (1980) reviewed the literature in his posthumous book *The English Mummers' Play*, and Alan Brody (1969) also summarised the scholarship in his book. Margaret Dean-Smith's (1958) review included some interesting insights into the motivation of some of the first folklorists to specialise in the subject. This survey will focus on how and when the different theories relating to origins arose and developed.

Conventionally, the paper published by Thomas Fairman Ordish in 1891 has been regarded as the beginning of the serious study of English folk plays. This is true, in that he was the first folklorist to have a specialised interest in folk drama. However, there was a period before Ordish when the plays were collected and published by antiquarians. From Ordish onwards, a series of scholars maintained interest in the subject, although as noted by E.C.Cawte:

> "there were episodes of hiccups, often at intervals of twenty years
> or so, and the individuals do not seem to have met, let alone
> discussed their work".   *(E.C.Cawte, 1985)*

This period culminated in the publication of *English Ritual Drama* (*ERD*) by E.C.Cawte, A.Helm and N.Peacock (1967). Primarily a bibliographic work, it brought together all known references to English folk drama - with certain exceptions - and arranged them as a geographical index. The book stimulated a new generation of folklorists, who started to re-examine the plays using new methods, and to question all the basic assumptions and tenets of what Craig Fees (1984) has termed the Old Folk Drama Studies or the Old Scholarship.

The history of folk drama studies can therefore be split into three broad periods, which will be reflected in this review:

1. The antiquarian period - i.e. the period up to T.F.Ordish (1891)

2. The old folk drama studies - from T.F.Ordish (1891) to E.C.Cawte et al (1967)

3. The new folk drama studies - the period after E.C.Cawte et al (1967).

Whilst I have marked the boundaries of these periods with specific publications which have specific dates, in reality the boundaries are not so clear cut. Interest in earlier views did not cease immediately with the appearance of new ideas, and indeed ideas from even the earliest antiquarians continue to be quoted in popular works to the present day. The boundaries are therefore fuzzy. They mark the beginnings of the ends rather than the ends themselves.

The Antiquarian Period

Folk plays are notable by their absence in earliest English folklore books. H.Bourne's *Antiquitates vulgares* (1725) is generally regarded as the first book comprehensively devoted to English folklore. It presents numerous descriptions of English customs, albeit from a very judgmental point of view, reflecting Bourne's Protestant religious outlook. Although there is a section on Mumming, this relates to the non-play customs of cross-dressing and house visiting. Bourne makes no mention of plays. If the plays had been widespread during Bourne's day, this omission would perhaps be surprising, however, there is no indisputable evidence to show that they even existed at that time.

The second major book on English folklore was published by John Brand in 1777. This book repeats H.Bourne's (1725) work verbatim, but adds various notes and details of further customs. As in Bourne's original, all references to Mumming relate to non-play customs. However, in his own notes on Christmas, which are in a different chapter to the Mumming, Brand mentions seeing a copy of the *Alexander and the King of Egypt* play chapbook in a collection of broadsides in the offices of

T.Saint of Newcastle (J.Brand, 1777, pp.185-186). He quotes the concluding verse to this play, which is also found in isolation in J.Ray's *Collection of English Proverbs*:

> "Bounce, buckram, velvet's dear;
> Christmas comes but once a year;
> And when it comes it brings good chear; [sic]
> But when it's gone, it's never near." *(J.Ray, 1670)*

Sir Henry Ellis produced a revised edition of Brand's book in 1813. Ellis added a list of the *dramatis personae* of the 1779 Revesby play, and quoted the lines of the Hobby Horse. However, this mention is in the context of a discussion on sword dances, and otherwise has no relation to folk plays generally (J.Brand, 1813, p.401).

The absence or peripheral treatment of the plays in these books is puzzling. The trend was continued by T.D.Fosbroke (1825). His *Encyclopedia*, though not devoted specifically to folklore, gives a definition of *Mummers* and provides examples, but there is no mention of plays. Even after the first collected texts had been published, J.Strutt (1845) continued to ignore them, although he did cover non-play mediaeval Mummers and other dramatic forms in some depth.

What can be said with certainty about the early books is that none of them recognised the Quack Doctor plays as sufficiently special to be treated as a particular traditional *genre*. Consequently, no comments were made on the plays' origins as this time. This dearth of information could be explained in various ways, but this is something which will be pursued further in a later chapter.

The Earliest Texts

The earliest known printed Quack Doctor folk play text is the chapbook entitled *Alexander and the King of Egypt* published by J.White, Newcastle (also Bourne's publisher). This bears no date, but has been attributed from typographical evidence and from the biographical details of the printer to sometime between 1746 and 1769. Later editions of this chapbook dated 1771 and 1788 were published in Newcastle, and several more appeared in Whitehaven throughout the 19th century (M.J.Preston et al, 1977). Not only is this *Alexander* chapbook the oldest Quack Doctor play text, it is also the earliest undisputed reference of any sort to such a play.

A few plays were collected and performances noted towards the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however these were generally not published at the time, other than in abbreviated form in footnotes. Known examples are: Exeter, Devon, 1737 or 1770 (A.Brice, 1770, p.90), Revesby, Lincolnshire, 1779 (P.Smith & G.Smith, 1980), Islip, Oxfordshire, 1780 (M.J.Preston, 1973), Truro, Cornwall, late 1780s (P.Millington, forthcoming), Cheshire, pre-1791 (D.Broomhead, 1982), and Romsey, Hampshire, 1796-1837 (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967, pp.87-90).

Following the publication of Ellis's new edition of Brand in 1813, and possibly inspired by it, the plays, including some texts, started appearing in regional antiquarian books. Examples are: Durham, 1815 (R.Topliff, 1815), Cornwall, 1823 and 1824 (D.Gilbert, 1823; F.Hitchins & S.Drew, 1824), and Scotland, 1824 (J.Mactaggart, 1824). With one exception, these do not concern themselves with possible origins. In mentioning Cornish plays, Hitchins and Drew say:

> "It is generally understood that these Christmas plays derived their origins from the ancient crusades…"   *(F.Hitchins & S.Drew, 1824, p.718)*

The first publication to give folk plays any national prominence was W.Hone's *Every-Day Book* (1827). This antiquarian miscellany, involving many contributors, contains four items relating to folk plays. These consist primarily of descriptions and texts, but two contributions comment on possible origins.

The contribution by John Wood Reddock gives the text of a Scottish Guisards' play, performed at Hogmanay - one of "many editions" (W.Hone, 1827, cols.13-21). Reddock likens the style of this play to the mysteries or Whitsun plays of Coventry. At the start of his account, he sees these mysteries as having been "grafted on the stock of pagan observances". The mysteries gave way to the moralities, and so on through various dramatic periods down to modern times. He did not continue to trace this lineage specifically to the Guisards' play, although this is implied.

The contribution from W.S. (William Sandys) gives the full text of a Christmas play from Cornwall (W.Hone, 1827, col.123). In his introduction, he mentions "...a copy of that acted at Newcastle, printed there some thirty or forty years since, is

longer than any I have seen here in the west." This appears to refer to the *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook, and as he comments on its length, it is clear he must have seen the full text rather than just the citation in J.Brand (1777). Hone later reproduces T.Wilson's Whitehaven edition of this chapbook in cols.1645-1648. Referring to origins, Sandys states:

> "By some the play is considered to have reference to the time of the crusades, and to have been introduced on the return of the adventurers from the Holy-Land, as typifying their battles."
>
> *(W.Hone, 1827, col.123)*

This view appears to be hearsay, possibly based on the statement of Hitchins and Drew (1824). No supporting evidence is offered.

In summary, W.Hone's book was important for several reasons:

1. It recognised and established folk drama as a special type of custom, and was the first to spread an awareness of folk plays through the educated classes nation-wide.

2. It confirms that people were noticing and collecting different versions of the play, therefore the plays must have been fairly common at this time - at least near the residences of Hone's contributors.

3. It popularised two theories regarding the origins of the plays:

   a) That they derived from mediaeval mystery plays, and

   b) The plot, if not the plays themselves, originated from the time of the Crusades.

4. It is also possible that the inclusion of full texts may have contributed to the spreading of the custom.

William Sandys

Apart from his contribution to Hone's *Every-day Book*, William Sandys demonstrated a long-standing interest in the Saint George plays. He published Cornish texts and comments on several occasions (W.Sandys, 1830; W.Sandys,

1833, "Uncle Jan Treenoodle", 1846; W.Sandys, 1852), although his familiarity with the text of the Newcastle *Alexander* chapbook shows that his interest was not restricted to Cornwall.

Sandys' views on the plays' origins are consistent throughout his publications, but are most fully expressed in his *Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern* (1833). His folklore theory - or rather his theories regarding popular antiquities - had a pronounced religious flavour. He saw all religions and customs as having ultimately come from a single origin because that must have been the situation after Noah's Flood. However they started to differ when the nations dispersed following the Tower of Babel incident. Much of his discourse on the history of customs in general (and Christmas customs in particular) is very much centred around the history of the Christian church, and much of it is supported by documentary evidence.

A significant part of the lengthy introduction relates to Christmas drama, describing mysteries, moralities and the like. He makes much use of documentary evidence here also. It is clear from his discussion that nearly all the mediaeval Christmastide plays and similar entertainments related to religious subjects, and especially to aspects of the Christmas story. The Saint George plays do not appear to have been part of this however, and these are raised separately towards the end of his introduction. Interestingly, when he talks of the origins of the Saint George Christmas plays, he make almost no use of documentary evidence:

> "Christmas plays however puerile they may seem at present, are of a remote origin, and *supposed by many to be as old as the time of the Crusades*, and that hence arose the favourite subject of St. George and the Dragon. But the Crusaders perhaps only varied the representations then existing. Saint George and his friends however were introduced into theatrical performances many centuries since, and is not improbable that some of those religious adventurers might have introduced them."   *(W.Sandys, 1833, pp.cvii-cviii - my italics)*

Although no citation is given, this view appears to follow that of Hitchins and Drew (1824). He goes on to mention the presence of Saint George in a play performed before Henry V in 1416, and he also refers to Richard Johnson's *Seven Champions of Christendom* and *Syr Bevis of Hampton* as possible sources. This is

the first occasion on which these possible sources are discussed in relation to the plays.

The Late Nineteenth Century

Following Sandys, there is a marked gap before T.F.Ordish's papers started appearing in 1889. Numerous plays were collected and published during this period, mostly in local publications, but some in popular works such as R.Chambers' *Book of Days* (1864). Also, away from scholarship, chapbooks containing play texts continued to be printed. Several new versions were published, in addition to reprints (A.Helm, 1969 and M.J.Preston et al, 1976a).

However, there were no new ideas on origins. If origins were mentioned at all, they merely reiterated the theories expressed in Hone's *Every-Day Book* by Reddock and by Sandys. A case in point is J.S.Udal (1880). Shortly after the founding of the Folklore Society, Udal was the first folklorist to express more than a passing interest in the plays. However, in printing the texts of two Dorset plays, his introduction merely quotes the works I have described above. His approach therefore was still antiquarian.

On the other hand, one of the brief supplementary notes to his paper by Mr. Hyde Clarke was more interesting (J.S.Udal, 1880, pp.115-116). Clarke evidently believed that Saint George was added to pre-existing mummings at the time of the Crusades, whilst Saint Patrick was added in more modern times, having been taken from the *Seven Champions of Christendom*. By this I take him to mean Richard Johnson's book (1596). Clarke also appears to be the first person to remark on the similarities of the plays to "the Italian and French harlequinade", and its English derivatives - Punch and Judy, and pantomimes.

Thomas Fairman Ordish

The first folklorist to pursue a specialist interest in folk plays during the boom folklore years of the late 19th century was T.F.Ordish. Like his contemporaries, he appears to have been very much influenced by the ideas of J.G.Frazer (1890),

W.Mannhardt (1875) and the brothers Grimm. According to Margaret Dean-Smith who published some biographical details (1958, pp.239-240), Ordish was perhaps more influenced by the German schools of thought than by Frazer. This may be reflected in his references to Norse sources in preference to Classical Mythology.

Ordish's first folk play paper was on the Revesby Morris Dancers' text (1889), but it was in his later papers that he developed his theories on folk drama and introduced new concepts. His first theoretical paper appeared in 1891. This began by stating the established views on the history of English drama generally:

> "It arose from the miracle-plays and mysteries, which gave way to moralities and interludes; these were succeeded by the Elizabethan drama, which was a child of the Renaissance, whose playwrights wrought under the inspiration of the classical drama of Greece and Rome."
>   *(T.F.Ordish, 1891, pp.314-315)*

However, he then went further in declaring that all primitive drama arose from the sacred dance and song of pagan religious observances. He saw all dramatic traditions as following the same parallel course, whether it be in the Classical world, in India or wherever. This idea led him to amend his view of the history of English drama as follows:

> "My reading of the genealogy of the English epic drama is the meeting of two forces, Pagan and Christian, resulting in the concession of the miracle-play and mystery; that alongside the miracle-plays, the traditional embryonic drama continued to exist, competition with which led eventually to mixing or debasing the miracle-play representations and ultimately to their abolition..."
>
>   *(T.F.Ordish, 1891, pp.321-322)*

and so on, making the point that traditional subjects with a pagan origin continued to influence stage plays well into the Elizabethan era and beyond. The important point here is that Ordish clearly believed that folk plays of some sort had existed in pre-Christian England, and that they continued to exist in parallel with more established drama right up to the present day. In a nutshell, they were a pagan survival.

Obviously they were altered by outside influences during this time, particularly by the church. In general terms, Ordish felt that this led to the native dramatic

tradition in northern Europe being supplanted by the parallel tradition from Greece and Rome used by the clergy. As a specific instance, Ordish states:

> "What may have been contributed by the miracle-play... is the form
> of dialogue, the conduct of a story by speaking characters."
>
> *(T.F.Ordish, 1891, p.322).*

In searching out other influences, Ordish detailed a whole series of plays and pageants relating to the legend of Saint George, performed by "gilds" in pre-Shakespearean times. He also included Robin Hood and similar themes. The inference here is that Ordish believed that the Saint George folk plays had acquired material from these performances.

Apart from asserting that the plays were a pagan survival, Ordish proposed two other new points. The first was that the Doctor represented a survival of the primitive shaman:

> "The Doctor, who heals the combatants when they are supposed to
> be slain in the fights that always take place, was no doubt originally
> a magician, and the long staff which he usually carries supports that
> conclusion."   *(T.F.Ordish, 1891, p.331)*

The second point was an important one for the comparative folklorists:

> "What is of first consequence is the action and the characters
> represented; the dialogue is of secondary importance altogether."
>
> *(T.F.Ordish, 1891, p.334)*

This principle freed folklorists from having to restrict themselves to considering the texts of the plays and this enabled them to draw parallels with a wide variety of customs from all periods and from all parts of the world.

Ordish's 1891 paper evidently stimulated some discussion, and prompted his fellow folklorists to send him much new material. Consequently, when he published his second theoretical paper in 1893, he had revised his views, with varying degrees of success.

He had an obvious problem with annual times of occurrence. In particular, the mediaeval Saint George pageants he detailed in his 1891 paper were all performed

on Saint George's Day - 23rd April - whereas the Saint George plays were mostly performed at Christmas, with some others at Easter or on Plough Monday. To resolve this mismatch, Ordish proposed that the customs had migrated to different times of year, and that some Saint George's Day customs had moved to Christmas and some to Easter:

> "...Traditional observances, at one time marking various stages in the year's passage, gradually became concentrated upon one or more festivals, chiefly Christmas and Easter..."
>
> *(T.F.Ordish, 1893, pp.150-151)*

He appears to have been unaware at this time of the Scottish Halloween plays and the Cheshire All Soul's Day plays. Otherwise he would have had difficulty reconciling the dates of these festivals with his proposition.

Ordish continued to work from the premise that the main stem of the play was the legend of Saint George adapted into a story of the Crusades. However he extended this view to propose that the legend - if not the play - replaced a similar native Norse legend concerning Odin (on this horse Sleipner) and his conflict with the dragon Nidhug (T.F.Ordish, 1893, pp.151-152). The conjecture is based on general symbolic parallels. By extending this interpretation to include the Balder Myth (Balder personifying summer and light), Ordish suggests that the Easter and Plough-Monday plays continue the tradition of the battle of the Summer and Winter Champions (T.F.Ordish, 1893, pp.155-156). This then became engrafted onto the Christmas plays, along with various other accretions:

> "Summarising this analysis of the Christmas mumming-play, we find that it consists of the following elements combined by the natural dramatic instinct of the folk :-
>
> (a)   The Christmas Masking or Disguising
>
> (b)   The Sword-Dance : the character of Father Christmas being a modification of the Chorus of the Sword-Dance play.
>
> (c)   The Pace-Egg or Easter Play
>
> (d)   The Wassailing Rite or Custom"   *(T.F.Ordish, 1893, p.162)*

This particular rag-bag explanation was not pursued by later scholars, nor was Ordish's proposal that the plays enacted the Odin legend. The view that customs migrated to Christmas and Easter appears to have been one abiding legacy of this paper. Another legacy is his "hint" that the play was "an episode which continues the tradition of the Summer and Winter Champions." *(T.F.Ordish, 1893, p.172)* This sowed a seed for later scholars to cultivate.

In an appeal for material in 1902, Ordish announced his intention of publishing a book on Folk Drama (T.F.Ordish, 1902). He indeed received a great deal of new material from his fellow folklorists, and his collection was eventually deposited as the *Ordish Papers* in the library of the Folklore Society. However, his planned book was forestalled by the appearance of E.K.Chambers' *English Mediaeval Stage* in 1903.

E.K.Chambers

Sir Edmund Kerchever Chambers was primarily a theatre historian, specialising in mediaeval and Elizabethan theatre. His *English Mediaeval Stage* (1903) was a two volume work, of which the first was mostly devoted to folklore matters. His approach was very much influenced by J.G.Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890). From Frazer he derived his predilection for wide-ranging comparative folklore and long rambling arguments. He was clearly not a believer in Occam's Razor.

Chambers sat very firmly in the survivalist camp. His long ramblings on folklore were intended to establish a very broad definition of "folk drama" and to show that mediaeval customs, and therefore mediaeval drama, were survivals of heathen practices:

> "For if the comparative study of religions proves anything it is, that the traditional beliefs and customs of the mediaeval or modern peasant are in nine cases out of ten but the *detritus* of heathen mythology and heathen worship, enduring with but little change in the shadow of an hostile creed. This is particularly true of the village festivals and their *ludi*. Their full significance only appears when they are regarded as fragments of forgotten cults..."

(E.K.Chambers, 1903, p.94)

Like Ordish, Chambers included a great deal of Old Norse mythology in his discussions, and also like Ordish, he had trouble reconciling the disparate annual dates of the plays. In fact he addresses this issue directly:

> "With regard to the main drift of this chapter, the criticism presents itself; if the folk-plays are essentially a celebration of the *renouveau* of spring, how is it that the performances generally take place in mid-winter at Christmas? The answer is that... none of the Christmas folk-customs are proper to mid-winter. They have been attracted by the ecclesiastical feast from the seasons which in the old European calendar preceded and followed it, from the beginning of winter and the beginning of summer or spring.
>
> *(E.K.Chambers, 1903, p.226)*

He uses changes in agricultural practices to explain why "winter feasts" are spread from All Souls' Day to Twelfth Night. (But note that he does not extend this range to cover Easter.) Despite numerous footnotes, none of his factual evidence provides convincing support for such major differences or changes in dates.

Unlike Ordish, Chambers did not see the Odin legend as the origin of the plays. Instead, he developed the idea that the play represented the annual life-cycle - first hinted at by Ordish:

> "...Though the plays differ in many respects, they have a common incident, in the death and revival, generally by a Doctor, of one of the characters. And in virtue of this central incident one is justified in classing them as forms of a folk-drama in which the resurrection of the year is symbolized." *(E.K.Chambers, 1903, p.207)*

Furthermore, in his chapter on "Village Festivals", Chambers proposed the idea that an animal or human being was at one time sacrificed to ensure agricultural fertility in the coming year, and that this was then replaced with a drama.

In "The Sword Dance" chapter, Chambers introduces the idea that folk-drama evolved out of folk-dance - in particular sword dances, with their mock beheadings. This is a subtly different view to that of Ordish, who saw the sword dances as being only one of the pre-existing forms which were incorporated in the plays. In view of this proposed sword dance origin, Chambers takes the Revesby play to be important because of "the large amount of dancing that remains in it". However, perhaps

sensing its unique nature, he seems to maintain a distinction between this play and both the Plough Monday plays (Cropwell and Lincolnshire), and the Saint George plays.

Regarding sources of text, Chambers rightly dismisses any influence of John Kirke's stage-play of *The Seven Champions of Christendome* (1638), and only attributes the theme of the "Seven Champions" to Richard Johnson's book. (E.K.Chambers, 1903, p.221)

The latter half of the "Mummers' Play" chapter cites mainly mediaeval records pertaining to Saint George plays. These records do not include texts, but merely mentions of characters - the Dragon and Robin Hood being particularly popular in addition to Saint George. There does not appear to have been a Doctor in mediaeval plays. The annual times of occurrence are on days well away from those of modern plays, which suggests there is probably no direct link between them.

An important and enduring part of Chambers' analysis of the Mummers' plays was his division of the performance into three main structural segments:

1. The Presentation

2. The Drama - further subdivided into

   a. The vaunts

   b. The dispute and combat

   c. The Lament

   d. The Cure

3. The *Quête*

Chambers' book was reviewed in a positive light in the journal *Folk-lore* by O.Elton (1906). Elton appears to endorse Chambers' view that many if not most mediaeval customs originated in pagan religious practices, whilst cautioning readers that Chambers may have been over-enthusiastic in applying this theory at times. Interestingly, Elton makes no reference at all to the Mummers' plays, which occupy a prominent chapter in Chambers' work. However, he does allude to the

"mumming" and "disguising" that "took shape at the beginning of the sixteenth century" in the form of court revels. In emphasising Chambers' philosophy of survivals, he implicitly also endorses Chambers' views on the origins of the Mummers' plays.

Beware of Greeks

E.K.Chambers' structural breakdown of the English Mummers' Play was picked up by students of Classical drama and religion. In the book *Themis* (J.E.Harrison, 1912), both the author and Prof. Gilbert Murray enumerated the main elements of the ancient Greek "Eniautos" celebrations in a similar way.

a. A Contest or *agon*. This is a race to decide who shall carry the boughs and wear the crown.

b. A *Pathos*, a death or defeat.
    -   The pathos is formally announced by a messenger, and
    -   It is followed or accompanied by a lamentation.

c. A triumphant Epiphany, an appearance or crowning of the victor or the new king with an abrupt change from lamentation to rejoicing.

At this point it is appropriate to mention a number of modern Greek folk plays collected at the start of the 20th century by members of the British School at Athens. R.M.Dawkins (1906) and A.J.B.Wace (1909/1910) both described plays that they had collected from northern Greece, performed by *Kalogheroi*. In that they featured a quack Doctor and cure, these plays had undeniable similarities with the English plays. Dawkins felt that these plays could have derived from the ancient Greek cult of Dionysus. The location of the modern plays in northern Greece was felt to be particularly auspicious, as this was the area that Dionysus is supposed to have hailed from.

Jane Harrison cited these modern Greek folk plays, and implied that there was a direct historical link between them and the ancient plays. (She also implied a similar link with modern English folk plays). Murray likewise noted certain similarities between the ancient Greek and modern Greek plays, but was more circumspect about direct ancestry.

Harrison provides a remarkably familiar interpretation of the ancient Greek drama, evidently inspired by E.K.Chambers:

> "The shift from sorrow to joy was integral because it was the mimetic presentation of the death of the Old Year, the Birth of the New." *(J.E.Harrison, 1912, p.332)*

Wace continued his collecting activity in the Balkans into the second decade. His findings undermined his hypothesis regarding an origin in the cult of Dionysus because the plays turned out not to be characteristically Greek:

> "...it is by no means a typically Greek festival, for it occurs only in Northern Greece where there is much mixed blood, and it is known to almost all the other South Balkan races."
>
> *(A.J.B.Wace, 1912/1913, pp.262-263)*

All these Greek ruminations might have been regarded as a diversion or *non sequitur* had they not been latched onto by the renowned folk dance and song collector Cecil Sharp in his books on English Sword Dances (C.J.Sharp, 1913a & b). Sharp specifically compared the sword dance play from Ampleforth, Yorkshire with the modern Greek play from Haghios Georghios described by R.M.Dawkins (1906), on the assumption that both shared a common origin in ancient Greek tragedy. In Sharp's hands, the Greek theorising evidently gained something in the telling. Responding to a query from the *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, he gave the following florid interpretation of what were supposedly Murray's list of the main elements of the play:

> "(1) A Birth, i.e. of the New Year; (2) A Marriage, i.e. of the Heavens (the Father) with the Earth (the Mother), the former raining upon the latter and producing fertilisation; (3) A Death, i.e. of the Year; and, finally (4) A Resurrection, i.e. the revival of Nature." *(C.J.Sharp, 1914)*

Sharp quotes a rough genealogy for the English sword dances and the plays from Phillips Barker:

<div align="center">

Primitive Sword Dance
|
Civic/Guild custom
|
Play added
|
Passes to peasants
|
Dance stays, play degrades

</div>
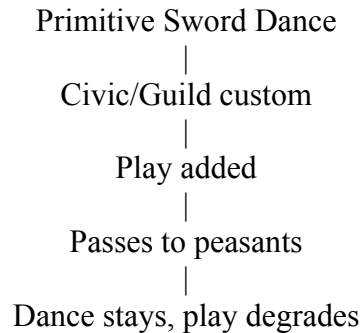
(Adapted from the narrative quoted by C.J.Sharp, 1913b, p.17-18)

In summary, this means that the dance and the play were separate to start with, coalesced, and then split again.[1]

R.J.E.Tiddy

Thanks to Sharp, folk drama now entered the realm of folk dance scholarship, and was incorporated in the activities of the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS). Dance scholars were understandably keen to justify their interest in folk drama, and they therefore emphasised the combination of the plays with sword dances. Thus, for instance, R.J.E.Tiddy explains:

> "To consider the Mummers' Play in isolation and apart from the Sword Dance Play would be unsuitable and misleading, because in both these forms there is a combat, a death, and a revival, and this common feature is so essential that both forms of the play must be attributed to a common origin."   *(R.J.E.Tiddy, 1923, p.72)*

Tiddy's book *The Mummers' Play*, published posthumously, is regarded as one of the key works in English folk drama scholarship, but in reality it adds little new theory. Its main importance lies in its large collection of texts, and in his identification of several of the literary sources which had been incorporated into some texts. He mainly reinforced the life-cycle theory of E.K.Chambers. He felt that the combatants would have been the key characters in the original ritual, followed in importance by the Doctor:

> "He is the medicine man of primitive races, and in origin is an unusually gifted savage who assumed control of the ceremonies..."
>
> *(R.J.E.Tiddy, 1923, p.76)*

He mentions that the man-woman character had been explained as the survival of a ritual marriage, but because the traces of wooing and marriage in English Mummers' plays were so slight he was inclined to suspend judgement (R.J.E.Tiddy, 1923, p.77). Unfortunately he neither says who had suggested this interpretation, nor explains the significance of the "ritual marriage".

Tiddy discusses the mediaeval forbears of the plays in a similar manner to E.K.Chambers. He is ambivalent about whether the folk plays derived material from the mysteries, moralities and other later forms of drama, or *vice versa* - erring in favour of dramatists borrowing from folk plays.

A.R.Wright reviewed *The Mummers' Play* for *Folk-lore* (1924), and generally supported Tiddy's ideas. Wright stressed two particular concepts - the origin from a single source, and the inseparable nature of the English sword dance and the mummers' play. He supported the first concept on the basis of Tiddy's collection of texts:

> "They cover a fairly wide area, and bring out clearly the underlying identity of the play, and the obviously single origin of the versions, despite the numerous minor and superficial variations found even in villages which are neighbour [sic]. The essence of the play is, of course, a combat and the revival of the slain, possibly of ritual origin."
>
> *(A.R.Wright, 1924, p.97)*

The idea of an ultimate single source for the text was only implied by Tiddy and earlier authors, so in some respects Wright's analysis is novel. His endorsement of the unity of the sword dance and the play is primarily based on vague similarities between the characters.

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[1] No bibliographic reference is given for Phillips Barker, and it seems likely that the source is personal correspondence. The inventory of the Alex Helm Collection lists several letters from E.Phillips Barker to Cecil Sharp. Those that are dated are all 1913.

C.R.Baskervill

The series of three publications by C.R.Baskervill (1920, 1924 and 1929) use E.K.Chambers' *Mediaeval Stage* (1903) as their basis. Baskervill was a very thorough and erudite scholar, who was intimately familiar with various dramatic forms, from the Elizabethan era to the 18th century. His main contribution was to propose the existence of distinct "Wooing" or "Marriage" plays in England. This proposal first appeared in his 1920 paper, and from his references, it is clear he had the Recruiting Sergeant plays of the East Midlands in mind at this time.

Baskervill's 1924 paper was the most important of the three. In it he published the texts of several newly discovered plays from the first half of the 19th century. These consisted of five texts from Lincolnshire, and another from Keynsham, Somerset. They all have a strong wooing motif, and he used them to establish a new class of English folk play, which Ordish and Chambers had failed to recognise. However, he conformed with these writers in believing the wooing plays also to be a survival of pagan ritual:

> "...It will be possible to draw more definite conclusions than before in regard to the importance of wooing and marriage in the ancient pagan rituals of England. For the plays are almost certainly survivals of pagan rites, forms no doubt of the so-called 'sacred marriage'."
>
> *(C.R.Baskervill, 1924, p.226)*

He explains further that the lady's rejection of an elderly suitor and her acceptance of a young fool:

> "...symbolize the virgin union of the representatives of the new seasons and the displacement of the representatives of the old season." *(C.R.Baskervill, 1924, p.227)*

Unfortunately, as he analysed his newly discovered texts in more detail to see how they fitted in with hypothesis he had problems with literary influences in the plays:

> "Indeed one of the greatest difficulties in dealing with the ritual elements of the plays lies in the fact that the very features in which

these elements are clearest show a strong literary influence exerted
at various periods..."   *(C.R.Baskervill, 1924, p.229)*

Through identifying literary sources for large segments of text, his analysis of the plays showed that much of the text is relatively recent in origin, i.e. 16th century onwards, and that:

"... The dialogue reflecting the old ritual motive of the wooing
came to be simply made up from dialogue ballads, jigs, and similar
sources."   *(C.R.Baskervill, 1924, p.238)*

Baskervill refers to C.J.Sharp's (1913b) comparison of the Ampleforth sword dance play with the Balkan and Thracean parallels reported by R.M.Dawkins (1906) and A.J.B.Wace (1909/1910). He is more forthright in concluding that both the English and Balkan customs had ancient common origin, centring his argument around the fact that these customs all appear to involve a plough. He does not explore plough customs generally - which could have provided important contextual evidence.

Baskervill's 1929 book on Elizabethan jigs largely repeats his earlier works when it comes to folk plays. He draws interesting parallels between the plays and the jigs, both of which typically involve a dialogue between at least three people. Many involve wooing themes. There are also links with the *Englische Kommödianten* in Germany, and with the character Pickle Herring (to be found also in the Revesby play).

The literary parallels did not shake Baskervill's view that the plays have a prehistoric origin:

"These mummers' wooing plays are clearly older than the jigs.
Festival plays from the Balkans, especially from Thrace, with
similar rival wooings and ritual acts with choral song instead of
dialogue, suggest a great age for the type of folk play."

(C.R.Baskervill, 1929, p.250)

The 1930s

Douglas Kennedy (1930) started the decade with the paper in which he coined the term Sword-Dance Play and outlined its distinguishing features. He felt that the sword dance plays were closer to the putative "original ceremonial" from which both the sword dance and the Mummers' play were supposed to have derived:

> "The possibility of the Sword-Dance and the Play having drifted together through similarity of purpose, and because they fell on the same seasonal festival, has been suggested, but it is a remote possibility, and it seems much more likely that they were derived from a common source." *(P.Kennedy, 1930, p.14)*

At one point, in a very strange and rambling piece of reasoning, Kennedy proposes that the Doctor, Jack Finney and the Horse were in fact all one in the same character. The Doctor would originally have been a witch doctor, and the horse's hide would have been his "animal insignia". This proposal is not convincing, although some later scholars did take it up.

H.Coote Lake (1931) compared the English and Balkan plays mentioned above, centring his arguments around the sequence of six events in ancient Greek ritual dance and drama outlined by G.Murray in J.E.Harrison (1912). Coote Lake's view was that the Greek drama arose from "ritual dance":

> "The whole sequence is taken to point to some primitive magic rite in which the death and resurrection of the Summer was acted, in order that, as the actor who took the part of the Summer was slain and revived, so the Summer which had been slain by the Winter might be revived." *(H.Coote Lake, 1931, p.143)*

Coote Lake compares the Balkan plays with the English plays in detail - and there truly are some close parallels. However, he goes further in suggesting the parallels are unsurprising "if we grant the common origin" (H.Coote Lake, 1931, p.145). He also suggests that similar changes took place in Thrace as are supposed to have taken place in England:

> "The Thracian play resembles a blend of two of our English festivals, the mummers' play and Plough Monday celebration. When the spring custom of mummers' plays was transferred to

> Christmastide in England, the two became confused, and something similar may have taken place in Thrace." *(H.Coote Lake, 1931, p.145)*

He argues that the Balkan plays have most of the items in Murray's sequence, and that the English plays have even more. However, he attaches considerable importance to "the recognition" of the victim before the doctor is called. Maybe it is because other writers have not sympathised with this view that this paper has not featured more prominently in the literature. He also perhaps attaches more importance to the supernumerary characters than is justifiable.

Commendably, Coote Lake finished his paper with a note of caution:

> "It is necessary to be very careful with an identification as vague as this. 'The fact that we can get the same scheme out of two stories does not prove their common origin.' But there is a duty to call attention to any real probability in order to direct the interest of students who come later."[2] *(H.Coote Lake, 1931, p.149)*

In 1933, E.K.Chambers published *The English Folk-Play*, which was largely an update of the "Mummers' Play" chapter in his earlier *Mediaeval Stage* (1903). Much of it is purely descriptive, but as before, he makes comparisons with a wide range of other folk customs and non-folk drama.

Reviewing the book, E.P.Baker (1934) pointed out that it had not moved on much from the 1903 work. However:

> "…if we feel at the end that we are not far in advance of the previous position, we at least realize that our ideas have been somewhat solidified, and that perhaps there really is no direction in which to break out…" *(E.P.Baker, 1934, p.177)*

This could be interpreted as saying that folk play scholarship was in a rut - or maybe it was just Chambers. Nonetheless, there was some movement. Chambers' main innovation is to propose a new class of English folk play - the "Plough Play". In many ways this is an alternative term for the "Wooing Play" proposed by C.R.Baskervill (1924), and both have been used synonymously by later authors. If

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[2] The quotation is from a review by A.Kellgren Cyriax (1928), in which he considered C.W.Von Sydow's discussion of the variants of the "human son of a bear" story.

there is a difference, it is perhaps that Chambers gives more prominence to the Recruiting Sergeant plays within this class. The term "Plough Play" derives from the fact that most of these plays from the East Midlands were performed on Plough Monday.

Chambers was sceptical of the importance given by Baskervill to the wooing motif itself in these plays, seeing these parts of the plays as modern additions to the older ordinary Mummers' plays.

> "My own impression is that it is best to regard the divergence of
> the Plough Plays from the ordinary type of mummers' play as due
> to the merging of the traditional *ludus*-motive of Death and Revival
> with an independent Wooing Play of later origin."*(E.K.Chambers, 1933, p.235)*

The other new evidence he considered was the by now familiar batch of Balkan plays. He uses these to bolster his concept of ritual origins:

> "The Balkan *ludi*, especially that at Haghios Gheorghios, and
> presumably therefore the conjectural old English *ludus*, to which
> they show so close a resemblance, can hardly be anything but
> survivals of ceremonies intended to promote agricultural fertility."

(E.K.Chambers, 1933, p.220)

Reviewers received Chambers' book fairly well. H.Coote Lake (1934) reviewed it for *Folk-lore* and the prolific reviewer E.P.Baker (1934) reviewed it for the *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*. To an extent, the reviewers had a synoptic view. They both endorsed the view that the texts probably came from a single unidentified source of approximately Elizabethan age. Similarly, they agreed that the actions and characters of the play are older, and they both chose to highlight this with Chambers' reference to the 1553 Jack of Lent procession in London, with its quack doctor, taken from Henry Machyn's diary.

Coote Lake's review is fairly uncritical and routine, whereas Baker's longer review displays an independence of spirit, dissenting from some of Chambers' conclusions. For instance, Baker is unhappy about the unity of the sword dances and the plays. He also appears to be ambivalent about the recorded history of the plays. All the texts and descriptions are late and degenerated, with nothing older than

Revesby. Before that, there are little more than hints - such as the Jack of Lent procession - which Baker appears on balance to accept. On the other hand, there are historical gaps of a century or more that he finds difficult to explain. Also, some of the earlier evidence is somewhat generic, implying a need for caution. For example:

> "…the quack, in one form or another, is a pervasive figure, found in classical as well as medieval literature, and his ramifications are many."
> *(E.P.Baker, 1934, p.176)*

The various flaws in Chambers' *English Folk-Play* are discussed more fully later in the Critique. However, suffice to say that despite its flaws, it has unfortunately continued to be used as a standard text.

Joseph Needham

The scientist and morris dancer Joseph Needham made passing reference to mummers' plays in his geographical study on ceremonial dance (1936). However, he did consider the relationship between sword dances and the plays, concluding that:

> "…We could add that the Mummers' play without the Sword dance may be secondary degeneration, or that the two things may have been at first quite separate and later entered into a symbiotic union, where geographical and cultural conditions were favourable."
>
> *(J.Needham, 1936, p.39)*

Needham's was one of the first English folklore works to try to compile and classify all known sources for a particular type of custom. As such, its prime importance was as a model for the future lists of plays and other customs compiled by Alex Helm, and others. Additionally, he attempted to explain distribution patterns of different dance types in terms of historical geography, and especially in terms of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Danish territorial divisions.

His search for sources was systematic, within the libraries at Cambridge and Cecil Sharp House. He particularly addressed the absence of ceremonial dance traditions in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, a lack also occurring with the plays. Needham extensively searched the specialist collections on these counties in the library of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. He interpreted his lack of success

as firm negative evidence against the existence of ceremonial dances in these counties (J.Needham, 1936, p.19)

Folk Dancers get in on the Act

From the end of the Second World War to about 1970, the study of English folk drama largely fell into the hands of folk dance enthusiasts and the EFDSS. As mentioned earlier when discussing C.J.Sharp (1913), D.Kennedy (1930) and R.J.E.Tiddy (1923), folk dance enthusiasts had a vested interest in trying to link folk drama to folk dance. At times they were myopically dogmatic in their belief of ritual origins, and perhaps following the later example of E.K.Chambers, they were often less than academically rigorous. A classic case of this lack of rigour is Douglas Kennedy.

In his article on *Dramatic Elements in the Folk Dance* (1949), Kennedy asserts that the Plough Plays are older than the Mummers' Plays:

> "We are now able to distinguish between one form, the true folk survival, which Chambers called the 'Plough Play', and another, the 'Mummers' Play' bearing many marks of literary influence."
>
> *(D.Kennedy, 1949, p.1)*

To support this view, Kennedy refers to a wide range of folk customs from "Europe" (in reality only the Balkans) and from England. However, the article is full of woolly ideas, tenuous connections and wishful thinking. There is not a reference in sight. The only reason it warrants a mention, apart from it being a bad example, is because it appears to be the first publication to implicate the Rumanian *Calusari* custom in the debate as an extension of the Balkan parallels, with possible connections to linked sword dances. Kennedy may therefore have influenced the ideas of contemporaneous scholars such as Alex Helm and Margaret Dean-Smith.

By the 1950s, theories of origin for the folk plays seem to have become consolidated. The principal tenets at the time can be summarised as follows:

1. The plays originated from a springtime pagan fertility ritual enacting the annual life cycle, in which the death and resurrection scene represented the death of the old year and the rebirth of the new.

2. The Plough Plays or Wooing Plays were regarded as "the proper play" - older in origin than the more common Saint George Mummers' Plays.

3. The wooing scene was also seen as symbolic of fertility.

4. The English plays shared a common origin with parallel Balkan plays, particularly those recorded from Thrace.

5. The text of the Saint George plays was a relatively modern accretion, probably deriving ultimately from Richard Johnson's *Famous History of the Seven Champions of Christendom* - notwithstanding Chambers' refutation.

6. Some features were probably inherited from mediaeval mystery and miracle plays.

Violet Alford outlined these views in her *Introduction to Folklore* (1952), emphasising the Balkan parallels, including the *Calusari*. This was a very popular book, and there can be no doubt it was instrumental in disseminating these ideas on folk play origins to a very wide audience.

There were, however, some crumbs of common sense here and there. In Nottingham, local collector Sydney Race, who had first been active in the 1920s (S.R., 1924 and 1926), expressed different opinions in a newspaper article. He rejected the idea of pagan survivals because of the lack of evidence:

> "There is no mention of the play or of any of its characters by Shakespeare or contemporary dramatists." *(S.R., 1947)*

Instead, he suggested they may have originated in the 18th century, becoming popular in the 19th century under the influence of chapbooks and popular literature. He also felt that the Plough Monday plays were more recent than the Mummers' plays, having split off from them only in the mid 19th century.

A key paper in the 1950s was M.W.Barley's *Plough Plays in the East Midlands* (1953). This is primarily descriptive, summarising a large number of Plough Play texts, most of which were new. His approach mirrors the descriptive sections of E.K.Chambers' *English Folk-Play*. Barley stands out from all the other folk play scholars of his day in not resorting to speculation on origins, and sticking to plain documented facts. His only foray into origins was to explore the proposal by J.Needham (1936) that there might be a possible link between Plough Monday and the Danelaw. He did this by enquiring about customs similar to Plough Plays in Denmark. However, as these enquiries drew a blank, he concluded that:

> "The plough play has not survived in Denmark, and its persistence in the Danelaw, whatever its origin in time or place, is an expression of the cultural homogeneity which the mixed Anglo-Danish population there developed and preserved for so many centuries."
>
> *(M.W.Barley, 1953, p.70)*

If the content of Barley's paper was one of the academic bright spots of 1950s folk drama studies, the circumstances of its publication were a disgrace. This is because Douglas Kennedy inserted a half-page footnote at the end of Barley's paper, by virtue of his senior position in the publishing body, the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Somewhat patronising in tone, and perhaps abusing Kennedy's authority, it sought to interpret Barley's material in terms of the established dogma of symbolic ritual origins. Similarly, several small footnotes inserted by Violet Alford also appeared to contradict Barley's conclusions or assumptions on minor points.[3]

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[3] Barley was unaware of these footnotes until after the paper had been published (M.W.Barley, personal communications, and P.T.Millington, 1992). At best this was uncommunicative editing. At worst it was a deliberate attempt to doctor Barley's conclusions. My view is that it was probably poor editing. But whatever the reason, Barley quite rightly took umbrage, and as a result, he permanently gave up his interest in folk play studies. He turned his attention instead to archaeology and vernacular architecture.

Alex Helm, Margaret Dean-Smith and Friends

Barley apart, folk play studies in the 1950s and 1960s were pursued by a group of people centred around Alex Helm and Margaret Dean-Smith. Of these two, Dean-Smith was the main theoretician, but because of his large collection and his accessible publications Helm became more prominent. Both became interested in plays through involvement in a project to examine Ordish's Papers - which had lain neglected at the Folklore Society until then.

Helm appears to have been obsessed by ritual origins. The disproportionate coverage of this aspect of English folk plays is a hallmark of his publications, as is his tendency to launch straight into overseas parallels. His, first booklet *The English Folk Play: A General Survey* (1954) is a case in point. Rather than starting with an introduction, or terms of reference, Helm jumps straight into four pages on "origins". And the first page of these is a description of a parallel Hunza hobby horse custom. This is used to support his view that "...it is likely that we have in our own Folk Play an example of a once world wide custom" (A.Helm, 1954, p.3). However, the only evidence that Helm offers to justify this world wide view are the Hunza custom and plays from the Balkans. This is a brave extrapolation.

He reiterates the established view of the "original" custom:

> "it is quite likely that in its basic form the Play was a mimetic ritual for three people, the tribal Priest-cum-Medicine Man and two combatants. Of these, the former was the more important, and under his tutelage the other two, by miming, re-enacted the overcoming of summer by winter, and the rebirth of summer due to the medicine man's powers - a form of imitative magic."
>
> *(A.Helm, 1954, p.4)*

In addition to this view, Helm believed that the custom was a form of luck visit:

> "The Play, in addition to its mimetic triumph of summer over winter, is also concerned with bringing luck to the places visited..."
> "To bring luck, the visitors had not to be recognised, the original costume being designed to disguise identity."   *(A.Helm, 1954, p.7)*

Because Helm felt the prime purpose of the costume was to disguise the performers, and not to add dramatic realism, he asserted that the non-representational style of costume was original, and dressing in part a modern decadence.

At this stage Helm introduces Hobby Horses into his hypotheses. When talking about the character of the Doctor, he suggests that the Doctor could at one stage have been a hobby-horse character (A.Helm, 1954, p.10). If one adds Helm's discussion of the link the plays had with sword dance, his theories of origin become a confused catch-all view.

When he gets away from theory, Helm's contribution is more lasting. His descriptions of the drama and of the individual characters are generally good. More importantly, he was one of the first people to make a concerted attempt to collect information on all aspect of the subject, not just texts, but also details of costume, performance, etc. In doing this, he followed the example of J.Needham's (1936), geographical listing of English folk dances. Helm's 1954 booklet was his first attempt to produce such a list for folk plays, and marked the start of a project which ultimately resulted *English Ritual Drama* (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967). This will be discussed later in the chronology.

Margaret Dean-Smith's two papers (1958 and 1966) are broadly similar. Her view is that the play was originally a form of "the Luck Visit", and while she portrays the plays as symbolising the life cycle of man, she does not appear to suggest that the original custom was a fertility ritual. In her second paper she almost appears to be condescending about this view which was influenced by J.G.Frazer (1890) and W.Mannhardt (1875):

> "...They have conferred on the humble seasonal play of peasant people the conception of a magico-religious observance expected to benefit those assisting at its performance."   *(M.Dean-Smith, 1966, p.90)*

Her first paper usefully formalised a number of points:

> "My first proposition is that the play and any significance it may have, resides in the action : the text is a local accretion alone, often both superfluous and irrelevant. The Play can exist in action alone, without a word spoken,..."   *(M.Dean-Smith, 1958, p.244)*

This proposition has drawn much criticism from more recent workers for various reasons. However, I will contend later that there is in fact an element of truth in Dean-Smith's proposition. In her second paper, she seemed to tone down this proposition, but it clearly remained her view that:

> "...As in other religious rites, the essence subsists in the act, not in
> the liturgy, or text with which time, tradition, or even comic fancy
> have clothed it."   *(M.Dean-Smith, 1966, p.99)*

Because she saw the text as unimportant, Dean-Smith was happy to dismiss any idea of an origin from mediaeval mysteries and moralities. She also dismissed any link with versions of the *Seven Champions of Christendom* published by Richard Johnson and by John Kirke.

Dean-Smith's second proposition formalised what earlier scholars had mainly implied:

> "...My second proposition is that in England, practically all the
> examples we have of the Play are fragments of a single entity, and
> that if careful examination be made of these hundreds of fragments
> it is possible to perceive the elements and outline of the cyclic
> whole."   *(M.Dean-Smith, 1958, p.245)*

It would follow from this view that all the modern folk plays must be regarded as degenerate versions of the original whole, and this is a recurring theme in her papers. Adult performances degenerated to children's performances. Chapbook versions of the play "are degenerate and they have successfully misled popular opinion for a century" (M.Dean-Smith, 1958, p.248). Dressing in part instead of stylistically is degenerate. And so on.

Dean-Smith's view was that the English plays were substantially identical to the Eastern European plays - by which she meant the now familiar plays from the Balkans. The main purpose of her second paper was in fact to establish this link firmly. It was the English "Bridal Play" (i.e. the Multiple Wooing and Recruiting Sergeant plays) which exhibited the closest similarities with the Balkan examples.

"English Ritual Drama"

Following the publication of his 1954 booklet, Alex Helm formed a team to collect and index all available records on folk plays, folk dances and related customs such as Plough Monday and May Day. The other members of this team were E.C.Cawte, N.Peacock and R.J.Marriott. The result was a comprehensive collection of material - now housed as the Alex Helm Collection in the Manuscripts Department at University College London - and several reference publications loosely modelled on J.Needham's 1936 listing. The most important of these with regard to Quack Doctor plays was *English Ritual Drama: A geographical index* (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967) - commonly referred to by the abbreviation *ERD*.

Despite the mass of new information they gathered, Helm said in a paper on the plays that appeared shortly before the publication of *ERD*:

> "…Our view… has not varied except in detail since we had amassed enough material to be able to form opinions: for example, we still believe that the Play is best considered as an action, that it has its origins in primitive religious beliefs, and that it is the most widespread men's ceremonial custom which has survived into this Century."   *(A.Helm, 1965, p.118)*

On the other hand, in the same paper, Helm gives a balanced view of the possible relevance of Johnson's *Famous Historie of the Seavern Champions of Christendom* and related works for the plays. He also rather grudgingly accepts that chapbooks were used by traditional groups.

Returning to *ERD*, the key importance of this slim tome is its listing of some 1165 accounts of folk plays, and its correspondingly large, if idiosyncratically arranged bibliography. Although it is now out of date, it continues to be one of the key reference works for the subject, and is likely to remain so for some time. To some however, it was a disappointment, because there was no re-analysis of the wealth of new material that was unearthed in its compilation. There were no new ideas, apart from weak attempts to match their geographical distribution maps of the plays with other historical and geographical patterns.

The introduction to *ERD* includes a discussion of origins. This offered little that was new. It promulgated the theory that the plays originated from a pagan fertility ritual, and was assiduous in establishing links between English plays and the usual Balkan plays:

> "It seems entirely reasonable not only to regard our British plays as the remnants of a magical fertility ceremony, but also to think that they once resembled the Balkan performances even more closely than they do now." *(E.C.Cawte et al, 1967, p.24)*

This was important to them, because more then ever before, they followed the dogmas of J.G.Frazer. Explicitly, they believed the plays to be "... a form of the ceremony of revitalisation discussed by Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, and by others" (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967, p.11).

The Beginning of the End of Ritual Origins

Although it failed to put forward any new ideas itself, *ERD* made available material which allowed a new generation of researchers to re-examine the subject. Inevitably however, the old views did not disappear immediately. Alan Brody (1969) was quick off the mark in producing a new book so soon after *ERD*. It was primarily a consolidation of existing ideas - evidently intending to update E.K.Chambers *The English Folk-Play* and/or expand the introduction to *ERD*. He says nothing new on origins, his own views being definitely oriented towards ancient Greece.

Helm was himself working on a book, when he died prematurely in 1970. His colleagues Norman Peacock and E.C.Cawte prepared the book for posthumous publication, and it finally appeared ten years later (A.Helm, 1980). It is a useful book, containing many texts and illustrations, but by the time it was published, it was largely out of date in terms of its theoretical points.

Helm persists with his view that the plays derived from a pagan fertility ritual. Again, he makes extensive use of the parallels between the English plays and a wide variety of European "ceremonies". Chief of these are the Roumanian *Calusari* and the Balkan *Kalogheroi*, but he also includes a couple of references to customs from Switzerland and Germany which feature a revival by a Doctor (A.Helm, 1980, p.46).

An extensive appendix discusses the chapbook play texts and the influence they had on the tradition. This appendix largely repeats a booklet that he published on the chapbooks shortly before his death (A.Helm, 1969), so I will deal with them as one.

As a piece of bibliographic history, Helm's work on the chapbooks was an excellent piece of scholarship. Most chapbooks are undated, and Helm did meticulous work in tracing the histories of the relevant publishers, or indeed particular typefaces, in order to establish dates or date ranges for particular editions. He was able to show that not only were the chapbooks used by traditional teams, but may even have increased the popularity of the custom:

> "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 tradition and re-writing which was apparently acceptable."   *(A.Helm, 1969, p.32)*

As a result of this observation, Helm concluded that it was not appropriate to maintain a distinction between "traditional" and "chapbook" versions - at least in the north west of England. Nonetheless, the chapbook evidence did not dent Helm's view that the plays originated from a pagan ritual or ceremony. In his view, of course, the text was almost irrelevant to origins:

> "All surviving texts seem to be late attempts to provide an acceptable verbal accompaniment for a ceremony whose original aim had been forgotten."   *(A.Helm, 1969, p.5)*

Because many were billed as juvenile dramas and therefore aimed at children, Helm held the chapbooks responsible for the plays passing from adult to children's performances, although he offered no systematic evidence to illustrate such a change, or to show that children did not participate in the earliest performances.

The Post-*ERD* Era

Apart from these last publications of Brody and Helm, the nature of folk play scholarship changed markedly after *ERD*. People coming new to the subject now had more information available to them than their predecessors, and fewer preconceived

ideas. Roger Abrahams (1970) was first to confront the view that the plays are vestiges of some archetypal life-cycle play. He felt that:

> "To regard the 'original life-cycle play' as a total statement of the
> cycle is to place folk religious practice into the sophisticated and
> abstract frame of reference of philosophical religion."
>
> *(R.D.Abrahams, 1970, p.242)*

He rejected this perspective because he clearly felt that it was not within the capabilities of "the folk". He also thought that theory conflicts with the fact that folk play performances are overwhelmingly comic in character. Abrahams had documented the folk drama of St.Kitts and Nevis in the West Indies, of which a Quack Doctor play was only one of many folk plays performed there. This experience led to become unhappy with the focus of scholarship on the Quack Doctor plays:

> "We have overemphasized the mumming play at the expense of
> other types of British folk theatre, perhaps because it was the most
> widespread play, but also certainly because it seemed to be a
> complete and integral ritualistic movement." (*R.D.Abrahams, 1970,* p.257)

E.T.Kirby (1971) was next to criticise the established theories, rejecting the midwinter fertility ritual theory of origins because:

> "(1) these performances were not related to the calendar and were
> not seasonal in nature; (2) the combat represented in them was not
> a 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."
>
> *(E.T.Kirby, 1971, p.276)*

In his view, the error was caused by the misplaced romanticism and fictions of the Cambridge school of folklore, inspired by J.G.Frazer. Kirby's main factual evidence is that the annual times of performance are so spread out that they cannot be considered to be a midwinter custom. He proposes that the key character of the plays is the Doctor, and that the main purpose of the combat is to provide the Doctor with a patient. His argument is that the identity of the combatants is so variable, and

the outcome of the combat so unpredictable, that the combat can only have been of subsidiary significance (E.T.Kirby, 1971, p.278). This argument is persuasive.

Although Kirby rejects the theory of origins in a fertility ritual, he merely goes on to replace it with another survivalist view. In common with the fertility ritualists, he feels that:

> "The distribution of the play and its related forms throughout Europe leaves little doubt that it was a survival of an extensive aboriginal culture stratum and that it developed, almost certainly, from the rituals characteristic of that culture."   *(E.T.Kirby, 1971, p.276)*

Because of the prominence of the Doctor in the plays, he proposes that the plays derive from some shamanistic rite. This idea was of course first proposed by T.F,Ordish (1891, p.331), but this is not acknowledged by Kirby.

To be more specific, Kirby proposes that:

> "...The performances derive from two functions of the shaman; the mummers' play from his curing session or séance, the related hobby-horse dances from the trance dances at which he officiated."

> *(E.T.Kirby, 1971, p.276)*

He sees the pretended extraction of a tooth as being directly equivalent to a shaman exhibiting some object (e.g. a bone) which embodied the "pain" extracted from his patient. The tangle-talk of the Doctor's lists of cures and travels are seen to be equivalent to the babbling of a shaman when in a trance, during which he may often "describe" the spirit world. Kirby also sees the hobby-horses as relics of a shaman's "trance dance", and indirectly cites D.Kennedy's view (via E.K.Chambers, 1933, p.213 & 216) that the Doctor and the Hobby Horse can be treated as one character.

Kirby's paper led to an open correspondence between himself and E.C.Cawte in the columns of the *Journal of American Folklore*. Cawte (1972) challenged several of Kirkby's facts, but his key point was that if Kirby was to show that the plays were a relic of shamanism, this did not thereby invalidate the possibility of it having also been a life-cycle ritual. Cawte also challenged Kirby's view that the plays were not

seasonal. Kirby (1973) responded by citing statistics from Cawte's own book - *ERD* - to support his view that the plays are not seasonal. His alternative proposal is that the shamanistic rituals were at one time spread randomly throughout the year, but became focused on particular festivals because that was when people had time available.

Kirby also criticised Cawte's use of the Balkan parallels because he relies so much on an indirect report of one performance in Thrace (R.M.Dawkins, 1906). Even so, Kirby went on to reinterpret this report in terms of shamanism, basing his argument purely on symbolic parallels. Cawte (1974) closed the correspondence by stating that Kirby had only demonstrated that the plays did not all take place at the same season. He expressed the view that the matter of origins remained open because the historical gap between the earliest plays and the latest likely pre-Christian ceremonies was too large. To counter Kirby's shamanistic origins, he states that the Doctor should be interpreted mainly as a comic character with no deeper meaning. To add my own postscript to this correspondence, Kirby at the very least forced Cawte and others to justify their views. This was progress.

Another radical idea for its time came from Mike Preston (1971), who was inspired by the collection of essays on *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland* edited by H.Halpert and G.M.Story (1969). These essays did not address origins, but they did show that Quack Doctor plays and non-play house-visiting customs existed side by side under the same name. This led Preston to suggest more generally that it was the house-visiting that was the original custom, to which the plays had been added later as an elaboration.

Reviewing *The English Mummers and their Plays* for *English Dance and Song*, Tony Green criticised Brody's perpetuation of the thesis "that the mumming play is a vestigial form of an ancient ritual" (A.E.Green, 1972). However, Green's use of a sarcastic fictional dialogue between an ethereal scholar and a down to earth mummer will have done little to win over his readership, most of whom at the time were likely to have believed the ritualist line. Green's key point was that with ideas on origins going nowhere, no progress has been made on other

unanswered questions regarding the relationships between different play types, performance and social context, and the possible significance of the various characters.

Around the same time, the theatre historian Rosemary Woolf (1972) also touched on folk plays in her discussion of English mediaeval mystery plays. She concluded that there was "nothing in their style that suggests the Middle Ages as the original time of composition" (R.Woolf, 1972, p.36), and elaborated by noting that the surviving texts "are written more in the manner of the urban hack-writers of later periods with their tedium and flatness." (R.Woolf, 1972, p.37). Furthermore, she was confident enough to propose that "it was the religious drama of the church that influenced the folk-play and suggested the usefulness of dialogue and not vice versa" (R.Woolf, 1972, p.37). Her conclusions were of course restricted only to the late provenance of the folk plays *per se*. She acknowledged that "the village ceremonies that preceded it are referred to from the beginning of the thirteenth century." (R.Woolf, 1972, p.37)

This was a fundamental change for theatre historians, because hitherto they had always worked from the premise that folk plays were survivals of pre-Shakespearean drama - no doubt aided and abetted by E.K.Chambers' classic textbooks.

The New Folk Drama Studies

In the early 1970s, many of the people newly interested in researching folk plays developed an association with the University of Sheffield, with Paul Smith and his wife Georgina (now Boyes) acting in a mediating rôle. Together with John Widdowson, they prepared a field research guide (G.Smith et al, 1972), that encouraged the new breed of folk play student to consider a wide variety ancillary and contextual topics, rather than focus on the texts alone.

From this activity came a series of Traditional Drama Conferences, annual from 1978 to 1985, and less frequently thereafter. A great many new ideas, new approaches and new methodologies were presented at these conferences, and most of the old ideas were re-examined. This amounted to a revolution in the subject, but

unfortunately the beneficial effects of these conferences were marred by the slowness with which the papers appeared in print - and at the time of writing (May 2002), many have still not been published.

The success of the conferences led to the establishment of a periodical newsletter *Roomer*, and ultimately to the inauguration of the Traditional Drama Research Group (TDRG) in 1981. The original stimulus for this small group was a cooperative indexing project. However they all shared a common scepticism concerning the established theories of origins, and became doubtful about the supposed great age of the plays. In re-examining the evidence and methods of the old school, the TDRG and its associates substantially invalidated the theory of a pagan or mediaeval origin for the plays.

These scholars usually worked on different specialist aspects of the plays, so from now on in the chronology, it is difficult to maintain a logical flow of ideas from paper to paper. Further chronological incongruities are caused by the extensive delays between papers being presented at the Traditional Drama conferences and their publication. The issues and ideas they raise are only summarised briefly here, and are dealt with more fully in the ensuing chapters.

Continuing the Quest for Data

First of all the gathering of new information proceeded apace. Following the publication of *ERD* and until Helm's death in 1970, the Guizer Press – the imprint of Cawte, Helm and Peacock - published a number of books and booklets. Among these were regional guides to the plays of Cheshire (A.Helm, 1968), Ireland (A.Gailey, 1968a), and, after a long gestation period, Staffordshire (A.Helm, 1984). These basically expanded the relevant listings in *ERD*, with narrative, quotations from sources, and texts. Whether inspired by these or by *ERD* itself, new researchers set about compiling such guides for their own areas. Steve Roud and his collaborators were particularly prolific for the southern English counties (S.Roud, 1980, 1981 and 1984, S.Roud & M.Bee, 1991, S.Roud & P.Marsh, 1978 and 1980). I compiled a guide for Nottinghamshire (P.T.Millington, 1980a), and

Brian Hayward's book on the Scottish plays might also be included (B.Hayward, 1992). Most recently, Eddie Cass (2001) has covered Lancashire. The format of these guides was variable, but they incorporated much newly discovered material, usually more than doubling the number of known locations over *ERD*.

Helm's work on the English chapbooks was mirrored in Ireland by Alan Gailey (1974), with similar conclusions with regard to the chapbooks being used by performing groups. Helm and Gailey's work on chapbooks has been continued by Mike Preston, Georgina and Paul Smith. They have undertaken a systematic search for every copy of known folk play chapbooks, with a view to determining their bibliographic history. Their early *Interim Checklist* greatly expanded Helm's list of chapbooks (M.J.Preston, M.G.Smith & P.S.Smith, 1976a), and subsequent definitive publications have covered *Alexander and the King of Egypt* (M.J.Preston, M.G.Smith & P.S.Smith, 1977), and the *Christmas Rhyme* chapbooks (G.Boyes, M.J.Preston & P.Smith, 1999 and P.Smith & M.J.Preston, 2000). Now working with a new collaborator – Eddie Cass – their study of *The Peace Egg* chapbooks is awaited with bated breath.

The work of this group has greatly improved the bibliographic history of the chapbooks, and highlighted their significance for disseminating the plays among performing groups. An important achievement has been their dating of the J.White edition of the *Alexander* chapbook to c1746-1769, which makes it both the oldest known chapbook and the oldest full folk play text. However, it remains to be seen what significance this work has for origins, since the consensus is that the *Alexander* chapbook was probably derived from a slightly earlier oral text.

The same group also investigated the exemplar texts much used by the old school. Georgina Boyes (1985) re-examined three such - Revesby, Ampleforth and Papa Stour. In each case she was able to demonstrate abnormal circumstances of collection or performance which rendered them unique, unreliable and unsuitable for detailed comparative analysis. Even so, a key achievement of this group was their work on the Revesby text. Having published a monograph on the manuscript in the British Library (M.J.Preston, M.G.Smith & P.S.Smith, 1976b),

which was evidently a fair copy of an earlier manuscript, they then discovered the original manuscript held by the Lincolnshire Archives (P.Smith & G.Smith, 1980, and M.J.Preston & P.Smith, 1999).

Similar reassessments took place outside this group. Duncan Broomhead (1982) examined a Cheshire play in the papers of Francis Douce, dated before 1788. I discovered that the St.Kitts and Nevis *Mummies* plays were based on the composite play published by J.H.Ewing in 1884 (P.Millington 1996). More recently I re-examined the manuscript of the play originally ascribed to Mylor, Cornwall in the late 19th century, and discovered that it really belongs to Truro in the late 1780s (P.Millington, forthcoming).

Computerisation

With all this data accumulating, there was an increasing need to review and evaluate it. However, the volume of data was causing handling difficulties, so computers were brought to bear on the problem. Mike Preston built the first database, which was a database of full texts, and from which he generated a KWIC (Key Word In Context) index for use in textual studies. Alas his electronic files no longer exist, although paper copies of the index are deposited in several archives. (M.J.Preston, 1975, 1983 and personal communication).

Paul Smith digitised the data in *ERD*, and a few paper listings were distributed among friends, but ultimately this data was merged and updated with another database built by Steve Roud that was eventually commercially published in electronic form (S.Roud & P.Smith, 1993). The source data files have since been passed on to Ron Shuttleworth, Folk-Play Archivist of the Morris Ring.

Ervin Beck built an electronic inventory of the Alex Helm Collection, in association with Paul Smith, while on sabbatical leave with CECTAL at the University of Sheffield (E.Beck, 1982 and E.Beck & P.Smith, 1985). Paper listings were distributed to folk play researchers for proof reading but this process did not go very far. This database has since been published in its rough state on the Internet (E.Beck, 2000). The same website – www.folkplay.info – hosts the

database that I compiled for Nottinghamshire plays and related customs (P.T.Millington, 1999). Additionally, as part of this study, I have built a full-text database of play scripts, not dissimilar to that of Preston, and this has been published online during its construction (P.Millington, 1999-2002).

Computers have also been used to analyse folk plays. Once again, Preston was first, using a statistical method to characterise texts, and compare folk plays with certain literary texts (M.J.Preston, 1972b, 1977a and 1977b). Paul Smith and myself also used computers to perform cluster analysis - Smith to analyse Derby Tup texts (P.Smith, 1985a), and myself to analyse Nottinghamshire folk play casts (P.T.Millington, 1988). I also used computers to automate a graphical method of displaying the dialogue structure of plays, although this technique has not yet been used in any specific studies (P.T.Millington, 1980b and 1982b).

Criticising the Old Scholarship

Criticism of the Old Scholarship is covered in detail in the next chapter. In summary, the most articulate and assiduous critic was Craig Fees. In a paper first presented at *Traditional Drama 1982*, his initial point was that the scope of the term folk play had become too narrow too soon - largely thanks to E.K.Chambers' books (C.Fees, 1994). This meant that some relevant dramatic material was never considered, to the detriment of folk play scholarship.

Later, provoked by two separate cases of what he regarded as sloppy scholarship by Sandra Billington (1983) and Gareth Morgan (1989 and 1990), fees published damning remarks on the flawed ideas and thinking they embodied (C.Fees, 1984 and 1989). Both cases led to follow-up correspondence, with Cawte (1985) defending Billington, but with Fees having the last word both times (C.Fees, 1985 and 1991). In an unconventional move, Fees wagered Morgan £50 that he could not defend his thesis that the word *Mummers* derived from the Greek *Momoeri*, before a board of professional folklorists. The bet was not taken up.

One of Fees criticisms was that the Old Scholars had denied that time and space were relevant factors. Thus, by having equated English and Balkan plays,

they ignored a geographical gap of over 1500 miles. They also ignored a documentary hiatus of several centuries between Quack Doctor folk plays and mediaeval plays. As mentioned earlier, E.T.Kirby (1973) had criticised the over-reliance on one account of the Greek plays – that of R.M.Dawkins (1906). Walter Puchner (1983) examined this over-emphasis in detail from the standpoint of information transfer, and attributed the popularity of Dawkins' paper to it having been published in English in a high profile journal. A profusion of additional accounts in Greek and Bulgarian had been ignored, probably for reasons of language and disciplinary insularity.

Performance and Context

Many of the New Scholars have undertaken detailed recording and analysis of modern folk play performances and their contexts. While this work addresses one of Tony Green's criticisms of the Old Scholarship, the results have not really had much relevance for origins. The exceptions perhaps are Georgina Smith's paper on chapbooks and traditional plays (G.Smith, 1981), and the study of Pace-Egging in Rochdale by Stevenson and Buckley (1985), which show that the use of chapbooks was as important to the tradition as oral transmission.

Of more relevance to origins was the work of Tom Pettitt, who was interested in validating potential mediaeval and early modern sources, where the absence of common text means having to rely on ancillary features. Having decided that the presence of Saint George or a doctor or the name *Mummers* were insufficient validation on their own, he set about defining a comprehensive contextual typology for all forms of "customary drama", of which "dramatic mumming" is one particular form (T.Pettitt, 1990 and 1995). Armed with this typology he was then ready to reassess many of the early sources that had been put forward by the Old Scholars (T.Pettitt, 1994). His conclusion was that most of the evidence before the early 18th century has little or no relevance to folk plays.

Farewell Survivalism

Thus far, the rejection of pre-Christian or mediaeval origins was based on qualitative considerations – poor definitions, flawed methodologies, untested assumptions, etc. These criteria alone were enough for folk play scholars – such as Steve Tillis (1999) - to continue to reject the old theories. Outside of the field of folk drama, the sword dancing historian Stephen Corrsin (1997) also questioned sword dance plays as the shared ancestor of both the sword dances and the non-dance plays, seeing them instead as a modern hybrid. This further undermined the Old Scholars' concept of one all-encompassing *Ur*-ritual.

The decisive factor that eventually led to more general rejection of pre-Christian and mediaeval origins was the lack of evidence for the plays prior to the 18th century. The lack of early evidence had been an issue even for the earliest folk play scholars. As early as 1934, R.Crompton Rhodes, responding to the publication of Chambers' *English Folk-Play* had suggested that the hiatus brought these ideas into question. Subsequent research failed to fill the void. Tom Pettitt (1980, p.72) felt that the absence of early texts and records was a serious obstacle. Georgina Smith (1981) repeated this concern and noted the contrast with many other customs, as did I later (P.Millington, 1989a). In a praiseworthy change of direction at the London *Calendar Customs* conference 1984, Cawte started the quantification of this contrast by comparing the earliest recorded dates of several calendar customs, including the plays. He concluded that the plays were probably of literary origin (E.C.Cawte, 1993).

One problem with citing lack of data as evidence is that there is always a suspicion that the vacuum may be due to accidents of collection. Outside of folk drama, the *Early Morris Project* showed how systematic archival searching could turn up an abundance of early records (M.Heaney, 1988, J.Forrest & M.Heaney, 1991, M.Heaney & J.Forrest, 1991, and K.Chandler, 1993a and 1993b). The Records of Early English Drama (1976) project - *REED* - did the same for pre-Elizabethan drama (I.Lancashire, 1984). While a similar systematic search has not yet been done for early folk play records, *REED* and the *Early Morris Project*

would have reported any early records of our plays had they found them. This therefore combines with Pettitt's work to underline the lack of historical data.

The lack of records before the 18th century and the contrast with other customs has become the most persuasive argument against survivalist origins, and has been cited by several recent British authors – J.Simpson & S.Roud (2000), E.Cass (2001), E.Cass & S.Roud (2002).

A key player in promulgating this view is Ronald Hutton. His interest is in the pagan religions of the British Isles, in particular, trying to sort out real facts from the morass of beliefs regarding pagan origins that have sprung up the past century. Initially, he accepted the idea of pre-Christian origins for the plays (R.Hutton, 1991), but by the time he published *Stations of the Sun* (1996) he had converted to the view that they were modern. Again, it is the contrast between the modern recorded history of the plays and the proven pre-Christian status of certain other customs (such as Beltane) that is persuasive. It is his apparently even-handed approach, his willingness to accept valid evidence for pagan origins that makes his rejection of such origins for the plays seem conclusive.

Moving On

Having disposed of survivalist theories of origin, the inevitable question arises, what is there to replace them? The answer is not a great deal. The idea, originally suggested by Preston (1971), that that the plays were added to a pre-existing house-visiting custom, perhaps as an extension of the entertainment already associated with the visits, is gaining acceptance (e.g. by M.J.Lovelace, 1980, T.Pettitt, 1994, and E.Cass & S.Roud, 2002). This elaboration would have taken place in the early to mid 18th century, which is when the first unequivocal play records occur. Building on this, I have suggested that the pre-existing house-visiting customs may have been the source of the non-representational costumes worn by some folk play actors (P.Millington, 1985 and 1989).

No specific source has yet been found for the play texts, although a literary provenance has been suggested as likely in principle (e.g E.C.Cawte, 1993, p.43

and J.Simpson & S.Roud, 2000, p.253). While the dating of *Alexander* chapbook makes it the oldest known script, no one has suggested that it is the ultimate source. Chapbooks have been shown to be important for disseminating the plays in certain areas, but not enough to account for the plays' nation-wide distribution.

A number of people have noted similarities between the Italian *Commedia dell' Arte* and the Quack Doctor plays (R.D.Abrahams, 1970, T.Pettitt, 1985, C.Brookes, 1988, P.Millington, 1985 and 1989). There is no real suggestion that the *Commedia dell' Arte* were a direct source for the Quack Doctor plays, rather they would have exerted their influence through their manifestations in the English theatre – the Harlequinade and pantomime. It has also been suggested that they contributed certain contemporary 18th-century theatrical conventions – verse texts, stylised dramaturgy, non-realistic costumes – and possibly the character of the Doctor. There are images in popular literature, including some folk play chapbooks that support this view.

Eddie Cass (2001) has suggested that the plays could have derived from the booth plays that were performed at fairs in the 18th century. His argument is based on images of such booths in two paintings (which also show the influence of the *Commedia dell' Arte*), and on the presence of folk play text in the script of one such play performed in Bristol in 1770 ("Anthony Pasquin, 1791). This idea requires further consideration.

Remaining tasks

In summary, the modern scholars appear to have won the battle to discredit the old theories regarding ritual origins for the plays, although the victory requires some consolidation. Unfortunately, what they have generally failed to do is propose a cohesive alternative hypothesis regarding origins, so work is required here too. In the present partial vacuum, the old theories continue to survive.

CRITIQUE OF EARLIER RESEARCH

The bibliographic survey gave a chronological outline of the development of folk play scholarship, in particular identifying when key ideas were proposed and by whom. Criticism and dissent from these views was alluded to but not discussed in detail. In this chapter these points, and others, are considered in a systematic fashion.

Previous Criticism

In the period of the old folk drama studies, including the antiquarian period, criticism is a rare commodity. There may be corrections of fact and reinterpretations of minor points, but that is all. In mainstream academic books and papers, theories on origins are advanced by a series of assertions and propositions. There is little attempt at discussion or argument. If one scholar agrees with the ideas of another, then they repeat them in their own work, usually with acknowledgment. However, it appears that if they disagree, the ideas are simply ignored or damned with faint praise. There is usually no explanation of why previous ideas have been dropped. Some proposals have sunk without trace, but the problem is that erroneous and invalid hypotheses that have not been disproved in print are more likely to re-emerge at a later date.

Of course, it is possible that in some cases scholars were unaware of each other's work, but there are clear instances where this was not so. The most significant case is the treatment of T.F.Ordish. There can be no doubt that Ordish was one of the key folk play scholars at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet, as pointed out by Dean-Smith (1966, p.90) and Alford (1967, p.232), Ordish and his ideas were almost ignored in E.K.Chambers' books, and receive no mention at all from Tiddy. Chambers picked up a couple of Ordish's points - his interpretation of paper costumes as scales (E.K.Chambers, 1933, p.84), and his view that the "…head made of iron, body made of steel" speech refers not to armour but to the frost-bound

earth in winter (E.K.Chambers, 1903, p.220). These are presented in the manner of alternative views, but Chambers effectively dismisses them with comments that are somewhat condescending. More significantly, Chambers did not pick up Ordish's proposal that the plays originated in the myths of the Norse god Odin.

Another example comes from William Sandys. Reddock, a fellow contributor to Hone (1823, cols.13-21) was the first to link folk plays to the mediaeval mystery and morality plays, although to be correct, this was more a strong implication than a firm proposal. Sandys did not take up this view, instead he said "they are supposed by many to be as old as the time of the Crusades" (W.Sandys, 1833, pp.cvii-cviii), thus repeating the views of F.Hitchins and S.Drew (1824).

This is strange in two ways. Firstly, Sandys was very familiar with mysteries and moralities. They are discussed extensively in his 1833 introduction, and he makes much use of documentary evidence in his footnotes. I suggest therefore that it appears that Sandys did not concur with Reddock's view, although there is no counter argument. Sandys was equipped to do this, but the idea was simply ignored. Secondly, Sandys' comments on the origin from the crusades are unusually non-committal. His use of the phrase "supposed by many" betrays a lack of conviction, and the absence of documentary evidence contrasts conspicuously with his treatment of other subjects. Perhaps he did not have the inclination to investigate further.

Margaret Dean-Smith was the main academic critic immediately before the publication of *English Ritual Drama*. In essence, she purports to re-assess existing theories in the light of additional material in the rediscovered Ordish Papers. However, her comments all tend towards a more generic "worldwide" view of things and away from the specific. Perhaps therefore, her criticisms are little more than new assertions and propositions in disguise.

Book Reviewers

Moving away from mainstream books and papers, a certain amount of criticism does emerge. Book reviews and provincial publications were prepared to rock the boat. O.Elton (1906) reviewing Chambers' *Mediaeval Stage* for *Folk-lore* noted the

Graeco-Roman bias of Chambers' treatment of origins, to the detriment of putative Norse ancestry. However, whilst Elton was a firm believer in many mediaeval customs having originated from pagan practices, he was prepared to suggest that the folk plays could have arisen purely for the purposes of amusement rather than for any occult reason. This is a common sense view.

G.H.Cowling (1924), reviewing Tiddy's book for the Yorkshire Dialect Society is more forthright and scathing in his rejection of pagan origins, and talks of the "devastating effect of Frazer's 'Golden Bough'". Cowling's objections are twofold. Firstly he feels that any pagan-inspired act would not have had the approval of the mediaeval church and would not have survived its sanction. Secondly, he feels that there is nothing to suggest that the play is any older than Elizabeth I. Cowling's views are not based on hard documentary evidence, but on the language style of the texts and historical allusions within them. Their validity may therefore be unsafe, and they can only relate to the texts, but nonetheless they appear to have withstood the test of time.

H.Coote-Lake (1934), reviewing Chambers' second book was also of the view that the texts and many characters are no older than the Elizabethan era, and indeed may have traceable literary sources. Otherwise, he is highly supportive of pagan origins. The recent nature of the texts is echoed by E.P.Baker (1934), also reviewing Chambers' *English Folk Play*. Baker is not openly antagonistic to pagan origins, but he makes it clear that Chambers' comparative similarities are too generic to justify links to mediaeval or religious drama. He also disagrees with the play being an integral part of the sword dance. Rather it is an incidental addition. Baker finishes by bemoaning the apparent lack of progress in the thirty year period between Chambers' two books (E.P.Baker, 1934, p.177).

Chambers has in fact been the focus of much serious criticism over his methods and the dominance his views have had over folk play scholarship. Apart from the reviews already mentioned, authors with as diverse views as Dean-Smith and C.Fees have questioned the reliability of Chambers' second book. Dean-Smith described the book as "a strange, confused work, and one which its author seemed not to realize

was long out of date before it was written." (M.Dean-Smith, 1958, p.90). Fees also questioned the reliability of Chambers' evidence.

> "E.K.Chambers can be cited as an authority only in cases of data and sources of information. The moment there is any hint of speculation or theory in his 'facts' he ceases to be an authority, and what he says must be supported independently."   *(C.Fees, 1984, p.44)*

Fees contends that Chambers was a good accumulator of sources, but he was not an original thinker:

> "...He argued major points by association in the absence of actual connection, he offered hypothesis as fact without clearly drawing the distinction. He was, in short, an unreliable factualizer, and where he departs from demonstrable data he ceases to be reliable."
>
> *(C.Fees, 1984, p.44)*

Chambers' dominance channeled folk play theory into a rut that persisted until the late 1960s (V.Alford, 1967, p.232). Whilst this is to be regretted, some of Chambers contributions continue to hold true, in particular his breakdown of the basic action into three (or six) parts from introduction to *quête*. His descriptive summary of these scenes and the various *dramatis personae* has also not been superseded, and in fact served as the model for Maurice Barley's (1953) fuller description of Plough Plays.

The New Criticism

English Ritual Drama itself drew significant criticism from Dean-Smith (1969), which was followed by responses from the authors (E.C.Cawte et al, 1969) and their collaborator Alan Gailey (1969). The authors maintained that the main purpose of the book was as an index to sources, although its idiosyncratic layout was one of Dean-Smith's complaints. However, the introductory chapter has been seen as important by later scholars, or at least treated as a position statement. Dean-Smith was unhappy with the lack of discussion in support of the conclusions, but did not miss the opportunity to reaffirm her own proposal that the action is independent of the text. S.F.Sanderson (1969) in his review noted this focus on action and ritual, and remarked on the lack of any textual analysis.

With the publication of *English Ritual Drama* we enter the era of the new folk play scholarship, one of the defining characteristics of which has been to criticise and question everything that has gone before. Their specific criticisms are incorporated later under more detailed headings, so at this point, just a summary of the key critics and the range of their interests is appropriate.

E.T.Kirby (1971) was first off the mark with his rejection of the life-cycle theory in favour of a survival from shamanism. His argument is that the new evidence shows that there is no single link to the calendar, and that the cure rather than the combat is the main element of the plays.

The bulk of the new criticism comes from what was to become the Traditional Drama Research Group. Key papers were first presented at the series of Traditional Drama Conferences held at Sheffield University from 1978 onwards, although their impact has been attenuated by prolonged publications delays, some still waiting to appear in print. A more vibrant debate took place in the pages of *Roomer*, the combined effect being that criticism is concentrated in the 1980's. The two principal critics have been Georgina Boyes (formerly Smith) and Craig Fees.

G.Boyes (1995) pointed out problems with the exemplar texts, such as Ampleforth, that had been prominent in the earlier theory. She also points out that theories based on philological similarity are not supported with documentary evidence, and she explores the limitations associated with the persistence of the unilinear concept of evolution (G.Smith, 1978).

Fees tackles the methods and assumptions of the Old Scholars, and his particular approach is to challenge new examples of old style thinking as they arise. His analysis is thorough - he is a great itemiser - and he uses formal logic with devastating effect. Following his critical analysis of one example of the old folk drama approach by S.Billington (1983), Fees (1984) makes three propositions:

1. The presence of St.George and the Dragon in a custom is not enough to link it to plays, because:

   • The Dragon is uncharacteristic of the Folk Play,

- The story of Saint George and the Dragon has been widely available in popular culture for a long time, and

- Any proposed link must be on the basis of features that are fundamentally special to the Folk Play (e.g. the death and resurrection) - which Saint George and the Dragon are not.

This point questions assumptions and definitions

2. E.K.Chambers is not to be trusted. This point questions the reliability of the Old Scholars

3. Denial of space and time is central to the Old Scholarship. This point questions methodologies.

When G.Morgan (1989) proposed that the Mummers originated from the Greek *Momoeri*, Fees (1989) was swift and penetrating, itemising the conditions required for Morgan's assertion to be true, and pointing out that the facts if anything are more supportive of the reverse derivation.

Finally, Fees (1984 and 1994) criticises the narrow English definition of what constitutes a folk play and how this came about. The scope of what a "folk play" means is also taken up by S.Richards (1983), whilst my own paper on the origins of Plough Monday (P.T.Millington, 1979) shows that the non-dramatic customs related to folk plays have been largely ignored or misinterpreted, and that taken together different pictures emerge. T.Pettitt (1994) also considers the non-play customs and in particular questions the assumption that mediaeval Mummers and customs involving St. George are comparable and historically related to modern Mummers' plays.

Flawed Methodologies

With its plethora of footnoted sources, the old folk drama scholarship gives the impression of being academically rigorous, and in some areas it certainly is. However, most of the key discussion on origins is based around ideas that are supported by plenty of verbiage but with little material fact, and sometimes an absence of logic. Fees sums up the situation as follows:

> "In the Old Folk Drama it was equally sufficient to assert and illustrate; assertion stood for argument, and illustration stood for proof. That's why it never became a science. That's why it became moribund."
> *(C.Fees, 1984, p.42)*

In short, the methods used by the old folk play scholars were generally unscientific and confused.

The majority of ideas on origins are based on perceived similarities between some aspect of the English folk plays and either a supposed ancestor or a supposed parallel descendent. It is rare for the wording of the texts to be used for this purpose, because they are seen to be secondary. (I deal with this later.) Rather, the "actions", the names for the actors and other ancillary aspects are used. Some of the proposed similarities require a good deal of imagination. However, if one accepts that a given similarity appears to be valid, then there are four possible ways in which the two entities (which I will call A and B) may be related:

- A may be derived from B

- B may be derived from A

- Both A and B may have derived from a common ancestor

- The similarity may be coincidental, in which case there is no ancestral relationship.

Given these options, it is necessary to seek supporting factual evidence to reveal which are true and which are false. Often the question will have to be left undecided when insufficient evidence is to hand. In the case of common ancestors, more than one candidate may present themselves, requiring additional investigation.

Unfortunately, the norm in the Old Scholarship is to consider only one of these alternatives, and in the case of common ancestors, either only one possibility is considered, or a hypothetical ancestor is invoked - usually Greek. There is no lateral thinking, and this is not satisfactory, although in mitigation it has to be said that H.Coote-Lake (1931) was cautious enough to quote Kellgren Cyriax's note that "the

fact that we can get the same scheme out of two stories does not prove their common origin" (A.Kellgren Cyriax, 1928, p107).

Thanks to Fees (1989 and 1991), the best characterised example is the proposal from G.Morgan (1989 and 1990) that the term *Mummer* is related to the Greek term *Momoeri*. In recent times the two terms have been used for similar types of dramatic activity in England and among the Greek speakers of Pontus in the Levant respectively. There is at least a superficial philological similarity in the names, so the idea of a relationship is attractive enough to warrant further investigation. Morgan did this, but closed down his options with an assertion that the English and Western European term *Mummers* was derived from the Greek term *Momoeri*.

Fees' thorough analysis revealed a number of flaws in Morgan's arguments. The most striking of these was that there is no record of *Momoeri* before the 19th century, whereas *Mummers* has a pedigree stretching back at least as far as the 13th century (C.Fees, 1989, p242). However, the earliest Mumming plays only occur from the late 18th century. Additionally, the activities of early Western European Mummers were different to either the Greek or modern English customs. In chronological terms alone, the available evidence does not support Morgan's proposal. On the contrary, if anything it supports the opposite possibility that the Greek *Momoeri* derived from the English *Mummers*.

If a derivation from the English Mummers seems unlikely, consider the following. Morgan unfortunately does not give any dates of performance for the Pontic plays. His earliest reference is dated 1927, so the origin of the Pontic *Momoeri* could be at any date before then, and could as easily have been a couple of decades before as several centuries before. We do not know. What we do know is that R.M.Dawkins was living in Trebizond (now Trabzun), the capital of Pontus, at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 (J.Mavrogordato, 1955). Dawkins was familiar with English Mummers plays and is well known for his collection of Thracian Greek plays. This is not to suggest that Dawkins was responsible for introducing the plays to the region (he could even have been collecting). It does show however that there was an English person with the required knowledge in the

right place at a feasible time and possibly with the motivation to introduce English-based plays.

Of course there may be as yet undiscovered Greek evidence that fills the historical gap and validates Morgan's view. However, the point is that Morgan was oblivious to his logical flaw, he did not recognise the historical gap in the Greek evidence, and therefore he did not try to fill it. Additionally he failed to consider any other options, if only to discount them.

Other old-style scholars made similar or equivalent omissions and errors in their theorising - for instance, asserting that Plough Plays are older than hero/combat plays. I should stress therefore that Morgan was not necessarily any worse than his forbears.

That Morgan chose to propose that the English Mummers derived from the Greek rather than the other way round is not surprising, bearing in mind the theoretical framework within which the old-style scholars worked.. Heavily influenced by J.G.Frazer and to a lesser degree W.Mannhardt, they believed that most customs derived from some pre-Christian ritual, especially ancient Greek and Roman, and occasionally Norse. To them, evolution is unidirectional. To them therefore it is inconceivable that the Greek customs could possibly have derived from the English play*s*, so inconceivable in their view that it was not worthy of any investigation.

E.T.Kirby's argument for shaman origins contains similar flaws. He sees parallels between the Doctor's tangle talk about cures and travels as being equivalent to a shaman's babbling when in a trance. He also sees the comic extraction of a tooth as being equivalent to a shaman extracting a supposed pathogenic object from his patient. The examples Kirby cites may have some subjective validity, although some are a bit farfetched - e.g. the comparison between the locked sword star (the glass) at Revesby with the use of mirrors by the Burgat shamans in Siberia (E.T.Kirby, 1971, p.284). However, regardless of whether the similarity is valid, Kirby does not attempt to demonstrate any historical or geographical links between the English folk plays and his parallel shamanistic

examples. For him the world-wide distribution of his shamanistic examples is enough to explain that ancestry came from an extensive aboriginal culture stratum.

Unsound though this thinking may be, it has some practical justification in that it facilitates progress of sorts. Assumptions and theories need to be re-examined periodically, but the effort required diminishes the time available for more pressing matters - such as recording a custom before it becomes extinct. It is therefore helpful to be able to take some things as read and get on with the job. This is academically acceptable, provided the assumptions *are* occasionally tested. However, in the case of the old folk drama studies this was never done, or at least not properly. Moreover, such scholarship was subjective in being directed solely at bolstering the established ideas.

Fitting Facts to Theory

One of the consequences of this apparently myopic approach is a strong tendency to try and fit facts to the theory - perhaps selectively - rather than *vice versa*. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately, depending on your point of view), fitting facts to the theory is not always easy, especially if, as appears to be the case with the old folk drama studies, the theories are wrong or seriously flawed. This results in a variety of paradoxical situations. On the one hand, proposals are generalised to such a degree that almost anything will fit, and yet on the other hand there is little hesitation in using minute details as evidence if it is felt appropriate. As I have already said much imagination may be needed, and often the arguments are counter-intuitive.

Ordish was untroubled by his obscure interpretations. As he explains:

> "If I were asked to define the greatest danger which besets folk-lore, I should say it was the obvious".   *(T.F.Ordish, 1893, p.172)*

and later on, giving us a hint that he had his critics, he says:

> "… I suppose that Mr. Obvious, if he is here … will have no patience with me…"   *(T.F.Ordish, 1893, p.172)*

The problem with Ordish is that he persistently avoids straightforward, simple explanations, preferring:

- To suggest more complex intellectual explanations requiring several times more verbiage, and

- To try to find connections - however obscure or tenuous - with Norse mythology.

A prime example of his complex explanations is his interpretation of the standard couplet "My head is made of iron, my body made of steel..." He does not take this to refer to armour:

> "The allusion may be to armour. But if the allusion in the former passage spoken by St. George were proved to be derived from the myth, we should scarcely hesitate to identify Slasher with the champion of Winter, interpreting the iron and steel and knuckle-bone as descriptive of the frost-bound earth."   *(T.F.Ordish, 1893, p.158)*

Frankly, this is artificially fitting facts to the theory and lacks common sense. The "head of iron" speech is always spoken by one or both of the adversaries in the plays, during the challenges leading up to the combat. The idea that the speech alludes to armour fits so well with its context that Ordish's alternative interpretation seems perverse.

Chambers also rejected Ordish's interpretation, but then used the same speech as evidence for characters such as the Turkish Knight and Slasher really being substitutes for the Dragon on the grounds that the lines resembled descriptions of dragons in several mediaeval and Tudor sources (Chambers , 1933, p.178). To support his argument, he suggested that ribbon and paper costumes represented the dragon's scales. However, as pointed out by A.Helm (1980, p.6) all the characters wear this type of costume, so this argument does not hold good.

A series of scholars - Kennedy, Helm and Kirby - appear similarly perverse in their attempt to equate hobby horses with the Doctor (first proposed by D.N.Kennedy, 1930). Their starting point is that the Doctor derived from ancient medicine men or shamans. In his first booklet, Helm says:

> "If the hypothesis of his origins from the medicine man is accepted, it is quite conceivable that at one stage he was a hobby-horse character. The horse was one of the animal forms assumed in ancient Greece by the Corn Spirit..." "... and the priest, or medicine man, would naturally wear the animal insignia of the horse."

> *(A.Helm, 1954, p.10)*

This stretches credulity, something which Helm's tentative phraseology suggests he was aware of. He follows his hypothesis with a desperate litany of associations of things equine with the plays in general and the Doctor in particular - to the extent of trying to link the Padstow Hobby Horse with the play.

Kirby develops Kennedy's idea further by considering hobby horses dances. In these, the costume merges horse and rider into one person - often termed a tourney horse. Kirby sees these hobby horses as having derived from trance dances in which the shaman "becomes" a horse. This provides Kirby with a reason for trying to equate horse with Doctor. As there are not many plays with horses - and then not actually dancing - this link is rather tenuous. There are horses associated with doctors in a few plays, but Kirby manages to swell their number by saying that the horse is often represented by the unseen horse that the Doctor sometimes says he has arrived on and left outside. Horses are associated with the plays in Cheshire and North Lincolnshire, but they are appended to rather than integrated with the plot. In summary Kirby's justification for a unified Doctor/horse is long and convoluted, based on tenuous links and very little evidence. The result is not persuasive.

This over-emphasis on minor features of the plays appears often. Another example is the view, typified by A.Helm (1970), that costumes that include animal skins are evidence of primitive ritual origins.

> "...As the understanding of the ceremony died, so did the purpose of the disguise. Ribbons probably replaced strips of cloth as they became more readily available, and these in turn replaced fur and foliage, worn so that the performers could identify themselves with the crops and animals whose fertility they sought to promote..."

> *(A.Helm, 1970)*

Thus, ribbon costumes are seen to be an ancient feature - older than dressing in part (A.Helm,1980 p.37). However, I have shown that both forms are equally present among the earliest play records (P.Millington, 1985). Furthermore, there are no British plays where foliage is worn - with the possible exception of the Ulster Straw Boys. The wearing of fur or skins is rare and when it occurs, is usually limited to one character such as the fool. Helm's proposition is therefore conjecture.

Over-generalisation

The above are examples of over-emphasis on fine detail, but there is also the opposite tendency to over-generalise things. Once again, Ordish is happy with this. In opposing the idea that the plays have an individual origin, he says:

> "… The other method of interpretation takes a wider view. It proceeds upon a generalisation of all the past of human life..."

(T.F.Ordish, 1893, p.156)

How general is it possible to be? This has to be too extreme.

E.K.Chambers (1903) divides the performance of the plays into three main sections - Presentation, Drama and *Quête* - although he subdivides the drama into four parts - vaunts, dispute and combat, lament and cure. A.Helm 91980, p.28) keeps the main threefold divisions but refers to the drama instead as Combat with cure. Helm's "combat with cure" reflects the structure of the hero/combat plays better, suggesting that a fourfold division might be more appropriate. However, in the Recruiting Sergeant plays there is usually an assault rather than a combat, so Chambers "Dispute" is preferable to "Combat".

These breakdowns, however arranged, are essentially valid in that they truly represent the structure of the vast majority of Quack Doctor plays. However, this structure alone has been used to justify comparisons with other customs, myths and dramas. E.C.Cawte et al (1967, pp.29-30) cite the theme of death and resurrection among the ancient Thracians (Dionysus), Syrians (Adonis), Phrygians (Attis), Egyptians (Osiris) and Greeks (Hypolytus). They also refer to Thai drama (Suwannahongs) and to the Shilluks of the Sudan. These comparisons are possible

largely because the breakdown of the action is so generic that a highly diverse selection of dramas could fit the pattern. One could even make a good case for a link with the revival of Tinkerbell in J.M.Barrie's drama *Peter Pan*, or for many a superhero cartoon on the television. This becomes absurd. It is clear that additional criteria are required if a given comparison is to be considered valid.

Margaret Dean-Smith further generalises this concept by listing the main characters of the plays:

> "Here then are the seven, essential dramatis personae: The Old Man and Old Woman, the Baby (supposedly child of one of them), the Bridegroom (the Baby grown to maturity), the Bride, the Enemy (also a son of the Old Woman and Old Man) and the Wonder-worker who is able to resurrect the dead".

(M.Dean-Smith, 1958, p.242)

If Chambers' breakdown is too generic, then this is more so. It has little relevance to the St. George play casts, and has very little to do with the Multiple Wooing casts. Although it is more similar to the Recruiting Sergeant plays, its emphasis is on the minor characters. However, the character specifications are so generalised, they too could apply to a wide range of dramas - folk or otherwise. They would be familiar to anyone who has seen an English pantomime or a melodrama.

Lists and descriptions such as those of Chambers' and Dean-Smith's need to be more specific if they are to permit meaningful comparisons. For instance, the inclusion of the Doctor - a professional doctor - seems to be more helpful than Chambers' generic "Cure" or Dean-Smith's "Wonder-worker". This change alone provides a rational basis for why some foreign customs more than others - notably the Greek plays and the Russian Tsar Maksimilian plays - seem needful of comparison with the English plays. It also explains why some other comparisons are less convincing - e.g. the comparison with Hunza hobby horse customs by Helm (1954).

Lack of Re-evaluation

During the history of the old folk play scholarship, the amount of available evidence has steadily and appreciably increased. Yet the theoretical ideas and underlying assumptions were never fundamentally questioned in the light of the new evidence. Instead, new evidence was used to solidify the *status quo*. In his review of Chambers' *English Folk Play*, Baker points out that Chambers' theories had not moved on much from his 1903 book. However:

> "…if we feel at the end that we are not far in advance of the previous position, we at least realize that our ideas have been somewhat solidified, and that perhaps there really is no direction in which to break out…"   *(E.P.Baker, 1934, p.177)*

This could be interpreted as folk play theory being stuck in a rut. To a degree, Dean-Smith (1958 and 1966) appeared to review the scholarship in depth using the rediscovered collection of T.F.Ordish. However, the effect of her review was only to refine the existing theories, and to present certain aspects in new and more formal ways. She did not question any of the basic assumptions, nor did she produce any radically different new ideas.

Brody similarly illustrates contentment with the *status quo* when he states:

> "Every new version we come upon simply forces us back to the core of the play."   *(A.Brody, 1969, p.3)*

An instance of where theory should have responded to new evidence is the idea, first proposed by Ordish (1893, p.150-151) that the plays' times of occurrence had migrated from various stages of the year to the Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter. Ordish did not provide any documented cases where such migration had taken place, nor has anyone else been able to do so as more historical accounts were unearthed.

Documentation aside, within the context of the theory that the plays represented the death of the old year and the renewal of the new, the concept of the custom having "migrated" to Christmas and Easter is just about feasible. The two festivals could be said to mark the two ends of Spring, and so could be said to be consistent

with the renewal theme. The concept remains undented when New Year and Plough Monday performances are included, because they too can be said to mark the beginning of spring. However, this argument breaks down when All Souls and Halloween are brought into the equation, because these occur in mid-autumn, and in seasonal terms represents the opposite of renewal. They also stretch the range of occurrence to five months, which is impossible to generalise as *mid* winter.

Not until Kirby (1973) was this idea challenged. He noted that there is a clear statistical preference for performances at Christmas, and concedes the possibility that in certain regions they could have transposed to other dates. However, in recognising the range of dates he proposed that originally performances had been spread throughout the year (as with shamanistic rites). He presents no documentary evidence to support this.

Fees summarises the lack of re-examination succinctly as follows:

> "...It is not that there were no other theories around, but that within the Tradition to which ERD belongs, there is only one theory logically available... built on a web of unexamined prejudices and assumptions."   *(C.Fees, 1985, p.28)*

Closed English Definition of "Folk Play"

The Oxford English Dictionary defines *Folk Play* as: "A play written for acting by the people of a town." (J.A.H.Murray et al, 1933). This definition allows a wide range of possibilities, although usage of the term in English folklore circles has come to be quite precise and restrictive.

To date, the following types are definitely included in the English scope of folk plays:

- Saint George and hero/combat plays

- Plough plays - both the Multiple Wooing and Recruiting Sergeant variants

- Sword Dance plays

Also recognised as folk plays, but usually explicitly excluded from discussion because they are separate distinct types are:

- Derby Tup plays

- Old Horse plays

Relatively recently, mostly thanks to D.Wiles (1981), Robin Hood plays have also been recognised as folk plays, although there is in any case some overlap between these and the hero/combat plays in the Cotswolds.

In correspondence in *Roomer*, Sam Richards (1983) effectively asks why the following types of traditional play were not included:

> "1. Local pantomimes
> 2. Punch and Judy
> 3. Street theatre, past and present
> 4. Toasting contests (as with black DJ's [sic])
> 5. Some of the more elaborate party games which involve role-playing, disguise, or similar representation of animals
> 6. Children's games which basically involve play acting, playing house, or any of the goodies and badies range. These after all are improvised plays which follow patterns
> 7. Monologues, especially those requiring dressing up."
>
> *(S.Richards, 1983)*

Nearly all of these activities would generally be regarded by the public as "traditional", and they all fall within a broad definition of "drama". However, they do not necessarily all class as theatre. Curiously, Richards only refers to local pantomimes rather than pantomimes as a whole, presumably because he wishes to exclude commercial productions by professional actors.

My own list of potentially valid folk plays that have been either ignored or specifically excluded by earlier scholars of traditional drama includes some of Richards' list:

- Pantomimes

- Punch and Judy

- Dramatised dialogue ballads - e.g. *The Husbandman and the Serving Man*

- School and Church nativity plays

- Other plays enacting religious stories

- Mysteries and moralities

- etc.

All of the *genres* in the above list and those covered by the established English scope fall within the *OED* definition, and even more significantly would come within the scope of continental European definitions. The collections of plays and publications such as those of A.Hartmann (1880) and L.Schmidt (1962 and 1965) reveal some clear differences in scope relative to English scholarship:

- There is a wider variety of subjects and performance contexts - from simple house visiting to the elaborate Oberammergau theatre

- Religious subjects are common, if not predominant

- The scope encompasses, or at least overlaps with mediaeval mysteries and moralities. (For instance, the Newcastle Shipwright's play on Noah's Ark is included in L.Schmidt's (1965) pan-European compendium of texts.)

On the other hand, Schmidt excludes troupes of traveling players such as the *Englische Kommödianten* and the *Hanswursttheater*, which are roughly equivalent to our early English pantomime. The features common to the plays he does include are that they are usually seasonal (or performed for particular special events) and are in rhyme.

The rationale behind the English scope appears to be as follows:

- The hero/combat, plough and sword dance plays are all associated with calendar customs and house visiting. More significantly from the point of view of the Old

Scholars, they all contain a death and revival - or more objectively, they all include a Doctor. Also the texts are in rhyme.

- The Derby Tup, Old Horse and Robin Hood plays also have house visiting in association with calendar customs, and have texts in rhyme, even if they are sung. Hence they are regarded as folk plays, but because they lack the revival (though there may be a death) they have been kept separate.

- The other *genres* of traditional drama appear to have been ignored because they are either performed by professional actors or organised by figures of authority. They are not "of the folk".

Fees puts the view that folk drama scholarship has been shaped and moulded by the wealthy educated classes, from their position as customers of the plays.

> "...With their idealizations they preserved themselves as a seasonal market for the mummers' play. They have even been responsible for the creation and recreation of mumming customs, and through active and passive failure to patronize them have contributed to their demise."   *(C.Fees, 1994, p.10)*

At some point, the idea of "Folk Drama" was attached by the big-house classes to Christmas, and the St.George play in particular became regarded at the "proper mummers". After this, non-St.George plays were regarded as not proper and were therefore not worthy of collection.

> "To some extent, the great number of St.George-type texts collected may be an artefact of collection. Having once been recognized officially as <u>the</u> folk play, it will have become the play that educated people felt inclined to collect, disregarding rustic imitations of stage plays, disregarding alternative dramatic genres."
>
> *(C.Fees, 1994, p.8)*

Fees illustrates the narrowness of this view by describing in the first half of his paper a catalogue of alternative folk play performances from Wales, the West of England and Shropshire. These are definitely not Quack Doctor plays, although they may have had similar dramatic styles and context. He could have added the wide-ranging folk play traditions collected in St.Kitts-Nevis by R.D.Abrahams (1970).

Moving from the collection of plays to their academic study, Fees (1984) contends that while Ordish started off the old folk drama studies from a fairly broad base in 1891, it soon became narrowed down to almost exclusively the Quack Doctor plays, and E.K.Chambers effectively "closed the term down" in his 1933 book. I would add that Ordish spotted this trend as early as 1893, when he expressed fears that "…by some [the mumming-plays associated with Christmastide] are considered to represent the whole stock of English folk drama." He regarded this as a very limited view of folk drama (T.F.Ordish, 1893, p.150).

The effects of the narrow English definition of folk plays are insidious. As pointed out by Fees, people were much less inclined to collect plays at all if they did not conform to the established definition. In addition, the exclusion of *genres* with a professional or officially organised context led to a phobia of anything literary or theatrical. This is notable in the works of Tiddy (1923), Baskervill (1924) and Chambers (1933), where the identification of literary sources of certain segments of text leads to these segments being removed from consideration, a necessity that Baskervill found frustrating.

Recent scholars (e.g. P.T.Millington, 1985 and T.Pettitt, 1985) have noticed similarities between Quack Doctor plays and early English pantomime, and its forebears the *Commedia dell'Arte*. 19th-century collectors - for instance Hyde Clarke (in Udal, 1880) - noted these similarities, and sometimes likened costumes or rôles to characters in the Harlequinade. However, the defining characters - Harlequin, Columbine and Pantaloon - do not appear by name in any English folk plays. I suggest that collectors might have chosen not to record plays featuring these characters, had they existed.

The attitude towards such obviously modern additions, such as historical personages from the Napoleonic Wars, was more ambivalent. Some folklorists were happy to collect plays containing Nelson, Lord Collingwood, etc., such as are found in the plays of North Western England. On the other hand, some specifically excised these parts from the plays they handled. F.A.Carrington (1854) had explicitly separated them from the text he published from Wiltshire,

and Juliana Ewing (1895, p.159-160) specifically omitted them from her composite play *The Peace Egg*.

Interpretation of Non-play Customs

A further consequence of the restricted definition (although perceptions of evolution also play a part) is the treatment of related non-play customs. Sometimes they are recognised as distinct from their play relatives, but then ignored as irrelevant independent customs - e.g. the house-visiting Soulers of Cheshire (E.C.Cawte, 1978, p.130).

Alternatively, they have been seen as relics of plays or simply imperfect recollections of plays. The best example of this is M.W.Barley (1953 and 1955), who consistently interprets any mention of Plough Monday at a given location as evidence for a play having been performed there. His sources are ambiguous in their brevity, but my later updated survey of Nottinghamshire - one of the counties he covered - suggests that some of his incomplete references relate to simple house visiting customs rather than plays (P.T.Millington, 1980a).

In a similar vein, T.Pettitt (1994) shows that scholars have been quick to interpret mediaeval references to *Mummers* as evidence of plays, even though there is nothing uncontentious in the records that shows this to be the case. The principal link is the name *Mummers* alone.

I have shown that non-play relatives have important implications for the origins of the plays (P.T.Millington, 1979). The geographical distribution of all forms of Plough Monday custom exhibits a distinct zoning that does not show up when Plough Monday plays are taken on their own. The observed zoning strongly suggests that the festival of Plough Monday originated from some aspect of the ancient Danelaw. The plough plays alone, on the other hand, only occupy a small part of the full geographic range of Plough Monday, which is consistent with them having been a later localised addition to the custom.

Relevance of Sword Dances

Before leaving scope, it is necessary to discuss the relevance of sword dances to folk play origins. There can be no doubt that the sword dance plays which feature true dialogue and the Doctor's cure are relevant, if only because much of their texts are identical to the non-dance plays. It is another thing however to include dances that are purely dances or that merely include a calling on song. This requires justification.

The inclusion of sword dances stems from the view that the plays originated from some large ritual that included the dance. This involved perceptions of cultural evolution that I will discuss shortly. For now, it is sufficient to note that there is dissent from this view, particularly from E.P.Baker (1934). He noted that the Ampleforth and Revesby plays on which the inclusion is primarily based are "[not] by any means ordinary", and generally speaking, the dramatic element in the sword dance plays is very much curtailed.

> "The evidence is scanty and confused, and the conclusion drawn appears the only one to draw : that such drama as there is seems mainly to develop incidentally to the dance, that when it does so develop it is not very distinguishable from a mummers' play, and, in short, 'it is a matter of degree.' There is indeed no doubt that in the sword-dance the dance is the thing, and that its occasional dramatic appendages sit loosely and with an excrescential air."
>
> *(E.P.Baker, 1934, p176)*

The geographical indexes of "ceremonial dance" and "ritual drama" published by E.C.Cawte et al in 1960 and 1967 provide a basis for quantifying the relationship between the sword dances and plays. While these lists are now out of date, they the benefit of having been compiled by the same team, using a common methodology. I prepared a table of all locations in the dance index that had been assigned a sword dance classification, and placed beside them all entries for the same locations in the drama index, regardless of play type, plus the four sword dance related entries that are in the drama list but not the dance list. I then analysed this data to generate the following tables and pie charts (because of the difficulties caused by some locations having two types of custom, percentages are only accurate to 2%):

**Figure 1 – Categories of Sword Dance in *Ceremonial Dance*
E.C.Cawte et al (1960)**

Class	Tally	%
Doubtful	32	24%
Dance only	71	53%
Calling on Song	15	11%
Play	17	13%
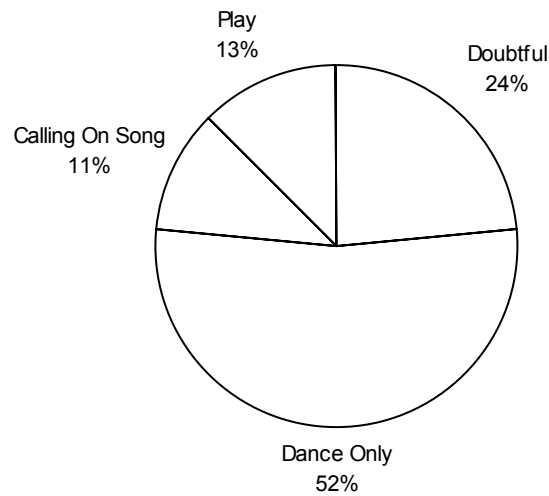
**Figure 2 – Analysis of Combined Sword Dance Locations from
Ceremonial Dance and *Ritual Drama*
E.C.Cawte et al (1960 and 1967)**

Classes	Tally	%
Dance only	82	57%
Doubtful play	10	7%
Lock death	12	8%
Sword Play	21	15%
Sword/Lock & Hero/combat	6	4%
Hero/combat only	12	8%

Lock death
8%

Sw ord Play
15%

Doubtful play
7%

Sw ord/Lock &
Hero/combat
4%

Hero/combat
only
8%

Dance only
58%
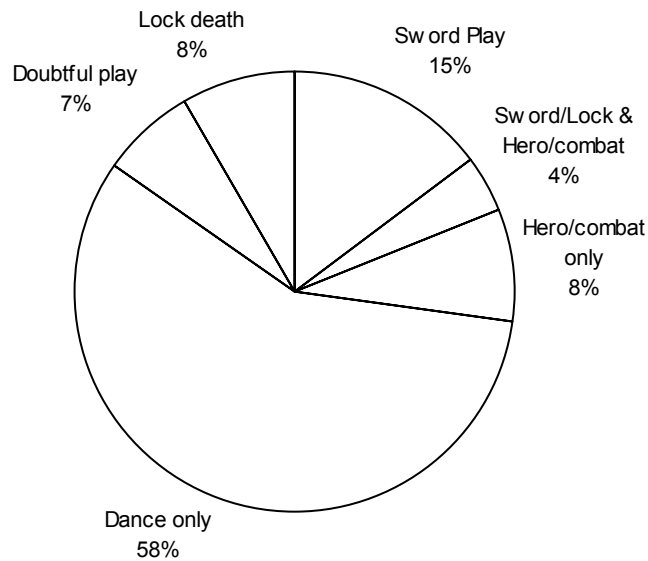
Figures 1 and 2 show that the proportion of English sword dances with plays is small (13%), and increases to only about a quarter (24%) if calling on songs are included. Not all the sword dance plays listed in the *Ceremonial Dance* index also appear in *English Ritual Drama*, and the proportion of included dances with calling on songs is smaller still. This may indicate a reassessment of the particular customs in the interval between the two publications. It is interesting to note however, that the sword dances coexist with separate plays at six locations. Furthermore, what the tables do not show is that there are numerous places close to the sword dance locations that only have hero/combat plays.

Unfortunately, the statistics alone do not help us determine the relationship between the sword dances and the plays. The overlap, though small, is too large for us to be able to say with confidence that the dances and plays should really be separate customs. Neither is it big enough for us to say with confidence that there is a close relationship. The size of the overlap is consistent with two possibilities - (a) that the dances and plays are normally separate but that occasionally they combine, or (b) that there is a continuum between the two forms. The implication for origins is

that we would expect a continuum to occur if the plays and dances had both derived from some all-encompassing ancestor.

Studies of form may resolve the question. Within the dance tradition, the texts of the calling on songs and dialogues are highly varied. One would expect similar variants in the non-dance folk plays if they had derived from the dance, but this is not the case. Baker's comments support separate customs, in which case, the sword dance plays should be treated as special extensions of the Quack Doctor format, rather than the core. However, there is still work to be done in this area., now that the atypical nature of the Revesby and Ampleforth sword dance plays has been accepted.

Texts and Degradation

The Old Scholarship asserts that the modern plays are derived from one big original custom. Dean-Smith's reasoning for this hypothesis is that:

> "… if careful examination is made of the hundreds of fragments, it is possible to perceive the elements and outline of the cyclic whole." *(M.Dean-Smith, 1958, p245)*

The terminology of the subject has been loaded to underline this wholeness. Books and papers commonly refer to the Play (capital "P" singular) which tends to block the idea that there may be distinct and unrelated alternatives.

However, this perception is understandable. Comparing several versions of the plays - especially from one town or district - usually shows them to be broadly similar, but subtly different. More specifically, there may appear to be a core of text common to all the versions, but most versions will have passages that are absent from or rare in the others. Therefore it appears that the sections of a specific version have been selected from a larger corpus of material. It would seem to follow therefore that by collating the different versions this main corpus could be reconstructed. Note however that *no* version would or could ever have used 100% of the corpus material.

The picture is complicated by the fact that the "corpus" may contain alternative paraphrased passages, only one of which will appear in a particular record. For example Nottinghamshire Plough Monday plays may have Beelzebub or Eezum Sqeezum, but not both, this being because the two characters share the same speech except for the introductory two lines. They are therefore interchangeable. Nationally, the corpus contains numerous alternatives for a given part, as well as a large number of optional and temporary passages and features. Reconstruction of the putative main corpus must therefore allow for this interchangeability.

An important consequence of the idea of there having been an original "cyclic whole" is the view that modern plays are only relics of the original. This implies that change with time has been a process of loss and degradation, and that any identifiably modern sources are contamination that corrupt the original. Such words as degradation, contamination and corruption, applied pejoratively, are relatively common in the Old Scholarship.

Once again, the available evidence provides a rationale for this mode of thinking. It is true that texts collected from the same location at different dates will generally have less material in the later versions that in the earlier versions. Often this can be attributed to the imperfect memories of the informants, who may have been recalling events from several decades earlier. For instance, texts were collected from S.Beazley of Mansfield, Notts in 1922 (A.S.Buxton Collection) and in 1946 (F.W.Beazley, 1946), with a third version probably collected from the same informant by N.M.Lane in 1948 (A.Helm collection). The 1922 version has 79 lines, reduced to 54 and 62 lines respectively in the 1946 and 1948 versions. Similar reductions can also be seen in living customs. For example, at Brinsley, Notts, a version relating to 1930 has 73 lines (P.T.Millington Collection, 1972, "Old Brunsly-ite"), whereas versions collected from live performances in 1971 and 1974 had been drastically reduced to 26 lines each (P.T.Millington Collection, 1971 and 1974).

The idea that the plays became progressively corrupt also has some basis in the evidence. When lines are imperfectly remembered, or they are not heard or

understood correctly during the process of oral transmission or during collecting one of two things tends to happen.

Firstly, an attempt may be made to render the imperfect lines meaningful, by changing words or extemporising replacement lines. Take for instance the plays from the West Indian islands of St. Kitts and Nevis, which have been shown to have used a text compiled from various sources by the Victorian children's author J.H.Ewing. Ewing's original lines:

> "Now Prince of Paradine is dead,
> And all his joys entirely fled"

become in St.Kitts:

> "Now, Black Prince of Paradine is dead
> And I carry his terrible head"   *(P.T.Millington, 1996,p.78)*

Secondly, there may be no attempt to rectify the deficit and lines may end up as meaningless gibberish. Taking again an example from St.Kitts-Nevis, in Ewing's text, St. David introduces himself with the line:

> "Of Taffy's Land I'm Patron Saint"

This is perfectly reasonable, if quaint, if you know that "Taffy" is a general nickname for Welshmen. This knowledge may have escaped the West Indians because the same line becomes:

> "Of Staffilan I am patience sent"   *(P.T.Millington, 1996,p 89)*

It seems reasonable to describe these reductions and changes as degradation and corruption. However, these are not the only processes that take place during the evolution of a custom. Material may equally be added, either from literary sources, other traditions or from original composition. In the living Derby Tup play tradition around Sheffield, I.Russell (1979) has well characterised the dynamic nature of the tradition, with lines disappearing and/or reappearing year on year. The addition of topical dialogue is also common. This may vary from short lived ad libs to complete parodies or rewrites following the traditional pattern. For instance, the Bullguisers of Jacksdale, Notts completely modernised their play in 1978 (I.Russell, 1981).

In short, the view that traditions only degrade or become corrupt fails to see the full true picture, a point also explored by Georgina Smith (1978). The variability in the texts could be interpreted as evidence that the plays derived by attrition from one big original, although it is clearly absurd that such an original could have contained the full range of textual material that is now available. However, the same evidence is also consistent with the texts having diverged through time from one or more original sources - such as the chapbooks. This is something I discuss in a later chapter.

Continuing this game of Consequences, and having mentioned chapbooks, we return briefly again to the phobia of literary sources or sources attributed to the composition of individuals. If modern plays are supposed to have evolved by a process of attrition from a large ancestor, it follows that anything that has crept into the plays from literary sources is by definition a corrupting influence. This creates particular difficulties in the case of chapbooks because it has been clearly demonstrated that they are an integral part of the tradition at many places, on a par with oral transmission (P.Stevenson & G.Buckley, 1985 and G.Smith, 1981). Before his untimely death, the major influence of the chapbooks on the tradition was also acknowledged by Helm (1969, pp.32-33), but he still stuck to his guns regarding pagan ritual origins.

Secondary Nature of the Texts

Another central tenet of the Old Scholarship, first proposed by Ordish (1891, p.334) and developed by Dean-Smith (1958, p.244), is that the folk play texts are secondary in importance to the action and *dramatis personae* of the plays. This proposition has rightfully drawn criticism from the new scholars because it has led to serious academic omissions. Put starkly the Old Scholars felt that this proposition absolved them from any need to analyse the wording of the texts. However, the texts constitute the vast majority of the evidence that is available, certainly most of the evidence available to the Old Scholars. No wonder the new scholars are resistant to the elimination of this data from consideration.

Paradoxically, while the Old Scholars failed to analyse the texts in any depth, they were not above citing the precise wording of a line or phrase in support of a conjecture or proffered symbolism. Also, more generally, the texts were vital to them as the measure for degradation.

Had the Old Scholars analysed the texts fully, not to mention character names and times of occurrence, things might have turned out differently. Cawte et al (1967, pp.32,34) plotted the geographical distribution of the plays using only three categories based on actions - Hero/combat, Wooing and Sword Dance plays. These categories are far too broad to reveal any recognisable distribution patterns, except for the "Wooing" plays in the East Midlands and concentrations of Irish plays in Ulster and Wexford. Analysis of the texts, characters and times of occurrence would probably have revealed more regional patterns. Such analyses have still not been performed on a national or international scale, although there have been some regional studies (M.W.Barley, 1955; P..T.Millington, 1982a and 1988; P.Smith, 1985a; and B.Hayward, 1992, p.13). However, an informal analysis of readily available texts suggests, for instance, a Galoshins sub-type in Scotland, a variant with the character Bulguyar (various spellings) in the West Midlands, the general limitation of Father Christmas to southern England, and so forth. Thorough analysis is quite likely to uncover spatial and/or temporal distribution patterns that may have a bearing on the origins and evolution of the plays. Such analyses are reported in later chapters of this thesis.

Another objection to dismissing texts has been raised by Paul Smith (1985b, p.137). Smith argues that without the texts the plays would be reified in a form different from that to which we recognise today. For instance, the plays could be in mime or have prose texts instead of their characteristic verse forms.

The arguments in favour of the importance of analysis of the texts and the form of the tradition seem reasonable. Yet I hold that the idea of the words being secondary to the action is substantially true. This appears to be an oxymoron. However, consider the following:

- Comparison of the texts collated from different people in the same group, or collected from the same person at different times, show substantial variations. So detailed comments on specific lines or phrases can be unwise, especially from a single text.

- There are several versions. These have different lines, but by and large they paraphrase each other, have substantially the same, or directly equivalent characters, and parallel plots. Clearly, the precise words are subordinate.

- Take the analogy of Nativity plays. The texts are often written afresh each year, but the principle characters are constant, as is the story. Parts may periodically be omitted or extra "local colour" added. A similar situation applies to some stage plays - e.g. Faust - and remakes of cine films such as "Dracula".

It is therefore true, to a degree, that the words are of secondary importance, but it is not the *actions* that are more important, it is the story and the characters. As Kirby states (1978, p.278), the main purpose of the dispute is to provide a body for the Doctor to cure. The identity of the combatants and the words they speak are unimportant to the basic plot. But neither are actions of major relevance. Taking again the Nativity play analogy, the actions may vary from year to year. So for instance, whether the performers stand in a circle or a line, or whether they kneel or bow in adoration of the baby Jesus is irrelevant. Once more, what counts is the basic story or plot

Characteristics of Modern Quack Doctor Plays

In view of the above considerations, I propose the following revised list of characteristics for the Quack Doctor plays:

- The plays are performed in association with an annual festival or calendar custom

- They are performed by house visitors, normally at several locations during the festival

- The actors wear special costumes, or at least make some attempt at disguise

- The texts are primarily in verse.

- The basic format of the plot consists of:

  – An introduction (optional)

  – A dispute resulting in one of the protagonists being knocked down or "killed"

  – A cure, wrought by the Doctor

  – A conclusion or *quête* (optional)

- Additional scenes or motifs may be introduced at any point in the plays, which may or may not be relevant to the basic plot

- Supernumerary characters, usually with a single speech, may also be introduced at any point in the plays. These do not contribute to the action, although they may be important for attracting the attention of the audience, and/or soliciting rewards.

Over-reliance on Exemplar Texts

During much of the scholarship, certain texts have received a disproportionate amount of attention. According to Boyes (1985), the three "important" texts have been those from Ampleforth, Revesby and Papa Stour. The Bassingham text also occurs frequently. These are all large texts, notable for their inclusion of sword dances and wooing themes. For hero/combat plays the sample is more representative, with authors almost regarding it as a matter of honour to publish new examples, rather than reprint previously published versions. Even so, there has been a tendency to use the larger versions. It should said that the Bassingham play is also representative, coming as it does from a small homogeneous collection (C.Baskervill, 1924). Why should there be such a preoccupation with size?

There is obviously a need to avoid using fragmentary examples wherever possible. However, it appears that *big* is equated with *complete*, and that therefore *biggest* is erroneously equated with *most complete*, or perhaps more accurately *less*

incomplete. This interpretation follows from the view that the plays have only developed by degradation from a larger "original". Apart from their size, the exemplar texts have been singled out because of their perceived similarity to certain Greek folk plays - of which more shortly.

To concentrate research on three or four "key" texts suggests that folk play theories have been based on an incomplete picture, even if the individual texts are *most complete*. To take an analogy, an anatomist could not gain a true picture of the human body just by studying giants.

Dissatisfaction with the exemplar British texts has a long history. Apart from E.P.Baker doubting the relationship of sword dances to the plays, he also points out that the texts from Ampleforth and Revesby are "neither … by any means ordinary" (E.P.Baker, 1934, p.176). M.W.Barley (1953) also cast doubt on the typicality of the Revesby play by suggesting that it had been staged as a unique out of season performance for the benefit of the famous botanist Sir Joseph Banks and his new wife. This led to deeper delving by later scholars, all of whom confirmed the exceptional nature of the this text (A.Helm, 1965, p.125; A.Brody, 1969, pp.148-155; M.J.Preston, 1972a; and A.Helm, 1980, pp.25-26). The result has been that most scholars have rejected this play as not being pure folk literature.

In an "excursus" appended to Brody's book, he re-examined the Papa Stour play (A.Brody, 1969, pp.156-161). This resulted in him dismissing the text of the play (although not the actions or characters) because of its literary nature. G.Boyes (1985, p.27) agreed with his conclusions regarding the literary influences.

At the same time as reviewing the reassessment of the Revesby and Papa Stour play, Boyes' particular contribution has been in demonstrating the exceptional nature of the Ampleforth play. Most of the key scholars, including the play's collector Cecil Sharp, have acknowledged the literary additions to the text (C.J.Sharp, 1913b, p.17; R.J.E.Tiddy, 1923, p.82; and E.K.Chambers, 1933, p.49), although they were happy to continue using it as a prime example. Boyes investigated the circumstances in which Sharp acquired the text - in fact he collected three versions - hinting that the offer of a substantial monetary reward to the informants may have made the

"fullness" of the text somewhat artificial. Stripped of their literary accretions, the Ampleforth texts cease to be so remarkable, fitting well with the other plays and dances of its environs.

Boyes sums up the importance of the exemplar texts as follows:

> "The exemplar plays are atypical hybrids which have very little in common with the generality of text or form of traditional plays. As subjects for a study of the interaction between traditional and literary styles, the exemplar plays offer much that would be of interest". *(G.Boyes, 1985, p.27)*

Balkan Parallels - A Preoccupation

Balkan folk plays and (allegedly) related customs have featured prominently in theories regarding the origin of English folk plays. The idea of a link was evidently first suggested by William Ridgeway (1910). Cecil Sharp (1913b) was the first folklorist to consider the link, in his discussion of the Ampleforth sword dance play. This idea was further developed by C.R.Baskervill (1924) and H.Coote-Lake (1931), and refined by E.K.Chambers (1933), whereupon the theory became standard throughout folk play scholarship.

It has to be said that the parallels cited by Sharp are valid if somewhat general. However, in Sharp (1913b):

a) These parallels specifically only relate to Ampleforth,

b) The overlap of incidents/motifs in the plays only amounts to about 50%.

c) Some of Sharp's parallels are a matter of opinion - e.g. is the Haghios Gheorghios "hand-in-hand" dance to be equated with the sword dance of Ampleforth?

Folk play authors have been fairly consistent in citing a group papers emanating from the British School at Athens between 1899 and 1913. These fall into two categories.

The first group relates to a fundamentally non-play custom, typified by the Carnival on Skyros, and described by J.C.Lawson (1899/1900) and R.M.Dawkins

(1904/1905). This was essentially a house-visiting custom, with up to three types of carnival character. The main characters were the "Old Men", who were usually dressed and masked in animal skins, and noisily decorated with goat or sheep bells about the waist. These could also be attended by "Maids" and "Franks".

The second group consists of the plays of the *Kalogeroi*, described by R.M.Dawkins (1906), A.J.B.Wace (1909/1910) and A.J.B.Wace (1912/1913). These had four key characters, with a variable number of ancillary characters or hangers-on. The characters were: the Bride, the Groom, and Old Man or Arab, and the Doctor. The Old Man/Arab is over "familiar" with the Bride, and in the ensuing argument the Old Man kills the Groom. The Bride tearfully mourns the Groom and calls the Doctor, who after an examination cures the victim. The main links with the Skyros-like customs are: the time of year, the fact that they are both house-visiting customs, and the fact that characters in both customs may wear goat bells round the waist.

In considering the origins of these customs, the British Athenian scholars inevitably looked at ancient Greek sources, and in particular the religious rites. Although J.C.Lawson briefly mentions "Bacchic or other orgies" in passing, the cult of Dionysus became the prime focus. Dionysus is supposed to have hailed from northern Greece, and the fact that the custom was thriving in the North Greek area was seen to be auspicious by R.M Dawkins (1906) and by A.J.B.Wace (1909/1910). However, by the time Wace had gathered material for the last paper in this group (1912/13), this idea had been undermined. To quote Wace: "...it is by no means a typically Greek festival, for it occurs only in Northern Greece where there is much mixed blood, and it is known to almost all the other South Balkan races." (pp.262-263).

The evidence mentioned in linking the *Kalogeroi* to the cult of Dionysus is the use of a winnowing fan (or *Liknon*) as a basket to hold Babo's bastard baby (H.Coote-Lake, 1931, p.143). Such a fan was apparently used in rites relating to Dionysus, but in my opinion this is very tenuous evidence for a historical link to the modern plays. Helm on the other hand seems to have regarded it as very important.

He does not actually mention the *Liknon* in his examination of origins in English Ritual Drama (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967). However, the paper by J.E.Harrison (1903) which discusses the *Liknon* at length (but not drama) is marked in the bibliography as a reference "valuable for general reading".

The death and resurrection scenes of the *Kalogeroi* are very similar to analogous scenes in English plays - and in fact other European plays. Likewise, the scenes involving Babo (in the Balkans) and Dame Jane (in England) and their respective bastard babies also show marked similarities. The idea of some relationship between the English and Balkan plays is therefore attractive. On the other hand, some Balkan characters do not have English equivalents - for instance the Gypsy blacksmiths of Haghios Georgios. Furthermore, the Balkan characters could equally parallel characters from the *Commedia dell' Arte*: e.g. Groom = Harlequin, Bride = Columbine, Old Man = Pantaloon, and Doctor = Doctor, etc.

The theatre history and folk play scholars' particular interest in these plays appears to have been founded on the central assumption that drama generally and folk drama in particular originally derived from ancient Greek theatre. Because, as initially suggested by Dawkins and by Wace, the Balkan plays were felt to have a history going directly back to ancient Greek cult worship, they were held to be closer to the "original" Dionysian custom.

The unfortunate effect of this assumption was that the intervening gaps, both geographical and historical were almost totally ignored. The geographical separation is over 1500 miles. If foreign plays were to be used for comparison, then plays from other parts of Europe should have been used as well (e.g. Austrian *Nikolausspiele*, Russian *Tsar Maksimilian* plays, etc.). The similarities between these plays and English plays are no less marked.

Harrison believed the folk plays to have been in existence before the ancient Greek drama, and have long outlasted it "with extraordinary tenacity". This is an amazingly dangerous assumption. She offers no evidence to fill the enormous historical gap, other than to cite the generalities from E.K.Chambers' (1903) *Mediaeval Stage* in a footnote (J.E.Harrison, 1912, p.333). Purely from the point of

view of ancient Greek drama, Pickard-Cambridge (1927) critically examined Harrison and Murray's proposed link with modern Greek drama and demonstrated that it is invalid. This was echoed by H.J.Rose (1959), who cited M.P.Nilsson (1957) as a more reliable authority.

Kirkby (1973) had criticised the over-reliance of the Balkan parallels on one particular account – that of Dawkins (1906). The prominent reception of Dawkins' paper by academia over other publications was the subject of a paper by Walter Puchner (1983), from the standpoint of information transfer. He attributed the popularity of Dawkins' paper to it having been published in English in a high profile journal – the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*. A great deal of further material on the customs was published locally after Dawkins, but because it was mostly published in Greek and Bulgarian, it failed to make an impact on western academics. Even material in French, German and Italian fared badly. Added to this, researchers from one discipline were reluctant to examine the work of other disciplines. If scholars had used this additional material, Puchner feels that invalid ideas would not have lasted as long as they did.

More recently, G.Morgan (1989 and 1990) has made known another collection of Greek plays to English speakers. These come from the Pontus region of northern Turkey. Again the plays exhibit similar parallels with the English plays, however, the nub of Morgan's study is his proposal that the English *Mummers* plays are derived from the Greek *Momoeri* plays, based on the philological equivalence of the actors' collective names.

I have already discussed the temporal inconsistencies of Morgan's proposal. It is another example of a general tendency to ignore the historical gap of around 2000 years between the ancient Greek rites and both modern Balkan and modern English plays. The bulk of the Greek evidence is more recent than 1890, and no attempt has been made in the papers cited to trace the history back beyond the 19th century. Links to a supposed common ancestor for modern Balkan (and English) plays in the rites of ancient Greece therefore remain unproven.

In England, the situation is only a little better. The English scholars did look at mediaeval and Tudor drama, but the assumption has always been that the folk plays were older still. Consequently, they never seriously considered plays from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which would have been a fruitful area for research. The notable exception here was C.R.Baskervill, who identified many literary sources from this period for various folk play texts.

Denial of Geography and Time

Separated as they are by a distance of around 1500 miles, the attempts to link the English and Balkan plays illustrates another example of the Old Scholarship - a cavalier attitude to geography.

Time and again, the plays (in terms of their action) are referred to as a world-wide phenomenon, especially by Helm and Dean-Smith. In reality, their evidence mostly came from Europe or occasionally Asia, and then from selected regions only. Not until Kirby (1971) were any customs cited from Africa, Australasia or the Americas (except obviously the plays of British origin in the West Indies and Newfoundland). The world-wide view appears to be misplaced. Even so, the proponents of the world-wide view failed to seek to fill the geographical gaps. This omission is particularly noticeable in Europe, where it is now clear that plenty of documented evidence for relevant plays and customs was available for those willing and able to seek it out.

Within the British Isles there are also geographical gaps that have not been filled. It is not clear whether these represent areas where the plays really were not performed, or where collecting activity has been patchy. The void in East Anglia may be real enough, but other regions have yielded endemic traditions upon thorough investigation. In Ireland for instance, only a handful of plays were known before the investigations of Alan Gailey. Helm's first checklist (1954) has only 6 plays for the whole of Ireland, but by the time of Cawte et al's index (1967) this number had grown to over 130 locations, and the concentration of the plays in Ulster and Wexford had become evident. Similarly, Helm's 1954 list had only 8 plays for

the whole of Scotland. By 1967 this had grown to a still sparse 35. B.Hayward (1992) increased this number to 105, which only then was sufficient to permit the identification of distribution patterns. Within England too, the number of records for many counties has shown equally impressive growth.

The conclusions I draw from this discussion are that whenever people have looked for evidence in a particular area, they have usually found it. It is therefore not sufficient to state that plays do not occur in a particular area unless it is possible to demonstrate that an assiduous search for evidence has been unsuccessful. Cawte et al may have demonstrated this for Shropshire and Herefordshire (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967, p31).

Similar arguments apply to filling historical gaps, a topic I cover in my next chapter. However, Fees' (1984) observations on chronological unrealities in Billington (1983) are pertinent here. He points out that Billington had suggested that a 1833 stage production was staged in response to a competitive production of 1822. It is unrealistic to suggest that theatrical productions eleven years apart were in competition with each other. Billington also suggested that a droll performed and spread by actors in Yorkshire in about 1750 was also taken by them to Shropshire (but not collected until 1883). Even if the Shropshire play had been collected from an old man who had acted the play in his youth, the historical gap between the two versions is too great to say categorically that it was the Yorkshire actors who took it to Shropshire. All sorts of things could have happened in between times.

Fees complains that the "mists of time" are invoked to indicate that the evidence fades away as we go back in time and that there is no point in looking for it. The scholars of the Old Tradition are not put off by the likelihood that major social disturbances such as wars and plagues would have disrupted the supposed continuity of the folk plays from pagan times.

Summary

The critique in this chapter has mostly focused on the ideas and reasoning of the old folk drama scholarship. Much of the discussion draws on the new scholarship,

which has concentrated on questioning assumptions, but has presented few new ideas on origins. I discuss these new ideas in later chapters.

The overall impression of the Old Scholarship is highly negative, comprising a sad litany of unquestioned assumptions, over-generalisations, flawed logic, unbalanced use of evidence, over-narrow definitions, untraced histories, and so on. However, there are a couple of positive notes. There is a measure of truth in the view that folk plays tend to degrade with time, although other forms of evolution occur too. It is also true that texts are secondary to the plot and characters, but this does not mean that valuable information cannot be gleaned from thorough analysis of the texts.

In the context of origins, the most unsatisfactory area has been the neglect or misinterpretation of historical evidence. The next chapter is devoted to the investigation of such evidence.

THE QUESTION OF SURVIVALS

The Key Issue - Traceable Ancestry

To recap, previous studies of English folk plays have yielded three main theories regarding the plays' origins:

1. That they derived from the Mysteries and Moralities of the Middle Ages - perhaps from the time of the Crusades.

2. That they were survivals of a pre-Christian fertility ritual, in which the death and revival of the play symbolised the death of the old year and the rebirth of the new.

3. That they were survivals of primitive shamanistic rituals, in which the Doctor of the plays and his cure are relics of primitive witch doctors and their ritualistic remedies.

All three theories are essentially survivalist, and therefore they are based on one fundamental assumption - that there is a continuous history leading back from the modern folk plays to mediaeval and/or pre-Christian times. If this assumption can be shown to be valid, then all well and good. However, if it is shown to be invalid, then support for the theories collapses, and further argument about them is futile. In this chapter, the validity of this assumption will be investigated.

Apparent Lack of Older Records

From previous bibliographies, such as *ERD* (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967), it is evident that there is a sparsity of folk play records dated prior to 1800. Working backwards in time, the historical trail appears to dry up with J.White's chapbook, dated somewhere between 1746 and 1769. References from before then are open to question, either in terms of accuracy of dating and/or in terms of whether or not they qualify as Quack Doctor plays.

There are, however, stage plays and broadsides containing textual material that also appears in Quack Doctor plays. These mostly date from the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and have tended to be regarded as sources from which the plays derived text, although in theory the reverse is possible. These literary and ephemeral texts are discussed later.

Mediaeval and Tudor records of *Mummers* and customs involving Saint George have been known and discussed throughout the history of folk drama scholarship, but of late these have been rejected as ancestors to the Quack Doctor plays (C.Fees, 1984 and T.Pettitt, 1994). And yet, even the earliest edition of the *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook bears the subtitle "as it is acted by the Mummers every Christmas", thus indicating that an ongoing tradition existed before the publication of the chapbook. What at are the implications of this subtitle for origins? It begs the question "every Christmas since when?" Survivalists would probably answer "since time immemorial". Sceptics would question the assumptions involved in that reply. How many years does something need to be performed before it is described as being done every year? Anecdotal evidence and personal experience suggests that this could be as few as three years in some cases, and most would consider a minimum of five to ten years acceptable. Perhaps, therefore, this is a red herring. Nothing quantitative can be inferred regarding precise dating from the subtitle.

Is the Lack of Records before the mid 18th Century Real?

It could be inferred from the historical record of Quack Doctor plays drying up around the middle of the 18th century that the plays themselves in fact only originated about then. This raises a number of questions about the completeness of the historical record:

- Has there been sufficient searching through libraries and archives for us to be sure that there are not significant numbers of undiscovered older records?

- Have the right periods been searched?

- How does the situation with older records for folk plays compare with old records for other customs?

- Have all appropriate types of source been searched?

- Are we sure that the older records are really not Quack Doctor folk plays?

Historical Bibliometric Investigations

The first three of the above questions can be investigated by examining the historical bibliometrics of known records, determined from various databases and listings. Data for folk plays from four databases is presented below. For comparison, similar data is also presented for Plough Monday customs, morris dancing and early English drama. These databases are; Ervin Beck's Inventory of the Alex Helm Collection (E.Beck, 1992 and 2000, and E.Beck & P.Smith, 1985), Steve Roud's *MumBib* and *MummInd* databases (S.Roud & P.Smith, 1993), and my own bibliography of Nottinghamshire folk plays and related customs (P.Millington, 1999). These are described fully later.

Bibliometric Compilation Methodology

The statistics have been compiled using the same methodology, with adaptations to exploit specific features of particular databases. In outline, the basic steps were as follows:

- Entries containing dates were extracted from the source database and tabulated in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, using one row per entry or date.

- Dates were normalised to take account of date ranges and approximations

- Wherever possible, keywords in the database entries were used to encode categories for the dates. These might indicate the type of event associated with the date, the type of custom, etc.

- Trial histograms were prepared showing the number of entries per decade for various combinations of categories, and from these the most representative charts were selected for further consideration.

Further details of these steps follow:

Extracting Dated Items from Databases

In all cases, the processing and analysis of the dates were performed in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. In the first stage of the analysis, a row was created in the spreadsheet for each item or date taken from the database or source. Where the data source was a hard-copy listing, the required information was keyed directly into the spreadsheet. With electronic databases, some automatic processing was possible. This comprised, firstly, selecting the database entries that contained dates and discarding undated items, and secondly, arranging the data fields into columns, deleting unrequired fields in the process.

In some databases, a record might contain two or more dates, either relating to different events such as performance, collection and publication, or relating to different locations or customs. In these cases, a separate row was entered in the table for each date.

The first column normally held the source's accession or reference number for the item. Where this was insufficient, other information, such as a bibliographic citation, was used as a unique identifier. Thereafter, followed columns for the dates, and for such categories as might be provided in the database.

Normalising Dates

In all the sources used, dates were recorded as a combination of text and numbers, representing anything from a specific day to a range of years, all with an admixture of approximations and qualifiers. For the purposes of these analyses, dates were processed to a precision of whole years, although in histograms the results were grouped as normal decades. The following examples illustrate the variety of formats in which dates were recorded:

> 1830 to 1840
>
> 24th December 1974
>
> 1953
>
> Late 1950s

About 1944 & 1945

Mid 19th Century

Reign of Queen Victoria

It seems likely that broad date ranges, such as centuries and the reigns of monarchs, were not intended to indicate continuous occurrence during the full period, and including them could give rise to false pictures of frequency. Therefore it was necessary to exclude such ranges, or at least those that exceed a certain number of years – typically date ranges above ten years duration.

Taking the raw dates, the different elements were parsed into separate columns, as follows:

- Any months and days were discarded

- The remaining years were placed into two columns representing the start and end years of a date range. In the case of a date being a single year, that year appeared in both columns.

- Many dates included approximations or qualifiers, some of which could be meaningfully interpreted and some of which could not.   Certain qualifiers were interpreted arithmetically according to the following rules;

A Decade	The full 10 years	e.g.	1890s	= 1890 to 1899
Early	First 4 years of a decade	e.g.	Early 1950s	= 1950 to 1953
Mid	Middle 4 years of a decade	e.g.	Mid 1950s	= 1953 to 1956
Late	Last 4 years of a decade	e.g.	Late 1950s	= 1956 to 1959
About	Year plus or minus 2 years	e.g.	About 1954	= 1952 to 1956

- The following qualifiers were not interpreted because of insufficient specificity:

  After, Before, From, To, Until

Consequently, a date such as "Before 1914" became simply "1914".

- In addition to undated records, references to centuries or reigns of monarchs were discarded. Parts of such periods (e.g. Mid 19th Century) were also discarded. Again, this was because they were insufficiently specific.

- To assist in applying limits to date ranges, it was also helpful to add a column in which the duration of each range was calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Duration} = \text{To-date} - \text{From-date} + 1$$

$$\text{e.g. } 1942 \text{ to } 1943 = 1943 - 1942 + 1 = 2 \text{ years}$$

Care had to be taken with cross-references, notably in I.Lancashire's early English drama data, to ensure that there was no double accounting of items.

Handling Categories

Three of the sources, discussed specifically below, contained information that permitted the dates or records to be categorised. In general, the maximum possible set of categories was used for a given source, including non-folk play categories, even if ultimately they were not used further. Categories were codified by creating a column in the spreadsheet for each category, and placing a check mark in that column if it was appropriate to a given entry.

In the Millington and Roud databases, an associated event type (e.g. published, collected, etc.) was given with the date. The different keywords were categorised under the following headings;

- Performed

    Broadcast, Ceased, Current, Extant, Granted, Held, Lapsed, Minuted, Observed, Performed, Revived

- Collected

    Collected, Communicated, Dated, Recorded

- Published

    First Published, Published, Reprinted

- Other

    Born, Cited, Died

Only "Performed", "Collected" and "Published" were included in results. The "Other" dates were too few in number to be used meaningfully.

With the Beck and Millington databases, dates could also associated with classes of tradition and/or equivalent title keywords. For the Millington database, index terms had been systemically applied, enabling accurate and comprehensive analysis of categories. Three classes were encoded for this study, of which the first two are discussed later. These were:

- Folk Plays

- Non-Play Plough Monday Customs

- Plough Sunday Customs

With Ervin Beck's inventory of the Alex Helm collection, there was little or no indexing, and therefore the most useful categories had to be determined by seeking keywords, or word stems, in titles. This technique is inherently less accurate, since it relies on meaningful and representative titles having been provided for each item. This is not a realistic expectation, and data may therefore be lost to some categories. However, it is reasonable to assume that the level of quality is similar across the whole inventory. Consequently, we can draw qualitative conclusions from the analysis, even if quantitative conclusions have to be treated with circumspection.

Beck provided two fields that could be categorised:

- Type of record: Text, Song, Music, Dance

- Publications by Helm et al, and Roy Judge in which the entry was used:

    ERD = English Ritual Drama (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967)

    RAD = Ritual Animal Disguise (E.C.Cawte, 1978)

    ICD = Index of Ceremonial Dance (E.C.Cawte et al, 1960)

JIG = Jack-in-the-Green (R.Judge, 1979)

None = The rest (by inference)

Other categories were determined by identifying the word roots in either the item's bibliographic title and/or Beck's "Short Title", and including variant spellings wherever practicable:

- Type of custom:

  Plays

  Morris

- Play performers' collective names:

  Mummer

  Guiser (as in Guisers, Guizards, etc)

  Soul (as in Soulers & Soul Cakers)

  Egg (as in Pace Egging)

  Rhymer (as in Christmas Rimer)

  Some of the records for these names related to non-play customs. Subsequent tallies may therefore be higher than they should. On the other hand, the vaguaries of titles means that some true play records will have been missed. It is possible that these two effects cancel each other out.

  Players' names were handled both individually and as a group. It was only feasible to work with the more common players' names, hence infrequent names are omitted, such as Tipteerers, White Boys, etc.

- Plough - i.e. Plough Monday, Plow Jaggs, etc.

A typical segment from one of the spreadsheet tables resulting from this data preparation is given in Figure 3 (Millington database):

Figure 3 - Part of a Bibliometric Data Table

Ref.	From	To	Play	P.Mon	P.Sun	Other	Perf.	Col.	Publ.	Other	Notts	Derbys	Neigh	Other
TD00031	1933	1933	1				1				1			
TD00031	1933	1933	1						1		1			
TD00032	1951	1951	1					1			1			
TD00032	1882	1882	1				1				1			
TD00032	1952	1952	1						1		1			
TD00033	1962	1962	1	1		1			1		1			
TD00034	1925	1925	1					1			1			
TD00034	1948	1948	1						1		1			
TD00035	1897	1897		1					1				1	
TD00036	1957	1957	1						1		1			
TD00037	1958	1958	1			1			1		1			
TD00038	1889	1889				1			1			1		
TD00039	1914	1914	1						1			1		
TD00040	1979	1979	1						1		1			

Compiling and Charting Statistics

Having prepared and normalised the raw data, secondary tables were compiled, showing the number of entries present in the source per decade. The data in these tables was in turn used to chart histograms. In counting entries, date ranges spanning decade boundaries were counted in all of the decades concerned. Thus 1865 to 1880 would be counted in all three of the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s decades. For any given source, various combinations of categories were used to select entries and compile a large number of secondary tables and charts. If necessary, individual items could be excluded if they had a date range that exceeded a specified maximum duration (typically above ten years).

In those sources where an item might have dates for more than one event - Millington and Roud - some double accounting was unavoidable. This resulted in experimental variation that is difficult to quantify, but which is probably quite high. Accordingly, overall tallies for combined events should perhaps be treated as ranging from anything between 50% and 100% of the quoted figures. This level of variation may seem unnervingly wide. However, the degree of duplication is probably fairly consistent throughout, so relative comparisons are

probably valid. Also, one purpose of the charts is to show when there are no records, and in cases of zero records, the figures are accurate.

The total number of tables and charts was pared down according to a number of criteria.

- Some tables and charts were rejected because they contained too little data to be meaningful.

- About half the tables and charts had no relevance for folk plays. Most of these were rejected, but a few were retained for comparison with folk play data. In this case it was important to be confident that the pairs of tables being compared had been compiled using the same methodology. This was achieved primarily by using charts compiled from the same source database.

- Finally, it was evident that some charts effectively duplicated the same distributions and trends. In such cases, the most representative chart was selected for discussion.

The statistical tables used in compiling all the graphs presented below are given in Table 1 at the end this chapter, and the full normalised source data is given in the electronic Appendix I (file Bibliometric Statistics.xls).

Bibliometric Results for Folk Play Databases

The statistics for folk plays were compiled from the following four databases:

- Ervin Beck's inventory of the Alex Helm Collection (E.Beck, 1992 and 2000, and E.Beck & P.Smith, 1985) – Figure 4

This is a large database, representing an inventory of the Alex Helm Collection, held at University College London. The main subject matter relates to folk plays, morris dances and sword dances from throughout Britain, Ireland and elsewhere. It also includes a significant amount of material relating to other customs, such as Plough Monday, May Day, etc. This was the source data used for various listings published by Helm and his collaborators. Ervin Beck of Goshen College, Indiana, compiled the inventory while on sabatical at the University of Sheffield. It has been published on the

World-wide Web (E.Beck, 2000), but has yet to be proof-read and corrected. Typographical and transcription errors will have led to the loss of some statistical data, but this loss appears to be minuscule, and spread evenly.

- Peter Millington's Bibliography of Nottinghamshire folk plays and related customs (P.Millington, 1999) – Figure 5

  This is a database of over 500 items, focussed on the folk plays of Nottinghamshire. It also covers, however, Plough Monday and Plough Sunday customs, and includes some references from neighbouring counties. There are abstracts or extracts for most items, and it is extensively indexed.

- Steve Roud's *MumBib* database (S.Roud & P.Smith, 1993)[4] – Figure 6

  This is a conventional and comprehensive bibliography on the subject of folk plays. There are no abstracts or indexes, but it is published as an electronically searchable database, and it also comes with…

- Steve Roud's *MummInd* database (S.Roud & P.Smith, 1993) – Figure 7

  Related to *MumBib*, this database presents analytical data on several hundred English folk plays. There are fields for location, county, player's names, performance dates, etc. The coverage is not comprehensive however.

The charts compiled from these databases are given below.

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[4] Although this electronic bibliography was published commercially, the statistics show here were compiled using prepublication data provided to me personally by Steve Roud.

Figure 4 - Plays & Player's Names in E.Beck's Helm Inventory
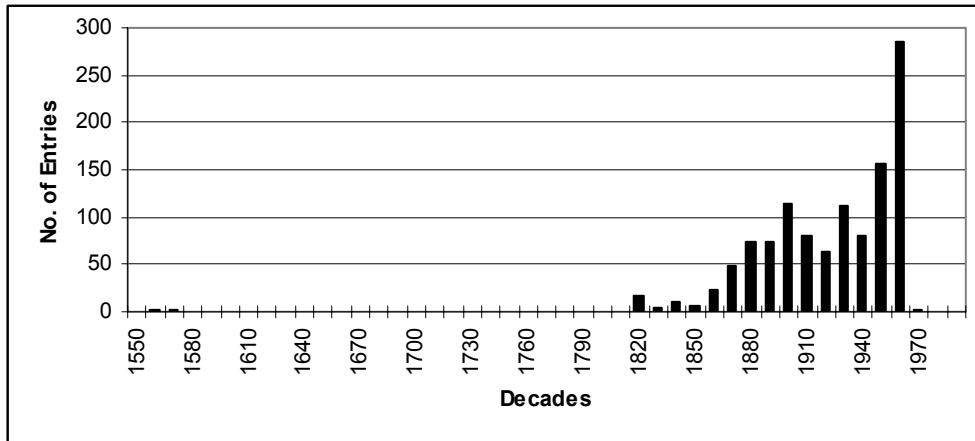
Figure 5 - Plays in P.Millington's Nottinghamshire Bibliography
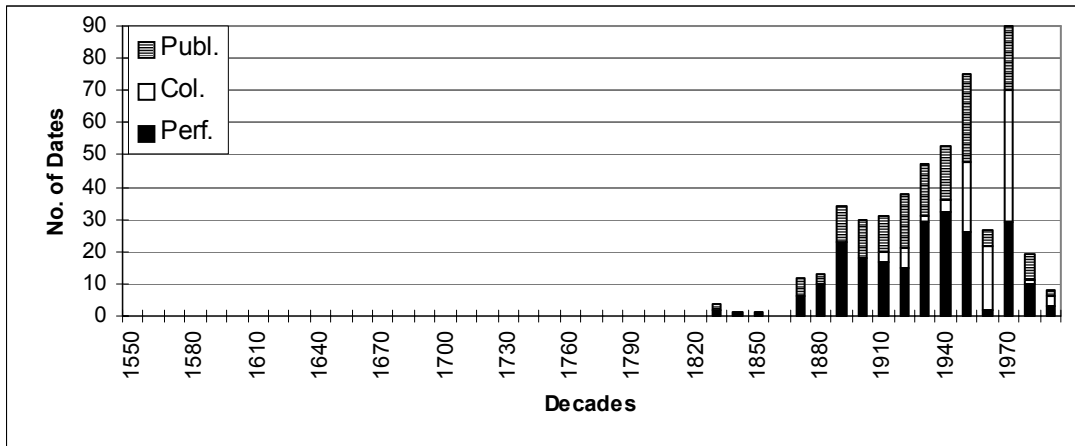
Figure 6 - Dates of Items in S.Roud's *MumBib* Database
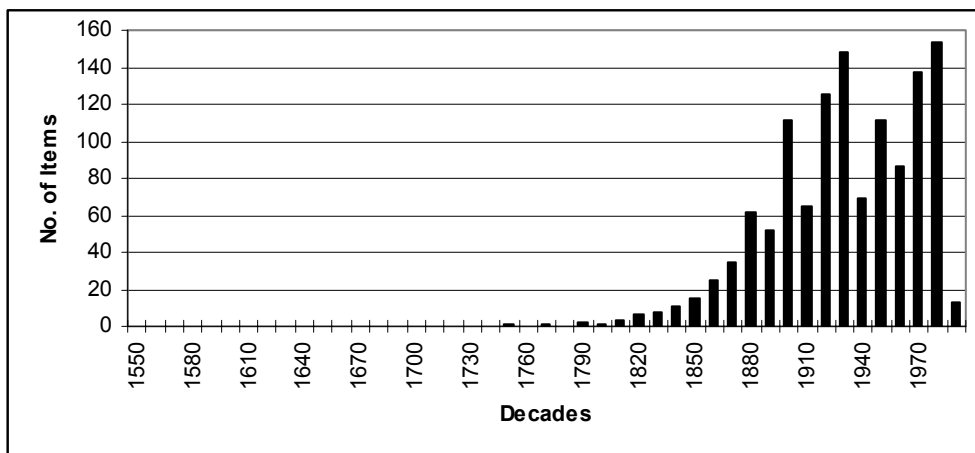
Figure 7 - Dates from S.Roud's *MummInd* Database
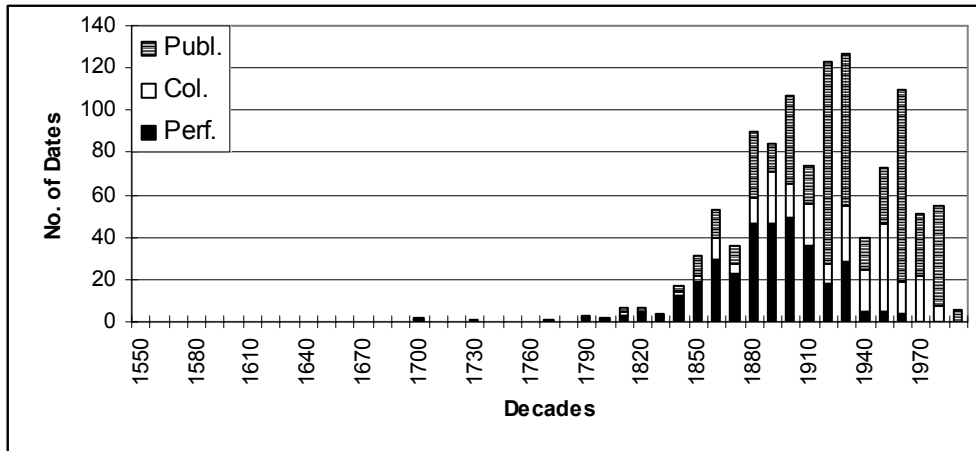
Observations on Folk Play Bibliometrics

Although there are differences in the detail, some common observations can be made for all four graphs. Firstly, all but a few records are restricted to the 19th and 20th centuries. Even within this period, records are sparse before about 1850, although the number grows throughout the 19th century, reaching an initial peak at around 1900. 20th-century numbers are more irregular, but there appears to be a distinct increase in the third quarter of the century.

The few records earlier than the *Alexander* chapbook of about 1750 deserve closer examination. There are two such records in Roud's *MummInd* database. One record refers to the well-known Saint George quatrain from Exeter that appears in a footnote to Brice's heroi-comic poem *The Mobiad* (A.Brice, 1770). According to Cuthbert Bede (1860), this poem was written in 1737 but not published until 1770. Brice's biographer W.H.K.Wright (1896) gives 1738 as the date of the election that the poem describes. Bede appends the following note to another of the Brice footnotes that he quotes:

> "That the custom was continued up to 1770, we may conclude from
> the above note not being corrected or altered by the author, as is the
> case with many of the notes with the book"   *(C.Bede, 1860, p.464)*

This seems to imply that Brice's footnotes could have been added any time between 1737 (or 1738) and 1770.

The other old record in *MumBib* is a reference to Christmas Mummers at Weston Underwood, Buckinghamshire, in the Throckmorton Family Papers for 1705. There is no other information to indicate whether these Mummers performed a play or were just house-visiting.

Beck's inventory yields only four play records dating before 1750. Three of these are references to gifts to "players" taken from account books held by the Lincolnshire Archives. There is no indication of what sort of performance the players gave (they might even have been musicians), nor of the time of year. The fourth record relates to John Kirke's (1638) play *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, which Helm discussed and ruled out as a textual source for the Quack Doctor plays (A.Helm, 1965, pp.120-121, and A.Helm, 1980, pp.4-5).

To summarise, of the six records that predate 1750, one is demonstrably not a folk play, and one contains undisputed folk play text but has an ambiguous (and possibly later) date. The remaining four do not contain sufficient information for us to be confident that they are folk plays at all.

Comparing Folk Play Bibliometrics with other Performances

It is interesting to compare the distributions for folk plays with similar bibliometric distributions for other customs that have an older proven history. The charts given below for morris dancing and Plough Monday use data from Beck's inventory and from my Nottinghamshire Bibliography. The fact that the same sources are being used as for folk plays is important. Because the listings were compiled using similar selection criteria, this means that we are comparing like with like and that therefore valid direct comparisons can be made. Comparing statistics from different databases, we would be less confident about validity.

Comparing Bibliometrics with Morris Dancing

The following graph was compiled from Beck's inventory of the Helm Collection.

Figure 8 - Morris Dances in E.Beck's Helm Inventory
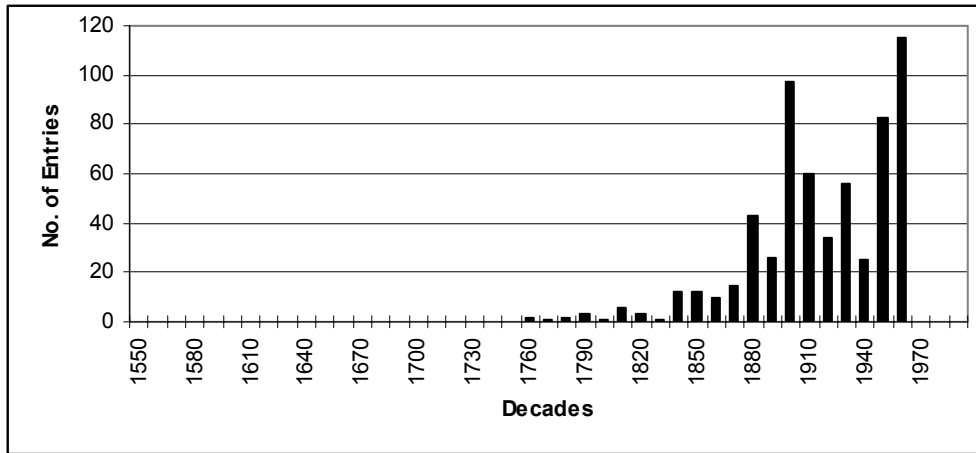
Allowing for a much less pronounced surge of records in the 1960s, the shape of this graph is remarkably similar to that of the equivalent folk play graph, with peaks in the same decades. Curiously, however, there are no records prior to 1750. This is strange because Helm was certainly aware of older documentary evidence. A case in point is the famed Betley window - a stained glass window from Betley, Staffordshire, dating from the beginning of the 16th century, depicting a set of morris dancers and their attendants. Betley appears in Beck's inventory, but without any mention of morris dancing - hence it was not picked up by the keyword search. On the other hand, one of the definitive papers describing and discussing window (E.J.Nicol, 1953) does not appear in the inventory, although it appears in the same journal issue as, and immediately precedes Maurice Barley's paper on East Midlands Plough Plays (1953), which was one of Helm's key sources.

The similarity in the shapes of the graphs, and the absence of older morris dancing records raise the possibility that it was the method by which the collection was gathered, or by which the inventory was compiled, or both, which has determined the observed distributions.

Comparing Bibliometrics with Plough Monday

Figures 9 and 10 present statistics for Plough Monday, drawn from the Beck and Millington databases. Differences in compilation mean that they are not

directly comparable with each other, although they may be compared with other graphs from their source databases.

The graph based on Beck's inventory includes all records containing the keywords "Plough" or "Plow". Consequently, it represents a mixture of performance types; folk plays and Molly dances, as well as non-play and non-dance house visiting and processional customs. In contrast, the Nottinghamshire graph is restricted to non-play Plough Monday customs, although there are many cases where the plays and the non-play customs coexisted.

Figure 9 - Plough Customs from E.Beck's Helm Inventory
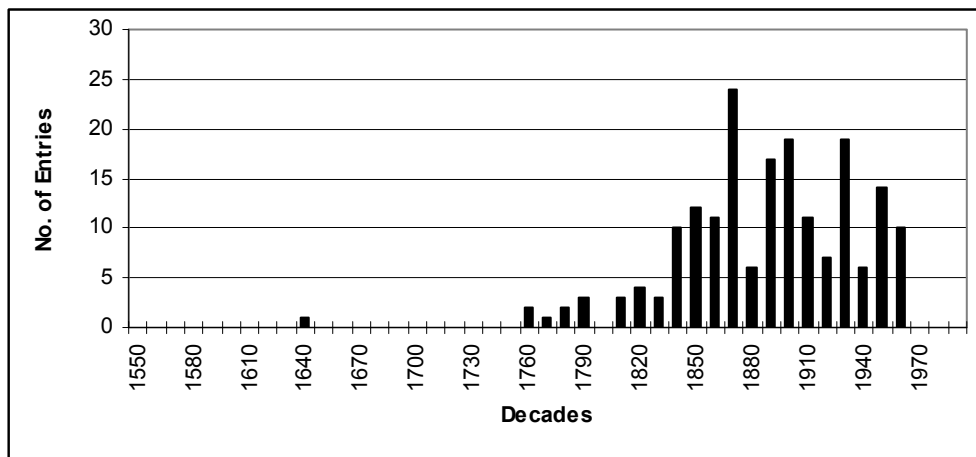
Figure 10 - Non-Play Plough Monday in P.Millington's Notts Bibliography
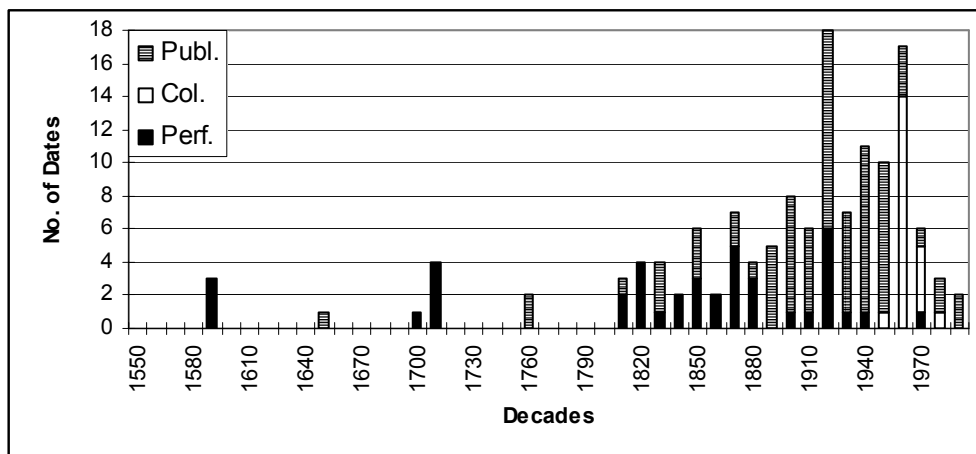
In both these graphs, the bulk of the data is still largely confined to the 19th and 20th centuries. However, relatively speaking, there are more records from

earlier periods. What is more, the nature of these early records is much less ambiguous.

The one earlier record from Helm refers to Plowday expenses incurred by the Brednorth family at Hucknall, Nottinghamshire in 1641-42, although it does not indicate what type of activity took place. On the other hand, from Millington, there are three records referring to an ecclesiastical court case in 1596 in which ten men from North Muskham appeared in costume, charged with ploughing up the churchyard on Plough Monday (B.V.M, 1886 & 1902). Another reference in Millington relates to ploughing starting on Plough Monday (Gervase Markham, 1620). Finally, a group of records from the Records of the Borough of Nottingham (Corporation of Nottingham, 1914) relate to the business that led up to the granting of the charter for the Plough Day Fair by Queen Anne in 1712.

Possible Explanations for the Variability in the Bibliometrics

Given the general concentration of records in all the above graphs in the period from the mid 19th century onwards, and that there are some common peaks and troughs, it is informative to investigate why this might be.

Effects of Social Changes

It would be reasonable to expect that major national social upheavals and changes might have an impact on traditions and their recording. We would expect major wars to have a deleterious effect. Many of the performers and tradition bearers will have gone off to war, and the people remaining behind may have been disinclined to merriment out of respect, and from a perceived need for *gravitas*. Consequently, there are numerous records of traditions being suspended for the duration, sometimes to be revived afterwards, but often permanently discontinued. Two examples from Nottinghamshire are the plays performed at Cropwell Bishop (S.Race Collection, 1924, E.R. Granger), which was discontinued at the outbreak of World War I, and at Tollerton (*Nottingham Guardian*, 1948), which was suspended during World War II.

While times of war have had an impact on the traditions themselves, the effect on the bibliometrics is less clear. There generally appears to be a dip in the graphs for the decades of the two World Wars, but the intrinsic levels still remain high, and one could argue that the variation lies within the inherent experimental error of the compilation method. morris dancing, however, in Figure 8, does not match this pattern. The bar for the 1910s is the fourth highest in this graph.

Contrariwise, one might expect traditions and scholarship to thrive during times of peace and prosperity. This might explain the growth at the end of the Victorian era, and the peaks in the 1950s and 1960s. However, in Figure 5, there is a significant dip in the 1960s, a notable period of peace and prosperity. The play tradition was alive in Nottinghamshire well into the 1970s (I.Russell, 1981), but this is not reflected in the local bibliometrics for the 1960s. Similarly, the Plough Monday graphs - Figures 9 & 10 - tail off at the end of the 20th century, in contrast with the other graphs.

The conclusion to be drawn from these observations is that social upheavals and changes have not had a major impact on the bibliometrics of folk traditions. Therefore, other factors must be more important.

Effects of Major Collectors and Key Publications

The anomalies just mentioned can largely be explained by the activities (or inactivity) of key collectors. In the case of the 1960s gap for Nottinghamshire plays, this probably represents the hiatus in collecting between the activities of M.W.Barley in the 1950s, and of my friends and myself in the 1970s. It may also reflect an irrational reluctance on my part to collect retrospectively from my contemporaries, who would have performed the plays in the 1960s. The Nottinghamshire play references that were collected in the 1960s nearly all come from essays submitted to a series of competitions on village reminiscences run by the Nottinghamshire Local History Council (A.Cossons, 1962).   The same competitions also account totally for the prominent 1960s peak for Nottinghamshire Plough Monday customs. Excepting this, the Plough Monday customs in both Figures 9 and 10 tail off in the late 20th century. This probably

reflects the fact that these customs were not actively collected. They mostly appear to have been recorded in passing by collectors who were primarily looking for Plough Plays, Sword Dances or Molly Dances.

Other collecting effects are apparent. The peaks in the 1900s and 1910s for morris dancing reflect the activities of Cecil Sharp and his collaborators. The sustained effort by Alex Helm and his entourage also explain the peaks in the 1950s and 1960s in the graphs for both morris dancing and folk plays based on Beck's inventory.

Some of the effects are more indirect, in that certain publications have led to an overall increase in recording by a diffuse assortment of individuals. The clearest example of this is the surge of collecting following the publication of *ERD* (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967), notably by members of the Traditional Drama Research Group. A similar surge started in the 1890s following the lectures and papers by T.F.Ordish, to be compounded further by the interest stirred up by E.K.Chambers (1903) in his *Mediaeval Stage*. The publication of Tiddy's book in 1923 and Chambers' sequel *The English Folk-Play* in 1933 inspired later peaks.

Occasionally, effects were more local. In Nottinghamshire, for instance, interest in the 1890s was stirred mainly by the publication of a play text from Cropwell in Mrs. Chaworth-Musters' novel *A Cavalier Stronghold* in 1890. (Mrs. Chaworth-Musters was also one of Ordish's correspondents.) Activities of prominent performing sides may also be significant. S.Roud and P.Marsh (1980) note the prominence of the Overton Mummers in Hampshire in the 1930s, enhanced by the publicity provided by George Long in numerous publications. The revived Tollerton Plough Boys were given similar extensive coverage by the Nottinghamshire press in the late 1940s an early 1950s, as were Nottingham's Owd 'Oss Mummers in the 1970s.

Sources of Information and Methods of Compilation

Key collectors and key publications may well explain the variability in folk play bibliometrics in the past two centuries (one could even say that the first stimulus to collecting was W.Hone's *Every-day Book* in 1827). However, I

contend that it does not explain why the number of records is so low before 1800 for all customs in the sources discussed so far. As alluded to earlier, the other major factor is probably the method used to compile used the databases. It is accurate to say that all the sources discussed so far drew their material almost exclusively from publications and from the manuscript collections of folklorists and popular antiquarians. The few records from other types of unpublished source - such as official historical records in national and county archives - virtually all came indirectly from citations in publications, rather than from the original documents. The concentration on published sources and folklorists' collections places some constraints on the amount and the ease with which material could be located.

Available Publications

Taking publications first, we have to consider the history of the publishing industry. The means for mass publication, relatively speaking, did not arrive in Britain until the 1470s, when William Caxton set up the first English printing presses. Thereafter, for much of the time, growth was very much controlled by the state, the church and vested interests such as those of the Stationers' Company. It was not until the 19th century that publishing really took off, with the abolition of monopolies and the repeal of the Stamp Acts.

Figure 11 - British Library Public Catalogue of Older Reference Material
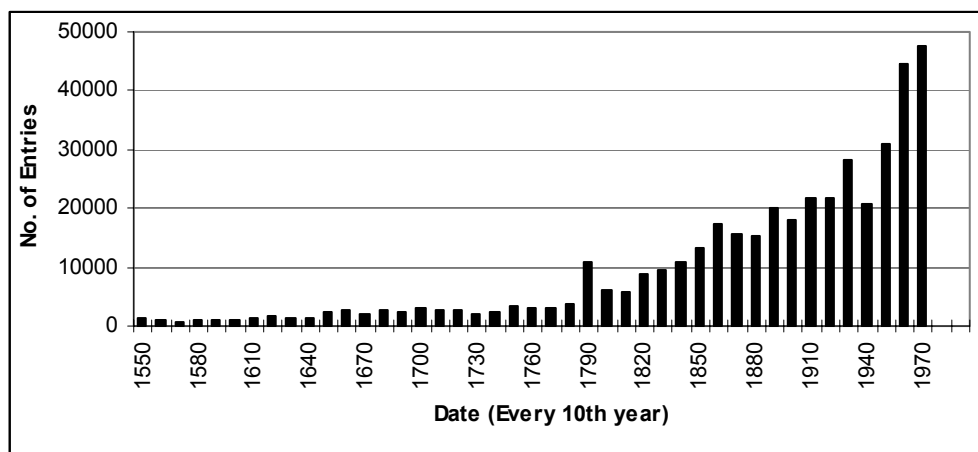
Figure 11 illustrates the growth of printed literature. The graph is based on a number of entries in the British Library's BLPC Online catalogue − formerly OPAC97 - for books published up to 1970 (British Library, 2002). The scope of the catalogue is international, and the chart shows the number of entries for every tenth year. Simplistically speaking, the shape of this graph is not dissimilar to the play and dance graphs, in that the vast bulk is concentrated in the final two centuries. However, the growth is less abrupt, and the variation is smoother. It appears reasonable to say that the growth of publishing provides a foundation upon which the bibliometric distributions of folk plays, dances and other customs are built.[5] However, there are other factors to be considered.

It is one thing for a text or description to be printed in a book, periodical, broadside or whatever. Finding it is another, whether it be an individual piece or the publication in which it is printed. The following discussion concentrates on folk plays, but it applies equally to Plough Monday, morris dancing and many other customs. Taking whole publications first, the number of works dedicated specifically to folk plays is minuscule. Numbers take a quantum leap if we consider general works on drama or folklore, a small proportion of which contain references to folk drama. Furthermore, many references occur in local histories, local newspapers and other local publications of a generic nature.

Retrieval Tools

Potential sources tend to be widely dispersed within a given repository, even with an efficient subject classification. Librarianship did not emerge as an organised profession until the late 19th century. The first widely adopted subject classification for libraries - the Dewey Decimal Classification - was not proposed by Melvil Dewey until 1876. The Library Association was founded in 1877, receiving its Royal Charter in 1898. Previously, subject classifications were either non-existent, too broadly categorised or generally hit and miss. Similarly, subject

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[5] It would be interesting to find or compile a graph showing the growth of newspaper publishing in Britain, similar to the one for books, to see what rôle newspapers could have played in the dissemination and recording of folk plays.

bibliographies primarily emerged in the 19th century, and then were usually restricted to monographs, not individual papers in journals, such as we would expect today. The British Museum Library produced its first subject index to acquisitions in 1886 - for 1880-1885, and thereafter at five year intervals (G.N.Fortescue, 1886).

Given that classifications and bibliographies are of limited use in guiding students of a subject as widely dispersed as folk drama, scholars have often had to resort to scanning large numbers of more general books and periodicals. In doing so, they have had to rely on their indexes and/or contents lists. And here lie further limitations, since in real life, such conveniences are not always available. Books without chapter headings are rare, but not unknown (e.g. the source for a Nottinghamshire recruiting speech, J.Granger, 1904). A contents list clearly cannot be provided in such circumstances, and if, as in the latter case, there is no index either, scanning such books requires serious motivation. Titles and chapter headings may help, if they are informative. They are less help if they are obscurely composed (e.g. the tortuous title *English Ritual Drama*), written for literary effect (e.g. *Early Pastures* in Fred Kitchen's autobiography *Brother to the Ox*, 1940), or overly generic (e.g. *Old Andover* - for a book on local history). Contents lists may therefore be helpful, but usually need to be followed up with examination of the relevant chapter, although a few books help more by giving detailed lists of the contents of each chapter.

Indexes ought to help, but the quality varies greatly. Indexes in books written with local history and/or genealogy in mind may only consist of entries for personal and place names. Other subjects may be covered to a lesser or greater extent according to the whim of the indexer. Folklore and folk drama often fare poorly in such circumstances, although they may be indexed under the name of the festival with which they are associated, or by a local collective term for the participants. Indexes therefore need to be consulted under a wide range of terms to minimise the risk of missing important information. Indexes in academic periodicals have tended to mirror book indexing. Most titles provide indexes, often annual, but some do not. Some, titles also provide cumulative indexes for

longer periods - such as W.Bonser's bibliographies of *Folklore* (1961 & 1969). All such indexes certainly help, but with small specialist series such as the *Folk Music Journal*, scanning titles of papers for the whole run is not out of the question.

With the notable exception of *The Times* of London, newspapers have generally not been indexed, although from the end of the 20th century, electronic databases have become available, as a spin-off from publishers adopting electronic type setting. Many public local studies libraries and some private individuals have built up collections of press cuttings of articles they judge to be significant. These may or may not include folklore materials. They are commonly stored according to subject, and may even be indexed. Some libraries and individuals have even endeavoured to compile true indexes to their local newspapers, but they have tended to cover limited timespans, curtailed by loss of funding or indexers' availability. The Local Studies Section of Nottingham Central Library is lucky to have been bequeathed the immense card index to local newspapers, journals and books compiled by W.E.Doubleday (1865-1959). There has been some attempt to keep it up to date, although the coverage now appears to be less comprehensive. The Nottinghamshire library service also took advantage of work creation schemes in the 1970s to index newspapers held by many of its branch libraries. The quality was variable, but debatably an imperfect index is better than none.

Where they exist, newspaper indexes are very helpful, but should not be relied on totally. As an alternative, it is far from unknown for dedicated individuals to search through long runs of newspapers systematically for material on a given subject. This is not quite as tedious as it may seem. In all the cases of which I am aware, the searchers were looking for calendar customs. Therefore they were able to restrict their searches to a few weeks either side of the relevant festival. In Nottinghamshire, my bibliography benefited very much from the searching that Idwal Jones and Dave Crowther undertook for Christmas and Plough Monday plays in Nottingham newspapers. An unidentified manuscript list of references, of which I have a copy, indicates that someone did a similar exercise for Plough

Monday in the *Stamford Mercury* newspaper. As a final example, E.C.Cawte et al (1960, p.1) acknowledge the work done by K.J.Holland in searching through local newspapers in Buckinghamshire, *Notes and Queries* and other publications for information on morris dancing.

Considering historical trends, it is generally the case that older publications are more prone to lack indexes or contents lists, or to have poor indexes. As with librarianship, indexing emerged as a discipline in the 19th century, the Index Society being founded in 1877. Searching for sources from the mid 19th century onwards is therefore easier and more likely to be fruitful, and I suggest that this is reflected in the bibliometric graphs presented so far.

Folklore Manuscript Collections

As mentioned earlier, the other major class of sources used hitherto consists of the manuscript collections of folklorists, and before that antiquarians with an interest in popular antiquities. These usually comprise the results of their own fieldwork and of their correspondents. Folklore emerged as an academic discipline during the latter half of the 19th century, and with the formation of the Folk-Lore Society in 1878, collecting took off, particularly in the last quarter of the century. The "collected" bars in Figure 7 illustrate this spurt of growth in collecting particularly well for folk drama. Knowing that a person was a folklorist makes it easier to judge whether their manuscript collection is worth searching and the degree of thoroughness of searching that is appropriate. However, locating the collections of even known folklorists can be difficult.

ERD cites a large number of sources as, for instance, "Garth Christian: Collection". A few of these references indicate a repository in brackets (e.g the Roger Abraham, M.W.Barley and the T.Fairman Ordish collections), but the majority give no address, indicating that they were held privately by the person named. Whilst this preserves privacy, it obstructs access to the originals, although there are copies of many in the Alex Helm Collection. Most, if not all, of these collectors were well known among folklore researchers the time of publication,

and were therefore probably traceable. However, many have since died and the whereabouts of their original collections, if they still exist, is generally not known.

Before the emergence of folklore as a discipline, recording was largely in the hands of antiquarians. Relatively few antiquarians appear to have had a serious interest in popular antiquities, and when they did, it was typically only one of a wide range of interests (e.g. Sarah Sophia Banks - M.J.Preston & P.Smith, 1999). The manuscripts of some of these scholars are available to us. They may, however, be dispersed across more than one repository, and may or may not be provided with inventories and/or indexes. Nonetheless, folk play texts and descriptions have been located in such collections - e.g. the manuscript texts from Revesby, Lincolnshire from the Banks family papers (M.J.Preston & P.Smith, 1999, and M.J.Preston et al, 1976b) and a Cheshire text from the papers of Francis Douce (D.Broomhead, 1982).

Outside the field of folklore, other unpublished sources appear not to have been searched systematically, although there have been fortuitous finds from these sources. Often, non-folk play scholars have found these when looking for something else, perhaps then footnoted them in their (non-folklore) publications, or perhaps passed them directly to folklorists of their acquaintance. For instance, Maurice Barley was certainly told of material on Plough Monday in household accounts held in the Lincolnshire County Archives because the archivists were aware of his interests (M.W.Barley, personal communication). Such referrals rely on the finder having some familiarity with the subject of interest, or at least relevant keywords such as "Mummers". All in all, however, the impact of non-folk archives is very limited in the databases discussed so far. Non-folk archives have their own characteristics, and it is worth considering how these relate to folklore records, before proceeding to discuss more recent studies.

How Folklore Records Change Throughout History

Records from all periods are vulnerable to physical destruction or decay, and copying of records was more difficult in earlier times. The duplication of records, especially facilitated by printing, made it more likely that some documents were

preserved. Nonetheless, it is true that the quantity of available evidence becomes less as we go back in time.

While written evidence from any period could generally be assumed to be accurate, the same cannot be said for pictorial evidence. Before the invention and widespread adoption of photography in the 19th century, all images had to be created via the interpretive eyes of an artist. Technical constraints may have limited the degree of detail that was illustrated, and some artists may have added their own embellishments. This will have been particularly true where artists had to prepare illustrations from narrative descriptions rather than from life.

Material evidence - i.e. preserved objects, costumes, etc. - is relatively rare from all periods. With the exception of musical scores, audiovisual material - meaning recorded sound, and still and cinematic photography - has only become readily available in the past century. At the present time, this type of material is quite common, but the difficulties of long-term preservation appear to be much greater than for conventional media.

Working backward in time, using time slices divided on historical or scholastic landmark events, we can expect to see the following:

Late 20th Century

This is the most thorough period. We can expect to find highly detailed records of all aspects of a custom - often including extensive audiovisual material and information on social context. These result from the systematic non-selective fieldwork and/or observation of performances by trained folklorists.

Late 19th to Mid 20th Century

There are also detailed written records in this period, but audiovisual material, is less common and underdeveloped. Also, there is usually no explicit description of social context. These result from less systematic fieldwork by amateur and/or untrained folklorists, at a time when folklore was emerging as a discipline. Information usually focuses on the performance alone. What the collector perceived

as peripheral subject matter or "literary influences" were often ignored or deliberately excluded.

Early to Mid 19th Century

Bourne's and Brand's books aroused interest in "popular antiquities", leading to *ad hoc* collecting by antiquarians. Antiquarian accounts give variable amounts of detail, but are relatively clear and unambiguous. Up to this period there is almost no visual material available, except for idealised book illustrations, which one suspects were impressions drawn from verbal descriptions. The antiquarians tended to record "interesting survivals". Although one could argue that at the time there was a consensus that old customs were all "survivals", the scope of "interesting" certainly depended greatly on individual tastes. Hence, records from this period tend to be much more varied and less inhibited about what information they include than later records. Records from this period tend to carry with themselves a certain measure of subjectivity. However, where customs were vigorously alive and unselfconscious, they sometimes came into conflict with the law or impinged on the local establishment. Thus, from this period, one may also find factual news reports or official records relating to particular incidents, remarkable occurrences, etc.

Restoration to Late 18th Century

Most traditional activities having been officially suppressed during the Commonwealth, there appears to have been a large number of short-term revivals immediately following the Restoration of Charles II (e.g. see K.Chandler, 1993, pp.46-47 regarding a surge of Maypoles in Oxford). However, once life had settled down, customs were often seen as nothing remarkable during this period - just a part of everyday life. With a couple of notable exceptions, there was no systematic recording of customs. Diarists might note the customs they encountered, and members of the local gentry might write descriptions of customs as curiosities. Otherwise, we mainly have official records relating to particular incidents or occurrences.

All the above records tend to be brief - a paragraph or two as most - often only a line. Because they are brief, they are often less clear and open to different

interpretations. The notable exceptions to this tendency are the book by H.Bourne (1725) and its sequel by J.Brand (1777). These are the earliest British folklore books, and give relatively thorough accounts of customs that were prevalent in the 18th century, with occasional references to earlier periods. They perhaps mark the start of the wider study of folklore in Britain.

Reformation to the Civil War

The Reformation and the Civil War were both times when much documentary evidence was destroyed. Therefore records of any sort - still less folklore - are scarcer. There was little interest in recording folklore or traditions, other than from the Puritans who were hell bent on repressing anything they might regard as a papist or pagan survival. More than ever, we tend to be reliant on official records such as statutory instruments, court rolls, wills, account books and the like. Often briefer than records of later periods, the significance of a record from this era may hang on a single word or phrase - e.g. "to the Plough Boys..." - with no indication of what activity actually took place. These are particularly open to multiple interpretations.

Pre-Reformation

Here, records are scarcer still, and they tend to become fewer and fewer as one goes further back in time. In nature they are very similar to the records of the Tudor and Stuart eras, although folklore themes may also sometimes feature in manuscript illuminations. Records from this period may have the added complication of being written in Latin or Norman French, using paleographic scripts.

Summary of Influences So Far

In summary, what one sees is folklore records becoming less frequent and briefer as one goes back in time. (No wonder writers have been apt to invoke "the mists of time" or "time immemorial" in their speculations on origins.) Even so, it is often the case that even brief mediaeval and Tudor records give unambiguous evidence that a custom existed at a given period. Notwithstanding subsequent gaps in the historical record, such a custom can usually be traced to modern times, if not to the present day (see R.Hutton, 1996 for numerous examples).

The conclusions to be drawn from the foregoing discussion are that the observed bibliometric distributions, regardless of custom, reflect a combination of the types of source that have been searched, their availability over time, and the tools that have been provided to aid searching. The foundations of the distributions consist of publications, of which relatively few were available before the 19th century, although the number grew steadily thereafter. From the middle of the 19th century however, growth was boosted above the foundation rate by the introduction of improved bibliographic search aids, coupled with a surge of interest in folklore as a new discipline. This combination peaked around 1900, and although there was overall growth during the 20th century, the rate of growth fluctuated widely because of the activities of key individual researchers. The inescapable implication of these findings is that if one restricts historical searching to publications and folklore collections, very few records will ever be found that predate the 19th century for any traditions.

This is, of course, a purely quantitative outcome. It is perhaps a matter of judgement whether or not the quality of the older records makes up for the lack in numbers. However, we have two more recent surveys that show that more older records can be uncovered if other types of archival material are searched more systematically. These are the *Early Morris Project* and Ian Lancashire's (1984) handbook of pre-Elizabethan drama, both of which were prepared in collaboration with the *Records of Early English Drama* (*REED*) project based at the University of Toronto (Records of Early English Drama Newsletter, 1976).

A Change of Methodology

The Early Morris Project

With morris dancing we are fortunate in being able to call on the the results of the *Early Morris Project* undertaken in the 1980s by J.Forrest, M.Heaney and K.Chandler. This project sought to compile a database of all known references to morris dancing prior to 1750, however brief or tenuous (M.Heaney 1988, and J.Forrest & M.Heaney, 1991). Heaney and Forrest published the data in 1991. Keith Chandler went on separately to publish a thorough listing of all known sources for

performances in the English south midlands up to 1900 (K.Chandler, 1993a and 1993b). Prior to these surveys, there had been other smaller general surveys, covering primarily 19th- and 20th-century material (J.Needham, 1936, and E.C.Cawte et al, 1960).

Heaney and Forrest's listing contains over 700 entries for the period 1458 to 1750. Following the earlier pattern, a bibliometric chart for the database is given in Figure 12. Their references occur at a rate which averages more than two per year. However, as one might expect, the concentration of references is not uniform throughout this period. The records are sparse before 1500, and there are marked peaks in the 1600s and the 1660s. However, after 1500 there is a relatively continuous stream of references, even during the period of active suppression by the Puritans during the Commonwealth. The records are indeed sufficiently continuous for Forrest and Heaney to have been able to plot charts showing historical trends relating to types of venue, performance sponsors, character names, etc (J.Forrest & M.Heaney, 1991, pp.179-185).

Figure 12 - Morris Dancing Records from M.Heaney & J.Forrest (1991)
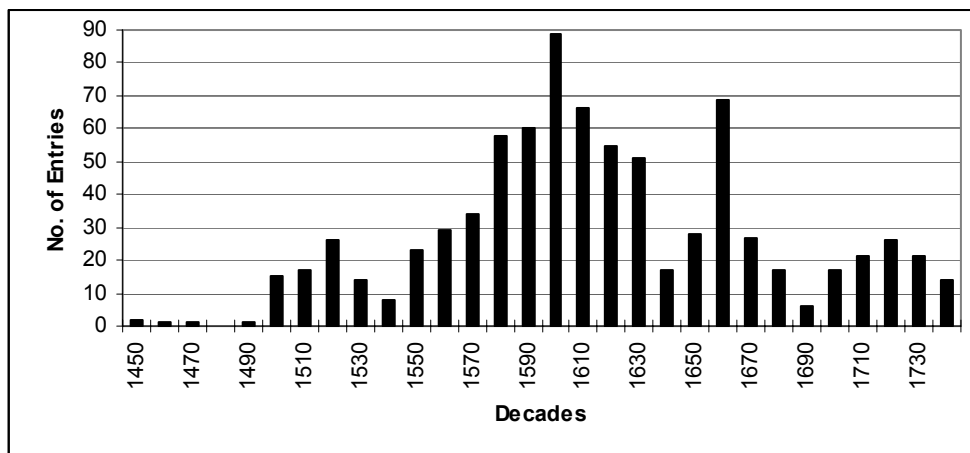
The size of this database represents a massive increase in the number of records for the period, relative to the few references that were known previously (J.Forrest & M.Heaney, 1991, p.170). This raises two questions:

- What did they do that was different to discover such a wealth of information?

- Could we expect the apparent pre-1750 vacuum to disappear if a similar approach were to be used with folk plays?

Answering the first question is easy. Forrest and Heaney did not restrict their research to publications and modern folklore collections as the earlier surveys did. The key difference is that they systematically searched historical non-folklore archives (See Appendix B for a classification of sources). We can learn from their experiences and utilise them in looking for older folk plays. The second question is less easy to answer, but is addressed in the following discussion on early English drama.

Early English Drama Projects

At the time of writing, there has not yet been a systematic search for early English folk plays that is directly equivalent to Forrest and Heaney's survey. Consequently, it might seem premature of R.Hutton (1996, p.78) to note the "remarkable silence" of pre-1730 folk play records when compared with the *Early Morris Project*. However, some of this earlier period has been covered by two interrelated surveys of early English drama. Both of these, like the morris survey, have sought out all records from their respective periods, whether they be brief one-line records or full texts and descriptions. The sources and compilation methods are the same as those used by Forrest and Heaney. In fact these authors leaned heavily on the research of the *REED* project, which will now be discussed (M.Heaney & J.Forrest, 1991, p.1).

The Records in Early English Drama (*REED*) project, is an on-going project based at the University of Toronto. Its aim is to "locate, transcribe, and publish systematically all surviving external evidence of dramatic, ceremonial, and minstrel activity in Great Britain before 1642". 1642 was the year when the Puritans suppressed the London theatres (Records of Early English Drama Newsletter, 1976). So far, the published outcome has been thorough but geographically patchy. It is therefore of limited use as a source of bibliometric data for comparison with my earlier charts.

I.Lancashire's (1984) listings of dramatic texts and records of Britain to 1558 are more useful. 1558 was the year of the accession of Queen Elizabeth I to the throne. This handbook is geographically comprehensive, and contains separate lists for "Texts", "Topographical Index", and "Doubtful Texts and Records". I compiled charts for all these lists, but found that the appendix giving a "Chronological List of Salient dates" yielded the most representative graph (Figure 13). It should be noted that the scope of the survey means that the distribution in this chart is only significant up to the 1550s, and not beyond. The later data represents the "overflow" from Lancashire's main period of study.

Figure 13 - "Salient Dates" for Early English Drama - I.Lancashire (1984)
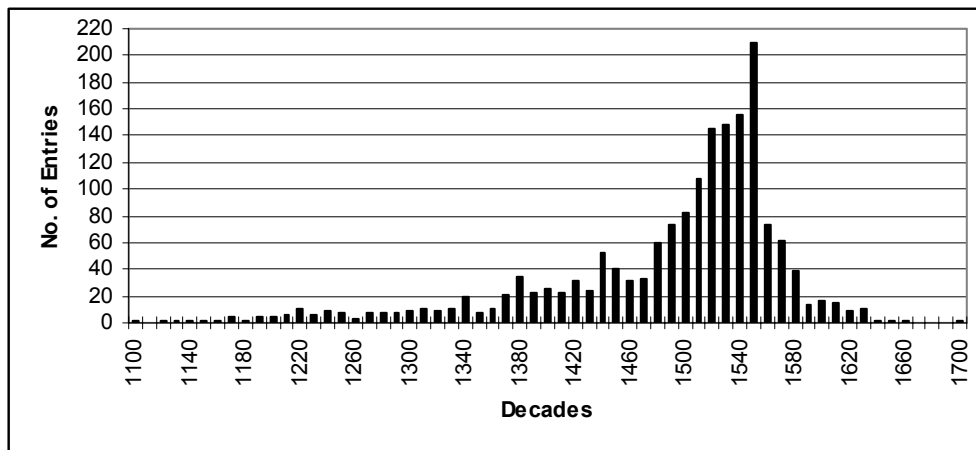
I.Lancashire's data cannot be compared directly with the *Early Morris Project* data because they cover different, if overlapping periods. However, like the *Early Morris Project*, this data shows that by delving systematically into historical manuscript archives, a large amount of information can be found.

Both drama surveys - *REED* and that of I.Lancashire - cover a very broad range of entertainments. They range from formal professional productions, staged for the aristocracy, to apparently traditional observances among the masses. Nor are all the entries dramatic. They cover dancing, disguising, minstrelsy, Christmas and other seasonal festivities. This coverage is sufficiently broad to have caught any records from their periods that might relate to the Quack Doctor folk plays. Similarly, one would hope that the *Early Morris Project* would have reported any early mumming and folk play records they may have encountered,

bearing in mind their links to *REED* and the long-standing interest of present-day English morris dancers in Mummers' plays[6].

Reassessing Old Records

There can be no doubt that shared text would be the best evidence for linking early drama records with modern folk plays. The significance of a single shared couplet or quatrain might be debatable, especially if it featured a common pair of rhyme words such as "…knight" and "…fight", but beyond that, the more text that is shared, the stronger the link. However, establishing a link between an early record and modern folk plays can have more than one connotation. It could be that the early record is merely a source of the textual material used in folk play scripts. This is probably the case for most printed stage play scripts, broadside ballads and the like. Alternatively, the early record could be a precursor of the folk play custom. If so, the shared text is unlikely to be sufficient evidence on its own. It needs to be supplemented by evidence regarding the participants, the context of the performance, and so on. If these ancillary factors are also shared, then all well and good, but differences require explanation, and may indicate that again the early record was only a source of textual material.

As it happens, within the potential early sources that have been identified so far, there are very few textual parallels. This is particularly the case with the early drama surveys. Therefore we have to rely more on the shared ancillary factors alone, such as dramaturgy, which are less satisfactory. This is something that has been considered in detail by Tom Pettitt. At the start of this process he declared his position as follows:

> "My own interest in the dramaturgy of the folk plays is due to its potential value in the task of charting the earlier phases of the tradition… The initial problem is to decide whether a parallel is significant or merely fortuitous, and even in cases where the

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[6] Keith Chandler (1986) reported one such find from the household accounts of the Dutton family at Sherborne, Gloucestershire. These references to "Mumers" – which may or may not have performed plays - come from the 1790s and therefore fall comfortably within the known history of the Quack Doctor plays.

parallel is quite specific and persuasive, there remains the problem
of determining the direction of the borrowing."   *(T.Pettitt, 1988, p.55)*

In two papers, he presents a contextual typology for what he calls "customary drama" (T.Pettitt, 1990 and 1995). This term is intended to cover all customs that involve some degree of dramatic performance. Pettitt's typology lists contextual features under five main headings – Activities, Incidence, Participants, Auspices and Physical Contexts. He then goes on to identify those features or combinations of features that characterise folk play performances (meaning Quack Doctor folk plays), and which serve to distinguish them from other forms of drama, "folk theatre", and custom. In his paper *Cork Revisited*, Pettitt calls these performances "dramatic mumming", which he defines as follows:

> [Dramatic mumming is] "...a seasonal house-visit custom performed by a group of guised men whose interaction with the households they visit involves the performance of a show including segments with enough by way of mimesis and plot to qualify as drama."
>
> *(T.Pettitt, 1994, pp.15)*

Pettitt then revisits several old records that had been raised by earlier scholars as possible antecedents of the Quack Doctor plays:

- Henry Machyn's eyewitness description of a *Jack of Lent* procession in London on 1553 (J.G.Nichols, 1848). Pettitt feels that that the Physician in this particular procession is not a convincing parallel to the Quack Doctor. More to the point, The time of occurrence - the end of Lent - is wrong relative to folk plays, and its auspices are wrong, being a civic processional pageant. In summary, "we are dealing with a different theatre, and indeed a different stage." (T.Pettitt, 1994, p.18)

- A manuscript of two isolated stanzas attributed to "Humfry Nayler 1471" (J.Ritson, 1783). These stanzas comprise a hero's general challenge and its acceptance. There is some similarity with folk play texts, but as Pettitt remarks himself, the rhyme pair "…knight"/"…fight" and the phrase "with sword in hand" are both common verbal formulae, and one would be happier with the parallel if the remaining wording were also more exactly matched. While the

stanzas appear to come from a play, there is no information on the context of performance. They may or may not have been dramatic mumming, but without the context they cannot be taken as evidence for it.

- Thomas Croker's manuscript *Recollections of Cork* (c.1800) quotes an earlier account of a play supposedly performed in Cork in 1685. The description and the named characters tally closely with modern Irish folk plays. Pettitt states that "both its authenticity and date have been questioned on a number of grounds", but he does not give references, which is a pity. Pettitt's own doubts about the date rest on the presence of Oliver Cromwell. He finds it unlikely that such a character would have been tolerated in Ireland so soon after the atrocities perpetrated by him there. He also doubts that it was a house visiting custom, and notes that it was probably a special summer performance.[7] Because the context of the performance is different, it is clearly distinct from the house-visiting of the modern mummers, and its significance remains enigmatic.

- "Anthony Pasquin" (1791) describes a show staged at Bristol Fair in 1770. This quotes a text for a Doctor scene that definitely corresponds with the equivalent scene in hero-combat plays. There is clearly some link with the Quack Doctor plays, even if the circumstances of performance are different.[8]

- Andrew Brice's (1770) *The Mobiad* - written in 1737 - includes an allusion to Christmas mummers, "England's Heroe" and a Dragon as part of an epic poem. A footnote gives further information about the then current Christmas custom in Exeter, including an introductory St. George speech that is common

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[7] Croker also mentions that a chapbook text entitled "Christmas Rhymes" was still current in Cork at his time of writing. The Cork description substantially mirrors the later Belfast chapbooks, almost suggesting that one was based on the other. Were it not for the fact that Croker places his play description within quotation marks, I would have suggested that he had decided to expand a very brief 1685 mention of "mumming and masking" with recent material that he assumed was related.

[8] Convincing though this parallel may be, by 1770, the first Alexander chapbook texts had already been published, so any transfer of lines could as easily have been from a traditional text to the professional Bristol play as *vice versa*.

in Quack Doctor plays. If this footnote truly relates to 1737, then this remains the earliest record of a Quack Doctor play.[9]

Regarding earlier records, Pettit states:

> "Earlier than 1737, as the above discussion has demonstrated, the records of the mummers' <u>play</u> and the mumming (house-visit) in which it is usually of late performed part company" *(T.Pettitt, 1994, p.25)*

Before 1737, there is plenty of material that initially looks promising, but which on closer inspection fails to yield conclusive information. There are Christmas Mummers a-plenty, being people in disguise, sometimes representing named characters. Some, but by no means all, of these Mummers perform plays (there are for instance a number of extant Court mummings written by John Lydgate), but none of the named characters are to be found in modern Quack Doctor plays. Saint George is also relatively common, but he appears in pageants, masques and the like, at times of year that are not associated with modern folk plays, and that are not house visiting customs (T.Pettitt, 1994, p.16). He is rare in those early records that are plays – and where he does appear, the plays lack the key co-character of the Quack Doctor. Such doctors or physicians as there are only appear to be incidental, as in the *Jack of Lent* procession mentioned above. The early drama surveys have also uncovered numerous play texts, including some, such as the Robin Hood plays, that continental Europeans would consider being folk plays,[10] however, these bear no relation to the Quack Doctor plays.

Regardless of whether or not this is enough to prove that the Quack Doctor plays are purely modern, the fact remains that there are large historical gaps in the historical record between the early drama surveys and the earliest records of Quack Doctor folk plays. In the case of *REED*, the historical gap is about 100 years, and with I.Lancashire's survey, the gap is about 200 years. The period from

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[9] Pettitt seems happy to accept that the footnote was added by Brice "in the manner of Pope" at the time that he wrote the poem - 1737. However, as noted earlier, it is possible that the footnote could have been added by Brice any time between then and the date of publication - 1770.

[10] L.Schmidt (1965, pp.312-323) gives a late mediaeval Corpus Christi play – *Noah's Ark, or the Shipwright's Ancient Play or Dirge*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne - as one of the English examples in his compendium of European folk plays *Le Théatre Populaire Européen*.

the Restoration to the mid 1750s therefore represents a key time for proving or disproving historical continuity. Furthermore, if the plays are modern, then this period is likely to be equally important for characterising the genesis of the plays.

Criteria for Accepting Records as Quack Doctor Plays

The list below gives revised criteria for accepting a given historical record as a Quack Doctor folk play or an antecedent. The list combines the issues raised by C.Fees (1984) and the definition refinements of T.Pettitt (1990, 1994 and 1995) with the revised list of characteristics of modern Quack Doctor plays given earlier in the *Critique* chapter.

No one criterion is sufficient on its own to validate a given record. Rather, the number of positive characteristics needs to exceed a certain "critical mass", which at the moment is difficult to specify objectively. However, there are some features which can disqualify a record (e.g. a puppet performance), although even then, the record might be regarded as some sort of precursor. Also, some superficially characteristic features of folk plays - such as the character Saint George - are in fact found widely in other contexts, to the extent of being *clichés*. Such commonplaces provide very weak evidence for folk plays.

Time of Occurrence

- Positive evidence: Performance associated with an annual festival. Performed on a feast day also associated with modern folk plays - especially Christmas and New Year, or whatever is usual for the district concerned.

- Weak evidence: *Ad hoc* performances; Performance at festivals not associated with modern folk plays

- Negative evidence: Performance on Saint George's Day, or on a summer festival such as Mayday.

House Visiting

- Positive evidence: Participants performing at several locations, or visiting the recorded venue from another location. Solicitation and/or receipt of rewards.

- Negative evidence: Occurrence in theatres, processions, pageants and masques.

Participants

- Positive evidence: Performance by men or boys.

- Negative evidence: Performance by puppets

Dramaturgy

- Positive evidence: Performance of a drama; evidence of spoken dialogue; verse text.

- Negative evidence: Absence of dialogue; Performance in mime

Action or Plot

- Positive evidence: Revival of a dead or injured character by a medical doctor

- Weak evidence: Dispute or combat [*Clichés*]

Characters

- Positive evidence: Most of the characters correspond to a modern folk play cast, including a medical doctor or physician. Uncommon character names otherwise unique to modern folk plays - e.g. Hopper Joe, Johnny Jack, etc.

- Weak evidence: Saint George, Beelzebub, Hobby Horses [*Clichés*]

- Negative evidence: Saint George's Dragon - abnormal in modern folk plays (S.Roud & C.Fees, 1984)

Costume

- Weak evidence: Some attempt at disguise and/or dressing to represent a character or personage, with or without facial disguise.

- Negative Evidence: Participants dressed normally, as they would on any other occasion.

Text

- Positive evidence: Text fragments found in modern folk plays. The more matching text, the stronger the evidence. A "fixed" core text and/or a habitually used text. Verse text.

- Weak evidence: A single couplet or quatrain; *Cliché* lines - e.g. "Christmas comes but once a year / And when it comes it brings good cheer" , "…stand / With sword in hand", etc.; Wording needs to be more exactly matched for common pairs of rhyme words – e.g. …knight / …fight; Presence of certain formulaic constructions – "In comes I…" or "Here comes I…"[11], and "If you don't believe what I say / Step in … and clear the way".

Name for the Participants or Custom

- Weak evidence: The names Mummers/Mumming, Guisers/Guising, etc - insufficient on their own, as they are also used for proven non-play activities

Armed with these new criteria, it should be possible to review relevant old records, and judge the validity of their relationship to the Quack Doctor plays – as precursors either to the texts or the customs or both. At the same time, the dates of these records should be revalidated, especially anything that is purported to predate 1750. Dates (or date ranges) should be unambiguous and verifiable. The probable validity of an account is reduced if access to the original record is not possible, and there are reasonable doubts about the trustworthiness of a secondary source.

Conclusions

Although there is still a need for a systematic search for folk play records before the mid 18th century, sufficient research has been done to enable us to come to some conclusions. The first is that the Quack Doctor plays did not exist before the 18th century - or possibly the late 17th century if Croker's account of

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[11] Following extensive full text searching of Literature On-line and the Internet, it became apparent that these self-introductory constructions are rare in other *genres* of drama and literature. Indeed they proved to be efficient search terms for retrieving folk play texts.

1685 is accepted. Secondly, the lack of early historical records contrasts with other customs – notably morris dancing – and other forms of early drama. From their example, it is reasonable to expect that at least a few unequivocal records of Quack Doctor play-like activities in earlier periods would have been found by now, but this is not the case. Consequently, the historical continuity required to validate the survivalist theories of origin does not exist, and they are therefore disproved.

The lack of convincing early records has been acknowledged throughout the history of English folk play scholarship, but has generally been ignored because it was felt that such records would be found with further research. The first person to suggest that the lack of older records was meaningful was R.Crompton Rhodes (1934), writing in response to E.K.Chambers' *English Folk-Play*. In doing so, he quoted the oldest sources he knew - E.Jones (1794), "Anthony Pasquin" (1791) and J.C.Walker (1788) - all late 18th century. It is significant in itself that in the period since 1934, only three or four older records have been found – also 18th century except perhaps for the Cork reference. Crompton Rhodes' contribution seems to have been ignored by his contemporaries, and similar views did not re-emerge until the period of the new folk play scholarship. Georgina Smith (1981) reiterated this view and went further in footnoting the contrast with other customs:

> "This absence of recording may be instructively compared with the numerous descriptions and recordings of other forms of seasonal traditions, such as rush bearing, making and exhibiting garlands, maypole and morris dancing, occurring in early sources."
>
> *(G.Smith, 1981, p.217, note 13)*

She noted that the recorded history was at odds with the existing survival theories. I was perhaps more forthright in my article of 1989 in saying that the lack of early records disproved the survival theories (P.Millington, 1989a).

As we have already seen, Pettitt further highlighted the contrast with other customs by bringing *REED* and the *Early Morris Project* data into the discussion. However the watershed publication is probably Ronald Hutton's *Stations of the Sun* (1996). First of all, Hutton accepts the view that the Quack Doctor plays are modern on the basis of their historical record. In the rest of his book, Hutton

critically examines the history of the whole range of British calendar customs, carefully demonstrating that many of these customs have more ancient histories, and even pre-Christian origins in a few cases (e.g. Beltane). It is his even-handedness and the contrast between the folk plays and the other customs that makes the case for the modernity of the folk plays convincing. Recent authors have further promulgated this view (e.g. S.Tillis, 1999, J.Simpson & S.Roud, 2000, E.Cass, 2001 and E.Cass & S.Roud, 2002), and it appears to be gaining general acceptance.

Notwithstanding the collapse of the survivalist theories, there has clearly been insufficient systematic searching in the period c.1650 to c.1750. Research in this period (especially the early 18th century) is likely to find material relating to the genesis and rise of the Quack Doctor plays. Few early records of morris dancing were known before Forrest and Heaney undertook their project. This raises the question of whether a similar project for folk drama would be equally successful.

Table 1 - Source Data for Bibliometric Statistics

Decade	E.Beck's Inventory of the Alex Helm Collection				P.Millington's Bibliography of Notts Folk Plays, etc.					
		Title Keywords			Folk Plays			Non-Play Plough Monday Customs		
	All Refs	Plays or Names	Plough	Morris Dance	Perf.	Col.	Publ.	Perf.	Col.	Publ.
1100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1110	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1120	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1130	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1140	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1150	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1160	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1170	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1180	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1190	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1210	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1220	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1230	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1240	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1250	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1260	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1270	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1280	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1290	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1300	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1310	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1320	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1330	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1340	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1350	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1360	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1370	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1380	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1390	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1400	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1410	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1420	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1430	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1440	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1450	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1460	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1470	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1480	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1490	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1510	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1520	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1530	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1540	1	1	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
1550	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1560	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1570	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1580	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1590	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0

Table 1 - Source Data for Bibliometric Statistics

| Decade | E.Beck's Inventory of the Alex Helm Collection | | | | P.Millington's Bibliography of Notts Folk Plays, etc. | | | | | |
| | | Title Keywords | | | Folk Plays | | | Non-Play Plough Monday Customs | | |
	All Refs	Plays or Names	Plough	Morris Dance	Perf.	Col.	Publ.	Perf.	Col.	Publ.
1600	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1610	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1620	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1630	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1640	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1650	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1660	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1670	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1680	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1690	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1700	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
1710	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
1720	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1730	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1740	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1750	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1760	7	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
1770	6	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1780	6	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
1790	18	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
1800	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1810	13	1	3	6	0	0	0	2	0	1
1820	32	16	4	3	0	0	0	4	0	0
1830	20	4	3	1	2	0	2	1	0	3
1840	50	11	10	12	1	0	0	2	0	0
1850	62	7	12	12	1	0	0	3	0	3
1860	75	24	11	10	0	0	0	2	0	0
1870	160	48	24	15	6	0	6	5	0	2
1880	226	75	6	43	10	0	3	3	0	1
1890	216	74	17	26	23	0	11	0	0	5
1900	312	115	19	97	18	0	12	1	0	7
1910	172	81	11	60	17	3	11	1	0	5
1920	120	64	7	34	15	6	17	6	0	12
1930	224	111	19	56	29	2	16	1	0	6
1940	128	80	6	25	32	4	17	1	0	10
1950	321	156	14	83	26	22	27	0	1	9
1960	575	286	10	115	2	20	5	0	14	3
1970	7	2	0	0	29	41	20	1	4	1
1980	-	-	-	-	10	1	8	0	1	2
1990	-	-	-	-	3	3	2	0	0	2

Table 1 - Source Data for Bibliometric Statistics

| Decade | S.Roud's MummInd Plays | | | S.Roud's MumBib Plays | BL Old Ref Material Every 10th Year | Heaney & Forrest (1991) Early Morris | I.Lancashire (1984) Salient Dates |
	Perf.	Col.	Publ.	No. of Items	No. of Entries	No.of Refs	No. of Entries
1100	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1110	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
1120	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1130	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
1140	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
1150	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
1160	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1170	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
1180	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
1190	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
1200	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
1210	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1220	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
1230	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1240	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
1250	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
1260	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
1270	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
1280	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
1290	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
1300	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
1310	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
1320	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
1330	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
1340	-	-	-	-	-	-	19
1350	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
1360	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
1370	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
1380	-	-	-	-	-	-	35
1390	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
1400	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
1410	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
1420	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
1430	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
1440	-	-	-	-	-	-	53
1450	-	-	-	-	-	2	40
1460	-	-	-	-	-	1	31
1470	-	-	-	-	-	1	33
1480	-	-	-	-	-	0	60
1490	-	-	-	-	-	1	73
1500	-	-	-	-	676	15	83
1510	-	-	-	-	708	17	108
1520	-	-	-	-	1090	26	145
1530	-	-	-	-	903	14	148
1540	-	-	-	-	736	8	156
1550	-	-	-	-	1346	23	209
1560	-	-	-	-	971	29	73
1570	-	-	-	-	811	34	61
1580	-	-	-	-	881	58	39
1590	-	-	-	-	906	60	13

Table 1 - Source Data for Bibliometric Statistics

Decade	S.Roud's MummInd Plays			S.Roud's MumBib Plays	BL Old Ref Material Every 10th Year	Heaney & Forrest (1991) Early Morris	I.Lancashire (1984) Salient Dates
	Perf.	Col.	Publ.	No. of Items	No. of Entries	No.of Refs	No. of Entries
1600	-	-	-	-	1110	89	17
1610	-	-	-	-	1343	66	15
1620	-	-	-	-	1651	55	9
1630	-	-	-	-	1329	51	10
1640	-	-	-	-	1367	17	1
1650	-	-	-	-	2333	28	1
1660	-	-	-	-	2852	69	2
1670	-	-	-	-	1967	27	0
1680	-	-	-	-	2642	17	0
1690	-	-	-	-	2403	6	0
1700	1	1	0	-	3121	17	1
1710	0	0	0	-	2684	21	-
1720	0	0	0	-	2671	26	-
1730	1	0	0	-	2191	21	-
1740	0	0	0	-	2345	14	-
1750	0	0	0	1	3346	-	-
1760	0	0	0	0	3155	-	-
1770	0	0	1	1	3199	-	-
1780	0	0	0	0	3800	-	-
1790	2	1	0	2	10918	-	-
1800	1	1	0	1	6038	-	-
1810	3	2	2	3	5921	-	-
1820	4	1	2	6	8979	-	-
1830	2	1	1	8	9508	-	-
1840	12	2	3	11	10779	-	-
1850	19	3	9	15	13332	-	-
1860	29	11	13	25	17424	-	-
1870	23	4	9	35	15603	-	-
1880	46	13	31	62	15427	-	-
1890	46	25	13	52	19917	-	-
1900	49	16	42	111	18112	-	-
1910	36	20	18	65	21619	-	-
1920	18	9	96	125	21886	-	-
1930	28	27	72	148	28186	-	-
1940	5	20	15	69	20640	-	-
1950	5	41	27	111	31011	-	-
1960	4	15	91	87	44450	-	-
1970	0	22	29	137	47641	-	-
1980	0	8	47	154	-	-	-
1990	0	0	6	13	-	-	-

ALTERNATIVE ORIGINS

Disproving the survivalist theories has proved to be a mixed blessing, as noted by Hutton:

> "All told, the collapse of the theory of pagan origins has created more problems than it has solved in the quest for the origins of the Mummers' Play."
>   *(R.Hutton, 1996, p.79)*

The fundamental problem is that the demise of the survivalist theories leaves a vacuum. There is no coherent replacement theory waiting in the wings, so we are left with numerous questions and very few answers. We may know roughly when the plays arose – early to mid 18th century - but we have no idea where they arose, and only clues to why and how. There has been some discussion of the plays' relationship to, and coexistence with the other customs of the festivals with which they are associated. Theatrical influences, both professional and amateur, have also been discussed, notably the *Commedia dell' Arte* and booth plays at fairs. This has involved some consideration of literary textual sources, most of which appear to have been transient *ad hoc* additions. Chapbook texts have been considered in great detail. These were undoubtedly important for the dissemination of the plays, but probably do not represent an origin, despite the fact that the first version *Alexander and the King of Egypt* occurs right at the start of our history. Otherwise, there has been very little textual analysis.

These ideas offer scope for progress, but they have not yet been presented on a united front. In this chapter, I review these discussions, and highlight outstanding issues and opportunities.

The Relationship of Plays to Non-Play House-Visiting

A key step in making progress on origins is the recognition that the customs to which the plays are attached also exist independently of the plays. This is illustrated nicely by Ruaridh Greig (1988) in his M.Phil. thesis on house-visiting

customs in South Yorkshire. It is also helpful that in his foreword to the *Introduction to the English Mummers' Play* by Cass & Roud, Phil Wilson describes a non-play Mummers' custom:

> "When I was young, my father told me about the Mummers. They came every New Year. They would knock on the front door and were welcomed into the house. Always strangers, always men, they would come in humming. They had blackened faces and hands, wore dark clothing and carried brooms, and would go through the whole house symbolically sweeping and all the while humming. When they were finished they would leave, not a word spoken, no money changing hands, but leaving gifts of a piece of coal and a piece of bread."
> *(E.Cass & S.Roud, 2002, p.5)*

Thus he makes it clear that not all Mummers performed plays. A play and its equivalent non-play house-visiting custom may even co-exist on the same date and in the same location

Pettitt has rightly pointed out that if the play *per se* is removed from its associated custom, the custom can and does quite happily exist on its own, and may indeed be better documented than the plays (T.Pettitt, 1995, pp.29-30, 31). In theory, the play could also survive on its own in a variety of other contexts, although this does not seem to happen in reality. This situation could be explained if the original custom lacked a play and the play was added later, or if the custom originally included a play, which was later dropped. Which is the case? In the past it has usually been assumed that the non-play customs have been degraded relics of a larger play custom, but no factual evidence has been presented in support.

A New Hypothesis

In a paper that deserves more prominence, Preston (1971) suggested that plays are dramatic additions to the activities of traditional house-visiting customs, these being of greater ancestry. This view contrasts with earlier assumptions. Unaware of Preston's paper, I independently came to the same conclusion. I first hinted at this hypothesis in my paper on costumes (P.Millington, 1985) and later spelled it out in the *American Morris Newsletter* (P.Millington, 1989a), adding that the change must have taken place in the early to mid 18th century. Equivalent views have been expressed by dance scholars with respect to the addition of dances to

Plough Monday plough trailing (G.M.Ridden, 1974, p.364), and the addition of plays to sword dances (S.D.Corrsin, 1997, pp.225-226).

Dean-Smith (1958) suggested something superficially similar – that the words of a play had been grafted onto a pre-existing luck visit ritual. The difference is that she assumes that the death and resurrection motif was already present in the ritual, and that the grafting of words was merely a dramatisation of that motif. However, as pointed out by Cass and Roud:

> "[This] falls at the first hurdle. There is no evidence for a death-resurrection custom in Britain before the rise of the mumming play."
> *(E.Cass & S.Roud, 2002, p.18)*

In fact the play provided the death-resurrection motif, so the pre-existing custom would have been a simple house-visiting of the type described earlier.

Testing the Hypothesis

The new hypothesis entails a number of points that can be tested:

- That there was a time before which the Quack Doctor folk plays did not exist.

- That the calendar customs with which the folk plays have latterly been associated existed independently for a significant period before this point in time – i.e. that they did not feature the plays.

- That it is possible to demonstrate a transition from non-play customs to customs with plays attached.

The first two points were dealt with in the last chapter, where I showed that there is a long recorded history for the relevant non-play customs, whereas the plays are absent from the record before the mid 18th century.

So far, I have not been able to find any single locations where a transition from non-play to play custom can be clearly demonstrated. The nearest I have found is North Muskham, Nottinghamshire. Here there is a record of an ecclesiastical court case dated 1596, involving some errant Plough Monday participants who had ploughed up the churchyard (B.V.M., 1886 and 1902). A Plough Monday play has also been collected from here that was performed at the

beginning of the 20th century (M.W.Barley Collection, 1952, Smalley and 1954, W.Gascoyne). The 1596 record appears to be a simple plough trailing custom, in which case the play must have been added later. However, despite much detail, there is insufficient information to say conclusively that the 1596 custom did not involve a play. Also, with a three hundred year gap between the two events, this is hardly a continuous record, and it is not possible to say when the change took place.

If it has not been possible to find a location where a non-play to play transition has taken place, perhaps it is valid to compare neighbouring locations, or districts. In Nottinghamshire generally, there are plenty of definite non-play Plough Monday records from the early 19th century. However, the oldest Nottinghamshire plays are a Christmas play from East Retford dated 1845-1850 (E.Sutton, 1913), and an unlocated Plough Monday play from the south of the county first published in 1873 (C.Brown, 1874). Both of these plays are of the Hero-Combat type. The Recruiting Sergeant plays that originated in the early 19th Century in Lincolnshire, do not appear to have spread into Nottinghamshire until the 1880s (P.Millington, 1999).

Looking more widely still, Plough Monday customs of all varieties have a recorded history going back at least to the early 16th century, and their geographical distribution throughout Yorkshire, the East Midlands and the Fens suggests that the celebration may have had some origin in the ancient Danelaw. By contrast, the Plough Monday plays are a regional variation of the custom restricted to the East Midlands, and none older than the 19th century (P.Millington, 1979). The only reasonable conclusion to be drawn from this is that the plays are a recent addition to the custom.

In the case of Plough Monday, the non-play house-visiting customs continued to co-exist side by side with the plays once they were added. The same situation applies to Pace-Egging and Souling in the North West and to Mumming.

Retained Pre-Play Features

Adding a play to a pre-existing custom should be seen as a form of hybridisation, with the new custom possessing features from both the original custom and the play. By definition, the time of occurrence, the participants' collective name, and the house-visiting would be supplied by the pre-existing custom. Other features may also have been carried over. In my paper on costumes (P Millington, 1985), I argue that the non-representational style of costume was probably inherited from the pre-play customs. These costumes are essentially decorative, with clothing covered to a greater or lesser extent with ribbons, streamers and *appliqué* patches. To all intents and purposes, everyone dresses alike, so the costumes act as a uniform. This is fine for simple house-visiting, but unusual for drama, where dressing in part is more natural. The costumes therefore appear to have been carried over from the non-play customs. Why they were not replaced with costumes that portray the character being played may have something to do with 18th-century theatre conventions, discussed later.

Another possibility is that certain supernumerary characters may have been inherited from the non-play custom. When discussing the influence of chapbook texts, Georgina Smith states:

> "If one recurrent element of performed plays can be proposed as deriving from pre-chapbook, 'traditional' forms, it is the occurrence of the supernumeraries…" "…It seems reasonable to suggest that the inclusion of supernumeraries in printed and performed plays reflects a tradition which, in some areas at least, predates the known chapbooks." *(G.Smith, 1981, p.213-214)*

In Smith's context, the supernumeraries would have come from non-chapbook plays that were already in the oral tradition, but it is not a major step to suggest that they could predate the plays themselves. Pettitt (1995, p.31) recognised this when he said that if the play was removed from the custom, an independent custom remained "along with whatever supernumerary beast-figures, dancers and clowns were there anyway". This could easily apply to Tom Fool and Dame Jane in Plough Plays. Early 19th-century description of Plough Monday plough trailing customs commonly mention the presence of a fool and a man dressed as a woman

– e.g. the "fool and witch" complained of by "Observer" (1823) in Basford, Nottingham (P.Millington, 1992a). These personages could easily have become Tom Fool and Dame Jane, if they did not have these names in the first place. Within the bounds of Pettitt's suggestion, their banter over Jane's bastard baby might have developed from comic speeches uttered by the pre-play characters. Different supernumeraries in other plays could have had a similar origin. Pettitt mentions Beelzebub and Devil Doubt. I suggest that Tosspot in Pace-Egging plays may also have come from pre-play Pace-Egging customs.

Where, When, How and Why

If the hypothesis of the plays being added to pre-existing customs is accepted, there are still a number of unanswered questions. For instance, it seems reasonable to expect that this addition would first have taken place in one particular location or region, but there are no clues as to where this might have been. The unspoken consensus is that the plays first appeared in England. However the distribution of the early records is so dispersed geographically that it is not possible to home in on a specific region, and it is not out of the question that they could have arisen in Ireland or Scotland. On the other hand, while the plays probably first arose sometime in the early to mid 18th century, they did not appear in some parts of the country until much later. There is no record of Recruiting Sergeant plays (nor Plough Plays generally, if one disqualifies Revesby) before the early 19th century. The same also applies to the Lancashire Pace-Egging plays (E.Cass, 2001, p.27).

As to how the plays became attached to the customs, it seems to have been a general thing for house-visiting mummers and guisers to provide some sort of entertainment – singing, dancing, etc – once the main business of their visit was completed. It is possible that the plays were simply an extension of this sort of entertainment. Clearly the plays acquired a degree of popularity. There are recurring reports that rewards were higher than for other activities, and this pecuniary factor alone could be enough to explain their rapid spread. Another factor could have been public order. The non-play customs gained a reputation for disorder and lawlessness that led to concerted campaigns by the establishment to

put them down[12]. Plays added a calming influence to these customs and probably made them more welcome. The endorsement of local worthies would have encouraged such a trend.

Theatrical and Literary Background

It is reasonable to suppose that folk plays would have been influenced by contemporaneous stage theatre and other popular art forms from the time of their inception, just as they are today. There is evidence of a variety of stage plays being used in folk drama, as well as *genre* influences from early English pantomime and their precursors in the Italian Comedy or *Commedia dell' Arte*.

Diversity of 18th-Century Amateur/Folk Drama

With the definition of English folk drama having been so focussed on the Quack Doctor plays, one might be excused for thinking they emerged fully formed out of a vacuum. This is an oversimplification. Pettitt (1981 and 1994) and Fees (1994) have both shown that a wide range of dramas was current among the ordinary folk in the 18th and early 19th century – interludes, drolls and jigs. Fees describes a long catalogue of alternative folk play performances from Wales, the West of England and Shropshire, and he could have added the wide-ranging folk play traditions collected by R.Abrahams (1970) in St.Kitts-Nevis. These were definitely not Quack Doctor plays – there was no doctor and the subjects varied from scriptural to tragic to just plain entertaining, sometimes with named folk authors and sometimes deriving from legitimate theatre. In many cases the circumstances of performance were essentially similar to our Quack Doctor plays, being taken round multiple locations at a particular time of year, although some records indicate more elaborate and fixed settings. These plays represent a continuum of drama types, from folk drama to what today we call amateur drama. They also demonstrate a relationship with the legitimate theatre. Within this

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[12] See for instance "Observer" (1832) and W.Howitt (1838, pp.471-472) for eyewitness accounts of the conflict that Plough Monday caused. These can be found in my paper on *Plough Monday in and Around the City of Nottingham* (P.Millington, 1992a)

context, the Quack Doctor play is just another play, although clearly it became particularly popular and gained a special traditional status.

Identified Literary and Ballad Sources

A number of literary parallels have been identified for segments of folk play text. Some date from the beginning of the 17th century, as the following list shows:

c.1513	I.Lancashire (1980) *The Interlude of Youth* printed by John Waley
	Verses used in the Revesby play (M.J.Preston & P.Smith, 1999)
1606	"Wily Begvilde" (1606) *Spectrvm* from *Wily Begvuilde*
	Used in the play from Broughton, Lincolnshire. (C.R.Baskervill, 1924, pp.250-258)
1637	T.Heywood (1637) *Epilogue* from *Pleasant Dialogues and Dramma's*
	Includes the couplet:
	"Aches within, and accidents without. Strangurian, collick, Apoplex, the goute"
	variations of which are found in the Doctor's list of cures in most Quack Doctor folk plays
1653	"Vindication of Christmas" (1653) *Vindication of Christmas* [Speech]
	Includes the couplet:
	"Let's dance and sing, and make good chear, For Christmas comes but once a year"
	Variations of this are found in folk plays, although it is in any case a commonplace saying.
1663	F.J.Child (1888) pp.209-213 126 : *Robin Hood and the Tanner*
	The dialogue in this ballad in dramatised in several Robin Hood folk plays

1663   F.J.Child (1888) pp.165-167
135 : *Robin Hood and the Shepherd*

Two stanzas of this ballad are merged with the dramatisation of *Robin Hood and the Tanner* in several Robin Hood folk plays

1670   J.Ray (1670)
Christmas rhyme from J.Ray (1670)

Contains a particular variant of the "Christmas comes but once a year" rhyme, that is used in the *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook.

1673   F.Kirkman (1673)
Diphilo and Granida from *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport*

Used in the play from Keynsham (C.R.Baskervill, 1923, pp.268-272)

1695   W.Congreve (1695)
Love for Love, Act 3, Scene 6

Found much altered in the Ampleforth play

1707   P.A.Motteux & R.Leveridge (1707)
The Mountebank

This song also appears in later broadsides under the title *The Infallible Mountebank, or Quack Doctor*. It gives a long list of cures, many of which are used in the *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook.

1700-1740   "Infallible Doctor" [S.Nicholls] (1700-1740)
The Infallible Doctor

Different to *The Mountebank*, some of the lines in this broadside appear in the *Alexander* chapbook.

1707   J.Addison (1707)
Rosamond, an Opera

Parts of this work are used in the play from Truro, Cornwall (formerly assigned to Mylor).

1730   "King Henry Fifth's Conquest of France" (1730)
King Henry Fifth's Conquest of France

Included in the play from Truro, Cornwall (ex-Mylor).

1736   H.Carey (1736)
            The Honest Yorkshireman : A Ballad Farce

            Part of Air XVIII and the ensuing dialogue are incorporated
            in the Plough Play from Swinderby, Lincs. (C.R.Baskervill,
            1924, pp.263-268), becoming the introductory lines for the
            Lady Bright and Gay in later Recruiting Sergeant plays.[13]

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[13] This is a new discovery, found by searching for folk play lines in *Literature On-line*
(Chadwyck-Healey, 1996-2001). The closeness of the match is self-evident in following parallel
texts:

	"The Honest Yorkshireman" (1736)		***Swinderby (1842)***
Combrush	There was a certain Usurer, He had a pretty Niece; Was courted by a Barrister, Who was her doating Piece. Her Uncle to prevent the same, Did all that in him lay, For which he's very much to blame, As all good People say.		
	A Country 'Squire was to wed, This fair and dainty Dame; But such Contraries in a Bed, Wou'd be a monst'rous Shame:		
	To see a Lady bright and gay, Of Fortune, and of Charms, So shamefully be thrown away, Into a Looby's Arms.	*[Lady.]*	Behold the lady bright and gay her fortune and her charms so scornfull i was thrown away into that lubeys harms)
	The Lovers, thus distracted, It set 'em on a Plot; Which lately has been acted, And---shall I tell you what, The Gentleman disguis'd himself Like to the Country 'Squire. Deceiv'd the old mischievous Elf, And got his Heart's Desire.		
Muck.	I dont like this Song.	*[Recruit.]*	I dont like your song maddam
Comb.	Then you don't like Truth, Sir.	*[Lady.]*	You dont like the truth sir)
Muck.	What! d'ye mean to affront me?	*[Recruit.]*	Would you wish to offend me)
Comb.	Wou'd you have me tell a Lye, Sir?	*[Lady.]*	Would you have me tell a lie
Muck.	Get out of my House, you Baggage.	*[Recruit.]*	get out of my sight you sausy baggage
Comb.	I only stay to take my Mistress with me; and see, here she comes.		

1780-1812   "Second thoughts are best" (1780-1812)
             Second thoughts are best

             This dialogue ballad is incorporated in two Plough Plays –
             The Bassingham Men's play (C.R.Baskervill, 1924, pp.241-
             245), and the Swinderby play (C.R.Baskervill, 1924,
             pp.263-268)

1790-1840   "Husbandman and Servant Man" (1790-1840)
             *A New Dialogue Between a Husbandman and a Servant
             Man.*

             This broadside dialogue ballad appears in the Mummers'
             play from Symondsbury, Dorset.

1796   J.Granger (1904)
             Recruiting Speech of 1796

             This parody of an army recruiting speech shares *Land of
             Cockaigne* motifs that are also found in some folk plays.

1820-1824   W.Armstrong (1820-1824)
             Young Roger of the Mill

             Words from this broadside song appear in the play from
             Swinderby, Lincolnshire, 1842 (C.R.Baskervill, 1924,
             pp.262-268).

1858   C.M.Yonge (1858)
             The Christmas Mummers

             This pocket novel incorporates the performance of
             Mummers' play into the plot, along with most of the lines.
             The character in the novel who plays the doctor is named
             Peter Lamb. This is also the name used for the Doctor in
             one of the versions from Burghclere, Hants., published in
             R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.185-188, and at nearby Thatcham,
             Berskshire (S.Roud & M.Bee, 1991, pp.72-75). The
             singularity of this name suggests a link between Yonge's
             novel and the oral versions.

1872   G.A.R. (1872)
             When good King Arthur ruled this land

             Lines from this modern nursery rhyme are included in the
             Ampleforth play.

In cases where a piece of text is found in both a literary source and a folk play, it is theoretically possible for transmission to have been in either direction. However, in nearly all of the listed examples, the folk play text is dated considerably later than the literary equivalent, and so it is more probable that the folk plays borrowed from the published text.

The occurrence of such literary sources in folk plays is generally rare. The parallels are mostly unique to one play or location, and they are often extracts rather than complete works - usually a single speech or scene. They therefore seem to have been transient inclusions, perhaps added to accommodate party pieces or extra actors. With the exception of the Ampleforth play, These inclusions appear to be restricted to the 18th and early 19th centuries. Whether inclusions ceased to be made after this period is a moot point. Fees suggests that during the 19th century a view emerged as to what a proper Saint George or Mummers' play should be (C.Fees, 1994). This certainly had an effect on collecting as can be seen from the comments of several collectors.[14] It also seems likely that the performers themselves accepted what a "proper" Mummers' play should be, and curbed their material accordingly.

While both the latter observations may be true of folk plays from the mid 19th century onwards, it is clear from our list of literary parallels that in earlier periods it was regarded as fair play to include external material into the texts. As already noted, most of these inclusions seem to have been transient. However a couple of literary influences were more lasting. Passages from both *The Infallible Mountebank* and *The Infallible Doctor* were incorporated in the *Alexander* chapbook and passed on to its derivative texts. Also, the extract from Carey's *Honest Yorkshireman* became the permanent introductory speech for the Lady Bright and Gay in the Recruiting Sergeant plays.

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[14] E.g. F.A.Carrington (1854) explicitly removed "interpolations [that] had reference to Napoleon, and the French war which ended in 1814" from the text of a Wiltshire play he published. Also, M.E.C.Walcott (1862) complained of new material and new plays being used by Hampshire Mummers

Finding Literary Parallels – Opportunities and Difficulties

The literary style of some folk play passages suggests there are other as yet unidentified sources and parallels. The following warrant systematic searching: interludes, jigs, toy theatre texts, 18th-century stage plays, etc.

The number of examples where material from literary stage plays, broadsides, etc., appears in folk plays is slowly increasing. They have mostly been fortuitous finds, except perhaps for those identified by Baskervill (1924), who was highly familiar with popular Tudor and Stuart drama. Searching for such sources has hitherto been severely limited by available indexes. Typically, only indexes to titles and, in the case of verse, indexes to first lines have been available. The usefulness of title indexes is very much reduced by the 18th-century penchant for obscure titles. For instance, the broadside ballad nowadays usually called *The Wedding Song*, which at least gives some clue to the subject, is entitled *Second Thoughts are Best* in the broadsides. First line indexes are similarly restricted in usefulness. If the first line does not appear in the relevant folk play, it cannot be looked up in the index. Even if it does appear, variant wording may adversely affect retrievability. Of course, it may not be obvious which folk play line is the first line of a literary parallel.

The advent of electronic databases is now improving the situation. Some databases merely continue the earlier approach to indexing - for instance the on-line *Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads* database (Bodleian Library, 1999) - but the use of computers accelerates searching. More helpful has been the introduction of full-text electronic databases, such as Chadwyck Healey's academically sound *Literature On-Line* or *LION* (Chadwyck-Healey, 1996-2001) and the less rigorous *Digital Tradition* on the Internet (D.Greenham et al, 1988-2001). These make it easy to check many folk play text lines for possible literary associations. Currently, the size of these databases is limited but growing, and new finds are being made - e.g. the lines from H.Carey's *The Honest Yorkshireman* given above. A full-text database of broadsides and garlands would probably be very helpful, although the *Digital Tradition* provides pointers that can

then be checked against the broadside images in the Bodleian database. I am confident that more sources will be found as the coverage increases.

Theatrical Influences

There are two particular *genres* of 18th-century theatre have been raised as influencing the Quack Doctor plays, if not playing some part in their origin – pantomime, and booth theatres at fairs.

Early English Pantomime and the Commedia dell'Arte

References to the *Commedia dell' Arte* or the Italian Comedy started to appear in the new folk play scholarship in the last quarter of the 20th century. R.Abrahams (1970, p.256) was the first to mention it, although only in passing. Lisa Warner's paper on the Quack Doctor in Russian folk theatre was more meaty, demonstrating the pervasiveness of the Italian Comedy in Russian popular culture of the 18th and 19th centuries (E.A.Warner, 1982). While this paper relates to Russian folk drama, the influence of the *Commedia dell' Arte* was felt throughout Europe (P.L.Duchartre, 1966), and in this case it is not unreasonable to extrapolate Warner's ideas to suggest that they would have influenced English folk drama too. Naturally, Warner's paper focussed on the character of *Il Dottore* – the Doctor. It was *Il Dottore* also that Brookes highlighted as a parallel to the Quack Doctor in English folk plays, although he stopped short of suggesting him as the direct source of the English Doctor (C.Brookes, 1988, pp.18-19). The main work in this area probably comes from my own paper on costumes (P.Millington, 1985), further developed in my later article on origins (P.Millington, 1989, p.13).

The English manifestation of the *Commedia dell' Arte* – the Harlequinade or Italian Comedy – became popular in the late 17th century. These verse dramas featured a number of stock characters, including Harlequin (A*rlecchino*), Pantaloon (*Pantalone*), Columbine (*Colombina*), Punch (*Pulcinella* or *Punchinello*), the Doctor (*Il Dottore*), Clown, etc. These characters always wore their own defining costume and took the same types of rôle - lovers, a foolish servant, etc. The plays would take any theme, - Dr.Faustus, Blue Beard, Oliver

Cromwell - and intersperse the stock characters with the required *dramatis personae*.

Figure 14 – *The Infallible Mountebank* Broadside (1750?)

The Harlequinade developed into English Pantomime in the early 18th century. The number of stock characters was reduced to Columbine, Clown, Pantaloon and the dominant character Harlequin, and these remained an inseparable part of pantomime for two hundred years. Later in the 18th century, Clown became the dominant character due to the fame of his greatest exponent, Joe Grimaldi. The other stock characters eventually became mere dancers, although in the first half of 19th century it was obligatory to include the name Harlequin in the name of the piece – e.g. *Harlequin Jack and Jill, Harlequin Robin Hood*, etc. Towards the end of the 19th century, the Harlequinade was dropped, leaving pantomime as it exists today (A.E.Wilson, 1934).

The key significance of the Harlequinade is that it provides a strong precedent for non-representational costumes – Harlequin was always dressed as Harlequin no matter what rôle he played in the "Opening". Face blackening may also owe something to the half-masks worn in the Harlequinade. There was even a formal style of presentation that is mirrored in the Quack Doctor plays. In summary therefore, the Harlequinade may have provided a set of theatrical conventions that were copied to a greater or lesser extent in the Quack Doctor plays. This could explain why it was acceptable for the folk play actors to retain their pre-play attire when the plays were added to their house-visiting.

There is some direct evidence to link the Harlequinade with the plays. Firstly there are images, the most important of which is the mid 18th-century broadside *The Infallible Mountebank* (1750?) [15] shown in Figure 11. The engraving shows a mountebank dressed in the style of the Italian Comedy, with a Merry Andrew emerging from behind a curtain dressed as Harlequin (although without his half

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[15] This broadside is undated, but the catalogue of its repository, the British Library, gives an estimated date of "1750?" On the other hand, the *English Short Title Catalogue* gives an estimated date of "1707?", presumably based on another dated but unillustrated broadside printed by H.Hills (Harley 5931.(175) that is contemporary with the song's first publication – P.A.Motteux & R.Leveridge (1907). The Wellcome Library for the History of Medicine holds a later reprint dated 1793 which is a mirror image of the British Library copy. The picture is not totally original. The Doctor was copied from an earlier separate engraving of Hans Buling by Marcellus Laroon (1653-1702) and the Merry Andrew was added later. Paul Smith has been studying the *Infallible Mountebank* broadsides, and presented some preliminary conclusions at *Traditional Drama 1980* (P.Smith & L.Warner, 1980), but as yet, nothing has appeared in print.

mask). The broadside text is the song listing the Doctor's cures, first published by P.A.Motteux and R.Leveridge (1707). Several stanzas of this are used for the Doctor's cures in the *Alexander* chapbook. It is therefore a veritable "missing link" between the Harlequinade and the Quack Doctor plays.

Additionally, some of the woodcuts in play chapbooks show Harlequinade characters. Smyth & Lyons *Christmas Rhime* chapbook (1803-1818) has a woodcut of Punch above the introduction, and the cut of Devil-doubt shows a figure dressed as Harlequin, complete with half mask but wielding a besom instead of a bat. A somewhat similar Devil Doubt appears in *The New Christmas Rhyme-Book* published by J.Nicholson (c.1890-1892). Punch also appears in several 19th-century *Peace Egg* chapbooks, including the curious *Peace Egg Book* with an Irish text, published by R.Carr (E.Cass, forthcoming).

The chapbook woodcuts are too recent to have any bearing on the origin of the plays, but they do confirm the influence of the Harlequinade on popular culture. However, the prologue of the *Alexander* chapbook includes the line "Three Actors hear [sic] I've brought so far from Italy", which seems to be a direct reference to the Italian Comedy. Similarly, there is an "Italian Doctor, lately come from Spain"– in some folk plays – e.g. Romsey, Hants,. (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967, 1967, pp.87-91), South West Dorset (J.S.Udal, 1880). Both Italy and Spain also feature in the Doctor's list of travels in many plays, although it is difficult to gauge the significance of this.

The Rôle of Booth Plays at Fairs

While the Harlequinade and pantomime was part of legitimate British theatre, and many of the scripts were published, they are unlikely to have had direct influence on our plays, or been the main route of influence. As Cass puts it:

> "It is possible that mumming plays were derived in part from the short dramas or 'drolls' mounted in the portable theatres or 'booths' that were a feature of European town and village life, and especially their fairs, from the mediaeval period onwards."

(E.Cass (2001, pp.18)

As evidence, Cass discusses two paintings of fairs – Hogarth's *Southwark Fair*, 1733, and Lancashire artist Joseph Parry's painting of a village fair, dated 1819. The Southwark painting shows both theatre booths and a quack doctor. It was normal European practice for mountebanks to employ entertainers to draw and keep a crowd (M.A.Katritzky, 2001). This is what Parry's painting shows, as does the engraving on the *Infallible Mountebank* broadside. Both types of show used characters from the *Commedia dell' Arte*,

Direct evidence of a link with Quack Doctor plays is an account of Bristol Fair, 1770 ("Anthony Pasquin", 1791). Here, the "comedian" John Edwin describes a booth play entitled *The Siege of Troy* that includes the text of a cure scene that is identical to the cure in the Quack Doctor plays – including the call for the Doctor, his list of cures and his revival of "slasher". This is very encouraging, but as 1770 is just within the recorded history of the Quack Doctor plays, it is as possible that the booth players took their text from a folk play as *vice versa*.

The case for fair performances having influenced the Quack Doctor plays is convincing, but Cass's suggestion of derivation is too forthright. While booth theatres could have facilitated the wide distribution of English folk plays, there are a number of problems regarding how their plays would have transferred to folk drama:

- Firstly, oral transmission seems unlikely. It would be a rare person indeed who could memorise a whole play at one sitting, or even several sittings, so it is improbable that audience members could have picked them up.

- No doubt booth actors occasionally left the theatre to live in the community, but it is doubtful that this would have led to such a widespread distribution.

- This leaves written texts as the only effective means of transferring these plays to the public. No doubt the proprietors could have printed their scripts for sale, but none have yet been found that could have been used in folk plays. Also, presumably, selling scripts could have undermined the interests of the booths.

- Lastly, why would the plays have transferred just to calendar customs? Fairs and wakes occur throughout the year, so any derivative folk play performances ought to be either at no particular time, or on a wide scatter of specific annual dates. Neither is the case.

The conclusion to be drawn is that while the Quack Doctor plays were influenced by the conventions and costumes of the Harlequinade, probably through contact with booth theatres and imagery in popular literature, there is no evidence of direct textual borrowing. The Doctor's scene has distinct parallels with the activities of real quack doctors at fairs, but parodies of quack doctors were a popular theatrical theme, and again no direct derivation can be shown.

Textual Origins

Despite repeated criticism that the old folk play scholars had ignored the texts because of its supposed unimportance relative to the action, the new scholars have generally failed to make up the shortfall, possibly blenching at the enormity of the task. With the exception of Preston's work, such textual analysis as there has been has been fairly restricted in scope. (I discuss this in the next chapter.) Consequently, opinions remain woolly about textual origins, as the following quotations show:

> 'My personal belief, not yet proved, is that these customs represent
> an interleaving, an amalgam, of many sources. Religion, civic
> pageant, literature, local invention, games, entertainment, initiation,
> and antiquarianism, may all have played a part. I do not believe that
> <u>the origin</u> of the customs exists or has existed"   *(E.C.Cawte, 1996, p.73)*

> "The play texts … cannot be traced to any specific known source."
> *J.Simpson & S.Roud (2000, p.251)*, although "…a 'literary' origin
> is most likely."   *(J.Simpson & S.Roud (2000, p.251 & 253)*

> "The constant appearance of identical or similar themes and lines
> suggests that we are looking for the origins of mumming plays in a
> very limited number of core scripts, if not just one."   *(E.Cass, 2001, p.18)*

> "It is now unlikely that we shall ever find the text of the proto-
> mummers' play… However, the interplay between the travelling
> theatre, chapbooks, the broadside songs and ballads and their
> demotic audience an users remains one of the more likely source of

our original text – the primeval 'soup' from which our play emerged."

<div align="right">*(E.Cass, 2001, p.23)*</div>

The consensus seems to be that the origin is complex, but ambivalent hopes remain that a single proto-text might yet be found. Even if multiple textual sources were used, it seems reasonable to suppose that at some point an individual must have written and/or arranged an original single Quack Doctor play from which other versions then evolved.

It is clear that whoever prepared the first text regarded it as fair play to incorporate sections of text from other sources. For instance, parts of *The Infallible Mountebank* were used in the *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook, parts of which were in turn used in *The Peace Egg* chapbook. No doubt some original composition was involved, and evidently the authors tried to imitate mediaeval or archaic language styles, no doubt in an attempt to match the Crusades theme of the hero-combat scenes. This has confused some scholars, but as Rosemary Woolf states:

> "...The surviving texts of the folk-plays, ... are written more in the manner of the urban hack-writers of later periods with their tedium and flatness, than with the supposed untutored spontaneity of the unlettered." "…there is nothing in their style that suggests the Middle Ages as the original time of composition."

<div align="right">*(R.Woolf, 1992, pp.36 & 37)*</div>

As we have seen dragons did not feature in the early Quack Doctor plays, so the play of W.Sandys (1833) could represent a deliberate attempt to introduce the Saint George legend.

In the ensuing chapters of this thesis, I present new large-scale analyses of play texts, and I shall come back to the question of proto-texts and the interrelationships between versions.

Dissemination of the plays

Rise and Fall

Because we have no idea where the Quack Doctor plays first arose, it is only possible to talk in general terms about how they came to be dispersed around the

country. While it seems likely that they originated in the early to mid 18th century, it is not possible to quantify their growth or pinpoint their heyday, for reasons explained in the last chapter. However it is clear that they dispersed very rapidly, because by the end of the 18th century there are sparse records stretching from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to western Cornwall, and by no later than the 1820s they were also established in Scotland and Ireland. Cass and Roud (2002, p.19) feel that the mid 19th century may have been the peak period. The decline of the plays does seem to have started at the end of the 19th century, and this is reflected in the tone of writers and witnesses of that time. Hayward (1992, p.34) presents a graph charting the approximate end dates of Galoshins traditions in Scotland. This shows an abrupt decline about 1890. There is a steady decline thereafter, which accelerates during the First World War. This pattern of decline seems right for the rest of Britain too. Very few traditions survived the Second World War, but there has been a growth in new performances from the last quarter of the 20th century, inspired by the folk revival of the 1960s and 1970s.

Methods of Transmission

There can be no doubt that oral transmission played an important part in the perpetuation of the plays among particular groups and at particular locations. There are also documented cases where migrants have transferred the tradition between locations.[16] However, most of the distances involved are short, so this method of transmission may have been too slow to account for the rapid nation-wide distribution of the plays. Some groups also used manuscripts, but as these were still passed from person to person, they may have been little more effective than oral transmission, although it would have been possible to mail them around the country. There is no evidence for this, except between antiquarians.

It is possible that certain mobile professions and social groups could have been responsible for distributing the plays, either orally or via manuscripts. Such

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[16] For instance, the play at Middle Barton, Oxfordshire was brought from Sulgrave, Northamptonshire. (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967, p.56), and the Snowshill, Gloucestershire play was transferred from Blockley (H.H.Albino, 1939), p.88)

groups could have included soldiers and militiamen, clerics, university scholars and boarding school pupils. However, there is no evidence that this was the case.

The Printed Texts

There is now ample evidence that *The Christmas Rime* and *The Peace Egg* chapbooks were used extensively in their respective areas of publication, and played an important rôle in popularising and perpetuating the plays (A.Helm, 1969 and 1980, A.Gailey, 1974, P.Stevenson & G.Buckley, 1985, G.Smith, 1981, E.Cass, 2001, etc.). Their spheres of influence covered large regions but were by no means national. They cannot explain the presence of plays in southern England and there is very little evidence of their use in Scotland. By way of contrast, no one has yet shown that the *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook had a similar effect, although fragments occur widely. With eight distinct printings, there must have been a market for it, and the reprint in Hone's popular *Every-Day Book* published it further afield. I am not aware of any cases where the other, later chapbooks - such as *The Four Champions* - were used by performing groups.

It is becoming clearer that books and other mainstream publications have played a part in disseminating the plays. This has been little explored, but two papers have been published. As already mentioned, Roud and Fees (1984) have suggested that all folk plays with the Dragon character ultimately derive from the text of William Sandys (1833). I have also shown that the Mummies' plays of St.Kitts and Nevis in the West Indies took their text from one published by J.H.Ewing in 1884 (P.T.Millington, 1996). Other examples have been found during this study:

- The *Alexander* chapbook as reprinted by W.Hone (1823) was used at Penkridge, Staffs (A.Helm, 1984, pp.49-54). It is possible to say this because a large Doctor's speech that is omitted in Hone, is also absent from the Penkridge text. For the same reason, it can be said that Slight also used Hone's reprint within his composite text (H.Slight, 1842)

- The play recorded at Llanmadoc and Cheriton (J.D.Davies, 1879) is a cut-down version of the Cornish play published by Sandys in Hone's *Every-Day Book* (1823).

- The first version of the play from Burghclere, Hampshire published by Tiddy (1923, pp.185-188), and the play from Thatcham, Berks. (S.Roud & M.Bee, 1991, pp.72-75) draw the character name Peter Lamb and possibly some of their scripts from text included in the narrative of a shilling novel by C.M.Yonge (1858).

This seems to be a phenomenon that occurs from the latter half of the 19th century onwards. Now that we are aware of it, I am confident that more cases will be found where books have been mined for texts by performing groups. Texts from books were often reprinted in other publications, including newspapers, so in some cases sources may have been used indirectly.

Newspaper sources have been under-researched, probably due to the difficulties of searching. However, as can be seen with all the large bibliographies, texts have been turned up wherever people have made the effort. These texts mostly come from the mid 19th century onwards. However, from my own searching in Nottingham newspapers, I am aware that 18th-century newspapers published regular poetry columns, and editorial material was often copied by or syndicated to other newspapers, thereby gaining a wide distribution. An average-sized Quack Doctor play would fit well in this context, so it is feasible that newspapers could have played a rôle in their early dissemination.[17]

In the 18th and 19th century there was a thriving trade in juvenile literature, including plays intended for use by children. These took several forms. Numerous juvenile plays were published in chapbook form, including the folk play chapbooks already discussed. William Walker of Otley, for instance, published a

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[17] To underline the potential of 18th-century newspapers, Andrew Brice (1692-1773) published newspapers in Exeter, Devon under a variety of titles from 1717 until his death. Brice was a poet and patron of the stage in Exeter, writing prologues for a number of plays (W.H.K.Wright, 1896 and T.N.Brushfield, 1888). It is Brice's *Mobiad* (1770) that provides us with what may be the oldest unequivocal fragment of a Quack Doctor play text. This is a promising juxtaposition.

large series of juvenile plays. Another source of play texts was the *libretti* of toy theatre plays (G.Speaight, 1946). These were primarily intended for use with the paper cut-out characters of toy theatres themselves, but no doubt they could have been used by real actors too. Dramas were also published in popular children's journals such as *Aunt Judy's Magazine*.

As we can see there was a wide range of play texts available during our period, not least for children, and it is only natural that they should have had some influence or effect on folk drama. There is some evidence for this. For instance, when publishing a Hampshire folk play text, M.E.C.Walcott complained:

> "I regret to find that the 'act' now varies every year, and is furnished from London." *(M.E.C.Walcott, 1862)*

This seems to be clear reference to such non-folk dramas supplanting the traditional plays. If more such references could be found, this might paint folk play customs in a new light.

Summary

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing chapter. Firstly, the plays were attached to existing non-play house-visiting customs in the early to mid 18th century. The pre-existing customs may have been the source of some of the supernumerary characters, and they were very likely the source for non-representational costumes, although popular theatre *genres* such as the Harlequinade also provided a precedent for characters not having to dress according to rôle.

The scope of folk drama was much more varied in the past than has generally been recognised. Plays ranged from the traditional Quack Doctor plays to stage plays written by named authors. There was also clearly a willingness to incorporate literary pieces and other external material into the Quack Doctor plays before the mid 19th century. It is probable there was a single proto-text, written in an archaic pseudo-mediaeval style, from which other versions soon developed. Booth plays at fairs have been suggested as a possible source for the plays, but this is unlikely, unless a printed text can be located.

There is no doubt that chapbooks played a significant rôle in disseminating the play in certain areas. However it has also become apparent that mainstream books and publications were also important for the dissemination of the plays from the mid 19th century onwards.

Inevitably, numerous problems remain. Where did the Quack Doctor plays first appear? Why did they attach themselves to particular calendar customs, rather than non-specific dates? How was such a wide distribution achieved? Why are there no plays in East Anglia?

There are opportunities for finding further literary and ballad parallels, a process which is becoming easier as full-text electronic databases become available and grow. Textual analysis is likely to shed light on the possibility of a proto-text and its composition, and reveal relationships between the various subsequent versions. This is the subject of the rest of this thesis.

HISTORICAL DATABASE OF TEXT LINES

Introduction

It only requires a cursory examination of a collection of folk play texts to notice that a large number of lines recur from text to text, albeit with variant wording. Some lines are redolent of literary or ballad sources, and as shown in the previous chapter, some of these sources have been positively identified. The folk play textual corpus is clearly highly suitable for comparative textual analyses of one form or another. Yet, as noted in the bibliographic survey, for much of its history, British folk play scholarship has had a love-hate relationship with textual analysis. Indeed, textual analysis was effectively rejected (e.g. by Dean-Smith and Helm), because the actions of the plays were viewed as supreme and the texts trivial.

To his credit, E.K.Chambers (1933) devoted a large proportion of his book *The English Folk Play* to presenting typical speeches and lists of their variants, with the occasional comments on meaning. However, his method was primarily descriptive. M.W.Barley (1953) also followed this approach in his paper on Plough Plays in the East Midlands. It is probable, that Chambers compiled his own private index to texts and lines during his research, but alas although most of his personal papers are deposited in the Bodleian Library, any papers relating the folk plays appear to be lost (P.S.Smith, personal communication). However, in the Barley Collection, there are tables listing generic speeches against play locations, which he appears to have used to identify and characterise localised variants of the Plough Plays (P.Millington, 1982a).

M.J.Preston prepared the first computerised database of folk play texts in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This comprised 156 full texts and 38 fragments, together with place, date and other information (M.J.Preston, 1983). He used this to investigate the variability of folk play texts, and in studies of some specific

texts (M.J.Preston, 1972b, 1977a & 1977b). As a finding aid, Preston generated a printed concordance in KWIC (Key Word In Context) format. An interesting feature of Preston's database was that although he marked line breaks (and there was also a "Line" version of the database), each text was effectively treated as one long continuous line. Both the KWIC index and his analytical method, which involved matching 15-character segments, transcended line boundaries. Alas the electronic data for Preston's concordance is no longer readable, but copies of the printed KWIC index are deposited in three folklore archives (M.J.Preston, 1975 and 1983).

Somewhat later, Preston collaborated with Paul and Georgina Smith in further automated textual analysis. This first manifested itself in public in their work on the *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbooks (M.J.Preston et al, 1977). In it, they presented a putative family tree illustrating the ancestral relationships between the different editions of the chapbook, based on a cluster analysis of the texts. This tree proposed hypothetical common ancestors corresponding to nodes on the cluster analysis dendrogram. However, they may have misinterpreted their dendrogram. While branches in a dendrogram can signify descent from a common ancestor, it is also possible that one branch could be the direct ancestor of the others. In the case of the chapbook study, my own interpretation is that hypothetical common ancestor versions do not need to be invoked.

In theory, Preston et al could have presented the different *Alexander* chapbook editions as parallel texts, but this would have been difficult for practical reasons (discussed below). Instead, they gave line by line lists of variations compared to a standard edition. A similar approach was used for their study of the *Christmas Rhyme* chapbooks (G.Boyes et al, 1999).

Also in the 1970s, Paul Smith built a computerised database of sixteen Derby Tup texts, which he subjected to extensive automated analysis, notably cluster analysis (P.S.Smith, 1985a). In this paper, he outlined many of the pitfalls that can befall textual analysis of predominantly oral traditions, most significant of which is the observation that it is often very difficult to say with authority whether or not a particular text is complete. In parallel with Smith's work on the Derby Tup, Ian

Russell did a detailed study of texts recorded at live performances of the Tup plays in fourteen north-east Derbyshire villages. His paper includes tables of a similar format to Barley's manuscript, plotting particular speeches against locations (I.Russell, 1979, pp.465-466), but he did not attempt to draw any conclusions from them.

More recently, Steve Roud has compiled his own paper-based index of lines for private reference (S.Roud, personal communication). I am not aware that he has used it to prepare any published work, although it may have been used in preparing his article on the Dragon in folk plays (S.Roud & C.Fees, 1984).

Lastly, I come to my own work. Whilst I dabbled with textual analysis in the 1970s and 1980s, my interests were more in exploring the general possibilities and limitations of cluster analysis. The published outcome was my paper on Nottinghamshire plays (P.T.Millington, 1988), based on cast lists rather than texts. However, my paper on the St.Kitts and Nevis Mummies' plays includes detailed comparative analyses of the texts of these plays with the text compiled by J.H.Ewing, and of Mrs.Ewing's text with those of her sources (P.T.Millington, 1996). This made extensive of use of parallel texts, and graphical analysis of parallel text data.

Approaches to Textual Analysis

In summary, the tools that have been used to analyse folk play texts are parallel texts and databases of texts. Parallel texts are usually only practicable when working with a small number of plays. Even with two plays however, this method may be complicated by transposed sections of text, which are difficult to lay out in a parallel table. This is clearly illustrated in the parallel texts from my St.Kitts' paper (P.T.Millington, 1996, supplement), and can also be seen in a paper on the Nikolausspiele from the Südtirol by Winfried Hofmann (1966/1967). Gaps sometimes have to be left in one or other column to accommodate the transpositions. Notes may also have to be added where sections have been transposed, or alternatively the line sequences may have to be adjusted so that equivalent lines

appear next to each other. These difficulties soon become insuperable, therefore parallel texts are of limited value.

The second tool that aids text comparison is a database of texts - either complete texts or individual lines - with appropriate indexes and/or search facilities. Because of the preponderance of verse, it appears to be self-evident that folk play texts should be encoded as sets of lines. An alternative approach, however, is to treat the complete text as one long continuous line. This is not without precedent. I have already mentioned that Mike Preston effectively treated texts this way in his KWIC index and in his textual analyses. The approach is also analogous to how bioinformaticians handle DNA and similar biomolecular sequences. They have indeed developed efficient computer programs to allow such long sequences to be matched and to perform cluster analyses on sets of sequences. These have to run on high-powered computers that are not normally available to language scholars. However, they have, for instance, been used successfully in an analysis of the manuscripts of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (A.C.Barbrook et al, 1998).

For my own database, however, I decided to compile a database of texts divided into lines, although I did this in a way that did not preclude the possibility of dealing with whole texts at a later date. The main reason was that I did not have powerful enough computers available to me to be able to perform whole text analyses of the type just mentioned. Furthermore, the degree of variability between folk play texts is much greater than with Chaucer manuscripts and many biomolecular sequences. In particular, significant transpositions of sections of text are common, which render whole text matching very difficult. At the line level, on the other hand, matching is much easier.

Additionally, I wanted to be able to answer questions at the line or speech level, such as:

- Are two or more lines sufficiently similar to be regarded as identical?

- Is a given line common or rare?

- How does a particular line vary between plays?

- What is the provenance or earliest occurrence of a particular line?

- Is a particular version of a line the "original", or a recent variation?

- How did a particular line change over time?

- etc.

Such questions need to be asked to be able to validate or disprove textual observations made by past scholars.

Databases of Lines

To be able to answer historical questions, it is clear that the lines need to be dated. Some means of grouping equivalent lines is also necessary - a typology or classification. Full-text searching of the database is also useful for *ad hoc* enquiries. For a large collection, creating suitable indexes would be a major clerical exercise, if undertaken manually. However, a computerised database can provide these facilities more easily, and additionally make automated analyses possible. These analyses include:

- Cluster analysis

- Identification of historical trends

- Plotting the provenance profile of lines from a given text

TextBase

The database of texts and fragments created for this research project is called TextBase. It really comprises two parts. Firstly there is a collection of individual plays encoded as ASCII text in a standardised format, but retaining the original orthography. Secondly there is the database itself, into which the individual plays are collated as normalised text. This is stored in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Selection of Texts for the Collection

The basic aim is to have as many different texts as possible in the database. However, as the database is intended for a historical study, it seemed appropriate to try to cover the oldest texts first. I therefore proceeded as follows;

- The database as initiated with J.White's *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook - the oldest known full text, and further texts were added working through the oldest texts, in approximately chronological order.

- A special point was made of adding examples of all the known chapbook versions - opting for the earliest editions wherever possible.

- Similarly, some published texts were included that appear to have been used, or even intended, as source texts by performers. e.g. J.H.Ewing (1874)

- Whenever identified literary or ballad parallels were encountered, these were added too. Normally the full textual parallel was included. However, if the size was significantly larger than the related folk play fragments, only the appropriate segment was included. Fortunately, this was not necessary often.

- All the texts in R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) were added.

- Other texts were added that happened to be already available in electronic form, and therefore readily encodable. These came from a variety of sources and usually needed to be proof read against the original paper source. The chronological provenance of these texts was effectively random.

- Lastly, further texts were added to fill gaps in the geographical distribution, the aim being cover the country as evenly as possible. The dates of these texts were also effectively random, although the oldest texts from a given area were always selected in preference to recent ones.

Record Dates

For many texts, the record dates are particularly troublesome. Ideally, the year of performance is required, or a range a years if appropriate. However, relatively few old records give a performance date, or if they do, the dates may be imprecise - e.g. "about 1925", "the 1850s", etc. In the absence of a performance date, other dates have to be used such as publication and collection dates, or even the date when the text was accessioned by an archive. These have the obvious flaw that they are normally dated an indeterminate number of years after the date when the performance took place, potentially fifty or more years in the case of a collection

date. This situation is highly frustrating at times, when circumstantial or stylistic evidence suggests that a particular text is old, but where academic rigour requires a much later date to be assigned. The general rule is that the earliest date associated with the record is used. There may be alternative dates, or a range of dates where uncertainty is involved.

Encoding Texts

Individual texts are encoded using the standard format specified in Appendix C, which draws on guidelines prepared for the Traditional Drama Research Group's co-operative indexing scheme (Traditional Drama Research Group, 1981). There is one file per text. In principle, the format, spelling and orthography of the original is preserved as much as possible, the main exception being that continuous text is re-laid out in lines. However, tags are added to the text to demarcate characters, lines, stage directions, in-text notes, etc. In addition to the text, special sections cover the play's context, bibliographic details, cast, and various notes.

The tags were of my own devising, based on the field tags used by some on-line literature databases, such as Dialog. I investigated the use of SGML tags (Standardised Graphical Mark-up Language) as used, for instance, by the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI - see P.Robinson, 1993), but found this too detailed and time-consuming for my purposes. Also, without a special viewer, the SGML tags made the texts difficult to read, unlike my own system. On the other hand, it was a simple matter to write a program to convert my standardised texts into HTML (Hyper-Text Mark-up Language), which is a subset of SGML. HTML is the mainstay of Internet Web documents, and it was therefore possible to publish the collection of encoded texts on the Internet (P.Millington, 1999-2002).[18] The standard HTML layout used is specified in Appendix D.

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[18] There is scope for converting the encoding to an XML format. This would allow more meaningful data interchange than HTML, but without the complexity of SGML.

Encoding Lines

The texts of English folk plays are mostly in verse, but their written form is varied. Some sources disregard the verse and present the text continuously in a prose-like form. Even when a versified presentation is used, the same verse, for instance, may be given as a couplet or as a quatrain in different texts. In addition, the versification of many lines may not be consistent even within one text.

There is a different problem in prose passages. Some segments of prose are quite long, especially when compared with verse lines, and a similar collection of prose passages might be sequenced differently in different texts. Therefore some system of splitting up the prose seems appropriate.

These considerations raised the general question of "what is a line?" For verse, the main issue is whether to code quatrains as four lines or two or to allow a mixture of either. For prose it is a question of whether to split into sentences, phrases, or to use some other criteria. After some experimentation at the analysis stage, it was found that most problems could be resolved by using a flexible identification numbering scheme for related lines. However, the following principles were applied when encoding lines:

Encoding Verse (including Blank Verse)

- Generally, whenever the source is laid out in verse, the original versification is preserved.

- When the original is written continuously, the text is reformatted to be laid out in verse.

- In the latter case, and in other cases where there is a choice or uncertainty, quatrains are encoded as two lines rather than four. Equivalent criteria are applied to other verse forms.

Encoding Prose

The prose sections appear primarily in the Doctor's lists of travels and cures, or in longer monologues of tangle talk. Consequently, the following approach was found to be suitable:

- Prose lists are split into discrete items. The dividing line between items is generally obvious, but a measure of subjectivity is inevitable at this stage.

- Other prose is split initially into sentences, clauses or phrases of around fifteen to twenty words in length.

Retrospective Adjustments

As more texts were added to the database, retrospective adjustments were sometimes found to be necessary. A typical scenario was that in comparing equivalent lines from different texts, the split point between lines was found to be inconsistent and needed to be made standard. These adjustments were usually just a matter of splitting a long line or concatenating two shorter ones.

The TextBase Database Design

The line database has been compiled as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, with one row per text line. The main columns or fields, described later, are:

- File Name   - Alphanumeric code (see Appendix C)

- Sequential Line Number   - Integer (whole number)

- Normalised Line   - Text

- Standard Line ID (Std ID)   - Decimal Number

- Unique Line ID   - Integer (whole number)

Figure 15 – TextBase.xls – Example Page of the Main Fields

File	Line	Character	Normalised Line	Std ID	Unique ID
74nz26wh	1240	alexander	stand off thou dirty dog for by my sword thou s die	1240.0	211
74nz26wh	1250	alexander	i ll make thy body full of holes and cause thy buttons flie	1250.0	212
74nz26wh	1260	prince george	oh what is here oh what is to be done	1260.0	213
74nz26wh	1270	prince george	our king is slain the crown is likewise gone	1270.0	214
74nz26wh	1280	prince george	take up the body bear it hence away	1280.0	215
74nz26wh	1290	prince george	for in this place no longer shall it stay	1290.0	216
74nz26wh	1300	prince george	bounser buckler velvet s dear	1300.0	217
74nz26wh	1310	prince george	and christmas comes but once a year	1310.0	218
74nz26wh	1320	prince george	thought when it comes it brings good chear	1320.0	219
74nz26wh	1330	prince george	but farewell christmas once a year	1330.0	220
74nz26wh	1340	prince george	farewell farewel adieu frindship and unity	1340.0	221
74nz26wh	1350	prince george	i hope we have made sport and pleas d the company	1350.0	222
74nz26wh	1360	prince george	but gentlemen you see we re but young actors four	1360.0	223
74nz26wh	1370	prince george	we ve done the best we can and the best can do no more	1370.0	224
77st57pa	10	o driscol	a doctor a doctor ten pound for a doctor	1560.0	1065
77st57pa	20	physician	her am i	3940.0	1066
77st57pa	30	o driscol	what can you cure	680.0	137
77st57pa	40	physician	the cramp the gout the pain within and the pain without	690.0	1067
77st57pa	50	o driscol	o boderation to your nonsense	6750.0	1068
77st57pa	60	o driscol	can you bring a dead man to life again	6680.0	1069
77st57pa	70	physician	oh marry that i can	6760.0	1070
77st57pa	80	physician	take a little of my tip tap	1650.0	1071
77st57pa	90	physician	put it on your nin nap	3590.0	1072
77st57pa	100	physician	now rise up slasher and fight again	1660.0	1073
77sx99ba	10	saint george	oh here comes i saint george a man of courage bold	295.0	1074
77sx99ba	20	saint george	and with my spear i winn d three crowns of gold	302.0	1075
77sx99ba	30	saint george	i slew the dragon and brought him to the slaughter	310.0	1076
77sx99ba	40	saint george	and by that very means i married sabra the beauteous king of egypts daughter	325.0	1077
77sx99ba	50	saint george	play musick	10460.1	1078
77tf26al	10	fool	you gentel lordes of honour	19130.0	4286
77tf26al	20	fool	of high and lou i say	19140.0	4287
77tf26al	30	fool	wee all desire your favour	18880.0	4280
77tf26al	40	fool	that is hear for to see our plesant play	19150.0	4288
77tf26al	50	fool	our play it is the best kind sir	19160.0	4289
77tf26al	60	fool	and that you would licke to know	19170.0	4290
77tf26al	70	fool	and wee will do the very best wee can	1370.1	4291
77tf26al	80	fool	and wee shall thinke it well bestoud	19180.0	4292
77tf26al	90	fool	tho sum of us be little	19190.0	4293
77tf26al	100	fool	and sum of a midel soart	19200.0	4294
77tf26al	110	fool	wee all desire your favour	18880.0	4280
77tf26al	120	fool	thats hear for to see our plesant spoart	19210.0	4295
77tf26al	130	fool	you must louck not on our actshons	19220.0	4296
77tf26al	140	fool	our wits they are all to seek	19230.0	2913
77tf26al	150	fool	and i pray tacke no exeptons	19240.0	4297
77tf26al	160	fool	know of what i am agoing to speak	19250.0	4298

A sample page of the main columns is shown in Figure 15. In addition there are index columns that are derived from the normalised lines that are used to help match new texts with existing lines in the database:

- Reversed Normalised Line - Text

- Phonetically Coded Lines - Text

- Temporary working fields - Mixed formats

The methods of compilation and purpose of these index columns are described fully in Appendix E.

Loading and Normalising Records

Texts are added to the database one at a time from the individual encoded files. In the individual files, texts are kept in their original form as regards use of case, punctuation, use of numerals, etc. However, such variation is not conducive to computerised analysis, because computers are absolutely literal, and variations such as "Two", "2" and "two" are not recognised as being the same. Therefore, the text is normalised *en route* during loading, and the various line identification numbers (IDs) are assigned.

The following text normalisation steps were applied. The order of the steps is important, because there are dependencies between them:

- Convert all text to lower case letters only.

- Omit stage directions - delimited by curly braces "{" & "}"

- Remove notes - delimited by square brackets "[" & "]"

- Replace the following punctuation marks with spaces

     " , ' ? ! . - ( ) ; : –   and the Tab character

- Collapse multiple spaces to a single space.

- Convert numbers to words. In the case of money figures, take account of any "£" signs - e.g. "£10" → "ten pounds"

- Expand the following abbreviations:

&c → etc

& → and

xmas → christmas

dr → doctor

st → saint - but only when followed by words beginning "geor", "patr", "davi", "andr", "fran" or "hele" - representing various spellings of Saints George, Patrick, David, Andrew, Francis and Helena. This list could grow as new saints are encountered. Other occurrences of "st" are flagged for manual interpretation. They could mean "street" or they could derive from abbreviated phrases such as "could'st".

Assigning IDs to Lines

On import into the database, each line of the text is flagged with the File ID (taken from the file name), and with a sequential line number. The lines are numbered from 10 in steps of ten. This allows adjustments to be made later if necessary, without having to renumber the complete text. For instance, if it is decided that line 240 should be split into two lines, because the next line is numbered 250, the new split line can be numbered 245 without affecting the line numbering of the rest of the text.

Unique IDs

A Unique ID is assigned to each unique wording of a given line in the database. These are numbered from 1 in steps of one. As there is no sequential significance in these numbers, adjustments can be made simply by deleting numbers or assigning new IDs.

With a newly imported text therefore, the next step is to check each new line against the lines that are already in the database to see if there is an exact match, letter for letter, space for space. This is achieved simply by temporarily sorting the database alphabetically by normalised line and comparing new lines (lacking

Unique Ids) with adjacent lines. When a new line exactly matches its neighbour in the sorted list, the respective existing Unique IDs and Standard IDs (discussed below) are assigned to the new line.

New Unique IDs are allocated to the remaining unmatched new lines. Occasionally a text may contain exact repeats of a new line. In these cases, it is important to ensure the duplicates are assigned the same new Unique ID.

Standard IDs (Std.IDs)

Each line is also assigned a Standard ID (Std.ID) which is common to all the textual variants of the line. Thus "in come i the turkish knight" and "here comes i a turkish night" both have Std.ID 3150. These IDs are initially assigned from 10 in intervals of ten, for reasons that become apparent shortly.

The first stage in assigning Std.IDs is to check each of the new lines against the database to see if they match existing lines. This is a computer-assisted process that uses the tools and algorithms described in Appendix E. If a new line matches an existing line, it is assigned the existing Std.ID.

When no more new lines can be matched with the existing database, new Standard IDs are assigned to the residue. Because lines and their variants may be repeated among the remaining unmatched lines, it is important to ensure that they receive the same Std.IDs. However, once this precaution has been taken, it is helpful if the lines of the new text are in their proper sequence before new Std.IDs are assigned.

Figure 16 gives a sample page of an Std.ID index, where, the database has been sorted by Std.ID then File ID then Line Number. The columns have been rearranged, and two new ones have been added for the Std.IDs of the previous and next lines. Where there is no previous or next line, the tags [Start] and [End] are used.

Figure 16 – Example Page of the Standard Line Identifier Index

Std ID	Prev.	Next	Normalised Line	File	Line	Character
17250	17240	17260	last christmas night i turned the spit	86sp14bc	1400	beezebub
17250	7140	17260	last christmas day i turned the spit	86su19cj	1240	tom pinny
17250	2495	17260	last christmas night i began to spit	88ig86ge	710	beelzebub
17250	3070	17260	laast christmas daay i turned the spit	88su--lb	330	molly
17250	2490	17260	last christmas eve i turned me spit	90sp12ta	1220	beelzebub
17250	55480	17260	last christmas time i turned to spit	90sp46gi	780	[beelzebub]
17250	2490	17260	last christmas day i turned the spit	91sp21tr	890	[beelzebub]
17260	17250	17270	i burnt me finger and felt it itch	86sp14bc	1410	beezebub
17260	17250	17270	i burnt my fingers and felt it hit	86su19cj	1250	tom pinny
17260	17250	51110	i burned my finger i feel it yet	88ig86ge	720	beelzebub
17260	17250	17270	burned my vingers an veels on t it	88su--lb	340	molly
17260	17250	17270	i burnt me finger and have n t found on t it	90sp12ta	1230	beelzebub
17260	17250	17280	and burnt my finger i feel it yet	90sp46gi	790	[beelzebub]
17260	17250	17280	i burned me finger i feels it hit	91sp21tr	900	[beelzebub]
17270	17260	17280	the sparks flew over the table	86sp14bc	1420	beezebub
17270	17260	17280	the spark jumped over the table	86su19cj	1260	tom pinny
17270	17260	17280	a spark vlew awver the staayble	88su--lb	350	molly
17270	17260	17280	spark fled over the table	90sp12ta	1240	beelzebub
17280	17270	17290	the pot lid kicked the ladle	86sp14bc	1430	beezebub
17280	17270	24660	and the frying pan beat the ladle	86su19cj	1270	tom pinny
17280	17270	17340	the skimmer hit the laaydle	88su--lb	360	molly
17280	17270	17340	potlid whacked the ladle	90sp12ta	1250	beelzebub
17280	17260	17340	the saucepan beat the ladle	90sp46gi	800	[beelzebub]
17280	17260	17340	the pot lid buat the ladel aye	91sp21tr	910	[beelzebub]
17290	17280	17300	up jumped spit jack	86sp14bc	1440	beezebub
17300	17290	17310	like a mansion man	86sp14bc	1450	beezebub
17310	17300	17320	swore he d fight the dripping pan	86sp14bc	1460	beezebub
17320	17310	17330	with his long tail	86sp14bc	1470	beezebub
17320	17350	17330	in runs the frying pan with his long tail	90sp12ta	1280	beelzebub
17320	17350	17330	in comes the fryin pan with his long tail	91sp21tr	940	[beelzebub]
17330	17320	17340	swore he d send them all to jail	86sp14bc	1480	beezebub
17330	17320	7230	and swore he d send them all to jail	90sp12ta	1290	beelzebub
17330	17320	[End]	and swer s if the cant agree i ll send hum all to jail	91sp21tr	950	[beelzebub]
17340	17330	17350	in comes the grid iron if you can t agree	86sp14bc	1490	beezebub
17340	17280	17350	ah zes the gridiron caan t you two agree	88su--lb	370	molly
17340	17280	17350	lep jumps the gridiron what can t you agree	90sp12ta	1260	beelzebub
17340	17280	17350	hullo said the grid iron can t you two agree	90sp46gi	810	[beelzebub]
17340	17280	17350	aye says the grid iron cant you to agree	91sp21tr	920	[beelzebub]
17350	17340	17360	i m the justice bring um to me	86sp14bc	1500	beezebub
17350	17340	1950	i be the justice bring em avoor me	88su--lb	380	molly
17350	17340	17320	i m the judge bring him to me	90sp12ta	1270	beelzebub
17350	17340	51360	i am the justice bring him to me	90sp46gi	820	[beelzebub]
17350	17340	17320	i m the justice bring hum to me	91sp21tr	930	[beelzebub]

Handling Line Definition Problems

Using decimal places solves the problem of couplets *versus* quatrains. Integer Std.IDs are assigned to lines in their couplet form. e.g.:

1510 = "with sword and buckler by my side i hope to win the game"

When, this is split into two lines in a quatrain, different decimals are added for the first and second halves of the line, thus;

1510.1 = "with sword and buckler by my side"
1510.6 = "i hope to win the game"

A convention was established whereby "0.1" denotes the first part of a divided line, and "0.6" denotes the second part. There are cases where lines have a tripartite split, or where split lines are further subdivided. In these cases, other decimals were used. For a two-line/one-line metre, the decimals 0.2, 0.3 & 0.6 were used. For a one-line/two-line metre, the decimals 0.1, 0.7 & 0.9 were used.

The variation of lines with a given Std.ID can be quite wide. It has sometimes been difficult to be objective when deciding whether two variant lines should be given the same Std.ID or given different IDs. One regularly occurring case is where a response uses similar wording to the question or challenge. e.g.:

"is there a doctor can be found"

"yes there is a doctor can be found"

In this example, the amount of variation in terms of words is very small, and yet they have distinct meanings in their context. They are different but related. I therefore wished to number them in such a way that they were kept distinct, but retained their relationship. This was achieved by exploiting the fact that the Std.IDs are normally numbered in intervals of ten. In this example, the question was given Std.ID 640 and the response Std.ID 645.

In addition to challenge/response pairs, a similar approach was applied to distinct variants of a given line. e.g.

290   "here comes i saint george that **worthy champion** bold"

295   "oh here comes i saint george a **man of courage** bold"

and…

> 300 "and with my sword and spear i won **three crowns** of gold"

> 305 "and with my trusty sword i won **ten thousand pounds** in gold"

The above principles also proved to be equally applicable to lines of prose. They could also be used to distinguish formulaic lines, which are identical but for the name of a character - e.g. "step in <someone> and clear the way"

SIMILARITY AND VARIABILITY OF LINES

The following sample of variants of line Std.ID 310, presented approximately in chronological order – just 20 of over 50 different alternatives - illustrates the high degree of variability that is commonly observable between equivalent lines.

1. twas i that brought the dragon to the slaughter
2. i slew the dragon and brought him to the slaughter
3. twas i that brought the fiery dragon to the slaughter
4. i fought the fierce dragon and brought him to slaughter
5. it s i who fought the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter
6. aye i fought the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter
7. i fought the finest dragon and brought him to a slaughter
8. i fought the dragon and brought hin to is slaughter
9. i fought the firy dragon and beat him to a slawter
10. i fought the dragon bold and brought him to the slaughter
11. i slew the dragon he and brought him to the slaughter
12. i fit the firey dragon and brought him to a slaughter
13. i fought the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter
14. twas i that fought the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter
15. he fought a fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter
16. twas me who slew the dragon and brought him to the slaughter
17. who fought the dragon and brought him to the slaughter
18. i fought the fiery dragon and brought him to great slaughter
19. i fought the fiery dragon i put him to a slaughter
20. i fought that fiery dragon and drove him to the slaughter

This degree of variation occurs for a host of reasons, including - the effects of oral transmission, poor memory, deliberate change, or just the natural variability of language. Spelling variations in folk play texts are also common. Some are ordinary misspellings and/or typographical errors, perhaps reflecting the semi-

literacy of some scribes. However, dialect also plays an important part. This occurs in three ways;

- Where a writer's literacy is poor, misspellings are likely to reflect the way they pronounce words in their own dialect.

- Some collectors and informants have felt it important to try and record the dialect of the performers, and use spellings accordingly. This may be particularly so when particular characters are distinguished from the rest of the cast by speaking in broad dialect.

- Some writers may have taken a script written in standard English and endeavoured to make it more "authentic" by introducing dialect spellings, which may or may not have been used by the original performers.

Setting aside spelling variations for the moment, four kinds of difference are present above, which, if considered in terms of how the texts might change during transmission, can be labelled - Addition, Deletion, Substitution, and Transposition. Preston (1972b, p.115 And 1977b, pp.160-161) noted the same set of change types, and I discuss them further in Appendix F.

Handling Variation

In most cases, a human should recognise the equivalence of two variants (although they might be too liberal or restrictive in their interpretations, or they might miss some of the more esoteric variations). For a computer to equate variants automatically is more difficult. This is because insignificant spelling variations (e.g. *shown* and *shewn*) and admissible inflectional differences (e.g. *thee, thou* and *you*) are treated literally, and interpreted as absolutely different.

The upshot of these phenomena is that automatic line comparison needs to allow for a reasonable degree of variation. An obvious method of doing this is to compare lines word by word. However, this still falls foul of spelling differences, nor does it accommodate inflectional variations easily, and transposed words or phrases may also cause difficulties. Spelling variations are more easy to accommodate if lines are compared letter by letter, rather than word by word, and

this method can also go a fair way towards handling substitutions and inflectional variations where these are homophonic or alliterative.

I have developed an algorithm, described in Appendix G, which does this comparison, and in common with most such routines, yields a numeric measure of the similarity between two lines. Similarity is normally expressed as a number between 0 and 1, or as a percentage - 0 or 0% indicating total dissimilarity, and 1 or 100% indicating total similarity. These values can also be used by cluster analysis programs.

The following two lines would be equated thus:

```
i slew-- the -----dragon and brought him to the slaughter
||      |||||      |||||||||||||    ||||||||||  ||||   |||
i fought the firy dragon and b---eat him to a-- slaw--ter
```

Note that hyphens have been used as padding here to facilitate the alignment of matched strings. The numerical similarity of these lines is 70% calculated as follows:

Similarity = $\dfrac{\text{2 x Number of common characters}}{\text{No. characters in Line No.1 + No. characters in Line No.2}}$

Similarity = $\dfrac{\text{2 x 35}}{\text{50 + 50}}$ = $\dfrac{70}{100}$ = 0.7 (or 70%)

Similarity Thresholds

In an ideal world, a non-matching pair of lines ought to yield 0%, but the widespread occurrence of common words means that actual values for non-matched pairs are somewhat higher than 0%. Likewise, a matched pair of lines should ideally yield a similarity of 100%. However, because of the natural variability of folk play texts, most line pairs that a human would recognise as being essentially the same would yield a similarity value somewhat lower than 100%.

In the real world therefore, where similarity ranges from 0% (totally dissimilar) to 100% (identical), one would generally expect matching pairs of lines to yield similarity values at the top end the range, and non-matching pairs to have values at the lower end. Intuitively, one might expect there to be a threshold

point somewhere in the middle of the range, above which one could regard a pair as matching, and another threshold below which they would be non-matching. Between these thresholds might be an unclear region where further analysis and/or intellectual intervention would be needed. There are advantages in having such thresholds for automatic comparison of text lines. At best, the whole process could be done automatically, and even if this is not achievable, it should be possible to reduce the amount of manual comparison significantly.

Experimental Similarity Statistics

To investigate if such thresholds were feasible, I compiled frequency distributions of matching and non-matching line pairs. The data sets were derived as follows:

- The TextBase database provided 7,917 pairs of matched lines, whose equivalence had been verified manually. The criterion for a match was that the core Std.ID numbers were the same. This sometimes meant that a full line was being compared against a part line when the couplet *versus* quatrain situation was encountered. I discuss the implications of this later.

- The non-matching line pairs came from comparing several texts with themselves. This is a controlled situation, because we know before we start that there should be as many 100% matched pairs as there are lines in the play. All other pair combinations, by definition should not be matches (although repeated lines would lead to extra matches). Therefore, it is only necessary to ignore the combinations where a given line is compared with itself. Non-matching pairs in fact generate the majority of the data resulting from a text self-comparison. For instance, for a 100-line text, there would be 4950 possible pairs of lines to compare, of which only 100 would be matches. Consequently, it was possible to compile data from 28,167 known non-matching pairs of lines.

The results from this exercise are given in histograms and table of Figure 17.

Figure 17 - Similarity of Line Pairs
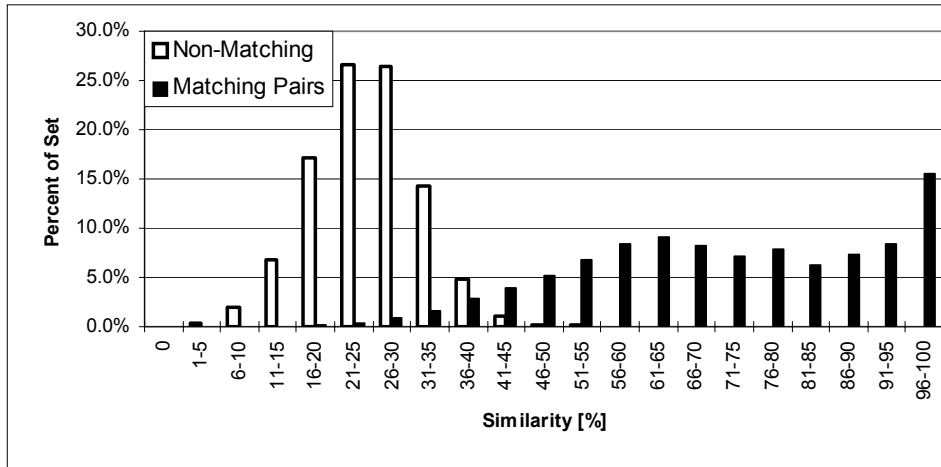
Similarity Range [%]	Raw Frequency		Percent of Set	
	Matching Pairs	Non-Matching	Matching Pairs	Non-Matching
0	0	6	0.0%	0.0%
1-5	0	111	0.0%	0.4%
6-10	2	572	0.0%	2.0%
11-15	2	1897	0.0%	6.7%
16-20	10	4845	0.1%	17.2%
21-25	32	7509	0.4%	26.7%
26-30	69	7438	0.9%	26.4%
31-35	122	4004	1.5%	14.2%
36-40	226	1350	2.9%	4.8%
41-45	309	320	3.9%	1.1%
46-50	415	70	5.2%	0.2%
51-55	540	33	6.8%	0.1%
56-60	661	8	8.3%	0.0%
61-65	726	1	9.2%	0.0%
66-70	650	1	8.2%	0.0%
71-75	571	2	7.2%	0.0%
76-80	616	0	7.8%	0.0%
81-85	497	0	6.3%	0.0%
86-90	576	0	7.3%	0.0%
91-95	662	0	8.4%	0.0%
96-100	1231	0	15.5%	0.0%
Totals	**7917**	**28167**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

A number of observations can be made about these distributions. Taking first the non-matching pairs, this distribution of similarities is a Normal distribution peaking at about 25%. Nearly all these pairs (99.8%) are below the 50% similarity level. However, 50% and above seems a very high similarity value for pairs which are

supposed to be non-matching. Three possible reasons why this may be come to mind:

- Some long character names - e.g. Father Christmas - may form a significant proportion of a given line. Comparing two different lines containing such a character name may yield an "abnormally" high similarity. Thus the pair:

  "in comes old father christmas welcome or welcome not"

    and

  "i hope old father christmas will never be forgot"

  are 68% similar.

- Some folk play lines follow a formulaic construction, where the texts are identical except for different character names. e.g.:

  "And if you don't believe the words I say,
  Step in [*someone*] and clear the way"

  Such lines will yield a high similarity value for different characters - e.g. the second lines for Slasher and Beelzebub are 82% similar. This high quantitative value is valid, but the character names make a qualitative difference that is difficult to handle automatically.

- Challenge/response pairs are a special case of formulaic construction that also yield high similarity values. Thus the pair:

  "is there a doctor can be found"

    and

  "yes there is a doctor can be found"

  are 91% similar. Given the variability of wording that generally occurs, it is quite conceivable that when comparing two challenge/response pairs, the non-matching counterparts might yield a higher similarity value than the true matching pair. Clearly it is not practicable to recognise the distinction automatically.

Fortunately, there are relatively few different types of formulaic lines and challenge/response pairs in English folk plays. Therefore the most practical

solution may be to accept them as matched during automatic analysis, and adjust them manually as special cases afterwards. Alternatively, a list of special cases could be built into the matching program so that relevant potential matches are presented for manual verification.

Coming now to matching pairs, the distribution in Figure 17 is elongated with two main peaks - one at 100% and the other at about 65%. The fact that there at least two peaks suggests that this may be an amalgam of two or more underlying distributions. One possible explanation alluded to earlier, is that the distribution cases where two full lines are being compared is different to the distribution of cases where full lines are being compared with part lines (the couplets *versus* quatrain problem). Because of the decimal notation used for Std.IDs in TextBase, it is possible to compile separate statistics for each case, and these are presented in the histograms and table of Figure 18.

Figure 18 - Similarity of Different Types of Line Pair
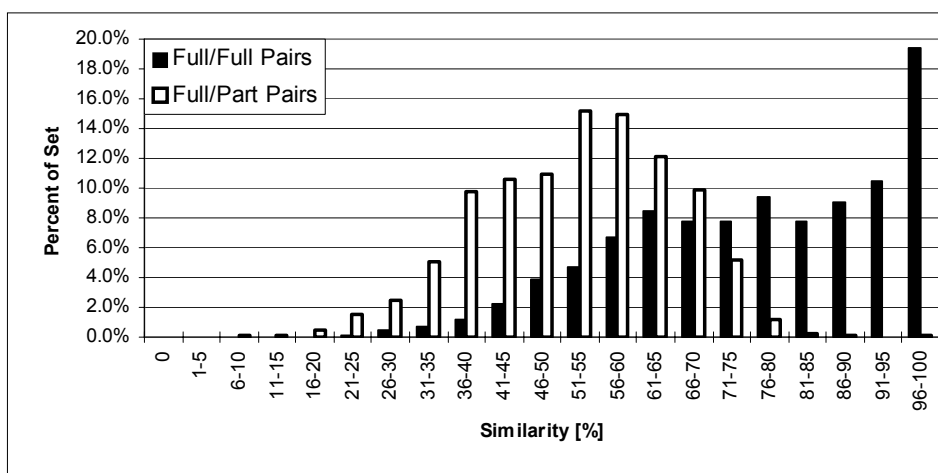
Similarity	Raw Frequency		Percent of Set	
Range [%]	Full/Full Pairs	Full/Part Pairs	Full/Full Pairs	Full/Part Pairs
0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%
1-5	0	0	0.0%	0.0%
6-10	0	2	0.0%	0.1%
11-15	1	1	0.0%	0.1%
16-20	2	8	0.0%	0.5%
21-25	8	24	0.1%	1.5%
26-30	30	39	0.5%	2.5%
31-35	42	80	0.7%	5.1%
36-40	74	152	1.2%	9.7%
41-45	144	165	2.3%	10.5%
46-50	243	172	3.8%	11.0%
51-55	302	238	4.8%	15.2%
56-60	427	234	6.7%	15.0%
61-65	537	189	8.5%	12.1%
66-70	496	154	7.8%	9.8%
71-75	490	81	7.7%	5.2%
76-80	597	19	9.4%	1.2%
81-85	493	4	7.8%	0.3%
86-90	574	2	9.0%	0.1%
91-95	662	0	10.4%	0.0%
96-100	1230	1	19.4%	0.1%
Totals	**6352**	**1565**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Once the distinction has been made, an approximately Normal, if lumpy, distribution emerges for the cases where full lines are compared with part lines. This appears to account for much of the secondary peak in the combined distribution. On the other hand, the similarity distribution where both lines are full is no less elongated than in the combined graph of Fig.17. Furthermore, some of the similarity values are so low as to question the validity of the matches. Undoubtedly a few of the lowest values will be the result of experimental error, but it is illuminating to examine some of the valid low matches:

1. in comes i beelzebub   Similarity 28%
    so here i am a rub a dub a dub

2. i can cure coughs colds fevers gout   Similarity 31%
    the phthisic the palsy and the gout

3. in egypt s fields i prisoner long was kept   Similarity 33%
    seven long years in a close cave have i been kept

4. but as thou art an old friend i ll nine of thee   Similarity 24%

    but nine pounds nineteen shillings and eleven pence three farthings will i
        take from thee

5. what s your fee   Similarity 31%

    o docter docter wat is thy fee this champion for to rise

6. doctor what is your fee   Similarity 27%

    what s thy fee doctor

7. my name ain t jack finney   Similarity 29%

    tom pinny s not my name

8. he came to poverty by the lending of his gold   Similarity 37%

    who by never lending any thing can t come to poverty

Pairs 1, 2 & 3 illustrate radical rewording, while retaining the rhyme, and the tenor of meaning. This leaves little that matches, apart from the rhyming syllables - hence the low similarity.

Pairs 4 & 5 also retain the substance of the meaning, but show either embellishment or abbreviation depending of your point of view. It is mostly the difference in line lengths that produces the low similarity. Even if all the characters in the shorter string were matched, the extra words in the longer line enlarge the denominator in the similarity formula and therefore dilute the result. I suggest a solution to this problem shortly.

Pairs 6, 7 & 8 show transpositions of phrases. Transpositions are not handled by the similarly algorithm. For instance, the lines in pair No.4 initially match on the word Doctor, but further matching words in the remaining segments cannot be aligned because they are on opposite sides of the initial match. Consequently, the calculated similarity is misleadingly low.

The above examples were chosen because they are extreme, but it is easy to see how lesser variations of a similar nature bring about the breadth of the match distributions.

Accommodating Different Line Lengths

If two lines are of uneven length, then it is impossible for there to be 100% similarity between them. If one assumes that all the characters of the shortest line will be matched, then the maximum possible similarity would be calculated thus;

$$\text{Max. Possible Similarity} = \frac{2 \times \text{No. of characters in the shortest line}}{\text{No. characters in text no.1} + \text{no. characters in text no.2}}$$

This sets the actual similarity in context. In some circumstances therefore, it may be more useful to use the ratio of actual similarity to maximum possible similarity for a given pair of lines.

$$\text{Similarity Ratio} = \text{Actual Similarity} / \text{Max. Possible Similarity}$$

Applying this formula to the earlier data, the distributions in Fig.19 are produced;

Figure 19 - Ratio of Actual to Max Possible Similarity of Line Pairs
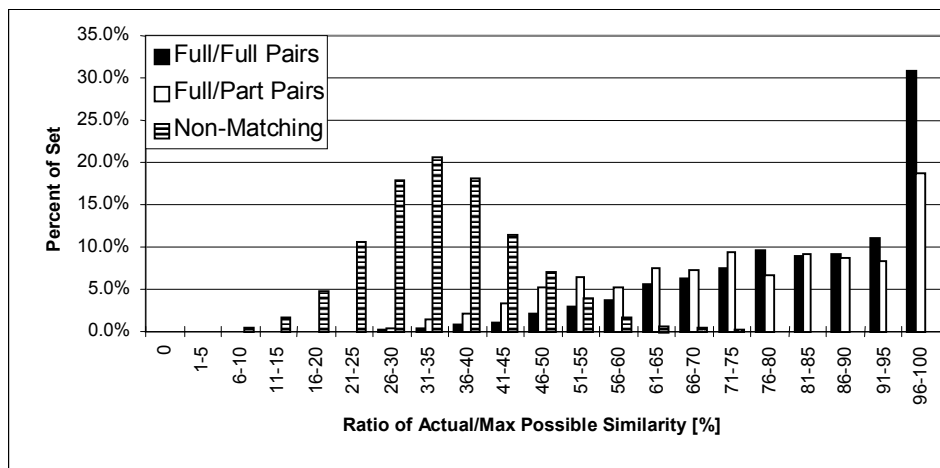
As one would expect, the peaks for all three distributions have shifted to the right, up the similarity scale. However, the general validity of this approach is shown by the full line/part line pairs. Once differing line lengths have been taken into account, there is no reason why the similarity distribution for these pairs should be any different to the distribution for pairs of full lines. This is what we find here. The shapes of the two distributions are broadly alike.

Words of caution are necessary however. Some lines are just short common words or phrases that also appear in much longer unrelated lines - e.g. the shortest

line, "No". When compared, these lines may achieve their maximum possible similarity, although the actual similarity should still be very low. In setting thresholds therefore, it would be prudent to specify values for both actual similarity and the ratio in combination so that these cases are excluded. The relevant programs used in this study used thresholds of 85% for actual similarity alone, and 60% for similarity ratio where actual similarity otherwise exceeded 40%.

TEXT ANALYSIS TOOLS

Introduction

I have prepared various tools to help analyse the text database. These are mostly graphical, using the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet package. Of these, cluster analysis and distribution mapping are well-established techniques, but the other tools are of my own devising. This chapter covers methodologies and the principles of interpretation of results, as well as the difficulties that may be encountered, together with potential solutions.

Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis is a well-established analytical technique in which the similarities or dissimilarities or distances between pairs of entities are measured using the number of characteristics they have in common. These values are then used to determine clusters where members are similar to each other, but distinct from the members of other clusters (B.S.Everitt et al, 2001). In this study, the entities are play texts, and the characteristics or attributes used for the analysis are line types. Lines were also used by Paul Smith (1985a) as the basis for his cluster analysis of 16 Derby Tup plays. However, other characteristics can and have been used for cluster analysis. For instance I have used cast lists to analyse a collection of 80 Nottinghamshire plays (P.Millington,1988).

One of the most common results output from cluster analysis is a tree diagram called a dendrogram. This represents the clustering of the entities, but does not indicate which collections of attributes characterise the clusters. I have therefore added a further analytical stage that determines which attributes are characteristic of the clusters.

The utility of cluster analysis is that it automatically determines a classification scheme for the entities being studied. Intellectual classification techniques usually

work in a broadly similar way, in that collections of attributes are compared and considered. However, cluster analysis has the advantage of largely being objective. That is the theory. In practice a degree of subjectivity may be unavoidably introduced when the data is encoded (for instance in deciding "what is a line?"), when selecting the various parameters and algorithms for the analysis, and in interpreting the results. Nonetheless, cluster analysis can be used to identify new potential groupings and relationships so that it may be possible to investigate further or validate using other methods.

Methodology

The core mathematical procedures of cluster analysis are applicable to a wide variety of data, both numeric and non-numeric. In the case of traditional drama, as with almost all folklore *genres*, the data is non-numeric. This means that similarities are based on the common presence and/or absence of characteristics rather than calculated distances between numeric values. The generic procedure is described fully in papers by Paul Smith (1985a) and myself (P.Millington, 1988), and in mathematical detail in the introductory book by B.S.Everitt et al (2001). Smith goes further in discussing some of the considerations that apply to folk play texts, in particular the choice of textual units for comparison. His options were; (a) word units, (b) line units and (c) speech/verse units. Additionally, he considered two types of match - identical unit match, and semantic unit match. For his study of Derby Tup plays, he decided that "identical line matching" was most appropriate (P.Smith, 1985a, p.47-48). In the present study, line units are also used. However, because the degree of variability is significantly higher than in Smith's study, semantic unit matching is used, facilitated by the use of the Standard Identifiers (Std.IDs) for distinct line types.

The earlier studies by Smith and myself used publicly available cluster analysis programs. For this study, I wrote my own programs, using Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) in Microsoft Excel. This approach allowed me to develop novel refinements and extensions of the technique. These included special line matching methods, and the determination of the characteristic attributes of the

clusters. Additionally, because the programs were associated with the database (also held in Excel), the turn round time for analyses was much faster, and there was more control over the parameters that could be used.

As evidenced by discussions in the earlier studies, cluster analysis comes with a potentially bewildering array of options, parameters and sub-techniques that can influence the outcome of the analysis. Some can be selected on the basis of the nature of the data. Others reflect the nature of the resultant clusters and/or the links between them. These options can be adjusted and applied in an iterative fashion, either to test specific hypotheses, or until an optimum solution is achieved. Unfortunately, there is potential for subjectively to influence the choice of parameters. That is to say that the parameters could be tweaked until a prejudged result was obtained. I therefore describe the options and choices used in this study and explain the theory behind the effects that they have on the outcome.

Similarity and Dissimilarity Formulae

In the last chapter and in Appendix G, I present a formula for calculating the similarity of two entities from the number of characteristics that are present in both:

$$\text{Similarity} = \frac{2 \times \text{Number present in both A \& B}}{\text{Number in A} + \text{Number in B}}$$

This formula is called the Dice Coefficient (L.R.Dice, 1945). It yields a number between 0 and 1, where 0 = total dissimilarity and 1 = identicality. This is commonly expressed as a percentage.

This coefficient only considers the common presence of characteristics. If a finite number of characteristics are available, it is also possible to consider the common absence of characteristics, in which case the formula becomes:

$$\text{Similarity} = \frac{\text{Number present in both A \& B} + \text{Number absent from both A \& B}}{\text{Number in A} + \text{Number in B}}$$

This is called the Simple Matching Coefficient. Again, this yields a number between 0 and 1 (or, if preferred, a percentage)

For convenience, it is common for similarities to be converted to a dissimilarity coefficient, using the formula:

Dissimilarity = 1 – Similarity

Here, 0 = identicality, and 1 = total dissimilarity. Again, this may be expressed as a percentage. The reason this is convenient is because with numeric data sets, the geometric distance between two values can be calculated as a measure of proximity. Because zero represents identicality in this situation, such values are a measure of dissimilarity, and therefore if dissimilarity measures are used for all types of data, the same software can be used for the clustering process. For this reason, the programs in the present study use dissimilarities too.

A third measure is the number of differences between two entities, as follows:

No. of Differences = No. in A + No. in B − 2 (No. present in both A & B)

This is known as the Hamming Distance (R.W.Hamming, 1950). The results from this formula do not have an upper limit, but they do have a lower limit of zero, which indicates that entities are identical. Hence, this formula also is a measure of dissimilarity. It could also be regarded as a measure of the number of changes that would be required to change entity A into entity B or *vice versa*. As such, it has potential use in evolutionary studies.

To summarise so far, three options have been considered for measuring dissimilarity - common presence only (Dice Coefficient), common presence and absence (Simple Matching Coefficient), and number of differences (Hamming Distance). Which are most appropriate to this study?

In the letter by letter line matching algorithm described in Appendix G, a finite number of characteristics cannot be specified, therefore the Dice Coefficient and Hamming Distance are the only appropriate options. The Dice Coefficient has been used here.

When comparing whole play texts, there may appear to be a finite number of line types available, but this could be illusory. A given collection of plays will yield its own finite number of line types, but if the addition or removal of texts affects the number of line types, then the criteria for using "common presence and absence" are not met. Furthermore, if it is possible that lines are missing because of the vagaries of memory and collection, common absence is clearly unreliable, so again the Simple Matching Coefficient is not appropriate. In Smith's study of the Derby Tup texts, he was confident enough of the comprehensiveness of his *corpus* of text lines, and of the completeness of the individual texts to be able use the Simple Matching Coefficient (P.Smith, 1985a, p.49). However, there is no such confidence regarding the database used by this study. Therefore the Dice Coefficient was felt to be the appropriate choice here for full texts.

Hamming Distance does not require there to be a finite number of line types, but does presuppose that individual texts are complete. Confidence in the completeness of individual texts in the study database varies, but Hamming Distance was retained as an option because it could be applied to selections of plays where known fragmentary texts had been excluded.

Data Selection

The complete database of texts is something of a mixed bag. It contains full texts, fragments, literary parallels, duplicate versions and so on. Some of these can, by their nature, disrupt the outcome of cluster analysis. Therefore, in addition to being able to analyse the whole database, the programs permitted the analysis of a list of selected texts. In fact, *selected* is perhaps the wrong word. Although special collections of texts might indeed be selected for specific purposes, the lists in this study were used more for excluding disruptive texts - that is to say disruptive on sound methodological grounds rather than because they produced inconvenient results. The following exclusions are typical:

- Fragments and fragmentary texts. Comparing a fragment with a full text will at best always yield a low similarity value, and once the fragment has been

clustered, the overall similarity of its group will also be lowered. Additionally, if the fragment occurs frequently within texts throughout the database, it may attach itself erratically to radically different clusters as parameters are adjusted and/or texts added to or removed from the list. Both these effects destroy the predictability of the analyses, therefore it is desirable to analyse complete texts only. Having said that, there may be instances where an incomplete text could be tolerated, if only a trivial proportion of the text - a line or a verse - appears to have been omitted. Conversely there may be good grounds for including specific incomplete texts. For instance, the *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook text reprinted in Hone's *Every-Day Book* (1827, cols.1645-1648) omits most of the Doctor's monologue regarding his cures. However, it appears that this incomplete reprint may have been used as a source by some traditional and compiled plays (such as Henry Slight's 1842 compilation), so its inclusion can be justified.

- Parallel literary texts. All literary parallels discovered so far equate to only a fraction of the corresponding folk play text. Consequently, they have the same similarity-lowering effects as text fragments. However, unlike fragments, they are unlikely to attach themselves erratically to clusters. Rather, they will bind with their folk play parallel, with unpredictable effects on subsequent clustering. If a suitable line occurrence threshold is used (as described below), literary parallels tend to drop out of the analysis anyway, because they mostly only occur a couple of times in the database and therefore fail to pass the threshold.

- Duplicate texts. Duplicate or near duplicate texts normally cluster together early on in the process, with a high similarity value. Consequently, they may form an abnormally tight cluster core with potentially two undesirable effects. Firstly, there may be a tendency for other texts to become "chained" to this core, to the detriment of clusters that would otherwise form separately. Secondly, with some clustering techniques, the tightness of the core could actually lower the overall similarity with other clusters. The best examples in

the database are the 1779 and 1780 versions of the Revesby text. Because one text is a transcript of the other, only one version is required for cluster analysis. Multiple editions of chapbook texts should also be regarded as duplicates for most purposes. In principle, only the earliest edition of each text has been used in this study, although versions with large additions or deletions of text might also be included.

- Known composite texts. This category covers texts that are known to have been compiled by *literati* from two or more other texts - in other words artificial hybrids. Two examples are J.H.Ewing's text, which was compiled from five earlier texts (P.Millington, 1996), and Henry Slight's (1842) text, which he states was compiled from unspecified earlier versions. The effects of these texts are like those of literary parallels. They usually bind first with one of the source texts - probably the one from which most text has been borrowed. Thereafter, the presence of additional, radically different text in the hybrid means that its group could cluster prematurely with the group containing the play from which the other text was taken, and/or prevent other validly related plays from clustering with the group.

- Composed texts. Composed texts consist mostly, if not totally of original material. There may be virtually no traditional lines, in which case the text will form a cluster of one, or, if a line occurrence threshold is used, it may be eliminated from the analysis anyway. Alternatively, the text may contain a few traditional lines, padded out with original material. In effect, this sort of composed text behaves the same as a fragmentary text, attaching itself erratically to groups in the clustering process. Four plays were treated as composed texts in this study - W.Scott's (1829) Papa Stour text, J.A.Giles (1848) Bampton text, the *Walker's New Mummer* chapbook (1855), and *The Four Champions of Great Britain* chapbook (1879-1884).

Line Similarity Measures

Measuring the similarity of two texts entails counting the number of lines that they have in common. This sounds simple in principle, but the variability of given lines could complicate matters. The simplest scenario is where the variability of a given line type is ignored, in which case there is a 100% match whenever the core Std.IDs match. However, in the case where distinct variants of a particular line type are being compared, the match is clearly less than 100% but more than 0%. It is difficult to quantify the degree of match objectively in such circumstances. Therefore, in this study, when variants were taken into account, an arbitrary value of 50% similarity was used when matching different distinct variants of a line type. A third option is to calculate the similarity of matched lines, letter by letter, as described in Appendix G. In summary, therefore, options for three measures of line similarity were provided:

- Core match. This is the simplest case, where a match of core Std.IDs scores 100%. Being simplest, it also requires the least amount of arithmetic. It is adequate for most purposes, because the vast majority of line types do not have variants.

- Exact match. In this case, identical variants of a line - i.e. with exactly matched Std.IDs - score 100%, but different variants - i.e. where the Std.IDs are different but their core values are the same - score 50%. This requires more processing because of the need to use an if-then-else construct in the calculation. In theory, if the line variants are valid, use of this measure should result in more tightly defined clusters. Thus, if different variants are truly characteristic of different clusters, the text dissimilarity *within* the clusters should be the same as with the "core match" measure, but the dissimilarity *between* the clusters will be higher - hence the better definition between them.

- Calculated match. In this case, if the core Std.IDs of two lines match, the letter-by-letter similarity of the lines is calculated using the method in Appendix G. This option requires orders of magnitude more processing than

the other two methods. It is debatable how useful this measure is. Because of the high variability of folk play lines, very few pairs of "identical" lines will yield 100% similarity, and it is quite possible that a pair of distinct "variants" could yield a higher similarity than an "identical" pair. From experiments, it appears that the main effect of using this measure is to reduce text similarity values overall, with the result that clusters tend to form at lower levels. This is undesirable because with clusters forming within such a restricted range of values, the links between clusters are weaker and become erratic.

Bearing in mind the above considerations, the "exact match" measure was normally used for line similarity in this study.

Text Similarity Measures

As already mentioned above in the discussion on similarity and dissimilarity formulae, two conventional measures were deemed appropriate for comparing folk play texts. These were the Dice Coefficient, using common presence of attributes only, and the number of line differences (Hamming Distance). However, a third measure was also used - the ratio of actual to maximum possible similarity, also known as the Simpson Coefficient or Asymmetric Coefficient (G.G.Simpson, 1960):

$$\text{Similarity Ratio} = \frac{\text{Number present in both A \& B}}{\text{Number in shorter of A \& B}}$$

The rationale for this was discussed in the last chapter. An example of the effect of using this formula is the text from Llanmadoc and Cheriton, which is a cut-down version of the Cornish play published by W.Sandys in 1827. The normal Dice similarity for this pair of texts is 67%, whereas the Similarity Ratio is 100%.

Because most pairs of texts are of differing lengths to some degree, the general tendency of using this coefficient is to increase similarity levels. On the other hand, specific effects vary. The internal similarity of a "valid" cluster is likely to be increased, whereas the similarity between unrelated or distantly

related clusters is likely to be little changed. Therefore, this measure tends to improve the definition of clusters. It is also tolerant of incomplete texts.

Minimum Number of Occurrences of Lines

In the database used in this study, about 60% of lines only occur in one text, and a further 20% occur in two texts only. In other words, about 80% of line types only occur once or twice in the database. The presence of these infrequent lines tends to lower similarity values. Therefore an option for a line occurrence threshold was provided. This is the minimum number of times a given line type must appear in the database (or the selected set of texts) for it to be included in the cluster analysis. Obviously, any lines occurring less often are excluded.

The effects of different values of this threshold were determined by experimentation. With a threshold of 1 - i.e. no exclusions - clusters tended to form at low levels of similarity, with a relatively large number of small clusters and singletons. Clusters were therefore weakly defined. With a threshold of 2, clusters formed at noticeably higher levels of similarity and there were fewer small clusters and singletons. Therefore the definition of clusters was improved. As the threshold continued to be raised, so the similarity level and size of clusters also tended to increase. However, the degree of improvement soon became lower and levelled off.

When working with the whole database, a line occurrence threshold of 3 seems to be optimal. The reasoning is as follows. The aim of the threshold is to exclude unique or rare lines so that the analysis can concentrate on shared lines - which obviously must occur at least twice. If a given text includes a passage from a known literary source, the full database also includes the literary version. Therefore, as such lines will only appear twice, a line occurrence threshold of 3 is needed to eliminate the passage. On the other hand, if a selected collection of texts is being analysed, where the literary versions have been manually excluded, a threshold of 2 may be appropriate.

It is tempting to use higher thresholds, to see if clusters coalesce. However, effects can occur which may or may not be desirable. Take for instance the Robin Hood plays. There are only three such plays in the database used by this study. Sure enough, with a line occurrence threshold of 1, 2 or 3, these texts combine to form a distinct cluster, loosely allied with other Cotswold plays. However, with thresholds of 3 or above, the characteristic Robin Hood lines are eliminated, and while the trio still tend to stay close to each other, they become subsumed within a larger cluster of Cotswold plays.

Clustering Methods

There are several clustering methods that can be used to analyse similarity data, but the basic principles are the same. The process always starts by finding the pair of entities with the highest similarity and these are then combined to start to form the first cluster. As the level of similarity is gradually lowered, further pairs of entities may start to form new clusters, or entities may join an existing cluster, or pairs of clusters may coalesce to form a bigger cluster, and so on until all the entities form part of one universal cluster – which is inevitable at the zero similarity level. The criterion for forming two individual entities into a cluster are the same whatever method is used – simply that their similarity passes the threshold. On the other hand, the similarity between a cluster and new entity or between two clusters is more complicated because the similarities between individual members of a cluster and the new candidate are likely to differ. The differences in clustering methods arise from how the similarities between clusters or between clusters and entities are handled.

Figure 20 illustrates a hypothetical set of data, where the geometrical distance between entities represents their dissimilarity – i.e. the shorter the distance between two entities, the more similar they are.

Figure 20 – Hypothetical Proximity Data and its Spatial Representation

Entity	Coordinates	
	X	Y
A	1	2
B	4	3
C	4	1
D	6	2
E	9	2

Entity	Distance (Dissimilarity) Matrix				
A					
B	3.2				
C	3.2	2.0			
D	5.0	2.2	2.2		
E	8.0	5.1	5.1	3.0	
	A	B	C	D	E

Spatial Representation

B

A   D   E

C

Three clustering methods have been used in this study.

- Single Linkage. This is the simplest and quickest of the methods. In this case, the criterion for joining clusters is the highest similarity (or shortest distance) between any pair of individuals, where one is a member of the first group and the other is a member of the second. When using distance measures, this method is also called "nearest neighbour".

Figure 21 shows how the cluster is built for our hypothetical test set. The concentric ellipses group entities into clusters, and the innermost ellipses represent the clusters that form first. In this case, entities *B* and *C* are the pair with the highest similarity and therefore form the first cluster. The next highest similarity is entity *D* with either *B* or *C*, and so joins them to form a cluster of three. Next is entity *E* paired with *D,* and that also joins the cluster. Lastly, entity *A* pairs with either *B* or *C,* thus completing a single cluster containing the whole data set.

Figure 21 – Formation of Clusters by Single Linkage
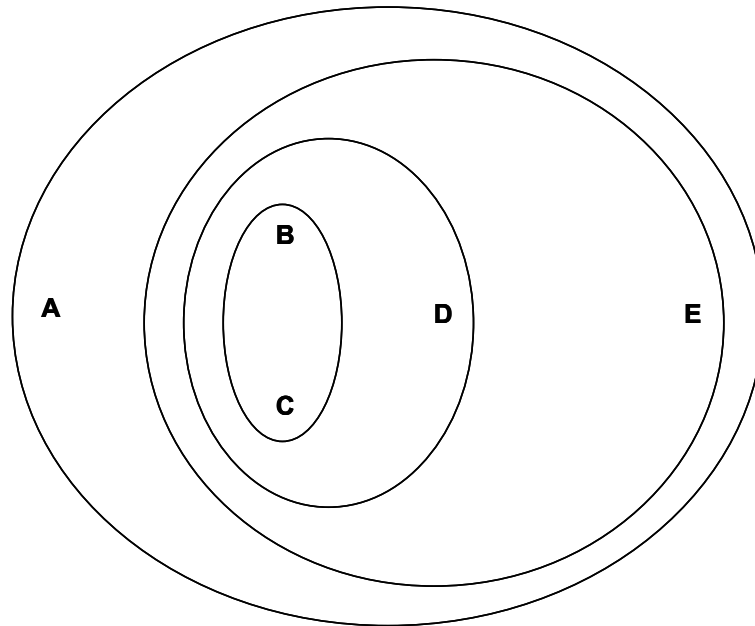
To quote Everitt et al (2001, p.62), single linkage "tends to produce unbalanced and straggly clusters ('chaining'), especially in large data sets [and] does not take account of cluster structure." Consequently, this method is generally felt to be undesirable, because one of the usual aims of cluster analysis is to generate a hierarchical classification for the data set. However, one needs to be careful with all clustering methods because the preference for hierarchical clusters presupposes that the data set really is hierarchical, and this may not always be true.

- Average Linkage. Another way of considering clustering is to visualise the clusters as circles. With single linkage, clusters will merge if their outer edges are close to each other, but it is better if clusters merge when their centres are close together. There are several methods for doing this, of which Average Linkage is the simplest. Average Linkage works by considering the average of similarities between all possible pairs of entities where there is one entity from each cluster, rather than just whichever individual pair is closest.

Figure 22 shows how average linkage affects the clustering of our hypothetical data set. The cluster comprising *B*, *C* and *D* forms as before, but

then average dissimilarities make a difference. Working to one decimal place, the average dissimilarity of *E* with the cluster is (5.1 + 5.1 + 3.0)/3 = 4.4, whereas the average dissimilarity of *A* with the cluster is (3.2 + 3.2 + 5.0)/3 = 3.8. Therefore entity *A* joins the cluster rather than *D*, and the result is a tighter cluster. (The mean dissimilarity of all pairs of entities within cluster [*A*, *B*, *C*, *D*] is 3.0, which is better than [*B*, *C*, *D*, *E*], whose mean internal dissimilarity would be 3.3.)

Figure 22 – Formation of Clusters by Average Linkage
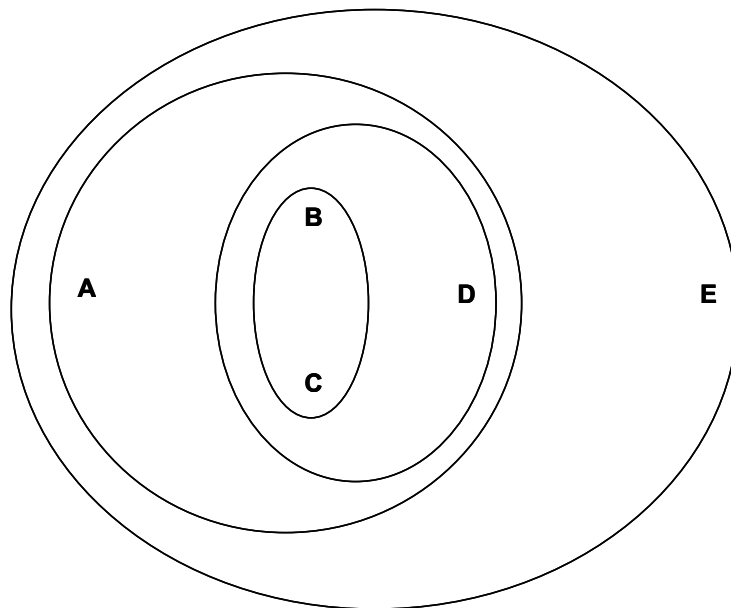
Average linkage takes account of cluster structure and is regarded as relatively robust (Everitt et al, 2001, p.62).

- Gaussian Linkage. While average linkage improves the tightness and definition of clusters, they can be improved further. The histograms in Figure 23 show the distribution of similarities for two hypothetical sets of entity pairs within a cluster. Both sets have the same number of data points, the same mean similarly of 65%, and the same minimum and maximum similarities. Both also have approximately Normal or Gaussian distribution patterns. However, it is evident that the first distribution is more dispersed, and therefore looser than the second. If we seek tight clusters, we would prefer the

second distribution rather than the first, but Average linkage does not distinguish between the two.

Figure 23 - Similarity Distributions for Two Hypothetical Data Sets
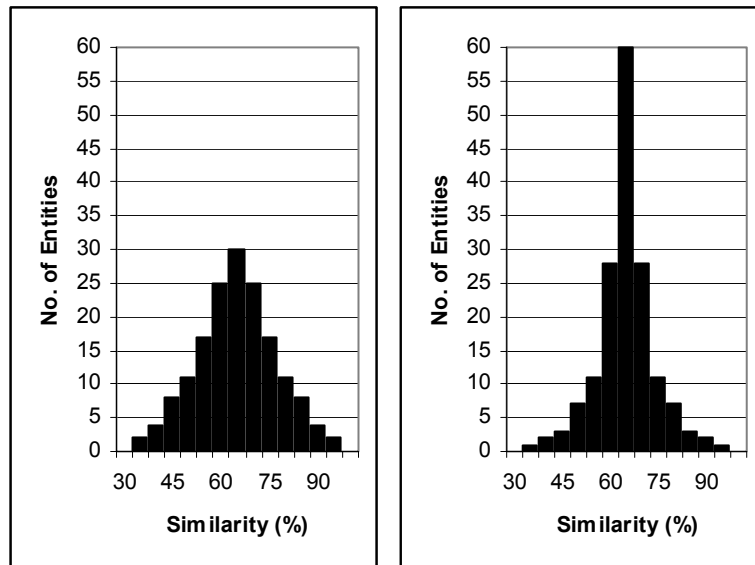
If we can assume that distributions of similarities of entity pairs within and/or between real clusters are indeed roughly Gaussian, statistics provides an established measure for the dispersion of a distribution that is called the Standard Deviation.[19] For the above examples, the Standard Deviations are +/-12% and +/-9% respectively, and as can be seen, larger values indicate a more dispersed distribution.

Standard Deviation can be used together with the mean similarly to delimit the core of the inter- and/or intra-cluster similarities of entity pairs to the range *Mean – Standard Deviation* to *Mean + Standard Deviation*. This range typically encompasses about 70% of a data set, and for the above examples the respective similarity ranges are therefore 53% to 77% and 56% to 74% To

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[19] This is a brave assumption. Looking ahead to the cluster analysis results of this study, similarity distributions for small clusters are roughly Gaussian, but larger clusters often have two or more peaks. These probably reflect the distributions of two or more constituent sub-clusters. Strictly speaking, this means that the measure of dispersion used here should not be applicable. However, in practice, it serves its purpose as an indicator of dispersion as well as anything, and the results appear to be valid according to external criteria.

amend our earlier example, if clusters are visualised as fried eggs, the range described here is represented by the yolk.

The specific clustering process is different, depending on whether similarity or dissimilarity values are used. For dissimilarities, as the cluster threshold is raised, a cluster may form if the *Mean + Standard Deviation* for the relevant inter-object dissimilarities is below the threshold. For similarities, as the threshold is lowered, a cluster may form if the *Mean − Standard Deviation* exceeds the threshold. Again, using our example, this is equivalent to clusters forming when both whole yolks are within the threshold. It would appear that this method of clustering is novel (Peter Willett, Personal communication).

Gaussian linkage tends to produce tight and homogeneous clusters. It takes account of the structure of clusters and is tolerant of outliers. Also, inversions do not appear to be a problem - at least not with the data used in this study.

Figure 24 shows the key distances for cluster formation for the three methods just described.

Figure 24 – Comparison of Clustering Methods

A = Single Linkage

B = Average Linkage

C = Gaussian Linkage

Core Similarities

Peripheral Similarities
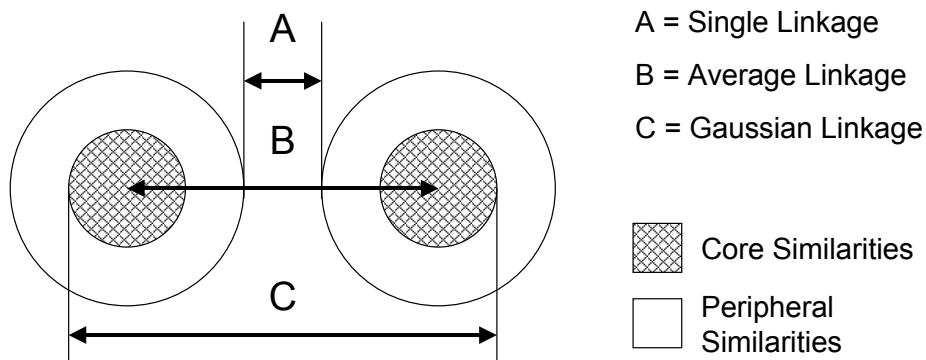
Type of Linkage

- Between groups only

  The most common practice when assessing the potential for two clusters to merge is to consider just the similarities of all possible pairs of entities where there is one from each of the clusters. In doing so, this sort of cluster analysis concentrates on the links between the original clusters, and ignores the structure of the resultant merged cluster, which may or may not be tight and homogeneous. This is the only option for Single Linkage.

- Within and between groups

  Another approach is possible for Average and Gaussian Linkage methods. Rather than just considering the similarities of entity pairs between the clusters, the internal similarities of entity pairs within the source clusters can also be included in the calculations. This approach should be affected by the structure of the resultant cluster, with the general effect of improving the tightness of homogeneity of clusters.

Type of Variance

Variance in statistical terms is another measure of how values vary within a distribution. It is usual, of course, to consider all relevant similarity values for clusters during cluster analysis. However, late on in the clustering process, when already clustered groups are being merged into larger groups, it may be valid to exclude values that represent total dissimilarity. The reasoning is as follows. The merging of two groups may result in an elongated cluster. When considering the possible clustering of an additional group, there may be links with only one of the original clusters, and the result would be an even more elongated cluster. The similarities between the new group and the other original group may all be zero in these circumstances, in which case, the effect would be to weaken the average or Gaussian linkage. In this study, the option was provided to include or exclude zero similarities if desired. The options were labelled as follows:

- Maximum Variance

    This is the option where all similarity or dissimilarity values are used in calculations. This favours the formation of homogeneous clusters.

- Minimum Variance

    With this option, values of zero similarity or 100% dissimilarity are excluded from calculations. This accommodates the effects of elongated or heterogeneous clusters being present. There is however a potential difficulty, since excluding zero similarities could reduce the number of values being considered to a point where the results are meaningless if not misleading. In the case of folk play texts, the ubiquity of certain line types means that 100% dissimilarities are relatively rare and significant. Therefore the Minimum Variance option could be used. On the other hand, it is debatable whether this is justified when the analysis is reversed so that line types are clustered on the basis of the texts they appear in.

Dendrograms

One common form of output from cluster analysis is to present the clusters as a dendrogram – see Figure 25. Because of the large number of entities used in this study, they have been listed down the page for an easier fit, with the dendrogram lines themselves to the right. Following the practice of P.S.Smith (1985, p.49), the mean similarity coefficient has also been drawn as a fine line on dendrograms, as a cut-off to aid the identification of the main clusters.

For a given cluster analysis, the order in which the entities are listed is unpredictable. This is because at any node in the diagram the components may be flipped over and yet still accurately represent the clustering. To aid the visual comparison of dendrograms, it was therefore thought appropriate to apply rules to govern the order in which entities are listed. For texts, the rule was that for any cluster or sub-cluster, the oldest text should appear at the top of the cluster. In other words they were sorted by date. Where adjacent texts have the same age, they appear in alphanumeric order of text identifier. Dendrograms for lines were

also sorted by date. Here, a given line type was given the age of the oldest text in which it occurred. As it appears to be common for adjacent lines to come from the same text, the secondary sort key was the line number within the text.

Interpretation

The hypothetical dendrogram in Figure 25 shows two distinct clusters – Entities 1 to 22 and Entities 23 to 30. They are distinct because they have failed to cluster until the 100% dissimilarity level. This interpretation is appropriate to the single linkage and average linkage algorithms. However, with number of differences as the dissimilarity measure, because there is no upper limit for differences, such a cut-off does not apply. With Gaussian linkage, because the distribution of dissimilarities for the final cluster may be skewed, the *Mean + Standard Deviation* may also exceed 100% The fine dashed line indicates the mean dissimilarity coefficient for the complete data set, for use as a cut-off to distinguish the main clusters, although it should be treated flexibly.

The larger cluster contains two sub-groups plus a number of singletons. The first sub-group – Entities 1 to 8 – is a good quality cluster in that it forms at a low level of dissimilarity, and does not cluster with anything else until a much higher dissimilarity level. There is "chaining" within the cluster – i.e. sequential addition of entities one at a time – but at this level it is probably an indication of the homogeneity of the cluster.

The second sub-group – Entities 9 to 18 – is also probably meaningful, but it is looser. With such loose clusters, the apparent hierarchy within the cluster is more likely to be a reflection of the homogeneity of the group than a real hierarchy. The remaining entities – numbers 19 to 22 – are only weekly allied to the cluster, and may represent incomplete or exceptional data. These are termed singletons.

Figure 25 – Example Dendrogram
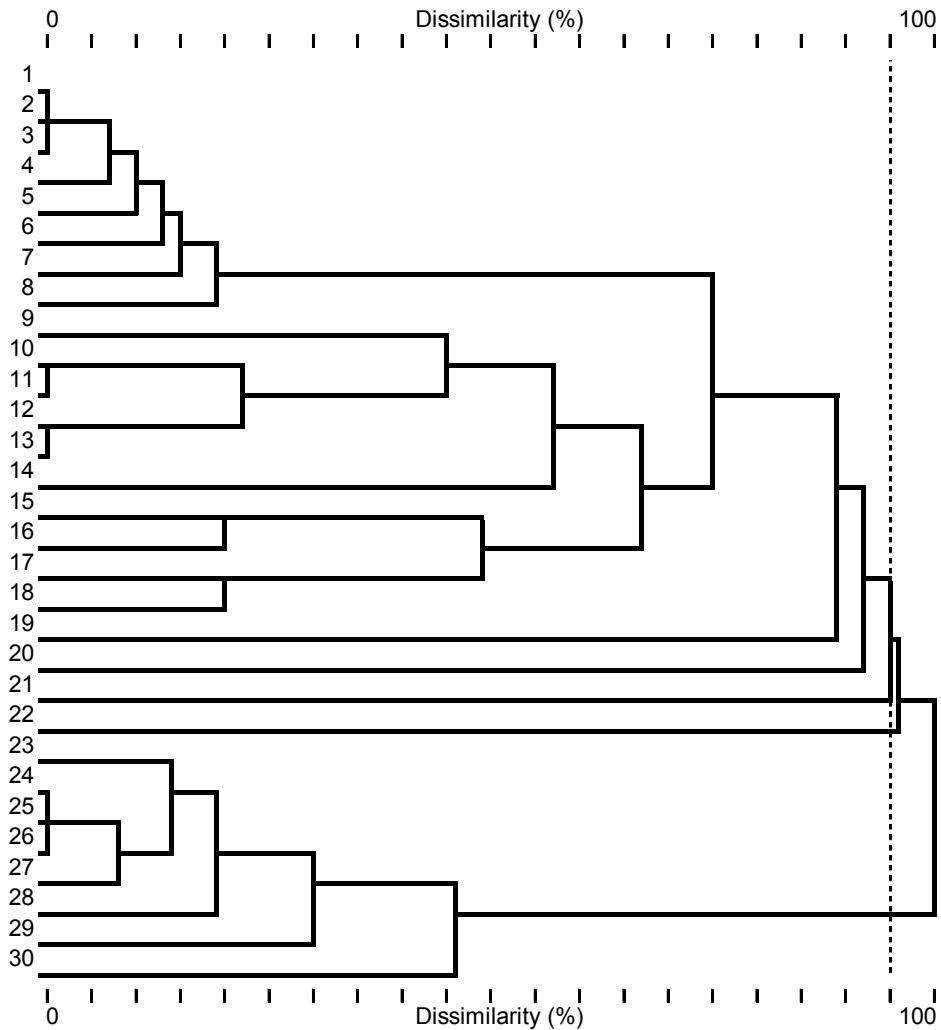
As mentioned at the start of this description, changing the cluster analysis parameters and algorithms affects the membership of the resultant clusters and the relationships between the clusters. If several difference analyses are run using the same data and the results remain unchanged, this suggests that the clusters and/or relationships are sound. This primarily applies to the hierarchical methods, single linkage being too crude. With folk play data, the membership of lower level sub-clusters seems to remain consistent as parameters and algorithms are changed, although there may be minor variations in their internal positioning. At higher levels, the interrelationships between clusters are more variable. Also, singletons

may change position erratically as parameters are changed. It is in evaluating the higher-level interrelationships and the nature of the singletons that intellectual effort is needed.

Key Attributes

This is a supplementary method that processes clustering information to determine which collections of attributes characterise the clusters and differentiate them from other clusters – see Figure 26.

In the key attribute tables used in this study, groups and entities are listed down the page, using indentation to indicate the relative clustering level. Entities are listed using their identifiers or titles, whereas groups are given arbitrarily numbered headings – e.g. Group 85. The key attributes determined for a given group are listed to the right of the group heading in the form of attribute identifiers. Attributes are not listed for the individual entities themselves because the lists would normally be too long to be of use, and in any case, the purpose of the table is to highlight attributes that typify groups rather than entities.

Methodology

In principle, the determination of the key diagnostic attributes of a cluster is simple. Taking the example of a cluster forming from just two entities, the key attributes are those attributes that are present in both the entities. For clusters containing n entities, the key attributes should be the attributes that are present in all n entities. This is the ideal, but in practice it is an unreasonable expectation, especially for large clusters. When classifying a new entity in any classification scheme, whether derived intellectually or numerically, it is normally only required that it possesses a certain minimum number of the attributes that characterise the particular class. This means that with a large cluster, one should accept that an individual entity might be missing a given key attribute, and that therefore somewhat less than 100% of the entities in the group as a whole would have that key attribute. Therefore a threshold was set – called the Commonality Threshold – defined as the percentage of entities in the cluster that contain a given attribute

in order for that attribute to be identified as diagnostic key. This threshold ought to be set close to 100% - say 95%. However, with orally transmitted data, the scope for the loss of attributes intuitively seems more probable, and therefore a lower threshold may be appropriate.

Figure 26 - Part of a Key Attribute Table

```
Group  213                                        10300 12520 12920
   Group  195                                      9830  9850  9870  9890  9910 10380 10390 10400 10410 19510
      The "Plouboys oR modes dancers" at Revesby
      Group  124                                   9090  9580  9590  9600  9640  9650  9660  9670  9830  9850  9870
         Group  113                                9090  9580  9590  9600  9640  9650  9660  9670  9830  9850  9870
            Bassingham Men's play 1823 Xmas
            Bassingham Childrens play Xmas 1823
            A Christmas Play [Broughton, Lincs.] - Text A
Group  205                                         10300 11130 11140 11160 11190 11440 12520
   Group  201                                      11090 11100 11130 11140 11160 11440 11450 11480
      Group  137                                   10220 11200 11240 11260 11280 11300 11380 11390 11400 11500 11510
         Recruiting Sergeant
         Swinderby Decr. 31st 1842 Play
      Group  188                                    3950 10300 11090 11100 12490 12520 12540 12550 12560 12920 12960
         Group  180                                10300 11090 11100 11130 11140 11160 11190 11440 11450 11480 11490
            Group  172                              3950 10950 11090 11100 11130 11140 11160 11180 11190 11440 11450
               Group  158                          11700 11720 45090
                  Plough Jacks' Play from Willoughton
                  Blidworth Plough Bullocking Play, 1896
               Group  162                           3950 10300 10310 10330 10950 11090 11100 11130 11140 11160 11180
                  Group  136                        10950 11090 11100 11130 11140 11160 11180 11220 11440 11450 11480
                     Group  128                     10310 10330 11180 11480 11490 11650 11710 11890 11900 12230 12240
                        Group  119                  11180 11210 11220 11670 11740 11780 11810 11830 11870 11880 11890
                           Group  116              11740 11750 11770 11780 11800 11810 11830 11910 11930 11950 11960
                              Cropwell, Notts. Ploughboys' Play
                              Plough Jagg's Play : Bassingham
                              The Plough Boys (from Tollerton, Nottinghamshire)
                              Play from Bulby, Lincs.
                              A Plough Monday Play from Clayworth, Notts.
                           Group  132              11420 11970 11980 11990 12000 12620 12630 12650 12670 44690 44700
                              North Muskham, Notts. - Plough Monday Play
                              Jerusalem, Lincs., Plough Play
                  Group  147                       29120
                     Kirton-in-Lindsey Plough-Jags Play
                     The "Plough Jacks'" Play from Kirmington, Lincs.
                  Group  143                       23600
                     Lincolnshire Plough Jags play
                     Another Version of a Plough Monday Play from Clayworth, Notts.
            Group  155                             42260 42270
               Plough-Jags' Ditties from North Lincolnshire
               Hibaldstow Ploughboys' Play
```

In addition to an attribute being common to all members of a cluster, in a well-defined cluster one would also like the attribute to be unique to that cluster. Thus not only does it help define the cluster but also to differentiate it from other clusters. Contrariwise, if an attribute occurs throughout the data collection, while its ubiquity in a given cluster may truly be part of that cluster's definition, it does not serve to differentiate it from other clusters. To facilitate the exclusion of such ubiquitous attributes, if required, an Exclusivity Threshold was provided. This is defined as the minimum percentage of all occurrences of an attribute that must be present in a cluster for it to be a key attribute of that cluster. Using a value of or near 100% for this threshold requires valid attributes to be unique to their clusters,

whereas a value of zero removes the threshold as a constraint. The number and size of meaningful clusters influence the effects of threshold values inbetween. The more clusters there are, the lower the Exclusivity Threshold should be, and vice versa.

Interpretation

Setting suitable threshold values is difficult for folk plays because of the variable nature of the texts and the uncertainties associated with them. Ideally, one would use high values for both thresholds – say 95% - but the result would be that very few diagnostic keys would be found except perhaps for some of the smaller clusters. Lowering one or both thresholds increases the number of keys found, although it is often the case anyway that some clusters will have no keys at all. With a low Commonality Threshold and a high Exclusivity Threshold, there is a tendency for the large general clusters to have a relatively large number of keys, while the smaller detailed clusters have few. With a high Commonality Threshold and a low Exclusivity Threshold the reverse is true.

The most practical approach was found to be to work iteratively by experimentation. Starting first with a high commonality threshold and a zero exclusivity threshold, the commonality was lowered until it was felt that sufficient key attributes were being presented for the main clusters. Then, keeping the commonality fixed at this level, the exclusivity was raised until the attribute lists for lower level clusters had been reduced to a useful size. Of course the number attributes that could be regarded as sufficient and/or useful is subjective. In this study, the target was six to twelve key attributes per cluster. Following trials, it was found that useful initial values for the thresholds for folk play texts are 67% for Commonality and 33% for Exclusivity.[20]

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[20] With other data types, such as document keywords and chemical structure keys, a Commonality Threshold of 25% to 30% would probably be appropriate (P.Willett, Personal communication).

Provenance Profiles

These are charts that are based on one specific text, showing which of its lines appear in the other texts in the database – see Figure 27. These help to reveal potential ancestral sources for the text, as well as its possible descendants.

Methodology

A provenance profile is essentially an XY scatter chart. It consists of a grid with a list of all the plays labelling the columns along the top of the graph (the X-axis), and all the lines of the specific play being analysed labelling the rows down the left-hand side (the Y-axis). The plays are listed along the X-axis in chronological order, and the dialogue lines are listed top to bottom in the sequence they occur in the text being analysed. Wherever a given play contains a given line, the square at the intersection of the play column and the text row is shaded in colour. It follows from this that all the squares in the column for text being analysed are shaded, and the text therefore appears as a solid vertical line.

For this study, the plotting of provenance profiles was automated using macros written for the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet program, and data in the TextBase database. The standard line identifiers (Std.IDs) were used to check if lines matched. More particularly, the core of the Std.IDs was used - i.e. Integer(Std.ID/10). This meant that, where appropriate, all variants of a line were matched and plotted in the graph. To distinguish between the variants, different colours were used for the shading. For instance, Std.ID 2490 - "Don't you think I'm a jolly old man" was shaded in black, whereas Std.ID 2495 - "And I think myself a jolly old man" was shaded in red. The choice of colour for the shading was based on the final digit of the Std.ID. Thus "0" was always black, "5" was always red, and so forth.

The only methodological complication concerned the chronological order of the plays, caused by some texts having ranges of possible dates rather than precise dates. The program therefore provided options to use the earliest available dates,

Figure 27 - Example Provenance Profile
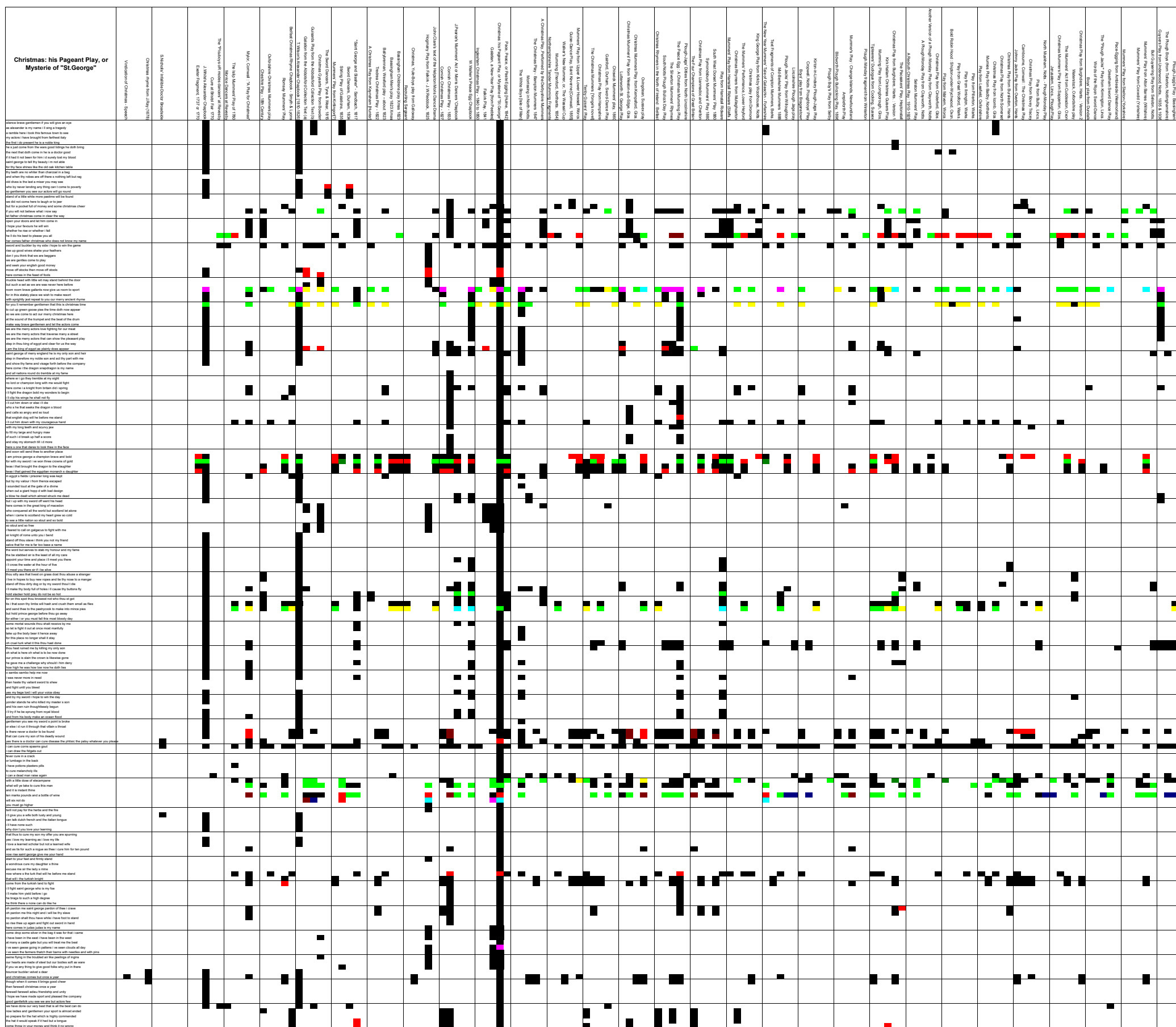
the latest dates, or the mid-point between the two. In practice, however, the earliest dates were used for most analyses

Interpretation

As already mentioned, the text being analysed - the study text - appears in the provenance profile as a solid vertical line. Any other text that also appears as a vertical line would seem to be identical to the study text. In fact this is an oversimplification. Firstly, the other text may have additional lines that are not in the study text and therefore do not appear on the chart. Also, even if the collection of shared lines may be identical, there is no guarantee that they will be in the same order in both texts. In practice, it is rare to see complete solid lines for other texts. At best there may be an almost solid line with occasional gaps where lines are missing in the other text. More commonly, other texts will have disjointed fragments of vertical lines with a scattering of isolated squares or pairs. Generally speaking, the more vertical fragments and squares a text has, the more similar it is to the study text.

Typically, only a few texts exhibit any significant similarity through such vertical fragments. The rest may have an apparently random scattering of matched squares or no matching lines at all. However, one phenomenon can be observed amongst these other texts. Horizontal alignments of lines may be seen. These indicate lines that are ubiquitous in the *genre*, and arguably define it. Examples are lines from the Doctor's scenes, Beelzebub's lines, etc.

These charts are particularly useful for identifying the sources used in texts compiled from more than one earlier script. Source texts should, of course, appear to the left of the study text. There is often one dominant source text, which tends to appear as a disjointed vertical line. The other source texts typically have vertical line segments that fill the gaps left by the other sources. There may or may not be overlaps between the source texts. In the above chart, this technique has been applied to the text published by Henry Slight (1842), which he states was compiled from unspecified "black letter" sources. The provenance profile for the Slight text suggests that it was compiled from two texts that were published in

W.Hone's *Every-Day Book* (1826) - an abridged transcript of an *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook and a Scottish play from J.Reddock - plus a third text published by W.Sandys (1833).

Mesa Graphs

These scatter graphs extend the concepts used in the provenance profiles of single texts to cover the complete database – see Figure 28. These help reveal key source texts, and patterns of textual evolution.

Mesa graphs are novel to this study. They are named after early versions of the graphs, which were inverted relative to the final form described here. These inverted graphs resembled the mesas of the Arizona Desert, as featured in classical Western films. At first used in a jocular fashion, in the absence of a succinct descriptive term, the name stuck.

Methodology

In essence, the method for plotting these graphs is the same as for provenance profiles. As before, the columns of the grid are labelled along the top of the graph with a chronological list of all the plays. Similarly, the rows are labelled with dialogue lines, and squares in the grid are coloured in the same way, where a given line appears in a particular play. The difference lies in the order of the lines. Starting at the top left, all the lines from the first play are listed down the page. Any additional lines that appear in the second text, but not in the first, are then listed, followed by lines that appear in the third text but not the first two, and so on. Notwithstanding any gaps, all lines are listed in the order they appear in their respective texts.

With a large database of texts, the above method has the propensity to generate a very long graph. For example, speaking in round figures, when the database used in this study contained 13,000 lines, there were 5,300 distinct line types. Each of these line types would be represented by a row in the mesa graph. Even if the height of the rows were very much compressed, a chart of over 5,000 rows would be too unmanageable for visual analysis. However, as mentioned

Figure 28 - Example Mesa Graph
(For a larger version, see Figure 38)
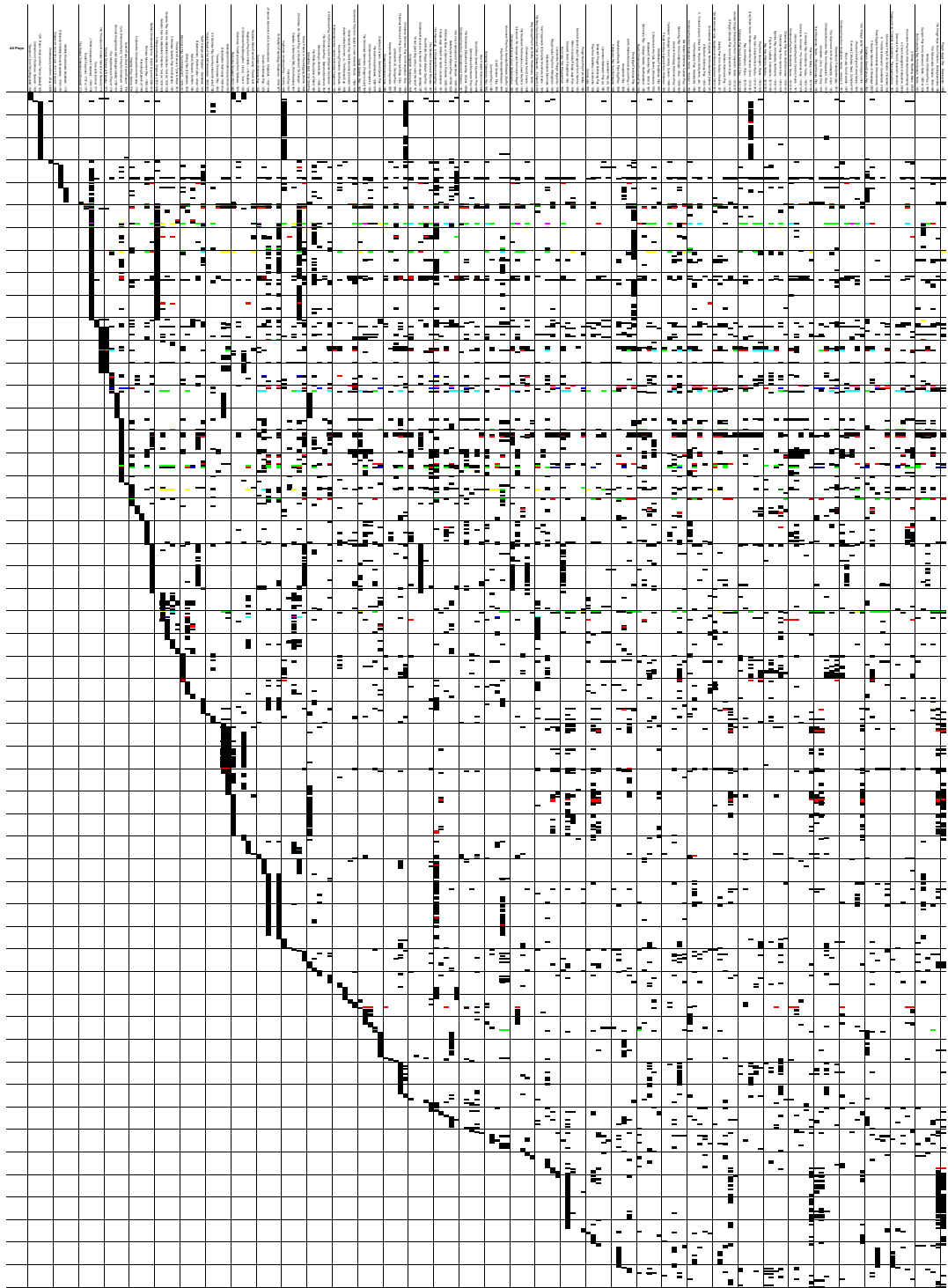
earlier, a very large number of lines only appear in one or two texts. As the point of these charts is to permit the detection of patterns across different texts, such lines are of little or no use. In the example database, 3,200 lines (60%) only occurred in one text, and a further 1,050 lines (20%) only occurred in two texts. Therefore, only about 1,000 lines (20%) occurred in more than two texts. By considering only lines that occur three or more times (or some higher threshold), the chart can be made to fit onto a single large sheet and still be usable.

In the Microsoft Excel implementation of this method (and in the related clustered mesa graphs and trellis graphs described below), the row height was reduced until the whole graph could be printed out on one page. While this meant that the legends for lines could not be read on paper, nor indeed in the main screen display, it was possible to read the line in the Excel formula bar for whichever square was highlighted by the cursor. In some cases, this approach was exploited further by also putting the relevant text line in all the squares that had been coloured in the graph. Even at full row height these lines could not be read in the main graph, because the shading obliterated them. However they could still be read in the Excel formula bar, and this feature could be used, for instance, to examine how lines vary within a given band. It was important to place space characters in all the unshaded squares, otherwise the text lines would have "bled" into neighbouring squares, rendering the chart illegible.

Interpretation

The dominant feature of the chart is a staggered line - the outline - running roughly from the top left of the graph towards the bottom right. The chart is blank to the left of this outline. An individual square forming part of the outline represents the oldest occurrence of a given line. As such, it may be the original source of the line, or hopefully at least a near descendant of it. It follows therefore that the more squares that a given text has in the outline, the more lines that that text, or a near ancestor, has contributed to the folk play corpus. In other words, key texts provide the longer vertical segments of the outline. Conversely,

a text may contribute no new material at all, or perhaps a few variant or localised lines, in which case it creates a step in the outline.

Features within the body of the chart - to the right of the outline - can be interpreted in the same way as the provenance profiles of single texts. There are three differences however. Firstly, if a line occurrence threshold has been used to exclude infrequent lines, the lines of a given play may not all be represented. Secondly, the squares for a particular text are unlikely to appear as a continuous vertical line, even if all the lines are present. Instead the line is likely to be broken into fragments. Some fragments might indeed be relatively long and more or less intact, but rectangles representing isolated lines and couplets are ubiquitous, and can perhaps be regarded as "noise". Lastly, the lines of a given play are unlikely to appear in the chart in the order they appear in the text.

Clustered Mesa Graphs

In the original mesa graphs, the texts are arranged across the top chronologically. However, in clustered mesa graphs, the texts are rearranged to match the order they appear in a cluster analysis dendrogram – see Figure 29. These graphs help consolidate hypotheses and results regarding key texts, their interrelationships and evolution.

Methodology

There are three stages to the production of a clustered mesa graph. Firstly, a normal mesa graph is created, as already described. Secondly, a cluster analysis is run using the same set of source texts, and whatever parameters and algorithms are felt to be appropriate. Thirdly, the order of texts in the mesa graph is changed to match the order of texts in the dendrogram. Note that during this process, whole columns of data are moved, not just the text labels. In addition to adjusting the order of the texts, vertical borderlines are added at the boundaries between clusters, as determined using the Mean Similarity Coefficient or Mean Dissimilarity Coefficient on the dendrogram.

Figure 29 - Example Clustered Mesa Graph

Interpretation

In comparing a clustered mesa graph with its unclustered counterpart, two visual differences are apparent. Firstly, the irregular diagonal dividing line is no longer present. Secondly, blocks of shaded squares occur in various positions on the graph. Looking more closely at these blocks, they tend to be based on the texts that formed the longer segments in the original mesa graph outline. Furthermore, because the order of texts within the clusters remains roughly chronological, the founding text often forms a solid line at the left of the block, with the others in the block exhibiting progressively more gaps as one moves further to the right. This reinforces the idea that the mesa outline text represents either the original text or a close descendant for the relevant cluster. Progressive gaps represent a gradual loss of lines over time, which could be for a variety of reasons. On the other hand, some mesa outline texts either do not seem to be associated with blocks or appear in the middle of loose cluster blocks. Such texts are probably less significant, and their position may indicate that they derive from some much earlier text.

In a few cases, it can be seen that two or more blocks are associated with a given mesa graph outline text, appearing side by side. This may indicate re-use of portions of text in a new version and/or the hybridisation of two texts. Conversely, some text clusters also have two or more blocks, appearing one above the other. These probably represent significant permanent extensions to or hybridisation of an original version. In fact these multiple blocks tend to appear in threes, at three corners of a right-angled triangle, which is consistent with the extension or hybridisation interpretation.

The blocks generally consolidate many of the alignments that are seen in the unclustered mesa graphs. However, a significant number of scattered alignments remain.

Trellis Graphs

Trellis graphs take clustered mesa graphs one stage further, in that not only are the texts arranged in the order resulting from cluster analysis, but the lines are also

arranged in the order resulting from a converse cluster analysis (i.e. lines clustered on the basis of the texts that contain them) – see Figure 30. These graphs reinforce the visualisation of the clusters.

Methodology

The first stage in producing a trellis graph is to determine the order of the texts and lines that are to appear along the axes. This is done running two cluster analyses, one for the texts, and the other the converse analysis for the lines. These must be run using the same set of texts, and preferably using similar parameters and algorithms. A minimum line occurrence threshold – typically 3 - would normally be used. The texts are then listed across the top of the page in the order that they appear in the text dendrogram, and the lines are likewise listed down the page in the order that they appear in the lines dendrogram. As with provenance profiles and mesa graphs, a square in the grid is shaded wherever the play column and the line row intersect for a given data point. Colour coding is used for line variants as before. Also, vertical and horizontal borderlines are added to separate play and line clusters respectively, again using the mean dissimilarity coefficient as the basis for demarcating clusters.

Interpretation

Trellis graphs have the same blocky structure as clustered mesa graphs. There are two differences. Firstly, the blocks appear looser, generally with small gaps throughout, and secondly, nearly all of the scattered alignments have been brought together. Nonetheless, there is a sprinkling of odd isolated squares all over the graph, which for most purposes can be ignored as background "noise".

Whereas with clustered mesa graphs, the blocks highlight the importance of a particular individual text, in trellis graphs, the blocks represent a discrete version in which possibly two or more texts might be equally prominent. This suggests that there was an unknown original text for the version, of which the key texts are near descendants.

Figure 30 - Example Trellis Graph

More so than in the clustered mesa graphs, trellis graph blocks may abut one another, and such configurations could relate to the evolution of the texts. With an L-shaped configuration of blocks in any orientation, the lines represented by the horizontal bar could represent an original text to which the lines represented by the vertical bar have been added. Conversely, the full height of the vertical bar could represent an original text, which has then been significantly and permanently pruned down to a smaller text, represented by the horizontal bar. Another interesting configuration is a Z-shape – that is to say two horizontal blocks that overlap or two vertical bocks that overlap. This could result from the hybridisation of two texts, which are represented by the lines in the overhanging attachments.

Graphical Comparison of Narrative Sequence

This technique plots a graph of the lines that are common to two texts to reveal how similar their narrative sequences are. It also calculates a numerical measure of that similarity. Such graphs were used in my paper on J.H.Ewing's *The Peace Egg* and the Mummies' plays from St. Kitts and Nevis. (P.Millington, 1996).

Methodology

This graph is another form of XY scatter chart. The X- and Y-axes represent the line numbers of the two play texts being compared, with the line numbers of one text running left to right along the X-axis (text X), and the other text running bottom to top on the Y-axis (Text Y). Taking the play on the X-axis, if a line (say line number 5), has a matching line in the other text (say line number 12), a point is plotted in the body of the graph at the appropriate intersection (in this case position 5,12). If a line in text X (say line number 20) has no equivalent in text Y, the point is plotted on the X-axis (in this case at position (20,0), which is the same as having the text Y line being line number zero. Likewise, if a line in text Y (say line number 24) does appear in text X, it is plotted on the Y-axis (in this case at position 0,24).

Figure 31 - Example Comparison of Narrative Sequence - All Lines
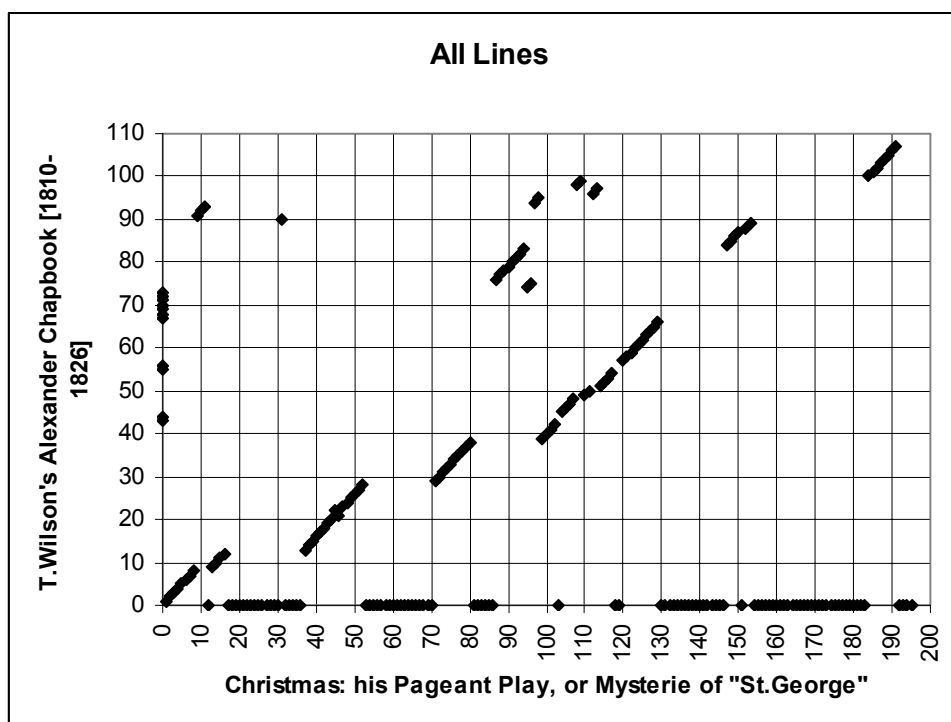
It is important to ensure that lines are consistently defined. Thus, taking the common couplet *versus* quatrain problem, the corresponding lines in both texts need to be treated either as couplets or as quatrains, but not a mix of the two. New sequential line numbers are assigned to each text once the layout of lines has been standardised. In this study, couplets were preferred, but an occasional quatrain was needed where a line had been split and additional lines inserted in the gap.

The main complication that may be encountered is the repetition of lines in one or both texts. In this case, it is possible for a line from one text to have two more lines from the other text plotted against it, instead of the usual one. However, in cases where the repetition occurs in both texts, it may be more appropriate to plot the first occurrence in one text against the first occurrence in the other text, rather than against both occurrences, and similarly with the second and any subsequent occurrences.

Interpretation

When two identical texts are compared using this method, the result is a row of dots along a diagonal axis leading from the origin at the bottom left to the top right of the chart. Any lines or speeches that are transposed result in dots being displaced away from the diagonal axis. In the case of transposed speeches, the dots for the transposed speech will form a line of dots that runs parallel to the main diagonal axis. If there are omissions and/or insertions in one text relative to the other, a diagonal line may still be evident, but there will be gaps, and possibly the ends of the lines will be displaced some distance away from their respective corners.

Repeated lines will appear as a displaced configuration of points that shadows a similar configuration in the main sequence. If there are repeats in both texts, these will manifest themselves as similar configurations of points appearing at the four corners of a rectangle.

Conformity Index

It is possible to calculate a numerical measure of the degree to which the narrative sequences of the two texts conform. The usefulness of the conformity index is that it can be used to distinguish between two pairs of texts that are otherwise identical in terms of the number of common lines. This is calculated as follows:

- Firstly, all the points representing unmatched lines are removed from the graph and the gaps on the X- and Y-axes closed up, as in Figure 32.

- Secondly, taking all possible pairs of adjacent points on one axis, the number of cases where the increment on the other axis is +1 is counted. Such line pairs are in sequence with each other.

Figure 32 –Example Comparison of Narrative Sequence - Matches Only
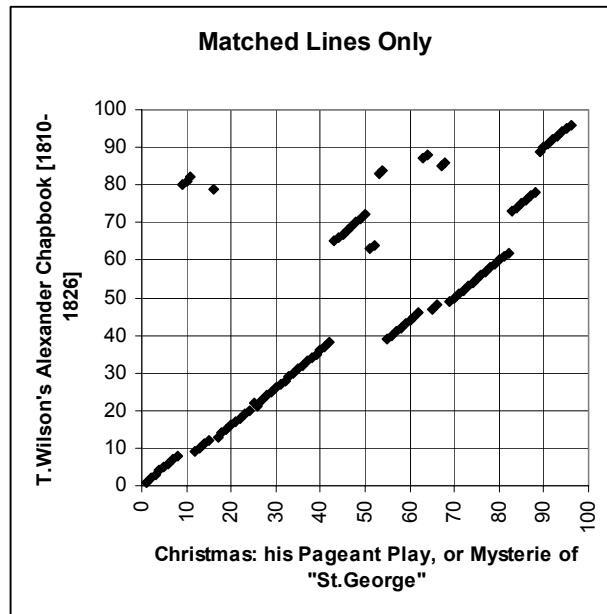
- Lastly, for a graph where *n* matched lines are plotted, the maximum possible number of adjacent pairs that are in sequence with each other is *n*-1. Therefore the conformity index can be calculated using the formula:

Conformity Index = Number of in-sequence pairs / (*n* - 1)

It is convenient to express this as a percentage.

Where there are a small number of lines in common, there is less scope for transpositions. Therefore there is a general tendency for pairs of plays with low similarity to have a high conformity index, and for pairs with high similarities to have somewhat lower conformity indices. Consequently, it is significant if a given pair of plays exhibit both high similarity and a high conformity index, suggesting that one may have been copied from the other. The sources proposed for Henry Slight's compiled text may be used as an example. The *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook text as published in Hone (1826) has a similarity of 64% and a conformity index of 82%. Conversely, J.Reddock's text from Falkirk has a similarity of only 25%, but a conformity index of 93%, and the W.Sandys 1833 text has a similarity of 42% and a conformity index of 75%. With both high

similarity and conformity index, it seems likely that the Alexander chapbook text was the starting point for Slight's compilation.

Distribution Maps

Plotting texts that share common features on a map can reveal whether or not there is any regional zoning. Multiple features can be plotted on the same map to illustrate regional differences or similarities. Plotting the clusters determined by cluster analysis is perhaps the ultimate case. If the clusters represent regional variations, this should become evident on the distribution maps.

Distribution maps have been used in past folk play studies. E.C.Cawte et al (1967, pp.32, 34) used them very broadly to illustrate the distribution of their three main types of play in Great Britain and Ireland. These were relatively successful in showing the localised nature of the plough plays and sword dance plays. According to Mike Preston (1977a, pp.123,131-132), he used his database of texts to print a large number of distribution maps of various characters, speeches and other features. However, he only published two of these – Father Christmas *versus* Old Dame Jane, and the Big Head speech. Lastly, I published a map of Nottinghamshire folk plays to show how the two distinct groups of casts identified by cluster analysis corresponded to discrete geographical distributions (P.T.Millington, 1988, p.40).

Methodology

It is only possible to plot maps for plays from specific locations, because they have geographical coordinates – either latitude and longitude, or in the case of the British Isles, grid references. Therefore, it is unfortunately not possible to plot plays that are attributed generally to a county or region. Consequently, the first step has to be to eliminate such texts from consideration. The next step is to select the required plays, and if two or more characteristics are being plotted, the plays should also be assigned to their relevant class, each class being represented by a different symbol or letter.

For this study, distribution maps are plotted using Microsoft Excel. The height and width of the spreadsheet cells are set so that cells are square. Each cell represents a 10km grid square. Horizontal and vertical borders are drawn at 100km intervals to demarcate the National Grid 100km squares. An outline of the British Isles has been created by placing borderlines on one or more edges of the squares that represent the coast, as determined from Ordnance Survey maps. The result is a rough, jagged, but recognisable outline map. The resolution of the graphs is 10km, therefore only two-figure grid references are used – i.e. the letters of the 100km square plus two figures representing the relevant 10km grid square. A lookup table for the 100km letter references is used within an Excel macro to convert map references to coordinates on the Excel grid. The list of items to be plotted is placed on a separate worksheet, along with their grid references. Here, the appropriate letters or symbols are assigned and a key created. Finally, an Excel macro plots the points on the outline map. In some cases, a given play or 10km grid square may have two or more key assignments. In these cases, both letters are plotted in the square side by side.

Interpretation

The aim of plotting a distribution is usually to see if one or more characteristics are regional in nature or more general. Therefore, when plotting one characteristic only, one would expect to see points concentrated in one part of the map, with the remainder blank. With two or more characteristics, one would hope that their points would be concentrated in different parts of the map. However, it is not unusual to find an area of overlap where two regions meet. Of course, one characteristic could be regional and the other general, in which case the localised pattern will be overlain on a national scattering of points for the general attribute. It sometimes helps to draw a line around each class of points. This can reinforce the localised nature of a distribution and/or highlight the degree of overlap between two distributions.

The validity of regional distributions depends on the geographical coverage of the database being uniform and/or complete. In this study it is recognised that the

Figure 33 - Example Distribution Map - Here / In comes I...
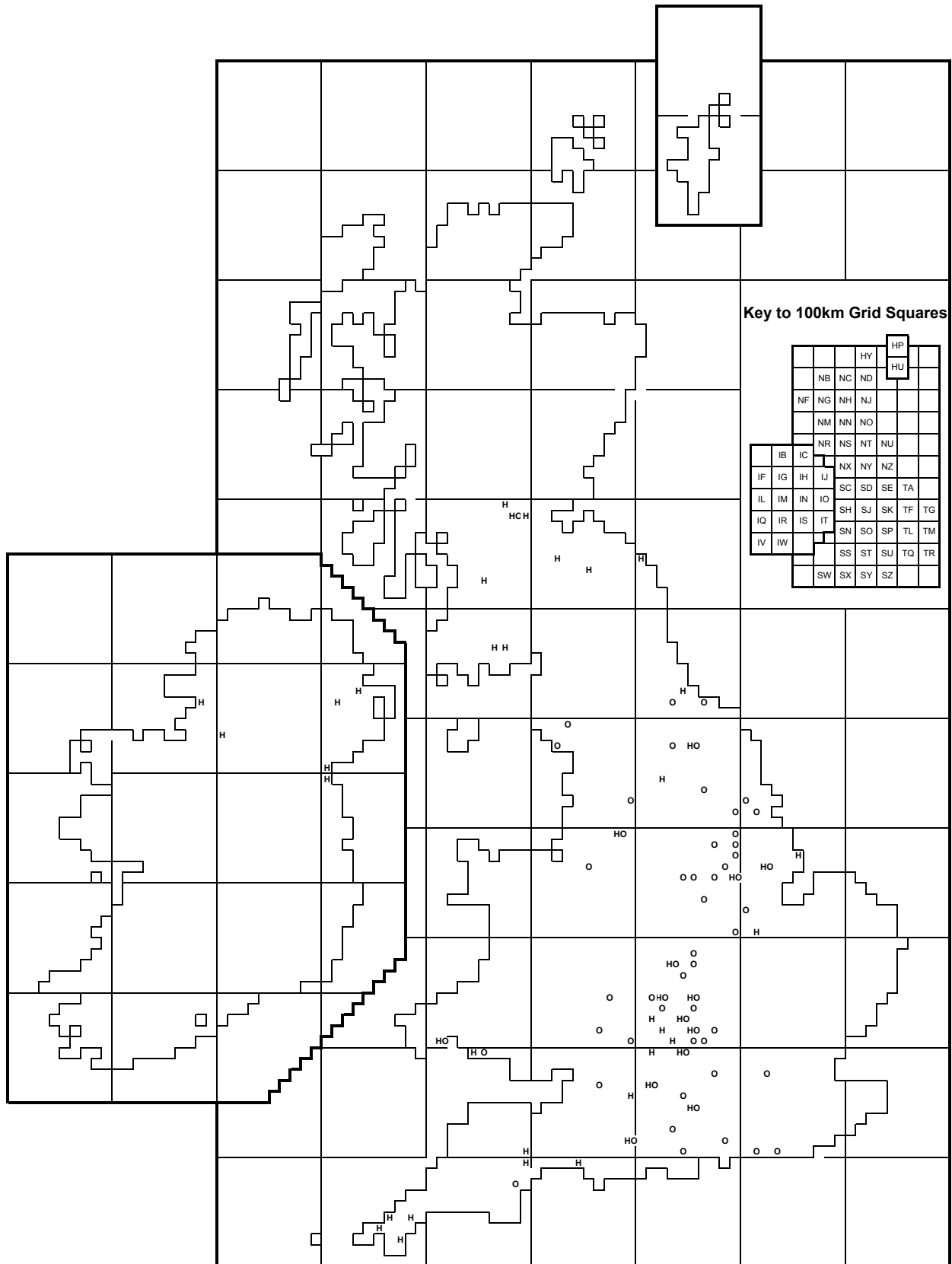
Key to 100km Grid Squares

Key

H = Here comes I…
O = In comes I…

geographical coverage of the database is somewhat heterogeneous, although attempts have been made to seek out appropriate texts that plug the gaps. With an incomplete map, two distinct distributions may appear that seem to be mutually exclusive. However, if there is an area in between that has little or no coverage, it is possible that this could represent an area overlap. Therefore, while the regional observations may still be meaningful, they must come with a caveat regarding a potentially unrepresented overlap.

"What if?" Investigations

Because the above techniques are automated, it is relatively easy to make temporary experimental changes to the data and re-run analyses to make new observations, test hypotheses, and so on.

Much can be achieved by selecting or excluding data. I have already explained the reasoning behind the exclusion of lines that only occur once or twice in the database, and the exclusion of certain classes of text such as duplicates, fragmentary texts, literary parallels, etc. One could make other exclusions of a speculatory nature. For instance all the chapbooks could be excluded from the analysis. Alternatively, selections of specific subsets could be made, for instance, all texts dated before 1900, all plays containing a given character or speech, all texts in a given cluster, and so forth, for more detailed analysis.

With mesa graphs, it is also possible to experiment with the dates of texts to see how this affects the graph. Firstly, one could experiment with the dates of those texts whose age is uncertain, seeing what the effects may be of using the earliest or latest possible date for the text, or some date in between. Secondly, if it is suspected that a given text is very similar to a hypothetical earlier ancestor, an appropriately older date could be temporarily assigned to the text to see what happens. If this is successful, some of the scattered horizontal features of the graph ought to be brought together into a consolidated block.

A test of validity for the cluster analyses and trellis graphs could be to generate a large number of hypothetical texts using randomly selected lines, and then analyse them. If the results exhibit similar features to the results for real data, the real results cannot be valid.

Lastly, another experiment could be to compile a hypothetical text – for instance to represent a "typical" play in a cluster – and add that to the analysis to see what happens.

Observations and results from my analyses are described and discussed in the next chapter.

National Centre for English Cultural Tradition

University of Sheffield

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH FOLK PLAYS

Volume 2

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.

Peter Thomas Millington

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DISCUSSION OF TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Textual Analysis Results

The final text database used for this study comprises 181 items, of which 142 were selected for cluster analysis according to the criteria detailed earlier. These are listed in Appendix H. The full database has 17,137 raw lines of text, becoming 15,670 lines, once split lines have been consolidated. There are 5,677 different line types, or 5,804 types if variations are treated separately. Of these, 3,518 (61%) occur only once, and a further 1056 (18%) only appear twice. Therefore, as explained earlier, only line types that occurred three or more times were included in analyses.

The geographical distribution of plays in the database is shown in Maps 1 and 2, although some plays cannot be shown because their locations are given as counties or districts rather than specific towns and villages. Map 1 is coded to show the classification of the plays, according to the scheme described in *English Ritual Drama* (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967). This map is similar to the maps given by Cawte et al (pp.32,34), but with fewer data points.

The plays in Map 2 are coded according to the following broad date bands – dates being the earlier of; date of performance, recording or publication:

- Up to the 1820s – i.e. roughly up to and including W.Hone's *Every-day Book* (1827)

- 1830s to the 1880s – i.e. pre-Ordish

- 1890s onwards – i.e. T.F.Ordish and E.K Chambers onwards.

The point to note about this map is that the earliest plays are distributed throughout the British Isles, and this would have even been the case if an earlier category for 18th-century plays had been used. Indeed distribution maps provide no obvious historical centre where the plays might have arisen, and from which

they may have been dispersed. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn is that the plays were dispersed rapidly very early on in their recorded history. Similarly, because all of the recognised sub-types (and some possible new sub-types) are represented among the earliest plays, it follows that this differentiation also took place early on in their recorded history.

Final Cluster Analyses

A wide variety of cluster analyses, using different settings, were run on the selection to see what groupings emerged and to see if they could be reproduced under different conditions. The cluster analyses were successful in that most settings identified the same broad groups. What is more, these results were robust. Analyses were run at various times while the database was being built, once about 75 texts had been entered. These early analyses identified the same broad groups, and they remained intact as further texts were added. This shows that the results are not an artefact of using a particular set of texts that might change radically with a different selection.

While the constituents of the broad clusters were reproducible, the interrelationships between these clusters, as evidenced by the dendrograms, were somewhat variable. A few relationships appeared to be stable, whereas others could not be relied on. Also, there are a few "awkward" texts – such as the Symondsbury play - that formed singletons or small "maverick" clusters, that tacked themselves on erratically to the main clusters.

All three line similarity measures produced comparable results, although the use of calculated line similarities resulted in looser clusters, and the results were less clear than with the other measures. Of the dissimilarity measures for entities (i.e. texts), number of line differences proved unsatisfactory because of a tendency to chaining, probably under the influence of the differences in size of texts. This measure was therefore not used. The performance of the other two measures depended on whether texts or lines were being analysed. For texts, similarity

Map 1 - Conventional Classification of Plays Selected for Analysis - After E.C.Cawte et al (1967)

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HY	HP		
				HU		
	NB	NC	ND			
NF	NG	NH	NJ			
	NM	NN	NO			
		NR	NS	NT	NU	
IB	IC		NX	NY	NZ	
IF	IG	IH	IJ			
				SC	SD	SE	TA
IL	IM	IN	IO			
				SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT			
				SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW		SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
			SW	SX	SY	SZ
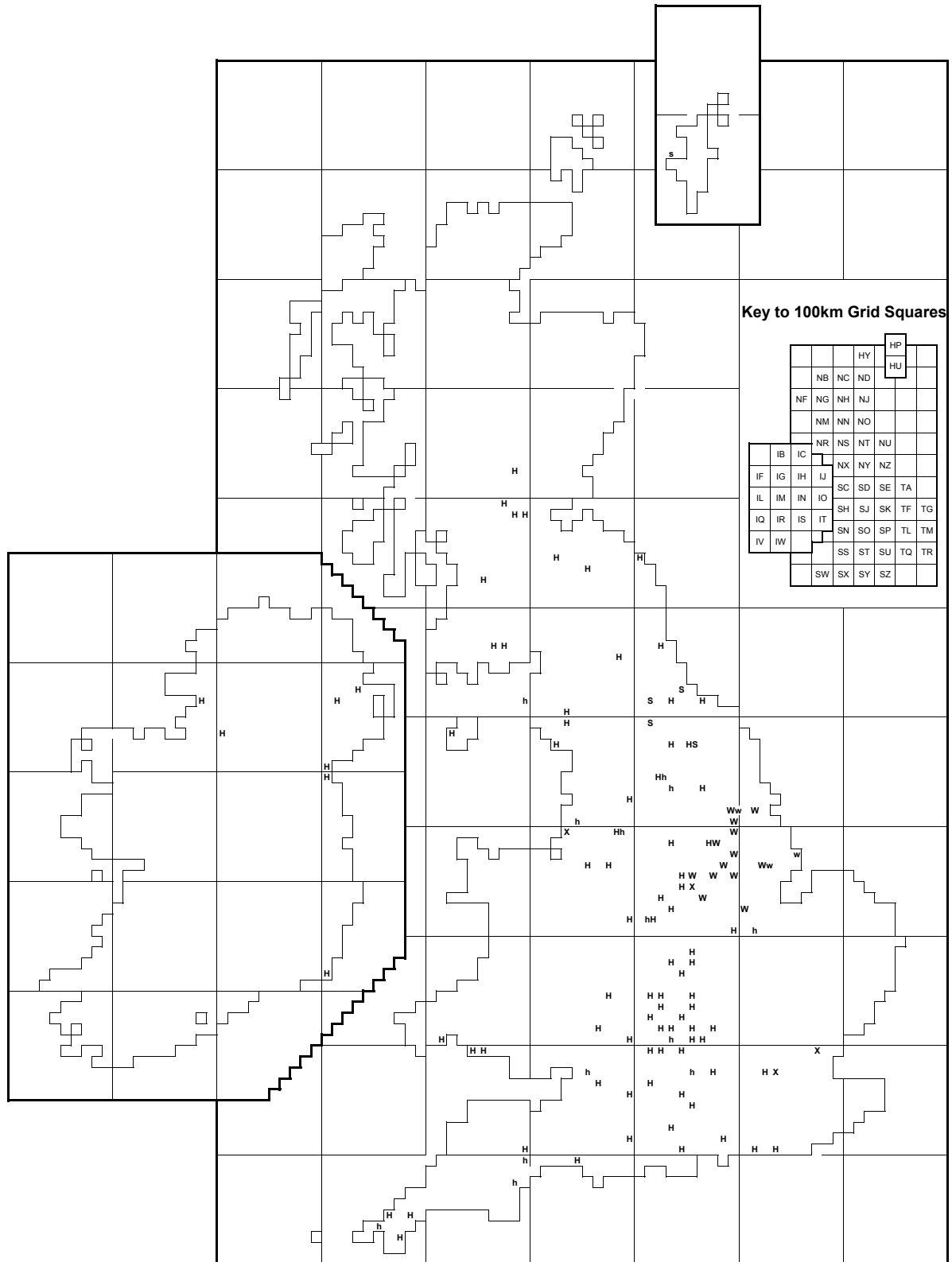
Key

H =	Hero/Combat Plays	**h** =	Unanalysed fragments, duplicates, etc
W =	Wooing or Plough Plays	**w** =	" " " "
S =	Sword Dance Plays	**s** =	" " " "
X =	Literary & Ballad Parallels (Not covered by E.C.Cawte et al, 1967)		

Map 2 - Approximate Dates of Plays - Excluding Literary Ballad Parallels
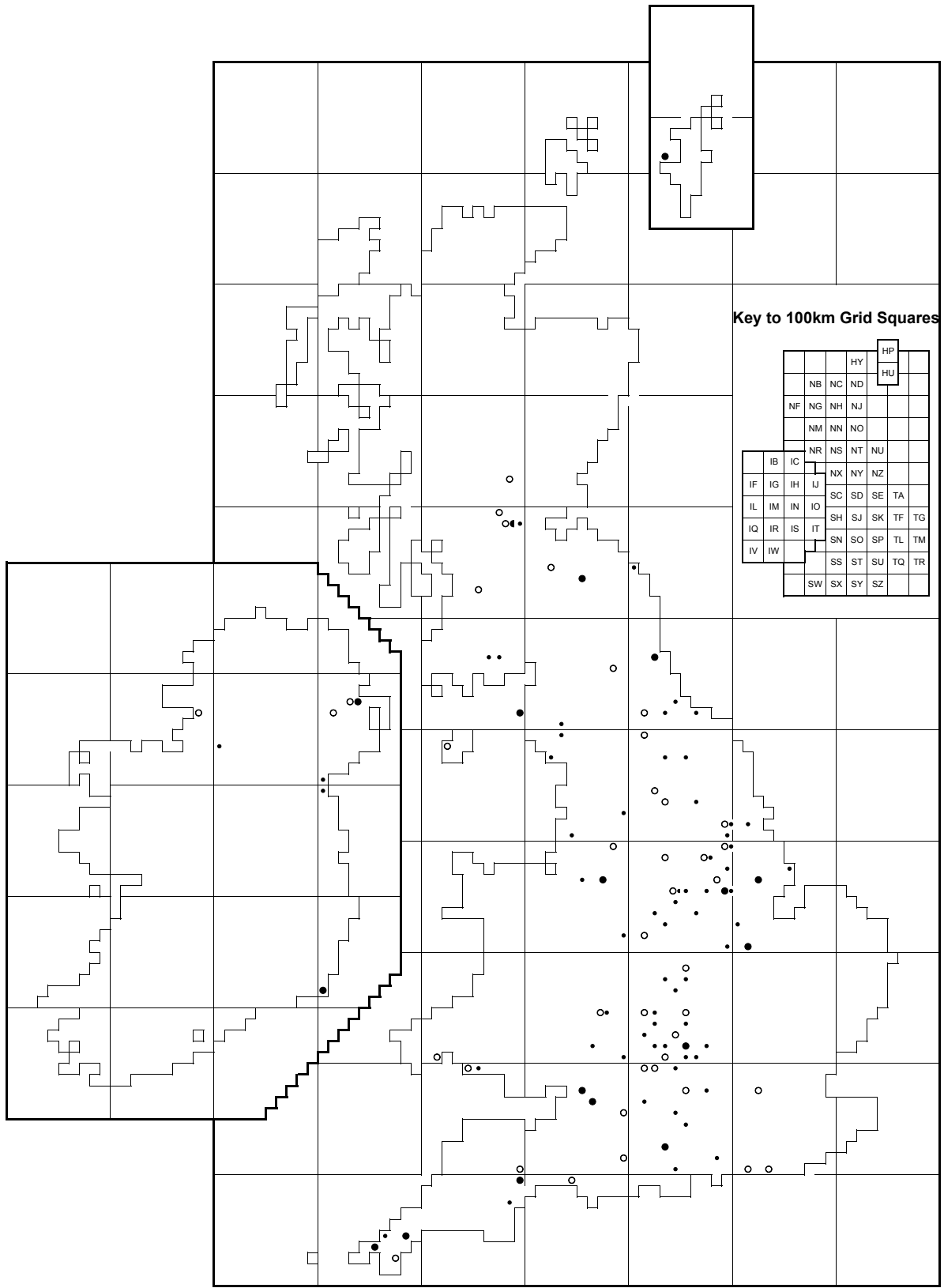
Key to 100km Grid Squares

				HY	HP		
		NB	NC	ND	HU		
	NF	NG	NH	NJ			
	NM	NN	NO				
		NR	NS	NT	NU		
IB	IC	NX	NY	NZ			
IF	IG	IH	IJ				
IL	IM	IN	IO	SC	SD	SE	TA
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IV	IW			SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
				SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ	

Key

● = Up to the 1820s
○ = 1830s to 1880s
· = 1890s onwards

ratios produced tighter and more distinct clusters that normal similarity, although the contents of the groups and their hierarchy were broadly the same. However, for lines, the opposite was true. Because many line types occur a small number of times, a large number of artificially high similarity ratios will have been calculated when these were compared with more frequently occurring lines. The resulting clusters for lines therefore lacked any correlation with the text clusters (of which more later), and were therefore of no use. Because it had been decided that the same clustering parameters should be used for both texts and lines, this unfortunately meant that similarity ratios had to be discarded.

Of the clustering techniques, single linkage was discarded because chaining was so extensive as to generate a single non-hierarchical cluster for the whole database. Average linkage was a little better, whether within and between groups or between groups only. Average linkage produced hierarchical clusters, but typically only two or three main text clusters were generated. Gaussian linkage produced the best results in that a reasonable number of hierarchical clusters were identified for texts. Whether the clustering was within and between groups or between groups only, similar clusters were identified, but the clusters were tighter when the linkage was within and between groups.

The following parameters and settings were therefore used for the results presented here:

- Minimum line occurrences for a given line type = 3

- Normal entity dissimilarity

- Gaussian linkage within and between groups with maximum variance.

Two sets of analyses were done, for:

- Core Std.ID line similarity

- Exact Std.ID line similarity

Text dendrograms and trellis graphs are presented for both cases, along with distribution maps for the main clusters, as delimited by the mean dissimilarity coefficient. Dendrograms for lines were far too large for printing *in toto*.

Figures 34 and 35 give the dendrograms for the Core and Exact analyses respectively. In both cases, letters have been assigned to each of the main clusters as delimited by the mean dissimilarity coefficient. These letters roughly embody some meaning in terms of geographical region or other features common to the plays in the cluster – e.g. C = Cotswolds, W = Wooing, etc – with the same letters being used for equivalent clusters in both dendrograms as far as possible. These letters are used to code the distribution of each cluster in Maps 3 and 4. They are also used to label the columns in the trellis graphs shown in figures 36 and 37. The rows in the trellis graphs correspond to the clusters in the Lines dendrograms. Although there is correspondence between the rows of the two graphs, they are ordered very differently. Therefore the rows are simply numbered sequentially down the page in each case.

The row and column divisions in the trellis graphs form a grid. In the ensuing discussion, a three-part reference will be used for the squares in these grids, comprising Core/Exact – Letter – Row Number. Thus for instance square Core-C07 is equivalent to Exact-C14

Validity of the Clusters

One of the problems of cluster analysis is deciding whether the clusters are meaningful or not. In the case of this study there are three things that suggest we are on safe ground.

Firstly, a simple test for the validity of the clustering technique is to compare the assignments of the plays in the resulting clusters with the classification they were given, or would have been given, in *English Ritual Drama* (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967). The *ERD* classification was derived intellectually, and comprises three categories – Hero/Combat plays, Sword Dance plays, and Wooing or Bridal plays.

Map 3 - Clusters - Core Line ID Similarity

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HY	HP	
				HU	
	NB	NC	ND		
NF	NG	NH	NJ		
	NM	NN	NO		
	NR	NS	NT	NU	
IB	IC	IJ	NX	NY	NZ
IF	IG	IH			
IL	IM	IN	IO	SC	SD	SE	TA
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IV	IW		SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
		SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
		SW	SX	SY	SZ
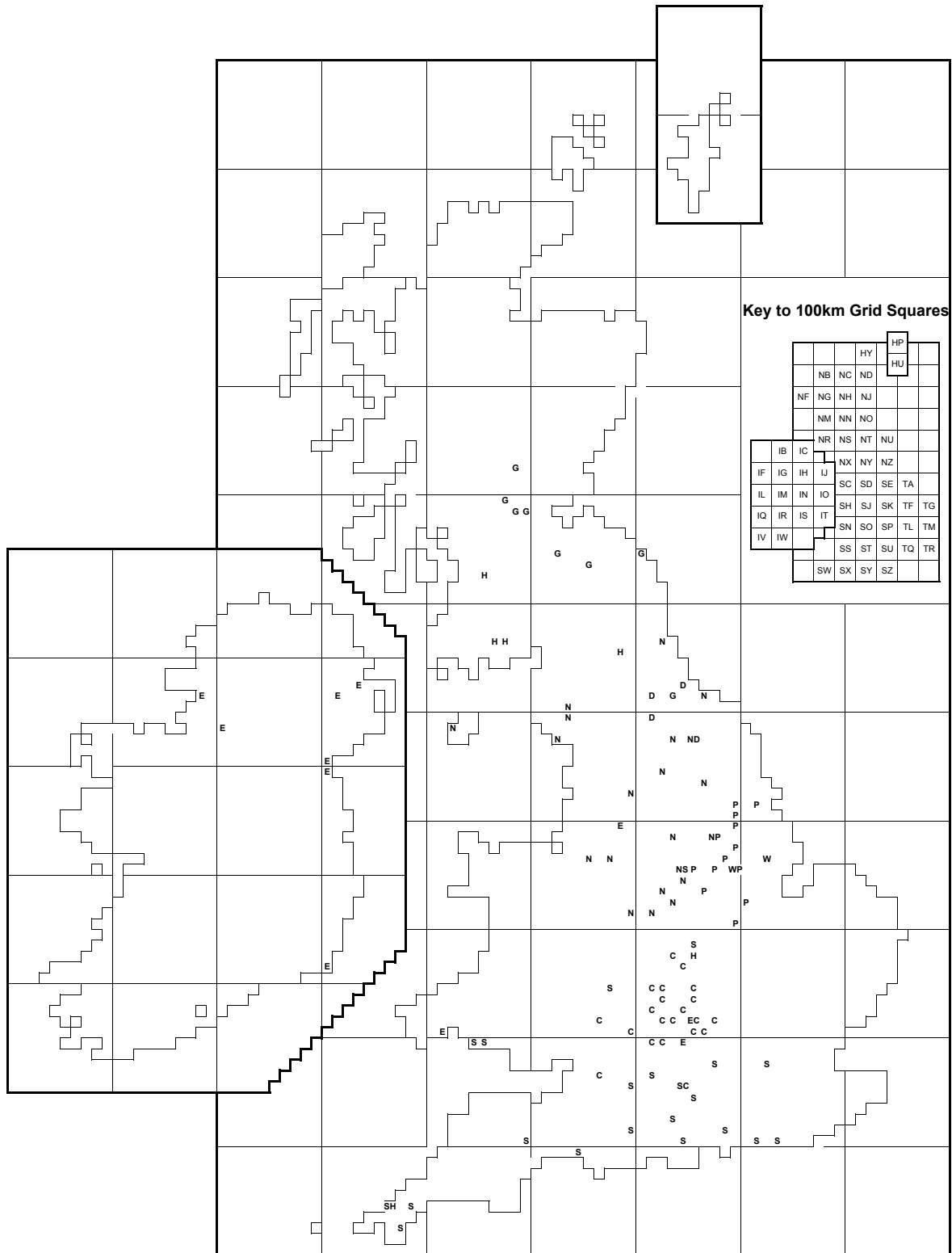
Key

C = Cotswolds Versions
G = Galoshins Versions
H = Halloween Versions
E = Irish Versions

N = Northern English Versions
P = Recruiting Sergeant Plays
S = Southern English Versions
W = Multiple Wooing Plays

Map 4 - Clusters - Exact Line ID Similarity

Key to 100km Grid Squares

					HY	HP	
						HU	
	NB	NC	ND				
NF	NG	NH	NJ				
	NM	NN	NO				
	NR	NS	NT	NU			
IB	IC	IJ	NX	NY	NZ		
IF	IG	IH	SC	SD	SE	TA	
IL	IM	IN	IO	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW			SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ	
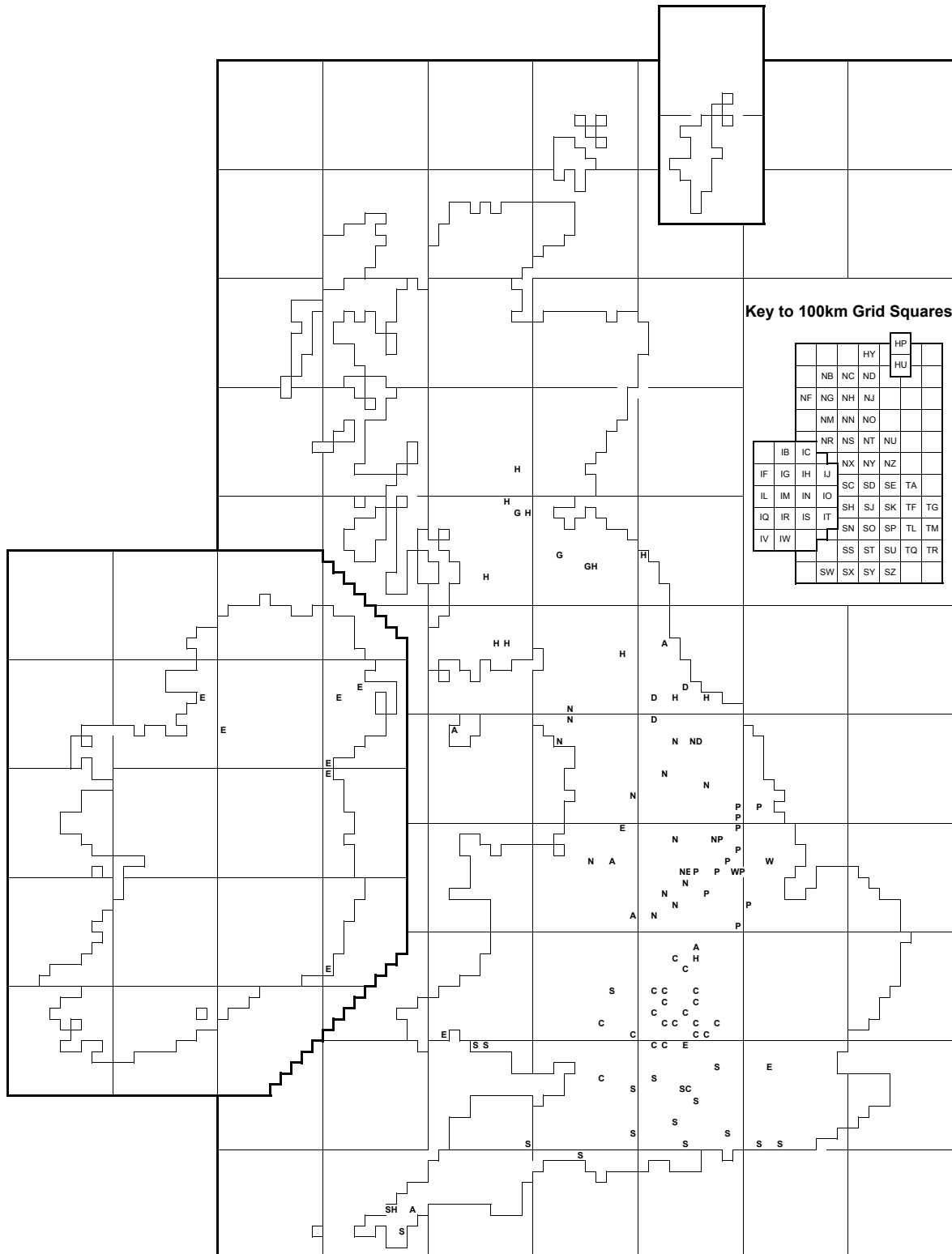
Key

A = Alexander and Chapbook Versions
C = Cotswolds Versions
D = Sword Dance Plays
G = Galoshins (a)
H = Galoshins (b)
N = Northern English Versions
W = Multiple Wooing Plays
P = Recruiting Sergeant Plays
S = Southern English Versions

Figure 34 - Dendrogram - Core Line ID Similarity
Min. Line occurrences = 3, Normal Text Dissimilarity, Gaussian Linkage Within Between Groups with Max. Variance

N

J.White's Alexander Chapbook - 1746-1769 74nz26wh
Penkridge Christmas Play, 1899 89sj91jn
The White Boys [Isle of Man] 1845 84sc28hw
J.Pearce's Mummers' Act or Morris Dancers 'Chapbook - 1837-1849 84se24ww
W.Walker's Peace Egg Chapbook - 1840-1877 84se24ww
Guysers Play from Underwood, Notts., 1935 & 1936 93sk45hb
Cheshire Play - Before 1788 78sj--df
A Christmas Play, Performed by the Derbyshire Mummers - 1849 84sk--hj
"Saint George and Slasher" - Sandbach, 1817 81sj76ej
Mummers' Play from Hamstall Ridware (Staffs.) 1884 88sk11kd
Kirk Hallam Christmas Guisers Play - 1907 90sk44cj
5. "Guisers" play on Xmas Eve, Repton, Derbyshire, Jan., 1909. 90sk32ps
4. Church Broughton, Derbyshire. [1930] 93sk23ps
Selston Mummers' Play - 1913 91sk45sc
Bull Guysering Play from Selston, Notts. - 1932 93sk45cl
The Somercotes Guisers, 1942-1945 94sk45ka
Hawkshead Easter Pace-Egg Play - 1898 89sd39ch
Pace-Egging from Ambleside (Westmorland) 1930 93ny30kd
Dendron Pace Egg Mummers Play, 1904 90sd27ha
The Paceakers' Play, Heptonstall - 1909 90sd92tr
Souling Play from Huxley, Cheshire, 1913 91sj56gb
Words of the Ripon Sword-Dance - 1920 92se37kd
Mummers' Play from Skelton (Yorkshire) 1930 93nz61kd
Morrissing in North Notts. - 1845-1850 84sk78se
Plough Boy's Play from Selby - 1892 89se63sh
Mummers' Play from Coxwold (Yorkshire) 1930 93se57kd

S

Truro [Formerly Mylor]: "A Play for Christmas", 1780s 78sw84em
Cornish Christmas Play - 1833 83s----sw
The Silverton Mummers' Rhymes - 1873 87ss90fs
Lutterworth St. George Play - 1863 86sp58kw
South Notts Plough Bullock Day Play - 1873 87sk--bc
Romsey Mummers' Play - 1796-1837 79su32lj
Ovingdean, Sussex play - 1870 87tq30tr
The Christmas Mummers [Yonge's novel] 1858 85su--yc
Christmas Play from Bursledon, Hants. - 1913-1916 91su40kc
Sompting Tipteerers's Play, 1882 88tq10sf
Christmas Play from Burghclere, Hants. : Version 1 - 1908 90su45h1
Johnny Jacks Play from Overton, Hants. - 1913 91su54cc
3. Witley, Reading, Berks. [1930] 93su77ps
Christmas Boys or Mummers, Potterne, 1876-1890 87st95bw
Tipteerers' Duologue from Cocking, Sussex - 1903-1906 90su81tr
Mummers' Play from Alton Barnes (Wiltshire) 1930 93su16kd
The Mummers [Sixpenny Handley, Dorset, 1880s] 88st91ws
Christmas Play from Hampshire - 1859 85su--cb
Cornish Christmas Play - 1827 82s----sw
Christmas Play from Llanmadoc and Cheriton - 1879 87ss49dj
South West Dorset Mummers' Play 1880 88sy--uj
Guise-Dance Play, Saint Keverne [Cornwall, 1855] 85sw72mw
Camborne, Cornwall : The Christmas Play - 1913-1916 91sw64tj
Mummers' Play from Upper & Lower Howsell, Worcs. - 1856-1857 85so74bc
Play from Malvern, Worcs. - 1913-1916 91so74tr
Mummer's Play : Change Islands, Newfoundland - 1900 90----pj
Dunvant Christmas Sport, Collected 1916 91ss59gw
Christmas Play from North Somerset - 1913-1916 91st--tr
Symondsbury Mummers' Play 1880 88sy49uj
Christmas, Yule-Boys play from Galloway - 1824 82nx--mt
Chiswick Mummers' play, 1860 86tq27ps
King George Play from Kirkby Woodhouse, Notts. - 1887 88sk45sj

E

The Islip Mummers' Play of 1780 78sp51be
Oxfordshire Christmas Mummers play - 1794 79sp--je
Belfast Christmas Rhyme - Smyth & Lyons (1803-1818) 80ij37sl
Christmas Rhymers in the North of Ireland : Belfast 1872 87ij37pw
Ballybrennan, Wexford play – about 1823 81it01kp
Christmas Rhymers from Mullaghcarton - 1885 88ij16ge
Pace, Peace, or Paste Egging [Hulme, 1842] 84sj89lj
Christmas play from Dromore - 1886 88ig86ge
Boys' play from Braganstown - 1890 89io09jb
Boys' play from Dundalk - 1915 91ij00jb
Belcoo Christmas Play, c.1940 94ih03dl
Tenby Guisers' Play - 1857 85sn10bl

C

2. Stanford-in-the-Vale, Berks. [Mummers, 1900] 90su49ps
Mummers' Play from Kirtlingon[?] - 1815-1816 81sp51rg
Play from Ilmington, Warks. - 1913-1916 91sp24tb
Play from Leafield, Oxfordshire - 1913-1916 91sp31tr
Christmas Play from Cinderford, Glos. - 1913-1916 91so61tr
Play from Great Wolford, Warks. - 1913-1916 91sp23tr
The Mummers' Act from Cuddesdon, Oxon - 1914 91sp50jl
Waterstock, Oxfordshire play - 1914 91sp60tr
Christmas Mummers of Stoneleigh [1925] 92sp37hm
Mumming [Thenford, Northants. 1854] 85sp54ba
Mid-Berkshire Mummers 1888 88su--lb
Christmas Play from Burghclere, Hants. : Version 2 - 1914 91su45h2
Christmas Mummers' Play from Weston-sub-Edge, Glos. - 1864 86sp14bc
Mumming Play from Longborough, Glos. - 1905-1906 90sp12ta
Christmas Play from Icomb, Glos. - 1913-1916 91sp71tr
Christmas Mummers Play from Sapperton, Glos. - 1914 91so90cw
The Mummers' Performance, Lower Heyford - 1885 88sp42fh
Broadwell Christmas Play, 1900 or 1901 90sp46gl
Play from Pillerton, Warks. - 1913-1916 91sp24tr
Mumies Play from Badby, Northants. - 1913-1916 91sp53tr
A Christmas Play from Keynsham [Hunter] 1822 82st66hs
Inglesham Christmas Play - 1840 to 1850 84su29wa
Christmas Mummers Play from Kempsford, Glos. - 1868 86su19cj
Bold Robin Hood : Shipton-under-Wychwood, Oxon. - 1913-1916 91sp21tr

D

The Sword Dancers, Tyne & Wear, 1815 81nz--tr
Sword Dancers, Durham, 1834 83nz--sc
Gainford, Durham, Sword-Dance Play - 1860 86nz11ce
Bellerby Sword Dance Play, 1879 & 1926 87se19km
Greatham Sword Dance Play - 1924 92nz42pn
Ampleforth Play - 1898 89se57ce

G

Guisards Play from the Abbotsford Collection Text (b) 1812-1832 82nt53ab
Stirling Play of Galations, 1835 83ns79mj
The New Year Mummers' Tale of Galaschin - Forfarshire 1888 88no--dw
"Sword Dancers" play, Haughton-le-Skerne, Durham [1913-1915] 91nz31ss
Crieff Guisers' Play, 1884 88nn82lm
Culross play, 1893 89ns98cg
Scremerston Guizards, Northumberland [before 1913] 91nu04ru
Galation from the Abbotsford Collection Text (a) 1812-1832 82nt53aa
Christmas Gysarts Play from Bowden - 1815 81nt53wt
Hogmany Play from Falkirk - J.W.Reddock, 1825 82ns88rj
Galatian, a New-Year Play [from Peebles] 1841 84nt24cr
Falkirk Play, 1841 84ns88cr

H

The Mummers [Allendale, 1860-1870] 86ny85bg
Hallowe'en Play from Balmaghie, 1897 89nx76gw
Laurieston Hallowe'en Play (a), 1897 89nx66ga
Laurieston Play (b), 1897 89nx66gb
Cumnock Play, c.1883 88ns52da
Rugby Christmas Mumming Play, 1899 89sp57bf
A Redruth Christmas Play : 1910-1925 91sw64ed

W

6. "The Sword-dancers" Cumberland. [1930] 93ny--ps
The "Plouboys oR modes dancers" at Revesby 1779 77tf26al
Bassingham Men's play 1823 Xmas 82sk95bd
Bassingham Childrens play Xmas 1823 82sk95be
A Christmas Play [Broughton, Lincs.] - Text A - 1824 82sk95ba
Recruiting Sergeant [1823-1888] 82sk--bc

P

Swinderby Decr. 31st 1842 Play 84sk86bc
Plough Jacks' Play from Willoughton - 1889 88sk99re
Blidworth Plough Bullocking Play, 1896 89sk55wr
Cropwell, Notts. Ploughboys' Play - 1890 89sk63cm
Plough Jagg's Play : Bassingham - 1952 95sk95re
The Plough Boys (from Tollerton, Nottinghamshire) 1950 95sk63sm
Play from Bulby, Lincs. - 1913-1916 91tf02tr
A Plough Monday Play from Clayworth, Notts. - 1913-1916 91sk78ta
North Muskham, Notts. - Plough Monday Play - 1914 91sk75gw
Jerusalem, Lincs., Plough Play - 1914 91sk97pa
Kirton-in-Lindsey Plough-Jags Play - 1980 89sk99pm
The "Plough Jacks'" Play from Kirmington, Lincs. - 1923 92ta11tr
Lincolnshire Plough Jags play - 1890 89----be
Edith Weston Morris-Dancers Play, c.1898 89sk90cb
Another Plough Monday Play from Clayworth, Notts. - 1913-1916 91sk78tb
Plough-Jags' Ditties from North Lincolnshire - 1876 87se91pm
Hibaldstow Ploughboys' Play -1901 90se90pm

0   Dissimilarity (%)   ##

Figure 35 - Dendrogram - Exact Line ID Similarity
Min. Line occurrences = 3, Normal Text Dissimilarity, Gaussian Linkage Within Between Groups with Max. Variance

A

J.White's Alexander Chapbook - 1746-1769 74nz26wh
Penkridge Christmas Play, 1899 89sj91jn
The White Boys [Isle of Man] 1845 84sc28hw
Truro [Formerly Mylor]: "A Play for Christmas", 1780s 78sw84em
Cornish Christmas Play - 1833 83s---sw
"Saint George and Slasher" - Sandbach, 1817 81sj76ej
Lutterworth St. George Play - 1863 86sp58kw
South Notts Plough Bullock Day Play - 1873 87sk--bc
Romsey Mummers' Play - 1796-1837 79su32lj

S

Ovingdean, Sussex play - 1870 87tq30tr
The Christmas Mummers [Yonge's novel] 1858 85su--yc
Christmas Play from Bursledon, Hants. - 1913-1916 91su40kc
Sompting Tipteerers's Play, 1882 88tq10sf
Christmas Play from Burghclere, Hants. : Version 1 - 1908 90su45h1
Johnny Jacks Play from Overton, Hants. - 1913 91su54cc
3. Witley, Reading, Berks. [1930] 93su77ps
Christmas Boys or Mummers, Potterne, 1876-1890 87st95bw
Mummers' Play from Alton Barnes (Wiltshire) 1930 93su16kd
Tipteerers' Duologue from Cocking, Sussex - 1903-1906 90su81tr
The Mummers [Sixpenny Handley, Dorset, 1880s] 88st91ws
Christmas Play from Hampshire, 1859 85su--cb
The Silverton Mummers' Rhymes - 1873 87ss90fs
Mummers' Play from Upper & Lower Howsell, Worcs. - 1856-1857 85so74bc
Play from Malvern, Worcs. - 1913-1916 91so74tr
Cornish Christmas Play - 1827 82s---sw
Christmas Play from Llanmadoc and Cheriton - 1879 87ss49dj
South West Dorset Mummers' Play 1880 88sy--uj
Guise-Dance Play, Saint Keverne [Cornwall, 1855] 85sw72mw
Camborne, Cornwall : The Christmas Play - 1913-1916 91sw64tj
Dunvant Christmas Sport, Collected 1916 91ss59gw
Christmas Play from North Somerset - 1913-1916 91st--tr
Symondsbury Mummers' Play 1880 88sy49uj
Cheshire Play - Before 1788 78sj--df

N

A Christmas Play, Performed by the Derbyshire Mummers - 1849 84sk--hj
Mummers' Play from Hamstall Ridware (Staffs.) 1884 88sk11kd
Kirk Hallam Christmas Guisers Play - 1907 90sk44cj
5. "Guisers" play on Xmas Eve, Repton, Derbyshire, Jan., 1909. 90sk32ps
4. Church Broughton, Derbyshire. [1930] 93sk23ps
Selston Mummers' Play - 1913 91sk45sc
Bull Guysering Play from Selston, Notts. - 1932 93sk45cl
The Somercotes Guisers, 1942-1945 94sk45ka
Hawkshead Easter Pace-Egg Play - 1898 89sd39ch
Pace-Egging from Ambleside (Westmorland) 1930 93ny30kd
Dendron Pace Egg Mummers Play, 1904 90sd27ha
The Paceakers' Play, Heptonstall - 1909 90sd92tr
Words of the Ripon Sword-Dance - 1920 92se37kd
Souling Play from Huxley, Cheshire, 1913 91sj56gb
J.Pearce's Mummers' Act or Morris Dancers 'Chapbook - 1837-1849 84sk38gp
W.Walker's Peace Egg Chapbook - 1840-1877 84se24ww
Guysers Play from Underwood, Notts., 1935 & 1936 93sk45hb
Morrissing in North Notts. - 1845-1850 84sk78se
Plough Boy's Play from Selby - 1892 89se63sh
Mummers' Play from Coxwold (Yorkshire) 1930 93se57kd
The Islip Mummers' Play of 1780 78sp51be

C

Oxfordshire Christmas Mummers play - 1794 79sp--je
Mummers' Play from Kirtlingon[?] - 1815-1816 81sp51rg
Play from Ilmington, Warks. - 1913-1916 91sp24tb
Play from Leafield, Oxfordshire - 1913-1916 91sp31tr
Christmas Play from Cinderford, Glos. - 1913-1916 91so61tr
Play from Great Wolford, Warks. - 1913-1916 91sp23tr
The Mummers' Act from Cuddesdon, Oxon - 1914 91sp50jl
Waterstock, Oxfordshire play - 1914 91sp60tr
Christmas Mummers of Stoneleigh [1925] 92sp37hm
Mumming [Thenford, Northants. 1854] 85sp54ba
Mid-Berkshire Mummers 1888 88su--lb
Christmas Play from Burghclere, Hants. : Version 2 - 1914 91su45h2
Christmas Mummers' Play from Weston-sub-Edge, Glos. - 1864 86sp14bc
Mumming Play from Longborough, Glos. - 1905-1906 90sp12ta
Christmas Play from Icomb, Glos. - 1913-1916 91sp71tr
Christmas Mummers Play from Sapperton, Glos. - 1914 91so90cw
The Mummers' Performance, Lower Heyford - 1885 88sp42fh
Broadwell Christmas Play, 1900 or 1901 90sp46gi
Play from Pillerton, Warks. - 1913-1916 91sp24tr
Mumies Play from Badby, Northants. - 1913-1916 91sp53tr
A Christmas Play from Keynsham [Hunter] 1822 82st66hs
Inglesham Christmas Play - 1840 to 1850 84su29wa
Christmas Mummers Play from Kempsford, Glos. - 1868 86su19cj
Bold Robin Hood : Shipton-under-Wychwood, Oxon. - 1913-1916 91sp21tr

E

Belfast Christmas Rhyme - Smyth & Lyons (1803-1818) 80ij37sl
Christmas Rhymers in the North of Ireland : Belfast 1872 87ij37pw
Ballybrennan, Wexford play – about 1823 81it01kp
Christmas Rhymers from Mullaghcarton - 1885 88ij16ge
Pace, Peace, or Paste Egging [Hulme, 1842] 84sj89lj
Christmas play from Dromore - 1886 88ig86ge
Boys' play from Braganstown - 1890 89io09jb
Boys' play from Dundalk - 1915 91ij00jb
Belcoo Christmas Play, c.1940 94ih03dl
Mummer's Play : Change Islands, Newfoundland - 1900 90----pj
Tenby Guisers' Play - 1857 85sn10bl
2. Stanford-in-the-Vale, Berks. [Mummers, 1900] 90su49ps
Christmas, Yule-Boys play from Galloway - 1824 82nx--mt
Chiswick Mummers' play, 1860 86tq27ps
King George Play from Kirkby Woodhouse, Notts. - 1887 88sk45sj

D

The Sword Dancers, Tyne & Wear, 1815 81nz--tr
Sword Dancers, Durham, 1834 83nz--sc
Gainford, Durham, Sword-Dance Play - 1860 86nz11ce
Bellerby Sword Dance Play, 1879 & 1926 87se19km
Greatham Sword Dance Play - 1924 92nz42pn
Ampleforth Play - 1898 89se57ce

G

Galation from the Abbotsford Collection Text (a) 1812-1832 82nt53aa
Christmas Gysarts Play from Bowden - 1815 81nt53wt
Hogmany Play from Falkirk - J.W.Reddock, 1825 82ns88rj
Galatian, a New-Year Play [from Peebles] 1841 84nt24cr
Falkirk Play, 1841 84ns88cr
Guisards Play from the Abbotsford Collection Text (b) 1812-1832 82nt53ab
Stirling Play of Galations, 1835 83ns79mj
The New Year Mummers' Tale of Galaschin - Forfarshire 1888 88no--dw
"Sword Dancers" play, Haughton-le-Skerne, Durham [1913-1915] 91nz31ss
Crieff Guisers' Play, 1884 88nn82lm

H

Culross play, 1893 89ns98cg
Scremerston Guizards, Northumberland [before 1913] 91nu04ru
The Mummers [Allendale, 1860-1870] 86ny85bg
Laurieston Hallowe'en Play (a), 1897 89nx66ga
Laurieston Play (b), 1897 89nx66gb
Hallowe'en Play from Balmaghie, 1897 89nx76gw
Cumnock Play, c.1883 88ns52da
Rugby Christmas Mumming Play, 1899 89sp57bf
A Redruth Christmas Play : 1910-1925 91sw64ed
Mummers' Play from Skelton (Yorkshire) 1930 93nz61kd
6. "The Sword-dancers" Cumberland. [1930] 93ny--ps

W

The "Plouboys oR modes dancers" at Revesby 1779 77f26al
Bassingham Men's play 1823 Xmas 82sk95bd
Bassingham Childrens play Xmas 1823 82sk95be
A Christmas Play [Broughton, Lincs.] - Text A - 1824 82sk95ba
Recruiting Sergeant [1823-1888] 82sk--bc

P

Swinderby Decr. 31st 1842 Play 84sk86bc
Plough Jacks' Play from Willoughton - 1889 88sk99re
Blidworth Plough Bullocking Play, 1896 89sk55wr
Cropwell, Notts. Ploughboys' Play - 1890 89sk63cm
Plough Jagg's Play : Bassingham - 1952 95sk95re
The Plough Boys (from Tollerton, Nottinghamshire) 1950 95sk63sm
Play from Bulby, Lincs. - 1913-1916 91tf02tr
A Plough Monday Play from Clayworth, Notts. - 1913-1916 91sk78ta
North Muskham, Notts. - Plough Monday Play - 1914 91sk75gw
Jerusalem, Lincs., Plough Play - 1914 91sk97pa
Kirton-in-Lindsey Plough-Jags Play - 1980 89sk99pm
The "Plough Jacks'" Play from Kirmington, Lincs. - 1923 92ta11tr
Lincolnshire Plough Jags play - 1890 89----be
Edith Weston Morris-Dancers Play, c.1898 89sk90cb
Another Plough Monday Play from Clayworth, Notts. - 1913-1916 91sk78tb
Plough-Jags' Ditties from North Lincolnshire - 1876 87se91pm
Hibaldstow Ploughboys' Play - 1901 90se90pm

0   Dissimilarity (%)   ##

Figure 36 - Trellis Graph - Core Line ID Similarity
Min. Line occurrences = 3, Normal Text Dissimilarity, Gaussian Linkage Within Between Groups with Max. Variance

Key to Text Cluster Codes

C = Cotswolds Versions   N = Northern English Versions
G = Galoshins Versions   P = Recruiting Sergeant Plays
H = Halloween Versions   S = Southern English Versions
E = Irish Versions   W = Multiple Wooing Plays

Figure 37 - Trellis Graph - Exact Line ID Similarity
Min. Line occurrences = 3, Normal Text Dissimilarity, Gaussian Linkage Within Between Groups with Max. Variance
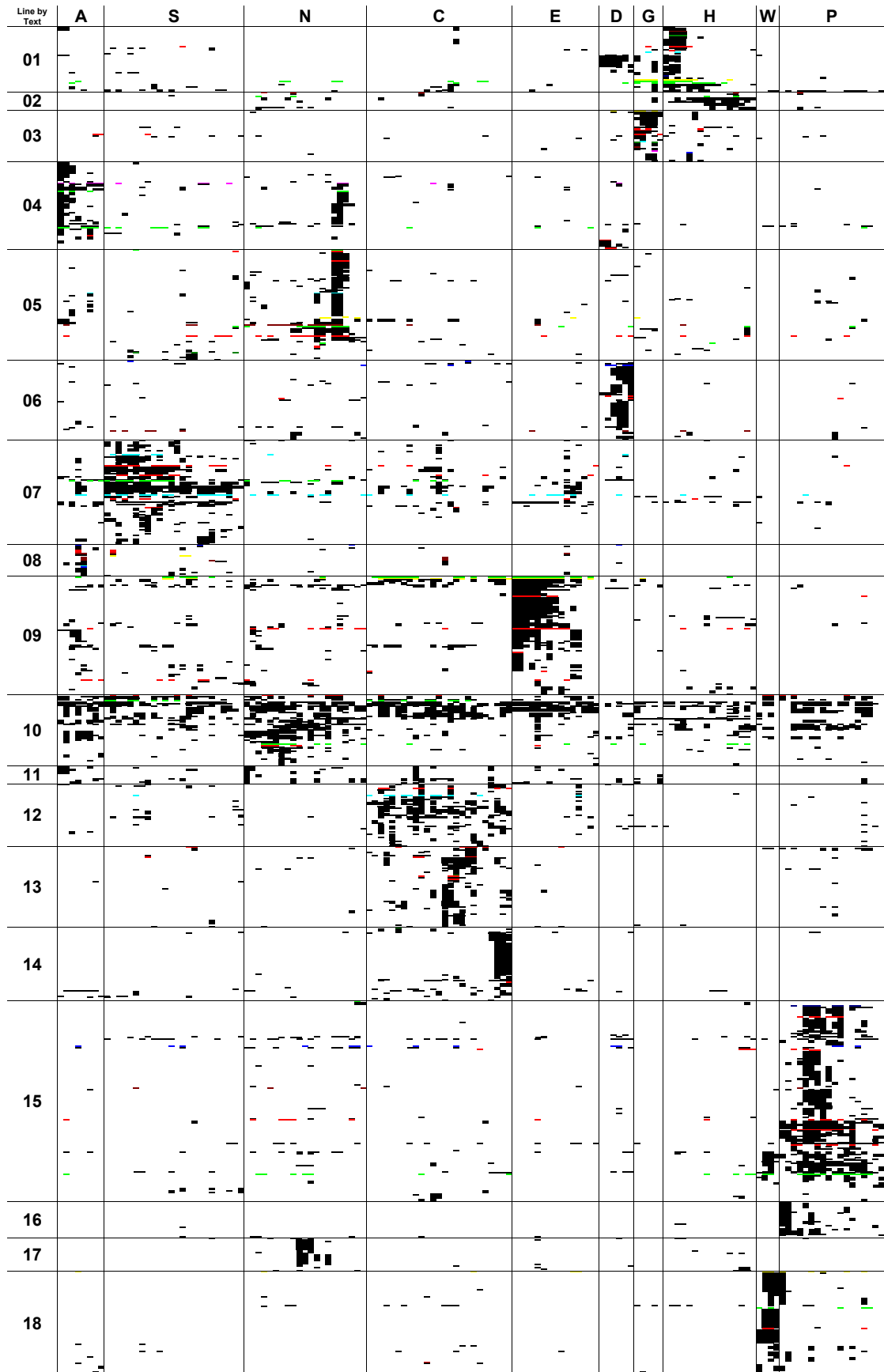
It is reassuring that discrete clusters were identified that correspond to the Wooing plays and the Sword Dance plays, while the remaining clusters were all of the Hero/Combat type. This last category is by far the largest, and it was only to be expected that sub-classes would be found.

The classification and terminology of the Wooing or Bridal plays has recently been reviewed and revised (P.Millington, 1995), and *Plough Play* is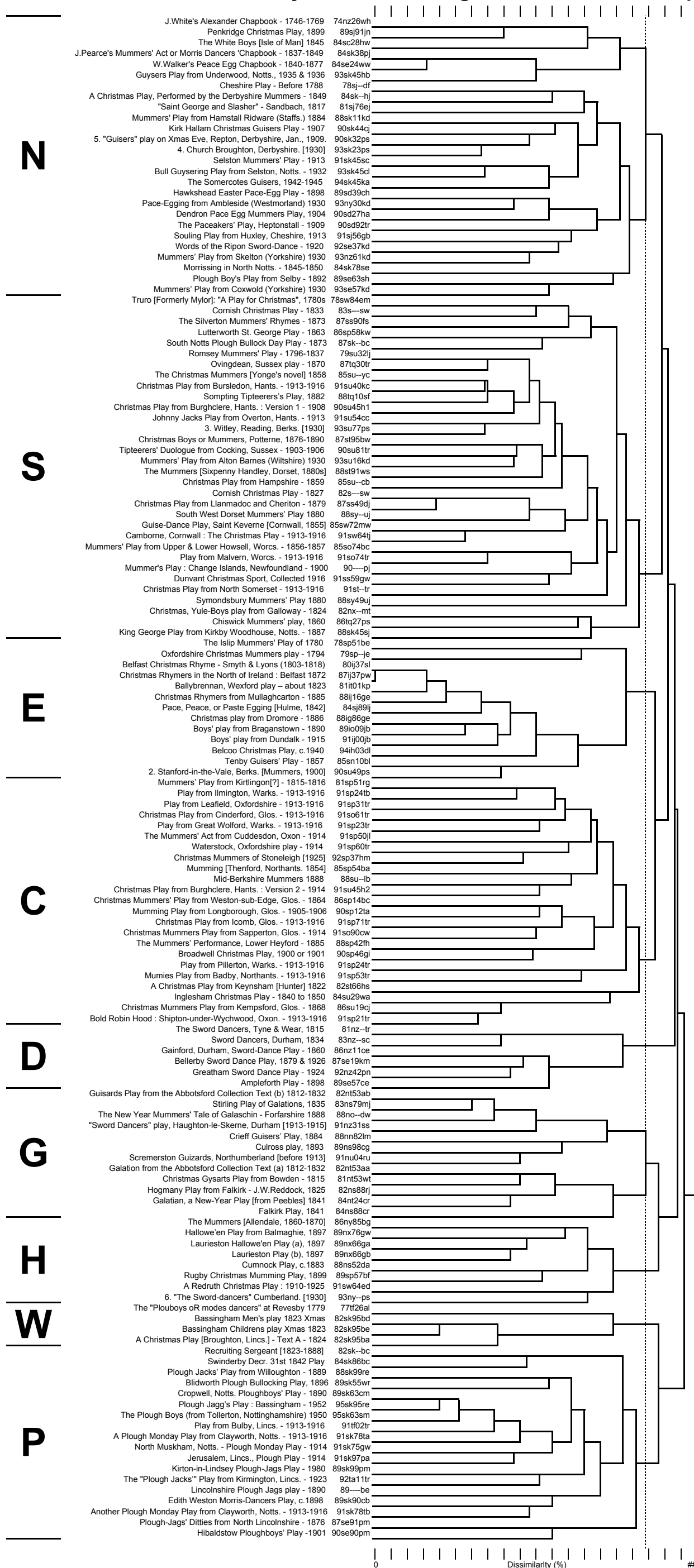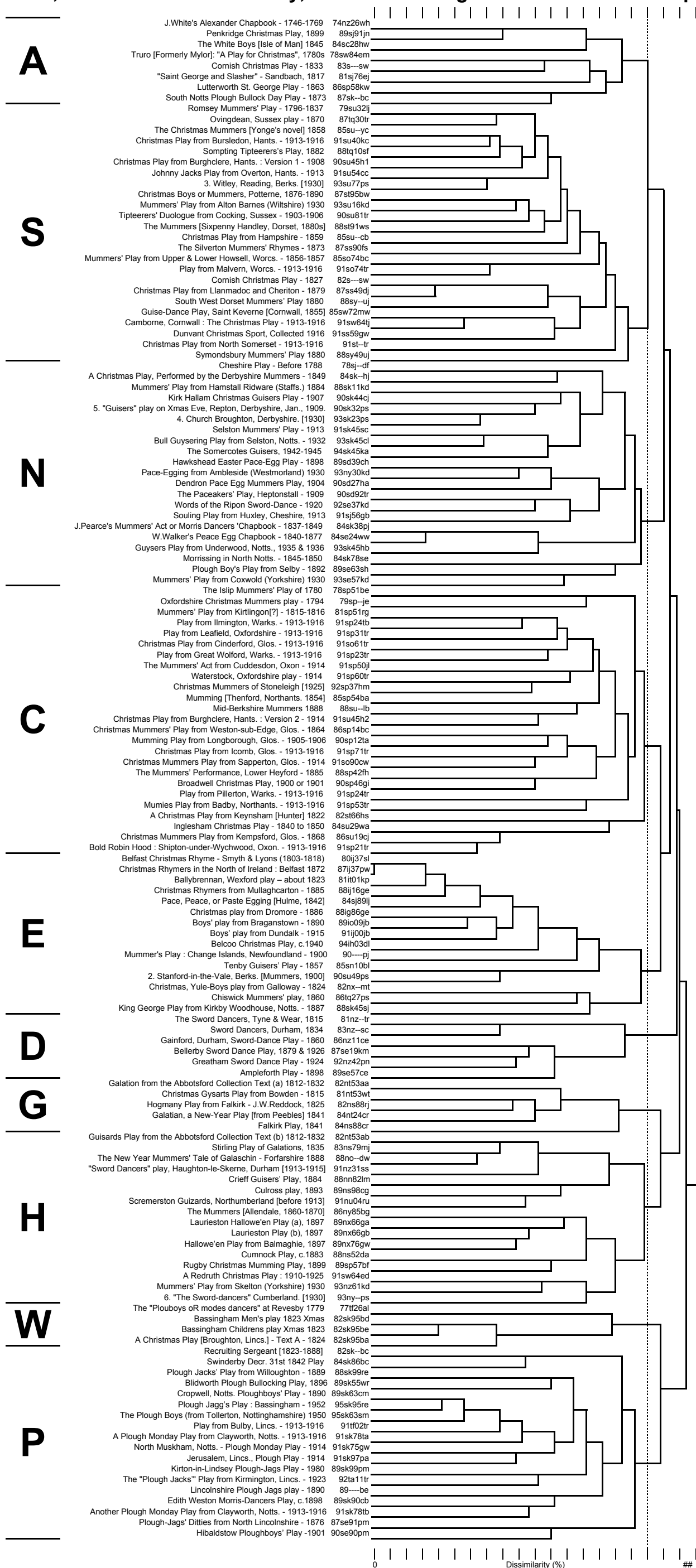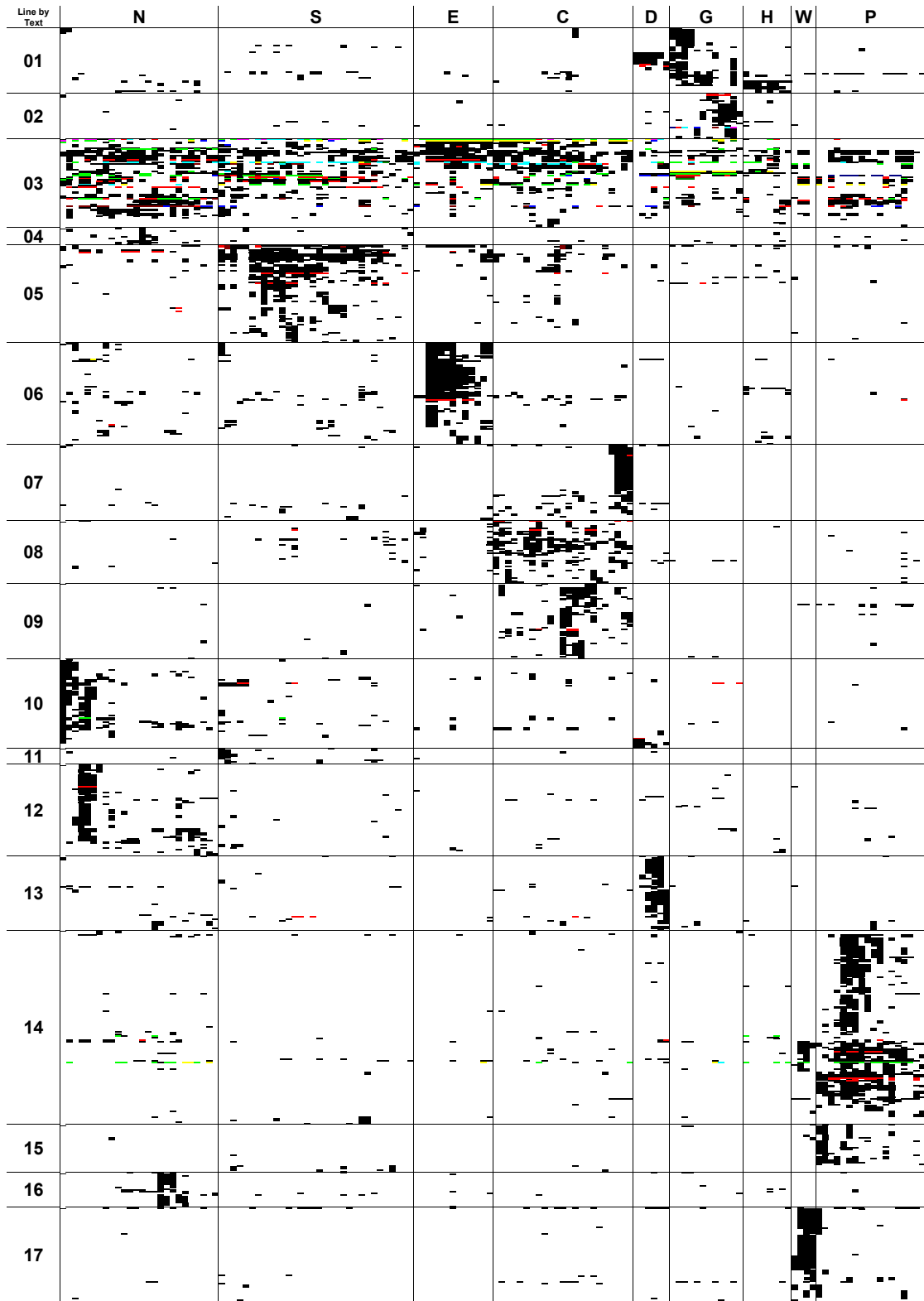 now the preferred term. These plays appear in the dendrograms and charts not only as discrete adjacent clusters (W and P) but are also clearly separated from the all the other plays. Furthermore, the Plough plays also exhibit two distinct sub-clusters, which correspond to the Multiple Wooing (W) and Recruiting Sergeant (P) sub-classes of the re-defined terminology.

The Sword Dance cluster (D), while being discrete is not clearly separated from the other non-Plough plays. Its relative position varies somewhat depending on the clustering parameters used. This supports doubts as to the validity of the Sword Dance play as a significantly distinct form. On the basis of the cluster analyses presented here, the Sword Dance plays are merely a sub-class of the Hero/Combat plays, and on a par with other, newly identified sub-classes.

The second indication that the clusters are valid is that the distribution maps show that they are regional. That is, plays that are close to each other in the dendrograms are also close to each other geographically – allowing for the odd outlier. Because the geographical coverage of the database is not homogeneous, it might be possible that the clustering was an artefact of the geographical discontinuities in coverage. However, boundaries rather than gaps between clusters can be discerned, for instance between the N and P clusters in the East Midlands in grid square SK, and between clusters C and S in the north of grid square SU.

The other evidence that the clusters are meaningful is provided by the trellis graphs. Allowing for some background "noise", the coloured dots are generally concentrated in large blocks, showing that text clusters have corresponding lines

clusters. The structured appearance of the graphs verifies that the data itself is structured. If not, the coloured dots would be randomly distributed across the graphs.

Evidence for a Proto-Text

An obvious prominent feature of the trellis graphs is the presence of a band of dots stretching the full width of the graph – rows Core-03 and Exact-10. This represents a group of lines that are drawn on by all the plays in the database. It is evidence that all the plays ultimately derive from a single proto-text, with the lines in this band specifically representing the proto-text. Had the plays derived from two or more proto-texts, a single band would not have been present. Rather there would have been two or more or more offset bands. If there had been no proto-text, no band would have been present. Other blocks in the trellis graphs represent the additional lines that distinguish the main clusters and sub-clusters.

The make up of the main band differs slightly between the Core and Exact analyses. The following lines are arranged in the order they would appear in a play:

Std.ID	Example Line	Line No.
1380	Open the door and let us come in	
1390	I hope your favour we shall win	
1400	Whether we stand or whether we fall	
1410	We'll do our endeavour to please you all	
13*	*Room, room brave gallants give us room to sport*	5
16*	*For remember good sirs this is Christmas time*	
1950	Activity of youth activity of age	
1960	*The like was never acted on a stage*	
145*	If you don't believe the words I say	
240	*Step in Saint George and clear the way*	10
1460	I am King George that valiant knight	
1470	*Who lost his blood for England's right*	
1480	England's right and England's reason	
1490	*Makes me carry this bloody weapon*	
29*	*I am Prince George a champion brave and bold*	15
30*	With my sword and spear I won ten thousand crowns in gold	
310	I fought the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter	

320	And by that means I gained the King of Egypt's daughter	
2100	*where is the man that dares bid me stand*	
211*	*I'll cut him down with my courageous hand*	*20*
1500	I am a valiant soldier Slasher is my name	
1510	Sword and buckler by my side I hope to win the game	
410	I will hash thee and smash thee as small as flies	
42*	And send him to the cook shop to make mince pies	
3860	Stand off Slasher let no more be said	*25*
1860	My head is made of iron, my body's made of steel	
187*	*My hands and feet of best knuckle bone I challenge thee to field*	
490	O cruel Christian what hast thou done?	
500	Thou hast ruined me by killing my best son	
53830	*To cure the man that here lies slain*	*30*
157*	*What is your fee?*	
158*	*Ten pounds is my fee but five I'll take of thee*	
12540	How camest thou to be a doctor?	
12550	I have travelled for it	
12560	where have you travelled?	*35*
160*	*I've travelled through Italy High Germany and Spain*	
1610	*And am now returned to old England again*	
13250	Three times round the world and back again	
680	What diseases can you cure?	
1620	*All diseases whatever you pleases*	*40*
700	The itch pox palsy and the gout	
690	All diseases both within and without	
328*	*If the Devil's in I can fetch him out*	
323*	*I've got a little bottle by my side called elecampane*	
1650	Here Jack take a little of my nip nap	*45*
3590	Pour it down thy tip top	
1660	Rise up Slasher and fight again	
2460	Here comes I old Beelzebub	
2470	Upon my shoulder I carry my club	
2480	And in my hand a dripping pan	*50*
2490	Don't you think I'm a jolly old man?	
17620	Here comes I that never came yet	
3350	With my great head and little wit	
17630	Though my head is great and my wits be small	

The asterisks in some of the Std.IDs indicate lines where variant types have been coded in the database with different final digits. Only one variant is given here, effectively selected at random. The lines in normal font are common to both analyses. The main band in the Core analysis has extra lines, which are shown in Italics. Most of these extra lines have multiple variants. In the Exact analysis, the

individual variants for these lines are dispersed to specific clusters, which is why they do not appear in its main band. The dispersal or otherwise of the variants affects how some non-varying lines are clustered, hence the presence of such additional lines in the Core main band.

It can be seen that this collection of lines pretty much forms a viable text. There appear to be a few instances of what might be alternative speeches – The opening speeches (*Open the door…* and *Room room…*), Saint/King George's self-introduction, the line to rhyme with *The itch pox palsy and the gout*, and the second line of the Doctor's travels. Also, one or two rhyme lines appear to be missing – the rhymes for *Stand off Slasher let no more be said*, and for the very last line. However the missing final line could be one of the other variants of Std.ID 1410, such as *I've brought my fiddle to please you all*. These would be combined under the single Std.ID in the trellis graphs.

Allowing for these imperfections, the above collection of lines could be regarded as a reconstruction of a proto-Quack Doctor play text.

The Main Clusters

The following sections enumerate and describe the principal clusters individually. Generally speaking, the discussion will centre on the lines outside the trellis graph main bands, which are the lines that serve to distinguish them from other clusters.

Plough Plays

As already mentioned, text clusters W and P represent the Multiple Wooing plays and Recruiting Sergeant plays respectively (as defined in P.Millington, 1995). Together these make up the class conventionally called Plough Plays.

Apart from lines in the main band, the Multiple Wooing plays are represented by a long block of lines in squares Core-W17 and Exact-W18, and by a shorter group of lines in Core-W14 and Exact-W15. It is the long group that particularly

specifies this cluster, while the short group comprises the following shared speeches that link it to the Recruiting Sergeant plays:

- An introductory speech:

  Good evening ladies and gentlemen all
  This merry time at Christmas I have made it bold to call…

- Dame Jane's self-introductory lines.

- Some of the Doctor's part, including

  I have travelled from my old grandmother's fireside
         to her bread and cheese cupboard door
  And there had a many a rare piece of bread and cheese

- The final song:

  Good master and good mistress as you sit by the fire
  Remember us poor ploughlads that runs through mud and mire…

Multiple Wooing Plays

The longer block of lines in squares Core-W17 and Exact-W18 mainly comprises the multiple wooing speeches. Typical lines include:

I am me father's eldest son and heir of all his land
I hope in a short time it will all fall in my hand
I was brought up in Lindsey Court all the days of my life
There stands a fair lady I wish she was my wife

Here comes the farming man
Upon my principle for to stand
I'm come to woo this lady fair
To gain her love is all my care

To gain my love it will not do
You speak too clownish for to woo
Therefore out of my sight be gone
A witty man or I'll have none

A lawyer I suppose you be
You plead your cause so wittily

But by an by I'll tell you plain
You plead a cause that's all in vain

I am a valiant hero lately come from sea
You never saw me before now did you
I slew ten men with a seed of mustard
Ten thousand with an old crushed toad

Here comes the poor old ancient man
I'll speak for myself the best I can
My old grey hairs they hang so low
I'll do the best for myself the best I know

This block also contains a few more Dame Jane lines, in particular her attempt to palm her bastard baby off onto the fool.

Recruiting Sergeant Plays

Two adjacent blocks – Core-P14 & P15 and Exact-P15 & P16 - represent the Recruiting Sergeant plays. The fact that there are two blocks suggests that further sub-classes are present, and indeed some additional internal structure is evident within the larger of the blocks – Core-P14 and Exact-P15.

The smaller block – Core-P15 and Exact-P16 - holds lines that are particularly represented in the two earliest Recruiting Sergeant plays – Swinderby, and *The Recruiting Sergeant* - published by C.R.Baskervill (1924). These lines include:

- A song introducing the Ribboner or Recruit, and his own self-introduction:

  Good people give attention and listen to my song
  I will tell you of a young man before it be long
  He is almost broken hearted the truth I do declare
  And beauty has enticed him and drawn him in a snare

  [In comes I that lost my mate][21]
  Drooping tears hangs down my fate
  Pity my condition I do declare
  For this false girl I am in despair

---

[21] The line in square brackets was not part of the analyses because it only appears in the database twice. However, it is clearly meant to go with the ensuing lines.

- The Sergeant's offer and its acceptance from the recruiting scene:

  > And ten guineas then shall be your bounty if along with me you will go
  > Your hat shall be so neatly dressed and we will cut a gallant show
  >
  > Then kind sir I will take your offer the time away will sweetly pass
  > Dash me if I will grieve any longer for a proud and saucy lass

- The Sergeant's warning to the Lady of the Recruit's inconstancy, and her response:

  > He never means to marry you as once perhaps he may
  > He will list for a soldier and from you run away
  >
  > Thank you kind sir for the good advice you gave
  > I never mean to marry him I would have you for to know
  > I will have another sweetheart and along with him I'll go

The larger block – Core-P14 and Exact-P15 - has two segments. The bottom half spans all the plays in the group, including the earlier plays, whereas the top half covers a smaller group of plays, of which the Cropwell play is the oldest. About half of the bottom segment consists of the lines in Core-W14 and Exact-W15 described above. The remaining additional lines include:

- Part of an alternative introductory speech:

  > Some can dance and some can sing
  > If you will consent they shall come in

- The Sergeant's self-introduction and the Tom Fool's responses:

  > In comes I the recruiting sergeant I've arrived here just now
  > My orders are to enlist all that follow the cart or the plough
  > Likewise fiddlers tinkers and all that can advance
  > The more I hear the fiddle play the better I can dance
  >
  > I should like to see our fool dance
  >
  > I can either dance sing or say
  >
  > If you begin to sing I shall go away

- The Lady Bright and Gay's introductory song (taken from Henry Carey's *The Honest Yorkshireman*, 1735):

  > Behold the lady bright and gay her fortune and her charms
  > So scornful I was thrown away into that looby's arms
  > He swears if I don't marry him as you may understand
  > He will list for a soldier into some foreign land

- The Sergeant's recruiting song:

  > Come my lads that has a mind for listing
  > List and do not be afraid
  > You shall have all kinds of liquor
  > Likewise kiss the pretty maid

- The Doctor's taking of the pulse:

  > I will feel of this man's pulse

  > Does a man's pulse be there?

  > Yes, that's the strongest part about him

- The cure:

  > This man his not dead but in a trance
  > We'll raise him up and have a dance

- The beginning of a second verse of the final song:

  > Good master and good mistress now our fool is gone
  > We will make it in our business to follow him along

The top half of Core-P14 and Exact-P15 primarily consists of major embellishments to the Doctor's part, but there is also Tom Fool's introduction and his wooing of the spurned Lady, Dame Jane and Tom's discourse over the baby, and the speeches of the somewhat supernumerary Farmer's Man and Threshing Blade:

- Bold Tom's introduction:

  In comes I bold Tom a brisk and lively young fellow
  I have come to taste of your best beef and ale
  They tell me it is so ripe and mellow
  Oking poking France and Spain
  The recruiting sergeant just the same

- The Farmer's Man:

  In comes I the farmer's man
  Don't you see my whip in hand
  I go forth and plough the master's land
  And turn it upside down
  How I straight I go from end to end
  I scarcely make a baulk or bend
  And to my horses I attend
  As they go marching round the end
  Gee back whoa

- The Thrashing Blade:

  In comes I old Thrashing Blade all good people ought to know
  My old dad learnt me this trade just ninety years ago

- Tom's wooing of the spurned Lady:

  Since my love is listed and entered volunteer
  I neither mean to sigh for him nor shed one tear

  Dost thou love me my pretty fair maid?

  Yes Tommy, to my sorrow

  When shall be our wedding day?

  Tommy love tomorrow

  They make bands and we shake hands
  And Tommy love to morrow

- Dame Jane's discourse with Tom over the baby:

  Tommy take the child

It's none of mine
Who told you bring it here?

The overseer of the parish told me to bring it to the biggest fool I could
    find
And I think you be him
For its eyes nose cheeks and chin
Is as much like you as ever it can grin

- Embellishments to the Doctor's part:

  Wo my lad take hold of my donkey
  And mind he does not kick you

  When I was down in Yorkshire
  My old grandmother tumbled upstairs with an empty teapot full of flour
  And grazed her shin bone
  And made her stocking leg bleed
  And I cured that

  She is in a very low way
  She will not get a deal lower without there is a hole dug for her

  She has swallowed a donkey and cart and can't digest the wheels

  She has been living on green potato tops
  A fortnight without water

  I have also got a box of my fatmetical pills
  You must take one in the morning two at night
  One drop in a morning two at night
  And swallow the bottle at dinner time

- An extension to the cure rhyme:

  If she can't dance we can sing
  So raise her up and let's begin

The disposition of the blocks in the trellis graphs, combined with the known dates of the plays concerned suggests that Plough Plays underwent a three-stage development. The earliest plays were the Multiple Wooing plays, being a hybrid combination of the multiple wooing scene and a Saint George play. In the early to mid 19th century, the multiple wooing scene was dropped in favour of the

recruiting scene. Finally, towards the end of the 19th century, substantial additions were made to the text, mostly of a comic nature. Mrs Chaworth Musters' book *A Cavalier Stronghold* may have been instrumental in disseminating these additions.

A final note; the lines and speeches in Plough plays that came from the Saint George play were effectively frozen at the time they were added, presumably around the start of the 19th century. These would therefore not have any features arising from subsequent developments in the Saint George plays themselves. This could be helpful in trying to determine the chronology and genealogy of the different versions.

Sword Dance Plays

The Sword Dance plays are defined by a large block in squares Core-D13 and Exact-D06, a smaller block in squares Core-D01 and Exact-D01, and a few lines in squares Core-D10 and Exact-D04. The smaller block in Core-D1 and Exact-D1 is most typical, in that these lines relate to all the plays in the class (although the lines are also found in some non-dance Scottish plays). The characteristic lines are:

- The calling-on of the Squire's Son:

    The first that I call in is a Squire's Son
    He's like to lose his love because he is too young
    Although he be too young he has money for to rove
    And he'll freely spend it all before he'll lose his love

- The lament for the fallen man:

    Alas our actor's dead and on the ground he's laid
    Some of us must suffer for it, young men I'm sore afraid

- Denials of culpability:

    I am sure 't was none of me I am clear of the crime
    'Twas him that follows me that drew his sword so fine

The large block in Core-D13 and Exact-D06 relates the later-recorded examples. It contains speeches for the introduction and the calling-on of the dancers, plus some special lines regarding the Doctor, his cure and the recovery of his patient. The following lines are typical:

- From the introduction:

  We're six dancers young never danced much before
  We'll do the best we can the best can do no more

  I'm the king of the conquerors and here I do advance

  And I the ragged clown and I've come to see thee dance

  Dance? Thou admits to see a king dance?

  Dance? I am a king that's highly known
  I'll be very sorry to be offended by a saucy fellow ragged clown

  Wasn't thou stealing swine last night
  Tenting swine perhaps I mean

- From the calling-on speeches:

  Oh the first is Mr. Spark who's lately come from France
  He's the first man in our list and the second in our dance

  God bless your honour's fame and all your young men too
  I've come to act my part as well as I can do

  My valour has been tried through city town and field
  I never met the man that yet could make ye yield

  Cox bobs I'd like forgot, I am one of your crew
  If you want to know my name, my name is love so true

  So you've see us all go round think of us what you will
  Music strike up and play a tune just what you will

- The recovery of the fallen man:

  Good morning gentlemen a sleeping I have been
  I've had such a sleep as the like was never seen
  But now I am awake and alive unto this day
  So we will have a dance and the doctor must seek his pay

The few lines in Core-D10 and Exact-D04 extend earlier themes, and perhaps relate more to the earlier of these plays:

> You've seen them all called in, you've seen them all go round
> Wait but a little while, some pastime will be found
>
> I'm sure twas none of I, I'm clear of the fact
> 'Twas him that follows me that did this bloody act
>
> Then cheer up my bonny bonny lads and be of courage bold
> For we'll take him to the church and we'll bury him in the mould

In the main band, it is worth noting that the Sword Dance Doctor has a particularly magnanimous variant of his fee:

> Ten pounds is my fee, but nine pounds nineteen shillings and eleven pence
> three farthings will I take from thee

Galoshins (or Galation) and other Scottish Plays[22]

Clusters G and H are nearly all Scottish plays, although a couple come from North Eastern England. The trellis structure for these plays is more complex, the two columns having different numbers of rows in the two charts. On top of this, there is also clearly some relationship with the Sword Dance texts as featured in squares Core-D1 and Exact-D1. In overview, the Scottish plays appear to fall into three or four groups.

- The plays represented by square Exact-G03, which is equivalent to the block towards the right of square Core-G02. These generally appear to be the oldest Scottish plays, dating from the start of the 19th century. The lines embody overtly Scottish sentiments and dialect.

From the introduction:

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[22] In his book on the Scottish folk plays, Brian Hayward discusses the name at length, presenting a map to show that the singular form of the name Galation was used in the east of its region, and the plural Galoshins used in the west (B.Hayward, 1992, pp.72-84). He opted to use Galoshins as his standard for the name of the play and for the collective name for the actors. His practice is followed here, although on the basis of the quoted text, Galation is used here for the name of the character.

> Redd up stocks redd up stools
> Here comes in a pack o fools
> Muckle head and little wit stand behint the door
> But sic a set as we are ne'er were here before

Entry of one of the combatants:

> Here comes in the great King of Macedon
> Who has conquered all the world but Scotland alone
> When I came to Scotland my heart grew so cold
> To see a little nation so stout and so bold
> So stout and so bold so frank and so free
> Call upon Galation to fight wi me

The lament and the entry of the Doctor:

> I've killed my brother Jack my father's only son

> Here comes in the best doctor that ever Scotland bred

Judas's concluding part:

> I've been i the east carse, I've been i the west carse
> I've seen geese ga'in on pattens
> And swine fleeing i the air like peelings o' onions

> If you've onything to gi' us stap it in there

Three particular Scottish adaptations of general lines also occur with this group - from square Exact-G01, and the main band of the Core graph:

> Here comes in Galation, Galation is my name

> What will you take to cure this dead man

> I have a little bottle of inker pinker in my pocket

- These last three lines – notably Galation - are also part of the definition of the next group, which occurs in the middle of Exact-H01 and the middle of Core-H01. This group has little more than generic lines from the main band, and the above three lines. However, it also features a challenge, the entry of Doctor Brown (part of Core-G01, but separated in Exact-G02), and the victim's recovery speech:

> The game sir. The game is not within your power
> For with this little weapon I'll slay you in less than half an hour
>
> Yes here come I the little Doctor Brown
> The best old doctor in the town
>
> Once I was dead and now I'm alive
> Blessed be the doctor that made me alive
> We'll all join hands and we'll never fight no more
> And we'll be as brothers as we were before

This group therefore represents fairly rudimentary Galoshins plays. Incidentally, the spelling of this name is highly variable.

- The next group – represented by square Core-H01 and the right hand side of Exact-H02 - lacks Galation, instead having alternative characters with the "hope to win the game" rhyme, such as Slasher. Otherwise this is similar to the previous group, and could be treated together with it.

- Lastly, we have a group towards the left of Core-G01 and the left of Exact-H01 which has the Galation, Doctor Brown and related speeches, further lines from the Sword Dance plays (Core-D01, Exact-D01), and additional introductory lines also akin to the sword dance calling-on:

> Keep silence merry gentlemen unto your courts said I
> My name's Sir Alexander. I'll show you sport said I
> Five of us all fine merry boys are we
> And we are come a rambling your houses for to see
> Your houses for to see sir and pleasure for to have
> And what you freely give us we freely will receive
>
> The next young man that I call in he is a hero fine
> He's admiral of the hairy caps and all his men are mine
>
> Fight on fight on brave warriors fight on with noble speed
> I'll give any man ten hundred pounds to slay Galation dead

There is scope for treating the Sword Dance, Galoshins and other Scottish plays as sub-classes of a single group, which I will call North British, in that it covers North Eastern England as well as most of the Scottish plays.

Irish and Related Plays

On the face of it, the Irish group of plays – squares Core-E06 and Exact-E09 – is one of the easiest groups to define, because the lines are nearly all to be found in the *Christmas Rhime* chapbooks. Particularly typical speeches include:

- George's introductory speech (whose first line is shared with the *Peace Egg* chapbooks):

  > Here come I knight George from England have I sprung
  > One of those noble deeds of valour to begin
  > Seven long years in a close cave have I been kept
  > And out of that into a prison leapt
  > And out of that unto a rock of stone
  > where there I made my sad and grievous moan
  > Many a giant I did subdue
  > I run the fiery dragon through and through
  > I freed fair Sabra from the stake
  > What more could mortal man then undertake
  > I fought them all courageously
  > And still have gained the victory

- Saint Patrick:

  > Here come I Saint Patrick in shining armour bright
  > A famous champion and a worthy knight
  > What was Saint George but Saint Patrick's boy
  > He fed is horse seven long years on oats and hay
  > And afterwards be run away

- Oliver Cromwell:

  > Here comes I Oliver Cromwell as you may suppose
  > I conquered many nations with my copper nose
  > I made my foes for to tremble, and my enemies for to quake
  > And beat all my opposers till I made their hearts to ache

In addition to the truly Irish plays, there are a few plays on mainland Britain that have significant portions of the Irish text – Hulme (Manchester), Tenby, and Stanford-in-the-Vale, Berkshire. The Core analysis also puts the Islip play and the Oxfordshire Christmas play of 1794 in this group, whereas the Exact analysis

places these in the Cotswolds group. As there are relatively few lines in common with both of these clusters, it is possible to ignore these two plays for now.

The Southern English Plays
or Father Christmas and the Turkish Knight

Cluster S – squares Core-S05 and Exact-S07 – is a group that is found throughout southern England, roughly below a line drawn from London to Bristol. There are six lines (three couplets) that particularly typify this group:

> Here comes I old Father Christmas, welcome or welcome not
> I hope old Father Christmas will never be forgot
>
> Here comes I a Turkish Knight
> Come from the Turkish land to fight
>
> Saint George I pray thee be not so bold
> If thy blood be hot I'll soon make it cold

It is because of the ubiquity of the first two couplets that I have sub-titled this version *Father Christmas and the Turkish Knight*. Other characteristic lines include:

> And in this room there shall be shown
> The finest battle that ever was known
>
> Wo ho my little fellow thou talk'st very bold
> Much like a lad that I have been told
>
> Christmas comes but once a year
> When it comes it brings good cheer
> Roast beef plum pudding and mince pies
> Who likes them better than you and I
>
> Pull out your sword and fight
> Pull out your purse and pay
> For satisfaction I will have before you go away
>
> Ladies and gentlemen see what I have done
> I have cut him down like the evening sun

> O pardon me Saint George. O pardon me I crave
> O pardon me this once and I will be thy slave
>
> I never will pardon a Turkish Knight
> Therefore arise and try thy might
>
> In comes Twing Twang
> Lieutenant of this press gang
> I press all these bold mummers and send them aboard a man of war
>
> In comes I little Johnnie Jack
> With my wife and family up my back
> My family is large and I am small
> And so a little helps us all
>
> A mug of your Christmas ale will make us dance and sing
> And money in our pockets is a very fine thing
> So ladies and gentlemen all at your ease
> Give the Christmas boys just what you please

Saint George is the hero of these plays, and is always the "man of courage" bold rather than "the champion bold". Also the Doctor always has his bottle of elecampane. On the other hand, the characters Beelzebub and Devil Doubt are generally absent from these plays, as is also to some extent Slasher.

Cotswold Plays

Three squares – Core-C08 and Exact-C12, Core-C09 and Exact-C13, Core-07 and Exact-C14 – cover a cluster that is situated in the Cotswolds. The way that three squares are involved suggests that they represent a basic Cotswold version and two variants or sub-types.

Core-C08 and Exact-C12 cover the lines that are common to the cluster, and plays towards the left of this block have little more by way of text apart from what is in the main band. It is characterised by:

- The entry of Jack Finney and the cure of the magpie with the toothache:

My name's not Jack Finny
My name is Mr Finny a man of great fame
Can cure more than you or any other man again
What can you do?

I can cure a magpie of the toothache

And how canst do that?

I should cut his head off and throw his body in the ditch

- A challenge:

    A battle, a battle betwixt you and I
    To see which on the ground shall lie

- A call for the Doctor:

    Doctor Doctor where bist thee?
    King George is wounded in the knee
    Doctor Doctor do thy part
    King George is wounded through the heart

- There is also a comical scene where a giant tooth is drawn, and whose lines are too variable to be quoted.

Core-C09 and Exact-C13 develop Jack Finney's rôle as the Doctor's insubordinate assistant – e.g.:

Hold my horse jack

Hold him yourself

What's that you saucy young beggar

I've got him fast by the tail sir

However the main distinguishing features of this block are Land of Cockaigne or Lubberland motifs – for example:

I saw a pigsty tied to an elder bush
Houses thatched with pancakes
Where the streets are pitched with penny loaves

And tangle talk – e.g.:

I went up a straight crooked lane
I met a bark and he dogged at me
I went to the stick and cut a hedge

Last Christmas Eve I turned me spit
I burnt me finger and felt it itch
Spark fled over the table
Potlid whacked the ladle
In runs the frying pan with his long tail
And swore he'd send them all to jail
Up jumps the gridiron, what can't you agree
I'm the judge, bring him to me
I went on a bit further
I knocked at the door and the maid fell out
She asked if I could eat a cup of her cider
And drink a hard crust of her bread and cheese
I said no thanks yes if yer please

Lastly, Core-07 and Exact-C14 represent the Robin Hood plays that have long been recognised as a distinct sub-type of the play (M.J.Preston, 1972b and 1976). This block is characterised by the lines of the ballad *Robin Hood and the Tanner*, F.J.Child (1888, pp.209-213). Given the well-known nature of this ballad, one short passage will suffice as an example

I am a bold tanner from Northamptonshire I came
Long time I wrote my name bold Arthur Abland
With a long pike staff on my shoulder
So well I clear my way
Let them be one two or three I make them flee
They dare no longer stay
As I was walking one summer's morning
Through the forest merry greenwood
To view the red deer
That run here and there
Then I saw bold Robin Hood

Northern English Plays and the Chapbook Texts

Describing the cluster that occupies northern England, including the North Midlands is complicated by the chapbooks published and used in this area. Of the two types, *Alexander and the King of Egypt* seems to have had little recorded

Map 5 - Use of J.White's "Alexander" Chapbook in Folk Plays

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HP	
		HY	HU	
	NB	NC	ND	
	NF	NG	NH	NJ
		NM	NN	NO
		NR	NS	NT	NU
IB	IC		NX	NY	NZ
IF	IG	IH	IJ	SC	SD	SE	TA
IL	IM	IN	IO	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW			SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ

Key

- • = 1 to 16 lines
- ○ = 17 to 32 lines
- ● = 33 or more lines
- ■ = J.White's "Alexander" Chapbook

Map 6 - Use of W.Walker's "Peace Egg" Chapbook in Folk Plays

Key to 100km Grid Squares

				HY	HP	
					HU	
	NB	NC	ND			
	NF	NG	NH	NJ		
	NM	NN	NO			
	NR	NS	NT	NU		
IB	IC	NX	NY	NZ		
IF	IG	IH	IJ			
			SC	SD	SE	TA
IL	IM	IN	IO	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW			SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
			SW	SX	SY	SZ	

Key

- ● = 1 to 16 lines
- ○ = 17 to 32 lines
- ● = 33 or more lines
- ■ = W.Walker's "Peace Egg" Chapbook

Map 7 - Use of Smyth and Lyons' "Christmas Rhime" chapbook in Folk Plays

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HY		HP		
					HU		
	NB	NC	ND				
	NF	NG	NH	NJ			
		NM	NN	NO			
		NR	NS	NT	NU		
IB	IC		NX	NY	NZ		
IF	IG	IH	IJ	SC	SD	SE	TA
IL	IM	IN	IO	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW			SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ

Key

- • = 1 to 16 lines
- ○ = 17 to 32 lines
- ● = 33 or more lines
- ■ = Smyth & Lyons' "Christmas Rhime" chapbook

influence on performed plays. Map 5 shows how many lines from this chapbook are to be found in plays in the database. For a play of over 135 lines, the usage of this text is meagre to say the least. Only four plays on the map have 33 or more of the *Alexander* chapbook lines. One of these is in fact a Whitehaven edition of the chapbook. The Penkridge text may have used the version reprinted by W.Hone (1827) - because it too lacks the Doctor's lines that Hone omits. The other mainland example of high usage is W.Walker's *Peace Egg* chapbook, which incorporates many *Alexander* passages *literatim*. This leaves the White Boys' play on the Isle of Man as the only case in this database where the *Alexander* chapbook itself has had any direct influence on the content of a performed text.

By contrast, the *Peace Egg* chapbooks are known to have had a big influence in the conurbations of the north (E.Cass, 2001, A.Helm, 1980, G.Smith, 1981, etc.). Map 6 shows the usage of *Peace Egg* lines in the play collection. This time the distribution is more significant, in western Yorkshire, south eastern Lancashire, and the north Midlands.[23]

The two English chapbook versions manifest themselves in the trellis graphs in squares Core-N10 and -N12 and in Exact-A04, -N04 and –N05. For the purposes of this part of the discussion, I will keep to Exact references only. The lines in Exact-N04 and most of the lines in Exact-A04 are the lines that are common to both chapbooks, notably:

- The Introduction:

> Room room brave gallants, give us room to sport
> For in this room we wish for to resort
> Resort and to repeat you our merry rhyme
> For remember good sirs this is Christmas time
> The time to cut up goose pies now doth appear
> So we are come to act our merry Christmas here

---

[23] For completeness, Map 7 gives a similar usage distribution for the Irish *Christmas Rhime* chapbook. Its influence is minimal in mainland Britain apart from Hulme, Manchester, near where a one-off edition of the chapbook was published (E.Cass, forthcoming), and in Tenby, Wales.

> At the sound of the trumpet and beat of the drum
> Make room brave gentlemen and let our actors come
> Etc.

- The King of Egypt:

> I am the King of Egypt as plainly doth appear
> I'm come to seek my son my son and only heir

- The challenge to the Prince of Paradine:

> Stand off thou black Morocco dog or by my sword thou'st die
> I'll stiffen thy body full of pellets and make thy buttons fly

- The call for Sambo/Hector and his response:

> For in my life I never stood more need
> And stand not there with sword in hand
> But rise and fight at my command
>
> Yes yes my liege I will obey
> And by my sword I hope to win the day
>
> If he should be of noble blood
> I'll make it run like Noah's flood

A few lines in Exact-A04 relate to the *Alexander* chapbook alone. These are somewhat miscellaneous, except for some lines from Alexander's introductory monologue, which is decidedly redolent of the calling-on lines of the Sword Dance plays. E.g.

> The first I do present he is a noble king
> He's just come from the wars good tidings he doth bring
> The next that doth come in he is a doctor good
> …
> Who by lending of his gold is come to poverty

This now brings us to Exact-N05, which mostly contains the lines that come from *The Peace Egg* alone. E.g.

- Saint George's vaunts:

  I followed a fair lady to a giant's gate
  Confined in dungeon deep to meet her fate
  Etc.

- The challenges between Saint George and Slasher:

  And for to fight with me I see thou art not able
  So with my trusty broad sword I soon will thee disable

  Disable, disable it lies not in thy power
  For with my glittering sword and spear I soon will thee devour

  Stand off Slasher let no more be said
  For if I draw my sword I'm sure to break thy head

  How canst thou break my head

- Lines from the Doctor's list of cures:

  I have in my pockets crutches for lame ducks
  And plaisters for broken backed mice

- The cure itself:

  Here Jack take a little out of my bottle
  And let it run down thy throttle

- The dialogue about Slasher's back, following his recovery:

  O my back!

  What's amiss with thy back?

  My back is wounded
  And my heart is confounded
  To be struck out of seven senses into four score
  The like was never seen in old England before

  Farewell Saint George we can no longer stay
  Down yonder is the way

- The Prince of Paradine's introduction:

> I am black Prince of Paradine born of high renown
> Soon I will fetch Saint George's lofty courage down

- Inquiries following the death of the Prince of Paradine:

> He is slain

> Who did him slay who did him kill
> And on the ground his precious blood did spill?

> I did him slay I did him kill
> And on the ground his precious blood did spill
> Please you my liege my honour to maintain
> Had you been there you might have fared the same

The *Peace Egg* and those plays influenced by it appear towards the right of Exact-N05. These include, as a sub-sub-group, the few texts that have lines in square Exact-N17 (Core-N16), which are lines of the Pace-Egging/Souling song, especially the description of Tosspot.

Finally, we have the plays in Exact-N10 that are not related to the chapbooks. These have little more than basic main band lines, and therefore it could be argued that they are closest to the putative proto-text. There are however a few North Midlands texts, such as Selston, Notts., where Bull Guy in his variant spellings replaces Slasher. His lines appear to be the same as Slasher's, although they are very variable. Just the name is different. Bull Guy is clearly meant to represent an infidel antagonist, and as such he perhaps represents a step towards (or from) the Turkish Knight.

Other Groups

There are two other recognised groups, of known provenance, that are not represented in the database. The first of these consists of the West Indian Mummies' plays. These are Hero-Combat plays that have been shown to derive from the text published by Juliana Horatia Ewing in 1884 (P.Millington, 1996). This script was compiled from five known texts that span several of the groups described above. It consequently does not really fit properly in any of them, and

therefore the West Indian plays should be placed in a group of their own along with Mrs. Ewing's original.

The other group comprises the distinctive tradition of Mumming in Wexford, Ireland (J.Parle, 2001). Originally, the plays in Wexford were the same as the other Irish plays (see for instance the Ballybrennan play). However, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the plays were totally rewritten to represent patriotic Irish themes. The dialogue texts in Parle's comprehensive book show enough variation to suggest that rewriting was a regular occurrence at that time. However, this state of affairs settled down into a mix of speech and dance with some superficial format similarities with the English sword dance plays. Such Mummers still perform today. The speeches consist of a series of relatively long monologues by patriotic Irish characters from all periods, but particularly from the Wexford uprising of 1798 (e.g. Wolfe Tone). However there is no real dialogue as such. Instead it is a series of self-presentations, interspersed with dancing. All the participants dress alike with sashes and distinctive hats – except for Father Murphy, who is dressed in black as a priest. They carry short "Mumming sticks" that are clashed during the step dancing, then various figures are performed. As they no longer have a quack doctor character, Wexford Mummers should perhaps fall outside the scope of this study. However there is clearly a historical relationship, and they warrant their own group.

Lastly, of course, there are the unique plays – mostly compositions and compilations – that were excluded from the cluster analyses. These cannot be assigned to any of the groups on textual grounds, and can only be classed as "Other". Mrs Ewing's *Peace Egg* would also have been among these plays, were it not for its subsequent utilisation in the West Indies.

The Evolution of Folk Plays – Some Concepts

For a given version of a folk play – or indeed of any traditional whole text – it is to be expected that a certain amount of "drift" in content takes place, due to the

vagaries of oral transmission, imperfect memory, adaptation to suit different audiences and so on. This drift takes place both over time and space as the version spreads. However, the changes are relatively minor, and there is evidence from the distribution maps – for instance of the Plough Plays and the Cotswolds version – that the geographical range of such a version is likely to have a finite limit.

It is also evident that substantial transient changes occur, for instance, to insert topical allusions, to extend the duration of a performance, to exploit the abilities of a particular performer, etc. This appears to have been particularly so in the 18th and early 19th centuries, when people had no scruples about incorporating literary and ballad works into folk plays (see for instance the Truro play). To judge from the database, these changes mostly involved the addition of supplementary material, rather than deletion or replacement. Similarly, they mostly appear to have been one-off occurrences. However, on rare occasions some passages became permanent features, at least on a local or regional scale.[24]

The theme of the foregoing two paragraphs is that folk play texts are relatively stable, albeit within a generous range of allowable variability. New versions arise from major creative events, that is to say substantial adaptations and rewrites. This might simply involve the addition of new characters or scenes, however, a more important characteristic is that original material is displaced by new. This might be totally new material, and/or could be significant paraphrasing and rewording of existing lines. Whatever these changes are, if they persist, they are likely to become a new, possibly regional variant.

Interesting things are bound to occur whenever two versions collide, especially if the lines paraphrase each other. This could happen, for instance, when an actor migrates to a new part of the country where a different version is performed. It could be that the versions compete for supremacy with only one

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[24] An example is the permanent incorporation of the Lady's speech from Henry Carey's The *Honest Yorkshireman* (1735) in the Recruiting Sergeant plays.

victor. Alternatively, the versions might hybridise, with a mixture of speeches from both versions. This could be the mechanism by which plays with multiple combats arose. If the pairs of antagonists were different, the combats could be added one after the other. A similar mechanism could extend the list of the Doctor's cures and travels, add extra *quête* characters, and so forth. On the other hand where the versions had different speeches that serve the same function – for instance Saint George's self-introduction – presumably only one speech could be chosen.

If this hypothesis regarding the genesis of new variants is valid, then it seems logical that all versions of the Quack Doctor plays ultimately derive from a single proto-text. This is not a particularly new idea. The overall similarity of all the texts has led others – e.g. D.Kennedy (1930) and M.Dean-Smith (1958, p.245) – to suggest that they share a single common origin. Hitherto, it has been proposed that there was a single large all-encompassing *Ur*-text from which the later texts descended by attrition. This one-way attrition of material is an unrealistic view of evolution, that is no longer accepted (G.Smith, 1978). It is more realistic to posit a single proto-text from which the various versions derived by mechanisms such as those just described – both losing and gaining material.

Textual Clues to Ancestry

Along with the concept of the all-encompassing *Ur*-text came the idea that it might be possible to reconstruct this *Ur*-text from the supposedly fragmentary texts that have been collected in recent times. No one has achieved such a reconstruction, although I am not aware that anyone has ever really tried. Chambers published a "normalized text", but this was meant to be a collation of common features for discussion, and definitely not a putative archetype (E.K.Chambers, 1933, pp.6-9). The general frustration at not knowing what to do with the texts is nicely expressed by Cass and Roud:

> "…the texts obviously contain vital clues – if only we could just
> learn how to read them!"   *(E.Cass & S.Roud, 2002, p.18)*

Now that distinct versions have been identified in this study that are more specific than earlier categorisations, it may be possible to find evidence in the texts as to which version derived from which, and hence determine the one that represents or is closest to the proposed proto-text.

Dates are of limited help in determining ancestry. Many texts are not dated, and collection or publication dates are likely to be quite some time after the year of performance – perhaps up to fifty or sixty years later. Furthermore, accidents of collection mean that coverage is decidedly patchy, both in terms of time and geography. It is fair to say that the further apart the recorded dates of two versions are in time, the more likely it is that one version arose before the other, but there is always an element of uncertainty, and other corroborative evidence is also needed.

General Observations and Tendencies

In examining the database, a number of observations can be made that may have significance regarding the evolution of the texts.

Firstly, as discussed in an earlier chapter, there is a general tendency for textual material to be lost over time, especially during the terminal phase of the custom.. This tendency can be seen in the Mesa graph in Figure 38, and to a lesser extent in the Trellis graphs. In the Mesa graph there are horizontal bands of vertical lines. The oldest text of the band forms a solid line on the boundary line at the left (or a near solid line at the left of a block in a Trellis graph). Other texts in the band generally exhibit progressively more gaps as one moves further to the right, showing that material is lost over time.

Secondly, the oldest lines and verses show most significant variations. A good example is the "Room, room…" line (Std.ID 130) which is one of the oldest in the database. It has at least five variants, each ending with a different rhyme word, and therefore tending to have different following rhyme lines. Furthermore, the line variants tend to show regional patterns of distribution, and therefore perhaps merit investigation.

Figure 38 - Mesa Graph - All Plays - Lines occurring 3 or more times
(Vertical lines mark intervals of 25 years)

Thirdly, prose is more variable than verse, probably because it lacks the constraining factors of metre and rhyme words. These same constraints mean that it is more likely that verse will lose its rhyme than that prose will acquire rhyme. This is especially true if the lines adjacent to a verse are also in rhyme, or if the lines next to prose are prose too.

Lastly, as already stated above, 18th- and early 19th-century folk plays appear more likely to incorporate passages of literary or ballad passages into their texts.

Evidence of Specific Relationships

There are phenomena, such as the following, that may reflect an ancestral link between two or more entities. Even so, there may be no clue as to the direction in which the evolution took place – i.e., which of the entities came first.

Some line variations are more significant than others, because it seems unlikely that the relevant changes could be either re-created and/or reversed spontaneously. There are two such situations:

- Semantic changes within a line.

- Substitution of a different rhyme line in a verse.

A good example of semantic change is the line following the threat to "hash thee and smash thee as small as flies" (Std.ID 410). Here the challenger says he will send his opponent to one of a variety of places or people "to make mince pies" – the Devil/Satan, cookshop/pastrycook/kitchen/bakehouse, Jamaica, over the seas, Turkey, etc (Std.IDs 420 to 428). Clearly the Devil and Satan are interchangeable, and no significance can be attached to one name being replaced by the other. The same applies to the cookshop, pastrycook, etc., because the culinary theme is maintained. A change from Satan to the cookhouse could happen spontaneously, because this fits rationally with the ensuing "mince pies", and is therefore of low significance. However, a change from the cookshop to

Satan is significant because of the semantic shift, with no obvious internal rationality for the change.[25]

Most interesting of all is the reference to Jamaica, since this seems totally irrational. Again, this might change into cook shop, pastry cook, etc., to go with the mince pies. Similarly, it would be rational for it to be changed to Turkey if it is the Turkey Champion who is being threatened. It might also be generalised to become "over the seas". All these changes could be repeated spontaneously on independent occasions and therefore have low significance. However, any change *to* Jamaica seems so improbable that it could only have taken place once. Consequently, it must either have been in the original version of the line, or the introduction of Jamaica marks a significant change of direction.

Examples of the second case, where the second line of a couplet is different, are more clear cut because the alternative lines tend to differ radically. Thus, for instance, consider the line "I open the door, I enter in" (Std.ID 1380). Two of its alternative rhyme lines are - "I hope your favour for to win" (Std.ID 1390) and "I beg your pardon to begin" (Std.ID 27710). It seems highly improbable that either of these rhyme lines could have been changed into the other on more than one occasion.

There are some alternative verses, if not whole speeches, that serve a particular function that ordinarily one might expect to occur only once in a given play – for instance the self-introduction of a character. If in reality such speeches indeed turn out to be mutually exclusive, this indicates a deliberate change of direction. Conversely, if both alternatives appear in one text, this is evidence of hybridisation or a deliberate effort to extend a performance.

Examples of mutually exclusive lines come from the Doctor's entry speech. There are four such lines, which all appear to be mutually exclusive – "In comes I

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[25] In this case, the change may analogise a line later in the speech that threatens to "send you to Satan before thou art three days old".

the Doctor", "In comes I Doctor Brown, the best old doctor in the town", "I am a doctor pure and good", and "Yes there is a doctor to be found". The Truro Christmas play (formerly assigned to Mylor) shows what can happen when two versions are merged. The Truro play is a pastiche of at least two plays, including the typical Irish text and a Father Christmas and Turkish Knight text. Both have an introductory Saint George speech, but only the Irish speech has been used in the Truro text.

If two normally exclusive speeches or rôles both appear in a given play, special circumstances may apply. For instance, I suggest that the natural state for a Quack Doctor play is to have one hero and one antagonist, and therefore one cure. Cases of there being two heroes are relatively rare, but in and around Hampshire, and in a few other places, Saint/King George may have more than one adversary – typically Slasher and the Turkish Knight. An explanation could be that when the two previously independent plays came into contact with each other, someone decided to concatenate the two combats, presumably to prolong the action. There may sometimes still only be one cure, or perhaps one cure speech that is repeated. In *The Peace Egg* chapbook, Saint George unusually introduces himself twice using different speeches, but this is perhaps rational in this context because he does this in separate "Acts". On the other hand, this situation suggests that the chapbook was compiled from a combination of two or more texts (one of which was the *Alexander* chapbook).

In some circumstances, clues to ancestry can be found in the textual overlap and non-overlap between different plays or versions. For instance, a Venn diagram can be drawn, showing the overlap between the lines of three versions A, B and C. The following configuration is significant:
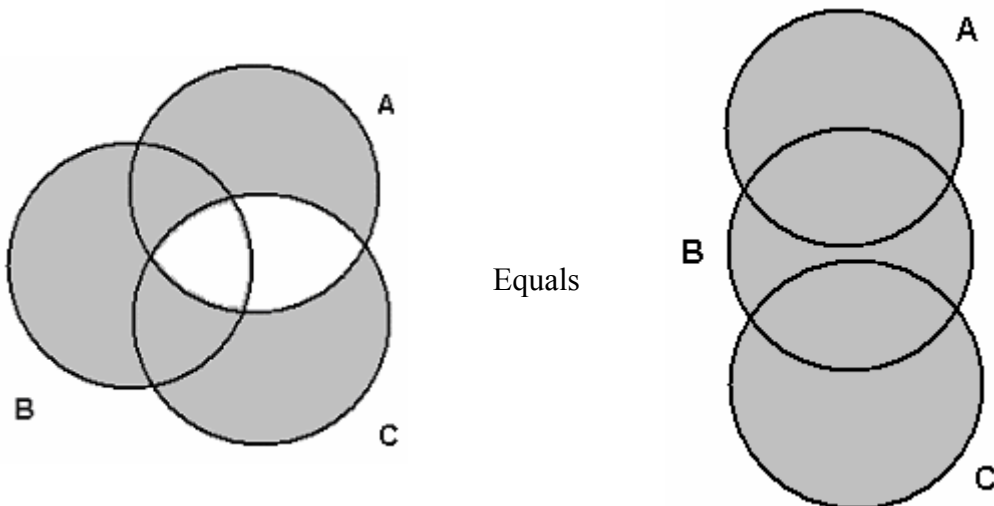
Equals
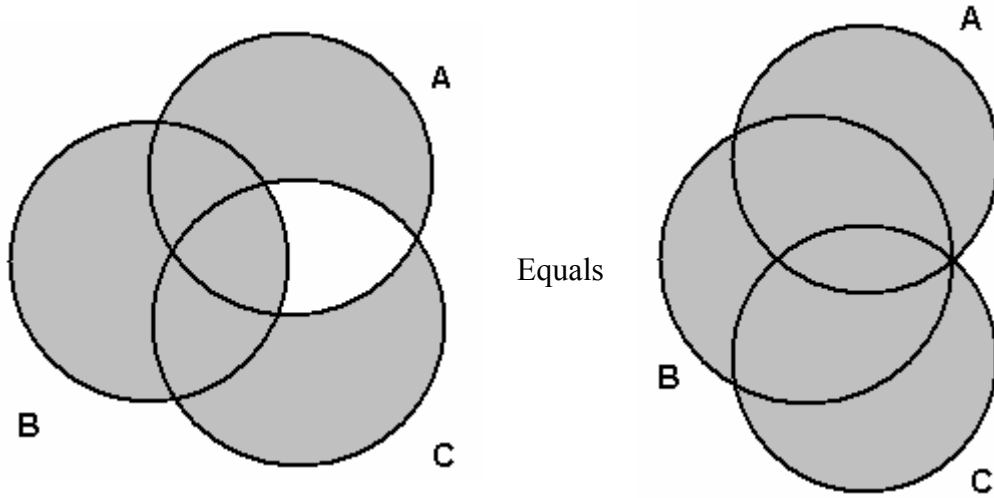
This indicates three possible evolutionary routes between the versions;

- A to B then B to C

- C to B then B to A

- B to A and independently B to C

Equals

If the blank segment for the intersection of A with C were also shaded to indicate shared text, no such inferences could be made. This case can be taken

further, if additionally there is no common text in the intersection between A, B and C, and in the second pair of Venn diagrams.

The same three ancestral routes are possible here, but there is the additional possibility that B could have been hybridised from A and C. The material shared by all three plays precludes the possibility of hybridisation in the first case.

This technique is used in my paper on the Truro Christmas play (P.Millington, 2002), where I investigate the textual overlap between (a) the *Alexander* chapbook, (b) the putative Father Christmas and Turkish Knight play, and (c) the Irish *Christmas Rhime* chapbook. The Venn diagrams for these three versions conform to the first case given above, with the texts being represented by A, B and C in that order.   Of the three possible evolutionary routes between them, *Alexander* → Father Christmas and the Turkish Knight → Irish seems the most likely. This is because, firstly, the earliest dates of the versions are consistent with this lineage (1750s, 1780s and c.1810 respectively). Secondly, this is the only route where each step entails a loss of *Alexander* material, which conforms with the tendency for material to be lost over time.

One last tool that may help determine specific evolutionary relationships is the distribution map. Different variant or alternative speeches often occupy discrete geographical regions. In the case of variants, this helps to confirm that the differences are real rather than imagined. If it is assumed that one variant replaced the alternative, and the distributions for the two are merely adjacent, maps unfortunately give no clue as to which came first. However, if one alternative appears as an "island" surrounded by the other variant, either the island will have been superimposed on a more widespread pre-existing distribution, or the island represents an area that resisted later change. In the context of folk plays, it seems more likely that the island is more recent, because generally speaking the oldest lines are spread over the whole country, and newer lines appear to be regional.

Specific Ancestral Relationships

I will now examine the evidence for links between specific groups, with the aim of being able to generate a family tree for them, and therefore hopefully identify the ultimate origin for the Quack Doctor plays. I start by examining the more clear cut relationships.

Links between Ireland and the British Mainland

The texts of the Irish folk plays (excluding the modern Wexford Mummers) are homogeneous when compared with the variable texts of mainland Britain. The established view is that the plays were introduced to Ireland from Britain (A.Gailey, 1968, pp.15-16 and H.Glassie, 1975, p.135), although there has been no attempt to determine a more specific provenance. Now, an examination of the data in the study database, coupled with distribution mapping, indicates a specific English group with which the Irish plays are linked. This is the Cotswold group. As with the other groups, the textual differences between the Irish and the Cotswold groups are substantial, and therefore some major rewriting must have taken place in transit. However, there are some distinctive lines that are common to both these groups, but which do not appear in the other groups, or at least much less frequently. The lines with the most specific affinity are (using the Smyth and Lyons chapbook text for the examples, 1803-1818):

> I am a doctor pure and good
> And with my sword can staunch his blood   *(Std.ID 2210-2220)*

> Room, room brave gallant boys, come give us room to rhime
> We are come to show our activity in Christmas time   *(Std.ID 132-164)*

The distribution of these speeches is given in Maps 8 and 9, to illustrate the correlation between the two regions. The following lines have somewhat less affinity, because they also occur sporadically outside the Cotswolds region:

> Active young and active age
> The like was never acted on a stage   *(Std.ID 1950-1960)*

Map 8 - I am a doctor pure and good / And with my skill I can staunch his blood

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HY	HP	
				HU	
	NB	NC	ND		
NF	NG	NH	NJ		
	NM	NN	NO		
		NR	NS	NT	NU
IB	IC	NX	NY	NZ	
IF	IG	IH	IJ		
IL	IM	IN	IO	SC	SD	SE	TA
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IV	IW		SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
			SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
			SW	SX	SY	SZ
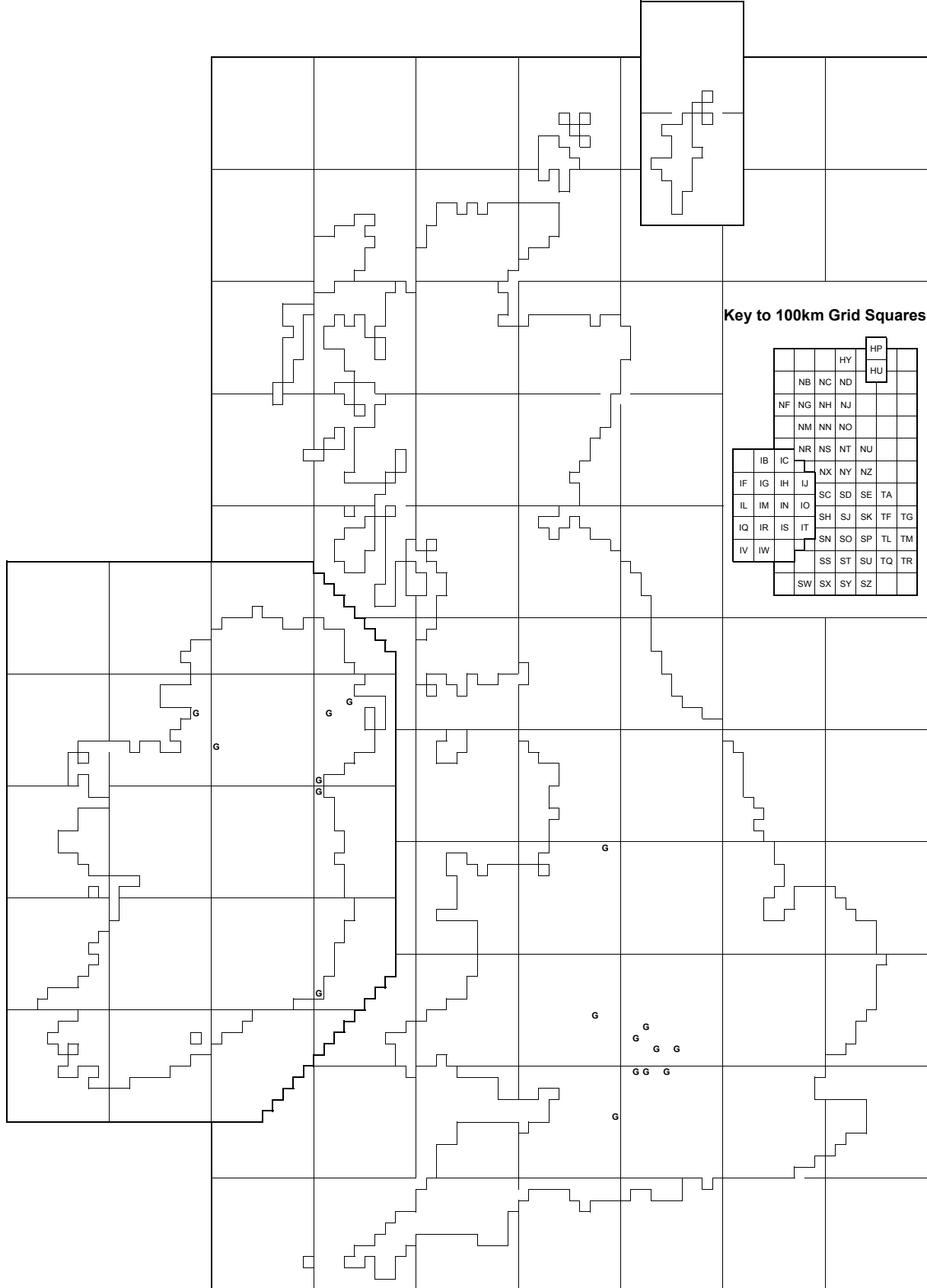
Key

G = Std.ID 2210/2220 - I am a doctor pure and good / And with my skill I can staunch his blood

Map 9 - Room, room, brave gallant boys, come give us room to rhyme

Key to 100km Grid Squares

		HY		HP	
				HU	
NB	NC	ND			
NF	NG	NH	NJ		
	NM	NN	NO		
	NR	NS	NT	NU	
IB	IC	NX	NY	NZ	
IF	IG	IH	IJ		
IL	IM	IN	IO	SC	SD	SE	TA
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IV	IW			SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
				SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ	
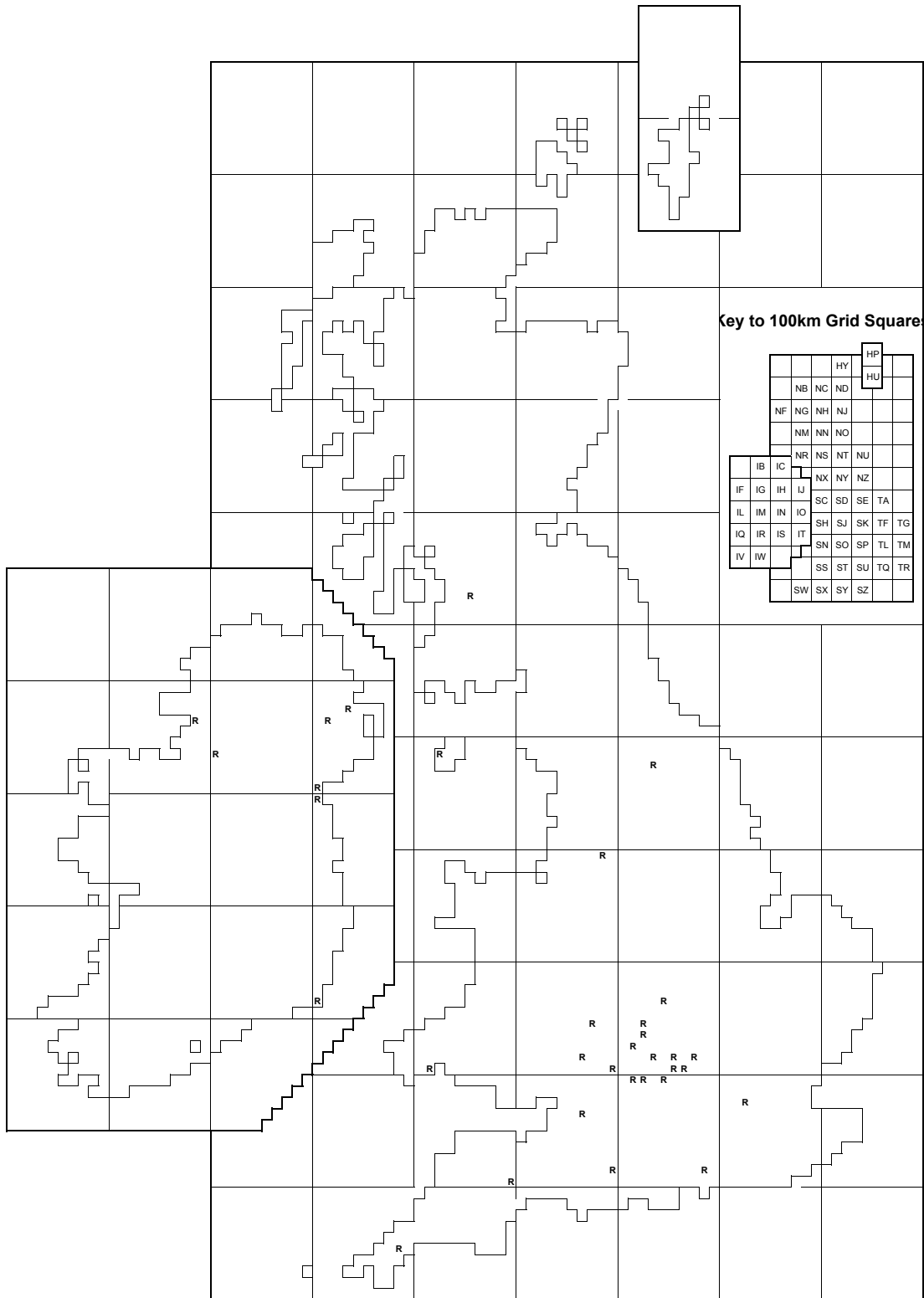
Key

R = Std.ID 132 - Room, room, brave gallant boys, come give us room to rhyme
Std.ID 164 - We've come to show activity upon a Christmas time

> Shew me the man that dare me stand
> I'll cut him down with my courageous hand　　　　*(Std.ID 2100-2110)*
>
> If you bring me an old woman of threescore and ten　　　*(Std.ID 2260)*

The last line is not common, so it is perhaps weak evidence. Overall, this evidence demonstrates an ancestral link between the Cotswold and Irish folk plays. However, as cautioned earlier, it does not indicate which version was derived from which. I am inclined to concur with the established view that the English play came first, if only because a couple of the Cotswold plays pre-date the earliest Irish text (e.g. the unlocated Oxfordshire play published by E.Jones, 1794). Nonetheless, the possibility remains that the transmission might have taken place in the opposite direction, from Ireland to the Cotswolds.

On the other hand, later re-transmission from Ireland to Britain has been proven. In discussing the geographic origins of the Irish plays, Gailey (1969, p.62) stated that "…nowhere in Britain has anything identical ever been found." This is no longer the case. A Manchester edition of the Irish chapbook text has recently been found (E.Cass, forthcoming). It is likely that this chapbook was the sourec of Irish speeches that were incorporated into the play from Hulme, Manchester. Elsewhere, typically Irish speeches – such as Oliver Cromwell and parts of the Prince George speech - are to be found in south Wales at Tenby and in the Gower peninsula (Celfyddydau Mari Arts, 1999). There are also Irish elements in the Truro play (P.Millington, forthcoming) and at Stanford in the Vale, Berkshire. Apart from the Gower plays, these plays appear on Map 7. If it is true that the Irish plays were originally exported from England, then these texts and fragments represent re-imports.

Plough Play Sources

Earlier on, I presented a view of the internal evolution of the Plough Play group, in which an independent multiple wooing scene was merged with a Saint George play. Later the multiple wooing was dropped in favour of the recruiting scene. However, I did not explore the provenance of the Saint George play

elements. Using similar methods to those just used, it perhaps comes as no surprise that these elements seem to belong to the adjacent Northern English group of plays. The key speeches with the most affinity are:

> My head is made of iron.
> My body's made of steel
> My hand and feet of knuckle bone.
> I challenge thee to feel   *(Std.ID 1860-1870)*

> How came you to be a doctor?

> By my travels.

> Where have you travelled?   *(Std.ID 12540-12550-12560)*

> Here Jack, take a little of my nip nap / wiff waff   *(Std.ID 1650)*

The distributions of the above speeches are given in Maps 10, 11 and 12 respectively. In each case, the Plough Plays, which are located in the East Midlands near the Wash, are indistinguishable from the Northern English group. Additionally, it should be said that whenever Saint George himself appears in the Plough Plays, he is normally "the noble champion bold" as with the other Northern English plays – whereas in the Southern English group he is usually "a man of courage bold".

The link with the Northern English group seems quite strong, and yet there are a couple of differences that appear to suggest a tenuous link with the Cotswold group of plays. The following lines are shown in Map 13.

> In comes I that's never been before
> Six merry actors stand at your door   *(Std.ID 27290-11080)*

There is also a subtle variation in the final line of Beelzebub's introductory quatrain – shown in Map 14 – where both the Cotswold and Plough Plays have:

> Don't you think I'm a jolly old man   *(Std.ID 2495)*

as opposed to "I think myself a jolly old man", which is used elsewhere in the north, and in Ireland. Perhaps the Plough Plays derived their Saint George play

Map 10 - My head is made of iron. My body's made of steel / ... I challenge thee to feel

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HP			
		HY	HU			
NB	NC	ND				
NF	NG	NH	NJ			
NM	NN	NO				
NR	NS	NT	NU			
	NX	NY	NZ			
SC	SD	SE	TA			
SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG		
SN	SO	SP	TL	TM		
SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR		
SW	SX	SY	SZ			

IB	IC
IF	IG	IH	IJ
IL	IM	IN	IO
IQ	IR	IS	IT
IV	IW
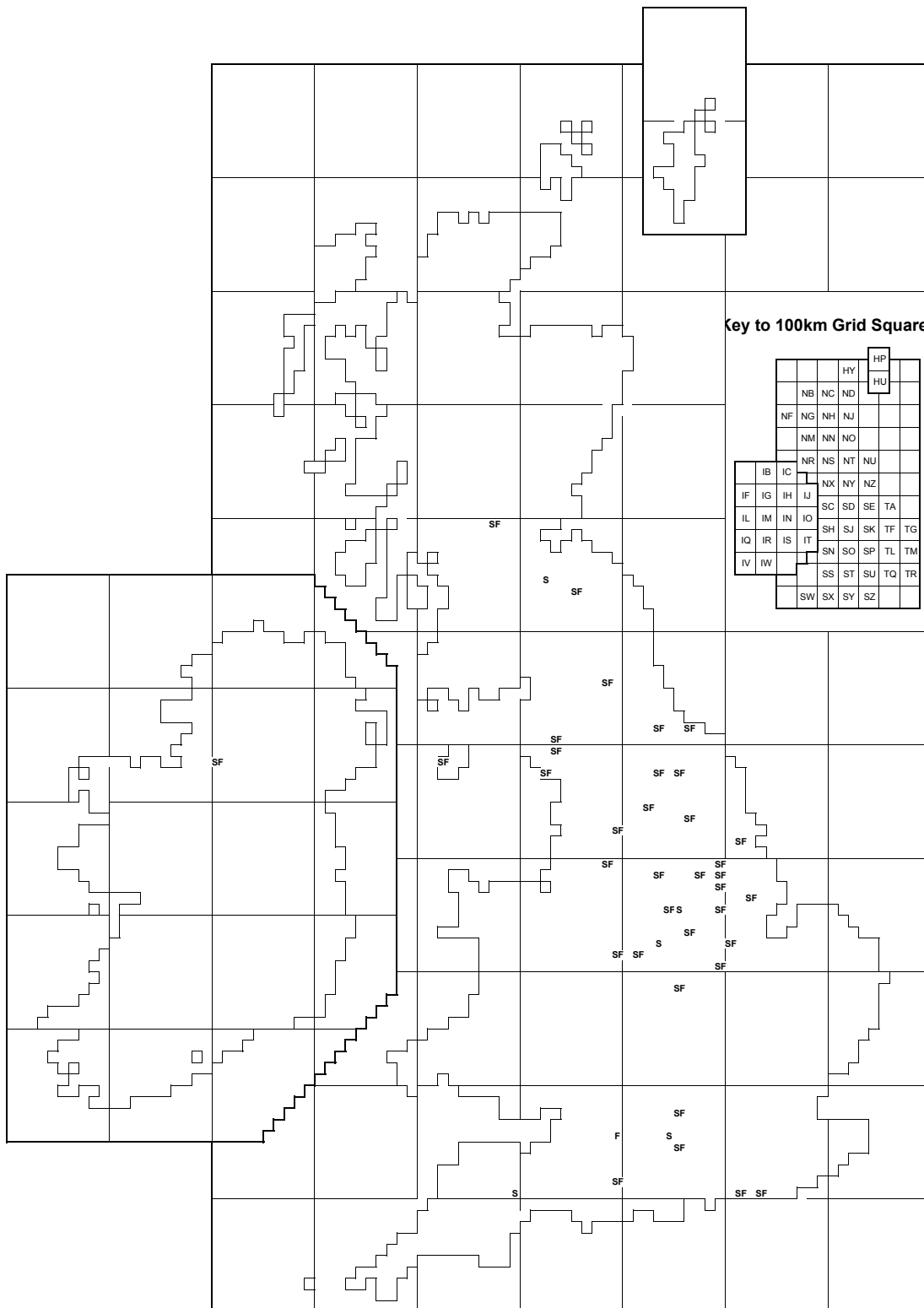
Key

S = Std.ID 1860 - My head is made of iron. My body's made of steel
F = Std.ID 1870 - My hand and feet of knuckle bone. I challenge thee to feel

Map 11 - How came you to be a doctor? / By my travels / Where have you travelled?

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HP	
		HY	HU	
NB	NC	ND		
NF	NG	NH	NJ	
NM	NN	NO		
NR	NS	NT	NU	
IB	IC	NX	NY	NZ	
IF	IG	IH	IJ		
IL	IM	IN	IO	SC	SD	SE	TA
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IV	IW			SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
				SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ
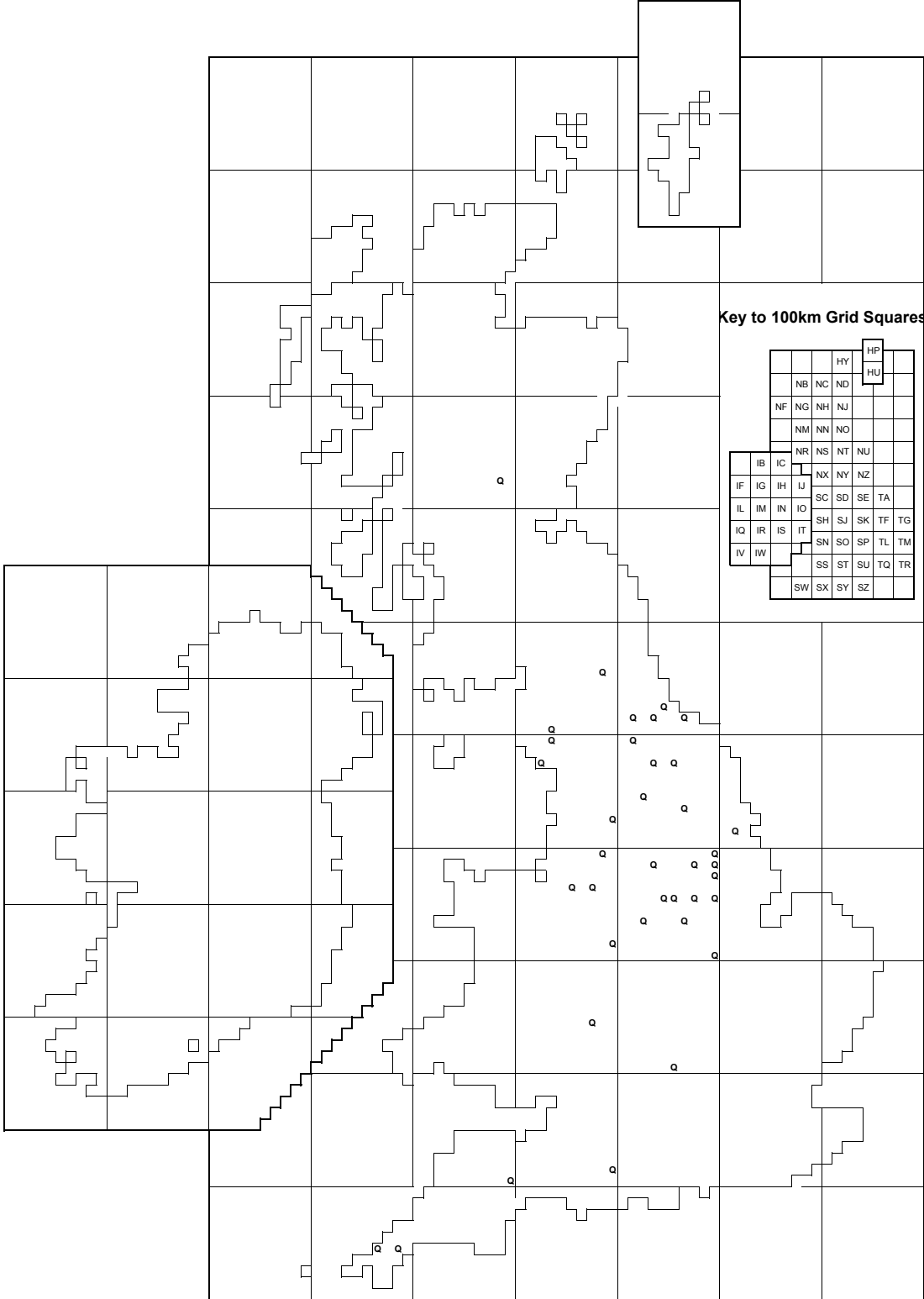
Key

Q = Std.ID 12540 - How came you to be a doctor?
Std.ID 12550 - By my travels
Std.ID 12560 - Where have you travelled?

Map 12 - Here Jack, take a little of my nip nap / wiff waff

Key to 100km Grid Squares
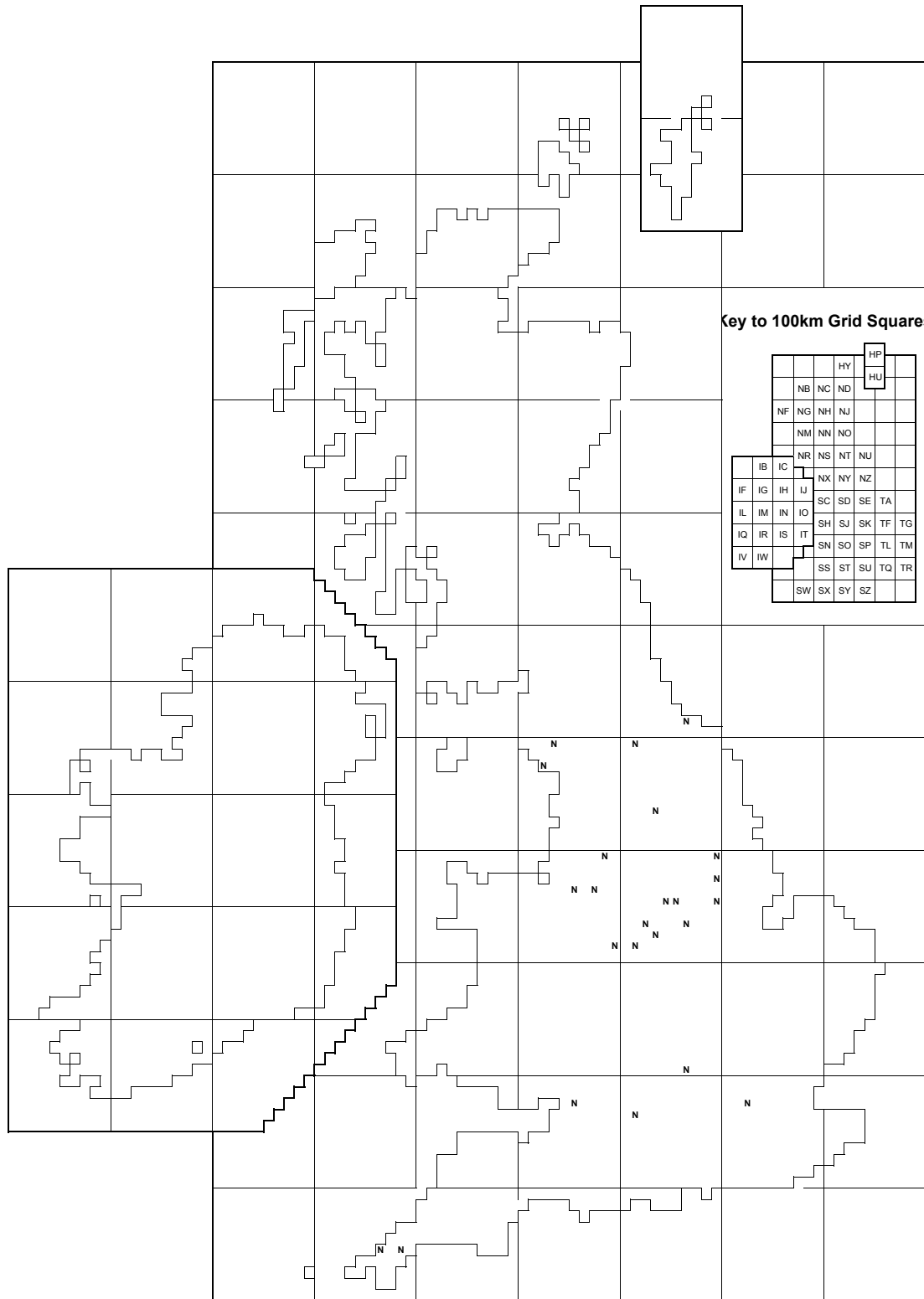
Key

N = Std.ID 1650 -   Here Jack, take a little of my nip nap / wiff waff

Map 13 - In comes I that's never been before

Key to 100km Grid Squares

				HY		HP	
						HU	
	NB	NC	ND				
NF	NG	NH	NJ				
NM	NN	NO					
	NR	NS	NT	NU			
IB	IC	NX	NY	NZ			
IF	IG	IH	IJ				
IL	IM	IN	IO	SC	SD	SE	TA
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IV	IW			SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
				SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ
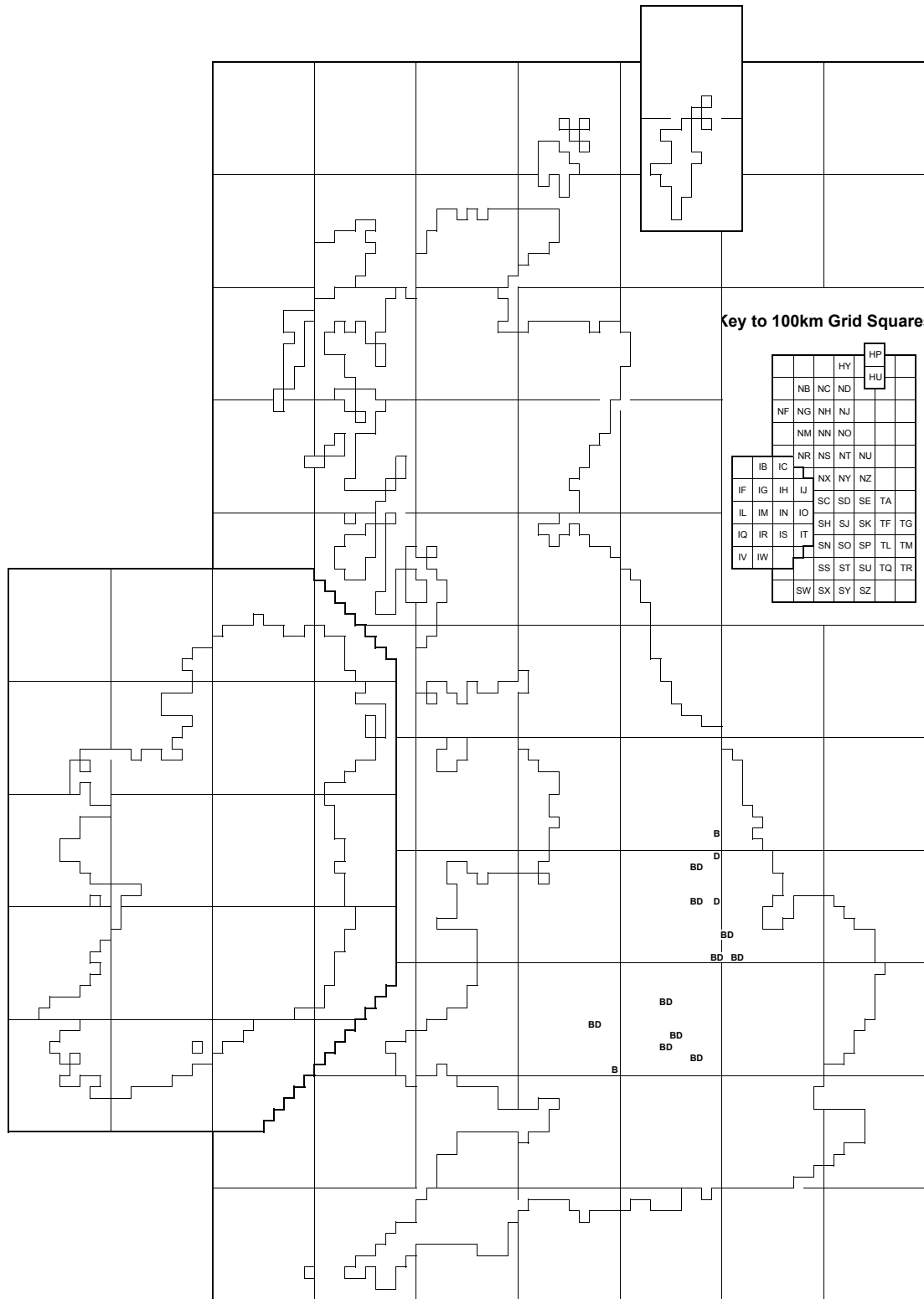
Key

B = Std.ID 27290 -   In comes I that's never been before
D = Std.ID 11080 -   Six merry actors stand at your door

Map 14 - Beelzebub, the jolly old man

Key to 100km Grid Squares

				HP	
			HY	HU	
	NB	NC	ND		
NF	NG	NH	NJ		
	NM	NN	NO		
	NR	NS	NT	NU	
IB	IC	NX	NY	NZ	
IF	IG	IH	IJ	SC	SD	SE	TA
IL	IM	IN	IO	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW			SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ	
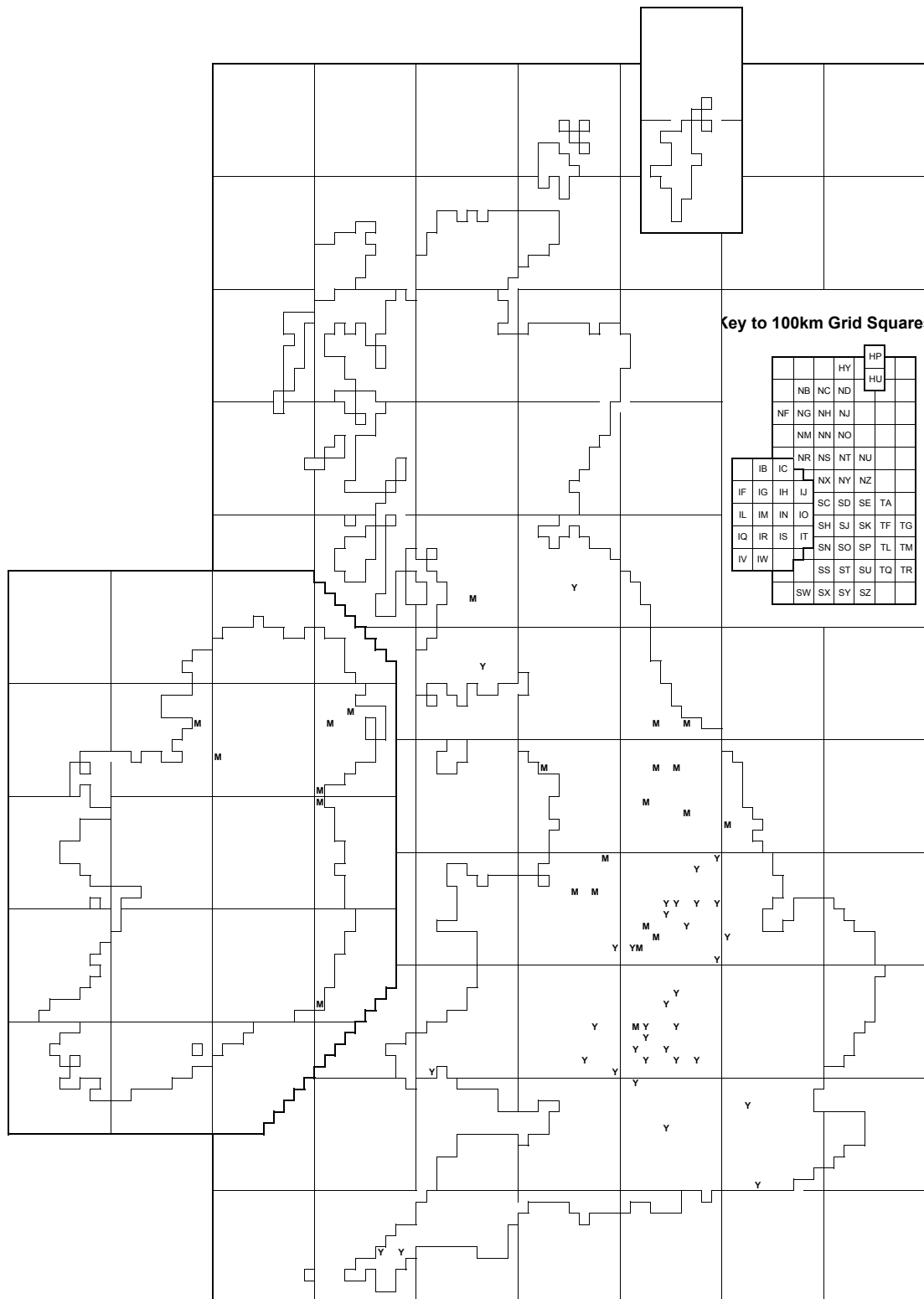
Key

M = Std.ID 2490 - I think myself a jolly old man
Y = Std.ID 2495 - Don't you think I'm a jolly old man

elements from an older Northern English version, that may have spread further south before the advent of Jack Finney.

The Northern English and Southern English Versions

While Map 10 demonstrates a strong link between the Plough Plays and the Northern English group, there is an additional sparse distribution for the "Iron and steel" speech in southern England, with a gap inbetween that corresponds to the Cotswold plays. There are indeed other speeches that are shared by the Northern English and Southern English groups that are either not present in the Cotswold group or only weakly represented. In addition to "Iron and steel" speech, these are:

> I am Saint George the noble champion bold   *(Std.ID 290)*
> > *and*
> In comes I Saint George that man of courage bold   *(Std.ID 295)*
>
> I fought the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter   *(Std.ID 310)*
> And by that means I won the King of Egypt's daughter   *(Std.ID 320)*
>
> Pull out thy purse and pay   *(Std.ID 1780)*
>
> Ten pounds is my fee but five I'll take off thee   *(Std.ID 1582)*

As it happens, all these lines appear in *The Peace Egg* chapbooks. This being a compilation, the question arises as to whether these lines existed in the northern tradition before the publication of the chapbook, or if the chapbooks were the ultimate source for the lines in the north. Certainly all these lines do pre-date *The Peace Egg* in the north. As proof, the Saint George lines appear in the *Alexander* chapbook – an 18th-century source used by *The Peace Egg* – and the remaining lines and the dragon legend speech all appear in the Cheshire play recorded by Francis Douce sometime before 1788 (D.Broomhead, 1982). However, this evidence is insufficient on its own to be able say whether the Northern group is older than the Southern group, or *vice versa*.

Thoughts on King George, Saint George, and the Dragon

Before proceeding with a discussion of the possible genesis of the Southern English group, I wish to make some observations on the characters Saint George and King George - and if it comes to that, Prince George. In the past, it has always been assumed that these names are interchangeable. Saint George is usually regarded as the original name, but presumably in deference to the Hanoverian monarchy, it had been changed to King George or Prince George.[26] Cass and Roud give the clearest statement of this view:
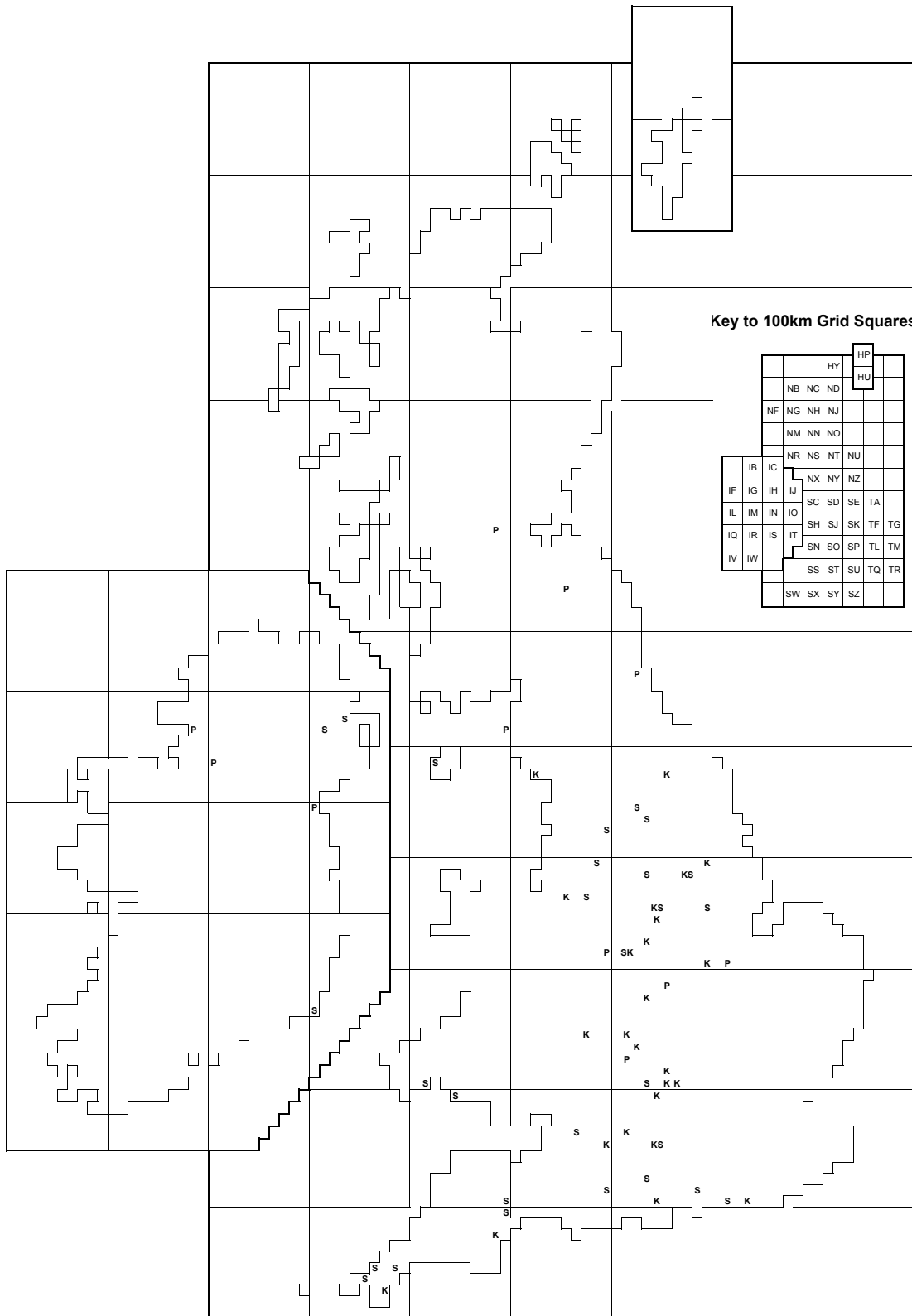
> "…Saint George or King George … is by far the most common combatant character name across the country… His boasts usually include references to the famous St. George legend – the dragon, winning a princess, and so on – so it is pretty safe to assume that as a mummers' character he was a Saint before he was a King. It also seems that the other occasional English kings and princes, such as King William or Prince George, are a further and later development." *(E.Cass and S.Roud, 2002, pp.36)*

On the face of it, these assumptions seem reasonable and intuitive, but they need testing. Map 15 shows the distribution of the George's title as it appears in his introductory speech, with statistics that include the plays that cannot be plotted. Here, he is a Saint in about 50% of cases, a King in 35% of cases, and a Prince 15% of the time. Roughly similar proportions apply regardless of whatever introductory speeches he uses – with one exception that is considered shortly. In additon, there are some plays where other characters' speeches, line tags and/or stage directions refer to George by a different title to the one used in his own speech. In general therefore, the various George names are indeed interchangeable. On the other hand, there seem to be regional trends in the distribution of the names. King George is prominent in the centre of England, while Prince George is important in Ireland and north Britain. Saint George, on
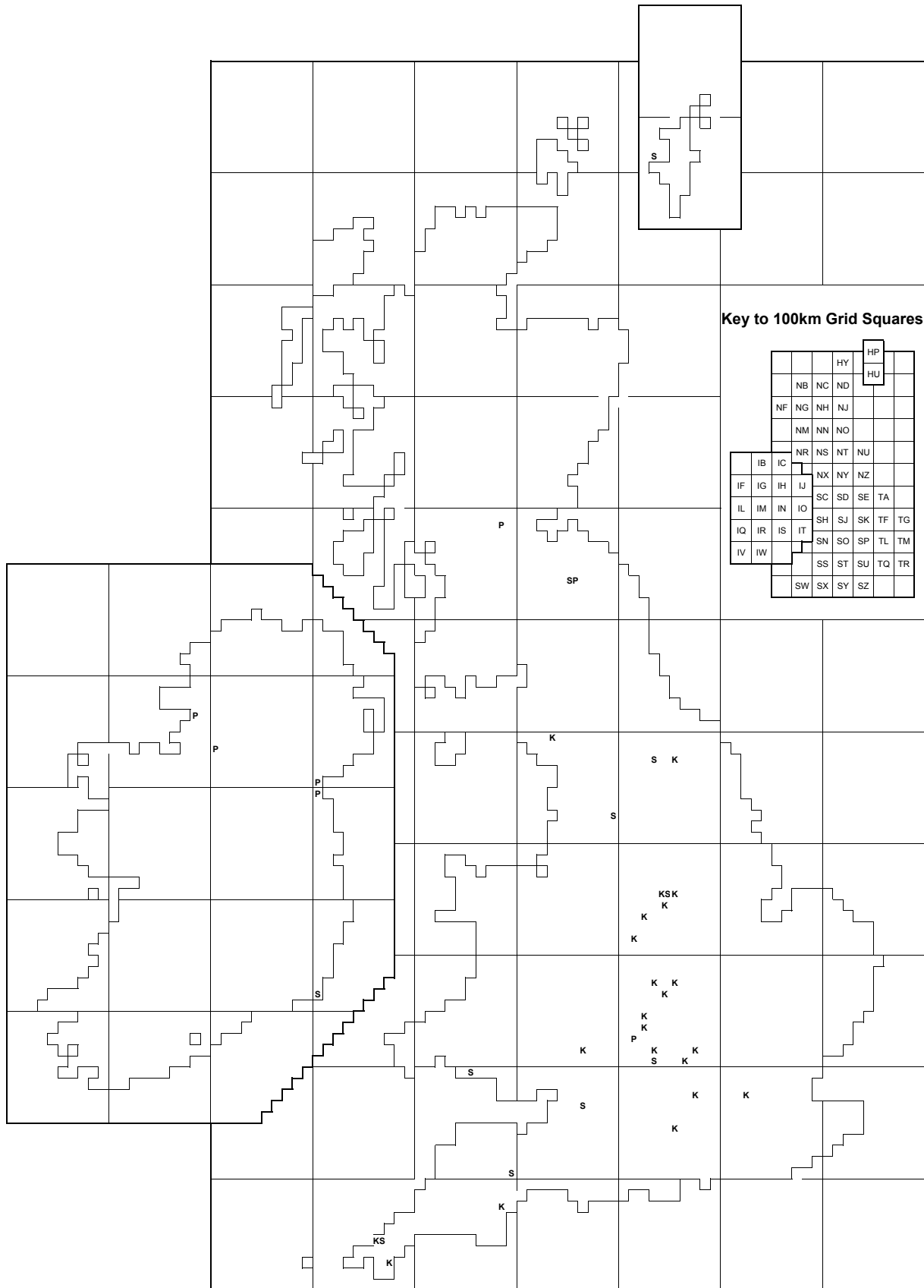
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[26] The occasional appearance of King William is seen as an extension of this principle during the reign of William IV.

Map 15 - The Naming of George in his Introductory Speech

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HY		HP
					HU
	NB	NC	ND		
NF	NG	NH	NJ		
	NM	NN	NO		
	NR	NS	NT	NU	
IB	IC	NX	NY	NZ	
IF	IG	IH	IJ	SC	SD	SE	TA
IL	IM	IN	IO	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW			SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ

Key
K = King George   33 plays (36%)
P = Prince George 14 plays (15%)
S = Saint George   44 plays (49%)

Map 16 - George without the Dragon Legend Speech

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HP	
		HY	HU	
	NB	NC	ND	
	NF	NG	NH	NJ
		NM	NN	NO
		NR	NS	NT	NU
IB	IC		NX	NY	NZ
IF	IG	IH	IJ	SC	SD	SE	TA
IL	IM	IN	IO				
				SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW			SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ

S

P

SP

P

P

P
P

S

K

S   K

S

KS K
K
K

K

K   K
K
K
K
P
K S   K
S   K

K

S

S

K

S

K

S

KS
K

Key   K = King George   P = Prince George   S = Saint George

Map 17 - The Association of George's Title with the Dragon Legend Speech

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HY		HP	
					HU	
	NB	NC	ND			
NF	NG	NH	NJ			
NM	NN	NO				
NR	NS	NT	NU			
IB	IC	NX	NY	NZ		
IF	IG	IH	IJ			
IL	IM	IN	IO	SC	SD	SE	TA
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IV	IW			SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
				SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ	
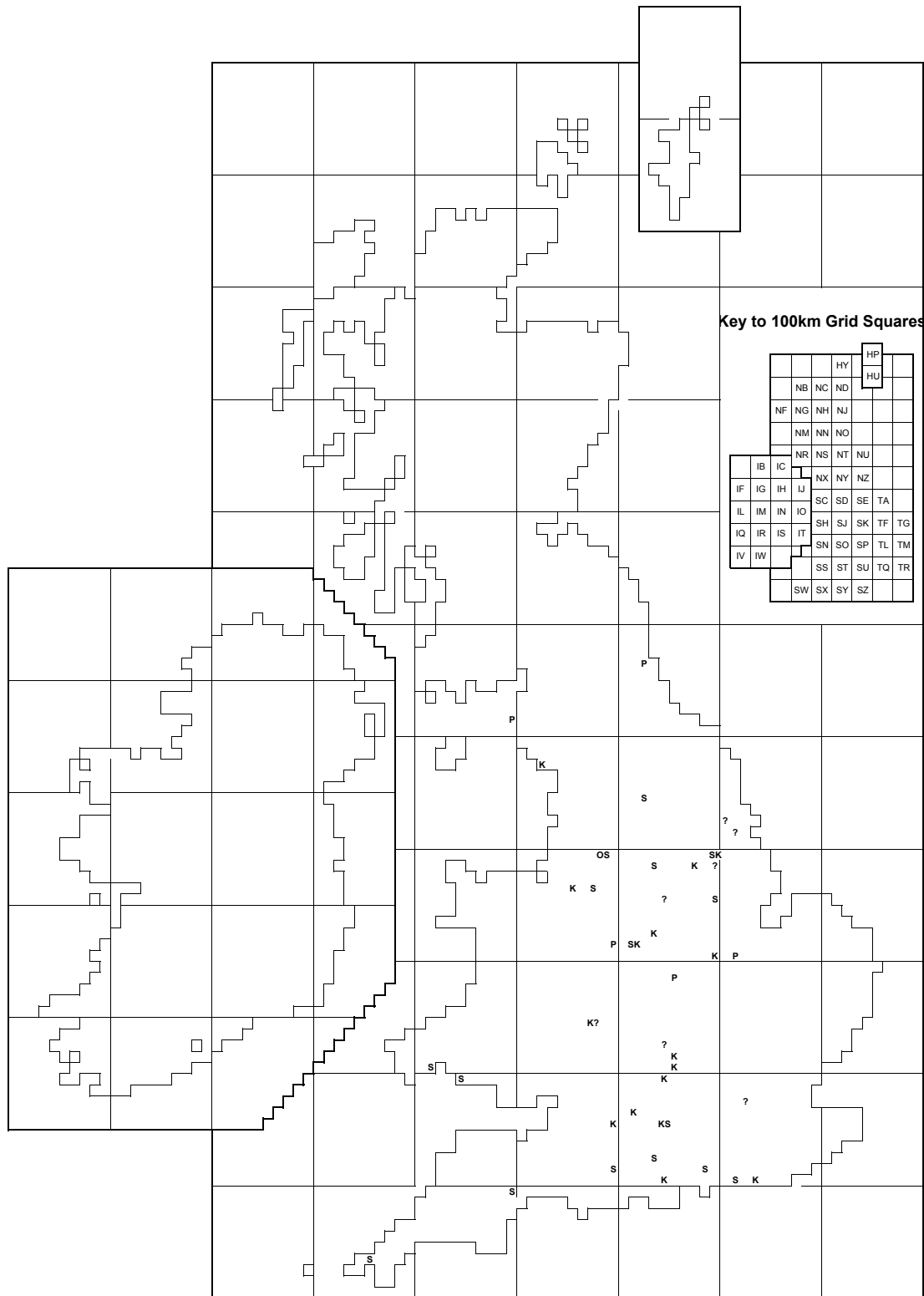
Key

K	= King George	**19 plays**	**(33%)**
P	= Prince George	**6 plays**	**(10%)**
S	= Saint George	**23 plays**	**(40%)**
O	= [Other] George	**2 plays**	**(3%)**
?	= [Unspecified]	**8 plays**	**(14%)**

Map 18 - George's Introductory Line

Key to 100km Grid Squares
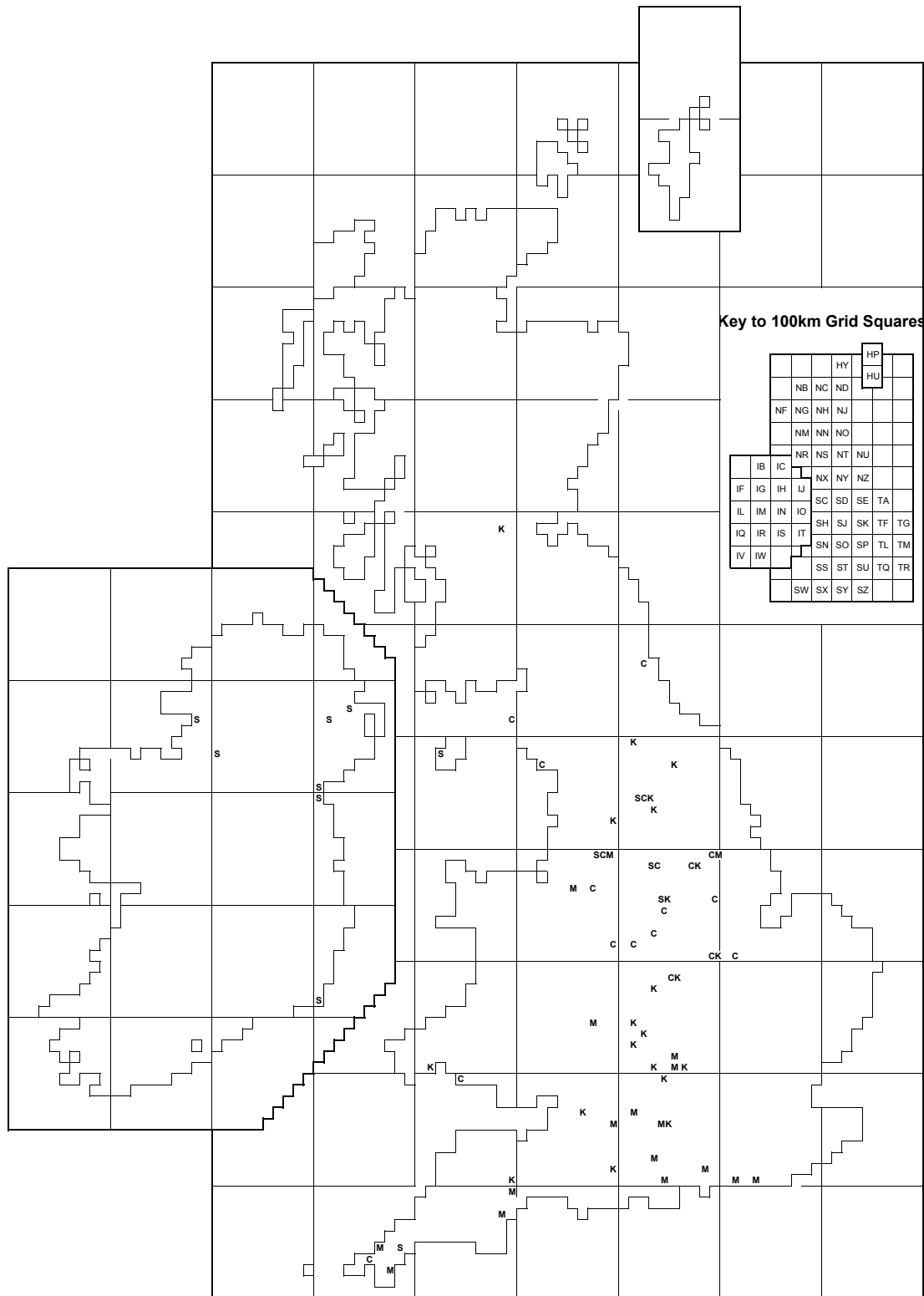
Key

C = Std.ID 290 - Here am I Saint George a noble champion bold
M = Std.ID 295 - In comes I King George the man of courage bold
K = Std.ID 1460 - I am King George that valiant knight
S = Std.ID 1970 - Here comes I Saint George from England I have sprung

the other hand is more dispersed, with perhaps two separate bands in northern and southern England.

Intuitively, one would expect the dragon legend speech – "I fought the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter…" – to have been used to emphasise Saint George. Conversely, one would expect the dragon legend lines to be dropped if George is meant to be a secular potentate. The latter hypothesis is supported by the database. There are numerous cases where George does not have this speech, and in these he is overwhelmingly a King or a Prince (about 70% in total). Furthermore, Map 16 shows that the distribution of the non-dragon George is concentrated in the Cotswolds and North Midlands. By contrast, there is surprisingly no evidence to suggest that the dragon legend speech is used to underline Saint George. As Map 17 shows, the dragon speech is more generally distributed throughout England, but George is still only a Saint in somewhat less than half of cases. There is no obvious explanation for this.

George uses one of three different introductory speeches (shown in Map 18), each of which is associated with a particular adversary.

Firstly, Saint George "from England have I sprung" or "who from old England sprung" is found in chapbooks and their derivatives - the *Christmas Rhime* in Ireland, and *The Peace Egg* in northern England respectively. In Ireland, this George fights the Turkey Champion, whereas in *The Peace Egg* he is coupled with Slasher. However, in *The Peace Egg* chapbooks, Saint George introduces himself a second time – in Act 2 – where he is "that noble champion bold". In this act he fights both the Prince of Paradine and Hector. Normally, a given *Peace Egg* George speech should remain coupled with the relevant combatant, but it is possible that they could become exchanged. This second speech is derived from the earlier *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook, where Prince George fights Alexander and Sambo (who has Hector's lines).

The "Bold" speech in fact forms the second of George's alternative introductory speeches. There are two sub-variants that are found in fairly distinct northern and southern regions, separated by the Cotswolds.

"The champion bold" sub-variant is almost totally confined to northern England and it seems likely that the distribution of this variant has been highly influenced by the *Alexander* and *Peace Egg* chapbooks. Even so, this does not necessarily mean that the chapbooks were the ultimate source for this sub-variant, although, the *Alexander* chapbook is the oldest recorded full text with a date of 1746-1769 (M.J.Preston et al, 1977).

"The man of courage bold" sub-variant primarily occurs in southern England with a few outliers in the north. He is a King in 63% of cases, so it is possible that this is the original status associated with this line.

Georges with the "bold" line may win one of two prizes in the next line – "three crowns of gold", or "ten thousand pounds in gold". There is not a clear-cut association of particular prizes with particular variants of "bold". However, there seems to be a tendency for "the man of courage bold" to have won the three crowns, while "the champion bold" tends to win the money.[27] Either way, outside the chapbooks, bold George's adversary is primarily the Turkish Knight/Turkish Champion. To illustrate the point, in the database, he appears with the Turk 17 times, 3 times with Slasher, and 8 times with both. In all the cases where the Turk and Slasher appear in the same play (e.g. Romsey, Hants.), the Turk is George's main opponent, and Slasher tends to be an extra. (In a couple of cases - Ovingdean, Sussex and Huxley, Cheshire - a single character has both names.)
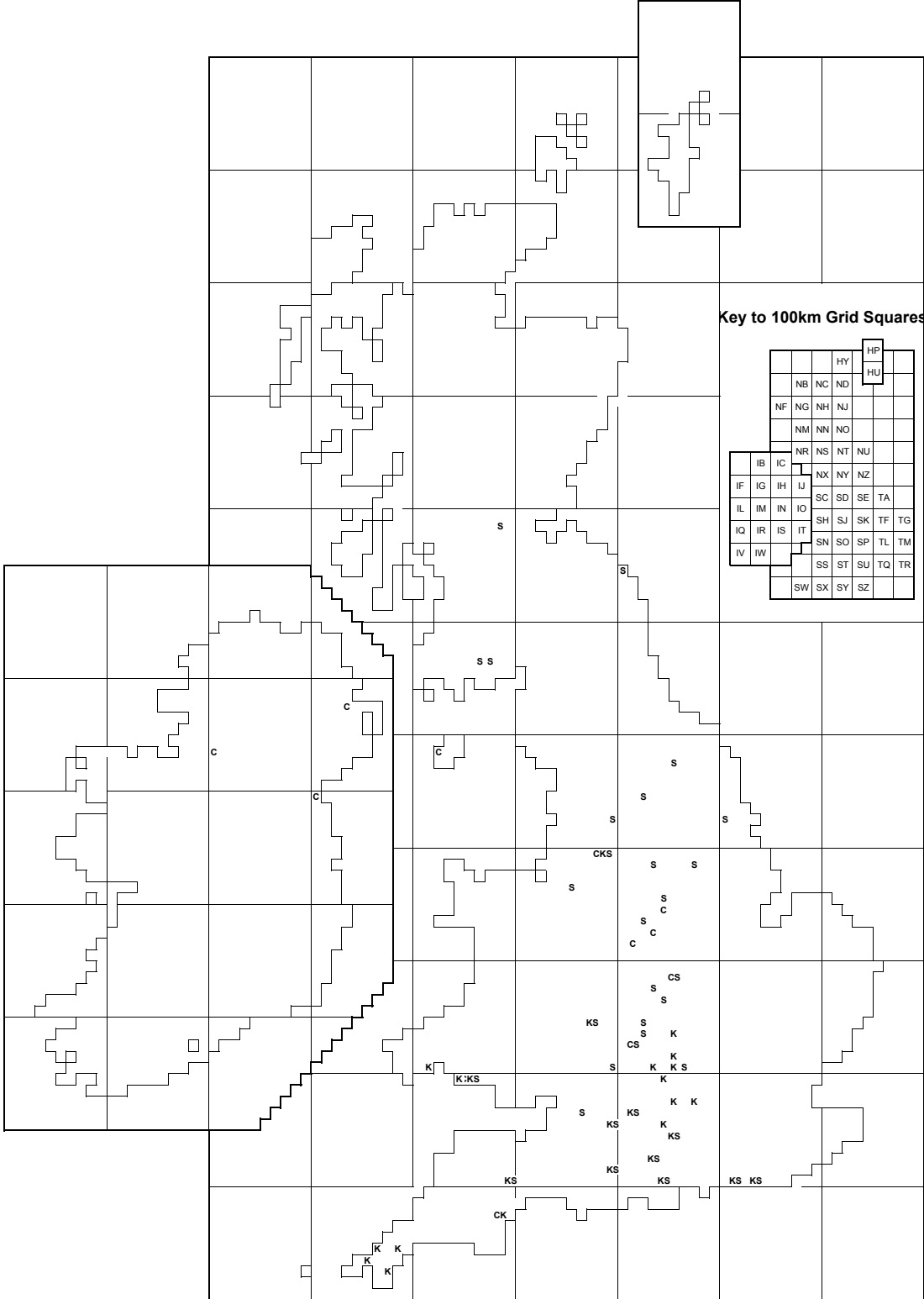
The third introductory speech is "George that valiant knight / Who shed his blood for England's rights". This occurs throughout mainland Britain, but appears

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[27] It could be said that both these lines refer to money, since "Crown" was also the name of an old coin of value five shillings (25 new pence). However, this coin was made of silver, not gold. Also if the line alluded to money it would probably read "three crowns *in* gold" not "three crowns *of* gold".
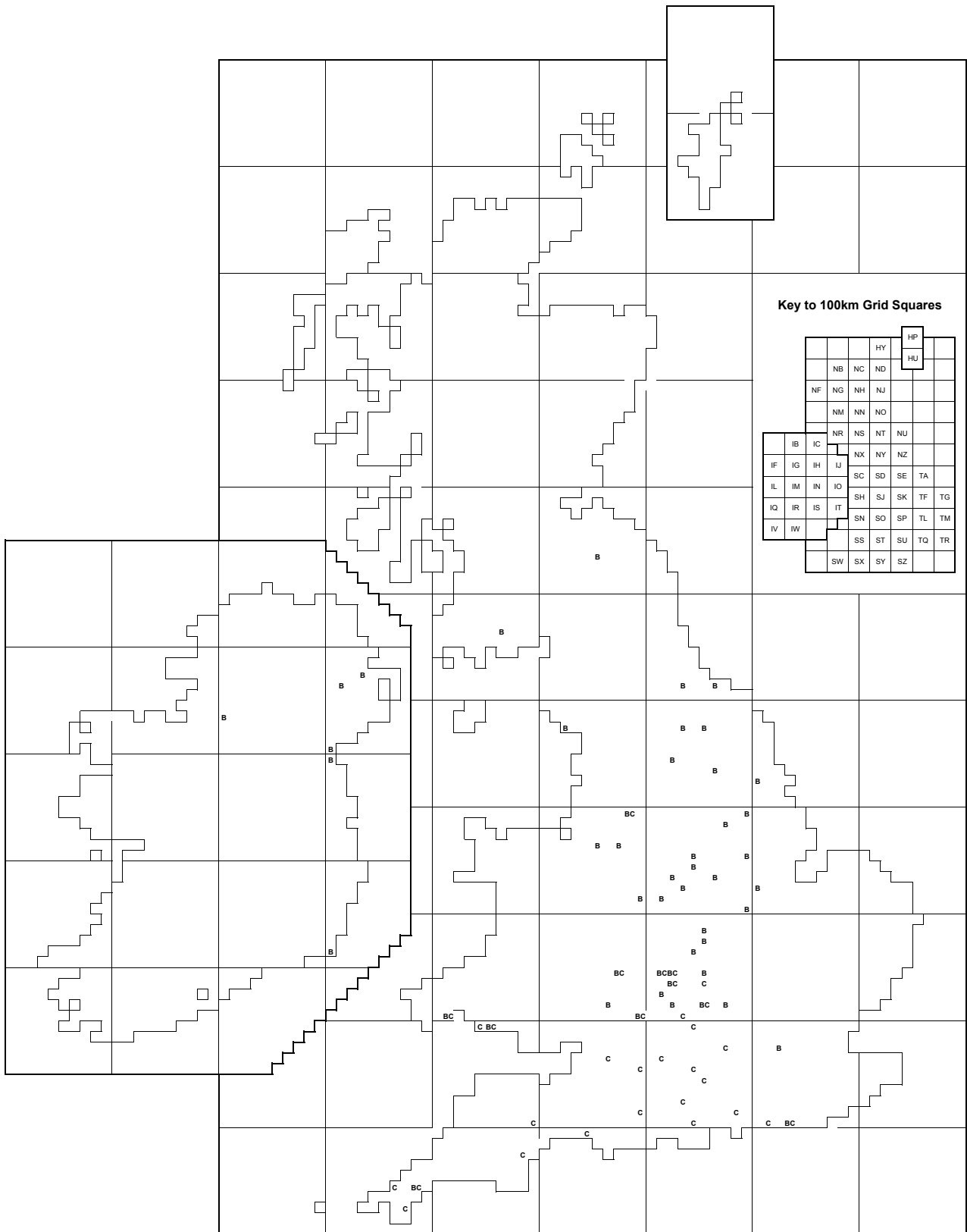
Map 19 - George the Valiant Knight

Key to 100km Grid Squares

				HY	HP		
					HU		
	NB	NC	ND				
NF	NG	NH	NJ				
	NM	NN	NO				
	NR	NS	NT	NU			
IB	IC		NX	NY	NZ		
IF	IG	IH	IJ	SC	SD	SE	TA
IL	IM	IN	IO	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW		SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
			SW	SX	SY	SZ	

Key K = King George   9 plays (36%)
P = Prince George   4 plays (16%)
S = Saint George   12 plays (48%)

Map 20 - The Distribution of Slasher and the Turk

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HY	HP	
				HU	
	NB	NC	ND		
NF	NG	NH	NJ		
NM	NN	NO			
NR	NS	NT	NU		
IB	IC	IJ	NX	NY	NZ
IF	IG	IH	SC	SD	SE	TA
IL	IM	IN	IO	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW		SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
		SW	SX	SY	SZ

Key

C = Std.ID 2150 - **I am a Turkish Champion from Turkeyland I came**
K = Std.ID 3150/3160 - **In comes I the Turkish Knight / Come from the Turkish land to fight**
S = Std.ID 1500 - **I am a valiant soldier and Slasher is my name**

Map 21 - Beelzebub v Father Christmas

Key to 100km Grid Squares

			HY	HP		
	NB	NC	ND	HU		
	NF	NG	NH	NJ		
	NM	NN	NO			
	NR	NS	NT	NU		
IB	IC	NX	NY	NZ		
IF	IG	IH	IJ	SC	SD	SE	TA
IL	IM	IN	IO	SH	SJ	SK	TF	TG
IQ	IR	IS	IT	SN	SO	SP	TL	TM
IV	IW			SS	ST	SU	TQ	TR
				SW	SX	SY	SZ	

Key

B	**=**	**Std.ID 2460**	**-**	**Here comes I old Beelzebub**
C	**=**	**Std.ID 3060**	**-**	**In comes I old Father Christmas,welcome or welcome not**

to be concentrated (or at least less diluted) in the Cotswolds (Grid square SP). Here, he tends to be King George, whereas north and south of this region he is more likely to be Saint George (see Map 19). George the valiant knight is primarily associated with Slasher, appearing with him 11 times in the database, whereas he only appears with the Turk 3 times, and with both 3 times (one of which is J.H.Ewing's composite text).

This linking of George's introductory speeches with particular combatants makes it possible to determine which came first. Map 20 shows the distribution of George's two principal adversaries, Slasher and the Turkish Knight/Turkish Champion. Slasher is found in most of mainland Britain. On the other hand, the Turk is mostly confined to southern England and to Ireland, perhaps overlying the Slasher distribution. This suggests that Slasher is the older adversary, and therefore by association, George the valiant knight must be older than George the bold. Furthermore, from the earlier discussion, he was probably originally King George without any allusion to the dragon legend, and is likely to have arisen in the Cotswolds and/or North Midlands. How George the bold arose is discussed next.

Genesis of the Southern English Group

An important clue to the origin of the Southern English group is the illustration in Figure 39 taken from W.Sandys (1852, p.152), which shows a group of juvenile performers. The description accompanying this picture reads:

> "The performers, who are usually young persons in humble life, are attired, including St. George and the Dragon, much in the same manner, having white trousers and waistcoats, showing their shirtsleeves, and decorated with ribbons and handkerchiefs; each carrying a drawn sword or cudgel in his hand : as one of the Somersetshire mummers says, 'Here comes I liddle man Jan wi' my sword in my han!' They wear high caps of pasteboard, covered with fancy paper, and ornamented with beads, small pieces of looking-glass, bugles, &c., and generally have long strips of pith hanging down from the top, with shreds of different coloured cloth strung on them, the whole having a fanciful and smart effect. The

Turk sometimes has a turban; Father Christmas is represented as a grotesque old man, with a large mask and comic wig, and a huge club in his hand; the Doctor has a three-cornered hat, and painted face, with some ludicrous dress, being the comic character of the piece; the lady is generally in the dress of the last century, when it can be got up; and the hobby-horse, when introduced, which is rarely, has a representation of a horse's hide. Wellington and Wolfe, when they appear, are dressed in any sort of uniform that can be procured for the nonce, and no doubt will now be found as militia men of the county where the play is represented."

(W.Sandys, 1852, pp.154-155)

Figure 39 - Illustration from W.Sandys (1852, p.152)

The picture is clearly based on the description, which is similar to accounts in Sandys' earlier publications (W.Sandys, 1827, 1830 and 1833). Presumably Sandys was happy with the accuracy of the depiction.

Without reading the description, most people would be under the impression that the character at the far left was Beelzebub. This is because of his large club, which is one of Beelzebub's expected accoutrements – to go with his second line

"Over my shoulder I carry my club". It therefore comes as a surprise to find that this figure is meant to be Father Christmas. Consequently, this raises the possibility that Beelzebub could at some time have been transformed into Father Christmas, perhaps by someone of religious sensibilities who felt the presence of Beelzebub was inappropriate. The geographical distribution of the two characters is shown on Map 21. This shows that they occupy different regions with very little overlap, which is consistent with the hypothesis. On the evidence of the picture, Beelzebub's lines and name might have been replaced with new lines for Father Christmas, while features of his original costume were retained. The possible confusion that this could cause can be seen at three locations where Beelzebub is referred to as "Old Father Beelzebub" – Upper and Lower Howsell, Worcestershire, Ovingdean, Sussex, and Mid-Berkshire (B.Lowsley, 1888). The latter reference gives the following reassuring description for his costume – "Old Beelzebub: As Father Christmas".[28]

Given that Father Christmas and the Turkish Knight are closely tied together in the Southern English group, and that the group also has King George the man of courage bold, with his dragon legend speech, a rational explanation for the creation of the new script becomes possible. This is that the play was rewritten to increase its Christian content. Three changes support this view. Firstly, all blasphemous or *risqué* material was removed – e.g.:

- The replacement of Beelzebub by Father Christmas.

- The replacement of the Devil by the cook shop in the line "and send him to the cook shop to make mince pies".

- The replacement of "pox" by "pitch" or "stitch" in the line "I can cure the hitch the stitch the palsy and the gout".

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[28] There is also a play from Glympton, Oxfordshire that has "Veyther Beelzebub" (E.Harpwood, 1961), but this play is in fact a transcript of Lowsley's Mid-Berkshire text.

- It is also possible that the supernumerary Devil Doubt was removed, and perhaps replaced by Johnny Jack, although there are insufficient examples in the database to verify this.

Secondly, the introduction of the Turkish Knight turned the plot into a play about the Crusades. Similarly, the inclusion of lines regarding the Saint George legend also reinforces the Crusading motif. However, it is strange that George remained a King and was not beatified at the same time. Lastly, the choice of Father Christmas as the replacement for Beelzebub emphasises the Christmas and hence the Christian theme.

From the distribution, there can be no doubt that the new version was created in southern England. Although it is not possible to say precisely where, somewhere in the southern Cotswolds seems most likely since it has been demonstrated that the Irish plays derived from here, and the Irish Turkish Champion is clearly equivalent the Turkish Knight in southern England.

At some point the old and new texts would have come into contact with each other, and this probably explains the plays in Hampshire and neighbouring counties that have a mix of features – notably both the Turkish Knight and Slasher.

Development of the Cotswold Group

The Cotswold group is characterised by the presence of Jack Finney, the tooth-drawing scene, and a number of other typical speeches. Setting these aside, this group has some similarities with both the Northern English and Southern English groups. This is perhaps not surprising bearing in mind its position geographically between the two. The clear distribution of this group as a local "island" suggests that the addition of Jack Finney, etc., was a relatively recent development. The question is, what did it develop from? My view is that this group is fundamentally closer to the Northern English group because of the presence of Slasher, Beelzebub and King George the valiant knight. The number

of cases where typical Southern English features are included – Father Christmas, the Turkish Knight and the "hot and cold" vaunt – are relatively few, and I feel that these represent hybrids formed at the border between the two groups.

In the Robin Hood sub-type of this group, the dispute between George and Slasher has been replaced by dialogue from the ballad *Robin Hood and the Tanner*. I concur with Preston that the Robin Hood sub-type is a later development of the group (M.J.Preston, 1976). I also believe that the other sub-group – with the Land of Cockaigne and tangle talk motifs - is probably also a later development, because these lines are additional to the core Jack Finney and related lines. It is likely that the Cockaigne/tangle talk sub-type arose before the Robin Hood changes were made, because some of these mangled lines are found in the Robin Hood version.

Genesis of the Sword Dance and Galoshins Plays

The development of the Sword Dance and Galoshins plays seem intertwined, with initially separate strands coming together to develop a new identity.

Taking the Sword Dance play first, sword dances have an independent existence, and they frequently feature a calling-on in which the individual dancers are introduced to the audience, often in song. This is not a dialogue. What appears to have happened is that a calling-on song has been merged with the text of a Quack Doctor play. In doing so, the combatants of the Quack Doctor play have been excised, and replaced by the dancers who provide a body for the Doctor by placing the lock of swords around the neck of the victim and then drawing the swords (a harmless action) to simulate a beheading. This move is also found independently in the sword dances. What may have been added specifically for the Sword Dance play is the scene in which the dancers deny culpability. Following the entry of the Doctor, the play concludes as in the normal Quack Doctor play, with a few local embellishments.

Because so much of the original Quack Doctor play has been excised, it is not immediately obvious which variant was used. However there appear to be more similarities with the Northern English group than with the others.
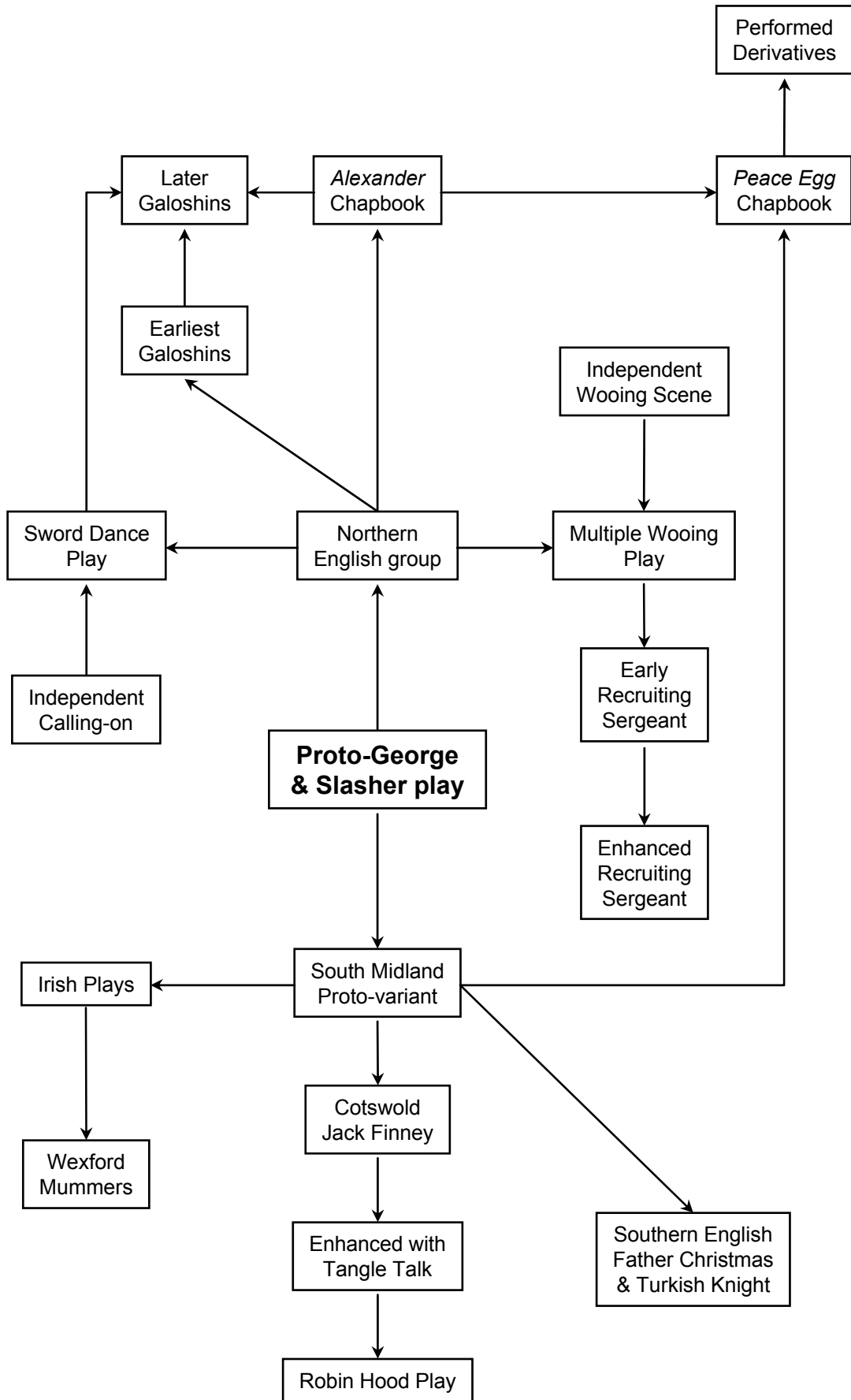
In Scotland, the older group (containing the Bowden play) seems to have been rewritten to "make it Scottish". This appears partly to have been done by removing English elements, such as Saint George, and partly by ostentatiously using Scottish dialect. The key change was the metamorphosis of Slasher into Galation. Their introductory couplets are identical but for the name, and the names themselves have some similarity in pronunciation. This shows that this version was adapted from the proto-George and Slasher play. It is possible that this proto-play had Saint George rather than King George, because King George was after all the king of Scotland as well as England. On the other hand, because of relatively recent Jacobite memories, the popularity of King of England may have been shaky in Scotland, until the landmark visit of the Prince Regent at the beginning of the 19th century.

The next oldest sub-group in Scotland has a combination of the calling-on and denial speeches from the Sword Dance play, and Galation from the earlier group, although there are some additional lines, a few of which are to be found in the *Alexander* chapbook. This chapbook may therefore also have been an influence, and can be seen as a source for the adversaries Alexander and the King of Macedonia in Scotland. The later Scottish plays probably evolved from the earlier versions mostly by losing material over time, but also by acquiring some new lines that drifted into the country from northern England.

A Family Tree for the Quack Doctor Plays

Having examined the possible and likely ancestral links between the various folk play groups, it is now possible to suggest a family tree, or rather a genealogical diagram for the Quack Doctor folk plays. This is given in Fig.40. A key element is of course the proposed proto-text, of which there is not as yet a

Figure 40 - Suggested Genealogy of the Quack Doctor Plays

specific real example, although the Northern English plays are perhaps closest to it. The degree of confidence in the various proposed links varies from case to case, as has hopefully been made clear above. This diagram should therefore perhaps be regarded as a starting point for discussion and further research.

In conclusion, it should be reiterated that on the evidence of earliest record dates, the geographical dissemination of the plays and the emergence of most of the variants took place during the 18th century. However, four variants appear to have arisen during the 19th century – the Plough Plays, the *Peace Egg* chapbook and its derivatives, the Cotswold plays with Jack Finney and most recently the Wexford Mummers.

CONCLUSIONS

Review of Earlier Theories

In my bibliographic survey, I described the rise of the three main theories regarding the origin of the Quack Doctor plays that held sway until the 1970s. These were:

- Derivation from a mystery or morality play from the time of the Crusades

- Descent from a pagan fertility ritual

- Survival from the rites of primitive shamanism.

In my critique, I have shown that there are numerous flaws in the approach used in the period up to about 1970 – the Old Scholarship - that call the validity of these ideas into question. First there was an ambivalent view of the scope of English folk plays. On the one hand, the definition was so focused on the Quack Doctor plays that other folk play forms were ignored, and non-play customs of the same name and time of year tended to be misinterpreted as vestiges of the plays rather than customs in their own right. On the other hand, almost any type traditional game or performance (E.K.Chambers' *ludi*) were regarded as valid evidence when talking about folk play origins. Indeed, the degree of over-generalisation became such that almost any evidence could be made to fit the theories.

As particularly pointed out by Fees, the Old Scholarship lacked scientific method and logic. Assumptions and assertions, of which there were many, were not tested. There was remarkably little criticism, and no rethinking or review of ideas when masses of new data became available. Almost no alternative ideas were proposed or considered, even if only to rule them out. There was also a tendency to ignore major discontinuities of geographical space and historical time. This is why the attempts to link English folk plays to Ancient and Modern Greek

plays do not stand scrutiny. No one examined plays in the intervening parts of Europe nor intervening Greek periods to demonstrate continuity.

One of the more curious aspects of the Old Scholarship was the attitude towards the play texts. Texts comprise the bulk of the evidence that is available for study, and yet very little textual analysis was done. Indeed, so convinced were the Old Scholars of the secondary nature of the texts, and the effects of degradation and "corruptive influences", they felt that textual analysis was pointless. This was a lost opportunity.

Disproving the Established Theories

The three theories of origin are all non-specific about their sources and survivalist in nature. They all rely on the same assumption – that there is a continuous history from modern folk plays to the relevant era. Although more historical research is needed, concerted effort over that past thirty years – notably by the *Records of Early English Drama* project (*REED*)– has failed to find any records of Quack Doctor plays or similar precursors before the 18th century. This lack of records contrasts strongly with records for other customs, such as morris dancing and Mayday, where abundant pre-18th-century records have been found. This is enough to show that the historical continuity required by the survivalist theories of origin does not exist. They are therefore disproved.

In part, the absence of pre-18th-century records reflects the way folk play material has been amassed. All the large collections are almost totally restricted to printed media and folklore manuscripts. Most folklore archives reflect the fact that very little active collecting was done until the 19th century, and bibliometrics also show that printed media really only became prominent from the 19th century onwards. To compound these limitations, efficient and comprehensive indexing tools only started to become available from the late 19th century. Clearly therefore, it is likely that very few pre-19th-century records would be found if one is restricted to printed media and folklore collections. On the other hand, the few early records that are found could still provide clear evidence of given custom, as

they did, for instance, for morris dancing before the advent of the *Early Morris Project*. This broke the mould by searching official archives, and in doing so, succeeded in finding a plethora of morris-related records. The lesson to be learned from the *Early Morris Project* is that if people look for archival material in a particular area, they will usually find it. The *REED* project has repeated this approach for folk plays for the period up to 1642, but there is still a need to continue this for the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Some interesting facts have emerged from my own bibliometric charting of folk play and related customs. Firstly, I have shown that major peaks and troughs match the activity or inactivity of key collectors, although some surges seem to follow the appearance of influential publications. On a local level, some peaks reflect the high public profile of certain performing groups. On a general level, social upheavals and changes do not appear to have had a major impact on the bibliometrics of folk traditions.

The period from the Restoration to the mid 18th century is the key time for either proving historical continuity with earlier records, or for characterising the genesis of the Quack Doctor plays. This period represents the gap between *REED* data and the earliest records of Quack Doctor plays, and it is where future historical research effort needs to be concentrated. To assist with this process, I have presented an updated list of criteria that should be used to re-evaluate and revalidate historical records as Quack Doctor plays or their precursors.

New Proposals

The problem with the demise of the established theories of origin is that there is not yet anything to replace them. Various proposals have been made regarding specific aspects of the folk play tradition, but they have not been assembled into a cohesive whole. There are five main points.

Firstly, the plays arose in the early to mid 18th century, and were attached to non-play house-visiting customs that had existed for a considerable historical period beforehand. They were probably added as an extension of the

entertainment that was already part of these house-visiting customs. The non-play customs were probably the source for non-representational costumes, and possibly also for some supernumerary characters. They were certainly the source for the dates of performance and the actors' collective names.

Secondly, drama in the community was varied in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some of this may have been amateur drama – theatrical plays staged by amateur actors – but some plays were definitely performed in the folk idiom in association with calendar customs. Similarly, the earliest Quack Doctor play texts show more variety than the later plays, and there was a willingness to incorporate literary matter into the texts.

Thirdly, there is some evidence that the Quack Doctor plays took up the theatrical conventions of the *Commedia dell' Arte*, in terms of verse scripts, dramaturgy and costume. This influence was exerted indirectly via the Harlequinade in English pantomime and booth plays at fairs, aided by popular imagery in street literature. However, it seems likely that neither pantomime nor booth theatres are direct sources for the plays, unless a printed script can be located.

Fourthly, the overall similarity of the scripts suggests that there ought to be a single proto-text from which all the various versions developed. However, there has hitherto been no attempt to characterise or locate such a proto-text.

Lastly, regardless of how the Quack Doctor plays originated, they seem to have spread very rapidly to most of Britain and diversified very early on in their history. Most versions were in existence before the end of the 18th century. Thereafter, in the 19th century, chapbooks were important for propagating the plays in certain areas, and from the mid 19th century, mainstream books were also important for disseminating texts.

Textual Analysis

A key tenet of the Old Scholarship was that the plays were all descended by attrition from an all-encompassing *Ur*-rite or *Ur*-text. This was based on a one-

way view of evolution that is no longer held to be valid. Although an overall tendency to lose textual material over time has been demonstrated, other additive and qualitative forms of evolution also occur. Another controversial tenet is that the texts are secondary to the action of the plays. I have argued that the texts are indeed secondary, but that the action is irrelevant. It is the plot and characters that are paramount. Even so, I contend that textual analysis is still worthwhile.

During this study, I have developed and demonstrated the usefulness of several text analysis tools. The first of these is Cluster Analysis. This is a well-established technique, although I have developed novel extensions, including a clustering method that I have named Gaussian Linkage, and a method for determining the key attributes of clusters. I have identified and explained the key factors for selecting the various coefficients and parameters for the cluster analysis of folk play texts. Completeness is the most important factor, and I have given the reasons for excluding certain texts – fragments, literary parallels, duplicates, composites and composed texts.

A group of four graphical methods is based on X-Y scatter charts of play texts *versus* lines, that compress a large amount of data onto a single page. The first two are novel. Provenance Profiles show which lines of a specific play are shared with other plays, revealing potential ancestors and possible descendants. Mesa graphs present data for the whole database, with texts and lines in chronological order. These reveal the relative importance of the contribution of particular texts to the corpus of lines, and also demonstrate the gradual loss of material over time. In Trellis Graphs, the plays and lines are presented in the order determined by appropriate cluster analyses. Clusters appear as blocks, and these graphs can be used to determine which lines characterise the clusters. In Clustered Mesa Graphs, the order of the plays is rearranged to match the results of a cluster analysis, while the lines remain in chronological order. Clusters also appear in these graphs as blocks, but there is often more than one block for a given cluster, and the chronological order means that clues can be found to the evolution of the groups.

Another X-Y scatter chart is used to compare the narrative sequences of any two plays. In addition to showing graphically how well the narrative sequences match each other, a quantitative measure of the match called the Conformity Index is also calculated. Lastly, much use has been made of distribution mapping, especially for plotting the distribution of clusters and different line types.

I have built a large full-text database of play scripts for this study, and from this I have generated an index of line types – based on the Standard Line Identifiers (Std.IDs). This index has been the main source of data for many of the distribution maps. It has also been used to characterise the frequency of occurrence of different line types. About 60% of lines occur once only, while about another 20% occur twice. Consequently, a line occurrence threshold of three was set for most analyses to permit meaningful comparisons and keep output to a reasonable size.

Textual Analysis Results

Despite the use of different coefficients and settings, cluster analyses identify the same broad folk play clusters. However, the links between these broad clusters are variable and therefore require intellectual investigation. The clusters have been shown to be robust by the fact that they became evident part way through the building of the database, and remained intact as more plays were added. The validity of the clusters has been demonstrated in three ways. Firstly, the clusters correspond to the classification assignments in *English Ritual Drama* (E.C.Cawte et al, 1967) and to more recent refinements – the split of Plough Plays into Multiple Wooing plays and Recruiting Sergeant plays, and the recognition of the Robin Hood group of plays. Secondly, the clusters occupy distinct geographical regions. Thirdly, the clusters manifest themselves in trellis graphs as blocks. If the clusters were not meaningful, this structural differentiation would not be present.

A New Classification for Quack Doctor Plays

As a result of the cluster analysis, I have been able to define a new classification that is more detailed than the previous three-fold classification. The

two are compatible, but the over-large Hero-Combat class has been divided into several sub-classes. However, underlying the classification is the new term Quack Doctor Play that I have proposed to replace the unsatisfactory term Mummers' or Mumming Play. The new term is based on the one character that is ubiquitous throughout the *genre*, and which serves to differentiate it from other forms. As such it is meant to be descriptive and non-contentious. It also avoids giving the false impression that all Mummers performed plays, and that all the groups that performed the plays were called Mummers.

Figure 41 – New Classification of Quack Doctor Plays

Class	*Defining Characters*
Quack Doctor plays -	Doctor
Plough Plays -	Dame Jane
Multiple Wooing plays -	Noble Anthony, Father's Eldest Son, Farming Man, Lawyer, Ancient Man
Recruting Sergeant plays -	Bold Tom, Recruiting Sergeant, Ribboner, Lady Bright and Gay, Farmer's Man
Hero-Combat plays	
North British plays	
Sword Dance plays -	No individual combatants – Dancers include the Squire's Son
Galoshins plays -	Galation
Irish plays -	Saint Patrick, Oliver Cromwell
Southern English plays -	Father Christmas, Turkish Knight
Cotswold plays -	Jack Finney
Robin Hood plays -	Robin Hood, Arthur Abland
Northern English plays -	Slasher, [Bull Guy]
Others	
West Indian Mummies -	Saint George, Saint Andrew, Saint Patrick and Saint David
Composed and compiled plays -	None - Highly variable
Wexford Mummers -	No Doctor – Father Murphy, Wolfe Tone, etc.

The new classification has nine basic groups that have been derived from cluster analysis, plus another three classes that were not covered by the analyses. In the main body of this thesis, the classes have been defined on the basis of characteristic lines. This is a meaningful but somewhat cumbersome approach. However, many of these lines belong to certain *dramatis personae*, so in the summary classification in Figure 41, these are given instead where available. The hierarchy of the classification is indicated using indentation.

One thing to note in this classification is that the Sword Dance plays are now merely another sub-type of the Hero-Combat plays, and not in a class of their own as they were before. This revised status has been determined from a combination of textual analysis and a reassessment of Helm's data on sword dances and sword dance plays.

Evolutionary implications

The presence of a band of common lines in the trellis graphs covering the full width of the *genre* is evidence for there having been a proto-text from which all the versions evolved. The lines in this band form a viable text, and they therefore probably represent something close to the putative proto-text. This requires refinement however, because there are alternatives for some lines where the older version has yet to be determined.

Primarily by examining the commonality between pairs of clusters, and backed up by distribution mapping, I have prepared a genealogical diagram – Figure 40 – that shows how I think the different versions developed. The putative proto-text is also included in this diagram. As some of the links are tentative, it is presented as a starting point for discussion. The diagram shows largely separate northern and southern developments, with the Irish plays being exported from the south. Some specific points are worthy of repetition here:

- There are several alternative self-introductory speeches for Saint/King/Prince George. Of these, the oldest appears to be "the valiant knight" speech.

- The Plough Plays originally drew their dispute and cure elements from the Northern English group of Hero-Combat plays, but then developed them separately.

- The Southern English group arose by "Christianising" the proto-text. In doing so, the Turkish Knight was brought in to provide the Crusades motif, and Father Christmas replaced the objectionable Beelzebub.

- The Robin Hood plays developed from the Cotswold cluster by substituting Robin Hood and Arthur Bland for Saint George and Slasher.

- Some shared lines indicate an ancestral link between the Irish plays and the Cotswolds group. It seems more likely that the Irish plays derived from the Cotswolds plays, rather than *vice versa,* but there was much rewriting *en route*.

- Multiple combats probably arose initially from the hybrid combination of single combat versions.

Suggestions for Further Work

Inevitably, only a finite amount of work can be undertaken during a research project such as this, so there was no opportunity to explore some lines of enquiry. Additionally, a number of ideas and issues arose out of this research that again I have not been able to investigate further. Here are my suggestions for following up this study.

Historical Research

There is a need to find amateur and folk drama records in the period roughly from 1650 to 1750, especially those associated with Christmas or other seasonal festivities. These are likely to be found in archives of official records and possibly in early newspapers. These should be reassessed against the criteria listed at the end of the chapter on *The Question of Survivals*.

Further systematic searching for textual parallels is likely to be successful. Promising sources include texts of jigs and drolls, and the scripts of stage plays from the 17th and early 18th centuries. On-line full-text databases of play and ballad texts have already proved useful, and any on-line literature resource is probably worthy of investigation.

Text Database Content

A larger database of texts should lead to better quality results. In adding texts to the database, priority should be given to older plays and to places that fill gaps in the geographical distribution. I am confident that re-running the analyses against a larger database will consolidate the broad clusters that have already been identified and resolve some of the uncertainties. Some new sub-clusters may emerge, and the evolutionary relationships between the different classes may become clearer.

In addition to analysing lines, it would be beneficial to analyse characters too – name and/or rôle. This would entail the creation of a new system of standard identifiers for characters, much like the line Std.IDs, probably using the approach outlined in my paper on Nottinghamshire cast lists (P.T.Millington, 1988). Similarly, it would be advantageous to provide standard identifiers for collective names, and times of occurrence, and to plot them on distribution maps.

Text Database Encoding

XML is becoming the preferred format for data exchange between computer programs and applications. XML provides more meaningful mark-up tags for data than HTML, but is not as complex as SGML. It would therefore allow easier accessibility and exploitation if the format of the folk play text files were converted to XML.

An XML format could also include tags for the Std.IDs of lines, and any future IDs for characters, rôles, collective names, etc. Images and musical notation, which are sometimes included with play texts, were not accommodated

in the current encoding standard. It would be beneficial to extend the format to handle these, as well as other media such as audio and video clips. It would be similarly helpful to be able to include hyperlink cross-references to related texts, or even external websites. Such hyperlinks might be to other plays from the same location, literary parallels, academic studies, etc.

Text Analysis Tools

The tools developed for this study were designed specifically with folk plays in mind. However, most of them are equally applicable to other textual forms such as folk song lyrics and verbal charms. Additional forms of data input might need to be accommodated, but otherwise few other changes would be needed.

When dates are required by the analysis, the current programs provided options for the earliest possible date, the latest possible date and the midway point between the two. A further date option could also be added - preferred date. This would allow the analyst to specify the date regarded as most probable for the play, or to experiment with dates within the known range. This might also be used for "precise" dates. For instance, where a precise date was a date of publication, the analyst might be able to estimate an earlier performance date.

In provenance profiles, mesa graphs, trellis graphs, etc., it would be useful to add a new row for the tally of matched lines for each text, and a new column for the tally of matched texts for each line. These would make the more frequently matched texts and lines easier to spot. They would also make it easier to plot maps showing the relative usage of lines, as was done in this study for the chapbook texts.

Comparing real results with results from numerous artificial randomly generated texts could further validate the graphical methods and the results of cluster analysis. If the real results are valid, they should have a radically different appearance to the artificial data. For instance, trellis graphs for randomly generated artificial data should show an even spread of points and lack the blocky structure of real data.

Unanswered Questions

The existence of the putative proto-text requires further proof. Outstanding questions regarding the origin and dispersal of the plays include:

- Precisely where in the country did the Quack Doctor plays first appear?

- Why were the plays attached to certain calendar customs rather than year-round non-specific dates?

- How was such a wide distribution achieved so quickly? But why are there no Quack Doctor plays recorded from East Anglia?

I also have three extra points that were not raised in the main text:

- The distribution of the introductory formulae "Here comes I…" and "In comes I…" shows regional patterns of use, whereas previously it has been assumed they were used interchangeably – Figure 33. Is this significant, and if so why?

- The variants of Beelzebub's final line – "I think myself…" or "Don't you think I'm a jolly old man" also show regional zoning that transcends group boundaries - Map 14. What is the cause of this? Could chapbook influences be involved?

- The Royal Prussian King appears in a few Cotswold plays. Where did he come from, and what is his significance?

To finish, I will reiterate a question that is relevant to the provenance of the *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook, which declares on its cover "As it is acted by the Mummers every Christmas". How many years does something need to be performed or repeated before it is described as being traditional, or "acted every year"?

Exeunt Omnes

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APPENDIX A - EXAMPLE TEXTS

Hero-Combat Play

Saint George Play from Underwood, Nottinghamshire

Source: *P.T.Millington Collection (16th Jan.1972, B.L.Hodgkinson)*

The Guysers as Performed in the Underwood District in 1935 and 1936

Opener In

> I open the door and enter in,
> And beg your pardon to begin,
> But whether we stand sit or fall,
> We'll do our duty to please you all.
> Room, room brave gallants,
> Come give us room,
> For in this room we wish to resort,
> And repeat to you our merry rhyme,
> For remember good sir's I is Christmas time.
> The time took cut goose pie and pork turkey now doth appear,
> And we have come to act our merry Christmas here.
> At the sound of the trumpet,
> at the beat of the drum,
> Brave Gallants let our merry actors come.
> We are the merry actors who travel the street.
> We are the merry actors who fight for our meet.
> We are the merry actors who show pleasant play.
> Step in Saint George our champion and clear the way.

Saint George

> I am Saint George from Olde England sprung,
> My famous name throughout the world has rung.
> Many brave deeds and wonders I have made known.
> I have made tyrants tremble on their throne.
> Twas I who followed a fair maid, to a Giants gate,
> Confined in dundgeon, deep, to meet her fate,
> When I resolved in true knight errantry,
> To burst the door and set the prisoner free,

When a giant almost struck me dead,
But by my valour I cut off his head.
I searched this world all round and round,
A man my equal, I've never found.

Enter Slasher

I am a gallant soldier and "Slasher" is my name,
With sword and buckler by my side,
I hope to win the game,
And for to fight with thee,
I see thou art not able,
For with my sword, will soon with thee disable.

Saint George

Stand back Slasher, and let no more be said,
For if I use my sword, will soon cut off thy head.

Slasher

How can'st thou cut off my head
My head is made of iron.
My body of steel,
My hand and feet of knuckle bone.
I'll challenge you to feel.

(They fight and Saint George mortally wounds Slasher)

Enter Slasher's Father

Oh George, what hast thou done?
Thou's killed and slain my only son.
Here he lies in the presence of you all,
And willingly a doctor call.
A doctor, Ten pounds for a doctor.

(Enter Doctor)

Slasher's Father

Are you a Doctor?

Doctor

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

Slasher's Father

How far have you travelled in doctorship?

Doctor

England, Ireland, France and Spain,
Over the Alps and back again.

Slasher's Father

What diseases can you cure?

Doctor

The hitch, the stitch, the palsy and the gout,
If a man's got 19 devils in his skull,
I can cast 20 out and leave one to breed.
But Jack take a sup out of this bottle,
And let it run down thy throttle,
And if thy not quite slain,
Arise Jack and fight again.

Slasher

Oh my back!

Doctor

What's a matter with thy back?

Slasher

My back is wounded,
My heart is confounded.
Farewell Saint George, I can no longer stay,
Down yonder lies my way.

Enter Belzebub

In comes our old Belzebub,
Over my shoulder I carry a club,
In my hand a dripping pan,
Don't you think I am a jolly old man?
If you don't, I do.

A rink chink, chink, and sup more drink,
We'll the old kettle sound dry,
If you think I am a fool has got no sense,
Put your hand in your pocket
      and give us a few pence.

Little Devil Doubt

In come Little Devil Doubt,
With my breeches turned inside out.
If you think I am a fool and got no sense,
Put your hand in your pocket
      and give a few pence.

(Entire company sings We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year.)

I have not seen the Guysers performed for years. It seems to be one of the traditions that are dying out.

Yours faithfully

B.L.Hodgkinson

P.S.   The Guysers required very little in the way of costumes, etc.

It required training about 1 night a week in somebody's shed or kitchen for about a month, before Xmas.

Most of the words in the Underwood Guyser's play are identical to the chapbook play entitled *The Peace Egg*. Apparently, a stationers in nearby Eastwood could supply the words of the play up until the First World War.

Recruiting Sergeant Play

Ploughboys Play from Cropwell, Nottinghamshire

Source: *Mrs. Chaworth Musters (1890) A Cavalier Stronghold : A Romance of the Vale of Belvoir*
London, Simpkin, Marshall & others, 1890, pp.387-392

"PLOUGH MONDAY

The characters in the play are about ten or a dozen in number and consist of the following:

Tom the Fool.	The Lady ; *a young man dressed*
The Recruiting Sergeant, *in*	*to represent a young woman.*
uniform.	
The Ribboner, *or Recruit.*	Dame Jane ; *a man representing*
The Doctor.	*an old woman.*
The Ploughman *and other*	
farm servants, Hopper Joe,	Beelzebub ; *generally with a*
The Threshing Blade, *&c.*	*blackened face, and club.*

The dresses are white shirts, worn over the men's ordinary clothes, and ornamented with horses cut out in black and red, and ribbons of any colour. The dialogue that follows was written down by one of the players at Cropwell:

Enter Tom *alone.*

Tom Fool

> In comes I, bold Tom,
> A brisk and lively young fellow,
> I have come to taste of your best beef and ale,
> They tell me it is so ripe and mellow.
> Good evening, ladies and gentlemen all,
> It's Plough Monday to-night,
>   that makes Tom so bold as to call ;

But don't take in all I have got to say,
There's plenty more lads and lasses on the way;
Some can dance and some can sing,
By your consent they shall come in,
Oking, poking, France and Spain,
The recruiting Sergeant just the same.

Enter Sergeant.

Sergeant

In come I, the Recruiting Sergeant,
I have just arrived at here.
I have orders from the Queen
to enlist all jolly fellows that follow horse, cart, or plough,
Tinkers, tailors, pedlars, nailers, all to my advance,
The more I hear the fiddle play, the better I can dance.

Tom Fool

Faith, can thee dance? I can dance sing or say ;
If you begin to dance, I soon shall march away.

Enter The Ribboner.

Ribboner.

In comes I, that lost my mate,
Drooping tears hangs down my fate, [face]
Pity my condition, I do declare,
For a false young girl I am in despair.

Enter Lady.

Lady [*singing*]

Behold the lady bright and gay,
        Good fortune and sweet charms ;
How scornfully I have been thrown away,
        Right out of my true love's arms.

He swears if I don't wed with him,
        Which you will understand,
He'll enlist him for a soldier,
        And go into some foreign land.

Sergeant [*sings*]

Come all ye lads that has a mind
For enlisting, and do not be afraid,

You shall have all kinds of liquors,
Likewise kiss the pretty maid.

[*To the Ribboner*]

Are you free-hearted and willing, young man?
On your hat I pin this ribbon,
In your hand I place this shilling.

Ribboner [*sings*]

Thank you, kind Sergeant, for your offer,
If I stay longer I may fare worse ;
Dash my wig if I will grieve any longer
For this proud and saucy lass.

Lady.

Since my love is listed, and entered volunteer,
I neither mean to sigh for him, nor shed one tear.

Tom the Fool.

Dost thou love me, my pretty fair maid?

Lady.

Yes, Tommy, to my sorrow.

Tom the Fool.

When shall be our wedding day?

Lady.

Tommy, love, to-morrow !

[*All take hold of hands and sing*]

They make bands and we shake hands,
And Tommy, love, to-morrow.

Enter Threshing Blade.

Threshing Blade

In comes I, old Thrashing Blade,
All good people ought to know
My old dad learnt me this trade
Just ninety years ago.

I have thrashed in this part of the country, and in many other parts. I will thrash you, Tommy, before I go. That's the way to give it him. [*beats* Tommy.]

Enter Hopper Joe.

Hopper Joe.

In comes I, old Hopper Joe,
I can either plough, sow, reap or mow,
And I hope the Master will bestow
All he can afford us in our hopper O !

Not only that, I am old Sankey-Benny,
I have three or four yards of black-and-white tape
        in my pocket,
I will sell you it all for a penny.

Tom the Fool.

Sank, my lad, what have you got in the hardware line ; anything but soft soap and treacle?

Hopper Joe.

Them's just the two things that I have not got.
I'll call on you a week last Tuesday.

Tom the Fool.

Thank you, old rag-bag.

Enter Farmer's Man.

Farmer's Man.

In comes I, the Farmer's Man,
Don't you see my capping hand?
I go forth and plough the master's land,
And turn it upside down.
How I straight I go from end to end.
I scarcely make a baulk or bend ;
And to my horses I attend
As they go marching round the end.
Hov-ve, gee, wo! [*cracks his whip.*]

Enter Dame Jane, *with a baby.*

Dame Jane.

> In comes I, old Dame Jane,
> With a neck as long as a crane ;
> Dib-dab over the meadow.
> Once I was a blooming maid,
> Now I am a downright old widow.
> Long time I have sought thee,
> And now I have caught thee.
> Tommy, take the child.

Tom the Fool.

> The child, Jane! it's none of mine.
> Who told you bring it here?

Dame Jane.

> The overseer of the parish told me to bring it to the biggest fool I could
> find, and I think you be him, for its eyes, nose, cheeks and chin, is as much
> like you as ever it can grin.

Tom the Fool.

> Is it a boy or a girl?

Dame Jane.

> It is a girl.

Tom the Fool.

> Mine is all boys. Take it and swear it to the town pump, old rag-bag.

Enter Beelzebub.

Beelzebub.

> In comes I, Beelzebub,
> On my shoulder I carry my club,
> In my hand a wet leather frying pan ;
> Don't you think I'm a funny old man?
> Is there any old woman that can stand afore me?

Dame Jane.

> I think I can.
> My head is made of iron,
> My body made of steel,
> My hands and feet of knuckle-bone,
> I think nobody can make me feel.

Beelzebub.

> If your head is made of iron,
> Your body made of steel,
> Your hands and feet of knuckle-bone,
> I think I can make me feel, old girl!

[*knocks* Dame Jane *down.*]

Tom the Fool.

> Oh, Beelzey! oh, Beelzey! what hast thou done?
> Thou hast kilt the old woman and limted [lamed] her son.
> Five pounds for a doctor,
> Ten to stop away,
> Fifteen to come in.

Enter Doctor.

Doctor.

> Wo! my lad, take hold of my donkey,
>   and mind he does not kick you.
> In comes I, the doctor, -

Tom the Fool.

> You the doctor?

Doctor.

> Yes, me the doctor!

Tom the Fool.

> How came you to be the doctor?

Doctor.

> By my travels.

Tom the Fool.

> Where have you travelled?

Doctor.

> England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales; back again to doctor old England ;
> fireside, bedside, by my old grandmother's cupboard-side, where I have had
> many pieces of pork pie. That makes me as big and fine a fellow as you are,
> Tom.

Tom the Fool.

Is that all your travels?

Doctor.

No ; when I was down in Yorkshire my old grandmother tumbled upstairs with an empty teapot full of flour and grazed her shin-bone , and made her stocking-leg bleed, and I cured that.

Tom the Fool.

What diseases can you cure?

Doctor.

The hipsy-pipsy, palsy, and the gout,
Aches within, aches without,
Draw a leg, set a tooth,
And almost raise the dead to life again.

Tom the Fool.

You seem a very clever young man, you better try a little of your skill.

Doctor.

Thank you, kind sir, I'll show you a pretty pass when I get my glasses on. I'll feel of this old body's pulse first. Her pulse beats very irregularly ; nineteen times to the tick of my watch once. She is in a very low way; she will not get a deal lower without there is a hole dug for her. She has been living on green potato-tops a fortnight without water. She has swallowed a donkey and cart, and can't digest the wheels. Now old lady, let me see your tongue, let me hear you cough. I have a little drop of snick-snarle in my coat waistcoat breeches pocket lining; shaken before taken, one drop in a morning, two at night, and swallow the bottle at dinner-time. I have also got a box of my fatmetical [pharmaceutical] pills ; you must take one in the morning, two at night, and swallow the box at tea-time, which will help to digest the wheels and purify your blood. Do you know good ladies and gentlemen, this old girl is not really dead,
She is in a trance,
So raise her up and let her dance;
If she can't dance we can sing,
So raise her up and let's begin.

All dance a country dance, and sing various solo songs; then all sing together -

Good Master and good Mistress,
As you sit round your fire,
Remember us poor plough lads,
That plough through mud and mire.
The mire has been so very deep,
We travel far and near,
We thank you for a Christmas box,
And a pitcher of your best beer.

As they go out of the hall, all sing -

We thank you for civility,
And what you gave us here;
We wish you all good night,
And another happy year.

Notes

This play text was appended to a historical novel published in 1890 by Mrs. Chaworth Musters of Wiverton Hall, near Bingham.

The Chaworth Musters family used to encourage the Cropwell and Tithby Ploughboys by inviting them to perform their play to hunting parties at the Hall. For the Ploughboys, this was the high point of the year, especially as they were wined and dined and given 7/6 each as a reward. In those days, seven shillings and sixpence were riches.

Several Notts village sides used Mrs Chaworth Musters' book as a source for their play text.

APPENDIX B - NATURE OF HISTORICAL FOLKLORE RECORDS

In their *Early Morris Project*, J.Forrest and M.Heaney (1991) list the main categories of source material, with examples, in which evidence can be found for morris dancing prior to 1750. Using my own experience with folk plays and Plough Monday, I have made the list more general by adding a couple of categories, and regrouping them under new headings. These are:

1. Contemporaneous Factual Records

These are records that were made at the time traditional events or performances took place, and/or when the tradition was current. They may be dry facts - such as an entry in an account book - and therefore be treated as objective records. Alternatively, they may be highly subjective, indicating approval or disapproval of the tradition. Accordingly, the information recorded may be incomplete or biased, but nonetheless tends to be accurate. Contemporaneous records can be subdivided into four further categories:

a) *Account Books, Inventories and other Lists*

Trade guilds, Borough corporations, churchwardens and large households, among others, often kept accounts of payments made to the participants in traditional activities, and/or for the purchase of accoutrements required for the tradition. Where the establishment maintained sets of costumes or other equipment, these sometimes appeared in inventories or other lists.

b) *Legal Instruments and Documents*

At various times, certain traditions have alternately been condoned or discouraged by the authorities - whether secular or ecclesiastical. An approved tradition might have its rights enshrined in formal statutes, proclamations, bylaws or charters. On the other hand, laws and injunctions

might also be used to suppress or control a custom that had attracted the disdain of the authorities. Such legal instruments are usually preserved in official archives. Naturally, when people occasionally transgressed these laws or regulations, they would be required to explain their actions or even face prosecution. The proceedings may be included in court records.

Many customs were initiated or maintained by endowments in wills. Wills may also be involved in the transfer of material objects by tradition bearers to their successors. Related to wills are registers of births, marriages and deaths, which may occasionally include tradition-related comments in addition to the bare facts they normally contain.

c) *Descriptive Records*

Descriptions of varying extent may be included in the official chronicles of the aristocracy, minutes of organisations, and the like. Customs may also be mentioned or described in private diaries, correspondence, notebooks and other personal papers of individuals.

Articles, correspondence and advertisements in newspapers, as well more modern forms of reportage such as cinema news reels, may include descriptive information similar to official and personal records.

d) *Physical Relics*

Preserved artifacts and costumes, scripts, posters and other ephemera used in the custom. While these things provide useful direct evidence, they are often of unidentified provenance, and are commonly undated.

2. Non-contemporaneous Records

These are descriptions that were recorded some time after the tradition occurred. They include information collected by antiquarians and academics, as well as reminiscences published in biographies and nostalgic correspondence in periodicals. Because these records rely on the memories of the participants or informants, there may be an element of incompleteness and/or occasional error.

3. Literary and Artistic Works

Traditions may feature in a wide variety of literary and art forms, including; verse, prose, plays, masques, dance, pictures, etc. They may include a portrayal of the tradition, or they may merely allude to it. However, in any case, it will only be present in an ancillary manner. Because such works are essentially original creations, accuracy is often not a major concern. Some authors and artists may strive to give accurate representations of the tradition, but at the other extreme they might be completely fanciful, perhaps only sharing a name with an authentic tradition. Conversely, parts of literary and artistic works were sometimes used by traditions as sources for textual and other material. This is especially the case with folk drama, where several versions have been shown to contain segments of text found in literary plays and broadsides.

APPENDIX C - FOLK PLAY TEXT ENCODING STANDARD

This appendix defines a standard format or layout format for encoding folk play texts, referred to hereafter as the STD format - meaning Standard Text Data.

Conventions

- Texts are stored as ASCII text files, one file per text.

- The information in each text record is split into clearly labelled sections, indicated by headings in angle brackets - e.g. <CONTEXT>. The record ends with an explicit "<END>" label followed by the text's serial number.

- Subsections or fields within sections are indicated by two-letter codes and an "=" sign - e.g. LC= for Location, CH= for Character Name, etc.

- Each text record must include a full set of section and subsection labels, in the correct order, even if one or more sections are empty.

- The STD format entails some reformatting of the native source. Lines are laid out in rhyme or according to metre, special layout conventions are used for stage directions and in-text notes, etc., and any associated information is decanted into the Notes section. However, original spellings, numerals, punctuation and abbreviations are retained.

- Line breaks and blank lines have no significance *per se*. This is because meaningful line breaks are marked by field labels and other standard tags. Blank lines and line breaks occurring in the original therefore do not need to be reproduced exactly. However, line breaks and blank lines may be added to the STD file to improve readability if required.

File Names

A unique serial number is assigned to each text, and for administrative convenience, file names use the same serial number. This being the case, and

because of constraints imposed by the available computers and software, the numbering scheme had to be compatible with the MS-DOS operating system. I opted for a numbering scheme with meaningful elements as follows:

Grid Ref., (2 letters + 2 figs.) for place
|
2-figs indicating decade - **77st57pa.std** - Standard file type
|
Initial of source's surname
+ Distinguishing suffix

File names are in lower case only. (Some programs automatically make the case conversion anyway when saving files.) In detail, the filename elements are be made up of the following components;

Date - A two-figure number representing the decade of the record date - one for the century and one for the decade. E.g. 95 = 1950s, 78 = 1780s, etc.

- The date should be whichever of the following is earliest (i.e. highest in the list);

    - Date of performance

    - Date of record - i.e. collection date, postmark, etc.

    - Date of publication

    - Date of deposition in an archive

- If a range of dates is given, the earliest of the dates is used. e.g. "1847 to 1891" gives "84"

- If the decade within a century is unknown, a hyphen "-" should be used. e.g. "8-" = 1800 to 1899, i.e. 19th Century.

Place - This is an Ordnance Survey Grid Reference - two letters and two-figures.

e.g. sk56 - from SK5168

The two-figure reference represents quite a broad area (a 10km square), but has the merit of allowing a degree of meaningful geographical sorting.

- The Location should be whichever of the following is highest in the list:

    - Place of performance

    - County (or region) of performance

- Place of publication or collection - if this is felt to be relevant

- If either the 100km grid square or the 10km grid square is not known, hyphens "--" should be used. e.g. "tf--" or "----".

- Where a county or region straddles more than one 100km grid square, use the square which contains most of it.

Person - The initial letter of the surname of the informant, author, collector, etc.

- The person should be whichever of the following is highest in the following list;

    - Performer
    - Informant
    - Collector
    - Author
    - Publisher

Suffix - An arbitrary letter is needed to distinguish between texts with the same Date-Place-Name combination. Normally this should be set to the Person's initial. Otherwise, any arbitrary letter should be used.

The order of the elements in the filename:

Examples

`77st57pa.std`   "Anthony Pasquin" (1791) Cure at Bristol Fair

77	= 1770
st57	= Bristol - ST5872
p	= Pasquin - Author
a	= A - Author's initial

`87----ej.std`   J.H.Ewing (1874) Play from "The Peace Egg"

87	= 1874 - Year of publication
----	= Place not relevant
e	= Ewing - Compiler's surname
j	= Juliana

`93sk45cl.std`	P.T.Millington Collection (1992, L.Clarke)

93	= 1932 - Approx Performance Date
sk45	= Selston, Notts. - SK4553
c	= Clarke - Performer's Surname
l	= L - Performer's initial

File Structure

\<IDENTIFICATION\>

Fields that identify the text and its source.

ID=   *Serial Number* - must be unique - e.g. 82sk46mf

FN=   *File name* - as used by the computer's operating system.   This is normally the Serial Number plus the file type extension - e.g. 82sk46mf.std

CI=   *Citation of Source* - based on the Harvard style - e.g. R.W.Storer (1983), M.W.Barley Collection (1953, R.L.Kirk), etc.

ST=   *Short Title* - e.g. Underwood Guysers 1994. This should be unique, and ideally this should include the geographical location of the tradition and a date. Other information such as county, name of informant, etc., can be used to distinguish otherwise non-unique titles.

\<CONTEXT\>

LC=   *Location of the tradition* - specifically the placename - e.g. Underwood

CO=   *County and Country* - e.g. Notts., England

GR=   *National Grid Reference* (Letters + 4 figures) - e.g. SK8574, or Latitude and Longitude (for overseas texts).

YR=   *Year*.   Earliest date (or date range) associated with the record, plus appropriate qualification. Ideally date of performance, but failing that, date of collection, publication, deposition, etc. - e.g. "Perf. 1943 to 1945"

TO=   *Time of Occurrence* - i.e. Christmas, Plough Monday, etc.

CN= *Collective Name(s)* - e.g. Plough Jaggs, Mummering, etc.

`<SOURCE>`

Full bibliographic details of the source of the text, following the conventions established by the Traditional Drama Research Group (1981).

AU= *Authors* - Full Names of authors, informants (or collectors).

TI= *Title* - Original full title of book, article or manuscript, with supplementary information in square brackets where necessary.

JN= *Series* - i.e. Journal title or Manuscript collection title.

PU= *Other publication details* - Date of publication/collection, Volume and Issue numbers, page numbers, collection reference numbers, etc.

N.b. - Any notes relating to bibliographic accuracy, holdings of rare items, etc., should be placed in the <Notes> section towards the end of the file.

`<CAST>`

List of characters.

- Characters should be listed in order of appearance wherever possible

- The entry for each character starts on a new line with the field label "CH=" followed the preferred name for the character as it appears in the source.

- A rôle can optionally be added on the same line in curly braces, and separated from the standardised name by one or more spaces.

- Any alternative names (synonyms and spelling variations) from the original source follow, each on their own line and prefixed by a hash sign ("#").

Notes

- The preferred name should be selected from one of the names used in the original source. In order of preference, the name should be selected from; (1) names occurring in the dialogue, (2) line tags used in the source, (3) in accompanying description or notes.

- If no suitable name is available, one should be devised - based on the rôle of the character - and placed in square brackets - e.g. `[Introducer].`

- Where the original source itself uses square brackets around line tags, these can be left as they are.

- Rôles should be kept simple, and preferably a single word - e.g. Introducer, Agonist, Collector, Supernumerary, etc.

- Include any characters and/or participants without speaking parts - e.g. "Old Horse", "Musician", etc.

`<TEXT>`

This section contains multiple occurrences of three types of information:

`CH=` - *Line tags*

- Line tags always appear on a new line, starting at the left margin. They start with the field label "`CH=`", followed by the character name as used in the source.

- Insert line tags within square brackets, whenever the original does not have them. Ideally, use the preferred name from the cast list.

- Special lines tags should be used where a character cannot be identified;

  `CH=[Unknown]` indicates a speech that is known to be spoken by a specific character but who cannot be identified.

  `CH=[Someone]` indicates a speech by a random member of the cast - as may typically happen in the call for the Doctor.

  `CH=[All]` is self-explanatory.

  `CH=[Rest]` indicates all the characters except the previous speaker. It may sometimes be better, if long-winded, to be explicit - e.g. `CH=[All except Slasher].`

Where there is more than one unidentified character, these should be distinguished by numbers - e.g. `[Someone No.1]`, `[Someone No.2]`, etc.

Stage Directions

- Stage directions should be enclosed in curly braces - e.g. `"{loudly}"`. Curly braces are substituted if the original source uses some other form punctuation.

- Stage directions can appear anywhere on a line, following the practice of the source wherever possible.

- Directions indicating an event - e.g. `{they dance}`, `{Slasher is killed}`, etc. - tend to appear on a line their own.

- Directions indicating a style of delivery - e.g. `{aside}`, `{suddenly}`, etc. - tend to be appended to line tags or placed at the appropriate place in a dialogue line. Often this will be at the start of a dialogue line.

Lines of Dialogue

- Each dialogue line should be preceded by a hash sign (i.e. "#") and one or more space characters. I found two spaces ideal for aligning dialogue with line tags.

- Long lines can be split for clarity if necessary. Continuation lines do not start with "#" sign, but an appropriate number of spaces are recommended to align with the preceding line.

- [Lines are currently not numbered in STD files.]

- Rhymed dialogue, which is written in the original as prose should be versified.

- Where a verse could be laid out as either quatrain or a couplet, use the couplet form.

- Genuine prose should be entered one sentence or major clause per line.

- For prose lists - e.g. certain Doctor's lists of cures - it may be appropriate to give each item a line of its own.

- Missing lines. Sometimes the source indicates that a number of lines are missing - usually this number is indeterminate. These should be indicated by an appropriate note in square brackets.

  e.g. `# [Lines forgotten here.]`

- Stage directions indicating style of delivery may be included within a dialogue line, provided they are placed within curly braces.

- In-text notes other than stage directions - e.g. alternative wordings, explanation of dialect, etc. - should be placed in square brackets.

- Round brackets are retained as such in the text (they may indicate an aside). Therefore, if the source uses round brackets for in-text notes and/or stage directions, these should be converted to the relevant standard form.

`<NOTES>`

The notes section may contain three types of note:

- Description and notes from the original source which are too long to remain as in-text notes.

- Notes from intermediate sources.

- Indexer's notes. These may include remarks on, for instance, bibliographic accuracy, uncertain locations or dates, aspects of the text, etc.

The standard layout is as follows:

- Hash signs "#" should be used at the start of each note or paragraph to preserve line breaks for clarity.

- Notes taken verbatim from the source should be given within quotation marks.

- The different types of notes should be labelled appropriately - e.g. "`# Barley's notes:`", "`# Indexer's notes:`", etc.

`<LOG>`

Administrative log of who has done what to the file and when.

Use one line for each transaction, starting with a hash sign "#" and giving; Date (e.g.26th Dec.1994), Name (e.g. Martin Collins), and Transaction type (e.g. Scanned, Encoded, Checked, Corrected, etc.)

    e.g.   # 26th Dec.1994 – Martin Collins - Scanned

`<END>`

Explicit end marker for the file/record. On the same line, this should be followed by a repeat of the Serial Number, labelled with the appropriate prefix

e.g. `<END> ID=77st57pa`

STD Template - Standardised Text File

<IDENTIFICATION>
ID=*Serial Number*
FN=*File Name*
CI=*Citation of source*
ST=*Short Title*
<CONTEXT>
LC=*Location - placename - of performance*
CO=*County/Country or performance*
GR=*Grid Reference of location*
YR=*Year(s) of performance or record*
TO=*Time(s) of occurrence*
CN=*Collective names for participants*
<SOURCE>
AU=*Authors/Collectors*
TI=*Title of source*
JN=*Journal or Collection Name*
PU=*Other publication details*
<CAST>
CH=*Character Name No.1 {rôle no.1}*
 # Alternative name for character no.1
 # Alternative name for character no.2
CH=*[Character Name No.2] {rôle no.2}*
 # Alternative name for character no.2
:
:
<TEXT>
CH=*Char.No.1 {in-text stage direction}*
 # Text line
*   Continuation of line*
 # Text line
{Stage Direction}
CH=*Char.No.2*
 # Text line,
:
:
<NOTES>
 # Author's **notes:** *"verbatim narrative from source*
 # Continuation of Author's notes"
 # Indexer's notes: *Indexer's remarks*
 # Continuation of Indexer's notes
<LOG>
 # Date **-** *Name* **-** *Transaction type*
<END> ID=*Serial number repeated*

Example STD File - Abridged

```
<IDENTIFICATION>
ID=90sk44mr
FN=90sk44mr.std
CI=R.Meynell (1957/58)
ST=Kirk Hallam Christmas Guisers Play
<CONTEXT>
LC=Kirk Hallam
CO=Derbys., England
GR=SK4540
YR=Perf. about 1907
TO=Christmas
CN=Guisers, Guisering
<SOURCE>
AU=Rosemary Meynell
TI="Come, Brave Bow Slash and his men"
JN=Derbyshire Countryside
PU=Dec.1957/Jan.1958, Vol.23, No.1, pp.22-23,35
<CAST>
CH=First Guiser {Introducer}
#  Opener
CH=King George {Combatant}
CH=Young Turk {Combatant}
CH=Princess of Paradise {Lamenter}
CH=Doctor {Doctor}
#  Doctor M.D. Brown
CH=Betsy Betsy Belzebub {Collector}
CH=Chorus
<TEXT>
CH=First Guiser
#  I open the door, I enter in,
#  I trust your favour I shall win.
      :
      :
CH=Betsy Betsy Belzebub
#  In comes Betsy Betsy Belzebub,
#  under my arm I carry a tub -
#  In my hand a dripping pan -
      :
      :
<NOTES>
# Meynell's note: "Collected from Mr.James Carrier"
# Indexer's note: The original uses "Chorus" to
  indicate "[Rest]" in the call for the Doctor.
<LOG>
# 18th Oct.1994 - Peter Millington - Entered
<END> ID=90sk44mr
```

Adaptation of the STD Template for Raw Data

The STD format may require some re-formatting of the native source. However, I recognise the potential for encoding sources verbatim in their native format. The template below outlines an adaptation of the STD format for raw data. This is designated as the RTD format, meaning Raw Text Data. RTD files are distinguished from STD files by using an **.rtd** filename type extension.

Most of the RTD conventions are the same as the STD standard. Several of the sections - Identification, Context, Source, Notes and Log are in fact identical in every respect. However, a Raw Data section replaces the Cast and Text sections. In this, the text and accompanying notes are copied from the source verbatim. This means that line breaks and blank lines are significant in RTD files.

Raw Text File

\<IDENTIFICATION\>
ID=*Serial Number*
FN=*File Name*
CI=*Citation of source*
ST=*Short Title*
\<CONTEXT\>
LC=*Location - placename - of performance*
CO=*County & Country of performance*
GR=*Ordnance Survey 4-figure Grid Reference for the location*
YR=*Year of performance or record*
TO=*Time(s) of occurrence*
CN=*Collective names for participants*
\<SOURCE\>
AU=*Authors/Collectors*
TI=*Title of source*
JN=*Journal or Collection Name*
PU=*Other publication details*
\<RAW DATA\>
Text, description, etc., in the native format of the source.
Line breaks are significant.
\<NOTES\>
 # Indexer's Remarks
\<LOG\>
 # Date - Name - Transaction type
\<END\> ID=Serial number repeated

APPENDIX D - FOLK PLAY TEXTS IN HTML FORMAT

Introduction

HyperText Mark-up Language (HTML) is a system of tags used to mark up documents for rendition on the World Wide Web. In order to make my collection of texts available on the Internet, I wrote a VBA-Excel program that converts files from STD to HTML format. This format is essentially an exact HTML equivalent of the STD format in that the format uses the same conventions, and has the same sections and subsections, mostly in the same order. The main differences are as follows:

- HTML headers and trailers have been added

- Each section is terminated by a horizontal rule - "<HR>".

- The STD tags are replaced either by HTML formatting tags or by an explicit displayable label. The formatting tags embolden, italicise, underline, indent, etc., in a prescribed manner for each field. Apart from wishing to impart a clear and pleasing appearance to the displayed text, the aim is to make it possible for a computer program to parse and extract data from the HTML code for analysis.

Fields

The content and HTML tags required for each section and field are shown in the template and examples at the end of this appendix. The following description is restricted to HTML-specific features and significant variations from the STD conventions.

HTML Header

- HTML requires headers to start with a title. This is displayed in the window frame by Web browsers, and is shown by search engines (such as AltaVista)

when displaying lists of search results. As it helps for this title to be meaningful, the Short Title is used as the HTML Title. However, it has to be repeated later in the header for normal display purposes.

- The file name is included in the displayable header, but the file type extension is *htm* rather than *std*.

Context

- Because font styles could not be used reliably to distinguish between the different types of data in this section, explicit field labels have been used.

- Location is a concatenation of Place, County/Country and Grid Reference.

  - A comma and space are used to separate Place and County/Country, and the Grid Reference is given in brackets.

  - If there is no Place, the comma and space should be omitted

  - Likewise, if there is no Grid Reference, the brackets should be omitted.

Source

- Author is marked up for bold face font, Journal/Collection is in underlined italics, and the Publication Details are given in normal italics

- Journal/Collection and Publication Details are concatenated, separated by a comma and space.

  If Journal/Collection and/or Publication Details are blank, the comma and space should be omitted

Cast

- The cast is presented as a bulleted list

- Where there are multiple alternative names for characters, they are concatenated into one line, separated by slash characters with a space either side - i.e. " / "

Text

- Character designations (line tags) and stage directions are given in italics.

- Character designations must start on a new line, and stage directions may also need to do so. HTML does not retain line breaks in source files, so an HTML tag has to be inserted. For character designations and stage directions, this is done by adding the end of paragraph tag "<P>" wherever a line break needs to be forced. This also inserts line spacing, which adds clarity to the display.

- Similarly, line breaks also need to be forced within the text lines. In this case this is done using the Break tag "<BR>". Unlike "<P>", this keeps the line spacing monospaced.

- As with the STD format, all original spellings, punctuation and orthography are retained. Stage directions should be enclosed in curly braces, and in-text notes should be within square brackets.

Notes

- Line breaks are forced using the Break tag "<BR>" wherever a "#" sign appears in an STD.

File History

- File History is displayed as an HTML table with three columns. STD data has to be parsed and split to fill this table. The splits take place at the first two hyphens in each line.

HTML Trailer

- It is standard practice with HTML files to end with date when the file was created or last changed, and to give the name of the file "owner". Optionally, the name may be given as a "mailto" link (or there may be separate link), so that users only have click on the link to generate a blank pre-addressed e-mail message.

- Latest update date and file owner (with "mailto" link) have been included in this format. (These are generated automatically by the STD-to-HTML file conversion program.)

HTML Template - with equivalent STD field tags

<HTML>
<HEAD>
  <TITLE>Short Title (ST in STD)**</TITLE>**
</HEAD>
<BODY BGCOLOR=PEACHPUFF>
<CENTER>
<B>Short Title (ST in STD)**</B>
**
Citation of source (CI in STD)**
**
<I>File Name(FN in STD**</I>**
</CENTER>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<B>Context:</B><BLOCKQUOTE><TABLE>
<TR><TD><I>Location:</I></TD><TD>Placename (LC in STD)**,**
County/Country (CO in STD) **(**Grid Ref (GR in STD)**)</TD></TR>**
<TR><TD><I>Year:</I></TD><TD>Year of Record
(YR in STD)**</TD></TR>**
<TR><TD><I>Time of Occurrence:</I></TD><TD> Festival Name
(TO in STD)**</TD></TR>**
<TR><TD><I>Collective Name: Collective Names
(CN in STD)**</I></TD><TD>-</TD></TR>**
</TABLE></BLOCKQUOTE>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<B>Source:</B><BLOCKQUOTE>
<AU><B>Authors/Collectors (AU in STD)**</B></AU>
**
<TI>Tile of source (TI in STD)**</TI>
**
<JN><I><U>Journal or Collection name (JN in STD)**</U></I></JN>,**
<PU><I>Other publication details (PU in STD)**</I></PU>**
</BLOCKQUOTE>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<B>Cast:</B><UL><LI>Character name No.1 (CH in STD) {rôle No.1} /
Alt name for No.1 (# in STD)**</LI>**
<LI>Character name No.2 (CH in STD) {rôle No.2} / Alt name for No.2 (# in
STD)**</LI>**
      :
      :
</UL>
<HR>
<B>Text:</B><BLOCKQUOTE>
<I>{Stage direction before character designation**}</I><P>**
<I>Character designation before text lines (CH in STD)**</I>**
<UL>First text line of speech (# in STD)
**
**Middle lines of speech (# in STD)
      :
**
Last text line of speech (# in STD)</UL>**
<I>Character designation before stage directions (CH in STD)**</I><P>**

<I>{*Stage direction before text lines*}**</I>**
<UL>*First text line of speech (# in STD)*
**
***Middle lines of speech (# in STD)*

     :

**
Last text line of speech (# in STD)</UL>**

     :

     :

</BLOCKQUOTE>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<B>Notes:</B><BLOCKQUOTE>
*First notes line or paragraph***
**
*Further notes lines or paragraphs***
**

     :

Last notes line or paragraph
</BLOCKQUOTE>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<B>File History:</B>
<BLOCKQUOTE><TABLE>
<TR><TD>*Date***</TD><TD>***- Name***</TD><TD>***- Transaction type***</TD></TR>**
<TR><TD>*Date***</TD><TD>***- Name***</TD><TD>***- Transaction type***</TD></TR>**

     :

</TABLE></BLOCKQUOTE>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<CENTER>
<FONT SIZE=2>Last generated on *Date & Time* **by** Name
(<A HREF="mailto:*e-mail address***">** *e-mail address* **</A>)</FONT>**
<p align=center>Go to the <A href="Playlist.htm">Folk Play List</A></p>
</CENTER>
</BODY>
</HTML>

Example HTML Code (abridged)

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
  <TITLE>A Christmas Play [Broughton, Lincs.] - Text A</TITLE>
</HEAD>
<BODY BGCOLOR=PEACHPUFF>
<CENTER>
<B>A Christmas Play [Broughton, Lincs.] - Text A</B><BR>
C.R.Baskervill (1924), pp.250-258<BR>
<I>82sk95ba.htm</I>
</CENTER>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<B>Context:</B><BLOCKQUOTE><TABLE>
<TR><TD><I>Location:</I></TD><TD>Broughton, Lincs.
(SK9154)</TD></TR>
<TR><TD><I>Year:</I></TD><TD>Probably Col. 1824</TD></TR>
<TR><TD><I>Time of Occurrence:</I></TD><TD>Christmas</TD></TR>
<TR><TD><I>Collective Name:</I></TD><TD>-</TD></TR>
</TABLE></BLOCKQUOTE>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<B>Source:</B><BLOCKQUOTE>
<AU><B>C.R.Baskervill</B></AU><BR>
<TI>Mummers' Wooing Plays in England</TI><BR>
<JN><I><U>Modern Philology</U></I></JN>,
<PU><I>Feb.1924, Vol.21, No.3, pp.250-258</I></PU>
</BLOCKQUOTE>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<B>Cast:</B><UL><LI>Fool {Introducer} / Noble Anthony / Clown /
Amorous George</LI>
<LI>Lady</LI>
<LI>1st Ribboner {Wooer} / Rib / Courteous Knight</LI>
<LI>2n Ribboner {Wooer} / 2 Rib / Lawyer</LI>
<LI>3 Ribr. {Wooer} / Fathers Eldest Son</LI>
<LI>Ancient Man {Wooer}</LI>
<LI>Jane {Old Woman} / Jinny</LI>
</UL>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<B>Text:</B><BLOCKQUOTE>
<I>{Enter Fool}</I><P>
<I>Fool</I>
<UL>Gentlemen and Ladies
<BR>I'm come to see you all
<BR>This merry time of Christmas,
<BR>I neither knock nor call;
<BR>I come in so brisk and bold</UL>
<I>Lady</I>
<UL>When I was a maid in blooming years
<BR>my pleasure was all in pride.
<BR>My tatling tongue could never lie still
<BR>in service to abide.</UL>
<I>1st Ribboner</I>
<UL>Hey now man I see thou can do something,
<BR>hold thy hand,
<BR>here's a Shilling for thy labour; </UL>
<I>{1st Rbr. to the Lady}</I>
<UL>Well meet fair Lady in this place,
```

```
<BR>the exercise that is in the
<BR>will over shade the fairest face,
<BR>when beauty comes on high degree</UL>
<I>{Finis}</I>
</BLOCKQUOTE>
<HR COLOR=RED>
<B>Notes:</B><BLOCKQUOTE>
Indexer's note: Although the play text is identified as coming
from Broughton, in the geographical context of the whole
collection of texts, this is likely to be a shortened
representation of Brant Broughton near Bottesford.  Plain
Broughton is in northern Lincolnshire.
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Entered</TD></TR>
<TR><TD>28/06/1996</TD><TD>- Peter Millington</TD><TD>- Proof
read</TD></TR>
<TR><TD>05/01/1998</TD><TD>- Peter Millington</TD><TD>-
Converted to HTML</TD></TR>
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<CENTER>
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P.Millington
(<A
HREF="mailto:peter.millington1@virgin.net">Peter.Millington1@vi
rgin.net</A>)</FONT>
<p align=center>Go to the <A href="Playlist.htm">Folk Play
List</A></p>
</CENTER>
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

Example - As Displayed (abridged)

A Christmas Play [Broughton, Lincs.] - Text A
C.R.Baskervill (1924), pp.250-258
82sk95ba.htm

Context:

Location:	Broughton, Lincs. (SK9154)
Year:	Probably Col. 1824
Time of Occurrence:	Christmas
Collective Name:	

Source:

C.R.Baskervill
Mummers' Wooing Plays in England
Modern Philology, Feb.1924, Vol.21, No.3, pp.250-258

Cast:

- Fool {Introducer} / Noble Anthony / Clown / Amorous George
- Lady
- 1st Ribboner {Wooer} / Rib / Courteous Knight
- 2n Ribboner {Wooer} / 2 Rib / Lawyer
- Ribr. {Wooer} / Fathers Eldest Son
- Ancient Man {Wooer}
- Jane {Old Woman} / Jinny

Text:

{Enter Fool}

Fool

> Gentlemen and Ladies
> I'm come to see you all
> This merry time of Christmas,
> I neither knock nor call;
> I come in so brisk and bold

Lady

> When I was a maid in blooming years
> my pleasure was all in pride.
> My tatling tongue could never lie still
> in service to abide.

1st Ribboner

Hey now man I see thou can do something,
hold thy hand,
here's a Shilling for thy labour;

{1st Rbr. to the Lady}
Well meet fair Lady in this place,
the exercise that is in the
will over shade the fairest face,
when beauty comes on high degree

{Finis}

Notes:

Indexer's note: Although the play text is identified as coming from Broughton, in the geographical context of the whole collection of texts, this is likely to be a shortened representation of Brant Broughton near Bottesford. Plain Broughton is in northern Lincolnshire.

File History:

19/05/1996	- Peter Millington	- Entered
28/06/1996	- Peter Millington	- Proof read
05/01/1998	- Peter Millington	- Converted to HTML

APPENDIX E - NON-EXACT LINE MATCHING TOOLS

In theory, when adding a new line to the database, it should be checked against every other line in the database to see which is most similar. A decision then has to be made as to whether the lines truly match or not. To a large degree, automated line matching is possible, but some manual intervention cannot be avoided. However, the main practical problem is that checking one line against every other line is a very long process, and cannot be done without high-powered computers. Consequently, I created a suite of automated tools to be used in various combinations and sequences, which are effectively short cuts. They are mostly based on the similarity algorithm for comparing lines described elsewhere, but some are short cuts that exploit the innate features of folk play texts.

Comparing Neighbours

This tool exploits the fact that pairs or groups of lines - especially rhymed lines - tend to stay together, usually in a standard order, as they are transmitted from text to text. Thus if an unmatched line is preceded or followed by matched neighbour, there is a reasonably good probability that other occurrences of the matched line elsewhere in the database will have neighbours that equate to the unmatched line. The algorithm is as follows;

- Does a matched neighbour *precede* an unmatched line? If so, note its Standard ID, then …

- Find other occurrences of the lines with this Std.ID in the database.

- Compare the lines following these occurrences with the unmatched line. Repeat for each occurrence until a true match is found, or until no further occurrences are left.

- If still not matched, does a matched line *follow* the unmatched line?

- If so, repeat as before, only this time comparing lines that precede other occurrences of the matched neighbour.

This tool is fairly efficient. Usually, a high proportion of the suggested matches is correct. Bearing this in mind, it could be beneficial to apply lower similarity thresholds relative to other matching tools. This would reduce the need for manual confirmation of borderline potential matches.

Comparing Reversed Lines

This matching tool exploits the fact that most English folk play texts are in rhyme. Because of the desire to preserve rhyme, the terminal words of lines are much less likely to vary, other than in spelling. Furthermore, even when terminal words are changed, the substitute words are likely to end in the same rhyming string of characters. Such poetic pressures do not impinge on prose, although the wish to preserve metre may also discourage variation to a greater or lesser extent.

The ideal tool would be a phonetically based rhyming index of lines. However, this is not simple to implement. Instead therefore I have opted for an index of lines with letters reversed - i.e. right to left - e.g. "here come i" → "i emoc ereh". This is a straightforward computing process. Thereafter, sorting the reversed lines alphabetically will bring together lines with the same terminal words or word endings. There are obvious shortcomings with this approach. For instance the words "beer", "here" and "hear" which ought to be relatively close to each other in a true rhyming index are, with this approach, more widely, if not distantly spaced. Nonetheless, such an index remains a useful tools for initial comparisons.

To match a line, the unmatched line is inserted in the appropriate place in the index, and compared with its neighbouring entries. In theory, one could progress outwards before and after the unmatched line, until either a match is found or there are no more lines to check. However, a preliminary statistical analysis of known matched pairs of lines showed that in general that they have at least five

terminal characters in common. Therefore in the index, the outward progress can be halted when less than five terminal characters match.[29]

This tool has average efficiency.

Comparing Normal Lines

This tool works along the same lines as the Reversed Line tool, except that it uses normal lines sorted alphabetically, and works from the beginning of lines. The poetic pressures that tend to preserve line ends do no apply to the beginnings of lines, although metre, alliteration and other constructs may have some conservative effect. Because the degree of variation is much greater, this tool is much less successful than the Reversed Line tool.

This tool has poor efficiency, and so is generally used as a last resort. Most suggested matches are incorrect, due to the large number of common initial words, especially conjunctions and prepositions. The accuracy of this method could be improved by having a stop list of these common initial words that are skipped when selecting candidate matches. Alternatively, the initial common character limit of 5 that was used in this study could be increased order to reduce the number false match suggestions.

Dialix - for handling Dialect and Semi-literate Variation

Very few matches are found when comparing Standard English with written dialect or semi-literate text because of the spelling variations. However, successful matches can be made if the lines have been phonetically encoded - using an algorithm such as Soundex or Phonix (H.J.Rogers & P.Willett, 1991, and T.N.Gadd, 1988). A simplified adaptation of the Phonix algorithm was created, which was designated Dialix. As with standard text, two versions of this index are generated, normal and reversed lines. Similarly, the reversed version is more successful at suggesting valid matches. While the number of valid matches is

---

[29] The same limit of five matching characters - whether initial or terminal - was applied to all the other indexes and line-matching tools. This needs refinement, since some of these tools require higher limits and some require lower limits.

increased relative to standard text, the down side is that the number of incorrect match suggestions also increases. Consequently, these indexes tended to be used for only processing texts identified as diverging significantly from Standard English.

This tool has poor to average efficiency.

Typical Sequence of Matching Operations

The general strategy is to use the more efficient tools to identify as many matches as possible before moving on to the less efficient tools, since only the remaining unmatched lines have to be processed.

- The process commences with a three-stage automatic process in the following order:

  - Lines that exactly match existing lines in the database are assigned the existing Unique and Std.IDs.

  - Remaining unmatched lines are checked against the reversed line index. Where the similarly with existing entries exceeds a certain threshold (85% in this study) the comparison is regarded as a match, and the relevant existing Std.ID is assigned.

  - Remaining unmatched lines are checked using the Compare Neighbours tool. Again, existing Std.IDs are automatically assigned if the similarity of a comparison exceeds a certain threshold (also 85%).

- The above stages being automatic, some incorrect matches may occur. These are primarily lines with common formulaic constructs and challenge/response pairs. Having become familiar with 15 to 20 common cases, these are checked manually at this stage, and corrected if necessary.

- The following stages all require manual confirmation of proposed matches. Potential matches are only displayed for consideration if their similarity exceeds a minimum threshold - typically 45%. Where several lines exceed this threshold, they are presented in descending order of similarity.

- The Compare Reversed Lines tool is normally used first, although if the new text uses much dialect or other non-standard spelling, this tool may be omitted in favour of the Reversed Dialix tool.

- This is followed by use of the Compare Neighbours tool.

- If a significant number of unmatched lines remain, the Reversed Dialix index and/or the Compare Normal Lines tool may be used, usually followed by a repetition of the Compare Neighbours stage.

- With the lines of the text in their correct order, manually check the Standard IDs that have been assigned so far.

  - Adjacent lines may have the same Std.ID. There are two common reasons for this; (a) The lines may be repeated, in which case repetition of the Std.ID is valid, or (b) a line may have been split. If the latter situation is confirmed, the appropriate decimals should be added to the Std.IDs - e.g. 340.0 and 340.0 become 340.1 and 340.6

  - Gaps in an otherwise continuous sequence of Std.IDs may suggest missing numbers that should be checked. Compare Neighbours may have missed these if lines have been transposed, or the degree of textual variation is high.

  - If a partial (decimalised) Std.ID is present without its partner, it is worth comparing the relevant normal partner with the unmatched line. Compare Neighbours should have suggested these already, but may have bypassed them if the degree of variation is high.

  - n.b Some or all of the above checks could be made automatic or semi-automatic.

- Any remaining unmatched lines should be investigated manually. A typical approach would be to search the database for relevant uncommon keywords or strings of characters and words to see if similar lines occur.

- The above stages can be repeated. The Compare Neighbours tool is particularly suited for repeated use after any stage.

- n.b. In theory, an automatic flexible check of all unmatched lines against the full database could be run. This would probably take an unacceptably long time to complete with current technology, and would therefore only be run as a last resort.

Assigning New Standard IDs

When no more new lines can be matched with the existing database, new Standard IDs should be assigned to the residue. Lines and their variants may be repeated among the remaining unmatched lines, and it is important that they receive the same Standard IDs. This is achieved as follows;

- The database is sorted by Std.ID and Reversed Line. This brings the unassigned lines together, and tends to group identical or rhymed lines. Matching lines are marked temporarily - e.g. with a different letter for each pair or group.

- Similarly, the database is then re-sorted by Std.ID and Normal Line. This may bring together related unmatched lines that have not already been grouped. Any further groups are also marked temporarily.

Finally, the database is sorted by Std.ID, File and Line Number. Having identifed the last Std.ID, the next numbers in the sequence are assigned in intervals of 10 to the unmatched lines. Members of the new groups identified above should receive the same new Std.ID. For the single new lines, Microsoft Excel's "Filldown → Series → Step value = 10" option is very useful. However, for couplets written as quatrains, new Std.IDs should be assigned with appropriate decimals, as described elsewhere.

APPENDIX F - TYPES OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TEXT LINES

There are four kinds of change that can happen to a line during transmission - Addition, Deletion, Substitution, and Transposition. All four categories can be split further into two - minor and major - according to how significant the changes are for the evolution of the plays. Minor changes are those which are likely to be spontaneously reversible or could be re-created without access to an original version. (By "original" I mean a written text, or an ex-performer who remembers the old text accurately.) These changes are usually reversible or can be re-created because they simply reflect the inherent variety of natural language - e.g. "will" ↔ "shall". They usually have no significant effects on play evolution. Conversely, major changes are likely to be irreversible or unlikely to be re-created, unless there is access to an original. The insertion of newly composed speeches is a prime example of such a change. These are the sort of changes that are significant for play evolution.

The four main types of change are listed below in detail, together with a number of special cases. The examples come from the parallel texts that accompany my paper on the J.H.Ewing "Peace Egg", St. Kitts and Nevis plays (P.T.Millington, 1996). The Ewing version is always given first.

Addition - of words, lines or speeches.

Reasons

The addition of odd words, and some cases of repetition, can mainly be ascribed to the natural variation in general language. They are often added to provide emphasis, and do not materially alter the meaning of the speech.

e.g.   "Here, sir, take a little of my flip-flop."

           - to -

         "Here, sir, take a little <u>out</u> of my flip flop."

Whole lines or speeches may be inserted to replace forgotten lines (in which case one could consider them under the category of Substitution).

They may also be original creations, either for art's sake, or to fulfil some special purpose. For instance, new parts may be required for extra actors, and they may wish to extend the duration of the play.

e.g.   [nothing]

   - to -

"I boldly crush a swear".

Special Case: Repetition

e.g.   "Down yonder is the way."

   - to -

"Down yonder, <u>down yonder,</u> is my way to go."

Repetition of whole lines, parts or dialogues may also occur. So for instance, if a play has multiple combats, the same Doctor's lines may be used for all of the cures.

Deletion - of words, lines or speeches.

Reasons

Again, the deletion of odd words can often be attributed to the innate variation in general language, especially if there is no significant change of meaning.

e.g.   "<u>Oh, hark!</u> I hear the silver trumpet sound"

   - to -

"I hear the silver trumpet sound."

Whole lines or speeches may be omitted.

e.g. "Ah, Saladin, St.George is in this very room.
       Thou'st come this unlucky hour to seek that fatal doom."

   - to -

[nothing]

Most commonly, lines are lost because of poor memory. On the other hand they may be deliberately cut out. This could be for pragmatic reasons, for instance a shortage of actors, or a desire to shorten the duration of the play. More sinisterly, they may be cut by way of censorship, and I particularly have in mind here the activities of Bowdlerisers.

Substitution - of words, lines or speeches

Reasons

Replacement of odd words and phrases with synonyms or phrases with more or less the same meaning is part of natural language and therefore to be expected. The same applies to minor changes of grammar such as tense changes, conversion of singular into plural, etc.

e.g.   "I challenge <u>thee</u> to feel"

> *- to -*

"I will challenge <u>you</u> to feel"

> "I am the King of Egypt, <u>as</u> plainly <u>doth</u> appear"
>
> > *- to -*
>
> "I am the King of Egypt, <u>so</u> plainly <u>does</u> appear"

A change of meaning is usually much more significant. It may be a deliberate change, or it may arise from lack of understanding of the original. Because of the archaic language that is used, this is often the case with folk plays.

e.g. "Now Prince of Paradine is dead,
<u>And all his joys entirely fled</u>."

> *- to -*

"Now, Black Prince of Paradine is dead,
<u>And I carry his terrible head</u>."

Conscious changes may be for the same reasons as for deliberate additions and deletions.

Special Case: Modernisation *- i.e. change of archaic to modern language ("doth" to "do"/"does", "thou"/"thee" to "You", etc.)*

e.g.   "I'll pierce <u>thy</u> body full of holes."

> *- to -*

"I'll place <u>your</u> body full of holes."

Such changes are probably intended to make the lines more intelligible to modern audiences.

Special Case: Antiquification *- i.e. change of modern to archaic language (the reverse of modernisation)*

e.g.   "And what fine sights pray have <u>you</u> seen?"

> *- to -*

"Pray, what fine sight' <u>thou</u> had seen."

These changes are probably intended to give the play an aura of antiquity, although it may just be continuing a pattern set in the rest of the play. The archaic language is often unknowingly being reinstated.

Special Case: Homophone Substitution *- i.e. use of similar sounding words.*

e.g.   "I'll <u>pierce</u> thy body full of holes."

> *- to -*

"I'll <u>place</u> your body full of holes."

> *- to -*

"I'll <u>paste</u> your body full of hole."

> "Of <u>Taffy's Land</u> I'm <u>Patron Saint</u>"
>
> > *- to -*
>
> "Of <u>Staffilan</u> I am <u>patience sent</u>"

"Here comes I, little <u>Dame</u> Dolly"

> *- to -*

"There come the little <u>James</u> Dolly"

> "Yes, Yes, my <u>liege</u> I will obey"
>
> > *- to -*
>
> "Yes, Yes, my <u>league</u> I will obey"

These changes may be the results of a creative mind, but more often they may result as a consequence of oral transmission. Also, they may reflect the fact that the actor or informant does not understand the (often archaic) words of the original. Alternatively, it may be the collector who does not understand the original. The outcome can be unintentionally amusing.

Special Case: Confusion - *i.e. text jumbled, often to the extent of no longer making sense.*

> e.g.   "If there is any man but me
>   Who noxious beasts can tame,
>   Let him stand forth in this gracious company
>   And boldly tell his name."
>
>   *- to -*
>
>   "So dear, if any man' heart
>   who contain in this company
>   Let him stand forth
>   and boldly tell his name."

"To travel south we're nothing loth,
     And treat you fairly, by my troth."

             - to -

     "Two trial' short, but not in t'ought."
     I will treat you plain with my true."

These changes may just be the product of poor memory, but such jumbling may sometimes be a more extreme form of the lack of understanding alluded to under homophone substitution.

Transposition - Reversal of order of words, lines or speeches.

e.g.   "And what fine sights <u>pray</u> have you seen?"

             - to -

       "<u>Pray</u>, what fine sights have you seen?"

"I for the crescent, you for the cross,
 Each mighty host oft won and lost."

     - to -

"Each mighty host reign, won and lost,
     I is for the crescent, and you is for the cross."

Reasons

Folk play speeches are usually in rhyme, and it is quite easy to reverse the order of couplets. Often this results in no change of meaning, so deliberate reversal of lines is unlikely.   Transpositions of odd words may simply be Spoonerisms.

APPENDIX G - AUTOMATIC COMPARISON OF TEXT LINES

Consider the following pair of equivalent lines from two separate texts:

1. `of taffys land im patron saint`   *(J.H.Ewing, 1884)*

2. `of staffilan i am patience sent`   *(R.Abrahams, 1968)*

Similarity Measures

Several methods are available for determining a numerical measure of similarity between two text lines. A frequently used measure is to use the number of words in common between the two texts. Much of the time, this is adequate, but in the example above, the only shared words are "of" and "i". This would yield a very low calculated similarity value, but what is more, "of" and "i" are such common words that completely unrelated lines could yield equivalent or even better similarity values.

A better approach might therefore be to use common strings of characters. Such strings could include multiple words and/or partial words. The advantage of this approach is that it handles variant words and spellings better, and could even accommodate additions and deletions.

Some flexibility in the positioning of characters might be needed to achieve the best fit. For instance;

```
of -taffys land i -m patron-- saint
||| ||||   ||| || ||||| | || ||
of staffi--lan- i am patience se-nt
```

Character string-based measures would yield higher similarity values, and although there is still a risk that the presence of generally common words may result in inappropriate matches, this risk should be lower.

Yet another approach could be to encode the text phonetically - e.g. using Soundex strings. This would accommodate similar sounding words or phrases,

regardless of spelling, which is a common problem. This might be better or worse than character-based measures, depending on the circumstances.

Each of the approaches listed above can have a number of ways in which the measure can be calculated. For instance, character-based methods could include or ignore spaces in the calculation.

A Method of Comparing Two Lines of Text (Character by Character)

When comparing two normalised lines of text, the aim is to identify the maximum number of characters they have in common - the common substring(s). Having done this, similarity can be calculated using the Dice Coefficient;

$$\text{Similarity} = \frac{2 \times \text{Number of common characters}}{\text{No. characters in No.1} + \text{No. characters in No.2}}$$

This formula yields value between 0 (totally dissimilar) to 1 (identical). Sometimes such figures are multiplied by 100 to be expressed as a percentage. There may be cases where using the raw number of common characters is more useful than a calculated similarity.

If we wish to accommodate the variations listed above, the identification of common characters needs to be an iterative process. The first step should be to identify the maximally common substring. Since its location cannot be predicted, we have to try every possible alignment, as in Table G-1.

It is likely that on occasion there will be two or more candidates for the maximally common substring. In this situation, the case with the maximum overlap of the two strings is preferable. If after this there is still more than one candidate, the case involving the minimum displacement of the line beginnings (or the ends) should be selected. If the choice is still undecided after this, an arbitrary decision may be required.

Table G-1 - Finding the Maximally Common Substring of two Lines

Step	Alignment	Overlap	No. in Common	Calculated Similarity
1	taffys land staffilan	1		
2	taffys land staffilan	2		
3	taffys land staffilan	3		
4	taffys land staffilan	4		
5	taffys land | staffilan	5	1	0.1
6	taffys land | staffilan	6	1	0.1
7	taffys land staffilan	7		
8	taffys land staffilan	8		
9	taffys land staffilan	9		
10	taffys land ||| staffilan	9	3	0.3
11	taffys land | staffilan	9	1	0.1
12	taffys land |||| staffilan	8	4	0.4
13	taffys land | staffilan	7	1	0.1
14	taffys land staffilan	6		
15	taffys land staffilan	5		
16	taffys land	4		

```
        staffilan

17         taffys land
             |                    3        1            0.1
        staffilan

18         taffys land          2
        staffilan

19          taffys land         1
        staffilan
```

In the example in Table G-1, all the cases where there are common characters happen to be contiguous strings. It is quite likely that situations could occur where the common characters are not adjacent. A preferable and more precise measure for a single iteration is therefore the maximum number of contiguous common characters.

Having found the maximally common substring, the remaining unmatched portions of the lines should be compared to find further substrings. This process needs to be repeated until no matchable characters are left and/or no actual match has been identified. One possible constraint could be to require the strings being matched to come from the same position relative to the previous common substring - i.e. either both from before or both from after. Otherwise, transpositions may be found.

Taking the example in Table G-1, the maximally common substring was;

```
TAFFYS LAND
   ||||
  STAFFILAN
```

This leaves a number of unmatched characters, which we can iterate as follows;

Table G-2 - Iteration Following the Example in Table G-1

Step	Alignment	Overlap	No. Common
1	ys land ilan	1	
2	ys land ilan	2	
3	ys land	3	

```
            ilan

  4      ys land              4
            ilan

  5      ys land
            |||              4           3
           ilan

  6      ys land              4
          ilan

  7      ys land              4
         ilan

  8       ys land             3
         ilan

  9        ys land            2
         ilan

 10         ys land           1
         ilan
```

This now gives a new total match as follows;

```
   taffys land
   ||||   |||                  = 7 common characters = 0.7 similarity
  staffi--lan
```

If one does not constrain the position of strings to be compared, then the two remaining "s" characters could be matched. This would indicate a transposition (or in this case a possible Spoonerism) which may or may not be credible.

In this example, we have;

- 7 common characters (disallowing transpositions)

- 11 characters in the first string (including the space)

- 9 characters in the second string

Using our formula;

Similarity = $\dfrac{2 \times \text{Number of common characters}}{\text{No. characters in No.1} + \text{No. characters in No.2}}$

Similarity = $\dfrac{2 \times 7}{11 + 9}$

Similarity = $\dfrac{14}{20}$ = 0.7 (or 70%)

Using this method for the complete pair of lines, the similarity comes to 0.72 (or 72%).

Further Refinements

In a text matching program, a given line from one text has to be checked against all the lines in the other text, with the aim of find the match with the highest similarity. It is quite possible that two or more matches may have the same similarity value, especially in the middle range. In this case, some means of discriminating between them is needed.

Let us consider two cases where matched substrings have been lined up;

```
1. of -taffys land i--m patron-- saint
   ||| ||||   ||| ||  |||||| |  ||  ||
   of staffi--lan- i am patience se-nt

2.   in comes i saint george that man of courage bold
       |||||||  ||||||||||||||||  ||||||||||||||||||||
     here comes --saint george the- man of courage bold
```

For the sake of argument, let us assume that the calculated similarity values for these pairs are the same - i.e. the similarities are quantitatively the same. Is there anything qualitative that can be used to further distinguish between the two?

Firstly, in No.1, there are more separate sets of matched substrings than there are in No.2. No.2 is therefore more **cohesive**. Secondly - and to a degree arising from the first case - the average length of the matched substrings in No.2 is greater than in No.1, also indicating greater **cohesion**. In both cases therefore, No.2 is qualitatively better than No.1.

It is possible to calculate a value for cohesion in two ways;

a. Count the total number of matched substrings

   E.g.   No.1 = 8,   No.2 = 3

b. Count the total number of segments, whether matched or not.

   E.g.   No.1 = 15,   No.2 = 6

In either case, the lower number indicates the most cohesive match. Option (b) is insufficiently precise. If one takes two lines of uneven length, with all the characters

of the shorter string matched with a single substring in the larger one, then three types of alignment can occur, yielding two different values of type (b) cohesion;
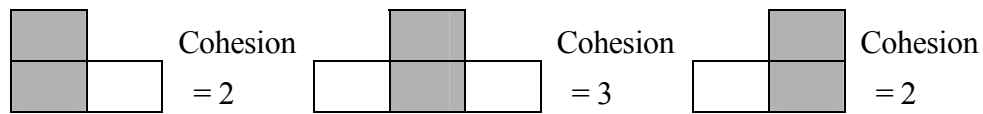
If we generalise this to cases where there are two or more matched substrings, Type (b) cohesion can range from *2n-1* to *2n+1*, where *n* equals the number of matched substrings. There are special cases for *n=0* [where Cohesion = 1 or not applicable] and *n=1* [min. Cohesion = 2].

Applying type (a) cohesion to the above example (i.e. *n=1*) always yields a calculated value of 1, so this is the better measure.

The best case for a match is when there is there is only one common substring, in which case the cohesion will be 1. The worst case would be where the common characters are all matched as isolated singles. In this case, if the number of matched characters is *n* then the calculated Cohesion will also be *n*.

The other approach to cohesion, mentioned above, is the average length of the matched substrings. For our example pairs;

No.1 = 2.75,   No.2 = 14.33

Storing Match Information Electronically

At any one time during the process of checking a line against a text, there will be a current best match, second best match, etc. To keep track of these candidates, the program needs to store the following minimum information;

• Line number of the matched line

• Similarity value of the match

• Cohesion value(s)

In addition it is useful retain details of the matched substrings. In the event that two lines appear to be equally well matched, the relevant matches can be displayed for manual selection of the best one.

Furthermore, while determining similarity, a computer program needs to store details of the currently matched, unmatched and unchecked substrings. This information can also be used in displaying the detail of the matches - for instance using the layout used in my examples.

Experimentation showed the following two-dimensional array format was effective;

Table G-3 - Format of Array for Storing Match Data

(Using examples of Tables G-1 & G-2)

	Character No. of start in Line 1	No. of chars. in Substring 1	Character No. of start in Line 2	No. of chars. in Substring 2	Type of Substring
Substring 1	-	0	1	1	N
Substring 2	1	4	2	4	M
Substring 3	5	3	6	1	U
Substring 4	9	3	7	3	M
Substring 5	12	1	-	0	N

Key to Types: M = Match, N = No Match, U = Unchecked

Efficiency Improvements

A lot of computer processing power is needed to compare every possible pair of lines in two texts in order to find the best match. Many of the comparisons may be avoidable.

Current Best or Threshold Similarity

If all the comparisons take place serially - i.e. one after the other - then there may come a time when making certain comparisons is pointless, because they have no chance of exceeding the current best similarity value.

To take an extreme example; if our program need to make say 9 comparisons, we may find that the second comparison yields a similarity of 100%. Obviously,

nothing else can exceed this value, so further comparisons are unnecessary (unless one wants to look for equal values).

For any pair of lines, there is a minimum overlap required (i.e. where at least that many character are common to each) to be able to equal or exceed the current best similarity. If two lines are to equal or exceed this threshold, the following formula applies;

$$\text{Threshold Similarity} >= \frac{2 \times \text{Minimum Overlap}}{\text{Length Line No.1} + \text{Length Line No.2}}$$

As the two line lengths and the threshold similarity are known, we can obtain the minimum overlap by rearranging the equation;

$$\text{Min.Overlap} = \frac{\text{Threshold Similarity} \times (\text{Length No.1} + \text{Length No.2})}{2}$$

As we can only deal with whole characters, the minimum overlap needs to be an integer. However, the formula could yield a non-integer result. In such cases, the result should be rounded **up** if the threshold must be exceeded, or rounded **down** if the threshold may be equalled.

In a program, this formula can be used to check if a comparison is worthwhile. It should first calculate the minimum overlap, and then only proceed further if the lengths of both exceed (or equal) this minimum.

Furthermore, if the comparison is to proceed, rather than start and end the comparison cycle with overlaps of one character, the minimum overlap can be used - thus reducing the number of shifts required.

Using this approach experimentally, the processing time was reduced by 28%.

Iteration of Threshold Similarity

The principle of minimum overlap can be extended to the iterations for remaining unmatched strings.

Having found the maximally common substring, an extreme case might look as follows;

	--- **Matched** ---	--- Unchecked ---
--- Unchecked ---	--- **Matched** ---	

Although there are plenty of unmatched characters, because of their alignment, there is no prospect of increasing the final overall overlap. There would be no point in continuing the comparison if the initial overlap does not equal or exceed the required minimum. More commonly, there will some potential for matching in the unchecked pairs of substrings. E.g.;

	--- **Matched** ---	
	--- **Matched** ---	

For each pair of unchecked substrings, there is a maximum possible overlap, which is equal to the length of the shorter substring. For the lines as whole therefore, the maximum possible overlap can be calculated as follows;

Max.poss.overlap = Sum of length of matched strings
+
Sum of max.poss.lengths of each pair unchecked substrings.

N.b. Pairs of substrings that are definitely not matched are excluded from this equation.

It should be convenient to determine this value while searching for unchecked substrings. If the maximum possible overlap is less than the required overall threshold, then the check of the current pair of lines can be halted.

Prioritising the Checking of Substrings

Having determined the maximally common substring of two lines, the remaining pairs of unchecked substrings are likely to be of uneven length (as illustrated in (b) above). As the substrings in any one pair may themselves be of uneven length, it is the pair of substrings with the maximum possible overlap which is the most important.

With more characters available, there is a higher probability that further matches will be found in the larger pair than in the smaller pair. Conversely, if no match is found, then larger segments of the lines are eliminated from the calculation of maximum possible overlap. Therefore, if the "largest" pair of unchecked substrings is always chosen, then the sooner the decision point on whether to abandon the check will be reached. This should result in increased efficiency.

Conditional Start Line

Although the threshold similarity approach improves the speed of the program, inefficiencies still remain if the second text is scanned from the beginning to the end for each line from the first text. Thus for instance, if the match is the 80th line in a text of 100 lines, a great many of the 80 lines will still have to be compared in full, despite using the threshold similarity approach.

Because blocks of lines tend to occur in the same order in different texts (e.g. a St.George introductory speech), there is a high probability that one good match will be immediately followed by another.

E.g. If the following lines are matched;

```
        in comes i-- beelzebub
         |||||||   ||| ||||||
      here comes old bellzebub
```

there is a good chance that the next lines from both plays will match too;

```
E.g.   over my shoulder i carry a- club
       |   ||||||||||||||||||||  |||||
       on-- my shoulder i carry my club
```

It is still necessary to check all the rest of the lines for a better match, but by starting with the likeliest best match, the threshold similarity will be initialised to a high value, and most of the remaining comparisons should be bypassed.

In my trial program, this approach reduced processing time by a further 9%, therefore achieving a total reduction of 37%.

Arranged by Country/County and Approximate Date

Bold entries are in TextBase.xls

CANADA

`90----pj` **Mummer's Play : Change Islands, Newfoundland - 1900**
J.J.Peckford (1949)   *Hero/Combat Play*

ENGLAND

`60tq79wb` **"Spectrvm" from "Wily Begvuilde" 1606**
"Wily Begvilde" (1606)   *Literary Parallel*

`65----vc` **Vindication of Christmas - Speech - 1653**
"Vindication of Christmas" (1653)   *Literary Parallel*

`66----cf` **126 : Robin Hood and the Tanner [Ballad] 1663**
F.J.Child (1888) pp.209-213   *Literary Parallel*

`67----rj` **Christmas rhyme from J.Ray (1670)**
J.Ray (1670)   *Literary Parallel*

`67tq37kf` **Diphilo and Granida - 1673**
F.Kirkman (1763)   *Literary Parallel*

`69tq37cw` **Congreve's Love for Love, Act 3, Scene 6 - 1695**
W.Congreve (1695)   *Literary Parallel*

`70----im` **Infallible Mountebank Broadside - 1707**
"Infallible Mountebank" (1707)   *Literary Parallel*

`70tq37aj` **Rosamond, an Opera - 1707**
J.Addison (1707)   *Literary Parallel*

`70tq37ns` **S.Nicholls' Infallible Doctor Broadside - 1700-1740**
"Infallible Doctor" [S.Nicholls] (n.d.)   *Literary Parallel*

`73tq37ap` **King Henry Fifth's Conquest of France - 1730**
"King Henry Fifth's Conquest of France" (1730)   *Literary Parallel*

`73tq37ch` **The Honest Yorkshireman [Extract] 1736**
H.Carey (1736)   *Literary Parallel*

`78tq37ej` **Second thoughts are best [dialogue ballad] 1780-1812**
"Second thoughts are best" (1780-1812)   *Literary Parallel*

`82sj39aw` **"Young Roger of the Mill" Broadside - 1820-1824**
W.Armstrong (1820-1824)   *Literary Parallel*

`83tq37jj` **A New Dialogue Between a Husbandman and a Servant Man - Before 1838**
"Husbandman and Servant Man" (1790-1840)   *Literary Parallel*

`87----ej` **The Peace Egg : A Christmas Mumming Play - 1874**
J.H.Ewing (1874)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`87se33jc` **The Four Champions of Great Britain - 1879-1884**
"Four Champions of Great Britain" [C.H.Johnson] (1879-1884)
Chapbook

`87tq37rg` **"When good King Arthur ruled this land" 1871**
G.A.R. (1872)   *Literary Parallel*

Berkshire

`88su57lb` **Text Fragments of Compton Mummers, Berks. - 1888**
B.Lowsley (1888) pp.21-22   *Hero/Combat Play*

`88su--lb` **Mid-Berkshire Mummers 1888**
B.Lowsley (1888) pp.17-21   *Hero/Combat Play*

`90su49ps` **2. Stanford-in-the-Vale, Berks. [Mummers, 1900]**
S.Piggott (1929) pp.262-264   *Hero/Combat Play*

`92su38ps` 1. Childrey, Berks. [Fragment - 1926]
S.Piggott (1929) p.262   *Hero/Combat Play*

`93su77ps` **3. Witley, Reading, Berks. [1930]**
S.Piggott (1929) pp.265-268   *Hero/Combat Play*

Cheshire

`78sj--df` **Cheshire Play - Before 1788**
D.Broomhead (1982)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`81sj76ej` **"Saint George and Slasher" - Sandbach, 1817**
F.Douce Collection (1817, J.Edwards)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sj56gb` **Souling Play from Huxley, Cheshire, 1913**
A.Helm (1968) pp.24-28   *Hero/Combat Play*

Cornwall

`78sw84em` **Truro [Formerly Mylor]: "A Play for Christmas", 1780s**
Enys Memoranda (no date) folio 22   *Hero/Combat Play*

`82s---sw` **Cornish Christmas Play - 1827**
W.Hone (1827)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`82sw53gd` **Tredrea Christmas Play - 1822**
D.Gilbert (1823)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`83s---sw` **Cornish Christmas Play - 1833**
W.Sandys (1833)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`85sw72mw` **Guise-Dance Play, Saint Keverne [Cornwall, 1855]**
R.M.N. (1925) pp.31-32 *Hero/Combat Play*

`85sw83pt` Mylor, Cornwall : "A Play for Christmas" 1850-1899
T.Peter (1916) *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sw64ed` **A Redruth Christmas Play : 1910-1925**
R.M.N. (1925) pp.29-31 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sw64tj` **Camborne, Cornwall : The Christmas Play - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.144-147 *Hero/Combat Play*

Cumberland

`81nx91wh` **T.Wilson's Alexander Chapbook [1810-1826]**
W.Hone (1826) col.1645-1648 *Chapbook*

`84nx91c1` Callander & Dixon's Alexander Chapbook - 1847-1891
Alexander and the King of Egypt [Callander & Dixon (1)] (n.d.)
Chapbook

`88nx91wi` A.Wilson's Alexander Chapbook - 1883-1901
Alexander and the King of Egypt [A.Wilson] (n.d.) *Chapbook*

`93ny--ps` **6. "The Sword-dancers" Cumberland. [1930]**
S.Piggott (1929) pp.272-273 *Hero/Combat Play*

Derbyshire

`84sk--hj` **A Christmas Play, Performed by the Derbyshire Mummers -
1849**
J.O.Halliwell (1849) *Hero/Combat Play*

`90sk32ps` **5. "Guisers" play on Xmas Eve, Repton, Derbyshire, Jan., 1909**
S.Piggott (1929) pp.270-272 *Hero/Combat Play*

`90sk44cj` **Kirk Hallam Christmas Guisers Play - 1907**
R.Meynell (1957/58) *Hero/Combat Play*

`93sk23ps` **4. Church Broughton, Derbyshire. [1930]**
S.Piggott (1929) pp.268-270 *Hero/Combat Play*

`94sk45ka` **The Somercotes Guisers, 1942-1945**
P.T.Millington Collection (2002, A.Kerry) *Hero/Combat Play*

Devon

`77sx99ba` **Exeter Fragment, 1737 or 1770**
A.Brice (1770) *Hero/Combat Play*

`87ss90fs` **The Silverton Mummers' Rhymes - 1873**
H.E.Fox-Strangways (1899 or 1900) *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sx87sw` **Christmas Play from Bovey Tracey - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.157-158 *Hero/Combat Play*

Dorset

`88st91ws` **The Mummers [Sixpenny Handley, Dorset, 1880s]**
S.J.White (1955/56)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`88sy49uj` **Symondsbury Mummers' Play 1880**
J.S.Udal (1880) pp.91-102   *Hero/Combat Play*

`88sy--uj` **South West Dorset Mummers' Play 1880**
J.S.Udal (1880) pp.102-112   *Hero/Combat Play*

Durham

`83nz--sc` **Sword Dancers, Durham, 1834**
C.Sharp (1834)   *Sword Dance Play*

`86nz11ce` **Gainford, Durham, Sword-Dance Play - 1860**
E.C.Cawte et al (1967), pp.78-82   *Sword Dance Play*

`91nz31ss` **"Sword Dancers" play, Haughton-le-Skerne, Durham [1913-1915]**
S.Smith (1913-1915)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`92nz42pn` **Greatham Sword Dance Play - 1924**
N.Peacock (1956)   *Sword Dance Play*

Gloucestershire

`86sp14bc` **Christmas Mummers' Play from Weston-sub-Edge, Glos. - 1864**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.163-168   *Hero/Combat Play*

`86su19cj` **Christmas Mummers Play from Kempsford, Glos. - 1868**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.248-253   *Robin Hood Play*

`90sp12ta` **Mumming Play from Longborough, Glos. - 1905-1906**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.180-184   *Hero/Combat Play*

`91so61tr` **Christmas Play from Cinderford, Glos. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.161-162   *Hero/Combat Play*

`91so90cw` **Christmas Mummers Play from Sapperton, Glos. - 1914**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.170-173   *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sp71tr` **Christmas Play from Icomb, Glos. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.174-179   *Hero/Combat Play*

Hampshire

`79su32lj` **Romsey Mummers' Play - 1796-1837**
E.C.Cawte et al (1967) pp.87-91   *Hero/Combat Play*

`84----sh` **Christmas: his Pageant Play, or Mysterie of "St.George" - 1842**
H.Slight (1842)   *Chapbook*

`85su--cb` **Christmas Play from Hampshire - 1859**
"Christmas Book" (1859)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`85su--yc` **The Christmas Mummers [Yonge's novel] 1858**
C.M.Yonge (1858) *Literary Parallel*

`86su--wm` **Hampshire Mummers [Fragments, 1861]**
M.E.C.Walcott (1862) *Hero/Combat Play*

`90su45h1` **Christmas Play from Burghclere, Hants. : Version 1 - 1908**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.185-188 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91su40kc` **Christmas Play from Bursledon, Hants. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.192-194 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91su45h2` **Christmas Play from Burghclere, Hants. : Version 2 - 1914**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.189-191 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91su54cc` **Johnny Jacks Play from Overton, Hants. - 1913**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.195-199 *Hero/Combat Play*

Lancashire

`84sj89lj` **Pace, Peace, or Paste Egging [Hulme, 1842]**
Manchester Local Studies Library Collection (1842, J.Lee)
Hero/Combat Play

`88sj89aj` **Atkinson's "St. George and the Turkish Knight", 1885**
J.A.Atkinson (1885) *Chapbook*

`89sd39ch` **Hawkshead Easter Pace-Egg Play - 1898**
H.S.Cowper (1899) *Hero/Combat Play*

`90sd27ha` **Dendron Pace Egg Mummers Play, 1904**
A.J.Humphris (1909) *Hero/Combat Play*

`90sd92tr` **The Paceakers' Play, Heptonstall - 1909**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.234-236 *Hero/Combat Play*

`93sd40kd` **Fragment from Ormskirk (Lancashire) : Pace-egging Song - 1930**
D.Kennedy (1930) pp.35-36 *Hero/Combat Play*

Leicestershire

`86sp58kw` **Lutterworth St. George Play - 1863**
W.Kelly (1865) *Hero/Combat Play*

Lincolnshire

`77tf26al` **The "Plouboys oR modes dancers" at Revesby 1779**
M.J.Preston & P.Smith (1999) *Plough Play*

`77tf26bm` **Morrice Dancers at Revesby - 1779**
M.J.Preston et al (1976) *Plough Play*

`82sk95ba` **A Christmas Play [Broughton, Lincs.] - Text A - 1824**
C.R.Baskervill (1924) pp.250-258 *Plough Play*

`82sk95bb` Broughton Play [Lincs.] - Text B - 1824
C.R.Baskervill (1924) pp.250-258 *Plough Play*

`82sk95bc` Broughton Xmas Play [Lincs.] - Text C - 1824
C.R.Baskervill (1924) pp.250-258 *Plough Play*

`82sk95bd` **Bassingham Men's play 1823 Xmas**
C.R.Baskervill (1924) pp.241-245 *Plough Play*

`82sk95be` **Bassingham Childrens play Xmas 1823**
C.R.Baskervill (1924) pp.246-250 *Plough Play*

`82sk--bc` **Recruiting Sergeant [1823-1888]**
C.R.Baskervill (1924) pp.259-262 *Plough Play*

`84sk86bc` **Swinderby Decr. 31st 1842 Play**
C.R.Baskervill (1924) pp.263-268 *Plough Play*

`87se91pm` **Plough-Jags' Ditties from North Lincolnshire - 1876**
M.Peacock (1901) pp.323-324 *Plough Play*

`88sk99re` **Plough Jacks' Play from Willoughton - 1889**
E.H.Rudkin (1939) *Plough Play*

`88ta02mj` **New Holland Mummers [1880]**
M.W.Barley Collection (1938, J.Mouncey) *Hero/Combat Play*

`89----be` **Lincolnshire Plough Jags play - 1890**
E.Bentley Wood (1890) *Plough Play*

`89sk98wa` **Play from Brattleby, Lincolnshire, 1894**
A.Helm & E.C.Cawte (1967) pp.37-43 *Plough Play*

`89sk99pm` **Kirton-in-Lindsey Plough-Jags Play - 1890**
M.Peacock (1901) pp.363-365 *Plough Play*

`89tf57jw` **Morris Dancers' play Fragment from Mumby - 1890**
W.Henry Jones (1890) *Plough Play*

`90se90pm` **Hibaldstow Ploughboys' Play -1901**
M.Peacock (1901) pp.322-323 *Plough Play*

`90se91pm` **Plough Monday fragment from Winterton - 1901**
M.Peacock (1901) p.323 *Plough Play*

`91sk97pa` **Jerusalem, Lincs., Plough Play - 1914**
E.C.Cawte et al (1967), pp.74-78 *Plough Play*

`91tf02tr` **Play from Bulby, Lincs. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.237-240 *Plough Play*

`92ta11tr` **The "Plough Jacks'" Play from Kirmington, Lincs. - 1923**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.254-257 *Plough Play*

`95sk95re` **Plough Jagg's Play : Bassingham - 1952**
E.H.Rudkin (1952) *Plough Play*

Middlesex

`86tq27ps` **Chiswick Mummers' play, 1860**
G.W.S.Piesse (1860)   *Hero/Combat Play*

Northamptonshire

`82tf10cj` **Helpston Moris Dance Drama - Clare's text - 1825**
G.Deacon (1983)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`85sp54ba` **Mumming [Thenford, Northants. 1854]**
A.E.Baker (1854)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`85sp--st` **Northamptonshire Tander Mumming Fragments - 1851**
T.Sternberg (1851)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sp53tr` **Mumies Play from Badby, Northants. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.222-223   *Hero/Combat Play*

Northumberland

`74nz26wh` **J.White's Alexander Chapbook - 1746-1769**
Alexander and the King of Egypt [J.White] (n.d.)   *Chapbook*

`81nz--tr` **The Sword Dancers, Tyne & Wear, 1815**
R.Topliff (1815)   *Sword Dance Play*

`86ny85bg` **The Mummers [Allendale, 1860-1870]**
P.T.Millington Collection (2002, G.Brown)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`91nu04ru` **Scremerston Guizards, Northumberland [before 1913]**
T.F.Ordish (no date, Rutter)   *Hero/Combat Play*

Nottinghamshire

`79sk54gj` **Recruiting Speech of 1796**
J.Granger (1904)   *Literary Parallel*

`84sk78se` **Morrissing in North Notts. - 1845-1850**
E.Sutton (1913)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`87sk--bc` **South Notts Plough Bullock Day Play - 1873**
C.Brown (1874)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`88sk45sj` **King George Play from Kirkby Woodhouse, Notts. - 1887**
M.W.Barley Collection (1957, J.B.Skelton)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`89sk55wr` **Blidworth Plough Bullocking Play, 1896**
R.H.Whitworth (1896)   *Plough Play*

`89sk63cm` **Cropwell, Notts. Ploughboys' Play - 1890**
Chaworth Musters (1890)   *Plough Play*

`91sk45sc` **Selston Mummers' Play - 1913**
R.W.Storer (1983), pp.54-58   *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sk75gw` **North Muskham, Notts. - Plough Monday Play - 1914**
M.W.Barley Collection (1957, W.Gascoyne)   *Plough Play*

`91sk78ta` **A Plough Monday Play from Clayworth, Notts. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.241-245 *Plough Play*

`91sk78tb` **Another Plough Monday Play from Clayworth, Notts. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.246-247 *Hero/Combat Play*

`93sk45cl` **Bull Guysering Play from Selston, Notts. - 1932**
P.T.Millington Collection (1992, L.Clarke) *Hero/Combat Play*

`93sk45hb` **Guysers Play from Underwood, Notts., 1935 & 1936**
P.T.Millington Collection (1972, B.L.Hodgkinson)
Hero/Combat Play

`95sk63sm` **The Plough Boys (from Tollerton, Nottinghamshire) 1950**
Vaughan Williams Memorial Library Collection (1950, .Shepherd)
Plough Play

Oxfordshire

`78sp51be` **The Islip Mummers' Play of 1780**
M.J.Preston (1973) *Hero/Combat Play*

`79sp--je` **Oxfordshire Christmas Mummers play - 1794**
E.Jones (1794) *Hero/Combat Play*

`81sp51rg` **Mummers' Play from Kirtlingon[?] - 1815-1816**
G.A.Rowell (1886) *Hero/Combat Play*

`84sp30gj` **The Christmas Play - Bampton Mummers 1847**
J.A.Giles (1848) *Hero/Combat Play*

`88sp42fh` **The Mummers' Performance, Lower Heyford - 1885**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.219-221 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sp21tr` **Bold Robin Hood : Shipton-under-Wychwood, Oxon. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.209-213 *Robin Hood Play*

`91sp31tr` **Play from Leafield, Oxfordshire - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.214-216 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sp50jl` **The Mummers' Act from Cuddesdon, Oxon - 1914**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.217-218 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sp60tr` **Waterstock, Oxfordshire play - 1914**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.206-208 *Hero/Combat Play*

Rutland

`89sk90cb` **Edith Weston Morris-Dancers Play, c.1898**
V.B.Crowther-Beynon (1905/1906) *Hero/Combat Play*

Somerset

`77st57pa` **Cure at Bristol Fair 1770**
"Anthony Pasquin" (1791) *Hero/Combat Play*

`82st66hs` **A Christmas Play from Keynsham [Hunter] 1822**
C.R.Baskervill (1924) pp.240,268-272 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91st--tr` **Christmas Play from North Somerset - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.159-160 *Hero/Combat Play*

Staffordshire

`88sk11cj` **Play from Hamstall Ridware - 1884**
J.O.Coussmaker (1900) *Hero/Combat Play*

`88sk11kd` **Mummers' Play from Hamstall Ridware (Staffs.) 1884**
D.Kennedy (1930) pp.33-35 *Hero/Combat Play*

`89sj91jn` **Penkridge Christmas Play, 1899**
A.Helm (1984) pp.49-54 *Hero/Combat Play*

Sussex

`87tq30tr` **Ovingdean, Sussex play - 1870**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.203-205 *Hero/Combat Play*

`88tq10sf` **Sompting Tipteerers's Play, 1882**
F.E.Sawyer (1883) *Hero/Combat Play*

`90su81tr` **Tipteerers' Duologue from Cocking, Sussex - 1903-1906**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.200-202 *Hero/Combat Play*

Warwickshire

`89sp57bf` **Rugby Christmas Mumming Play, 1899**
I.Gatty (1948) pp.21-22 *Hero/Combat Play*

`90sp46gi` **Broadwell Christmas Play, 1900 or 1901**
I.Gatty (1948) pp.32-34 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sp23tr` **Play from Great Wolford, Warks. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.229-231 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sp24tb` **Play from Ilmington, Warks. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.226-228 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91sp24tr` **Play from Pillerton, Warks. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.224-225 *Hero/Combat Play*

`92sp37hm` **Christmas Mummers of Stoneleigh [1925]**
M.D.Harris (1925) *Hero/Combat Play*

Westmorland

`93ny30kd` **Pace-Egging from Ambleside (Westmorland) 1930**
D.Kennedy (1930) pp.36-37 *Hero/Combat Play*

Wiltshire

`84su29wa` **Inglesham Christmas Play - 1840 to 1850**
A.Williams (1922) *Robin Hood Play*

`87st95bw` **Christmas Boys or Mummers, Potterne, 1876-1890**
W.Buchanan (1883)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`93su16kd` **Mummers' Play from Alton Barnes (Wiltshire) 1930**
D.Kennedy (1930) pp.32-33   *Hero/Combat Play*

Worcestershire

`85so74bc` **Mummers' Play from Upper & Lower Howsell, Worcs. - 1856-1857**
C.Bede (1861)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`91so74tr` **Play from Malvern, Worcs. - 1913-1916**
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.232-233   *Hero/Combat Play*

Yorkshire

`84se24ww` **W.Walker's Peace Egg Chapbook - 1840-1877**
Peace Egg Chapbook [W.Walker] (n.d.)   *Chapbook*

`84sk38pj` **J.Pearce's Mummers' Act or Morris Dancers 'Chapbook - 1837-1849**
"Mummers' Act" Chapbook [J.Pearce] (1837-1849)   *Chapbook*

`85se24ww` **Walker's New Mummer, or, The Wassail Cup - 1855**
"Walker's New Mummer" (1855)   *Chapbook*

`87se19km` **Bellerby Sword Dance Play, 1879 & 1926**
M.Karpeles (1928)   *Sword Dance Play*

`89se57ce` **Ampleforth Play - 1898**
E.K.Chambers (1933), pp.131-150   *Sword Dance Play*

`89se63sh` **Plough Boy's Play from Selby - 1892**
H.J.S. (1937)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`92se37kd` **Words of the Ripon Sword-Dance - 1920**
D.Kennedy (1930) pp.23-25   *Hero/Combat Play*

`93nz61kd` **Mummers' Play from Skelton (Yorkshire) 1930**
D.Kennedy (1930) pp.26-27   *Hero/Combat Play*

`93se57kd` **Mummers' Play from Coxwold (Yorkshire) 1930**
D.Kennedy (1930) p.38   *Hero/Combat Play*

IRELAND

`80ij37sl` **Belfast Christmas Rhyme - Smyth & Lyons (1803-1818)**
Smyth & Lyons (1803-1818)   *Chapbook*

`81it01kp` **Ballybrennan, Wexford play – 1817 or 1818**
P.Kennedy (1863)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`87ij37pw` **Christmas Rhymers in the North of Ireland : Belfast 1872**
W.H.Patterson (1872)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`88ig86ge` **Christmas play from Dromore - 1886**
E.R.R.Green (1946) pp.4,18-21 *Hero/Combat Play*

`88ij16ge` **Christmas Rhymers from Mullaghcarton - 1885**
E.R.R.Green (1946) pp.3-18 *Hero/Combat Play*

`89io09jb` **Boys' play from Braganstown - 1890**
B.Jones (1916) pp.301,304-307 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91ij00jb` **Boys' play from Dundalk - 1915**
B.Jones (1916) pp.301-304 *Hero/Combat Play*

`91ij37tr` Belfast : "The Christmas Rime" from R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) - 1913-
1916
R.J.E.Tiddy (1923) pp.141-143 *Chapbook*

`94ih03dl` **Belcoo Christmas Play, c.1940**
A.Helm & E.C.Cawte (1967) pp.30-35 *Hero/Combat Play*

ISLE OF MAN

`84sc28hw` **The White Boys [Isle of Man] 1845**
W.Harrison (1869) *Hero/Combat Play*

SCOTLAND

`78hu16sw` **Scott's Papa Stour Sword Dance - 1788**
W.Scott (1829) *Sword Dance Play*

`81nt53wt` **Christmas Gysarts Play from Bowden - 1815**
T.OWilkie (1815) *Hero/Combat Play*

`82ns88rj` **Hogmany Play from Falkirk - J.W.Reddock, 1825**
W.Hone (1827, J.W.Reddock) *Hero/Combat Play*

`82nt53aa` **Galation from the Abbotsford Collection Text (a) 1812-1832**
Abbotsford Collection (1812-1832a) *Hero/Combat Play*

`82nt53ab` **Guisards Play from the Abbotsford Collection Text (b) 1812-
1832**
Abbotsford Collection (1812-1832b) *Hero/Combat Play*

`82nx--mt` **Christmas, Yule-Boys play from Galloway - 1824**
J.MacTaggart (1824) *Hero/Combat Play*

`83ns79mj` **Stirling Play of Galations, 1835**
J.Maidment (1835) *Hero/Combat Play*

`84ns88cr` **Falkirk Play, 1841**
R.Chambers (1841a) *Hero/Combat Play*

`84nt24cr` **Galatian, a New-Year Play [from Peebles] 1841**
R.Chambers (1841b) *Hero/Combat Play*

`88nn82lm` **Crieff Guisers' Play, 1884**
M.J.P.Lawrence (1956) *Hero/Combat Play*

`88no--dw` **The New Year Mummers' Tale of Galaschin - Forfarshire 1888**
W.G.D. (1888)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`88ns52da` **Cumnock Play, c.1883**
A.Dunlop (1948)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`89ns98cg` **Culross play, 1893**
G.B.C. (1920)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`89nx66ga` **Laurieston Hallowe'en Play (a), 1897**
W.Gregor (1898b)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`89nx66gb` **Laurieston Play (b), 1897**
W.Gregor (1898c)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`89nx76gw` **Hallowe'en Play from Balmaghie, 1897**
W.Gregor (1898a)   *Hero/Combat Play*

WALES

`85sn10bl` **Tenby Guisers' Play - 1857**
L.P.Barnaschone (1857)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`87ss49dj` **Christmas Play from Llanmadoc and Cheriton - 1879**
J.D.Davies (1879)   *Hero/Combat Play*

`91ss59gw` **Dunvant Christmas Sport, Collected 1916**
Stanley Smith Collection (1916, W.Griffiths)   *Hero/Combat Play*

APPENDIX I – ELECTRONIC FILES

Database of Texts

Texts.htm - Folk Play Texts Encoded for this Study

This is a frozen version of the file at www.folkplay.info/Texts.htm. This links to a geographical list that is an HTML version of Appendix H, with further active hyperlinks to the full texts of all the plays used in this study.

TextBase.xls – The Full Database of Text Lines

ID_List.xls – Index of Standard Line IDs

Text Analysis Results

Core3NormalGaussianBoth.xls – Clustering using Core Std.IDs

- Lines – Dendrogram from cluster analysis of Lines

- Texts – Dendrogram from cluster analysis of Texts

- Trellis – Full trellis graph of text clusters by line clusters

- Keys – Key Std.ID attributes for the texts dendrogram

- Map – Distribution map of the main text clusters

Exact3NormalGaussianBoth.xls – Clustering using Exact Std.IDs

- Lines – Dendrogram from cluster analysis of Lines

- Texts – Dendrogram from cluster analysis of Texts

- Trellis – Full trellis graph of text clusters by line clusters

- Keys – Key Std.ID attributes for the texts dendrogram

- Map – Distribution map of the main text clusters

Mesa Graphs.xls – Mesa Graph of the Full Database

Selected Papers

Costumes

Costumes.htm

P.Millington (1985) A New Look at English Folk Play Costumes
Traditional Drama 1985: The 8th Annual Conference on Traditional
Drama Studies, University of Sheffield, 12th Oct.1985

Mystery History

Mystery_History.htm

P.Millington (1989a) Mystery History: The Origins of British Mummers'
Plays
American Morris Newsletter, Nov./Dec.1989, Vol.13, No.3, pp.9-16

Origins of Plough Monday

Origins_of_PM.doc – Microsoft Word document

P.T.Millington (1979) The Origins of Plough Monday
Traditional Drama '79, One Day Conference, University of Sheffield,
20th Oct.1979

Plough Monday in Nottingham

NottinghamPlough1.htm

P.Millington (1992a) Plough Monday in and Around the City of
Nottingham
Annual Conference of the Folk Life Society, University of
Nottingham, September 1992,
Repeated: International Conference on Traditional Drama, University
of Sheffield, March 1998.

Truro Cordwainers Play

Truro.doc – Microsoft Word document

P.Millington (Forthcoming) The Truro Cordwainers' Play: a "New" 18th-
Century Christmas Play
Folklore, In Press 2002

Database Statistics

Frequency of Line Occurences.xls – Statistics on Line Types

Bibliometric Statistics.xls - Raw Bibliometric Data and Charts

Text Analysis Tools

Britain.xls – Distribution Mapping Tool

Cluster.xls – Cluster Analysis Tool

Sequence.xls – Tool for Comparing the Narrative Sequences

Tools.xls – Mesa Graph and Provenance Profile Tool

Trellis.xls – Tool for Trellis Graphing from Cluster Analysis Results