

ROLES OF WOMEN IN EARLY ENGLISH FOLK DRAMA

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IN
EARLY ENGLISH FOLK DRAMA

By
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A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University
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Defence: September 25, 1990

MASTER OF ARTS (1990)
(English)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Roles of Women in Early English Folk Drama

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SUPERVISOR: Dr. Anne Savage

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 139

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the ways in which women are portrayed in folk drama. The thesis divides into two main sections. In the first, the English mummer's plays of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are analyzed on an anthropological model in order to determine the symbolic functions of the man-dressed-as-woman. In the second, the historical development of the Maid Marian character of the Robin Hood legend highlights the differences between folk drama and the legitimate stage. The ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin provide the link in these materials.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Anne Savage for her time and encouragement, both of which helped to keep me working. I would also like to thank Dr. Laurel Braswell-Means for the inspiration for this thesis. Finally, many thanks to my husband Dan for his patience and understanding.

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The Roles of Women in Early English Folk Drama

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND ANALOGIES

INTRODUCTION

Folk drama is defined by the presence of several attributes. First, it is secular drama, "a leisure recreation."¹ It is performed by local unprofessional actors at specific times of the year, "in connection with a seasonal festival, often as a part of a series of house-to-house visits."² This link with seasonal festivities is frequently given a ritual significance, which is reinforced by the fact that while the content of these plays, such as the names of characters and the attribution of their speeches varies widely, the form of the action is traditional and consistent. Consequently, in recent scholarship on folk drama, the action sequence of combat, death and revival has received far greater attention than the individual texts. While any examination must rely largely upon the evidence supplied by late, and obviously corrupted texts, there is little basis for the belief in some lost, original or "pure" text. The play-texts

¹Glynne Wickham, The Medieval Theatre, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 125.

²Julia C. Dietrich, "Folk Drama," A Companion to the Medieval Theatre, ed. R. Vince (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Inc. 1989) 126

exhibit the influence of a variety of sources, drawing upon the more "literary" drama of the legitimate stage, as well as upon historical events and social changes. Since they were not put down in writing until a comparatively recent time, it is generally believed that they have developed out of the residues of pre-Christian rituals, and that their texts are the product of a long evolution. The focus of this thesis will be on the implications of the performance, and upon the ritual and social meanings assigned to the female characters who appear in these plays.

A further feature of English folk drama is that the plays are traditionally performed by an all-male cast; even when a female character is introduced, she is played by a man. For the purposes of this paper, the term "women in folk drama" will expand to include the sexual dynamics of the fertility rite, the social implications of female characterizations in the plays, and the historical development of one specific "female" character: the woman of the Robin Hood plays, who gradually evolves into Maid Marian.

Little can be definitively proven about the earliest development of English folk-drama. The first recorded Robin Hood play took place in 1427. However, many of the mummer's plays survive only in printed editions of as late as the 18th and 19th centuries, while rituals similar in form to these plays have been recorded in twentieth-century Thrace and in

descriptions of ancient Gothic tribal rites.³ While the actual texts are late, they are generally accepted as descendants of unrecorded medieval seasonal festivities. Therefore, this paper will include sources much later than "early English" on the understanding that these sources are the reflections of a long tradition.

English folk drama divides into two major categories: the mummers' plays, and the early Robin Hood plays. Both were seasonal celebrations, were performed by amateur local players, involved a collection of money, or quete, and in most instances contained elements of combat, death and revival. Because the Robin Hood plays derive their setting from the exterior source of earlier Robin Hood ballads, they will be considered separately from the mummers' plays, which constitute the majority of the body of English folk drama.

Each field contains inherent difficulties: the development of the Robin Hood plays is marked by the outside influence of exterior sources, and these sources must be considered in an analysis of the development of Robin Hood drama. These plays are merely one facet of a legend which was and still is immensely popular with all levels of society. Consequently, manifestations of Robin Hood in dramatic presentation do not occur exclusively on the level of folk drama. A study of the contrasts between early and later

³Richard Axton, European Drama of the Early Middle Ages (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975) 33

dramatic manifestations of the Robin Hood legend exposes patterns of social development in the changing ways in which English society viewed women.

The mummers' plays suffer from the lack of this wide-ranging appeal. Because they were viewed as "merely" folk drama, a poor cousin of the legitimate theatre, they were not written down until within the past two centuries. The texts which we do have are extremely susceptible to corruption: lines, characters and whole incidents are transplanted from one place to another, multiplied or deleted; characters of various names speak nearly identical speeches; nouns are changed into phonetically similar nonsense words. (In one instance, the Turkish Knight becomes Turkey Snipe.) Any study of the mummers' plays must therefore focus on their similarities in action, rather than on the endless task of tracking down the possible literary sources of their textual differences in the hopes of arriving at some "original" text. The text of these plays is not their focus. I will be working within the assumptions of Alex Helm and Alan Brody, who argue that the ritual actions of death and resurrection are the motivating impulse for the performance and survival of these plays, and I will confine my discussion of the characterizations of women to their ritual significance within this action.

This thesis will begin with an examination of the three types of mummers' plays. The roles of the women in a sample

of each will be discussed. The Kempsford, Gloucestershire Hero Combat, an unusual mummers' play which adds characters from the Robin Hood legend will then be examined for signs of late developments in Robin Hood folk drama. The thesis will then move to a discussion of the earliest folk plays of Robin Hood and their literary descendants, and will conclude by tracing out the development of the Maid Marian character and her links to historical and social changes.

Mummers' Plays

The English mummers' plays which we know today are divided into three main categories, according to the actions which occur in each. Two of the three types of action are geographically well-defined. While the Hero Combat play is spread over most of England, and is the only play to have been exported to North America, the Sword Dance is a mid-winter festival which is confined to the north-eastern counties of Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire; and the Wooing Ceremony, now almost extinct, was found only in agricultural communities of the East Midlands: Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Rutland.

The action of the Hero Combat is very simple: a presenter calls for room and attention, and introduces the actors. St. George or King George is the most frequent protagonist. The Bold Slasher, Turkish Knight or a similar combatant is usually killed. A lament is often made, and then a doctor is called

in, and a comic sequence of the doctor's boasts and a bargaining sequence ensues. The doctor revives the fallen fighter, usually with a bottle of medicine, and several extraneous characters are exhibited. The action ends with a collection of money, and the actors well-wish the audience, frequently in song.

The Sword Dance comes in two forms. Some use flexible and others use rigid "swords". In both types, the participants are linked in a circle by holding the handle and the end of "swords" with a dancer on each side. The characters are individually introduced and perform intricate dances. One, usually the clown, is condemned to die and the dancers form a lock of swords around his neck while he makes his will. Finally, the swords are withdrawn all at once, and the actor indicates death by bowing his head or kneeling. A doctor is called in, the boast and bargain sequence occurs again, and the dead dancer is cured. In some instances, the dancers are accused one by one of the murder of their father; each denies responsibility until it is passed to the entire group. As with the Hero Combat, the Sword Dance ends with the collection of money.

The Wooing Ceremony features a Fool who is rejected by a maiden and recruited by a Sergeant. In some instances, the suitors for the maiden's hand are multiplied. A simplified death occurs, in which one character hits or stabs another. A doctor is called in, makes his boasts, bargains, and heals

the dead character. An old woman appears, carrying a "bastard" or "baby", which she presents to the fool, and the play ends with a wedding invitation to the audience in the form of a song. These plays are also known as plough plays and are sometimes associated with the ritual christening of a plough at New Year's or Plough Monday. A hobby-horse often accompanied the players, although he does not usually appear in the text.

Historical Background to the Mummers' Plays

A disturbing fact which must be dealt with in a study of these comparatively recent plays is that no play text, or unmistakable reference to such a play exists prior to the eighteenth century. The following pieces of evidence have been proposed to support a theory of the play's ancient origins.

E.K. Chambers refers to the many medieval records of "ludi", including a "ludus de Reg et Regina and ludi quos vocant Inductionem Maii sive Autumni, which we can reasonably equate with surviving folk festivals, but nothing of a mock death and cure."⁴ He also suggests the late fifteenth-century Robin Hood plays, which will be dealt with later in this paper, as precursors of the mummers' plays, and finds evidence of a death and revival sequence in the literary source of the

⁴E.K. Chambers The English Folk-Play (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933) 160

poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, in which the knight's death and revival are called a "Chrystemas gomen" which Arthur says may supply the lack of an "enterludez."⁵ Thus Chambers seeks an origin for the plays which is both medieval and literary; while it can be demonstrated that the present-day plays have incorporated materials from the legitimate theatre, the original source of the plays remains mysterious in this analysis.

Richard Axton argues that whether the Middle Ages knew a folk drama similar to the mummers' plays or not, some of the verbal formulae and characters of these plays are also recognizable in medieval play texts. Such elements as the room-clearing entrance speech, the vaunt of the champion, the quack-doctor, beheading and the exhibition of a devil are "caught and transformed within the framework of more "literary" drama."⁶ Thus,

the forms of folk-play familiar to us now received their typical structure in the period 1200-1400... Folk games and entertainments belonging to particular seasonal festivals became the plays performed by groups of ploughlads or shearmen at the obligatory feasts held for them by their overlords.⁷

Axton supports this claim with the an analysis of the text of an unusual drama found in a Scots "pleugh" song of about 1500. The song would have been part of the celebrations of Plough

⁵Chambers, Folk-Drama 161.

⁶Axton 39.

⁷Axton 39.

Monday, the beginning of the new agricultural year, which fell after the Christmas holidays. The nineteenth-century form of the wooing play was performed at this time. The form of this song-play is as follows:

The words describe a ceremony of renewal concerning the plough and the plough ox.... The killing of the old plough ox is enacted, a new ox is found and the plough lads are summoned and harnessed to the plough.... Finally a general blessing is invoked.⁸

Axton suggests that in the death of the ox, which is described as a circle of men around a victim in the middle, one might see the action of the Sword Play. Additionally, the guilt for the ox's death is shared by all the participants, and its revival is evident in the life of the new ox:

The participants are invited to take part in the slaying of the victim in order that they can affirm the victory of life over death in the community of the new plough-ox.⁹

The existence of this play argues for a medieval tradition similar in form to the mummers' plays of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its content links backward to the Buophonia festival of ancient Thrace, in which an actual ox was sacrificed, as well as forward to the present-day sword and wooing plays of the mummers.

Glynne Wickham theorizes that the fact of the mummers' play's survival is entirely due to its use as a seasonal fundraising device. He quotes fifteenth and early sixteenth

⁸Axton 40.

⁹Axton 42.

century village expense accounts to demonstrate that plays of Robin Hood and St. George existed in elaborate and large productions during this period. For example, in 1526

the St. George play in Lydd... was substantially revised by a Mr. Gybson of London... by 1533, it occupied four days of performance. The town of Bassingham in Cambridgeshire also possessed a "play of the Holy Martyr St. George"; this too was elaborate, and twenty-seven villages in the neighbourhood contributed to the costs of production."¹⁰

Wickham hypothesizes the connection between ancient ritual, these plays, and the twentieth century mummers' plays in the following manner:

Like other folk games derived from the rites of pre-Christian religions, the ceremonies associated with the figurative rejection of winter and the welcoming of spring that give the mummers' play its own particular form were deliberately allowed to continue by the Christian Church.... With the growth of both romance literature and the religious drama, many of these games came to be expanded and ornamented with texts until... the major religious festivals were celebrated... with the performance of a well-organized, scripted and rehearsed play with a Lord of Misrule as the presenter, St. George or Robin Hood as the hero, and a Turk or an oppressive baron as the villain.... The swelling tide of Puritan disapproval... was spearheaded by extremists within the Reformed Church, so the traditional partnership between Church and folk-festival collapsed, and customs had either to survive on their own... or die out.... That they have survived at all is due as much to their ability to provide their performers with free cakes and ale as to any other reason.¹¹

Wickham's analysis goes very far toward connecting the disparate threads of the history of folk drama. He

¹⁰Wickham 147

¹¹Wickham 147-149

concentrates upon the fact of the quiet as the key to the ritual's survival, and while he allows that the plays originated in pagan rites, he gives at least equal weight to the effects of literature and the legitimate religious drama upon the development of the folk drama.

Alex Helm comments upon an Irish manuscript dated 1800, which purports to reproduce an account of 1685, and which reads,

On our new green last evening here was presented the drollest piece of mummery ever I saw in or out of Ireland. There was St. George and St. Dennis and St. Patrick in their buffle coats and the Turks likewise and Oliver Cromwell, and a doctor and an old woman who made rare sport till Beelzebub came in with a frying pan upon his shoulder and a great flail in his hand threshing about him friends and foes, and at last running away with the bold usurper whom he tweaked by his gilded nose - and then came a little Devil with a broom to gather up the money that was thrown to the Mummings for their sport. It is an ancient pastime they tell me of the citizens.¹²

Helm questions the use of the term "ancient pastime" in connection with the presence of Oliver Cromwell, who died only twenty-seven years before the account was purportedly written. He suggests "this hardly qualifies as an "ancient pastime," unless Cromwell himself was a recent substitution in a much older ritual."¹³ He leaves open the question of what form these plays may have taken before 1685.

If it can be accepted that the roots of the action

¹²Alex Helm The English Mummings' Play (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer-Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 1981) 7

¹³Helm 7.

probably took hold in primitive times, there is a long gap in time between them and the first mention in manuscript or in print.... we can only assume that there was something before the 1700's which had begun, even then, to harden off into the form which remains today.¹⁴

Alan Brody points out that although the characters in this account are familiar, it says nothing of the combat, death and revival sequence which marks nearly all of the English folk-drama recorded in the past two centuries. He restates Helm's question:

Even if its earliest appearance had occurred as late as the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, why has there not been any evidence found which we can point to with any certainty as a reference to the men's ceremonial? Why do we have to wait until the end of the seventeenth century, when it had already, apparently, degenerated into "the drollest piece of mummerly"?¹⁵

Since Brody's approach is more anthropological than literary or historical, he fills in this gap, tentatively, with the evidence supplied by similar continental folk ceremonies. While Helm and Brody argue that the play's survival is based in its magical, ritual qualities, rather than its financial benefits, this apparent anomaly can easily be resolved. All agree that the motivation of the players in performing the play is "luck". Originally, this luck was fertility for the entire community; now luck is equated with money, and likewise, the play is performed as much for the abstract

¹⁴Helm 7.

¹⁵Alan Brody The English Mummings and Their Plays: Traces of Ancient Mystery (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969) 11

benefits of "luck" as for the more concrete ones of the collection.

Analogous Continental Rituals

Much of the recent scholarship devoted to the mummers' plays has been focused on the task of developing their connections with ancient fertility rituals. In order to do so, the form, rather than the content of these plays, has been analyzed. Examples of similar festivities in contemporary, but primitive societies such as the peasant plays of Thrace, in northern Greece, can serve to highlight the areas of the mummers' plays which still bear traces of this ancient ritual.

Among the performances noted by Jane Harrison in Thrace and Northern Greece early in this century was one performed by perambulatory masqueraders in masks, goatskin caps and bells. In the performance, a bridegroom with a phallic club, fought with, killed, and skinned his opponent. The slain man was lamented by a bride and brought to life by a doctor. The combat action was preceded by dances, mimic copulation of a man and boy-dressed-as-a-woman, and of an old "woman" and a baby, and by the mimic forging of a ploughshare. After the mock funeral and revival, the show concluded with a procession dragging a real plough through the village, scattering grain and praying for harvest.¹⁶

A ceremony from Thrace was reported by Dawkins as occurring annually before Lent. The two principal actors (Kalogheroi), always married men, wore animal skins, padded out with straw over their heads and shoulders. Two bachelors were dressed as brides, and an elderly "Female" in rags, carried a piece of wood representing a bastard baby. The rest of the team consisted of two or four "Gypsies", two or three policemen armed with whips

¹⁶Axton 35.

and swords, and a bagpiper. The party collected food and money with or without permission and the whole team considered themselves licensed chicken stealers. The "Female" and one of the gypsies performed an obscene mime in front of some of the houses. In the afternoon, the gypsies mimed the forging of a ploughshare, the "baby" grew and demanded a wife and one of the kalogheroi married one of the brides. This kalogheros was killed by the other, the Bride lamented his death and he suddenly revived. Next, the Brides were yoked to a real ploughshare which they dragged around the village square while seeds were scattered behind it and the performers cried "May wheat be ten piastres the bushel!... Yeah God, that poor folk may be filled," and other similar invocations.¹⁷

These performances, and the other fascinating examples of continental folk drama, notably those of Roumania and La Soule in the Basque region, must not be construed as direct relatives of the English mummers' plays. Rather, they demonstrate that similar formulae survive to dramatize the same ideas. The theme of death and resurrection occurs often and in widely scattered religions, including Christianity. The idea of a death and revival is connected to fertility through the cycle of the seasons. The death of the old year is a necessary step in order that the revival of the spring can occur. The above dramatic pieces are instances of what Helm terms "imitative magic, to increase fertility and bring luck to the community."¹⁸

Having established that there is some basis for the belief that the relatively modern mummers' plays are related

¹⁷Helm 48.

¹⁸Helm 49.

to a mysterious stream of secular drama which formed during the Middle Ages from the remains of pagan rite, it remains now to explore the ways in which the plays could benefit the community. To be specific, why are they performed, what are the qualities of the "luck" which they bring and how are their "female" characters related to this luck?

Some of these questions may be answered through an examination of the roles of women in the mummings. At first glance, this appears to be a deceptively simple area. Women did not participate in the mummings. Until long after Shakespeare's age, women did not participate in the theatre at all; if one regards the mummings' plays simply as degradations of the legitimate theatre, it could be supposed that the daring advances of the London stage simply never took root in the conservative rural communities in which these plays have lasted the longest. Robertson Davies comments,

Classical precedent forbade the appearance of women on the stage, and Aristotle's classification of women as inferior beings for the purposes of drama doubtless carried some weight.¹⁹

A closer examination of the roles of the man-dressed-as-woman, whom I shall term the "female" reveals some additional characteristics of the part. Chambers calls her "the Man-Woman, that unquiet spirit for whom there is no obvious function, but for whom a place always has to be found."²⁰

¹⁹Robertson Davies Shakespeare's Boy Actors (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1939) 9.

²⁰Chambers, Folk-Plays 153.

Two facts about women in folk drama are clear: women never participate, but are nearly always represented. Why is this so?

Mummers' plays are exclusively male performances even when there is a woman among the characters.... An Oxfordshire participant [said]: "Oh, you wouldn't have women in that; it's more like being in church."²¹

This connection with religious ritual appears again in Brody's work, when he quotes

an old mummer in the 1930's who was asked by a German professor at Oxford if women ever take part in the plays: "No sir" he replied, "mumming don't be for the likes of them... This here mumming be more like parson's work."²²

Thus the exclusion of women may recall traces of an ancient agricultural priesthood. Tiddy says

A theory which ascribes to it a purely dramatic origin fails to explain why the part should invariably be taken by a youth disguised as a woman.²³

Tiddy goes on to suggest two possible ritual-related theories which may explain the prevalence of this character. Women's clothes may have been worn to promote fertility by way of suggestion. Additionally, since agriculture, and the service of its attendant deities was women's work in primitive hunter-gatherer societies, the men who eventually took over agriculture and the administration of its rites "took the

²¹Chambers, Folk-Plays 5.

²²Brody 21.

²³R.J.E. Tiddy The Mummers' Play (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1923)

precaution of disguising themselves as women."²⁴ Brody adds: "This has to do with the primitive concept of the men as the priests, the primitive agents of magic."²⁵

Of course, there were also practical reasons for the exclusion of women from the mummers' plays. Performance often takes place in disguise, at night, and in various pubs in which the level of conduct is beyond that which was permitted for a woman, or for men in a woman's company. The "female" characters, especially that of the old woman who produces a bastard or baby in the wooing plays, are often broadly satirical, and would lose most of their humour if they were spoken by a woman rather than by what is obviously a man in woman's clothing. The reasons for the continuance of the mummers' plays as a purely male activity are at least as much based in the social customs of the last few centuries as they are in ancient ritual. The reasons for the inclusion of a "female" character in nearly every example are more mysteriously suggestive of pagan ritual and carnivalesque turnabout. An examination of the "female" role in each of the three types of mummers' plays will help to unravel the mystery of her ubiquitous presence.

²⁴Tiddy 77.

²⁵Brody 21.

CHAPTER TWO: THE THREE FORMS OF MUMMERS' PLAYS

The Hero Combat Play

Alex Helm categorizes this type of mummers' play as follows:

In a combat of champions, one is killed and revived by a doctor. Occasionally, the combats are multiplied. characteristic performers include St. George, Turkish Knight or Black Prince, "Female", Doctor, Jack Finney, Devil Doubt, Big Head. These names, however, are subject to endless local variations. Some named characters, among them the last three mentioned, do not carry the action further.

Costume: Latterly to correspond with character, but formerly, according to area, strips of paper or ribbons worn over ordinary clothes. Faces blackened, raddled or covered with headress.

Time of Appearance: From All Souls to Easter.²⁶

A sample play of this type is the Pace-Egg Play from Greenodd, Lancashire.²⁷ This is a fairly typical text in the sense that it includes the major elements of most hero-combats. Following the method of categorization devised by E.K. Chambers, this play divides into the four typical sections of Presentation, Combat, Cure and Quete. The Presentation of this play is composed of its first four lines:

Stir up the fire and strike a light
And see this noble act tonight
If you don't believe a word I say
Step in King George and clear the way

²⁶Helm 27.

²⁷See appendix one for the complete text.

The Presenter is a colourless character who does not take any further role in it, unless as a singer in the Quete. This role is frequently anonymous, or takes descriptive names such as "Caller, First Man, Open-the-Door,"²⁸ etc. The function of this character is to gain an audience for the players by opening a door, clearing a space, or simply calling for attention. "In the south and midlands, by far the most common presenter is Father Christmas."²⁹ In a few unusual cases such as Islip, the Presenter is a "Female" called Molly, Old Molly, or Old Mother Christmas. The Presenter is also occasionally referred to as the father of one of the combatants.

The second section of the Hero Combat is the combat itself. This is typically the most formalized part of the play. In the Greenodd play, each combatant steps forward and introduces himself, then challenges the other to a fight:

King George steps forward and says

In steps I, King George, a noble champion bold
With my right hand and glittering sword
I won three crowns of gold

Enter Prince of Paradise

In steps I, Prince of Paradise, Black Morocco King,
My sword and buckle by my side and through the woods I
ring

And through the woods I ring
I'm brave lads and that's what makes us good;
And through thy dearest body George, I'll draw thy
precious blood.

King George

²⁸Chambers Folk-Plays 13.

²⁹Chambers Folk-Plays 14.

If thou be made of Jinnus' race
 I'll make blood sprinkle down thy face
 If thou be made of noble blood
 I'll make it run like Noah's flood

Prince of Paradise

Black I am and black I be
 Lately come from Africa;
 Africa's my dwelling place,
 And now I'll fight thee face to face

They fight and Prince falls.

Brody suggests that the form of the combat sequence is derived from that of the medieval joust.

The basic structure of boast, defiance, combat, occasional second defiance, combat and victory boast is derivative.... The formal structure of the medieval joust and tournament was taken by the Folk and grafted on to the Men's Ceremonial.³⁰

The marriage of the jousting form with the ritual death in combat helped to rationalize the combat; it gave dramatic reasoning to the ritual. Additionally, it provided a means for the linking of the legend of St. George with the hero combat.

A popular folk imitation of the tournament... was the tilt at the Quintain.... The Crusades gave to this figure the likeness of a Turk.³¹

This antagonist is the ancestor of the Turkish Knight in the Mummings' plays. The Greenodd play substitutes King George for St. George, and the Prince of Paradise for the Turkish Knight, yet King seems to have been a later substitution for Saint because King George's opening lines continue to refer back to

³⁰Brody 50-51.

³¹Brody 51.

the adventures of the legendary St. George, which in this case are simplified to the prize of three crowns of gold. In the Netly Abbey play, he boasts:

In comes I King George
 King George that valiant man with courage bold
 'Twas I that won five crowns of gold
 'Twas I that fought the fiery dragon and brought him to
 a slaughter
 And by that fight, I hope to win the King of Egypt's
 daughter.³²

The nearly ubiquitous presence of St. George in the Hero Combats has caused some scholars, notably E.K. Chambers, to theorize that the mummers' plays are the corrupted descendants of a lost medieval mystery play of St. George. Richard Johnson's History of the Seven Champions of Christendom (1596) is referred to as the literary source of such a play. However, the Hero Combat play does not concentrate on the slaying of a dragon, or the rescue of Sabra, the princess of Egypt. Sabra's name is only mentioned in one example of the play (Syresham), and she never appears as a character. Helm suggests that

[while] it seems reasonably certain that the King of Egypt, the Black Prince of Morocco, and St. George himself were probably borrowed from Johnson.... It is highly probable that the performers themselves selected names for their champions from their favourite folk heroes.³³

The combat action of the Greenodd play is a typical, although condensed, version of that of most Hero Combat plays. Two

³²Brody 131-132.

³³Helm 5.

variations in the action can occur: the fight may be broken off in the middle with a plea for mercy from one of the characters, and then continued to the death; or the combat sequence itself may be multiplied into several combats with the goal of prolonging the most exciting part of the show for the audience. The combat always ends with the death of one of the combatants; however, St. George is not always the victor, and the actual outcome of the fight is not always spelled out in the text.

The Lament immediately follows the death. It forms a bridge between the Combat and Cure sections of the play. In the Greenodd Play, the Lament is made by Molly Masket, who identifies the Prince of Paradise as her son.

Oh, George! Oh, George! What hast thou done?
 Thou's gone and slain my only son,
 My only son, my only heir!
 Can'st thou not see him bleeding there?

The identification of the fallen man as the son of the Lament is important:

The most constant element in all this variation is the identification of the sonship of the Agonist to the Lament.³⁴

The English pun on "son" and "sun" is often commented upon:

This folk figure of diminishing sons is very likely connected with the loss of months in the year.... One of the themes of this combat is the ritual imitation of the death of the sun in winter and its rebirth in spring.³⁵

³⁴Chambers, Folk-Plays, 39.

³⁵Brody 53.

In several versions of the play from the Sussex region, the victor boasts,

See what I have done
I have cut him down like the evening sun.

The gender of the character who claims the son is far less significant than the fact of "sonship". In the case of Molly Masket in the Greenodd play, her existence in this role can only be attributed to what Chambers called the character for whom a place must be found, because she is in no way developed as a mother figure. Her purpose in this role is merely to identify the status of the dead man as "son". In many instances, the dead man is the son of either the Presenter or the Lamentor; in some cases, these two roles are reduced into one character. The winner of the combat, in this case King George, makes a victory boast:

He challenged me to fight, and why should I deny?
I'll cut his body in four parts and make his buttons
fly.

Inexplicably, King George's very next lines are the call for a doctor:

I've heard of doctors far and near,
I've heard of one in Spain.
I'm sure if he was here he'd bring
That dead man to life again.

Takes out his purse

I'll give five, ten, fifteen, twenty-five pounds for a
doctor.
Is there not one to be had?

The Cure sequence which follows the Lament can be broken down into the elements of the Call for the Doctor, Bargaining, Doctor's Boast, Administration of the Cure, and Resurrection.

Occasionally, some parts of the sequence are multiplied. In the Antrobus, Cheshire Soul-Caking play, as well as in the Greenodd play, the doctor first administers an ineffective cure for comic effect; in the Islip play, he resurrects one character with a pill, and a second by pulling out a tooth. This section of the play is the most farcical and the most prone to ad-libbing by the actors. The travels of the doctor comprise the most frequent subject material for his boasts. In the Greenodd play, they are described in what Helm identifies as "lines reminiscent of The Land of Cockayne, a fourteenth-century anti-monastic satire."³⁶ Tiddy says of these lines,

The nonsense rhyme and the effect of topsy-turvydom and self-contradiction are to be found in many plays and have a long history.³⁷

These lines have a quality which can best be described as carnivalesque, and they place the plays in a context of festive reversal:

From Hip-tip-to, Tallyantic Ocean,
Ninety degrees below bottom
Where I saw houses built of rounds of beef, slatted with
pancakes;
Roasted pig running up and down the street
With knives and forks sticking in their teeth
Crying "Here's a living! Who'll die?"
Last night, yesterday morning
About three o'clock in the afternoon,
As I was going through St. Paul's churchyard,
The very dead arose crying "Doctor! Doctor! Give me a box
of your ever-failing pills
It's a pity a man like me should die"

³⁶Helm 29.

³⁷Tiddy 117.

When I was going through town this morning I saw a dead
 dog jump up.
 It bit a man's leg and made his stocking bleed.

Although the texts of the mummers' plays are notoriously fallible, variations on this apparently nonsensical travel boast are fairly common. Bakhtin comments, "there was a popular cycle of legends about the utopian land of gluttony and idleness (for instance, the fabliau of the pays de Cockagne)."³⁸ He goes on to demonstrate the connection of this banquet image to that of death and revival:

This is the special relation of food and the underworld. The word "to die" had among its various connotations the meaning of being swallowed or being eaten up.³⁹

The speech quoted from the Greenodd play describes three resurrections amidst a banquet setting. Far from being utter nonsense, it makes good sense in that it is both a physical and a symbolic description of the act which the doctor will soon perform, and the collection which is sure to follow the performance.

The Doctor's next major speech is a description of the miraculous cures he can work. This is one of the most commonly occurring passages in all of the mummers' plays. Helm identifies the lines as "borrowed from The Infallible Mountebank, Or, Quack Doctor, circa 1750."⁴⁰ The cure is

³⁸Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indiana University Press 1984) 297.

³⁹Bakhtin 301.

⁴⁰Helm 29.

administered to the Prince of Paradise, fails the first time for comic effect, and then brings him back to life. The resurrection itself is simple: the Prince of Paradise rises, complains of a back pain, and prepares to fight again. In most cases the revived fighter makes this complaint, claims he has been asleep, or merely states that he has been dead and is now alive.

The actions of the Cure sequence are a strong contrast to those of the Combat. Formal challenge and counter-challenge give way to broad comedy and exaggerated cures in which hammers, pliers and other hardware are introduced as props. Helm suggests that this shift in tone indicates that the doctor is a late addition.

The doctor's part.... indicates a rationalization of a late date. Since in sophisticated times, a dead man could not be expected to cure himself, a doctor became necessary.⁴¹

Brody counters this idea with the argument that the doctor is the descendant of some form of pre-christian priest:

It is in this comic action that we see the remains of the once-serious conjurer, exorciser, magical life-restorer.⁴²

The inclusion of older literary materials in the doctor's speeches suggests that the character is not a recent innovation. He lies at the heart of the action, and he links it most clearly to the primitive ritual from which it appears

⁴¹Helm 29.

⁴²Brody 57.

to have sprung. It is interesting to note that although the "Female" may appear as any other character in the Hero Combat; as a combatant, Presenter, Lamentor, or even as the Fool, she is never the doctor. As the symbolic restorer of the sun's lost heat, and the closest performer to this magical and priestly action, the doctor could only be male.

The final section of the Hero-Combat is what Chambers terms the quete. This includes "a procession of characters, an entertainment, and a collection."⁴³ The dramatic action of the play concludes with the beginning of the Quete. A series of characters are introduced and exhibited. They have not yet appeared, yet they do not move the action of the play forward in any way. In the Greenodd play, which includes an unusually large number of such characters, these are old Tossport, Great Head, Molly Masket, Lord Nelson, Jack Tar, a soldier lately in France, poor Paddy from Cork, and three jolly boys. These characters sing their lines to provide entertainment and to open the wallets of the audience. The function of Molly, the only character of the Quete who also takes a dramatic role, becomes more clear at this point.

So the next that comes in is old Molly you see,
 She's a jolly old lassie as ever you see,
 She's gold and she's silver and copper in store,
 And by coming pace-egging she hopes to get more.

In comes I, old Molly Masket,
 Under my arm I carry my basket,
 In my basket I carry my eggs,
 With my eggs I carry my brass,

⁴³Brody 59.

And I think myself a jolly old lass.

Molly links the fertility rite with the collection. Pace-egg plays such as this one are performed in the Pascal of Easter season, and derive their name from it.

Eggs have from time immemorial played a role as a symbol of life and eggs have a part in Easter festivities... this Pasch, Pascal or Pace play has strayed from its mid-winter date, but the words are the same.⁴⁴

Molly carries both the ancient fertility symbol of eggs, and the modern equivalent of fertility or "luck": the brass. The collection is a form of luck for the players, which is frequently reciprocated with a blessing for the householders.

The performers observe such ceremony as is left by maintaining the disguise and appearing at the correct season of the year. Their aim is still collecting - the "luck" in reverse.⁴⁵

The survival of these plays is due at least as much to this collection as to their ritual function. In Newfoundland, Hero-Combat mummings are performed at Christmas, the performers are always masked, and the collection takes the form of unmasking and a free drink after the performance. This form of collection and unmasking functions to bring the community together and to re-establish social relations in terms of flexibility rather than rigidity.

The person who becomes known may not always be the "same" person who entered unknown.... [There is] a potential for change and alteration in social

⁴⁴Violet Alford, Introduction to English Folk-lore (London: Camelot Press, 1952) 37.

⁴⁵Helm 33.

relationships.⁴⁶

Thus the mummers' plays also function on a social level to fertilize and rejuvenate the community. The Hero Combat plays demonstrate a sequence of combat, death, revival and collection. While their purpose is most obviously the collection, they also function on a magical level as a mimetic ceremony of death and resurrection, whose purpose is fertility. This ritual may be interpreted as an imitation of the death of the sun, or of the year, or of the fertile growing season, but its impact remains identical. The function of the "female" in these performances is often obscure: she nearly always appears in some capacity, but rarely in some way which explains her presence. Her links with the collection and occasionally with eggs suggest that the "female" is related to the purpose of the ritual, perhaps as a representative of the fertility which is sought.

The Sword Dance

Alex Helm describes the action of the Sword Dance as follows:

The linked dance is the basis. A man is executed by the links being withdrawn from the Lock around his neck and he is revived by a doctor, a clown or a "Female". Characteristic performers include: Clown, five to eight performers, one of whom is Captain.

Costume: sometimes quasi-military, previously ordinary clothes with ribbons sewn on.

⁴⁶Gerald M. Sider Mumming in Outport Newfoundland (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1977) 21.

Appearance: Any time from Christmas to Plough
Monday⁴⁷

The chief characteristic of this form is the performance of a dance of locked swords, and today it is usually only this nondramatic dance sequence which survives. However, the texts which formerly accompanied this dance in the geographically limited area of the northeastern counties have been preserved. These texts are not simply Hero-Combats to which a dance has been tacked on; rather, they include elements of wooing, suggestions of common responsibility for the victim's death, and a more obvious exhibition of the inter-generational relationship between the victim and the other players than is demonstrated in the Hero Combats.

As a sample of this form, the text of the Bellerby Sword Dance play, from the North Riding of Yorkshire, is included.⁴⁸ This text includes the common elements of most Sword Dance plays, as well as several startling suggestions about the relationship of drama and ritual. The Sword Dance plays break down into the following sections: Prologue and Creation of the Dancing Area (Bellerby ll. 1-50); Calling-On Song (ll 51-123); First Dance and Execution (ll 124-135); Denial of Responsibility (ll 135-159); Call for Doctor (ll 160-212); Cure (213-223); Second Dance and Collection (ll 224-230).

⁴⁷Helm 21.

⁴⁸See appendix two for the complete text.

The Prologue and Creation of the Dance Area consists of an introduction by the first clown and a comic dialogue between the King and the Second Clown. This sequence may sound vaguely reminiscent of the Challenge of the Hero-Combat; in the Greatham Sword Dance,⁴⁹ the clown's challenge to the King immediately precedes his own execution rather than coming at the beginning of the play. However, even in the Greatham play, the challenge never leads to a combat. The challenge can only be considered a point of similarity between the two forms, rather than one of connection.

The Calling-On Song (ll 51-123) begins with the first Clown interrupting a potential combat to introduce the King in song. His lines suggest that the play's focus is amorous rather than heroic. Most of the dancers are described in terms of sexuality: Mr. Wild "the lasses he'll beguile"; the Squire's Son "afraid he's lost his love"; the First Clown, who is now named Captain Tom "if you've got fifty girls, I'll kiss them, every one"; and the Second Clown, who is named "Love so True". Brody says of this introduction,

the emphasis it places on sexual prowess and courtship.... is another important link with primitive fertility themes as well as a direct link with the Wooing Version.... In the Sword Ceremony, we can see the emphasis gradually shifting from these fertility elements to themes of combat.⁵⁰

The Dance contains the execution, for which no

⁴⁹Helm 23.

⁵⁰Brody 74.

explanation is attempted. Bessie comes forward, the dancers make the lock, and she sings:

Just now I'm going to die,
 As you can plainly see.
 These six fine glittering swords,
 Will soon put an end to me.
 Farewell unto you all,
 And to my old father here.
 Farewell unto you all,
 And my old grannie dear.

The text does not make it clear whom Bessie addresses as "father" and "grannie". It is reasonable to assume that "father" would be one of the dancers, because he is "here"; "grannie" could be one of the dancers, a member of the audience, or no specific person. In the Greatham play the clown who is executed is called "dad" by all the players, and in Ampleforth the victim is an outsider who is identified as the clown's son. In all cases the slain dancer is placed in some form of familial relationship which establishes the representation of two different generations. The execution in Bellerby, as in most cases, is effected by withdrawing all the swords from the lock at once.

The Denial of Responsibility is a series of verses sung by each dancer in which the blame is passed along to the next. The sixth first accepts the blame and prays for pardon, then blames the King, who responds by calling upon all of the dancers to bury Bessy. This denial of guilt occurs in each of the Sword Dance plays. Brody suggests an analogy with the Buophonia ceremony of ancient Greece:

In the Buophonia an ox is murdered for a ritual

feast. Before the flesh can be eaten, however, the blame... must be fixed. This shifts... until the responsibility falls on the axe. Harrison says: "The ox is brought to life again... because his resurrection is the mimetic representation of the new year."⁵¹

Helm states,

The death is the result of the concentrated act of a group against an individual.... This is more of a ritual killing than a ritual combat.⁵²

The Bellerby players make it quite clear that the guilt for the death is shared by all; their individual denials function to reinforce the sense of their responsibility as a group.

The Call for the Doctor and Cure are similar in many ways to those in the Hero Combat plays. The lines in these sections are spoken instead of sung, and the Doctor's boasts again include his travels:

Through Itty-Titty, where there is neither land nor city
wooden churches, leather bells and black puddings for
bell-ropes,

and his cures:

The whiskey jade, the smiling maid... the maiden with a
red pale face... any maiden wishing to cure her
sweetheart, I can tell her how she shall win. I once
cured my old grandmother who had been dead two year,
after which she lived three and brought forth two
children.

Although his boasts contain many commonplace elements, there is a new emphasis on sexuality and reproduction. Most of the Doctor's cures focus on women and fertility. Significantly, the figure of the old woman giving birth suggests the turn of

⁵¹Brody 80.

⁵²Helm 21.

the old year into the new.

The cure itself is most interesting. The Doctor's pills "Cure all ills, time present, time gone and time to come." Bessy arches her back as he rubs her stomach and administers "okum pokum pennyroyal." Brody identifies pennyroyal as "a well-known abortant,"⁵³ and Bessy's movement as a mimic of the birthing process. The minor leap in logic which is required to understand the choice of pennyroyal as a cure can be made if it is viewed in reverse: the cure is not the prevention of a birth, but the replacing of the dead Bessy with a live one. Much has been made of the fact that these plays were subject to changes in the nineteenth century in order to make way for more refined tastes. The inclusion of such obvious hints about the birth process in this play suggests that it may at one time have included a baby, such as is found in the Trace ceremonies and the wooing plays, which was deleted and its loss metaphorically explained by the use of an abortant in its place.

The Sword Dance play ends with a second dance, after which a collection would have been taken up in the manner of the Quete. The "new coat for our clown" may be a hint to the audience, as the second Clown's opening lines "roast beef, bull beef, apple pie" certainly are. This play was last performed in 1879 and was recorded in 1926. Although the "Female" does not always take the role of the victim in the

⁵³Brody 59.

Sword Dance plays, she remains a constant figure. At Askon Richard (c.1870), she performed the cure after the doctor had failed to do so by using her broom on the dead man's face. Helm suggests that "she may be performing her original function of sweeping away evil."⁵⁴ The "Female" appears to be a fertility charm whose presence is necessary for the cure to work. Even in Greatham, where there is no "Female", the Doctor is addressed once as "Dame Doctor". The emphasis in the Doctor's boasts on sexual play and cures for women of various ages links the female principle with agricultural fertility, the passage of time, and the birth of the new year. Even the play's most outstanding feature, the Lock of swords, can be traced back to this theme:

If the Lock could be looked upon as a means of restoring life rather than taking it, it makes better sense, particularly... as a symbol of the female principle placed over the head of a male performer to complete the union.⁵⁵

This analysis adds a further reason why the performer of the "Female" role could only be male: the play may be seen as the remnant of a ritual of supplication directed to a female principle by male performers.

The Wooing Plays

The third type of mummers' play is the Wooing play. Helm defines it as follows:

⁵⁴Helm 26.

⁵⁵Brody 96. Quoted from unpublished lectures by Alex Helm.

The wooer of a young "Female" is rejected in favour of a Clown and enlists in the army. The Clown is occasionally accused of being the father of a bastard child of an older "Female", which he denies. The action continues with a champion overcoming an opponent who is revived by a doctor. Much of the action is expressed in song. Characteristic performers include the Recruiting Sergeant, Ploughboy, Lady, Clown and Dame. Appears from Christmas to Plough Monday.⁵⁶

The most important aspects of this form are the wooing sequence, the inclusion of two "Female" characters, the exhibition of a "baby" or "bastard", and in some closing sequences, the invitation to a wedding feast. The wooing plays are the most geographically restricted of all of the Mummers' plays. They have been recorded only in the four agricultural communities of the East Midlands. The first play of this type was recorded at Bassinghamshire in 1823. Earlier records of payments of "morris dancers" and "Plough Boys", who may have performed this type of play, exist through the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century these plays were the target of attacks in the press and from the clergy upon the grounds of obscenity.

It was said of the Helpringham performance it wasn't proper for a respectable girl to see it.... Circa 1889, at Wispington, the Rev. J. Conway Walter and his wife withdrew from a presentation in their kitchen, as they were disgusted with it.⁵⁷

The content which sparked such opposition to these plays becomes more obvious upon examination of a typical wooing

⁵⁶Helm 11.

⁵⁷Helm 19.

text, that from Plumtree, Nottinghamshire.⁵⁸ This play divides into several sections, most of which appear in the plays classified as wooings. There are also a number of intermediate variations of this form, which include some, but not all of these sequences. The Branston play, which is very similar to this version, uses St. George as the champion, but does not include any combat at all. The Clayworth play includes a wooing and a combat, but lacks a baby.

The play opens with Tommy's introduction of the Fool and Recruiting Sergeant. The Farmer's Man appears and enlists, making it clear that he does so because he has wooed the Lady without success.

Dash to my wig if I'll grieve any longer
For that proud and saucy lass

Tommy woos the Lady, who agrees to be married to him. Old Dame Jane enters and presents Tommy with his baby, then accepts Beelzebub's challenge and is killed. There is no formal combat. The stage direction reads "He hits her with club. She falls down."⁵⁹ A doctor is called, goes through a typical boasting sequence and revives Old Dame Jane. The play ends with a civil "Good night and thank you very much," the invitation to the wedding feast having been shortened down in this case to the Lady's agreement to wed. The parts which are normally given ritual significance are the wooing, the Old

⁵⁸See appendix three for the complete text.

⁵⁹Helm 15.

"Female" with the baby, and the closing wedding invitation.

The wooing sequence demonstrates the effect of literary influence upon folk drama: in several cases, lines are added directly from the popular ballad Young Roger at the Mill, and from the 1606 comedy Wily Beguiled. However, although outside sources have supplied some of the names and lines, the action of the play itself is not merely "a Combat and Cure [to which is] loosely attached a sentimental drama... called the Fool's Wooing."⁶⁰ The combat is quick and simple, while the wooing is prolonged and is clearly the play's focus. Brody treats the wooing sequence as the most important aspect of the mummers' plays.

We have in the wooing play a ceremony... of fertility, whether it is expressed on the human magical level of copulation, the agricultural level exemplified in the dragging of a plough... or the cosmic level played out in the combat of seasons.⁶¹

The double manifestation of the "Female" figure is the second aspect of the wooing plays to which ritual significance has been attached. Brody compares this to the Scottish custom of personifying the last grains of harvest corn as the Old Wife and the Corn Maiden, as detailed in The Golden Bough.

There are parts of Scotland in which both an Old Wife and a Maiden are cut at harvest.... While each farmer keeps his maiden as the embodiment of the young and fruitful spirit of the corn, he passes on

⁶⁰Chambers, Folk-Plays, 91.

⁶¹Brody 106.

the Old Wife as soon as he can.⁶²

Brody suggests that the action of the wooing play, in which an old "Female", who has already produced, is rejected for a young woman, is analogous to the ritual of the Old Wife and the Corn Maiden. This old "Female" usually brings a "bastard" (later softened to a "baby") with her. The baby may be seen as the third generation which is necessary to represent the three ages of man: infancy, youth and age.

The infant completes the Life-Cycle. There are three generations in the action which represent life from the cradle to the grave and the [wooing] ceremony is the most unified of all the types because of this.⁶³

The role of the women in the wooing plays is fairly obvious. They personify the force of fertility. The old woman suggests time's passage and the revival of infancy out of age. In the Plumtree play, this is doubly emphasized, since it is also the old "Female" who dies and is revived. The young Maiden or Lady suggests future fertility and the desirability of youth over age. The Maiden and Fool are joined in what Brody terms a "sacred wedding", and the invitation to a feast which frequently closes the wooing plays is linked again to the ancient fertility ritual of the Buophonia.

In a sacred marriage, the bridegroom and the bride are representatives of divine or spiritual beings

⁶²James G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, (1922, London: MacMillan Press Ltd. Abridged Edition, 1971) 539.

⁶³Helm 17.

containing within them some form of the powers of fertility in nature.⁶⁴

Thus the participants in a wooing play can be interpreted as personifications of natural powers. In more primitive ceremonies such as those from Thrace, a direct connection is drawn between the imitated copulation, death, revival, wedding and ploughing actions, and the future welfare of the crop. The similarities in form of these ceremonies and the wooing plays suggest that something similar lies at the heart of the mummings' plays. If, as Brody suggests, the wooing play is the most primitive form of a ceremony which then proceeded to crystallize into the Sword Dance and Hero-Combat forms, the mysterious presence of the man-dressed-as-woman can be explained as a magical figure who permits and makes possible the function which the ceremony performs: the invocation of a good crop, the turn of winter into spring, the promise of the future fertility of the earth.

Brody's work is primarily aimed determining the points at which the mummings' plays exhibit similarities to ancient and primitive fertility rituals. This approach is effective only to the point that it can suggest a historically indefinable background as a source for the mysteriously suggestive nature of these plays. It loses ground however, by its vigorous insistence upon the impossible separation of materials which are "purely folk" from those which have been picked up from

⁶⁴Brody 198.

"outside" sources, such as the literary source of the ballads and legitimate stage, and from social and historical events which have left their marks on the plays. The anthropologically-based work of scholars such as Brody and Helm has supplied many solutions in a mysterious field, but for a fuller view of the roles of women in folk drama, it is necessary to explore a few of the sources which are ignored by their approach.

One such source is the additions which have been made to folk-drama through the ballad tradition. Since the ballads are a form of literature which was readily accessible to all levels of society, they have added to the folk drama elements which have a social meaning. One of the most popular of all the ballad cycles is that of Robin Hood. The Robin Hood legend surfaces briefly in the Hero Combat of Kempsford, Gloucestershire,⁶⁵ which is a close reproduction of the ballad "Robin Hood and the Tanner" (Child no. 126).⁶⁶ To the ballad's very simple story of Robin's combat with Arthur a Bland, the mummers' play adds a doctor, and a character who is a combination of clown and Father Christmas named Tom Pinney. The ballad ends with the recognition of Arthur as a kinsman of Little John; in the play, Little John kills Arthur in combat, Robin Hood summons a doctor, and the remainder of the play

⁶⁵See appendix four for the complete text.

⁶⁶Francis James Child, ed., The English and Scottish Popular Ballads (1888, Vol. 3, New York: Dover Publications, 1965. 5 vols.) 137.

follows a typical revival sequence. The doctor once again brags of reviving a dead woman, but there is no "Female" character at all in this play. The character whom we know as Maid Marian is the product of a long evolution, and to discover her origins, it is necessary to go back to the earliest known examples of English folk-drama.

CHAPTER THREE: THE BACKGROUND OF THE ROBIN HOOD TRADITION
Bahktin and the Carnavalesque Elements in May Day Festivities

The influence of Mikhail Bahktin's work in the study of Renaissance folk culture cannot be ignored. He provides the reader with an entire system of interpretation, a set of motifs which unlock the language of carnival. These provide the key to an understanding of the ways in which festive, popular, "folk" elements pervaded the entire calendar. Bahktin explains,

Carnival celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world - the new year, the new spring, the new kingdom.... That is why in carnivalesque images there is so much turnabout, so many opposite faces and intentionally upset proportions.... Men are transvested as women and vice versa, costumes are turned inside out.⁶⁷

The carnivalesque world-view functions on many levels: as a utopian substitute for the real world, as a celebration of life out of death, of regeneration and earthly immortality, as a form of justice in levelling out the inequalities of society by raising the low and debasing the high, and most importantly, as a purveyor of universal truth, in exposing the fact that despite social differences, all humans are subject to birth and death. The carnival, as 'inversion of bipolar

⁶⁷Bahktin 410.

opposites', must be understood, not as a revolutionary alternative to what we may define as an oppressive social system, but as an abiding part of this system.

Bahktin was right in seeing the manifestation of a profound drive towards liberation and subversion in Medieval carnival. The hyper-Bahktinian ideology of carnival as actual liberation may, however, be wrong.⁶⁸

The fact that carnival could exist in a stable society suggests that while its imagery could provide the language of revolution, the carnival itself reinforced the existing social structures by way of its temporary and marginal nature.

Without a valid law to break, carnival is impossible. During the Middle Ages, counter-rituals such as the Mass of the Ass or the Coronation of the Fool were enjoyable just because, during the rest of the year, the Holy Mass and the King's true coronation were sacred and respectable activities.⁶⁹

The forum of May Day celebrations provides the scholar with a very appropriate place in which to explore the ways in which this world-view could take concrete form. Bahktin says "it is the medieval comic theatre which is most intimately related to carnival,"⁷⁰ and he is absolutely correct. Folk drama permitted the participants (both the actors and the audience) to step outside their normal lives, to become something new, and for a time, to suspend the rules of

⁶⁸Umberto Eco, "The Frames of Comic Freedom," Carnival! (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1984) 3.

⁶⁹Eco 6.

⁷⁰Bahktin 15.

acceptable behaviour to establish an alternative system of authority. As well, it allowed for criticism of the established authority because it mocked the rules by imitating them in a backward, reversed manner.

Since so much of the world-view of the carnivalesque is derived from the universality of birth and death, it is unsurprising that the popular medieval view of women should be laced with precisely this ambiguity.

The popular tradition is in no way hostile to woman and does not approach her negatively.... Woman is essentially related to the lower bodily stratum; she is the incarnation of this stratum that degrades and regenerates simultaneously. She is ambivalent.⁷¹

Woman is therefore the force which drags man to his death, and yet also the fertile field from which he springs. Woman is the personification of carnival, the force which levels, reveals truth, destroys the old and glorifies the new. Bahktin develops the connection between the themes of cuckoldry and of the new year:

This is the uncrowning of the old husband and a new act of procreation with the young husband.... the cuckolded husband assumes the role of uncrowned old age, of the old year and the receding winter.⁷²

In the carnivalesque view, the cuckolding woman is a force of change and regeneration, rather than an example of moral laxity.

On a mythical level, the legendary Robin Hood has been

⁷¹Bahktin 240.

⁷²Bahktin 241.

interpreted as an incarnation of the spirit of spring, with ties to the Green Man of the Sir Gawain story, based on the pervasiveness of his association with the greenwood and the colour green. Although early folklorists of the Golden Bough school were inclined to interpret the Robin Hood of the May festivals as a personification of a vegetative fertilization spirit, Chambers disagrees:

We have seen no reason to suppose that the mock king, which is the part assigned to Robin Hood in the May-game, was ever regarded as an incarnation of the fertilization spirit. He is the priest of that spirit, slain at its festival, but nothing more."⁷³

Robin Hood can also be socially interpreted as the voice of youth because the May plays were nearly always performed by young, unmarried men. Some critics have used the surname Hood to develop a connection between Robin and the Norse deity Woden or another minor wood-spirit named Hode; this interpretation is generally discredited because of the extremely common nature of the surnames Wood and Hood. Robin Hood's status as an outlaw living in the forest beyond civilization also connects him with the supernatural folk of popular superstition. His name is sometimes associated with the fairies, in the person of Robin Goodfellow. However, most attempts to identify Robin Hood as a mythical representation of some single quality fail because he is the product of a long evolution. He may have held meanings at one stage which

⁷³E.K. Chambers, The Medieval Stage, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903) 175.

are no longer visible, and he has certainly accrued more meanings with time's passage.

Development of the May Tradition

To gain an understanding of the earliest Robin Hood dramas, it is essential to explore the background of the May festival tradition. E.K. Chambers traces May festivals back to the fertility rites of the prechristian world. As with so much of the existing, but objectionable pagan culture, the Church protested against the indecent nature of these festivals, but to little avail, eventually simply absorbing the existing traditions into its calendar. Dance and song continued to be a major part of secular May festivals. Additionally, the month of May was considered to be the time of year when women's power was at its peak.

Generally, May - Flora's month in Roman times - was thought to be a period in which women were powerful, their desires at their most immoderate.⁷⁴

Speaking of a medieval French folk-song, Chambers states,

The Queen here, is of course, the festival queen, or Lady of the May.... The desire of the Queen and her maidens to dance alone recall the conventional freedom of women from restraint in May, the month of their ancient sex-festival.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Natalie Zemon Davis, "Woman on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe," The Reversible World, ed. Barbara Babcock (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1978) 170.

⁷⁵Chambers, Medieval Stage vol. 1, 170.

Chambers uses French materials to describe this festival because very little corresponding material survives in English. He assumes a parallel development in the origins of the English May-festivals. Records of English May Games are scarce until Tudor times. The Tudor May games were marked by the erection of a May pole and the election of a male Summer King or Lord of Misrule. David Wiles describes the process as it was seen through the words of Phillip Stubbes in the 1583

Anatomy of Abuses:

We have here a vivid picture of a troupe of morris men in full spate. Even though a service is in progress, the men perform their dance inside the church itself. Having duly entertained the congregation, the dancers eventually go:

forth into the churchyard, where they have commonly their Summer Halls, their bowers, arbours and banqueting houses set up, wherein they feast, banquet and dance all that day, and peradventure, all the night too.

The Lord's banquet is provided by parishioners who bring along bread, ale, cheese, custard and cakes.... the Lord and his men gather money as well as food and drink from the spectators.

They have certain papers, wherein is painted some crest or other... and these they call "My Lord of Misrule's badges". These they give to everyone that will give money for them.⁷⁶

Social hierarchies and routines were temporarily upset; the Church's hold on the popular imagination was loosened, and in their freedom from everyday drudgery, the people enjoyed dances, processions, feasts, combats, and dramatic presentations, all of which were termed "play", or ludus, in

⁷⁶David Wiles, The Early Plays of Robin Hood (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer-Boydell & Brewer, 1981) 11.

the records which survive. The fact that these festivities took place within the church, and even while the service was in progress, suggests that prior to the protests of Puritans like Stubbes, the May festivals enjoyed the sanction of the church. A corresponding piece of evidence which points in this direction is the fact that in many towns the churchwarden was the administrator of the Robin Hood game. The account books of the churchwardens of Kingston-upon-Thames provide much of the information we have on the early Robin Hood games.

Among such other titles as Lord of Misrule, Summer King, Abbot of Unreason and Abbot of Bon-Accord, the man who was elected to lead the festivities frequently held the title Robin or Robin Hood. This name entered the May Games from two different sources: French may festivals and English ballads. French May festivities featured leading characters named Robin and Marian.

In the French Fetes du mai, only a little less mysterious than their English counterparts, Robin and Marian tended to preside, in the intervals of the attempted seduction of the latter by a series of knights, over a variety of rustic pastimes.⁷⁷

These characters are named in early pastourelles, as well as in a charming play written by Adam de la Halle in about 1283 called Robin et Marian. In this play, Marian remains faithful to her lover Robin, who is beaten in combat by a knight; all are then reconciled in a happy dance at the play's end. It is

⁷⁷R.B. Dobson and J. Taylor, Rymes of Robin Hood (London: Heinemann Press, 1976) 41.

important to note that while the characters of Robin et Marian are shepherds, the play was written for the noble audience of the court of Marie de France. These characters, especially Marion, are ennobled by their "courtly" behaviour. The use of combat and the dance are similar to the forms of later folk plays.

A second source for the application of the name Robin Hood to the English May games is the existing tradition of Robin Hood ballads. Whether a real outlaw of that name actually existed is irrelevant. F.J. Child calls Robin Hood "absolutely a creation of the ballad muse."⁷⁸ Those scholars who argue for the existence of a historical outlaw named Robin Hood tend to place him in the late 13th or early 14th centuries. By 1377, ballads of Robin Hood's exploits were popular enough to warrant Langland's criticism. Sloth, a satirical characterization of the negligent priesthood, says,

If I shulde deye bi this daye . me liste nought to loke
 I can nought parfitly my pater noster . as the preste it
 syngeth
 But I can rymes of Robin Hood . and Randolph erle of Chestre
 Ac neither of owre lorde ne of owre lady . the leste that
 evere was made.⁷⁹

This is the earliest written reference to Robin Hood.

An important facet of the May festivals was the collection of funds for "livery" badges, which were usually made of paper. In such prosperous towns as Kingston-Upon-

⁷⁸Child, 42.

⁷⁹Dobson and Taylor, 1.

Thames, "Payments are made for a varying number of liveries, ranging from 2,000 in 1520 to 600 in 1537, the second last year on record."⁸⁰ The monies which were collected went into the accounts of the local churchwardens, who in turn provided the funds for the purchase of new costumes and other necessities. The person elected as Robin Hood therefore had to be trustworthy, in order that he could make a proper accounting for the funds he collected. There was a penalty fine for turning down the role of Robin Hood, and there are cases recorded when things went wrong; either the appropriate Robin Hood refused the job, or he could not make an accounting for his takings when called upon to do so. In most cases, Robin Hood was chosen from the unmarried and relatively well-off young men of the town. Frequently, the man who played Robin Hood turns up in the records of later years as a churchwarden or mayor. Control of the game remained firmly in the hands of the authorities, as the careful choice of Robin Hood, and the final accounting for the takings indicate; yet the behaviour of the participants was beyond control and frequently caused concern for their eternal welfare. These games hold several elements of carnivalesque play: for the participants in the game, those who purchased liveries, reality was suspended for a time by the presence of an alternate "King"; additionally there is a reversal of values,

⁸⁰MacLean, Sally Beth "King Games and Robin Hood: Play and Profit at Kingston upon Thames" Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama 29 (1986-87): 80.

as the purchase of imitation livery-tokens, the badge of servitude, was equated with freedom for a day.

Most of the ballads which we have today are derived from a long compilation called A Gest of Robyn Hode. While the Gest was not published until 1562, scholarly opinion places the dating of the completed Gest at up to a hundred years earlier. The Gest, in turn, is a compound of several earlier ballads, some of which still survive in separate copies. Although the Gest does not mention Maid Marian or any female love interest for Robin Hood, Robin distinguishes himself as a chivalric servant of the Virgin Mary. As the ballads predate the earliest Robin Hood plays, it is generally accepted that Maid Marion entered the Robin Hood legend later, through the May Games. The English seem to have adopted the French tradition of naming their May-King and May-Queen Robin and Marian, and then to have amalgamated this Robin, King of May, with Robin Hood. As the festivities of each centre varied according to the wealth and tastes of the inhabitants, it is difficult to trace the exact process by which Robin and Marian became the accepted names for the King and Queen of the May games. The first mention of Marian in print dates from 1500 and appears in Barclay's Fourth Eclogue, in which "The two are kept distinct, for the lusty Codrus in the Eclogue wishes to hear 'some mery fit of Maide Marian or els of Robin Hood.'"⁸¹

⁸¹Child, 218.

The Maid Marian, or May Queen, was originally played by a woman. She placed the festivities in the context of chivalry: the records of the 1469 May celebrations in Wistow, Yorkshire show that, like a character out of a pastoral romance, she waited in a bower until Robin and his men had made their progress through the households selling their liveries and collecting money. Wiles describes this activity:

From among the unmarried of the parish, Margaret More and Thomas Barker were elected Summer King and Queen. On the third Sunday in June, from mid-day until after sunset, the Queen say in a kind of "barn" known as the "Summer-House", which lay next to the churchyard.⁸²

Natalie Zemon Davis comments:

Real women in early modern Europe had less chance than men to initiate or take part in their own festivals of inversion. Queens were elected for special occasions ... but their rule was gentle and tame.⁸³

However, the May Queen changed from a maiden into a man in a dress with the introduction of the morris dance. The account books of Kingston-on-Thames provide an intimate account of the workings of the May festivals. In 1509, Joan Whitbread was paid a shilling for her role as Marian, just as the man who played Robin Hood was, and gloves were purchased for each of their costumes. By 1516, Marian is played by an unnamed and unpaid male, and dancing shoes are on the shopping list for all of the participants in the games. Wiles tells us that,

⁸²Wiles, 20.

⁸³Davis, 170.

if, as all the evidence suggests, Robin Hood and his company did begin to dance in 1516, we have a logical explanation of why a man should have taken over the role of Marian. It would have been socially unacceptable for a girl to dance alone with a group of males; while it was traditional for a maiden to serve as May-Queen, the morris dance, then as now, was a male preserve.⁸⁴

The simultaneous introduction of the dancing shoes and of a male Marian suggests that the pastoral and relatively tame Marian is superseded at this point by a new characterization. The social boundaries which would have applied to a woman did not apply to a man, who was free to dance what Chaucer's Wife of Bath would have termed 'the old Daunce'.

Maid Marian and the Morris

In order to properly address Maid Marian's development, some attention must be paid to the morris dance, since it had such a significant effect on the presentation of Robin Hood's lady. A morris dance performed in the ancient manner included six men who wore bells, a dizard or fool, possibly a hobby horse, and the "female".

The actual dancers were accompanied by grotesque personages and one of these was a woman, or a man dressed in woman's clothes, to whom literary writers... continued to give the name of Maid Marian.⁸⁵

While Chambers appears to suggest that an actual woman may have participated in the morris, this is unlikely, as every other source of information on the morris emphasizes that it

⁸⁴Wiles, 24.

⁸⁵Chambers, Medieval Stage vol. 1, 196.

is a male-only dance. Chambers does not explain this apparent anomaly in his text; one must assume that it is a case of grammatical unclarity, rather than a suggestion that a woman might be a morris dancer.

Because this "female" Marian character is sometimes also called the 'mowren' or 'moren', Wiles argues that the name is originally derived etymologically from 'moor', as is 'morris'. In his estimation, the character began as a man in the flowing skirts of a moorish costume, who was gradually transformed into the Marian character. I find this explanation unconvincing, because the main piece of evidence for the inclusion of a moor in the morris is a description of a Royal celebration in 1561, which post-dates the Morris development of Marian. The churchwardens account books of Kingston-on-Thames indicate that at least there, Robin Hood and Marion were already in place when the morris arrived in 1516. Wiles' theory of the evolution of the moren into Marian also disagrees with Child, who says that "the lady is an essential personage in the morris. How and when she came to receive the appellation of Maid Marian in the English morris is unknown;"⁸⁶ and with J.C. Holt, who says simply "the Queen of May and the Friar were traditional participants in the morris dance."⁸⁷ Scholarly opinion is confusing and contradictory

⁸⁶Child, 45.

⁸⁷J.C. Holt, Robin Hood (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1982)
160.

on this point: the lady of the May Games was either originally a woman who was later played by a man, or a man who was later reinterpreted as a female character played by a man in woman's dress.

I have already shown that as Summer Queen, Marian was played by a woman and took a passive role in the proceedings. As a dancer however, she became a clownish figure of fun, and judging by the impressions she left, would seem to have been very active. The very name "Marian" grew to be associated with the unwomanly woman. Dobson and Taylor tell us "here Marian, played by a boy, developed into a by-word for impropriety."⁸⁸ Shakespeare mentions her, when Falstaff tells Mistress Quickly,

There's no more faith in thee than in a stewed
prune, nor no more truth in thee than in a drawn
fox, and for **womanhood**, Maid Marian may be the
deputy's wife of the ward to thee.⁸⁹ [emphasis my
own.]

Any social conventions of propriety which would have had to be observed by a local female Marian would quickly disappear when the character was played by a man and began to dance the morris. Feminist critics call the character who developed the "disorderly woman".

Often a woman in disguise, [she was] associated
with popular festivals and their inversions of
normal hierarchies. For the space of a festival, a

⁸⁸Dobson and Taylor, 41.

⁸⁹William Shakespeare, "I King Henry IV", III:iii The Complete Pelican Shakespeare (New York: Penguin Books Inc., 1969) 692.

woman could be placed on top, a Maid Marian.⁹⁰

The disorderly, dominant woman was a symbol of chaos... popular festivals in which men dressed as women were occasions for disorder.... The theme of the dominant woman, the woman on top, sometimes went with criticism of the established order.... Most of the time... the unruly woman was a negative symbol.⁹¹

The man in woman's clothing was freed from normal conventions, and could function both as a magical charm, a fertility ritual for the local area, and as a mocker and unmasker of social reality. Natalie Zemon Davis rates Maid Marion as

the most important English example of the male as grotesque female.... If in this capacity, she was sometimes a real female, and sometimes a disguised male, when it came to the morris dance with Robin,... Marion was a man. Here again, there was the chance that the maid's gestures or costume would be licentious.⁹²

The licence entailed by Marion's costume and gestures was a licence to flout the conventional rules of behaviour to which women were bound. The freedom of the festival time could easily be translated as the freedom to criticize and reverse (for a time) the established order.

The males drew upon the sexual power and energy of the unruly woman and on her licence (which they had long assumed at carnival and games) to promote

⁹⁰Leah S. Marcus, "Shakespeare's Comic Heroines, Elizabeth I, and the Political Uses of Androgyny," Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives, ed. Mary Beth Rose (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986) 147.

⁹¹Diane Bornstein, The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women (n.p.: Archon Books, 1983) 119.

⁹²Davis, 165-166.

fertility, to defend the community's interests and standards, and to tell the truth about unjust rule.... Maid Marion danced for a plentiful village.... The woman on top renewed old systems, but also helped to change them into something different.⁹³

The woman in the play Robin Hood and the Friar does not carry the full weight of the "disorderly woman" in the text alone. She does not speak and her actions are left to the discretion of the actors. However, she is described as a lusty and unruly woman. She is "a terer of shetes" and "a wagger of ballocks when other men sleeps", one who disrupts the normal relation of the sexes and who surpasses the men in sexual activity. It is also important to remember that the duties of the elected Robin Hood and Marian went far beyond acting out the text of this piece of drama. The full day's duties, including performance in the morris dances and collecting for the liveries, must have given a wide enough scope to the actor playing Marian to have inspired Shakespeare's estimation.

⁹³Davis, 182-183.

CHAPTER FOUR: ROBIN HOOD IN MEDIEVAL FOLK DRAMA

The Earliest Folk Plays

There are three early plays which can be considered the products of medieval folk materials. These are Robin Hood and the Sheriff, which is a fragment extant in one manuscript only, dating from 1470-75; Robin Hood and the Friar, and Robin Hood and the Potter which were published together as one play with Copland's printed edition of the Gest in 1562.

The manuscript of the fragment play Robin Hood and the Sheriff was among the papers of the famous Paston household. On the back of the manuscript in the same hand are household accounts of 1474-75. Also among the Paston papers is a famous letter of April 16, 1473, generally accepted as referring to this play, in which Sir John

lamented the flight of a man Woode whom he had kept "thys iii yer to pleye Seynt Jorge and Robyn Hod and the Shryff off Nottyngham", presumably acted before the Paston Household in the 1470's.⁹⁴

The play does not come with stage directions or speaker-names. Thus it can be reconstructed in several ways. The actions were obviously much more important than the speeches. Dobson and Taylor treat the play as a fragment of a unified

⁹⁴Dobson and Taylor, 204.

whole which breaks off just as Robin Hood and all of his men have been captured by the Sheriff.⁹⁵ Wiles suggests that the play is actually two separate playlets, that the sheriff is tricked by Robin Hood in disguise, and the men are freed at the play's end.⁹⁶ Child treats the capture of Little John as a flashback in order to make the play align with the ballad from which some of its material is clearly inherited, Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne. Unless a second text for the play turns up, I do not believe that it is possible to reconstruct the confusing action of the play with certainty. It is more satisfying, but textually less plausible, to have Robin Hood rescue his men.

The main inspiration of the play is physical action and combat. Many violent actions are performed or at least mentioned in its short space: beheading, drawing and quartering, binding and imprisonment. The play revolves around repeated combats: Robin and the knight compete at archery, stone-throwing, wrestling, and possibly sword-play, as Robin beheads the knight. Further, Little John and Friar Tuck may be competing at archery at the time of their capture; Little John and the Sheriff fight before the imprisonment, and depending on the reconstruction, there may also be a fight if the Sheriff is imprisoned. The heavy use of combat in the

⁹⁵See appendices five for the original text, and six for the Dobson and Taylor reconstruction.

⁹⁶See appendix seven for Wiles' reconstruction

play relates it to the mumming plays of hero combat; additionally, the beheading and the fact the Robin puts on the knight's clothes suggests a death and resurrection sequence similar to those of the mummers' plays. This play is important because it provides a firm date for the time during which Robin Hood plays were beginning to be performed; because its manuscript shows that this play was entertainment for a fairly wealthy household; and because the content of the play has such obvious affiliations with other folkloric motifs that their influence upon the development of the Robin Hood legend cannot be ignored.

The second and third plays are Robin Hood and the Friar, and Robin Hood and the Potter.⁹⁷ These are amalgamated into one play which survives solely in the printed text of Copland's A Gest of Robyn Hode, which dates from 1561-69. While copies of the Gest similar to Copland's exist, none of these include the dramatic pieces. However, the dating of the text is murky:

The text is defective and must have been taken from an older copy. They were probably written in the course of the revival of the May games under Queen Mary.⁹⁸

The plays are introduced in the full title of the volume, which reads: "A mery geste of Robyn Hode and of hys lyfe, wyth a newe playe for to be played in Maye games, verye plesaunte

⁹⁷See appendix eight for the complete text of both plays.

⁹⁸Wiles, 39.

and full of pastyme."⁹⁹ Although they are introduced as one play, they are generally credited as two separate plays, which in turn descended from separate, older ballads similar to each.

The play Robin Hood and the Friar is interesting because it demonstrates stereotypical medieval attitudes toward both women and friars. Friars were often satirized as hypocrites who would not hesitate to take advantage of their position in order to accumulate wealth, enjoy food and wine, and seduce women, especially in the confessional. Jill Mann suggests

It is easy to see how a class enjoying freedom to travel about and to have secret conferences with women would quickly take on the role assigned to the commercial traveller in modern anecdote.¹⁰⁰

Further, the travelling friar was inevitably opposed by the established clergy of whatever area he travelled through, because a friar could give easy absolution to sinners, eroding the authority of the local clergy. Friars were often portrayed as disreputable men of flexible morals. Mann concludes "the traditional picture is a complex unity, seeing dual motives of lechery and avarice in mendicant activities."¹⁰¹

In Robin Hood and the Friar, Robin Hood sends Little John

⁹⁹John S. Farmer, Robin Hood, 1914, Tudor Facsimile Texts (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1970) p. 2.

¹⁰⁰Jill Mann, Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 40.

¹⁰¹Mann, 53.

to find Friar Tuck and bring him in. The friar enters, saying "Deus hic," which, as the PLS text points out

offer[s] considerable opportunity for embellishing his jolly nature. He can enter singing or whistling a folk song and/or drinking from a flask. The latin hic may be combined with hiccups to suggest that the flask does not contain water.¹⁰²

The dogs which he mentions are handed down from the ballad Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar, in which there are fifty dogs; for staging purposes the PLS text of this play suggests that two or three henchmen be introduced as 'dogs'. These can then respond to the dog-like names of 'Cut' and 'Bause' by which the friar calls them later in the text. After a series of boasts, the friar reveals that he seeks Robin Hood. Robin's response to the friar's identity is distinctly hostile:

Thou lousy frere, what wouldest thou with hym?
He never loved fryer, nor none of freier's kin

He goes on to call the friar a fox, and to say he would rather meet a devil in hell than a friar. Robin then asks the friar to carry him over the water. The friar agrees, and then tosses Robin in. Line 80 is generally accepted to have been printed in a corrupt form in the Copland text; the PLS text amends it to read "now I friar without and thou Robin within" (meaning the water), while the original text reads "now art thou Robin without and I friar within." This correction makes

¹⁰²Mary A. Brackstone, staging notes, "Robin Hood and the Friar", PLS Performance Text No. 3, Toronto: PLS, 1973) 28.

better sense and simplifies staging. After the river scene, Robin and the Friar fight, and Robin, who is beginning to sweat, asks leave to blow his horn. The friar in turn is given leave to whistle, and henchmen and "dogs" enter from both sides for a free-for-all battle. The next lines of the text form the conventional offer of employment which Robin Hood makes to the victors in many of the ballads: "wilt thou be my man?" In this case, the offer is sweetened by the temptation of a "lady free":

Robin: How sayst thou frer wylt thou be my man
 To do me seruyse thou can
 Thou shalt haue both golde and fee
 and also here is a Lady free
 I will geue her vnto the
 And her chapplayne I the make
 To serue her for my sake

Friar: Here is an huckle-duckle an inch aboue the buckle
 She is a trul of trust, to serue a frier at his lust
 a prycker a prauncer a terer of shetes
 a wagger of ballocks when other men slepes
 Go home ye knaues and lay crabbes in the fyre
 For my lady and I will daunce in the mire for veri
 pure ioye

A "Lady" is introduced to the story. She is unnamed, she does not speak and is passed over as a gift (a signing bonus?). It is important that she is given to the friar because her presence demonstrates his lusts.

By the end of the Elizabethan period, the convention was well established that Friar Tuck was both a lecher and a dancer; he was a lecher because he danced opposite the Marian.¹⁰³

A "huckle-duckle," according to the PLS text, is

¹⁰³Wiles, 24.

A phrase of unclear meaning probably invented to rhyme with buckle and convey bawdy innuendo: "huckle" means hip, and the complete phrase may also describe the extent of his physical excitement.¹⁰⁴

George Parfitt footnotes huckle-duckle as a game, but does not elaborate.¹⁰⁵ The trul of line 116 translates to a trollop in modern terminology. The dance in the mire is doubly important because it suggests the lewd "old daunce" that Chaucer's Pandarus is so skilled in, and also because it strongly suggests that this play would end with a morris dance.

The mire is physically the condition which the playing field would probably have been reduced to after several fights and the water-dunking. Symbolically, "mire" suggests earthy sexuality, and the fallen condition of mankind led by his sexual appetites. I believe that "very pure joy" is added ironically. The juxtaposition of mire and purity heightens the audience's awareness of the friar as a creature of lusts, but it also moves the moral frame of reference outside of the conventional code by describing the dance in the mire as "pure"; what is normally an opposition becomes a synthesis. The audience is moved outside, and beyond the everyday code of ethics and into the free world of the greenwood. Peter Stallybrass says of this scene, "dirt intersects with the celebration of sexuality.... Dirt is used in this scene both

¹⁰⁴Blackstone, 37.

¹⁰⁵George Parfitt, "Early Robin Hood Plays: Two Fragments and a Bibliography," Renaissance and Modern Studies, 22 (1978) 5-12.

to degrade the Church... and to celebrate the liberties of carnival."¹⁰⁶

This play is important because it introduces a woman, presumably Maid Marian, to the Robin Hood legend for the first time. It also explains how Robin Hood and Friar Tuck joined forces, although Friar Tuck appears as an already-adopted member of the merry men in the earlier play Robin Hood and the Sheriff. It is interesting to note a piece of scholarly Victorian censorship in the work of F.J. Childs, who organized and catalogued these plays along with the early balladic materials on Robin Hood. While he includes the play Robin Hood and the Friar as a descendant of the ballad Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar, he does not include the last ten lines of the play, calling them "ten lines of ribaldry, which have no pertinency to the traditional Robin Hood and the Friar."¹⁰⁷ Presumably, he did this because the "lady free" does not appear in the corresponding ballad. However, I believe that her presence in the dramatic piece makes it all the more important because this play ties Robin Hood into the context of the May games and especially the morris dance, in which the figures of the woman and the lustful friar were stock characters. The play provides an essential link in the evolution of the Robin Hood legend because

¹⁰⁶Peter Stallybrass, "Drunk with the Cup of Liberty: Robin Hood, the Carnavalesque and the Rhetoric of Violence in Early Modern England," Semiotica, 54 (1985) 120-121.

¹⁰⁷Child, 128.

her relationship with Robin was a necessary precondition for the next important stage... [the legend's] transformation into a subject suitable for literary treatment at the hands of Tudor poets and playwrights.¹⁰⁸

The second half of Copland's play for May Day is known as Robin Hood and the Potter. While there is no break between the plays in the original text, the facts that Robin Hood and the Friar ends with a dance, and that Robin Hood and the Potter begins with the call for attention (Lysten to my mery men all/and hark what I shall say),¹⁰⁹ indicate that this is a new play. Robin tells of a potter who wears flowers on his head and refuses to pay passage; both these facts link back to the May games, when the "king" for a day exacted a fee for the sale of paper liveries, and the flower wreaths were emblems of spring-time celebrations. Little John refuses to meddle with the potter for twenty pounds, but wagers with Robin for that amount that Robin will force the potter to pay. Robin meets the potter's boy Jack, and proceeds to break all of his pots, calling the potter a cuckold. The potter enters, calling Robin a whoreson and bests Robin in wittiness by revealing that he was never married. He then offers to sell everything he owns and give Robin half, but still refuses to pay a penny's passage. The play ends with Robin summoning Little John to help him fight, and is apparently incomplete. Although there are no women in this text, the use of the word

¹⁰⁸Dobson and Taylor, 42.

¹⁰⁹Wiles, 76.

whoreson, and the cuckold joke still place it in the context of ribaldry (i.e., the only way to avoid being cuckolded is to avoid marriage). Symbolically, the potter is a figure of sterility. He is cuckolded by Robin's attack on his pots, which can be seen as the carnivalesque attack on old age and the destruction of boundaries. Additionally, the pots' suggestion of the female sexual anatomy reinforces Robin's role as cuckold, and provide the 'last laugh' in the cuckolding joke: the potter is no more immune to cuckolding than the married man.

These two plays are the direct descendants of early ballads of the same names. They are considered to be the work of the same author, and have been criticized for their primitive and often forced rhyming patterns. Wiles suggests that they were produced to be included with the publication of the Gest, in order to feed a public appetite for Robin Hood materials.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰Wiles, 39.

CHAPTER FIVE: SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND LATER DEVELOPMENTS

Social Implications

The Robin Hood legend has been interpreted in many ways; over the centuries it has come to hold some appeal for nearly every audience. I will try to show how the development of the legend, and especially of the treatment how its female characters in dramatic representations, were affected by its changing audience.

Initially, Marian the Summer Queen was a figure of chivalric, courtly romance.

Evidence for the greater antiquity of the courtly Marian is provided by her etymology, for she seems to derive her name from the Marian who is mistress to Robin in the pastourelles.¹¹¹

He adds that "the election of a May Lady to serve alongside the Lord acted as a control and enforced the enactment of courteous, chaste behaviour."¹¹² Marian's character underwent a drastic change as she was absorbed into the rough-and-tumble world of the Robin Hood legend: the origins of Robin Hood are far from courtly. In the earliest ballads, he is no more than an outlaw and a yeoman. His lowly status and

¹¹¹Wiles, 21.

¹¹²Wiles, 56.

his conflict with established authority added an element of social unrest to the May Games:

In a conventional King game, the real world can either be forgotten or imitated, so that temporarily but completely, the real world vanishes; but in a May game of Robin Hood, the real world is incorporated into the mythical world, and a measure of overt defiance becomes, inescapably, an ingredient in the game.¹¹³

Naturally enough, the Marion of these May Games was a figure with political overtones. "In so far as Marion was confined to a particular festival, she probably remained largely a figure of licenced misrule".¹¹⁴ However, Marion inspired political action and her role was often used as a cover and legitimizer for discontented rioters.

The unruly Marion of carnival was used to legitimate political action by the powerless.... In France, the name of Marion was to become indissolubly linked to revolution.... The revolutionary figure of Marianne was constructed within the symbolic language of the carnivalesque unruly woman.¹¹⁵

Although in the medieval context, the Robin Hood game could be used as "an institutionalized outlet to release communal tensions stemming from rigidities within the social structure,"¹¹⁶ it was seen in a different light by the

¹¹³Wiles, 20.

¹¹⁴Stallybrass, 123.

¹¹⁵Stallybrass, 124.

¹¹⁶Sally Beth MacLean, "King Games and Robin Hood: Play and Profit at Kingston upon Thames," Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama, 29 (1986-87) 88.

Elizabethans. As the Church was no longer the universal institution that it had been, interference with it became a political statement after the Reformation. In a famous sermon of April 12, 1549,

Bishop Hugh Latimer complained about his inability to preach in a certain town church; he had met with the response that: "Sir thys is a busye day wyth us, we can not heare you, it is Robyn Hoode's day. The parish are gone a brode to gather for Robyn Hoode."¹¹⁷

To mock and interfere with the Church was also to challenge the secular power structure; gathering for Robin Hood's liveries became an activity which directly threatened the power of the state.

The Scottish government sought first to contain the game by regulating its financial operations, then in 1555 passed a repressive statute:

That in times coming no manner of person be chosen Robert Hood, nor Little John, Abbot of Unreason, Queen of May nor otherwise.¹¹⁸

Robin Hood represented a dangerous sort of social mobility because he removed social barriers, especially as illustrated in his traditional conflict with the Sheriff of Nottingham. In terms of power he was "a commoner elected to the title Lord... the enemy of aristocratic power. Politically subversive readings became increasingly plausible."¹¹⁹ The

¹¹⁷Dobson and Taylor, 39.

¹¹⁸Wiles, 28.

¹¹⁹Wiles, 57.

nobility did not view the popularity of this figure kindly.

Sir Richard Morison... made the following complaint to Henry VIII in 1536: "In the summer commonly upon the holy days in most places of your realm there be plays of Robin Hood, Maid Marian, Friar Tuck: wherein, besides the lewdness and ribaldry that there is opened to the people, disobedience also to your officers is taught whilst these good bloods go about to take from the Sheriff of Nottingham one that for offending the laws should have suffered execution."¹²⁰

King Henry VIII, however, had his own interests in Robin Hood. In 1505, between the 23 and 31 of May, the Household Books of King Henry VII record payment "to the players at Kingeston toward the bilding of the church stiple" MacLean says

it is reasonable to deduce that the Kingston players performed some version of the Summer Lord ceremony or a Robin Hood play for Henry VII, as no other type of play is mentioned in the accounts of these years.¹²¹

One would assume that the visit made a big impression on the court, and on the future Henry VIII, if he were present at the time, for five years later in 1510 "King Henry's Maying took the form of entering his Queen's chamber with eleven of his nobles

"all appareled in short cotes of Kentish Kendal, with hodes on their heddes and hosen of the same, every one of them his bowes and arrowes, and a sword and bucklar, like outlaws or Robyn Hode's men." Five years later, (in May 1515) the King and Queen were entertained at Shooter's Hill on the way to Greenwich by 200 yeomen 'clothed all in grene' under the leadership of a 'Robyn Hode', who invited them 'into the grene wood, and se how the outlawes lyve.' After a venison breakfast in a bower served

¹²⁰Wiles, 53.

¹²¹MacLean, "Kingston upon Thames", 87.

by the outlaws (in reality the King's own yeomen), the royal party was met by the Ladies May and Flora together with their companion Ladies Humidity, Vert, Vegetave, Plesaunce and Sweet Odour.¹²²

E.K. Chambers says of these incidents: "Obviously, the pastime has degenerated in another direction. It has become learned, allegorical and pseudo-classic."¹²³ The form which the Robin Hood legend took depended upon the sort of audience who consumed it. In rural village festivals, the representation was bawdy, violent and anti-establishment; however, a strain of the legend which was moving toward the courtly ideals was also in use, as King Henry VIII's revels demonstrate.

The response to the threatening qualities of the medieval carnivalesque Robin Hood was a flurry of materials about him which subtly altered the way his character came across. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were a changing world, one that was becoming more socially mobile, and consequently one that was very much aware of the fragility of the hierarchy. Stallybrass says:

Customary rights were pushed aside in the hegemony of the property rights of the bourgeois individual.... The figure of Robin Hood was transmuted into the sylvan reveller of urban wish fulfilment.¹²⁴

The response was to convert the legend into an acceptable form in order to defuse the tensions which its medieval form

¹²²Dobson and Taylor, 42.

¹²³Chambers, Medieval Stage, 180.

¹²⁴Stallybrass, 129.

brought to the surface. While Robin retained his status as outlaw, he changed from a ribald yeoman into a dispossessed nobleman. Later portrayals are of a kinder, gentler Robin Hood; one who does not chop heads off and give ladies of questionable virtue away; and most importantly, one whose ancient quarrel with the Sheriff is played down in favour of his greater loyalty to the King or explained by the obvious villainy of the sheriff. Robin Hood changes from an anti-authoritarian outlaw to a romantic, almost knightly figure who respects all of the conventions of the courtly lover. Of course, the treatment of the women in the later Robin Hood plays changes dramatically.

The Courtly Tradition and Later Developments

At a first glimpse, the fragment of the play George A Green, the Pinner of Wakefield¹²⁵ seems extremely similar to the early Robin Hood plays. Like them, this play is based on another of the ballads of Robin Hood's exploits: Robin Hood and the Jolly Pinder of Wakefield. The first surviving copy of this ballad dates from the mid-seventeenth century, but it is accepted as at least a century older. The play was printed in 1599, but the first performance was recorded before that, in 1593. The "pinner" or "pinder" character of George was a well-known figure at the turn of the 16th and early 17th century, and characterizations always emphasized his qualities

¹²⁵See appendix nine for the complete text.

of strength, honesty and loyalty to the King.

Like the earlier Robin Hood plays, George A Green, the Pinner of Wakefield revolves around physical combat. George takes on and defeats Scarlet, Much, and then Robin Hood himself. In a second similarity to the older plays, Robin Hood offers George employment after George defeats him, saying: "George, wilt thou forsake Wakefield," echoing his earlier offer to the friar: "How sayest thou freier wilt thou be my man?" However, the similarity ends there. Robin does not offer George a "lady free"; instead, he calls the woman "my Marian" and she remains with Robin as a part of his train. The Pinner welcomes Robin Hood and Maid Marian on an almost-equal basis, and invites them both, and then the rest of the entourage for a meal. Although Marian again does not get the chance to speak in this play, she is named, and is treated more in the fashion of a wife or a partner than as a lewd piece of chattel. Finally, there is the most obvious difference in this play: the addition of George's love-scene with Beatrice. Each time that George and Beatrice address each other, they use the word "love". They are identified as lovers, rather than as a conventionally matched married couple, by Beatrice's revelation that she has left her father and her home in Bradford for George's love. Her presence places this play in the context of an innocent pastoral romance. After this brief love scene, George leaps to her defence and is compared by Scarlet to a "champion to a King."

Robin Hood also calls him "the stoutest champion that ever I laid hands upon." It is clear that George is a worthy opponent for Robin Hood, possessed of knightly qualities. After each has tried the other, Robin Hood can offer the princely sum of forty crowns for George's services, and George in turn swears an oath of fealty to Robin: "next to King Edward art thou liefe to me." Robin Hood has changed from an outlaw to a beloved and respected authority figure. This play is important to the Robin Hood legend because it is the first placement of Robin Hood in King Edward's reign. It is also important symbolically because Robin promises George two coats of livery each year. In the ballad which inspired the play, the coats are described as one green and one brown. David Wiles suggests that Robin is the force that moves the changing seasons from the brown of sterile winter to the green of the spring-time with which he is always associated. Finally, George A Green, the Pinner of Wakefield is important because it shows an evolution in both Robin's character and in the way that women are treated, in which Robin assumes nobler and more authoritarian qualities, and in which the women are quiet, passive objects of love, rather than rowdy disturbers of the peace.

In the next piece of Robin Hood drama, Peele's Edward I¹²⁶, the process of Robin Hood's ennoblement continues. In

¹²⁶See appendix ten for the piece of text which is discussed above.

the section of the play which is included, the prince Lluellen flees to the mountain and stages an impromptu play by taking the role of Robin Hood; his friar becomes Friar Tuck, his men become the merry men, and his beloved Elinor becomes Maid Marian. The play-within-a-play structure mimics what by then must have seemed like the old-fashioned innocence of the May Games. Lluellen says "I'll be Master of Misrule, I'll be Robin Hood." His rival Mortimer enters and takes advantage of the game by becoming the Potter. The ironies of the double roles give this play a sophisticated edge. The friar reveals that he is indeed lustful, saying "a little serves a friar's lust," and the Mortimer/Potter figure says "While Robin walk with Little John, the Friar will lick his Marian/ So will the Potter if he can." In this sense, they try to summon up the image of the old Marian, the "lady free." Lluellen/Robin Hood again walks away, leaving the friar to dance the "old dance" with Maid Marian. However, Peele soon corrects the Friar and Potter for their impertinence by foiling their plans with the return of their leader. The lady herself behaves as a model of restraint by making garlands in Robin's absence, and by preferring the Friar's Creed to a (potentially lewd) song. She behaves in a very conventional manner when the Potter interrupts the Friar's attempted seduction by asking the Friar, "Where are we now and you play not the man?" In this case, "the man" is the chivalric man who is obliged to arise to protect his lady's honour. Lluellen returns, ensures that

the combatants are evenly matched and then obliges them to punish each other, cooling the Friar's lusts and schooling the Potter. In this play, Robin Hood is a prince in disguise, an enforcer of justice and chastity. The old Marian, the "trul of trust," is replaced by a noble princess in the role of Marian; those who would try to bring back the old Marian are punished for their uncourteous behaviour. Elinor hearkens back to the original courtly May-Queen, who waits in the bower for her Robin, rather than to the carnivalesque caricature of the "disorderly woman."

Peele's play is clearly based upon a memory of folk practices, according to which the Summer Lord would erect a bower as the palace for his Lady or Queen."¹²⁷

Edward I is an important step in the history of Robin Hood drama because it reaffirms our knowledge of the very early May festivals, and it also demonstrates the direction that later interpretations of Robin Hood would take.

Anthony Munday's pair of plays The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington, and The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington marked a crucial turn in Robin Hood's career as a legendary figure.

No English writer has ever handled the Robin Hood legend in a more high-handed and cavalier fashion than Anthony Munday. Possibly the view that the forest outlaw was in reality an unjustly dispossessed nobleman had already gained some currency, but it was Munday who first made Robin

¹²⁷Wiles, 20.

socially acceptable.¹²⁸

The section which is included is the death scene from The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington.¹²⁹ In it, Robin praises Matilda, who is both chaste and his wife, saying, "Chaiste maid Matilda Countess of account/ Chase with thy bright eyes all these clouds of woe." He then swears the Queen, Matilda's former enemy to "a mother be/ To faire Matilda's chastitie." The scene ends with his will, and instructions for his burial below the abbey wall at Wakefield, a cross at his breast and his sword at his side, in the image of a holy crusading knight. Even in this brief scene, we have a glimpse of a very different Robin Hood: pious, chaste and noble. Dobson and Taylor say of this scene,

Munday's representation of Robin Hood's lingering death in the odour of sanctity differs radically with all ballad accounts of the outlaw hero's demise.¹³⁰

The Robin of this play is not merely a prince playing at being Robin Hood; he is genuinely both an earl and the outlaw Robin Hood.

Munday displays an obsession with social status that is characteristic of his age.... [It is] marked by an overt concern for morality that is quite alien to the spirit of the past"¹³¹

¹²⁸Dobson and Taylor, 44.

¹²⁹See appendix eleven for the piece of text which is discussed above.

¹³⁰Dobson and Taylor, 222.

¹³¹Wiles, 49-50.

Marian is replaced with Matilda. The original Matilda appears to have been "a semi-legendary figure persecuted by King John"¹³², and Munday's use of her name probably derives from Michael Drayton's poem "Matilda, the Faire and Chaste Daughter of Lord Fitzwater." Undoubtedly one of Munday's reasons for naming his heroine Matilda was the avoidance of the marred character associated with the name of Maid Marian. Matilda is the mirror opposite of the "trul of trust:" where Marian is famed for her lewd sexuality, Matilda is praised as a paragon of chastity.

Munday's plays show the final stage in the evolution of Robin Hood's character and of the ladies involved in his legend. Feminism, of course, had very little to do with the change from disorderly woman to chaste Matilda; they remain the opposite ends of the same scale, "sinful Eve" against "Virgin Mary". Like Marian, Matilda is also traded around like a pawn, has little to say, and is judged primarily on the basis of her sexuality. It is fair to say that the Robin Hood legend took no great leaps toward women's rights. However, a close study of the female characters of the legend, their portrayals and treatments by the other characters, can help to reveal the overall pattern of development of the Robin Hood legend.

The original May-Queen seems to have been treated in a courteous and gallant manner. As the descendant of an ancient

¹³²Dobson and Taylor, 222.

fertility rite, and the leader of a carnival-like festival in which hierarchical roles were reversed and relaxed, she was temporarily allowed to be the "woman on top". As the festivals grew to include Robin Hood and the morris dance, Marian was displaced, first to the role of a Queen to Robin Hood's Summer-King, then to a clownish figure who caricatured the frightening quality of female lust. When the social implications of the Robin Hood festivals became too alarming, the legend was cleaned up, and along with Robin Hood, Marion became a romanticized paragon of virtue. We see her now as an idealized figure, both free in the sense that she lives in the forest, outside social boundaries; yet law-abiding, in the sense that she follows what are termed "traditional" expectations about sexuality and power, despite her freedom.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

The study of the roles of women in folk drama is linked with the study of folk drama itself: the changing roles of women reflect social and historical changes which affected folk drama in many ways. While it is a frustrating field due to the sparse and corrupted nature of its texts, it can also be a most enlightening field. Folk drama is production without premeditation; it was not designed by, or for a specific person. Any individual example of folk drama incorporates a melange of materials of all historical periods, from antiquity until the time that it was recorded. In one case, "a boy in modern women's dress stepped forth- 'Here comes I, a Suffragette.'"¹³³ Thus, the women's roles in these plays bear elements of many influences. First, and most obviously, the "female" character is a fertility symbol. In many cases, her presence in the play is only explainable by this idea, as she appears to fill no other function, yet continually appears. In a few plays, her role as fertility symbol is enlarged so that she is more like a charm: her presence or actions are required so that the magical functions of the play, especially the Cure, will work.

¹³³Alford, 12.

If one explores beyond the background of ritual magic, the treatment of "female" characters in folk drama, as displayed in the Robin Hood plays, becomes fuller. Maid Marian's character had social implications of rebellion and role reversal which have been softened with time's passage. The early Robin Hood plays demonstrate that folk drama has been absorbing materials from the "outside" world for centuries. It is folly to rely on the analysis of these texts to derive some "primal" or "original" text for the final word. However, the following generalizations can be made:

First, the "female" roles in folk drama are not so much indicative of the lives of real women of any time period as they are of male impressions about women.

Second, the primary focus of these roles is on fertility, (women as equivalent to reproduction) and their next most important concern is with power and social roles (women as "lower stratum", threatening to override normal structures).

Finally, the female roles in all of the folk-plays studied were played by men as comedy. Their humour is the rich, renewing laughter of the carnivalesque which derives from the violation of boundaries. Rather than holding women up to ridicule, these roles functioned to demonstrate the attitudes about women held by the society that consumed these plays.

Appendix One: Hero-Combat

Greenodd, Lancashire Pace-Egg Version

Source: Alex Helm, The English Mummers' Play,
(Suffolk, D.S. Brewer-Boydell & Brewer
Ltd., 1981), 67-69.

Stir up the fire and strike a light,
And see the noble act tonight.
If you don't believe a word I say,
Step in King George, and clear the way.

King George steps forward and says

In steps I, King George, a noble champion bold, 5
With my right hand and glittering sword
I won three crowns of gold.

Enter Prince of Paradise

In steps I, Prince of Paradise, Black Morocco King,
My sword and buckle by my side and through the woods I 10
ring,
And through the woods I ring.
I'm brave, lads, and that's what makes us good;
And through thy dearest body, George, I'll draw thy precious
blood.

King George

If thou be of Jinnus' race
I'll make blood sprinkle down thy face;
If thou be made of noble blood, 15
I'll make it run like Noah's flood.

Prince of Paradise

Black I am, and black I be,
Lately come from from Africa;
Africa's my dwelling-place,
And now I'll fight thee face to face. 20

They fight and Prince falls

Molly Masket

Oh, George! Oh, George! What hast thou done?
Thou's gone and slain my only son,
My only son, my only heir!
Cans't thou not see him bleeding there?

King George

He challenged me to fight, and why should I deny? 25
 I'll cut his body in four parts and make his buttons fly.
 I've heard of doctors far and near,
 I've heard of one in Spain,
 I'm sure if he was here he'd bring
 That dead man to life again. 30

Takes out his purse

I'll give five, ten, fifteen, twenty-five pounds for a doctor.
 Is there not one to be had?

Dr. Brown

Yes! In steps I, old Jackie Brown,
 The best old doctor in this town.

King George

How came you to be a doctor? 35

Dr. Brown

By my travels.

King George

How far did you travel?

Dr. Brown

From Hip-tip-to, Tallyantic Ocean,
 Ninety degrees below bottom,
 Where I saw houses built of rounds of beef, slated with
 pancakes; 40
 Roasted pig running up and down the street
 With knives and forks in their teeth
 Crying, 'Here's a living! Who'll die?'
 Last night, yesterday morning,
 About three o'clock in the afternoon, 45
 As I was going through St. Paul's churchyard,
 The very dead arose, crying, 'Doctor! Doctor! Give me a box of
 your ever-failing pills.
 It's a pity a man like me should ever die'.
 When I was going through town this morning I saw a dead dog
 jump up.
 It bit a man's leg and made his stocking bleed. 50

King George

Any further?

Dr. Brown

Yes, a little

King George

How far?

Dr. Brown

From my grandmother's bed to the stairhead,
From the stairhead to the chair leg,
From the chair leg to the three corner cupboard
Where they kept the bread and cheese,
Which makes any man grow fat and lusty.

55

King George

I am not talking about fat.

Dr. Brown

Neither am I talking about lean.

60

King George

What are you talking about?

Dr. Brown

What I can cure.

King George

What can you cure?

Dr. Brown

Ipsy-pipsy, palsy and the gout,
The plague within and the plague without.
If there's nineteen devils in that man
I'm sure to drive one-and-twenty out.

65

King George

Drive them out!

Dr. Brown

Here I aly down my gold watch,
Points to half past hundred and forty four. 70
I also have a little bottle in my inside, outside, rightside,
leftside, waistcoat pocket, which my grandmother gave me
three days after she died, saying, 'Take this, it'll
bring any dead man to life again'.

King George

Bring that dead man to life again.

75

Doctor gives Prince a dose

Dr. Brown

Here, Jack, take a drop of this bottle,
Let it run down thy throttle,
Rise up, Bold Slash, and fight again.

Hunchback, raising a leg of the dead man

As green as grass, and as cold as brass.
This man's never stirred a limb yet, doctor.

80

Dr. Brown
Perhaps my silly old wife's given me the wrong bottle.

Molly Masket
Thou's a limestone!

Dr. Brown
Then perhaps it's my mistake.

Produces another bottle
Here, Jack, take a drop of this my nip-nap,
Let it run down thy thip-thap;
Rise up, Bold Slash, and fight again.

85

Prince of Paradise rises

Prince of Paradise
Oh! my back!

Dr. Brown
What's amiss with thy back?

Prince of Paradise
My back is bound,
My sword is sound
I'll have King George another round.

90

They fight again briefly

Dr. Brown
Stop, stop these swords without delay,
And fight again another day.

Song
So the first to come in is old Tossopot, you see
A jolly old fellow in every degree;
He wears a top hat and he wears a pig tail,
And all his delights is in drinking mulled ale.
Fol de la, fol de la,
Fol de diddle de dom day.

95

In comes I that never came yet
Great head and little wit.
If my wit be ever so small,
Me and Pompey'll wallop you all.

100

So the next that comes in is old Molly, you see,
She's a jolly old lassie as ever you see;
She's gold and she's silver and copper in store,
And by coming pace-egging she hopes to get more.

105

In comes I, old Molly Masket,

Under my arm I carry my basket.
In my basket I carry my eggs, 110
With my eggs I carry my brass,
And I think myself a jolly old lass.

So the next that comes in is Lord Nelson, you see,
With a bunch of blue ribbons right down to his knee,
A star on his breast like silver does shine, 115
And he hopes you will have a good pace-egging time.

So the next that comes in is a jolly Jack Tar,
Who fought with Lord Nelson during the last war;
He's fresh from the sea, old England to view,
And he joins in pace-egging with this jolly crew. 120

So the next to come in is a soldier, you see,
Who's fought against the Frenchmen in a far country.
He's a sword by his side wherever he goes,
To teach all young lasses so and so.

So the next to come in is poor Paddy from Cork; 125
He hails from ould Ireland, he comes to seek work;
He's his scyth on his back and he comes to work hay,
And then he's off back to ould Erin again.

Here's two or three jolly boys all in a row,
We've come a-pace-egging as you all well know. 130
Spare us not eggs and small beer, and you needn't fear
That you'll see us again till this time next year.

Ladies and gentlemen sit by the fire,
Put your hand in your pocket for all you desire.
Put your hand in your pocket and take out your purse, 135
And give us a trifle, you'll be nothing worse.

Appendix Two: Sword Dance

Bellerby, North Riding of Yorkshire

Source: Alex Helm, The English Mummers' Play,
(Suffolk, D.S. Brewer-Boydell & Brewer
Ltd., 1981), 93-96.

1st Clown (walking round in a ring)

Gentlemen and ladies, I have sprung from a noble knight;
I have come here to spill my blood for old England's right;
Old England's right and a free goodwill;
Gentlemen and ladies, I'll sing be mesel'.

Sings

Oh, there isn't a family 5
That can compare to mine,
My father he was hanged
For stealing of three swine.
O my father he was hanged,
And my mother was drowned in a well; 10
Isn't I a bonny chuck
To be living by mesel'?

2nd Clown (spoken)

Rumble, rumble, here my brave lads
And give us leave to sport,
For on this ground I mean to resort, 15
Resort and play - show you many rhymes.
Gentlemen and ladies, this is Chris-a-mas time.
Cris-a-mas comes but once a year,
When it comes it brings good cheer.
Roast beef, bull beef, apple pie, 20
With very small shares for you and I, Bess.

Turns and taps Bess on the chest with stick.

So mind, brave lads, what I do say;
My name is Bold Hector, I've come to clear the way;
Hector, Hector, from Dulberry Bush,
The devil's own sister-in-law clothed in lamb's wool. 25
Our king stands waiting on this ground (*pointing to the king
with his stick*)
He swears and tears he will be in
To teach me of my skill.
He is some silly fool I vow.
He will say more in the burning of an inch of candle 30

That he will perform in ten times ten pounds burning out

The Clown walks about during the next part

King

Hold, Hector, hold. Shall I wound thee on the leg,
Or wilt thou fall donw on thy knees and beg?

2nd Clown

No. Neither for my hand nor my van;
Thousands I have slain, 35
And here I've travelled to set old England right again.

King

I'm the King of the Conquerers and here I do advance.

2nd Clown

And I the ragged clown and I've come to see thee dance.

King

Dance? Thou admits to see a king dance?
Dance? I am a king that's highly known. 40
I'll be very sorry to be offended by a saucy fellow, ragged
clown.

2nd Clown

Hearty good fellow, art thou a king?
Wasn't thou stealing swine last night?

King

Stealing swine?

2nd Clown

Tenting swine, perhaps I mean. 45

King

My blood is raise, I swear and vow
I've been the death of many a man,
And I'll be the death of thou.
Young men draw your shavers, and quit this scoundrel from my
sight;
For if I stand to prate with him, he'll stand to prate with me
all night. 50

*From this point until the performance of the dance the words
are all sung*

1st Clown (walking about)

With your leave, kind gentlemen,
I've come to see a sport,
And likewise for to see
If a lady I can court.

	91
But the lasses nowadays They are so plaguey shy My clothing is so fine They will not come me nigh.	55
Our king is coming in Dressed in his grand array, He'll call his young men in By one, by two, by three.	60
<i>Goes to one side.</i>	
<i>King (walking round in a circle)</i> Spectators, silence keep, And you will plainly see, I'll call these young men in Dressed in their grand array By one, by two, or three.	65
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.	70
<i>2nd Dancer (following King, walking behind him in a circle)</i> 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	75
<i>King</i> If thou wilt act thee part And wil not from me flee I'll call these young men in By one, by two or three.	
Oh, the next is Mr. Stout As you will understand; As good a swordsman he is As ever took sword in hand.	80
<i>3rd Dancer (following 2nd Dancer)</i> My valour has been tried Through city, town, and field; I never met the man That yet could make ye yield.	85
<i>King (walking round in a circle)</i> O the next is Mr. Wild Who has travelled many a mile; I'm afraid the worst of all The lasses he'll beguile.	90

4th Dancer (following 3rd Dancer)
 Although I've travelled the world
 Not for any wrong;
 It is for my false love
 Because from me she's gone. 95

King
 O the next he is a prince,
 He is a squire's son,
 I'm afraid he's lost his love
 Because from me she's gone.

5th Dancer (following 4th Dancer)
 Although I be too young, 100
 I've money for to roam (*or, rove*);
 I'll freely spend it all
 Before I'll lose my love.

King
 Then in comes last of all,
 Mount Zion is his name; 105
 He's a worthy gentleman
 And by birth of noble fame.

6th Dancer (following 5th Dancer)
 My father's a metal man
 And a tinker too by trade;
 He never stopped one hole, 110
 But two for it he made.

1st Clown (running after them)
 Now, I'm the last of all
 My name is Captain Tom.
 If you've got fifty girls,
 I'll kiss them every one. 115

2nd Clown
 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'.

King
 So you see us all go round, 120
 Think of us what you will.
 Music, strike up and play
 A tune, just what you will.

The Dance follows. At the end of the Dance, Bessie comes forward and stands in the middle of the dancers, they getting into hilt and point position and walking round.

King (sings)

Our lady she comes in,
She looks both pale and wan; 125
She's got a long beard on,
Just like a collier's man.

Dancers make Lock and hang it round Bessie's neck.

Just now I'm going to die,
As you can plainly see;
These six fine glittering swords 130
Will soon put an end to me.
Farewell unto you all,
And my old father here,
Farewell unto you all
And my old grannie dear. 135

Dancers draw swords and Bessie falls down and lies flat on her back. The Dancers continue marching around.

King (sings)

Our lady she is dead,
And on the ground she's laid;
We must all suffer for this,
Young men, I'm sore afraid.

2nd Dancer (sings)

I'm sure it's none of I 140
That did this awful crime;
It's the man that follows me,
He drew his sword so fine.

3rd, 4th and 5th Dancers sing in turn

I'm sure it's none of I
That did this awful crime; 145
It's the man that follows me,
I caught him in the act.

6th Dancer (sings)

Since I the last of all
And I the blame must take,
Down on my bended knee 150
For pardon I must pray (*bends knee*)

Yet I not daunted be,
Although I be the last,
Our king had done this crime
And laid the blame on me. 155

King (sings)

Cheer up, my lively lads,
And be of courage bold;
We'll carry her to the church

And bury her in the mould.

Dancers stand still. The following words are all spoken.

2nd Dancer

Bury her, bury her, where do you mean to bury her, and all these people standing around? How do you mean to escape a halter? Send for a doctor out of van. I've heard tell of a doctor famed far and near; if he'd been here he would've brought this queen to life again. 160

King

Send for a doctor.

2nd Dancer

Doctor, doctor, twenty pounds for a doctor. 165

Doctor (one of the clowns)

Here am I.

King

Hearty good fello, art thou a doctor?

Doctor

Yes, I am a doctor.

King

What is thy name doctor?

Doctor

My name is Evan Lovan rantantiser to a boarding master taught by twelve universals, fried balsam upon balsam made of dead man's fat, rosin and goose grease - that's my name, doctor.

King

And a very curious name, doctor.

Doctor

Aye, Ah think so.

King

How far hast thou travelled, doctor? 175

Doctor

Travelled? I've travelled through Itty Titty, where there is neither house, land, nor city; wooden churches, leather bells, and black puddings for bell-ropes.

King

Is that all, doctor?

Doctor

No. I've travelled through England, Ireland, Scotland, France
and Spain. 180
And I've travelled to bring this old queen to life again.

King

Well done, doctor. What can you cure, doctor?

Doctor

Cure? I can cure the itch, the stitch, the ague, and the
gout. If there be nineteen devils in, I can bring one-and-
twenty out.

I can cure the whiskey jade, the smiling maid, 185
I can make the paper soak to crack, sir.
I can make the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, or the lame to
walk or fly, sir.

King

Is that all, doctor?

Doctor

No. I can cure the maiden with a red pale face, I can do the
like to a hare. Any maiden wishing to cure her
sweetheart, I can tell her how she shall win. I can
cure, aye, boys, aye. I once cured my old grandmother
who had been dead two year, after which she lived three
and brought forth two children. 190

King

Well done, doctor. What's thy fee doctor?

Doctor

My fee is twenty pounds.

King

Far too much, doctor. 195

Doctor

Well, as it's thee, I'll tkae nineteen pounds, nineteen
shillings, and eleven pence three farthings.

King

Fall to work, doctor. I will see thee paid, or unpaid, in the
morning.

Doctor (going away)

Paid, the devil. One bird in the hand is worth two in the
bush. I've got my own old wife at home been dead a fortnight
- a far better job than that. 200

King

Fall to work doctor, I'll see thee paid out of my own pocket.

Doctor comes back

Doctor

How did this old queen happen her misfortune?

King

She tumbled upstairs and broke her neck.

Doctor

Well done, stupid. I've heard of falling down. 205

King

Well, down, I mean.

Doctor (goes to Bessie's feet and lifts them up)

Her neck is broken.

Goes to her head and raises it.

Her things are out of joint and she is filling with wind causing her bowels to be in an uproar. She is in a very bad state indeed, sir. But I've got some pills in my pocket that will cure all ills, time present, time gone, and time to come. If that won't do, I'll scour her over and up again till the spirit moves; 210

Doctor rubs Bessie's stomach and she arches her back

and I've got a little bottle in my pocket called oakum-pokum pennyroyal.

Open thy niff-naff and I'll let it down thy chiff-chaff.

Rise, old girl, and sing. 215

Bessie (sings standing up)

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 220

And alive unto this day

So we will have a dance

And the doctor must seek his pay.

Dance performed as before, Bessie and clowns fooling about. The performers stand in two lines, facing audience, the two clowns in front with Bessie in the middle of them.

All sing

Gentry and sentry all stand in a row.

I mean you no manner of ill; 225

But I wish you sweethearts

And our Clown a new coat,

So, ladies, I bid you farewell,
So, ladies, I bid you farewell.

Appendix Three: Wooing Play

Plumtree, Nottinghamshire

Source: Alex Helm, The English Mummers' Play,
(Suffolk, D.S. Brewer-Boydell & Brewer
Ltd., 1981), 14-16.

Tommy

Good evening ladies and gentlemen all,
It's Plough Monday makes Tommy so bold as to call;
I hope you won't be offended
In what I have to say,
For I've a lot more boys and girls to come this way, 5
At your consent they's all come in.

*Tommy wears old white shirt with patches on. To hat
whitewashed one side.*

Enter Sergeant and says

In comes I, the Recruiting Sergeant;
I've arrived here just now
I've had orders from the King
To list all jolly fellows 10
That follow horse, cart or plough.
All these are to advance,
The more I hear the fiddle play,
The better I can dance.

Fool

You dance? 15

Sergeant

I can either dance, sing or say.

Fool

If you begin to dance, sing or say
I shall quickly march away.

Sergeant - then sings

Come ye lads that is bound for 'listing,
'List and do not be afraid, 20
That old hat shall be trimmed with ribbon
Likewise kiss the pretty fair maid.

Farmer's Man with whip

In comes I, the farmer's man,
 Don't you see the whip in my hand?
 As I go forth to plough the land 25
 I turn it upside-down.
 I go so straight from end to end,
 And to my horses I attend
 Gee! Whoa! Back!

Lady (dressed smart)
 Behold the lady bright and fair, 30
 Sweet fortune and sweet charms,
 So unfortunately I've been thrown away
 Right out of my true love's arms.
 He swears if I don't wed with him,
 As you all understand, 35
 He'll 'list him for a soldier,
 And go in some foreign land.

Sergeant
 Do you want to 'list, young man?

Farmer's Man
 Yes, to my sorrow.

Sergeant
 In your hand I'll place one shilling, 40
 And on your hat I'll pin this ribbon.
 Ten bright guineas shall be your bounty,
 If along with me you'll go.

Farmer's Man
 Dash to my wig if I'll grieve any longer
 For that proud and saucy lass. 45

Lady (sings)
 But since my love has 'listed
 And joined the volunteers,
 I neither mean to sigh for him
 Nor shed one single tear. 50
 I'll get another sweetheart,
 And along with him I'll go.

Tommy
 Have ye any love for me, my pretty maid?

Lady
 Yes, and to my honour.

Tommy
 When shall be our wedding day?

Lady

Tommy, love, tomorrow.

Tommy

We'll make banns and we'll shake hands,
And we'll get wed tomorrow.

Old Dame Jane

In comes I, Old Dame Jane,
With a neck as long as a crane.
Once I was a blooming girl
Now I'm a downright old maid.

60

(to Tommy)

Now I've caught you,
Long have I sought you.
Pray, Tommy, take your baby.

Tommy

My baby Jane? It's not a bit like me;
What is it, a lad or a boy?

65

Jane

A lad.

Tommy

Mine's all boys. Take it and swear it to the town's pump.

Beelzebub

In comes I, Beelzebub.

*(Wears old sack stuffed with straw; carrying sock stuffed,
tied on end of stick)*

On my shoulder I carry me club,
In my hand a whit leather frying pan,
Don't you think I'm a funny old man?
Is there any dame that dares stand before me?

70

Jane

Yes, I dare.

My head is made of iron;
My body's made of steel;
My hands and shins are knuckle bone,
And you can't make me feel.

75

Beelzebub

If your head is made of iron,
And your body's made of steel,
Your hands and shins are knuckle bone,
I can make ye feel.
I'll slish you and slash you as small as a fly,
And sen you to Jamaica to make mince-pies.

80

Hits her with club. She falls down.

Tommy

O Belzy, O Belzy, what hast thou done? 85
Thou's killed old Jane and her only son.
Five pound for a doctor.

Beelzebub

Ten to stop away.

Tommy

Fifteen to come. O, doctor, you must come to a case like this.

Doctor (enters)

In comes I, the Doctor. 90

Tommy

You, a doctor?

Doctor

Yes, me a doctor.

Tommy

How became you to be a doctor?

Doctor

By my travels.

Tommy

Where have you travelled? 95

Doctor

England, Ireland, France and Spain,
Now come back to cure the diseases of England again.

Tommy

What diseases can you cure?

Doctor

Hipsy, pipsy, palsy gout, 100
Pains within and pains without,
Draw a leg and set a tooth,
And almost restore dead men to life again.
I'll tell ye a little anydote as I did last week about a
fortnight ago. I cured an old lady, she tumbled upstairs
with half a teapot full of flour and I set that. 105

Tommy

Very clever doctor. You'd better try your experiment on this
old girl.

Doctor

So I will. I'll feel of the old girl's pulse.

Feels back of heel

Tommy

Pulse lie there, doctor?

Doctor

Yes. Where would you feel?

Tommy

Back of the neck; softest part about a man. 110

Doctor carries a bottle with coloured water

This old lady's not dead; she wants a bottle of my medicine.

Makes to give her a drink

And a box of my pills, take one tonight, and two in the morning, and swallow the box at dinner time. If the box don't cure you, the lid will.

This old lady's not dead, only in a trance
Come rise up old girl, and let's have a dance. 115

If you can't dance, we can sing,
So rise her up and let begin.

Good master and good mistress,
As you sit round your fire,
Remember us poor ploughboys 120
Who plough through mud and mire,
The mire it is so very deep
The water runs so clear,
We thank you for civility and a jug of your best beer. 125

Tommy

Steady with that beer, Belzy! I've nothing in this box yet.

Beelzebub

What do you want in the box?

Tommy

A lump of pork pie. I'm as bad hungry as you are dry. I can eat as big as a brick and our old Dame can eat a piece as big as a gravestone.

Clown goes out first. As they go, they sing

Good master and good mistress 130

You see our fool has gone;

We take it in our business to follow him along.

Good night and thank you very much.

Appendix Four: Hero-Combat Play incorporating Robin Hood
ballad

Kempsford, Gloucestershire

Source: R.J.E. Tiddy, The Mummers' Play, (Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1923) 249-253.

Enter Arthur Abland

Prologue

A room, a room brave gallants all
Please give me room to rhyme
This merry, merry Christmas time
Activity of youth activity of age
Such life was never known or played upon the stage.
I am a bold Tanner from Nottinghamshire 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.

(Enter Robin Hood)

Arthur continues

As soon as Robin Hood did me spy
Some sport he thought for to make
He bid me fan he bid me stan
And he bid me thus for to spake.

Robin

Who art thou bold fellow who begin so bold high here
Stroth to be brief thou lookest a thief
Come to steal the King's deer.
I'm the keeper over this forest and the King put me in trust
To mind the red deer
That run here and there
So stop thee good fellow I must.

Arthur

If thou beist keeper over this forest
An hast any great command

I don't care a peg for thou looking so big
So mend theeself where thee can.

Robin

Let us measure staves bold fellow
Before we begin our play
I won't have my staff half a foot longer than thine
Else that will come to foul play.

Arthur

My staff is eight foot and a half
And growed straight on a tree
An eight foot staff will knock down a calf
And I'm sure it will knock down thee. *(they fight)*

Robin

Oh hold our hands, oh hold our hands
And let our quarrels fall,
We shall beat our bones all to a meat
And get no quaintance at all
If thee will leave thy tanning trade
And bide in Greenwood with me,
My name's Robin Hood and I swear by the wood
I will give thee both gold and fee.

Arthur

Pray tell me where is Little John! In queen so plain I heard
his loud voice. By his mother's side he is our kinsman dear.

(Enter Little John)

Little John

What is the matter master I pray you tell,
You stand with your staff all in your hand
I'm 'fraid things aren't well.

Robin

The man that bid me stand is the tanner by my side;
He's a bonny blade
And a master by trade
And he swears he'll tan my hide.

Little John

Thee be recommended
If fate thee can do
If thee be so big and stout
The and I'll have a bout
And thee shall tan my hide too.

(They fight and Little John knocks Arthur down.)

Robin

A thousand pounds I'll give
Arthur Abland's life to save.

(Enter Doctor on a man's back)

Doctor

Hold my horse, Jack.

Tom Pinney *(from without)*

Yes Sir, I've got him fast by the tail.

Doctor

Rack him up with a faggot and fuzz, and give him a bucket of
ashes to drink.

Tom Pinney *(from without)*

I'll do as I be minded.

Doctor *(walking around rattling a pill-box)*

See Sirs, here comes this noble doctor

Both stout and good

And with my hand I'll stop his blood.

Robin

What country dost thou come from?

Doctor

From France, from Spain, from Rome I come

The furthest part of Christendom.

Robin

What canst thee cure?

Doctor

All sorts of diseases

Just what my pill pleases.

The heart corn and the smart corn

The itch, the stitch

Pains within and pains without

Both the palsy and the gout.

I don't go about like these half re-rafty Doctors pay ther
kill nor cure. I goes about for the good of the
country. I'd sooner kill than cure.

Bring me an old woman that's been 70 years dead and 70
years... and 70 years laid in her grave if she will rise up
and crack one of my silver pills I'll be bound to maintain her
life to save. I cured old John Juggler's wife. Her had the
rheumatiz in all four of her elbows, her died and I cured her
afterwards and I'll cure this man if he ain't too far gone.

(gives a pill to Arthur)

Robin

What else can'st thee cure?

Doctor

Horses cows sheeps and pigs

And so walk in Mr. Cleverlegs.

Tom Pinney (from without)
What's the matter with my legs more than thee own?

Doctor
Walk in Tom Pinney.

(Enter Tom Pinney)
Tom Pinney
Tom Pinney's not my name.

Doctor
What is't thee name?

Tom Pinney
Master Tom Pinney, a man of great fame
Doesn't know my name?
Here come's I as can't be hit
With my great head and little wit.
My head's so big, my wit's so small
I'm come to endeavor to please you all.

Robin
What can'st thee cure?

Tom Pinney
A magpie with a tooth ache.

Robin
How d'ye do that?

Tom Pinney
Cut off's head and throw his body in the ditch.

Robin
Ah what country dost thee come from?

Tom Pinney
I comes from the country where they knits horse shoes and
spins steel bars and thatches pigsties with pancakes.
Have you got any?

(Sings)
Christmas comes but once a year
Then I have a very good share
Beef plum pudding and strong beer.

(Speaks)
Last Xmas day I turned the spit
I burnt my fingers and felt it hit-
The spark jumped over the table
And the frying pan beat the ladle,
Aye aye says the gridiron
What can't you two agree.
Bring 'em to me, I'm the Justice of the Peace

And I'll make 'em agree.
Bring 'em to me, I'm the Justice of the Peace
And I'll make 'em agree.
Old Mother Harding killed a fat hog
Made black puddings enough to choke her dog-
Hung 'em high upon the pin
The fat ran out and the maggots crawled in
Hee-haw! Pudding and string.

Doctor

Billows, if you please Missus.

(Takes a pair of bellows from the fire place and blows into Arthur's mouth)

Rise up bold Arthur Abland and give the Ladies and Gentlemen
a dance before you go away.

(Arthur Abland rises and they all dance around while Tom Pinney sings to his fiddle)

So here I am a rub a dub dub
On my shoulder I carries my club
In my hand an empty can.
Don't you think I'm a jolly old man.
Green sleeves and yellow leaves
Now my boys we'll dance apace
Hump back and hairy wig
Now my boys we'll dance a jig.
(Exeunt omnes, dancing.)

Appendix Five: Robin Hood and the Sheriff

Manuscript Version

Source: R.B. Dobson and J. Taylor, Rymes of Robin Hood (London: Heinemann, 1976) 205.

Syr Sheryffe for thy sake / Robyn Hode wull y take
I wyll the gyffe golde and fee / This be heste thou holde me
Robyn Hode ffayre and fre / Undre this lynde shote we
With the shote y wyll / Alle thy lustes to full fyll
Have at the pryke / And y cleve the styke
Late us caste the stone / I graunte well be Seynt John
Late us caste the exaltre / Have a foote be fore the
Syr knyght ye have a falle / And I the Robyn qwyte shall
Owte on the I blowe myn horne / Hit ware better be un borne
Lat us fyght at ottraunce / He that fleth god gyfe hym
myschaunce

Now I have the maystry here / Off I smite this sory swyre
This knyghtys clothis wolle I were / And in my hode his hede
woll bear

Welle mete felowe myn / What herst thou of gode Robyn
Robyn Hode and his menye / With the sheryffe takyn be
Sette on foote with gode wyll / And the sheryffe wull we kyll
Be holde wele ffrere Tuke / Howe he doth his bowe pluke
Yeld yow syrs to the sheryffe / Or elles shall your bowes
clyffe

Now we be bounden all in same / ffrere (T)uck this is no game
Come thou forth thou fals outlawe / Thou shall (be) hangyde
and y draw

Now allas what shall we doo / we (m)oste to the prysone goo
Opyn the yatis faste anon / An(d la)te theis thevys ynne gon

Appendix Six: Robin Hood and the Sheriff

Conjectural Reconstruction #1

Source: R.B. Dobson and J. Taylor, Rymes of Robin Hood (London: Heinemann, 1976) 205-207.

SCENE ONE

Enter the Sheriff of Nottingham and a knight (?Sir Guy of Gisborne)

Knight Syr Sheryffe for thy sake
Robyn Hode wull y take

Sheriff I wyll the gyffe golde and fee
This be heste thou holde me

The sheriff leaves and Robin Hood enters to be challenged by the knight.

Knight Robyn Hode ffayre and fre
Undre this lynde shote we

Robin With the shote y wyll
Alle thy lustes to full fyll

Knight Have at the pryke

Robin And y cleve the styke! *Robin wins*

Knight Late us caste the stone

Robin I graunte well be Seynt John! *Robin wins again*

Knight Late us caste the exaltre

Robin Have a foote be fore the! *They wrestle; Robin wins*
Syr knyght ye have a falle.

Knight And I the Robyn qwyte shall;
Owte on the I blowe myn horne

Robin Hit ware better be un borne:

Lat us fyght at ottraunce

He that fleth god gyfe hym myschaunce!

They fight again: the knight is killed.

Robin Now I have the maystry here

Off I smite this sory swyre *Cuts off knight's head*

This knyghtys clothis wolle I were

And in my hode his hede woll bear

Robin disguises himself as the knight.

SCENE TWO

In a different part of the forest, the Sheriff is attacking Robin's men. As one of the outlaws (?Little John) approaches the scene of the conflict, he meets a companion (?Scarlet) in flight.

L. John Welle mete felowe myn
 What herst thou of gode Robyn?
 Scarlet Robyn Hode and his menye
 With the sheryffe takyn be.
 L. John Sette on foote with gode wyll
 And the sheryffe wull we kyll.

The two outlaws watch the fight still going on in the distance.

L. John Be holde wele ffrere Tuke
 Howe he doth his bowe pluke!

The Sheriff and his men enter, leading Friar Tuck and the other outlaws as prisoners: he addresses Little John and Scarlet.

Sheriff Yeld yow syrs to the sheryffe
 Or elles shall your bowes clyffe
Little John and Scarlet surrender to the Sheriff.

L. John Now we be bounden all in same
 Frere Tuke, this is no game.

Sheriff Come thou forth thou fals outlawe
 Thou shall be hangyde and y-draw.

F. Tuck Now allas what shall we doo
 we moste to the prysone goo.

Sheriff Obyn the yatis faste anon
 And late theis thevys ynne gon.

In the sequel the disguised Robin Hood enters and rescues his men - no doubt after yet another fight.

Appendix Seven: Robin Hood and the Sheriff

Conjectural Reconstruction #2

Source: David Wiles, The Early Plays of Robin Hood (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer - Boydell & Brewer, 1981) 34.

PLAY ONE

A linden tree serves to indicate that the scene is set in the greenwood.

Knight

Syr Sheryffe, for thy sake
Robyn Hode wull Y take.

Sheriff

I wyll the gyffe golde and fee
This be-heste thou holde me.

The Shriff withdraws. Robin Hood presents himself

Knight

Robyn Hode, ffayre and fre,
Undre this lynde shote we.

Robin Hood

With the shote Y wyll
Alle thy lustes to full-fyll.
Have at the pryke.

Knight

And Y cleve the styke.

They compete at archery

Robin Hood

Late us caste the stone.

Knight

I graunte well, be Seynt John.

They compete at stone throwing.

Robin Hood

Late us caste the exaltre.

Knight
Have a foote be-fore the.

They wrestle; Robin throws the knight.

Robin Hood
Syr Knyght, ye have a falle.

Knight
And I the, Robyn, qwyte shall.

The knight throws Robin

Robin Hood
Owte on the, I blowe myn horne.

Robin blows his horn to summon help.

Knight
Hit ware better be un-borne.

Robin Hood
Lat us fyght at ottraunce.
He that fleth, God gyfe hym myschaunce.

*They fight with swords in mortal combat. Robin's men arrive.
Robin defeats the knight, perhaps not without assistance.*

Robin Hood
Now I have the maystry here,
Off I smyte this sory swyre.

He performs the execution.

Robin Hood
This knyghtys clothis wolle I were,
And in my hode his hede woll bere.

He dons the knight's head-gear and regalia. Holding aloft his green hood in which the head is supposedly wrapped, he processes, followed by his company.

Play Two

Robin Hood and several of his company are tied up and shut inside a makeshift wooden prison. John and Tuck are still free.

Little John

Welle mete, felowe myn.
 What herst thou of gode Robyn?

Friar Tuck
 Robyn Hode and his menye
 With the Sheryff taken be.

Little John
 Sette on foote with gode wyll,
 And the Sheryffe wull we kyll.

Friar Tuck
 Be-holde wele Frere Tuke
 Howe he doth his bowe pluke.

Friar Tuck demonstrates his skill as an archer. Little John responds to the challenge. They do not see the sheriff and his men, also armed with bows, approaching them.

Sheriff
 Yeld yow, syrs, to the Sheryffe,
 Or els your bowes clyffe.

After a fight, the two outlaws are bound and dragged toward the prison.

Little John
 Now we be bounden alle in same.
 Frere Tuke, this is no game.

Having captured all the outlaws, the Sheriff opens the prison gate and orders Robin to come forth.

Sheriff
 Come thou forth, thou fals outlawe.
 Thou shal be hanged and y-drawe.

Having loosened their bonds inside the prison, Robin and his men catch the Sheriff unawares. After a fight, they bind the Sheriff and his men.

Sheriff
 Nowe allas, what shall we doo?
 We moste to the prysone goo.

Robin Hood
 Opyn the yatis faste anon,
 And late theis thevys ynne gon.

The Sheriff and his men are pushed inside the prison and locked up.

Appendix Eight: The Play of Robin Hood, very proper to be played in May-games

First printed by W. Copland in his edition of the Gest in 1562. There are no stage directions in the original.

Source: David Wiles, The Early Plays of Robin Hood (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer - Boydell & Brewer, 1981) 34.

Here beginneth the playe of Robyn Hode, verye proper to be played in Maye games.

Robin Hood and his company present themselves to the spectators.

Robin Hood

Now stand ye forth my mery men all
and harke what I shall say
Of and aduenture I shal you tell
the which befell this other day
as I went by the hygh way with
a stout frere I met
and a quarter staffe in his hande
Lyghtely to me he lept
and style he bade me stande
There were strypes two or three
But I can not tell who had the worse
But well I wote the horeson lepte within me
and fro me he toke my purse
Is there any of my mery men all
That to that frere wyll go
and bryng him to me forth withall whether he wyll or no

Lytell John

yes mayster I make god auowe
To that frer wyll I go
and bryng him to you whether he wyl or no

Friar Tuck in his turn comes forward to address the spectators. He is accompanied by three players dressed as dogs.

Fryer tucke

Deus hic, deus hic, god be here
Is this not a holy worde for a frere

God saue all this company
 But am I not a iolly fryer
 For I can shote both farre and nere
 and handle the sworde and buckler
 alnd this quarter staffe also
 If I met with a gentyman or yeman
 I am not a frayde to loke hym vpon
 Nor boldly with him to carpe
 If he speake any wordes to me
 He shall haue strypes two or thre
 That shall make his body smarte
 But maister to shew you the matter
 wherefore and why I am come hither
 In fayth I wyl not spare
 I am come to seke a good yeman
 In Bernisdale men sai is his habitacion
 His name is Robyn hode
 and if that he be better man than I
 His seruant wyl I be and serue him truely
 But if that I be better man than he
 By me troth my knaue shall he be
 and leade these dogges all three

Robin seizes the friar by the throat

Robyn hode
 yelde the fryer in thy longe cote

Fryer tucke
 I beshrew thy hart knaue, thou hurtest my throt

Robyn hode
 I trowe fryer thou beginnest to dote
 who make the so malapert and so bolde
 To come into this forest here
 amonge my falowe dere

Fryer
 Go louse the ragged knaue
 If thou make mani wordes I wil geue the on the eare
 Though I be but a poore fryer
 To seke Robyn hode I am com here
 And to him my hart to breke

Robyn hode
 Thou lousy frer what wouldest thou wyth hym
 He neuer loued fryer nor none of freiers kyn

Fryer
 Auant ye ragged knaue
 Or ye shall haue on the skynne

Robyn hode

Of all the men in the morning thou art the worst
 To mete with the I haue no lust
 For he that meteth a frere or a fox in the morning
 To spede ill that day he standeth in ieopardy
 Therefore I had leuer mete with the deuill of hell
 Fryer I tell the as I thinke
 Then mete with a fryer or a fox in a morning
 Or I drynke

Fryer

Auant thou ragged knaue this is but a mockm
 If you make mani words you shal haue a knock

Robyn hode

Harke frere what I say here
 Ouer this water thou shalt me bere
 The brydge is borne away

Fryer

To saye naye I wyll not
 To let thine oth it were great pitite and sin
 But vpon a fryers backe and haue euen in

Robyn hode

Nay haue ouer

Robin climbs onto the Friar's back.

Fryer

Now am I frere within and thou Robin without
 To lay the here I haue no great doubt

The Friar throws Robin into the water. There is evidently a printer's error in the next line.

Now are thou Robyn without, and I frere within
 Lye ther knaue chose whether thou wilte sinke or swym

Robyn hode

why thou lowsy frere what hast thou done

Fryer

mary set a knaue ouer the shone

Robyn hode

Therefore thou aby

Fryer

why wylt thou fyght a plucke

Robyn hode

and god send me good lucke

Fryer

Than haue a stroke for fryer tucke

They fight with staves

Robyn hode

Holde the hande frere and here me speke

Fryer

Saye on ragged knaue
me semyth ye begyn to swete

Robyn hode

In this forest I haue a hounde
I wyl not giue him for a hundreth pound
Geue me leue my horne to blowe
That my hounde may knowe

Fryer

Blowe on ragged knaue without any doubte
Vntyll bothe thine eyes starte out

Robin summons his company.

Here be a sorte of ragged knaues come in
Clothed all in kendale grene
And to the thay take their way nowe

Robyn hode

Peraduenture they do so

Fryer

I gaue the leue to blowe at thy wyll
Now giue me leue to whistell my fyll

Robyn hode

whystell frere euyl mote thou fare
Vn tyll bothe thyne eyes starte

The Friar summons his dogs

Fryer

Now cut and bause
Brenge forth the clubbes and staues
And downe with those ragged knaues

The outlaws fight the dogs.

Robyn hode

How sayest thou frere wylt thou be my man

To do me the best seruyse thou can
 Thou shalt haue both golde and fee
 and also here is a Lady free
The man playing the Marian presents himself.
 I wyll geue her vnto the
 And her chapplayn I the make
 To serue her for my sake

Fryer

Here is an huckle duckle an inch aboue the buckle
 she is a trul of trust, to serue a frier at his lust
 a prycker a prauncer a terer of shetes
 a wagger of ballockes when other men slepes
 Go home ye knaues and lay crabbes in the fyre
 For my lady and I wil daunce in the mire for veri pure ioye

The Friar dances with the Marian. The play of 'Robin Hood and the Friar' ends at this point and the play of 'Robin Hood and the Potter' begins.

Robin Hood and his company present themselves.

Robyn hode

Lysten to my mery men all
 and harke what I shall say
 Of an aduenture I shall you tell
 that befell this other daye
 with a proude potter I met
 And a rose garlande on his head
 the floures of it shone maruaylouse freshe
 this seuen yere and more he hath vsed this waye
 yet was he never so curtayse a potter
 as one peny passage to paye
 Is there any of my mery men all
 That dare be so bolde
 to make the potter pay passage either siluer or golde

Lytell Iohn

Not I master for twenty pound redy tolde
 For there is not among vs al one
 that dare medle with that potter man for man
 I felt his handes not long agone
 But I had leuer ben here by the
 Therefore I knowe what he is
 Mete him when ye wil or mete him what ye shal
 He is as propre a man as euer you medle withal

Robyn hode

I will lai with the litel Iohn .xx. pound so read
 If I wyth that potter mete
 I wil make him pay passage maugre his head

Lettell Iohn

I consente therto so eate I bread
 If he pay passage maugre his head
 Twenti pound shall ye haue of me for your mede

They withdraw. Jack comes forward.

The potters boye Iacke
 Out alas that euer I sawe this daye
 For I am clene out of my waye
 From Notygham towne
 If I hye me not the faster
 Or I come there the market wel be done

Robyn hode
 Let me se are the pottes hole and sound

He takes a pot and drops it on the ground.

Iacke
 yea meister but they will not breake the ground

Robyn hode
 I wil them breke for the cuckold thi maisters sake
 And if they will not breake the grounde
 thou shalt haue thre pence for a pound

He drops more pots.

Iacke
 Out alas what haue ye done
 If my maister come he will breke your crown

The Potter comes forward.

the potter
 why thou horeson art thou here yet
 thou shouldest haue bene at market

Iacke
 I met with robin hode a good yeman
 He hat broken my pottes
 And called you kuckold by your name

The potter
 Thou mayst be a gentyلمان so god me saue
 But thou semest a naughty knaue
 Thou callest me cuckolde by my name
 and I swere by God and seynt Iohn
 wyfe had I neuer none
 This cannot I denye
 But if thou be a good felowe
 I wil sel mi horse mi harneis pottes and paniers to

Thou shalt haue the one halfe and I wil haue the other
 If thou be nor so content
 Thou shalt haue stripes if thou were my brother

Robyn hode

Harke potter what I shall say
 this seuen yere and more thou hast vsed this way
 yet were thou neuer so curteis to me
 As one penny passage to paye

the potter

why should I paye passage to thee

Robyn hode

For I am Robyn hode chiefe gouernoure
 Vnder the grene woode tree

the potter

the seuen yere haue I vsed this way vp and downe
 yet payed I passage to no man
 Nor now I wyl not beginne to do the worst thou can

Robyn hode

passage shalt thou pai here vnder the green wode tre
 Or els thou shalt leue a wedded with me

the potter

If thou be a good felowe as men do the call
 Laye awaye thy bowe
 And take thy sword and buckeler in thy hande
 And se what shall befall

robin hode

Lyttle Iohn where are thou

Lytell

Here mayster I make god auowe
 I tolde you mayster so god me saue
 that you shoulde fynde the potter a knaue
 Holde your buckeler fast in your hand
 And I wyll styfly by you stande
 Ready for to fyghte
 Be the knaue neuer so stoute
 I shall rappe him on the snout
 And put hym to flyghte

The combat follows. The text ends at this point, apparently incomplete.

Thus endeth the play of
 Robyn Hode

Appendix Nine: George a Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield

Printed 1599, first recorded performance 1593.

Source: David Wiles, The Early Plays of Robin Hood,
(Cambridge: D.S. Brewer - Boydell and Brewer,
1981) 80-82

Enter George a Greene and Beatrice

George

Tell me, sweet love, how is thy mind content?
What, canst thou brook to live with George a Greene?

Beatrice

Oh George, how little pleasing are these words.
Came I from Bradford for love of thee
And left my father for so sweet a friend?
Here will I live until my life do end.

Enter Robin Hood and Marian and his train.

George

Happy I am to have so sweet a love.
But what are these come tracing here along?

Beatrice

Three men come striking though the corn,
My love.

George

Back again you foolish travellers,
For you are wrong and may not wend this way.

Robin Hood

That were great shame.
Now by my soul, proud sir,
We be three tall yeomen and thou are but one.
Come, we will forward in despite of him.

George

Leap the ditch, or I will make you skip.
What, cannot the highway serve your turn,
But you must make a path over the corn?

Robin

Why, art thou mad? Dar'st thou encounter three?
We are no babes, man. Look upon our limbs.

George

Sirrah, the biggest limbs have not the stoutest hearts.
 Were ye as good as Robin Hood and his three merry men,
 I'll drive ye back the same way that ye came.
 Be ye men, ye scorn to encounter me all at once;
 But be ye cowards, set upon me all three,
 And try the Pinner what he does perform.

Scarlet

Were thou as high in deeds
 As thou art haughty in words,
 Thou mightest be a champion for a king.
 But empty vessels have the loudest sounds,
 And cowards prattle more than men of worth.

George

Sirrah, darest thou try me?

Scarlet

Aye, sirrah, that I dare.

They fight, and George a Greene beats him.

Robin Hood

Come, sirrah, now to me. Spare me not,
 For I'll not spare thee.

George

Make no doubt, I will be as liberal to thee

They fight. Robin Hood stays.

Robin Hood

Stay George, for here I do protest
 Thou art the stoutest champion that ever I laid
 Hands upon.

George

Soft you, sir. By your leave, you lie.
 You never yet laid hands on me.

Robin Hood

George, will thou forsake Wakefield,
 And go with me?
 Two liveries I will give thee every year,
 And forty crowns shall be thy fee.

George

Why, who art thou?

Robin Hood

Why, Robin Hood.
 I am come hither with my Marian
 And these my yeomen for to visit thee.

George

Robin Hood, next to King Edward

Art thou lief to me.

Welcome, sweet Robin; welcome, Maid Marian;

And welcome, you my friends.

Will you to my poor house?

You shall have wafer cakes your fill,

A piece of beef hung up since Martlemas,

Mutton and veal. If this like you not,

Take that you find, or that youbring, for me.

Robin Hood

Godamercies, good George,

I'll be thy guest today.

George

Robin, therein thou honourest me.

I'll lead the way.

Exeunt omnes.

Appendix Ten: Peele's Edward I

Printed 1593, first performed not earlier than 1590.

Source: David Wiles, The Early Plays of Robin Hood,
(Cambridge: D.S. Brewer - Boydell and Brewer,
1981) 82-87

The game begins after Lluellen has failed to drive the English from Wales. He flees to the mountains, accompanied by Rice ap Meredith his cousin, by Elinor his betrothed, and by a Welsh friar.

Lluellen

Masters and friends, naked came we into the world, naked are we turned out of the good towns into the wilderness. Let me say, Mass! me thinks we are a handsome common-wealth, a handful of good fellows set a-sunning to dog on our own discretion. What say you sir? We are enough to keep a passage. Will you be ruled by me? We'll get the next day from Brecknock the book of "Robin Hood". The friar shall instruct us in his cause, and we'll even here fair and well - since the King hath put us amongst the discarding cards, and as it were turned us with deuces and treys out of the deck. Every man take his standing on Mannock Denny, and wander like irregulars up and down the wilderness. I'll be Master of Misrule, I'll be Robin Hood - that's once. Cousin Rice, thou shalt be Little John. And here's Friar David, as fit as a die for Friar Tuck. Now, my sweet Nell, if you will make up the mess with a good heart for Marian, and do well with Lluellen under the greenwood trees, with as good a will as in the good towns, why *plena est curia*.

Mortimer, who is also in love with Elinor, overhears the outlaws' preparations. When they have left to dress in green and build a cabin, he tells the audience of his plan to participate in the game...

Mortimer

Gentle Robin Hood,
You are not so well accompanied, I hope,
But if a potter comes to play his part,
You'll give him stripes or welcome, good or worse.
Go, Mortimer, and make their love holidays.
The King will take a common scuse of thee,
Who hath more men to attend than Mortimer.

Exit Mortimer

Enter Lluellen, Meredith, Friar, Elinor and their train. They are all clad in green, etc. Sing etc.: "Blithe and Bonny". The song ended, Lluellen speaketh:

Lluellen (as Robin Hood)
 Why, so I see, my mates of old,
 All were not lies that beldames told,
 Of Robin Hood and Little John,
 Friar Tuck and Maid Marian.

Friar
 Aye forsooth, master.

Lluellen (as Robin Hood)
 How well they couched in forest green,
 Frolic and lively withouten teen,
 And spent their day in game and glee...
 ... But what doth Little John devise?

Meredith (as Little John)
 That Robin Hood beware of spies -
 An aged saying and a true:
 Black will take no other hue.
 He that of old hath been thy foe
 Will die but will continue so.

Friar
 Oh master, whither shall we go?
 Doth any living creature know?

Lluellen (as Robin Hood)
 Rice and I will walk the round.
 Friar, see about the ground.

Enter Mortimer (disguised as the Potter)
 And spoil what prey is to be found.
 My love I leave within, in trust,
 Because I know thy dealing just.
 - Come, Potter, come and welcome too!
 Fare as we fare, and do as we do,
 Nell, adieu, we go for news.

Exit Lluellen and Meredith

Friar
 (*Aside.*) A little serves a Friar's lust,
 When *nolens volens* aside I must,
 Master, at all that you refuse.

Mortimer (as Potter)

Such a porter would I choose
 When I mean to blind a scuse.
 While Robin walk with Little John,
 The Friar will lick his Marian.
 So will the Potter if he can.

Elinor (as Maid Marian)
Calling from the inner stage, which serves as her "cabin" or bower, to the Friar, who stands guarding the entrance:
 Now Friar, with your lord is gone
 And you and I are left alone,
 What can the Friar do or say
 To pass the weary time away?
 Weary, Got wot, poor wench, to thee
 That never thought these days to see.

Mortimer (as Potter)
(aside) Break, heart, and split mine eyes in twain.
 Never let me hear those words again.

Friar
 What can the Friar do or say
 To pass the weary time away?
(aside) More dare he do than he dare say
 Because he doubts to have away.

Elinor (as Maid Marian)
 Do somewhat, Friar, say or sing,
 That may to sorrows solace bring;
 And I meanwhile will garlands make.

Mortimer (as Potter)
(aside) Oh, Mortimer, were it for thy sake,
 A garland were the happiest stake
 That ever this hand unhappy drew.

Friar
 Mistress, shall I tell you true,
 I have a song - I learned it long ago -
 I wot not whether you'll like it well or no -
 'Tis short and sweet, but somewhat broiled before -
 Once let me sing it and I ask no more. *(Kneels before her)*

Elinor (as Maid Marian)
 What Friar, will you so indeed?
 Agrees it somewhat with your need?

Friar
 Why, mistress, shall I sing my Creed?

Elinor (as Maid Marian)
 That's the fitter of the two at need.

Mortimer (as Potter)

(aside) Oh, wench, how may'st thou hope to speed?
(The Friar sings the first notes of a love song.)

Friar

Oh mistress, out it goes.
 Look what comes next. The Friar throws.

Mortimer (as Potter)

(aside) Such a sitting, who ever saw -
 An eagle's bird of a jackdaw.

Elinor (as Maid Marian)

So sir, is this all?

Mortimer (as potter)

(Sings) Friar, a ditty
 Come late from the city
 To ask some pity
 Of this lass so pretty
 Some pity sweet mistress, I pray ye.

Elinor (as Maid Marian)

How now, Friar, where are we now and you play not the man?

Friar

Friend copesmate, you that came late from the city -
(sings) To ask some pity
 Of this lass so pretty
 In likeness of
 A doleful ditty
 Hang me if I do not pay ye.

Mortimer (as Potter)

Oh Friar, you grow choleric. Well, you'll have no man to
 court your mistress but yourself 0 on my word, I'll take you
 down a button-hole.

Friar

Ye talk, ye talk, child.

Enter Lluellen and Meredith

Lluellen (as Robin Hood)

'Tis well. Potter, you fight in a good quarrel.

(Meredith provides the two combatants with weapons.)

Meredith (as Little John)

Mass, this bald will hold. Let me see then, Friar.

Friar

Mine's for mone own turn, I warrant. Give him his tools.
 Rise and let's to it, but no change and if you love me. I

scorn the odds, I can tell you. See fair play, and you be gentlemen.

Lluellen (as Robin Hood)

Marry, shall we, Friar. Let us see, be their staves of a length? Good.

Mortimer and the Friar begin to fight. Lluellen calls a halt. So now let us deem of the matter, Friar and Potter, without more clatter...

The scene ends with the punishment of the two seducers. Lluellen and Meredith oblige Mortimer and the Friar to strike at each other with flails...

Lluellen (as Robin Hood)

Rice, every day thus shall it be:

We'll have a thrashing set among the friars, and he
That of these challengers lays on the slowest load,
Be thou at hand Rice, to gore him with thy goad.

Friar

Ah, Potter, Potter, the Friar may rue
That ever this day our quarrel he knew,
My pate addle, mine arms black and blue.

Mortimer (as Potter)

Ah, Friar, who may his fate's force eschew?
I think, Friar, you are prettily schooled.

Friar

And I think the Potter is handsomely cooled.

Appendix Eleven: The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon

From Act I, by Anthony Munday

Source: R.B. Dobson and J. Taylor, Rymes of Robin Hood,
(London: Heinemann, 1976) 228-229

King

Robin, wee see what wee are sad to see
Death, like a champion, treading downe thy life:
Yet in thy end, somewhat to comfort thee,
Wee freeley give to thy betrothed wife,
Beauteous and chast Matilda, all those lands,
Falne by thy folly to the Prior's hands,
And by his fault now forfeited to mee:
Earle Huntingdon, she shall thy Countesse bee;
And thy wight yeomen, they shall wend with mee
Against the faithlesse enemies of Christ.

Robin

Bring forth a beere, and cover it with greene;
That on my deathbed I may here sit downe.

A bier is brought in. He sits.

At Robin's buriall let no blacke be seene,
Let no hand give for him a mourning gowne;
For in his death, his king hath given him life
By this large gift, given to his maiden wife.
Chaste maid Matilda, Countesse of account,
Chase with thy bright eyes all these clouds of woe
From these faire cheekes; I pray thee, sweete, do so:
Thinke it is bootlesse folly to complaine
For that which never can be had againe.
Queene Elianor, you once were Matilda's foe;
Prince John, you long sought her unlawfull love;
Let dying Robin Hood intreat you both
To change those passions: Madame, turne your hate
To princely love: Prince John, convert your love
To vertuous passions, chast and moderate.
O, that your gracious right hands would infolde
Matilda's right hand, prisoned in my palme,
And sweare to do what Robin Hood desires!

Queen

I sweare I will; I will a mother be
To faire Matilda's life and chastitie.

John

When John sollicites chast Matilda's eares
 With lawlesse sutes, as he hath often done,
 Or offers to the altars of her eyes
 Lascivious poems, stuffed with vanities,
 He craves to see but short and sower daies,
 His death be like to Robin's he desires;
 His perjur'd body prove a poysoned prey
 For cowed monks and barefoote begging friers.

Robin

Inough, inough! Fitzwater, take your childe.
 My dying frost, which no sunnes heat can thawe,
 Closes the powers of all my outward parts:
 My freezing blood runnes backe unto my heart,
 Where it assists death, which it would resist:
 Only my love a little hinders death,
 For he beholds her eyes, and cannot smite;
 Then goe not yet, Matilda, stay a while.
 Frier, make speed, and list my latest will.

Matilda

O, let me look forever in thy eyes,
 And lay my warme breath to thy bloodlesse lips,
 If my sight can restraine death's tyrannies,
 Or keepe life's breath within thy bosome lockt.

Robin

Away, away!
 Forbeare, my love; all this is but delay.

Fitzwater

Come, maiden daughter, from my maiden sonne,
 And give him leave to do what must be done.

Robin

First, I bequeath my soule to all soules Saver,
 And will my bodie to be buried
 At Wakefiled, underneath the abbey wall;
 And in this order make my funerall.
 When I am dead, stretch me upon this beere:
 My beades and primer shall my pillowe bee;
 On this side lay my bowe, my good shafts here;
 Upon my breast the crosse, and underneath
 My trustie sword, thus fastned in the sheath.
 Let Warman's bodie at my feete be laid,
 Poore Warman, that in my defence did die.
 For holy dirges, sing me wodmen's songs,
 As ye to Wakefield walk with voices shrill.
 This for my selfe. My goods and plate I give
 Among my yeomen: them I do bestowe
 Upon my soveraigne, Richard. This is all.

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