

TRADITIONAL DRAMA STUDIES



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RITUAL AND VAUDEVILLE: THE DRAMATURGY OF THE ENGLISH FOLK PLAYS

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The study of traditional drama still seems to be finding it hard to focus on the phenomenon as a particular kind of performance. To scholars seeking their ritual origins, the texts of the plays were inconveniently modern and unceremonial, and were largely set aside, along with much of the action, to reveal that central and "original" Act, the fertility-bringing death-and-renouveau:

No matter how many words and scenes the ceremony accrues, loses, or juxtaposes, it is all no more than the water breaking, shifting and receding around the rock-like center of the action. It is this center of action that we must deal with if our study is to have any value.¹

Current scholarly trends, in an understandable reaction to the ritualist obsession with (parts of) the action, are in danger of neglecting it. One tendency, well represented by Michael Preston's computer-based studies, subjects the texts to systematisation and comparative analysis, say in the attempt to determine which speeches are traditional and which less so, or which belong to distinct regional traditions.² Another recent trend, in itself very welcome, focuses on the status and function of the plays in a social and cultural context. In such studies, for example Henry Glassie's researches into Ulster folk plays, registration of the manner of performance occurs, but is rather ancillary to a wider aim.³ I suggest that "traditional drama", whatever else we demand of it in terms of text and context, to be worthy of the name must be characterised by a traditional dramaturgy, which comprises both verbal and physical aspects.

By dramaturgy I mean the movements of the performers, their interaction — physical and verbal — with each other and with the spectators, in relation to organised space. In any tradition of drama, this complex of factors will display a particular character and configuration, marking the distinct dramaturgical mode

characterising that tradition, and Traditional Drama will have its own characteristic mode, facilitating its identification, and the study of its interaction with other traditions of drama. It is indeed a particular dramaturgy, distinct from other familiar types, which is heralded in the Presenter's formula:

Activity of youth
 Activity of Age,
 The like was never seen
 Upon a common stage.⁴

As understood here, the dramaturgy of the folk plays can be fully appreciated only by direct experience of them in performance. Nonetheless some broad dramaturgical features can be established by second-hand experience via texts and accounts, and I offer by way of illustration the following report of the Scandinavian Epiphany Play of the Three Kings and the Star, as performed in the late nineteenth century in Nykøbing, on the Danish island of Falster. Contemplation of a performance geographically distant and in content quite different from the familiar English types should provide the appropriate conditions for determining just what is traditional about the dramaturgy of traditional drama.

The Three Kings enter the house. One of them is black, the other two white; all three have white shirts over their other clothes, golden or multicoloured belts, and shoulder-pieces or shoulder-ribbons. One of the white figures has a white staff or rod in his hand. Sometimes the second white figure will have a movable golden star on a long pole, and the black figure swings a censer ... or carries a rattle, with which they will have heralded their approach outside. All three have golden crowns on their heads. As soon as they have entered the room, they move round in a circle, singing together:

Good evening, good evening, both man and woman,
 Both goodman and lady, boy and girl in here.
 May you all find happiness.

As they walk round during the song the circle is gradually made as large as space permits, forcing the spectators back against the walls. The song is continued by all three:

In Jerusalem town our Saviour was born.
 The three holy kings with gladness of heart

From their homes set off for Bethlehem town.
 They travelled that road so difficult and long,
 They went on that journey singing,
 To find Jesus in the narrow manger.

They stop singing in unison, and, still walking round, sing the following dialogues:

1st white king. Why are you such a black man?
 2nd white king. Why are you such a black man?
 black king. Because I come from the land of the Moors.
 white kings. Because he comes from the land of the Moors.
 black king. Why are you both so white?
 white kings. Why are you both so white?
 white kings. Because we come from Christendom.
 all three. Because they (we) come from Christendom.

Now they narrow the circle towards the middle of the room, and as they do so all three sing the beginning of the following song:

Sir Ebbesøn goes out to the woods,
 Sir Ebbesøn goes out to the woods;
 He cuts cudgels, some four or five,
 His wife's back must feel them;
 He cuts them long,
 He cuts them white,
 His frightened wife
 Must wear them out.

During the last two lines the black figure has fallen to his knees and the white figure with the staff strikes him with it, as he continues to walk round. Meanwhile the white figure with the star stands still a little outside the circle. The black figure sings alone, in a sobbing voice:

Ah, ah dear Sir, strike not so hard!
 Ah, never cause me this pain and wrong!
 I really don't mean to run away.

The white figure ceases his blows and replies, now joined by the second white figure circling round the black figure:

Now, since you fall humbly at my feet,
 And since you implore me with tears and remorse,
 I shall spare your life and blood,
 And you shall be a good wife to me.

The black figure rises and joins the circle, which is again extended to cover as much space as possible, while all three sing:

Sir Ebbesøn stands there bold and mild,
The wife gets up with courteous manner.
Then they both go to the wood,
Where they embrace lovingly with kisses and smiles,
And both in gladness wish for the same,
Delighted they linger, there is nothing wrong.

This concludes the performance proper. The singers stand still, and they are treated to what the house can offer by way of Christmas fare: fritters, nuts, juice, etc. Gifts are also put into their bag or box, whereupon they once more walk around singing:

And so we say goodbye to you all,
And so we wish you all farewell.
We wish you all a happy new year,
With vigour and health and happiness,
A son or a daughter a year from today,
A good quiet night, and many thanks;
A good quiet night!

During the last words they walk out of the room and leave the house.⁵

The Epiphany Play of the Three Kings and the Star is the only variety of folk drama with a widespread and sustained tradition in Scandinavia.⁶ Early references permit us to trace it back to the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries, in both Scandinavia and Germany, from whence it is believed to derive. One of our earliest glimpses of it is at the back of Pieter Bruegel's great pictorial almanac of seasonal festivities, "The Battle between Carneval and Lent" (1559), where the three kings with their star can just be seen emerging from a doorway, preceded by a drummer and a piper.⁷ It has been the subject of the inevitable scholarly controversy, some tracing its descent from the Epiphany liturgy, the *officium stellae*, others seeing it as the debris of a primitive mid-winter ritual, particular attention being paid to the blackened faces, the beating, and the star (=sun).⁸

Fortunately it is not the origin of the custom that concerns us here, but its mode of performance, and although the text of the play, an odd combination of an epiphany carol and a comic shrewtaming ballad, is quite unfamiliar to students of

English folk drama, the performance offers, in a conveniently extreme form, dramaturgical features which are paralleled in English — and other European — traditions. The dramaturgy of the Nykøbing performance may be best summed up as presentational, non-representational, and formal. It is non-representational in the sense that very little attempt is made to foster the illusion of a dramatic reality distinct from the immediate social reality in which the performance takes place. As in the case of the English folk plays, this is in part determined by the physical context of performance, which is the living-room of a house, with no stage separating players from spectators, and no scenery to create dramatic illusion. The stage is merely that part of the room which the performers manage to clear of the people who were there before, and in the case of the Danish play it is evident that the acting space changes in extent, so that a part of the floor which at one moment is "stage", at another is "auditorium".

This illusion-preventing physical contiguity between play and audience is matched by the positive presentation of the play as something offered to an audience of whom the players are explicitly aware:

Goddl awten, goddl awten, både mand og kvinde
både husbond og frue, dreng og pige her inde.

Such introductory presentations and greetings are a characteristic dramaturgical formula of many varieties of folk drama performed in the context of a house-to-house visit (many of which have evolved a specific Presenter figure to perform the task):

Goder aften härinne sa mängen i är
Bade unga och gamla ... (Three Kings Play, Halland, Sweden)

Ein schön guten Abend, eine glückselige Stund',
Wünsch ich Euch Allen aus Herzengrund.
(Sword Dance, Harzen, Germany)

Ich tret herein am Abend spat,
Un wünsch euch einen guten Tag.
(Paradise Play, Schärading, Austria)

I tretta i die Stuba wohl alzue fest,
I grueza mine Herra n'ond mine Gäst.
(Summer & Winter Play, Appenzell, Switzerland)⁹

They are matched by the formal conclusions, obeisances and farewells with which such performances often end. Any remaining barrier between performers and spectators is pierced when the former step forward to take the quête, or join for a moment the seasonal festivity of the household they are visiting.

The Danish play gestures towards representational dramaturgy in the costume of the performers, which is evidently royal and perhaps vaguely oriental, and legend is duly observed in giving one of them a black face. The action is most nearly dramatic in the behaviour of the figure representing Mrs. Ebbesøn, who kneels and speaks in a sobbing voice as she is cudgelled by her husband. But she retains the black face of the King of the Moors, her 'husband' beats her with what must have been his king's sceptre, and in general such realistic touches are overwhelmed by the non-representational character of the performance as a whole. The entire text is sung, 30 of its 45 lines by all three performers together. At only two points, in the discussion between the kings on their respective colours, and the exchange between Sir Ebbesøn and his wife, is there anything approaching a performance par personages. There is no indication that other parts of the text which invite dramatisation — say the embraces of the Ebbesøns at the end of their intermezzo — are accorded it. It is difficult to speak of any acting of roles; at various stages the performers are themselves (opening and concluding stanzas), the Three Kings, and hr. & fru Ebbesøn, with no sign of any corresponding alteration in their performance.

English traditional drama is equally presentational, with the plays framed by introductory and valedictory addresses to the audience, and this feature is reinforced by the habit of new characters of introducing themselves on their first appearance ("In comes I, St George"). Some English plays are accorded a rather more theatrical performance, with the characters dressed in part and hamming their lines, but there is an alternative convention in which the performers, rather than costumed, are "disguised", in straw, ribbons, or strips of paper, declaim their lines without dramatic intonation, and give only a token rendition of the action. The drift from one role to another noticed in the Danish play, obviously an obstacle to dramatic realism, can also be encountered in the English corpus, for example at West Woodhay, Berkshire, where the Presenter, Grandfather Christmas, is suddenly Bold Tanner, a role he sustains through two combats, at the end of which he "lies bleeding on the ground". As Presenter, however, he is needed to call for the Doctor, which he duly performs, rising from the ground without the benefit of a cure.¹⁰ This awkward alternation between parts may be due to a shortage of

performers, but the role-shift solution of the mummers is radically different to the technique of doubling resorted to by the early professional actors, who faced a similar problem. There the dramatists were careful to get an actor off stage before he reappeared in his new role, even if the exit was very lamely motivated: this degree of verisimilitude is maintained by the early theatre at almost any cost; the mummers seem unaware of the problem.¹¹

In the Danish play the lack of dramatic realism is accentuated by a second positive feature, the extreme formality of the patterns of movement in the performance. Here again the Danish text offers an extreme example of a feature common to much traditional drama, although the patterns need not always of course be the same. At the most realistic point of the performance, with Mrs. Ebbesøn sobbing on her knees, the figure who beats her continues to walk in the circular movement he has maintained since they came in (and probably beats her in time to the song). Indeed this circular movement completely dominates the dramaturgy of the performance. It is evidently used at the start to establish an acting-area (although why it should be expanded to press spectators against the walls is unclear); it is sustained throughout the Three Kings section and the Ebbesøn intermezzo, and is again resumed for the Farewell after the quête.

It is such formal patterns of movement which above all else characterise the dramaturgy of the folk plays, although they have been neglected in favour of the "central" death-and-revival, to which they are often seen as preliminary and concluding adjuncts.¹² But it must be significant that whatever the content of the plays on the level of text or plot — Hero Combat, Wooing, Summer and Winter, King Herod, Adam and Eve — their dramaturgy is marked by recurrent formal patterns of movement. The circular movement which dominated the Danish play is perhaps the most visible and striking of such patterns, but it is only one among several. In England it occurs as the opening movement of the Sword Dance Plays,¹³ but may also accompany the Presenter's opening speech in other types.¹⁴ Sometimes, as in the Midgley Pace-Egg Play, it persists from the beginning quite deep into the course of the action.¹⁵ Most often, perhaps, the circular walk is the final movement of the performance, accompanying or following the Farewell or quête, the circle eventually winding out of the performance area, in the manner of the Morris dance, as the performers make their exit.¹⁶

Formal movement may also characterise the confrontation and combat which occur in several types of play. In England, the Heroes, as they boast and fight, may

countermarch, clashing their swords as they pass each other, a procedure recorded from places as far apart as Alderley, Cheshire, and Chithurst, Sussex.¹⁷ Rather similar in its formalised strife is the Swiss Summer and Winter Play, where the figures representing the two seasons confront each other, exchanging insults and boasts. Each holds a club, which is employed, after each couplet, to give the opponent a blow on the shoulder, making a loud noise.¹⁸

Probably the most common formal pattern encountered internationally in traditional drama is the simple sequence (German Revue, or Reihespiel), in which a series of figures step forward one after the other, each delivering in turn a short speech, usually directed to the audience. In English tradition, this is most familiar in the Quête sequence which rounds off the Hero Combat Plays. A similar simple sequence occurs in the Italian Play of the Months (I Mesi), where twelve figures representing the months step forward one after another to deliver a short speech of self-description and characterisation.¹⁹ In the simplest cases, there is no interaction between the characters who thus present themselves, or between them and performers already on the stage. But the same serial pattern can be detected in scenes where some interaction does occur, for example in those English Wooing Plays of the Multiple Wooing type where a series of male figures — Eldest Son, Farming Man, Lawyer, Old Man, Fool — woo the Lady with brief speeches of self-praise, and in turn are rejected with brief replies from the Lady.²⁰ Here the pattern is focused, the wooers each interacting with a central figure, the Lady, and not with each other. Alternatively there may be a linear pattern of interaction through the series of speakers, for example in the Greatham Sword Dance Play where, after the slaying of the Fool, each swordsman in turn denies his responsibility and puts the blame on "him that comes after me".²¹

Both these sequence patterns feature in the folk play's familiar technique for getting new characters onto the acting area, the "calling on". The linear form can be glimpsed at the beginning of the Hero Combat Plays, where the Presenter introduces himself and calls on St. George, who in turn introduces himself and, in some instances, calls on the Turkish Knight.²² It can be more prominent in some versions, where the Quête figures, instead of stepping forward unannounced, call on each other in turn. The series can sometimes reach alarming proportions, as at Baronscourt, Co. Tyrone, where Prince Patrick (after his death-and-cure) calls on Jack Straw, who presents himself and calls on Lord Wren, who presents himself and calls on the Girl ... Big Head ... Belzebub ... Devil Doubt ... Master Man.²³ In view of their dramaturgy such plays might indeed best be termed calling-on sequences,

interrupted at some point by a hero combat and cure. This linear sequence is also encountered in Continental traditions, for example in the German Sword Dance Play, which opens with the calling-on series King of England — King of Saxony — King of Poland — King of Denmark — King of the Moors — and finally Schnortison, the Fool.²⁴ The device is designated by German scholars as the "Calling-on Chain" (Hereinrufungskette), since each figure calls on his successor, to distinguish it from the focusing form, the "Calling-on Stem" (Hereinrufungskamm), where one central figure (say, the Presenter), calls on all the others.²⁵ The latter device occurs at the start of the English Sword Dance Play, where (in conjunction with a circular movement) the King calls on the dancers in turn, providing a brief characterisation of each, to which each responds in turn with a short self-presentation.

These remarks and illustrations have been designed to confirm my assertion that a traditional drama must have a traditional dramaturgy, and analysis has revealed the mode of performance of the folk plays to be presentational, non-representational, and marked by formal patterns of movement and interaction. These features are as fundamental to traditional drama, I would assert, as formulas and incremental repetition are to the traditional ballad. This dramaturgy may conveniently and appropriately be termed "ritual" not because it derives from either the liturgy of the Church or the rites of primitive cult, but because it evinces a similarly limited relationship to the kind of performance normally associated with the term "drama" — usually taken to mean something mimetic, representational, involving informal, naturalistic patterns of movement and relationship.

Appreciation of the fundamental importance of ritual dramaturgy to traditional drama provides a number of useful perspectives for scholarship. Some of the points made in the discussion above, for example, suggest that the time may be ripe for a reassessment of the Quête sequence which concludes the Hero Combat Plays. As a simple series of speeches it is dramatically the least complex part of the play, and there has been some doubt about its status and purpose. Some suggest that the figures in the Quête once played a more prominent part in the action (i.e. the "dramatic" action), but having been displaced by St George & Co. found a last refuge in the Quête with only one speech to their names to remind them of former glory. Alex Helm even speculated that they may once have been the men whose job it was to form a circle round the acting area, and that it was found expedient to give them a speech each.²⁶ But from what has been said earlier, it is evident that the Quête needs no excuses: in terms of dramaturgy it is about the most traditional action traditional drama has to offer.

Of particular interest for the study of recent traditions is the significance of this dramaturgical awareness as a device for measuring the traditional status of problematic texts. I have argued at length elsewhere that the *Revesby Sword Play*, despite its unusual length and medley of parts, and despite its limited verbal parallels to other texts, all of which has prompted doubts about its traditional status, is nonetheless so thoroughly marked by the ritual dramaturgy of the folk plays that it is extremely difficult to see it as a non-traditional, "literary" production. Its structural and verbal idiosyncrasy in the context of the available corpus of plays must be due to the loss of eighteenth century or earlier traditions with which it would be compatible, and of which there are indeed some hints in the early records.²⁷

Interestingly enough, the equally problematic play from Ampleforth, Yorkshire, fares less well under such scrutiny. Its dialogue, like *Revesby's*, is only sporadically related to that of the other folk plays, and large chunks of it are lifted from William Congreve's *Love for Love*, 1695 (and, I suspect, from other, earlier stage plays). Neither of these circumstances, however, nor its length and division into five miscellaneous parts, is as decisive in assessing its traditional status as the substantial presence in its dramaturgy of a mode which is alien to traditional drama. This mode, manifestly theatrical, is characterised by explicitly motivated (even if poorly motivated) entrances ("Here's one that doth me follow"), exits ("My father calls, I must obey"), sustained dialogue, conversations with three active participants (all those on stage at the time), and a naturalistic interplay of words, gesture and movement:

King. (Goes up to the Queen) O, madam, do but hear me;
I've got something more to say.

Queen. (Gives him a prick) Don't stand so near hard by me;
Stand further off, I pray!

.....

(King goes up to the Queen again; she gives him a prick, and stamps her foot and says —)

Queen. Begone, thou piece of valour! ...²⁸

Evidently this play is a mixture of the traditional (it does have some calling-on sequences, for example) and the less traditional, and dramaturgical analysis offers a useful means of determining their proportions and interaction, and thus the exact status of the play as a whole.

My own interest in the dramaturgy of the folk plays is due to its potential value in the task of charting the earlier phases of tradition, in that dark period before the *Revesby Play*, before the chapbook texts, back beyond the point where the references to the now familiar types of folk drama in historical sources peter out in the early eighteenth century. In the absence of play texts and accounts of performances, the student of early English traditional drama is obliged to make an awkward sideways approach to it, via parallels in those other traditions of drama for which texts and accounts survive to us in greater quantities, for example the drama of the early professional theatre. This naturally presents serious problems of method and assessment. The initial problem is to decide whether a parallel is significant or merely fortuitous, and even in cases where the parallel is quite specific and persuasive, there remains the problem of determining the direction of the borrowing. The one thing we can assert with confidence about early English traditional drama is that it entered into a lively interaction with the popular professional theatre, with exchanges of material and techniques in both directions.

From all that has been said earlier, it is evident that the most difficult to assess are the purely verbal correspondences, striking and suggestive as these may be in themselves. The following snatches of dialogue from early stage plays all provoke direct reminiscences of lines or characteristic verbal habits of the folk plays familiar today:

Coomes. ... I have seen the world, and I know what belongs to causes, and the experience that I have, I thank God I have travelled for it.

Frank. Why, how far have ye travell'd for it?

Boy. From my master's house to the ale-house.

(Henry Porter, *The Two Angry Women of Abingdon*)

Will Cricket. ... as long as Hunks with the great head has been about to show his little wit in the second part of his paltry poetry...

(Wily Beguiled)

Marcus. O Titus, see, O see what thou hast done!

In a bad quarrel slain a virtuous son.

(Titus Andronicus)

Mouse. O, horrible, terrible! Was ever poor gentleman so scar'd out of his seven senses? ...

A was a little, low broad tall, narrow, big, well-favoured fellow.

(Mucedorus)

Damplay. Why so, my peremptory Jack?

Boy. My name is Iohn, indeed.

(The Magnetic Lady).²⁹

But are they borrowed from the folk plays, or are they comic verbal commonplaces of the popular theatre which have drifted into traditional drama via the travelling companies? They may even be catchphrases and verbal tricks common to much popular literature, since similar parallels are readily encountered in non-dramatic texts:

Fye vpon the Captaine Care,
And all thy bloddye band!
For thou hast slayne my eldest sonne,
The ayre of all my land.

(Child 178A, "Captain Car",
st.18, late 16th cent.)

Win up, win up, now Lord Ingram,
Rise up immediately,
That you and I the quarrel try,
Who gains the victory.

(Child 66E, "Lord Ingram and
Chiel Wyet", st.36, 19th cent.)

God keepe you out of the traitor's hands!
For you wott full litle what man hee is.

He is brasse within and steele without ...

(Child 167A, "Sir Andrew Barton",
sts.26-7, mid.-17th cent.)³⁰

... a fayre yong childe, aboue XV hundred yeares olde, come in the place of the bread, ... O cruel and unmersyfull fathers so to handle your poore yong old chyld.

(Thomas Becon, The Displayeng
of the Popysh Masse, 1563).³¹

Even the "tangletalk", generally thought to be native to the folk plays ("I met a bark and he dogged at me"), is common verbal property, listed as Submutatio in the standard manuals of rhetoric: "When a sentence is said with contrary order of words" — "Open the day, and see if it be the window" (Peacham, The Garden of Eloquence, 1577).³²

It is correspondingly easier to speak with confidence about the direction of the borrowing when the verbal echo in a stage play, or a familiar plot motif, is supplemented by modulation into the characteristic dramaturgical patterns and presentational mode of the folk plays. Indeed, dramaturgical analysis can reveal the presence of folk play elements in scenes where there is little or no signal on the verbal level or in the specific content of the action. The early professional dramatists seem to have utilised folk play dramaturgy in two ways. There is first what we might term the dramaturgical quotation, in which there is no break in continuity on the level of plot, but material which would have been dramatised anyway, in the more usual theatrical mode, is presented in the folk play manner. I think something of the kind happens, for example, at the beginning of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, where Duke Theseus hears the complaint of Egeus about his daughter and the young men who court her. Theseus has just ordered the arrangement of "merriments" and "revelling" for his forthcoming wedding day. He is ultimately rewarded with the "very tragical mirth" of Pyramus and Thisbe, but in a way is treated to a merriment at once as Egeus, Hermia, Lysander and Demetrius intrude on the Duke and his court in the manner of a party of mummers entering a squire's hall. Egeus functions as Presenter and steps forward first to offer greetings: "Happy be Theseus, our renowned Duke!" The mummers' formula, "In comes I ..." may even be echoed in his "Full of vexation come I", and he goes on to explain the matter: "... with complaint / against my child, my daughter Hermia." There follows what amounts to a formal calling-on (a calling-on stem), as Egeus presents the two young men:

Stand forth Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.

Stand forth Lysander. And, my gracious Duke,
This hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child. (i.i.24-7)

One would like to think of Egeus walking round in a circle throughout this presentation. In the argument that follows, with the two lovers urging their claims to the girl;

I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,
As well possess'd; my love is more than his;
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd ...

(99-101)

there may be something of the competitive wooing of the Lady in the Multiple Wooing Plays, but the parallel peters out as the dramaturgy modulates back to a more realistic mode.³³

Alternatively, the dramatist can interrupt (while still furthering) his plot by inserting a complete rounded performance in the folk play mode, in the same way that we find plays-within-plays, masques-within-plays, jigs-within-plays, etc. A neat example of the technique occurs in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, sc.vi, after Faustus has made one of his sporadic gestures towards repentance. Lucifer, Mephistophilis and Beelzebub upbraid him, and he desists. As they often do in this play, the devils divert Faustus's thoughts with a show. They have already intruded on him at home (he is "in his study") like a group of mummers, the parallel doubtless reinforced by their "disguise" (Mephistophilis as a friar, the other two as devils), and Beelzebub (himself a familiar folk play figure) now introduces the show in a manner that mirrors exactly the folk play Presenter. He announces their arrival ("we are come..."), and their purpose ("to show thee some pastime"), asks the audience to settle down ("Sit down..."), and reveals what is to come ("thou shalt behold...") (sc.vi., 11.104-107). He is seconded by Lucifer, who calls for attention ("mark the show") and tells Mephistophilis to "fetch them in" (a kind of "calling-on" which, in its use of a subordinate as an intermediary, is paralleled in the German Sword Dance Play). The performers, who represent the Seven Deadly Sins, enter together, led by a piper. We may imagine them disguised, and perhaps masked, in extravagant fashion: Beelzebub has promised (11.106-107) that they will be "in their own proper shapes and likeness." There follows a performance which is a classic example of the simplest dramaturgical pattern of traditional drama, the speech-sequence or Reihenspiel, as each Sin steps forward in turn and delivers a short comic speech of self-characterization:

I am Pride, I disdain to have any parents ...
I am Covetousness begotten of an old churl in a leather bag ...
I am Envy, begotten of a chimney-sweeper and an oyster wife ...

There may even be a humorous hint of a quête in Gluttony's request, "...wilt thou bid me to supper?" (1.155). The sequence complete, Sins and piper march off. Here

is a complete traditional performance inserted into a stage play: it may reasonably be credited to Marlowe's collaborator, who also adopted significant folk play action elsewhere in the scenes he contributed.³⁴

In concluding this line of enquiry it is possible to go one step further and speculate whether whole genres, rather than just bits of plays, may reveal, when subjected to dramaturgical analysis, a direct indebtedness to traditional drama. This is unlikely to apply to any genre of regular drama. It is possible to speak meaningfully of a genre of "Festive Comedy", comprising a cluster of Elizabethan stage plays, which, as C.L. Barber has demonstrated, owe much of their content, structure, themes, and occasional sequences of action to the folk drama of seasonal festivity.³⁵ They remain nonetheless fundamentally theatrical plays, and their full appreciation requires a wider literary and dramatic awareness.³⁶ More likely candidates are the many sub-dramatic genres of the later middle ages and the sixteenth century, such as the jigs, whose direct derivation from popular seasonal custom has been argued at length by C.R. Baskerville,³⁷ and the even more obscure varieties — merriments, drolls, pastimes, gambols, etc. — which are now little more than a name to us. Particularly interesting are the Jacobean Court Masques, and the less elaborate Tudor mummings and disguisings which preceded them. The derivation of the Court Masque from folk drama has been suggested by Margaret Dean-Smith, in a study which provided a general review of such significant features as season, function, disguise, and patterns of action.³⁸ Much earlier C.R. Baskerville had pointed to concrete parallels in two specific masques by Ben Jonson, The Masque of Christmas and Love's Welcome at Welbeck.³⁹ Further dramaturgical analysis is likely to confirm the masque as not so much a derivative of the folk play, as a specifically courtly elaboration of traditional drama. A specifically urban elaboration, meanwhile, is provided by the traditional German shrovetide plays, the Fastnachtspiele. As I have argued elsewhere, the Fastnachtspiele of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, in addition to presenting characters and motifs familiar from English folk drama — multiple wooing, combat, cure, Doctor & comic servant, etc. — reproduce fully and closely the context, mode of performance and dramaturgical patterns of traditional drama. They are indeed a useful illustration of what I would assert is the primacy of the physical over the verbal in determining the traditional status of a performance; for while a new play was written for each Fastnacht, tradition sustained the characteristic mode and patterns of performance from year to year, through all the changing texts and plots.⁴⁰

If awareness of traditional drama's characteristic dramaturgy facilitates detecting its presence in other dramatic traditions, the reverse is equally the case: dramaturgical analysis may reveal features which, in historical terms, are intrusions into traditional drama from without. For if the dramaturgy of the tradition as a whole — Presentations, Calling-ons, Boasts, Combats, Wooings, Quêtes and Farewells — is ritual, the dramaturgy of the Cure Scene, common to all three types of current English folk drama, is just as emphatically vaudeville: not merely in the sense that it is humorous, but because under most of the headings discussed earlier its mode of performance is essentially theatrical.

In the matter of costume, for example, the Doctor is sometimes an idiosyncratic figure, invariably dressing in part. In those instances where all the other characters do the same, he merely follows the general pattern; but in the alternative convention where the players appear in a guise of ribbon, paper or straw which effectually obliterates their distinct identities (as individuals and dramatic characters), the Doctor often stands out as a naturalistic exception with his black coat, hat and bag.⁴¹ This visual idiosyncrasy is matched by physical and verbal aspects of the Doctor's performance. Particularly revealing is the motivation of his entry, which is odd in being motivated at all. The ritual dramaturgy dominating the tradition as a whole customarily utilises non-motivated entries: characters merely step forward and say their lines, or are explicitly called on by someone already in the acting area. The Doctor, in contrast, is provided with a motivated entry by the character who laments the slaying which has occurred, and asks, "Is there a doctor to be found ...?" The Doctor duly responds: he is called for, not on, and no one is asked to "Make room" or "Clear the way" for him.

Once in the acting area the Doctor performs in a mode which comes closer than anything else in the plays to deserving the designation "representational". He is one of the few characters to speak prose (though not exclusively), and in the discussion of his learning, abilities and fee participates in what is virtually the only sustained conversation the English folk plays can offer. Even his formal boast of the powers of his medicines, while addressed to the world at large (including the audience, and to this extent "presentational"), presumably imitates the kind of performance put on by the travelling quack doctors familiar from town squares and country markets. Examination of the patient, diagnosis and cure are acted out, even if with grotesque exaggeration. They provide opportunities for the clowning and horseplay which are generally restricted to this scene, and give scope for the improvisational talents of the inspired or inebriated mummer: indeed one has the

impression that the role of the Doctor is often assigned to the performer with the most developed histrionic talents.

The humorous element (including the scope for horseplay and improvisation) is vastly increased in those plays where the Doctor is provided with a comic servant, the lazy and impudent Jack Finney. Their interaction is the nearest we get in the plays to something fundamental in most regular drama, a personal relationship between characters, and together they can put on a performance which seems almost designed for the vaudeville comedian and his straight man:

- D. Hold my hoss, Mr. John Finney.
 F. Will he bite?
 D. No.
 F. Will he kick?
 D. No.
 F. Take tow to hold him?
 D. No.
 F. Hold him yurself then.
 D. What's that, you saucy young rascal?
 F. Oh, I hold him, sir.

etc., etc.

(Weston-sub-Edge, Gloucestershire).⁴²

Altogether the Cure Scene has very much the look of a vaudeville sketch inserted into the quite alien dramaturgical framework of traditional drama. The idea gains plausibility from the consideration that the plays could do perfectly well without it: given the general lack of concern for motivation and verisimilitude in the plays there is no reason why the defeated champion or executed Fool (who in terms of this rudimentary dramaturgy is now neither dead, nor wounded, but merely lying down) should not merely stand up, without the intervention of a doctor or a cure to achieve dramatic realism.

Just where the Doctor comes from is therefore a matter inviting speculation, although the matter is decidedly complex: even leaving aside the social reality itself, or literary sources such as the songs discussed by Paul Smith at the 1980 Conference, there are many quack doctors in the dramatic traditions of the Middle Ages. There is one in the French *Jeu de la Feuillée*, a play with many folk play connections interestingly explored by Richard Axton.⁴³ He is a frequent character in the *Fastnachtspiele*, and an identical figure occurs in the more elaborate of the

continental Easter liturgical plays, as well as in the German Passion Plays (Osterspiele).⁴⁴ All of these figures correspond in many details to the English folk play Doctor. Charting their relationships is however extremely difficult. There has for example been a lively debate in continental scholarship on the priority of the Fastnachtspiele versus the liturgical and Passion plays, with the Doctor (and his comic servant, who is very similar to Jack Finney) as the central issue.⁴⁵ Dramaturgical considerations suggest an independent source in a tradition with a more positively mimetic mode of performance. And, as we have known for a long time, a quack doctor routine also featured, as early as the thirteenth century, in the repertoire of the jongleurs, the direct ancestors of both the professional theatre and the vaudeville. This routine, the Herberie, was a dramatic monologue, with one performer sustaining one role (in this case an itinerant herbalist); the simplest of the sub-dramatic genres evolved by the jongleurs, and the texts of three such Herberies survive from the thirteenth century.⁴⁶

Insofar as is possible in a one-man turn, these French performances are representational, evidently mimicking the boasts, the audience manipulation, the favourite turns of phrase, and presumably the gestures and posturings, of the travelling mountebanks. There are striking parallels to the Doctor of the English folk plays (not to mention the corresponding figure in the Fastnachtspiele, liturgical plays, and Passion Plays). The speakers in the Herberies emphasise their learning and abilities, their superiority to ordinary quacks, their education (which involved extensive travelling), the potency of their medicines and the many diseases for which they have a remedy. There are occasionally close verbal parallels:

Je suis bons mire et bien sages
Je sai garir de toz malages⁴⁷

(cf. "I am a Doctor pure and good / ... all sorts of diseases")

and many of their boasts could be taken over verbatim by a nineteenth or twentieth century English mummer:

If you know of any man who has such a bad toothache that he can't eat tough food like badly cooked beef, I'll make him eat as eagerly as a man who hasn't eaten for three days; and if he has got any good teeth left among the bad ones I'll make him eat like a man who hasn't eaten for four days.⁴⁸

They have a medicine for rejuvenating the old (not an unknown boast for their English descendants), and one Herbalist even claims to have medicines "Qui font resusciteir le mort."⁴⁹ It may be such claims, dramatically appropriate here as the ultimate absurdity in a parody of the real mountebanks' boasts, which facilitated the intrusion of the Doctor into the folk plays, at whatever stage in their evolution it was felt appropriate or desirable to motivate the revival of the slain or executed figure.

Just when, how and why this transfer occurred is a difficult issue. I suspect the professional stage clowns had some hand in it:⁵⁰ Dick Tarlton would have been very much at home in the role of Jack Finney. But I have now commenced speculating without the benefit of support from dramaturgical factors, which is precisely the point where speculation should cease ...

NOTES

1. Alan Brody, The English Mummers and their Plays. Traces of Ancient Mystery (London, 1969), p. 10.
2. Michael Preston, "Solutions to Classic Problems in the Study of Oral Literature", in Computing in the Humanities, ed. S. Lusignan & J.S. North (Waterloo, Canada, 1978), pp. 117-132. Cf. also Peter Millington, "Graphs for Visualizing the Structure of Folk Plays", Roomer, 1.2 (Dec., 1980), 8-10. Both these systems of analysis handle exclusively verbal material: in neither case do we get a full or direct picture of what the performers do.
3. Henry Glassie, All Silver and No Brass (Bloomington, Indiana, and London, 1975). See also Barry J. Ward, "A Functional Approach to English Folk Drama", Diss. (Ohio State University, 1972); Susan Pattison, "The Antrobus Souicaking Play: An Alternative Approach to the Mummers' Play", Folklife, 15 (1977), 5-11. Both Glassie and Ward offer significant but tantalizingly brief discussions of folk play performances in respect to the shape of the rooms and houses concerned.
4. From the "normalized text" offered by E.K. Chambers in The English Folk-Play (Oxford, 1933; rpt. 1969), p. 6, 11.11-14, which, for all its faults as a scholarly tool, does combine some of the more usual formulas common to many versions of the Hero Combat Play. The Presenter's use of the word "activity" here is a useful reminder of the physical aspect of performance: it is regularly used in the Court records of the Elizabethan period to designate displays of physical dexterity; see E.K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage (Oxford, 1923), IV, 158-163.
5. From the account by Gudmand Højer in the Danish magazine, Skattegraveren, 12. 118 (1889), 226, reprinted in Marius Kristensen, "En Hellig-Tre-Kongers-Vise og Hellig-Tre-Kongers-Dans i Danmark", Danske Studier (1925), 68-70, and in Iørn Piø, Julens Hvem Hvad Hvor (Copenhagen, 1977), pp. 48-9: my translation.
6. The standard work on the tradition is Hilding Celander, Stjärngossarna, deras visor och Julspel (Stockholm, 1950) -- English summary on pp. 490-2. See Celander's notes for earlier German scholarship on the tradition.
7. In the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. The painting is frequently reproduced, for example in Walter S. Gibson, Bruegel (London, 1977), pl. 47. For a highly significant analysis in terms of seasonal custom, including identification of the Three Kings, see Claude Gaignebet, "Le Combat de Carnaval et de Careme de P. Bruegel (1559)", Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations, 27 (1972), 313-345.
8. Celander, Stjärngossarna, pp. 15ff.; Robert Stumpf, Kultspiele der Germanen als Ursprung des Mittelalterlichen Dramas (Berlin, 1936), pp. 354ff.
9. Le Théâtre Populaire Européen, ed. Leopold Schmidt (Paris, 1965), opening lines to Nos. 14, 11, 13 and 1, respectively.
10. Eight Mummers' Plays, ed. Alex Helm (Aylesbury, 1971; rpt. 1978), pp. 35-40.
11. For the device of doubling in the early professional drama, and its impact on the dramaturgy and structure of the plays, see David Bevington, From "Mankind to Marlowe" (Cambridge, Mass., 1962).
12. The neglect has been such that we lack even an adequate and widely accepted system of notation for the patterns of movement in traditional drama, that is the movement of performers in relationship to each other and the performance area in terms of space and time. Perhaps the notations applied to traditional dance could be adapted for this purpose.
13. For example in the unlocated play from Co. Durham reported in Ancient Poems, Ballads and Songs of the Peasantry of England, ed. Robert Bell (London, 1857), pp. 175ff.
14. For example in the play from Chadlington, Oxfordshire, in Eight Mummers' Plays, ed. Helm, p. 29.
15. The Pace-Egg. The Midgley Version, ed. H.W. Harwood & F.H. Marsden, 2nd ed. (Halifax, 1977), pp. 14-16.
16. E.g. Alderley (Cheshire), Greens Norton (Northants), and Chadlington (Oxfordshire), all in Eight Mummers' Plays, ed. Helm, pp. 23, 34, 42, respectively.

17. For Alderley, see Eight Mummers' Plays, ed. Helm, p. 18; for Chithurst, see Brody, English Mummers, p. 28, citing Helm Collection.
18. Le Théâtre Populaire Européen, ed. Schmidt, p. 22.
19. Ibid., No. 3.
20. C.R. Baskervill, "Mummers' Wooling Plays in England", Modern Philology, 21 (1923-4), 225-272.
21. N. Peacock, "The Greatham Sword Dance", JEFDSS, 8 (1956), 29-39.
22. E.g. Guilden Sutton, Cheshire, in JEFDSS, 5 (1947), 85.
23. Eight Mummers' Plays, ed. Helm, pp. 58-60.
24. Le Théâtre Populaire Européen, ed. Schmidt, No. 11.
25. Karl Meschke, Schwerttanz und Schwerttanzspiel im germanischen Kulturkreis (Leipzig & Berlin, 1931), p. 171.
26. Brody, English Mummers, p. 61; Helm, Eight Mummers' Plays, p. 9.
27. Thomas Pettitt, "English Folk Drama in the Eighteenth Century: A Defense of the Revesby Sword Play", Comparative Drama, 15 (1981), 3-29.
28. Chambers, English Folk-Play, pp. 134-5.
29. Henry Porter, The Two Angry Women of Abingdon, in A Select Collection of Old English Plays, 4th ed., rev. W.C. Hazlitt (London, 1874-6), vol. VII, 335; Wily Beguiled, in ibid., vol. IX, 292; Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus, l.i.341f., in Complete Works, ed. Peter Alexander (London, 1951, rpt. 1970); Mucedorus, in Select Collection, vol. VII, 208; Ben Jonson, The Magnetic Lady, Chorus between Acts I & II, ll. 35-6, in Ben Jonson, ed. C.H. Herford & Percy & Evelyn Simpson, vol. VI (Oxford, 1938, rpt. 1966).
30. The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, ed. F.J. Child, 5 vols. (Boston, 1882-98, rpt. New York, 1965).
31. Quoted in L. Sinanoglou, "The Christ Child as Sacrifice: A Medieval Tradition and the Corpus Christi Plays", Speculum, 48 (1973), 493-4.
32. Lee A. Sonnino, A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric (London, 1968), p. 175.
33. Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream, ed. Harold F. Brooks, The Arden Shakespeare (London, 1979).
34. Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, ed. J.D. Jump, Revels Plays (London, 1962, rpt. Manchester, 1978). See Thomas Pettitt, "The Folk Play in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus", Folklore, 91 (1980), 72-7.
35. C.L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy (Princeton, 1959; rpt. 1972).
36. Leo Salingar, Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 9ff.
37. C.R. Baskervill, The Elizabethan Jig (Chicago, 1929, rpt. New York, 1965).
38. Margaret Dean-Smith, "The Folk-Play Origins of the English Masque", Folklore, 65 (1954), 74-86.
39. C.R. Baskervill, "The Sources of Jonson's Masque of Christmas and Love's Welcome at Welbeck", MP, 6 (1908-9), 257-269.
40. Thomas Pettitt, "English Folk Drama and the Early German Fastnachtspiele", Renaissance Drama, N.S. 13 (1982), 00-00.
41. See for example Glassie, All Silver and No Brass, pp. 46-7; Alex Helm, The English Mummers' Play (Woodbridge, 1980), pl. 2.
42. R.J.E. Tiddy, The Mummers' Play (Oxford, 1923), p. 165.
43. Richard Axton, European Drama of the Early Middle Ages (London, 1974), pp. 144-158.
44. Pettitt, "English Folk Drama and the Early German Fastnachtspiele"; P. Abrahams, "The Mercator-Scenes in Medieval French Passion-Plays", Medium

Ævum, 3 (1934), 112-123; Viktor Michels, Studien über die Ältesten deutschen Fastnachtspiele (Strasbourg, 1896), pp. 52-9.

45. Stumpf, Kultspiele der Germanen, pp. 222ff.; Michels, op. cit., pp. 52-4; R. Pascal, "On the Origins of the Liturgical Drama of the Middle Ages", MLR, 36 (1941), 369-387.
46. Rutebeuf, "Le Dit de l'Herberie", in Oeuvres Completes de Rutebeuf, ed. E. Faral & Julia Bastin (Paris, 1969), No. LII; "l'Erberie", in ibid., pp. 268-71; "De la Goute en l'Aine", in Mimes Français du XIIIe Siecle, ed. E. Faral (Paris, 1910), No. III. See Grace Frank, The Medieval French Drama (Oxford, 1954, rpt. 1967), pp. 112f.; E. Faral, Les Jongleurs en France au Moyen Age (Paris, 1910; rpt. New York, 1970), pp. 236ff.; E. Picot, "Le Monologue Dramatique dans l'ancien Théâtre Français", Romania, 15 (1886), 358-422, 16 (1887), 438-542, 17 (1888), 207-275.
47. "De la Goute en l'Aine", 11. 19-20.
48. "l'Erberie", ed. cit., pp. 268-9.
49. "Le Dit de l'Herberie", 1. 33.
50. One of the stage skits by which the London theatres contributed to the Marprelate Controversy of the 1580's evidently involved a grotesque cure ("launcing and worming") of a figure representing the puritan controversialist (Baskervill, The Elizabethan Jig, pp. 53-4).