

ROOMER

An occasional newsletter for researchers
in Traditional Drama. Vol 1:6 (1981)



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THE NORTH WALTHAM MUMMERS

Steve Roud

It is always interesting to learn what performers of traditional activities believe are the origins of their own particular customs. Such aetiological explanations may or may not tell us anything much about the true origins of the customs (although they should never, I believe, be dismissed out of hand), but they do give us useful information as to how the performers themselves viewed their traditions and, indeed, the explanations may become 'traditions' in themselves.

The following piece is from Frank Bond who was, for many years, the leader of the North Waltham (Hants. SU 5646) gang of mummers - right up to their demise about 1950. The later years of Frank's life were spent as a bed-ridden invalid and he whiled away his time writing down his thoughts in exercise books. He covered a wide variety of subjects in this way, and the books are now in the possession of his daughter, his brother Sam and others.

There is a useful description of Frank and his writings in Bob Copper's Songs and Southern Breezes (London: Heinemann, 1973) and he can be heard singing two songs on the Topic L.P. record of the same name (12T 317 . 1977).

The following is taken from one of the exercise books by kind permission of Mrs. Elmer, Frank Bond's daughter.

"The Mummerns

What are these mummy, funny things with long ears and glary eyes? No my dear, they were men that used to dress up in weird costumes, and travel round the villages, and large houses, and perform a funny old fashioned play at Christmas time. With the advent of wireless, and later television, the old mummerns have gone into oblivion, never to rise any more. There is no doubt that a good many of the old fashioned plays etc., date back into history for a considerable time. But there are reasons to believe that these old plays were entirely local village concerns, and did not trespass on other neighbouring villages. I can give a little idea of a village like North Waltham giving outsiders a good reception at the end of the last century. When I passed the special labour exam to leave school, at the turn of the century, we came down to North Waltham school for the exam. After we had finished the exam, and was on our way back to Dummer, we were followed by Waltham boys, which included bung-eye Giles and co. We were set on to on Maiden Thorn Hill, and a tidy skirmish ensued, in which there was scarlet flying. That was the kind of reception you got in a good many places. No, in those days you kept to your own locality. We used to get on very well, the small tradesman with his half crown was as good to us as a fl note would be today, in fact bought more. So much for all that, what

I want to try and do is to find out approximately when my play was inaugurated. When we study the patter used in the play, I think we shall be able to form some opinion as to the approximate age of the play as I know it. I think the best guide to a possible conclusion is to study the patter used in the play itself. I think by doing this we shall hit the nail right on the head. In the first place if we read through the patter used in the play, we shall gain enough information to give us a clue as to when, and what the patter was based on. We have got a King George in the play, and there is every reason to believe the reference is to Geo III. In his patter, King George states (I am the first, and that you know, my title is the Cut and star, in France I served my time). This portion of patter implies that our King George had seen service in France. The next hint we get comes from the Doctor, whom Father Christmas calls on to cure his two sons. Valiant Soldier and Bold Slasher. He is asked by Father Christmas what his fees will be. His reply is, ten guineas is my fee, but ten pounds I'll take of thee. Now this is the most important clue of all. I am not quite sure of the year that the first pound sovereign was issued, but I believe it was 1816 or 17. This statement by the Doctor definitely implies that the pound sovereign was in circulation. Now the third little bit of information gives us a clue as to what the Mummers play was based on. Here is his passage of patter. (In comes I Little Twing Twang, head man of this Press Gang). There we are complete, Twing Twang has told us what the play was based on. The men who formed the original gangs had no doubt served in press gangs during the Napoleonic Wars. But if I come to the conclusion, that my Mummers play is based on the Press Gangs, which operated during the Napoleonic Wars, I am still not entitled to assume, that all these old plays are based on the same event. But it must not be assumed that the patter in my play has not undergone some changes during the past 150 years. Anyone who has had experience in the army, of an order passed down the ranks, knows what it sounds like at the end. It is probably like some of these old customs undergone a little change. I have got a copy of the patter as spoken by the Antropus (sic) Mummers, but a good portion of it is not comprehensible, and appears to have no meaning whatsoever. My father was born in 1851, he went round with the Overton Mummers for a good many years, before we moved to Dummer in 1897. He told me the play had not altered in his day. So I should say that I am quite justified that we are right in claiming that our play was organised by men who were familiar with the working of the Press Gangs, who were organized, and used for forcing men into service in the armed forces, during the Napoleonic Wars. The items of our patter, which I have elected to build my case on seems to be evidence enough of what the play was all about. In itself, the act of forcing men to fight against their will had their origins during these wars in Napoleon's day. We have not changed very much since those days. They were called Napoleonic Wars. Today they can be termed Millionaires Wars as they get get all the fat. (The End)"

THE OLD TUP AND THE OLD HORSE

Paul Smith

Increased attention has recently started to be focused on two of the least researched genres of Traditional Drama in the British Isles - The Old Tup (1) and The Old Horse (2). These two traditions both exhibit a cante fable structure and it is perhaps because of this, in the main, they have been overlooked by folklorists. Irrespective of their form and structure, however, there is little that cannot be said of the manner of performance and methods of transmission of the more acceptable forms of Traditional Drama (3) that cannot be applied to The Old Tup and The Old Horse.

Whilst preparing material for our study of chapbooks containing traditional play texts (4) a small quantity of chapbooks and broadsides came to light that possibly relate to The Old Tup and The Old Horse traditions, (for examples see Plates I (5) and II (6)). The exact nature of such a relationship is somewhat problematical however in that, in both The Tup and Old Horse traditions, at least three distinct and related forms appear to exist.

GARLAND OF NEW SONGS.

- CONTAINING
- 1 The old Ram of Derby.
 - 2 The Soldier's Adieu.
 - 3 Sir James the Rose.



The old Ram of Derby.

AS I was going to Derby
All on a market day,
I saw the finest Ram, fir,
That ever was fed on hay.

The Butcher that killed this Ram, fir,
Was drowned in his blood,
And the boy that held the bowl, fir,
Was driven away with the flood.

The head of this said Ram, fir,
Served fifty thousand men,
It served them over and over,
And ten times over again.

The horns that grew on his head, fir,
Was fifty cubits high,
Where the eagles built their nest, fir,
For I heard the young ones cry.

The little boys in Derby
Sent me for but two eyes,
For to kick them about the street,
For they were of a fool-bull size.



The beard of this said Ram, fir,
Was an hundred yards long and an ell,
And it was carried to Derby,
For to ring the market bell.

The back-bone of this ram, fir,
Made a mainmast for a ship,
And they carried more upon it,
Than all the English first.

The wool that grew on his belly, fir,
Hung dangling to the ground,
And it was sold in Derbyshire,
For fifty thousand pounds.

The wool that grew on his tail, fir,
Was sold for as much more,
And the tanner that tanned his hide, fir,
Was never after poor.

Now Gentlemen and Ladies,
If you think I tell a lie,
You may go now to Derby,
And you'll see it as well as I.

THE SOLDIER'S ADIEU.

ADIEU, adieu my country,
My Honour calls me from thee,



SWEET HOME.

London.—H. P. SUCH, Machine Printer and Publisher, 177, Union-st., Boro'.

MID pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble there's no place like home :

A charm from the skies seem to hallow us there,
Which seek thro' the world is ne'er met with elsewhere.

Home ! home ! sweet, sweet, home !
There's no place like home, there's no place like home.

The poor sailor boy as o'er billows he roams,

Oh sighs for the cot he has left far from home,

And the sweet village bells so pleasant and gay,

And the lass that he loves, who is far, far away.

An exile from home splendour dazzles in vain,

Oh, give me my lowly thatch'd cottage again ;

The birds singing gaily that came at my call,

Give me sweet peace of mind that's dearer than all



THE POOR OLD HORSE.

WHEN I was a young horse all in my youthful pride,
My master used to ride on me, he thought me very fine,
But now I am grown old, and nature does decay,
My master frowns upon me, and these words I heard him say,
Poor old horse, poor old horse.

My clothing that was once of the shining superfine,
Then I stood in my stable and did in my glory shine,
But now I am grown old, and nature does decay,
My master frowns upon me, and these words I heard him say,
Poor old horse, poor old horse.

My feeding it was once of the best corn and hay,
That grew in the fields and in the meadows gay,
But now I am grown old and scarcely can I crawl,
I am forced to eat the coarsest grass that grows against the wall,
Poor old horse, poor old horse.

He is old, and he is cold, and he is both dull and slow,
He has eat up my hay and has spoiled all my straw,
Nor either is he fit to draw with my team,
Take him and whip him is now my master's theme,
Poor old horse, poor old horse.

To the huntsman now shall go his old hide and shoes,
Likewise his tender carcase the bounds will not refuse,
His body that so swiftly has ran so many miles,
Over hedges, ditches, brooks, and cleared bridges, gates and stiles,
Poor old horse, poor old horse.

1. The Cante Fable Tradition

Here the primary form/structure of the tradition is the cante fable as exemplified in The Old Tup and The Old Horse dramatic traditions. Performances are usually tied to the calendar and, more often than not, occur over the Christmas/New Year period. Such plays exhibit only a sporadic geographical distribution being, in the main, confined to Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire. These traditions function essentially as a vehicle for the collection of money and/or gifts during visits to private houses and licensed premises.

2. The Oral Song Tradition

Often known as The Derby Ram and Poor Old Horse, we are concerned here with a widespread international tradition which has been documented in the U.K., Ireland, Australia, Canada and the U.S.A. The relevant function of both these independent song traditions varies considerably from being employed as a chanty to again being used in the collection of money/gifts, etc. in house to house visits. The later instance appears, however, to be something of a rarity - the predominant function of both songs being entertainment.

3. The Ephemeral Printed Tradition

Chapbooks and broadsides bearing the titles The Old Ram of Derby and The Lamentation of an Old Horse/Poor Old Horse have been found to be printed in many of the major centres of 19th Century ephemeral printing in the U.K., (for example Newcastle, Manchester, London and Edinburgh). The prime function of such sheets/chapbooks was, of course, not perceived as having anything to do with raising funds for performers etc. Rather production was undertaken to develop and satiate specific economic markets.

From the outline of these three related forms, it is apparent that such a relationship is very difficult to comment on. Several observations can however be made:

1. Textually, in both the tradition of The Old Tup and The Old Horse, a considerable degree of similarity exists.
2. To date, no ephemeral printed version of either tradition has been traced which contains any element of the speeches associated with the songs as found in the cante fable versions.
3. Whilst a high degree of textual similarity exists within both traditions there is an almost lack of functional cohesion amongst the related forms.

With this in mind, the only further comment that we can possibly offer at this time is that we need much more information regarding the occurrence of both these traditions and their various related forms. For example a small quantity of material generated as part of an early 19th Century high cultural printed song/music tradition is already known to exist (7). Should this also be included in any analysis? As yet we cannot tell simply because the gaps in our knowledge are too great. Consequently, I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to anyone who may have information relating to this topic to contact me.

NOTES

1. See for example - E. C. Cawte, Ritual Animal Disguise (D. S. Brewer Ltd. for the Folklore Society, 1978), p.110-117: Ian Russel 'Here Comes me and Our Old Lass, Short of Money and Short of Brass: A Survey of Traditional Drama in North East Derbyshire 1970-1980', Folk Music Journal 3:3 (1979), p.339-479.
2. See for example - Rory Greig, 'We Have a Poor Old Horse', Lore and Language II:9 (July 1973), p.7-10: E. C. Cawte (1978), p.117-123.

3. E. C. Cawte, Alex Helm and N. Peacock, English Ritual Drama: A Geographical Index (London: The Folklore Society, 1967) p.14-15
4. M. J. Preston, M. G. Smith and P. S. Smith, S.L.F. Research Project 1: A Classification of Chapbooks containing Traditional Play Texts. Interim Report, Lore and Language 2:4 (1976) p.5-7.
5. Copy from British Museum 11606 aa 24 (58).
6. Copy from P. S. Smith and M. G. Boyes Collection.
7. See for example - Dr. Callcott, As I was Going to Derby (London: B. Williams, N.D.) Copy in Selected Glees B.M. H2342.C.

DOWN BY THE GREENWOOD SIDE

John Foreman has brought to our attention that a performance of Down by the Greenwood Side, written by Harrison Birtwistle, was given earlier this year at the Cottaloe Theatre.

Below is a short description of the performance taken from the handout:

THE CHARACTERS

MRS GREEN	Teresa Cahill
FATHER CHRISTMAS	David Roper
ST GEORGE	Michael Thomas
BOLD SLASHER	James Hayes
DR BLOOD	Roger Gartland
JACK FINNEY	Tony Robertson

THE MUSICIANS: Dominic Muldowney (conductor)
 Paul Beer (euphonium) Michael Cole (bassoon)
 Ruth Crouch (violin) David Goldesgeyme (cello)
 John Harle (clarinet) John Harrod (percussion)
 Colin Rae (cornet) Steve Saunders (trombone)
 Stina Wilson (fluee)

TEXT	Michael Nyman
DIRECTOR	Harrison Birtwistle
DESIGNER	Jocelyn Herbert
ASSISTANT DESIGNER	Sue Jenkinson
LIGHTING	Laurence Clayton Andy Phillips
MUSIC DIRECTOR	Dominic Muldowney
STAGE MANAGERS	Brewyeen Rowland Rebecca Peek
MOVEMENT	Stuart Hopps
FIGHT SEQUENCES	John Wilkinson
REHEARSAL PIANIST	Odaline de la Martinez

DOWN BY THE GREENWOOD SIDE was written in 1970 for the Brighton Festival, and first performed on the Brighton Pier by the Music Theatre Ensemble. The text is compiled from two folk sources, which are interwoven: the traditional mummers' play about the killing and resurrection of Saint George; and the ballad of the Cruel Mother, of which there are hundreds of versions, stretching from Scandinavia, Scotland, Northern England to America. It is a ballad about a mother who kills her children, and meets them on the way home; it also has resurrection as its central theme.

The instrumentation is taken from the Victorian ballad "The Floral Dance":

The Morris Ring Archives has recently produced a short catalogue of photographs in their possession. Below are listed items which may be of interest to Traditional Drama researchers. Prints (size 7 x 5 inches) are available at approximately 50p each. All orders and enquiries should be sent to: Barry Care, Rooty Hill Cottage, 8 Chater Street, Moulton, Northampton. (0604-46818)

- LS14 Goathland Ploughstots approx. 1920 (H8)
- LS15 Goathland Ploughstots approx. 1920 (H5)
- LS16 Goathland Ploughstots approx. 1920 (H7)
- LS20 Papa Stour Sword Dancers 1977 (L31)
- LS21 Papa Stour Sword Dancers 1977 (L30)
- LS27 Ampleforth Sword Play 1947 (G14)
- LS28 Ampleforth Sword Dancers 1896 (D15)
- LS34 Papa Stour Sword Team's Fiddler - James Adam Coates 1924 (E35)
- LS37 Ripon Sword Dance Play (M30)
- LS41 Goathland Ploughstots no date
- LS46 The Ampleforth Swords and details.
- MC15 Bellerby Feast Guisers (Yorks.) (M28)
- MC35 Bellerby Feast, Yorkshire (M3)
- MC41 Rumanian Calusari - Visiting Troupe in London 1935 (K20)
- MU1 Marshfield Mummers (M27)
- MU2 Unidentified Yorkshire Folk Play (Sleights?) (H36)
- MU3 Symondsburly Mummers (H6)
- MU4 Darleston Folk Play (Staffs.) Boys of Bilston and Wolverhampton (H16)
- MU5 Midgeley Pace Eggers (D34)
- MU6 Mummers in County Wexford, Eire (G10)
- MU7 Marshfield Mummers (G9)
- MU8 Coventry Mummers at Thaxted 1971 (J11)
- MU9 Revesby Mummers Play at Albert Hall 1955 (H22)
- MU10 Antrobus Souling Play 1956
- MU11 Antrobus Souling Play 1960
- HH3 Richmond (Yorks.) Hobby Horse 1880 (D33)
- HH4 Burringham (Lincs.) Hobby Horse 1930's revival (E7)
- HH5 Old Tup at Handsworth, Sheffield (E36)
- HH7 Mari Lwyd (Welsh Hobby Horse) (M22)
- HH8 Mari Lwyd (Welsh Hobby Horse) (M35)
- HH20 Hooden Horse of St. Nicholas at Wade, Kent 1910 (D13)
- HH21 Hooden Horse of St. Nicholas at Wade, Kent 1910 (H2)
- HH22 Hooden Horse Party in Kent no date (H1)
- HH24 The Mari Lwyd Welsh Hobby Horse (E10)
- HH25 The Mari Lwyd Welsh Hobby Horse (E9)
- HH26 The Mari Lwyd Welsh Hobby Horse (G7)
- HH27 Hooden Horse of St. Nicholas at Wade, Kent in 1908 (D14)

**THE REVESBY SWORD PLAY: AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
FOLK PLAY ADAPTATION**

Micahel J. Preston, editor

The Revesby Sword Play, entitled "Morrice Dancers at Revesby" and dated "Oct. 20, 1779" in the manuscript (BM Add. MS. 44870), has had a major influence on those concerned with folk drama as well as those attempting to relate native dramatic traditions to the earlier English drama. The Revesby manuscript, measuring 9 1/8 x 7 5/16 inches, is written in an extremely clear eighteenth-century hand. Considerable pains seem to have been bestowed on this short manuscript, for it has been neatly corrected in many places by the transcriber. In this edition, each line represents a line of the manuscript, even when the transcriber wrote what appears to be verse as prose. The capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviations correspond with the manuscript, although colons have been added following speakers' names and appropriate stage directions. The edition is supplemented by an introduction and extensive notes on the text.

University Microfilms

Order No. LD00058, 59 pp.

PUBLICATION NEWS

Barbara Brown, 'History of a Revival Mummers' Side', English Dance and Song 42:3 (1980) 9.

Alan Gailey, 'Mummers' and Christmas Rhymers' Plays in Ireland: The Problem of Distribution', Ulster Folklife 24 (1978) 59-68.

S. Gee and S. Mills, Old Ball: The Lancashire Hobby Horse (Privately printed by the Author: Lancashire, 1978) 6pp.

Martin J. Lovelace, 'Christmas Mumming in England: The House Visit', in K. S. Goldstein and N. V. Rosenberg, Folklore Studies in Honour of Herbert Halpert: A Festschrift (Memorial University of Newfoundland: St. John's, Newfoundland, 1981) 271-281.

Paul Merchant, 'Thomas Heywood's Hand in the Seven Champions of Christendom', The Library 5th Series, 38:3 (1978) 226-230.

Thomass Pettitt, 'The Folk-Play in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus', Folklore 91 (1980) 72-77.

Michael Preston, 'The British Folk Plays and Thomas Hardy: A Computer-Aided Study', Southern Folklore Quarterly, 40 (1977) 159-182.

Norman Simms, 'Ned Ludd's Mummers' Play', Folklore 89 (1978) 166-178.

Julia Small, The Hooden Horse (Privately printed by the Author: Deal, 1975) 4pp. Available from The Author, Oakmead, Marine Road, Walmer, Deal, Kent.

Georgina Smith, Chapbook Sources of British Traditional Drama: The Mummers' Play as Popular Culture (Folklore Preprint Series Vol 6:6. Folklore Publications Group: Indiana, 1978) 10pp.

Georgina Smith, Review of Ritual Animal Disguise ..., by E. C. Cawte, in the Journal of American Folklore 93 (1980) 492-494

Forthcoming Publications

Thomas Pettitt, 'English Folk Drama and the Early German Fastnachtspiele', Renaissance Drama XIII.

Sandra Billington, A Social History of the Fool in England, (Harvester Press).

ROOMER: AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR RESEARCHERS IN TRADITIONAL DRAMA

Research in any field is, as often as not, hampered by the lack of communication between individual researchers, and Traditional Drama is no exception. We are acutely aware that there are many people doing valuable work who have little or no contact with others in this field and, consequently, no opportunity to compare notes or air their views.

ROOMER then is designed to fill this gap by providing an informal forum. It includes notes and queries, details of publications, out-of-the-way texts, information on work in progress, in fact anything that may be of interest to those working in the field of Traditional Drama. As such it relies heavily on participation by subscribers. Therefore, if you have any potential contributions we would be most grateful to receive them.

In addition, we plan to prepare a series of occasional publications dealing with various aspects of Traditional Drama research. Suggestions for suitable topics or items for inclusion in this series are most welcome.

We hope you find this issue of ROOMER useful. If you would like further details please contact the editors.

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TRADITIONAL DRAMA 1981

THE FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON ASPECTS OF CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP IN TRADITIONAL DRAMA STUDIES

Saturday, 10th October, 1981 (10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.)

Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language,
Endcliffe Exhibition Hall, 605 Eccleshall Road, Sheffield

ABSTRACTS

A Newfoundland Mummers' Play

JOHN WIDDOWSON

Mumming at the Christmas season in Newfoundland is a tradition of very long standing. Two main types of house-visiting are the most common features. The first of these, the house-visit in which the game of guessing identities is played, has already been described fairly fully in H. Halpert and G. M. Story, Eds., Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1969). The second house-visiting custom with all the performance of a play has hitherto received little attention.

This paper traces the evolution of fieldwork and research into the mummers' play tradition in Newfoundland during the 1960s. A number of field trips were made to various parts of the province in what turned out to be a game of detection which eventually located reports of plays and texts and fragments of texts from a number of widely scattered locations.

The specific play text from the community of Tilting on the East coast island of Fogo will be presented together with some discussion of its context and variation as revealed by the few surviving individuals who remembered the performance.

The Lesson on the Map: The Geography of the Scottish Folk Play and its Implications for a Theory of Political and Cultural Origin

BRIAN HAYWARD

The Scottish folk play attracted little synoptic interest before Cawte, Helm and Peacock compiled their index for English Ritual Drama (1967). Using that publication as a starting-point, an attempt has been made, utilising oral and written sources, to expand the Scottish folk play gazetteer. The data gathered so far has been examined primarily on a geographical basis. Firstly it has been compared with the 1967 Index. Secondly it has been examined as a possible reflection of the ethnography of the relevant area of Scotland from the time of the Roman Empire to the fourteenth century. This has been undertaken with a view to determine which, if any, of the ethnic influences in the country (which, after the 'Romans', included the Welsh, the Scots, the Northumbrians, the Norse, the Danes and, with the feudalisation of Scotland, the Anglo-French and the Anglo-Flemish) could be construed as determinants for a theory of origin, in terms of both historical date and as an exponent of community interaction.

Ritual and Vaudeville: The Dramaturgy of the English Folk Plays

TOM PETTITT

The dramaturgy of the English folk plays remains something of a neglected perspective. The ritualist approach concentrated on their central 'act', neglecting much of the action that characterizes them as a distinct species of dramatic performance. Recent scholarship has very properly returned to the plays themselves, but there is still a tendency for the dramaturgy to be neglected, say in favour of the texts of the plays or their social context and function. 'Traditional drama', surely must be characterized by a traditional dramaturgy, which includes verbal, physical and contextual aspects.

By dramaturgy I mean the movements of the performers and their interaction - physical and verbal - with each other and with the audience, all this in relation to organized space. The distinct dramaturgical mode of the folk plays is formal, with performers moving on to, within and off the acting space in regular patterns, and presentational, characterized by much direct address to the audience and with little attempt at creating an autonomous dramatic world distinct from the social reality in which the performance takes place. This mode is appropriately designated 'ritual', although the designation implies nothing of course about origins. The mode is, however, fundamental to folk drama, as it characterizes not only the English plays but many continental types as well, such as the German sword dance plays and the Scandinavian plays of the Three Kings and the Star.

An awareness of the characteristic dramaturgical mode of folk-play performance may facilitate the study of other problems, such as:

1. Assessing the authenticity of problematical plays, e.g. the Revesby Sword Play is characterized throughout by highly traditional dramaturgy and is, therefore, unlikely to be a literary production.
2. Determining the influence of traditional drama on other dramatic traditions, for example Fastnachtspiele, the Court Masque, or early professional drama (Doctor Faustus, A Midsummer Night's Dream) - verbal echoes or parallels of motif are by themselves inadequate to determine the extent or direction of the borrowing.
3. Detecting what may in historical terms be extraneous elements in traditional drama, e.g. the Cure Scene of the English folk plays is marked by an essentially alien dramaturgy: complex rather than formal, representational rather than presentational, 'vaudeville', rather than ritual. It may not be a coincidence that a comic quack doctor routine figured in the repertoire of the medieval jongleurs, and may just be glimpsed among the turns of the Elizabethan stage clowns.

That Damned Revesby Play: A Study in Contradiction

PAUL SMITH

Although some 200 years have passed since the first performance of what has become known as The Revesby Play and 168 years have lapsed since the existence of the British Museum copy was noted, very little is, in fact, known about this play. For example, whilst statements regarding the reasons for performance of the play have been made these have been based on evidence contained in secondhand accounts from the 19th and 20th Century. In 1979 whilst researching an article to commemorate the so called anniversary of the performance of The Revesby Play a small manuscript book containing a version predating the British Museum manuscript was discovered. In order to establish the provenance of this earlier manuscript I started to investigate the massive collections of primary sources relating to the Banks family and their affairs. Whilst, as yet, I have only just explored the tip of the proverbial iceberg, a considerable quantity of relevant material has come to light. This paper then presents these findings and explores the contradictions they often contain.