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CORK REVISITED: A RECONSIDERATION OF SOME EARLY RECORDS OF THE MUMMERS' PLAYS

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As time goes by it becomes less and less likely that the problem of the early history of the English mummers' plays will be suddenly resolved by the discovery of some vital record such as the 1389 text of the Chipping Campden Hero Combat Play – "Yn cometh I, seynte George..." – or the like. The longstanding efforts of the theatre historians to "locate, transcribe, and publish systematically all surviving external evidence of dramatic, ceremonial, and minstrel activity in Great Britain before 1642" (1) have produced nothing of the kind, and nor have the equally thorough if less co-ordinated explorations of social historians into the social perspectives of traditional custom in the early modern period.(2) It is against this background that the familiar accounts long established as the earliest-known records of the mummers' plays merit critical re-examination, but this task should be prefaced by a clear definition of precisely what it is these may be the earliest evidence for: the history of "the mummers' play" is determined largely in advance by this definition.

This essay will therefore seek for early records of what is probably better called the dramatic mumming, in the sense of a seasonal house-visit custom performed by a group of guised men whose interaction with the households they visit involves the performance of a show including segments with enough by way of mimesis and plot to qualify as drama.(3) "Mummers' play" is a useful enough term in that it distinguishes these traditions both from other house-visit customs (e.g. wassailing) which lack a fully dramatic element (they are mummers' plays), and from other dramatic customs (e.g. lyke-wake games) performed under auspices other than the seasonal house-visit (they are mummers' plays).(4) It is potentially misleading, however, in at least two ways. It specifies exclusively the play, whereas most dramatic mummings involve the performance of an extended show comprising a formal Presentation (in speech or song) and a non-dramatic Entertainment (music, song, dance, speeches) as well the dramatic segment (which should consequently be distinguished as the play proper or, coming as it usually does between non-dramatic items,

the dramatic interlude). "Mummers' play" can also be used both in the generic sense equivalent to "the dramatic mumming" for a specific play performed by mummers, like the "Hero-Combat (or "St. George") play". The trouble is of course that many discussions fail to distinguish between the two senses; usually on the assumption that there is basically only one play (since all the recorded varieties derive from the same original ritual), and that the history of the activity can therefore be determined by the history of one of its forms or a characteristic feature of that form, be it a single figure (e.g. St. George or Beelzebub) or a sequence (e.g. a death and revival).

But a new perspective is acquired, and a new approach is needed, once it is appreciated that the mummers' play – in the sense of the dramatic mumming – is not necessarily a single play, or even variant developments of a single original form, but a type of custom, a variety of folk theatre, in which a variety of dramatic sequences (combined with a variety of non-dramatic items) could feature. English tradition alone can offer the distinct Hero-Combat and Wooing plays as well as the dramatic matter accompanying some sword-dance quêtes, (5) and Continental traditions of the dramatic house-visit several more, including plays on Christian themes. So the usual rules of theatre history apply: tracing the earlier history of St. George or the Fool or the death-and-revival sequence or even the entire Hero-Combat interlude will not determine the history of the dramatic mumming, any more than establishing the Danish antecedents of Hamlet and his family troubles prove a Nordic origin for Revenge Tragedy or the Elizabethan theatre.

Thus the many early references to performances of plays or (more often) pageants involving St. George in a multitude of English towns and villages (6) are of little value for present purposes: the auspices are different (a community festival on St. George's Day rather than a customary house-visit at Christmas, Easter or All Souls'), as is the performance context (village green or town square); they belong, in other words, to a different (folk-) theatre.(7)

It was the failure to distinguish in this way between the specific and the general (between the play – or rather part of it – and the "theatre" in which it was performed) which led Sir Edmund Chambers

to claim that the "provokingly complete" silence of the early records does not start until we get to the Middle Ages, since "so characteristic an episode of the Mummers' Play as the Cure" can be encountered in the context of seasonal custom as early as 1553.(8) The evidence for this comprises the following account of a London procession recorded by the citizen and Merchant-Tailor Henry Machyn in his diary for 17 March of that year:

The xvij day of Marche cam through London, < from > Algatt, master Maynard, the shreyff of London, wyth a standard and dromes, and after gyants boyth great and smalle, and then hobe-horsses, and after them the g<...>, and after grett horsses and men in cotes of velvet, < with chains > of gold abowt ther nekes, and men in harnes; < and then > the mores dansse, and then mony mynsterels; and af<ter came> the sergantes and yomen on horsse-bake with rebyns < of green > and whytt abowtt ther nekes, and then my lo<rd justice?> late behyng lord of myssrulle, rod gorgyusly < in cloth? > of gold, and with cheynes of gold abowt ys neke, with hand fulle of rynges of grett waluw; the w... serjants rod in cotes of velvet with cheynes of < gold; > and then cam the dullo and a sawden, and then < a priest? > shreyffing Jake-of-lent on horss-bake, and a do<ctor> ys fezyssyoun, and then Jake-of-lent('s) wyff brow<ght him> ys fessysyons and bad save ys lyff, and he shuld < give him > a thowsand li for ys labur; and then cam the carte with the wyrth hangyd with cloth of gold, and fulle of ban<ners> and mynstrels plahyng and syngyng; and a-for rod master Coke, in a cot of velvett with a cheyn off gold, and with flowres.(9)

But linking this record to the modern mummers' plays is both erroneous and misleading. It is erroneous because the business involving Jack of Lent, his Wife and his Physician (quite apart from its probable performance as dumbshow rather than drama) is a far from convincing parallel to the cure-sequence in the mummers' plays; indeed

it is extremely unlikely, given the occasion of the procession, that any cure was effected. The entry is clearly dated 17 March, but its position in the diary, as Chambers points out, suggests that this is an error for March 27 (i.e. Machyn has omitted an "x" in the date), which in 1553 was the Monday following Palm Sunday. In either case the period of Lent fasting is coming to its close, and correspondingly the figure symbolic of this period, Jack of Lent, is sick and dying (hence the priest hearing his confession). And, given the inexorable approach of Easter, he is past recovery and the physician's attempts at a cure are doomed to failure: the only consolation he might offer to Jack (and to seekers for mummers' play parallels) is the prospect of a renouveau come Ash Wednesday, 1554. Correspondingly, or rather conversely, the "late" Lord of Misrule of the preceding Christmas, whose reign was interrupted at the beginning of Lent, can now re-emerge in all his finery and process through the city accompanied by his morris dancers, hobby-horses, drummers, giants, etc.(10) The parallel is misleading since, as Chambers was quite aware, the auspices of this performance are a far cry from those of the dramatic mumming: what we might term the social auspices are civic, and the temporal (in this case seasonal) auspices Shrovetide (to which the matter, as we have seen, is intimately linked). The mimetic context (an outdoor processional pageant) is equally distinct. We are dealing again with a different theatre, and indeed a different stage.(11)

This is potentially the drawback, unfortunately, of an earlier and more convincing parallel which was noted right at the beginning of folk-drama scholarship, but later virtually forgotten. First remarked by Joseph Ritson, it comprises a fragment of two stanzas from BL MS Harley 1197, to which Ritson added an explanatory commentary (here italicized):

Behold a champion, who gives universal defiance:
 I ame a knighte
 And menes to fight
 And armet well ame I
 Lo here I stand
 With swerd ine hand
 My manhoud for to try.

The challenge is instantly accepted:

Thow marciall wite
 That menes to fight
 And sete uppon me so
 Lo heare I stand
 With swerd in hand
 To dubbelle eurey bloue

Here would necessarily ensue a combat with the backsword or cudgel, to the great entertainment, as well as instruction of the applauding crowd.(12)

The manuscript is a miscellany of three main classes of material: a series of fifteenth-century tracts and sermons, some with Lollard connections; an anti-Catholic treatise of the time of Henry VIII, and documents recording the rights and properties of Canterbury Cathedral. An unlikely context, perhaps, for a mumming fragment, but the stanzas quoted by Ritson occur on a separate sheet not related to the remainder; the page is otherwise blank except for a heading at the top which may read in part "Humfry Nayler 1471".(13) The combat is entirely Ritson's contribution, but not unreasonable: the dialogue form certainly suggests a dramatic presentation, and a duel with swords is evidently in the offing. That the dialogue comprised more than these two stanzas is suggested by a cancelled line in the second: it is not easily decipherable, but does not seem to repeat or anticipate any of the others. The precise wording and the stanza form differ from those of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Hero Combat mummers' plays, but the structure — a self-descriptive boast provoking an aggressive response — is very close to the opening exchange between St. George and his antagonist. "With sword in hand" is a common verbal formula in the Hero-Combat Plays, and often, as here, rhymes with "stand"; another conventional rhyme-pair, "knight"/"fight", is also anticipated. The verbal parallels between the two boasts (three of the second speech's six lines echoing the first) are also characteristic of more recent tradition, and may be symptoms of oral transmission, suggesting that the writer was recalling a customary performance, and the erasure may imply he was confused in the process of recollection. The

fragment may indicate (more convincingly than the London procession of 1553) that sequences of dialogue and action characteristic of (some of) the dramatic mummings of more recent tradition could be encountered as early as the fifteenth century, but just what the performance was, and in what circumstances "Humfry Nayler" saw it, for the time being defy reconstruction.

The most tantalizing of the early references to what might be antecedents of our mummings' plays is the account describing a customary show in Cork, Ireland, in Thomas Croker's manuscript, "Recollections of Cork" of c.1800, which claims to quote an earlier account of 1685:

The earliest theatrical exhibition which I can trace in Cork, is <thus quaintly> minutely enough described in a manuscript account of the City, written in 1685.. "Mumming and masking" says the writer "have we daily upon our new green. Last evening there was presented the drollest piece of mummery I ever saw in or out of Ireland. There was St. George and St. Dennis and St. Patrick in their buffe Coats, and the Turke was there likewise and Oliver Cromwell, and a Doctor, and an old woman who made rare sport, till Belzibub came in with a frying pan upon his Shoulder and a great flail in his hand <laying> threshing about him on friends and foes, and at last running away with the bold usurper Cromwell, 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."(14)

With the exception of St. Denis, all the characters mentioned, including Cromwell with his distinctive red nose, occur regularly in the Anglophone mummings' plays of more recent Irish tradition, and their configuration suggests the familiar combat-slaying-and-cure. The original 1685 account is lost, however, and its existence, date and content attested only by Croker;(15) both its authenticity and date have been questioned on a number of grounds.

Cork is, for example, at some distance from the other areas of Ireland where the Hero-Combat plays occur, notably in Ulster and parts of the old English pale around Dublin and Wexford, but if Croker is at all to be trusted this is not an isolated occurrence, for in a following paragraph which has attracted less attention he goes on to claim direct knowledge of mummings' plays involving the same action in Cork in his own time, -and of a locally printed chapbook text which seems to have escaped the standard accounts:

This identical pastime, which is evidently a later version of a very ancient popular performance, was practised within my recollection in Cork and <illegible erasure> for the benefit of Antiquaries I <discovered> beg to <say?> state that a halfpenny Edition under the title of "Christmas Rhymes" <was> is still printed and by sold by Charles Dillon, Castle Street, next to the Exchange. Such were the early exhibitions, the humble wit of which <with> aided by the grotesque garbs of the Actors <were sufficient to> <afforded> yielded unequivocal delight to <the contemporaries of> our <great-grandfathers> forefathers.(16)

The implausible appearance of Cromwell in a festive entertainment, only a few decades after his atrocities in Ireland, (17) might be explained by the ethnic and confessional composition of the community, since Cork, like the other areas in Ireland where Hero-Combat players are found, received a good deal of early settlement from England. On the other hand, however, a Protestant, Anglophile audience would hardly appreciate seeing Cromwell grotesquely parodied (his nose was a favourite of Royalist caricature as early a 1649), abused, and carried off by a devil. And either way, a pastime featuring Cromwell can hardly have been "ancient", at least in the form recorded, by 1685.(18)

Even if fifty years later than claimed, the account would still be of potential significance in reconstructing the early history of the mummings' play, but there is a final complication with regard to the precise auspices under which this show was performed. While the terms "mumming" and "masking" suggest that the reporter may have

known the show in the context of the winter house-visit, what he describes is clearly an outdoor performance "upon our new green" and in the evening, so probably in summer.(19) The writer may therefore have used these terms in the more general sense of a performance by guised and masked players. The authenticity of this aspect of the account is underlined by the practical detail of the second devil sweeping up the coins thrown by spectators; in later indoor performances the equivalent figure, Devil Doubt, goes round with a box.(20) It is tempting to suggest that a mummers' play (in the strict sense) has been transposed to these atypical circumstances for a special occasion (say to celebrate the opening of the "new green"), but logically if this account proves anything it is that the typical matter of the most common variety of the recent mummers' plays could in earlier times feature in a show performed under auspices quite distinct from the customary house-visit.(21)

Indeed the auspices of the Cork show need not necessarily have been a traditional custom: the reference to "daily" performances on the green suggests a fairly elaborate arrangement, perhaps verging on the professional. That a close analogue of the mummers' plot could be offered under such auspices is suggested by a humorous description of the entertainments offered at Bristol Fair in 1770, which includes the show on offer in the booth of one Mr. Jackson, its climax being a puppet-show, "The Siege of Troy", comprising the full combat-slaying-cure sequence of the Hero Combat Plays:

The curtain was drawn up, and the Grecian camp discovered – when a large party of Greeks and Trojans entered from the opposite wings – Hector, Achilles and O'Driscol were animated, the rest were very handsomely fashioned out of pieces of paste-board, and appeared full as majestic as the supernumeraries of the metropolitan theatres – When Hector and Achilles had shaken hands, both stript to their shirts to decide which was the better man – After some pugilistic manoeuvres which would not have disgraced Johnson, the sturdy son of Thetis struck the branch of Priam in the bread basket by a straight forward blow, and brought his

adversary to the ground – O'Driscol, distracted at his friend Hector's overthrow, thus bellowed for assistance

O'Driscol

A doctor, a doctor, ten pound for a doctor!

Enter Physician –

Physician.

Here am I!

O'Driscol.

What can you cure?

Physician

The cramp, the gout, the pain within
and the pain without!

O'Driscol

O boderation to your nonsense – can
you bring a dead man to life again?

Physician

Oh marry, that I can – take a little of
my tip-tap, put it on your nip-nap,
now rise up slasher and fight again.

After this skilful administration, Hector leapt from the stage upon his legs – cut a few capers – made a saraband, and was carried off in triumph – This event concluded the variegated performance.(22)

The Physician's odd reference to Hector as "slasher" may suggest that the puppet-master had adapted a traditional (or chapbook) Hero-Combat Play in which one of the combatants (as is often the case) is (Bold) Slasher, assigning his role to Hector. Alternatively the lines might originally have belonged to Hector, with the mummers' "Slasher" developing out of this (not inappropriate) descriptive term. An organic relationship between the two figures is suggested by their tendency to appear as alternatives in the same role, as the second of two champions called on by a character (sometimes explicitly their father) when the first is slain by the antagonist: Hector usually takes this role in the North of England (e.g. Derbyshire, Lancashire, and Yorkshire), Slasher in the South (e.g. Hampshire, Kent). And Hector is certainly

more in his natural habitat here among Greeks and Trojans than with St. George and the King of Egypt in the mummers' plays.

Relevant to this discussion is Sandra Billington's suggestion that the mummers' plays may be indebted for the Doctor, his comic servant and their vaudeville-like 'exchanges to the mountebanks and booth theatres of the fairgrounds, and in an earlier, mid-eighteenth century account of Cornish mummers' plays William Borlase refers enigmatically to the part of the show most resembling the Hero-Combat ("... the final victory of the hero of the drama, and the death of his antagonist") as "the combat of puppets", suggesting that it reminded him of something he had seen elsewhere as a puppet-show.(23) Either way, the Bristol and Cork accounts further reinforce the point that one of the particular plays we now associate with the mummers is eminently transferable between different theatres, be they "folk" or otherwise.

The earliest available record of the English mummers' play in which the dramatic element corresponds to that of more recent tradition is therefore still Andrew Brice's mock epic, *The Mobjiad*, written in 1737 (although not published until 1770), a burlesque account of an election in Exeter. In the course of an epic simile the poem refers to the "Christmas Mummer" who "England's Heroe plays,/And Dragon with his Whineard's Flourish slays", and in the manner of Pope the author supplies an explanatory note to the allusion:

At Christmas are (or at least very lately were) fellows
wont to go about from House to House in Exeter a
mumming; one of whom, in a (borrow'd) Holland
Shirt, most gorgeously be-ribbon'd, over his
Waistcoat, &c. flourishing a Faulchion, very valiantly
entertains the admiring Spectators thus:

Oh! here comes I Saint george, a Man of
Courage bold,
And with my Spear I winn'd three Crowns
of Gold.
I slew the Dragon, and brought him to the
Slaughter;

And by that very means I married Sabra,
the beauteous King of Egypts Daughter.

Play Musick.(24)

The auspices of the custom (the Christmas house-visit), the costume, St. George and his boast all anticipate closely the Hero-Combat Plays of the later records, and the reference in the main text also suggests a combat, although evidently not with the dragon who, as St. George's conventional lines quoted in the footnote indicate, is long dead by the time the plot of the play opens. The only real peculiarity here is St. George's concluding direction to the "Musick" (i.e. the accompanying musicians) to play, but it would not be out of keeping with the dramaturgy of the mummers' plays for each Hero to give a brief solo dance display following his (self-)introduction: precisely this device is specified in the sword-dance show reported by Sir Walter Scott in the Shetlands in the eighteenth century.(25)

Earlier than 1737, as the above earlier discussion has demonstrated, the records of the mummers' play and the mumming (house-visit) in which it is usually of late performed part company. The records of the play (or parts of it) already discussed can be multiplied by the numerous "echoes" detected by drama historians in medieval mystery cycles, miracle plays (e.g. the Croxton Sacrament), moralities (e.g. Mankind) and interludes (e.g. The Marriage of Wit and Science), and Elizabethan stage plays (e.g. Hamlet; Doctor Faustus), but these demonstrate no more than that "something closely resembling the modern folk-play in its central significant action was in existence in England by the end of the sixteenth century".(26) They do not demonstrate that at the time this something was performed in the context of a house-visit custom, or even "folk" in any sense of the word. Conversely there are many records of customary house-visits (some, but far from all, called "mummings") in which some kind of show was performed, but none indicating that it included a dramatic item resembling the modern mummers' plays.

The historian of the mummers' plays is therefore faced with a choice between pursuing the history of the play, or the history of the house-visit custom in which the play has recently been performed, and I would suggest that of these it is the visit which provides the more

significant object of study, although ultimately the two must be juxtaposed. Either the modern plays were added to a non-dramatic house-visit custom at some post-medieval period which further investigation might be able to determine, or there were dramatic house-visit shows in the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, the evidence for which we may have failed to recognize because it matched our expectations conditioned by the modern forms. The 1389 Chipping Campden mummers' play may indeed one day be discovered, or more likely recognised, but it is as likely to begin, "I, one Snout by name, present a wall" as "Yn cometh I, seynte George..."

NOTES

1. Records of Early English Drama Newsletter, 1.1 (1976), 1 (the "all" has been dropped however in recent statements on the aims of the REED project).
2. The most recent contribution is David Underdown's Revel, Riot and Rebellion. Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660 (Oxford, 1985).
3. "Guise" is adopted here as a neutral term encompassing both "disguise" (the deliberate concealment of identity) and "costume" (dressing in part).
4. As this statement implies, I take the terms "mummer" and "mumming" to refer to a seasonal house-visit, rather than any feature of the appearance (e.g. disguise) or behaviour (e.g. silence) of the performers. This corresponds to normal usage in both early and late sources to the extent that most "mummers" are (or pretend to be) visitors to the venue at which they perform, although conversely of course there are many house-visit customs designated by some term other than "mumming". It should also be appreciated that there are some customs (e.g. pace-egging, souling, plough-trailing, the sword dance) which exist in parallel dramatic and non-dramatic form (with and without an accompanying play).
5. The clumsiness of my formulation here reflects the inconsistency the current terminology for the three main varieties of dramatic mumming in England: "Hero-Combat" and "Wooing" refer to the play (proper) of the visitors' show, "Sword Dance" to part of the

non-dramatic Entertainment. "Quete" is used here in the sense of a house-visit custom whose main purpose is the begging of largesse (food, drink, money). It is arguable, although I shall not pursue the point here, that house-visit customs are as usefully distinguished by the purposes of the visitors (begging, greeting, conviviality, mischief) as by the content of their show (dramatic vs. non-dramatic; one play vs. another).

6. On the early St. George-and-Dragon shows see E.K. Chambers, The Medieval Stage (London, 1903), I, pp. 221-7; John Wasson, "The St. George and Robin Hood Plays in Devon", MEth, 2 (1980), 66-9; Eileen White, "Bryngyng Forth of Saynt George': The St. George Celebrations in York", MEth, 3 (1981), 114-121; Robert Withington, English Pageantry. An Historical Outline, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass., 1918), pp. 23-32; A.R. Wright, British Calendar Customs, England, Vol. II., Fixed Festivals, January - May (London, 1938), pp. 178-181.
7. This point is more important for the present argument than the more obvious differences in matter: the early St. George shows evidently depicted his dragon-slaying, an exploit which the St. George of the mummers' plays is emphatic has been achieved before he comes on.
8. E.K. Chambers, The English Folk-Play (Oxford, 1933), p. 160.
9. The Diary of Henry Machyn, ed. J.G. Nichols (1848; rpt. New York, 1968), p. 33. For Chambers' discussion see The English Folk-Play, pp. 155-57. The words in brackets were supplied by an early antiquarian with access to the manuscript and are partly readings, partly conjectures. I have no quarrel with them except the "lord justice" as the identity of the outgoing lord of misrule: the title of a particular nobleman was probably mentioned, or an honorific festive title for the lord of misrule (like the late "Lord of Purpool" at one of the inns of court). Ian Lancashire, Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain: A Chronological Topography to 1558 (Toronto, 1984), No. 1080, wrongly characterises this as a "procession of the Sheriff of London as Lord of Misrule"; the two figures are clearly distinguished.
10. I am grateful for this perception to Sandra Billington, who also points out that 1553 was a bad year for meat supplies in the city, and that the Lenten fish-diet may have started earlier this year -- hence this special celebration (the only one of its kind recorded by Machyn) as Lent approaches its end.

11. It would be proper to acknowledge that if the procession had stopped at intervals for the performance of a play by some of the participating figures - e.g. the "dullo" (who may be a devil or a fool), the Soldan, Jack of Lent, his Wife, the Priest and the Physician - the circumstances would have resembled the performance of mummers' plays in those (mostly Northern English) local traditions in which the mummers perambulate the community and perform at particular outdoor stations. But applying the strict logic of my definition, these are not dramatic (house-visit-) mummings either. I suspect such traditions may have abandoned the house-to-house pattern in favour of street venues in response to the special demographic and economic conditions of industrial towns and villages (e.g. the absence of "great houses" affording a ready and generous welcome to customary visitors), but it is also possible that they continue (or revert to) the station-to-station performances of the medieval and sixteenth century "gatherings" which financed community festivals such as the church-ales (and perhaps related to the processional performance of some provincial mystery cycles). It would not surprise me at all if the customs we now lump together as "mummers' plays", (because they provide auspices for the same or similar plays) should prove on closer examination of their contextual features prove to be distinct traditions with separate if linked histories.
12. Joseph Ritson, Remarks Critical and Illustrative on the Text and Last Edition of Shakespeare (London, 1783), p. 38; I have checked Ritson's transcript against the original. This fragment is also quoted by Chambers, Medieval Stage, I, 202, n.2, with the remark merely that it "looks ... like a dance or play".
13. The sheet is now bound and numbered as f. 203* (with the stanzas on the verso). It may however have been moved during rebinding in 1964, as Chambers cites "f.101*", placing it within the fifteenth century material. My thanks to M.A.F. Borrie of the Department of Manuscripts for sorting out this puzzle.
14. Thomas Croker, "Recollections of Cork", Dublin, Trinity College Library MS. 1206, ch. 9, pp. 11-12. The words in brackets in my transcript have been crossed out in Croker's text. The account has been frequently printed and discussed, although not always in full or accurately. See for example Alex Helm, The English Mummers' Play (Woodbridge, 1981), p. 7 (begins, "on our new green last evening..."; Alan Brody, The English Mummers and their Plays

- (London, n.d.), p. 11 (several inaccuracies); Alan Gailey, Irish Folk Drama (Cork, 1969), p. 8 (omits venue); W. Smith Clark, The Early Irish Stage (Oxford, 1955), pp. 4-5 (omits venue). None of these supply Croker's further paragraph on the Cork tradition which I quote below.
15. Alan Gailey, "Chapbook Influences on Irish Mummers' Plays", Folklore, 85 (1974), 20, n. 1, erroneously implies that Croker's manuscript itself has also disappeared.
16. Croker, op. cit., p. 12. Chapbook texts with the same title ("Christmas Rhymes") were published in Belfast later in the nineteenth century.
17. Remarkd on by Cawte, English Mummers' Plays, p. 7.
18. For a Royalist pamphlet of 1649 mocking Cromwell's nose "like a bright Beacon ... <that> hangs like a Comet o're thy dreadfull face...", see Lois Potter, "Marlowe in the Civil War and Commonwealth: Some Allusions and Parodies", in Kenneth Friedenreich, et al., eds. A Poet and a Filthy Play-Maker, (New York, 1988), p. 80.
19. Native Irish tradition had its "May mummers", although they acted a play quite different from the Hero-Combat (Alan Gailey, Irish Folk Drama, p. 88). Smith Clark, Early Irish Stage, p. 4, assigns this Cork performance to Christmas, but also claims that at the end of the seventeenth century such shows were "of frequent occurrence" in counties Cork and Wexford "on May Day and Christmas"; neither point is substantiated. A terminus a quo for the account might be established by determining the date at which this "new green" was laid out; an enquiry along these lines to a local authority has not been answered.
20. This detail, in view of the impracticality of sweeping up coins in grass in the dark of a winter evening, may also confirm a summer time performance.
21. While this article was in preparation the author was kindly furnished by Paul Smith with two variant texts, one at least "substantive", of Croker's account of the Cork show. They do not prompt any major revision of the suggestions advanced in my main text, but they do merit a brief mention if only to prompt further investigation. The first is in the Cork City Library copy of Charles Smith's The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork, 2 Vols. (Dublin, 1750), which contains interleaved annotations by Croker, started,

according to a note on a flyleaf (in Croker's hand) in July 1830. Opposite Book II, p. 406 is a variant of the account in the Trinity College ms of Croker's "Recollections of Cork". It differs from the latter mainly in specifying that the source is "the fragment of a very curious ms. description of Cork written in 1685" (emphasis supplied), and that this is "now in my possession". The quotation from the earlier MS has the following variants: Mummings and Maskings (for "Mumming and masking"); Last Night (for "Last evening"); drollest piece of Acting (for "drollest piece of mummery"); iron frying pan (for "frying pan"); laying about him (for "threshing about him", corrected from "laying..."); his broom (for "a broom"); and also indicates with asterisks that some text has been omitted between "rare sport" and "till Belzibub". It otherwise reproduces the Trinity College text as far as the words "...to their sport". The overt claim that Croker owned the manuscript (fragment) increases confidence in the latter's existence: the textual variants undermine it. The second text occurs in a note by "M.H." on "Mummings and Maskings", in the Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, 2nd ser., 41 (1936), 44, and probably derives from the later of the Croker texts just described, all of whose divergences from the Trinity College ms it follows, with the exception of the "iron frying pan". It differs from both, however, in adding in parentheses after the reference to the "new green" the identification "Hammond's Marsh, in the vicinity of Sheares' Street.

22. Anthony Pasquin, The Eccentricities of John Edwin, Comedian (London, 1791), I, 262-4.
23. Sandra Billington, A Social History of the Fool (Brighton, 1984), chapters 6 and 7, particularly pp. 100-101; William Borlase, The Natural History of Cornwall (Oxford, 1758), p. 299, quoted in C.R. Baskervill, "Some Evidence for Early Romantic Plays in England", MP, 14 (1916-17), 229-251; 467-512; this: 497, n. 5.
24. Andrew Brice, The MOBIAD; or Battle of the Voice (Exeter, 1770), p. 90 and n. On Brice and the dating of the work, see Cuthbert Bede, "Christmas at Exeter in 1737", Notes and Queries, 2 Ser., 10 (1860), 464-5.
25. David Buchan, ed. Scottish Tradition (London, 1984), pp. 220-225.
26. Thomas Pettitt, "The Folk-Play in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus", Folklore, 91 (1980), 72-77. In the terms of the current discussion the statement quoted is correct; the title of the article was optimistic.

SPANISH HOLY WEEK PROCESSIONS AND THE ENGLISH MYSTERY CYCLES: TOWARDS A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

Rafael Portillo

In some cities in the south of Spain, and particularly in Seville, the complaints of actors and theatre directors are often heard, as their dramatic productions are received rather coolly, as if the inhabitants of this area lacked interest in theatrical activities. Paradoxically, the people of the south have always been characterised by their fondness for traditional open-air performances. In fact, there is no town, no matter how small, which at some time of year does not celebrate some kind of popular festival. Seville itself has a calendar of festivities and spectacles so overloaded that one can say that no month passes without its corresponding celebration. As this is the case, it seems logical to think that the majority of its people prefer to participate spontaneously in public performances than pay admission to a commercial show.

Of all the open-air spectacles which take place in Seville, none has achieved the status of the Holy Week processions, undoubtedly the most important event of the year. Holy Week is also celebrated in many other Spanish cities, but Seville's has surpassed all the rest, not only for the number of people who take part, but also for the quality of the floats and art objects that are displayed. The processions continue to be organised according to criteria that have hardly changed since the sixteenth century, though, of course, the actual mise-en-scene has evolved with the passage of time. The Holy Week celebrations actually last eight days, from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, and during that time numerous processions go out into the streets. These consist of long lines of nazarenos (masked penitents) and enormous wooden floats which are called pasos. The floats are moved from underneath by teams of twenty to fifty men, who carry them on their shoulders, as wheels are not used. These men are called costaleros. On the floats, at a height of about two metres above street level, are placed the wooden figures of Jesus, Mary and other characters from the passion. Since the floats are covered with thick material on all four sides, the men who carry them cannot see what is happening around