THE FOLK PLAY AND THE CAROL IN MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS DRAMA

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PREFACE

The importance of establishing written English drama during the Middle Ages is commonly acknowledged, but factors affecting its growth are still appropriate areas for further research. For example, at the time that the Church was developing a literary drama, there existed among the folk certain performances of a dramatic nature, and two of these dramatic folk traditions--the folk play or mummers' play and the carol--are of some consequence in English literary history. This author perceived a need to bring together a number of scholarly comments upon these two folk traditions with a recognition of the wide range of opinions that such a study entails.

Although the folk play did not distinguish itself as a medieval literary form in quite the same way as did the carol in the latter's evolvement of a unique type of written poetry, both deserve individual attention from a literary point of view since both in their medieval application partake of a dramatic nature worthy of observance. This thesis involves an examination of the dramatic elements inherent in these two folk traditions with a consideration of the carol's significance as a literary form in its own right and the

relationship between the folk play and the carol, the ultimate objective being an investigation of the extent to which these two dramatic folk traditions under consideration influenced medieval literary drama from the liturgical plays through the mystery and miracle plays.

The idea for this topic emerged from a research project on the Middle English carol in Dr. Charles E. Walton's seminar in Middle English Literature. I wish to express special thanks to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Walton, for his guidance and beneficial criticism of the text and to my second reader, Mr. Richard L. Roahen, for his helpful suggestions on the manuscript. I also wish to thank Mr. James Knott for his assistance in the interpretation of Latin terms and my parents and brothers for their encouragement.

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CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH FOLK PLAY

A rather prominent folk dramatic presentation of medieval England, and a presentation which is still in existence today, is often referred to as the mummers' play. In order to understand the significance of the chief elements and characters in the mummers' play, it will be necessary to review theories concerning the ultimate origin of this type of folk play in an attempt to reconstruct its development into the Middle Ages. R. J. E. Tiddy has called attention to the opinions of some people who question the value of such a study and who question whether folk literature is the proper territory of a student of written literature. His reply is worthy of note and is as follows:

> Some would deny that [folk literature] had any separate entity, while others would say that it was part of another branch of knowledge, anthropology. With the first view I agree to this extent, that poetry is poetry wherever it is found; but I also feel that if, as most critics would admit, we are justified in studying the social habits of the eighteenth century in order to deal justly with eighteenth-century poetry, so we are justified in setting folk poetry in close relation with its creator the folk. In the main most people will probably agree that it is worth while looking into the origins of some of the simpler and more popular kinds of literary art,

> if only on the chance that they may throw light on their more complex offspring.[1]

It should be pointed out early in this investigation of the origin and development of a type of medieval folk literature, such as the English folk play, that it is a highly speculative matter since there is such a distance in time and since there is such a lack of contemporary recorded references to this type of literature. Such scholars as Tiddy, however, seem to believe that reasonable theories can be constructed on the basis of remarks that have been recorded by medieval contemporaries, on the study of similarities in other types of literature, and on the study of customs that have existed and have been documented in recent times among so-called "primitive" societies.[2] In addition, since complete descriptions of the folk plays and recording of the scripts have been attempted only in comparatively recent times, it is also necessary to base the conclusions partly on the traditional practices of the present-day people in Britain, keeping in mind the changes that the folk and his customs may have undergone since the Middle Ages.[3]

Another difficulty encountered in studying the English mummers' play is that there are many varieties of the play,

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[1] R. J. E. Tiddy, The Mummers' Play, p. 61.

[2] Ibid., p. 62.

[3] Ibid., pp. 64-65.

today. In order to understand the origins and medieval development of the play, it is necessary to identify those aspects observable in all, or nearly all, of the existing plays and to discard those aspects added in relatively recent times. Two characteristics seem to be applicable to all the English folk plays: first, all the plays take place at definite times during the year; secondly, all deal, if some only vaguely, with the theme of death and resurrection.[4]

In one of the more recent studies of the English mummers' play, Alan Brody has attempted to classify its many varieties into three categories: "Hero-Combat," in which there is at least one combat resulting in the death and resurrection of a character; "Sword Dance Ceremony," in which one dancer is slain by the others with the slain dancer being resurrected; and "Wooing Ceremony," in which the death and resurrection action may be subordinated to an episode in which a male character woos a lady. Since the theme of death and resurrection occurs at some point in these plays in all three categories,[5] this study employs the rather broad terms, folk play or mummers' play, to include any dramatic presentation of the folk which occurs at regular times during the

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[4]Alan Brody, The English Mummers and Their Plays, p. 3.

[5]Ibid., pp. 4-6.

year and which in some way deals with the theme of death and resurrection.

Whatever the variation in details, all of these folk plays involve the basic action of a character who dies and then is miraculously revived or resurrected by another character, usually a doctor.[6] Richard Southern in his extensive study of the development of the theater has given some attention to the evolution of the English mummers' play. According to Southern, the central part of the action is the killing of the character who will later be resurrected, an action which has little to do with any spoken part that may have been added.[7] Tiddy, also, has put much stress on the central action of the killing and resurrecting of one of the characters.[8] Southern and Tiddy, therefore, support the conclusion of Sir E. K. Chambers, who sees in the central action of the mummers' play the symbolization of the knowledge that the old year is dying with winter and the hope that a new year is being born with spring.[9] If these opinions are correct, the ultimate origin of the mummers' play must lie in the distant past and in the rituals and traditions of pagan

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[6]Sir E. K. Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, I, 207.

[7]Richard Southern, The Seven Ages of the Theatre, p. 52.

[8]Tiddy, pp. 73-74.

[9]Chambers, pp. 207, 218.

people, specifically in the fertility rites in which primitive cultures attempted, through magical methods, to obtain a new season of rebirth and growth after the death of a previous season.[10]

In his explanation of "Imitative Magic" and "Contagious Magic," Sir James George Frazer sees magic as concerned with two basic principles: "first, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and, second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed."[11] Both principles apparently figure in the origins of the English folk play.

Tiddy mentions a primitive idea that an event occurs as a result of one performing actions similar to the event. It was a common practice in many pagan societies to represent a spiritual being that had to die only to be resurrected. Closely related to this imitative type of magic was a concept of an encounter between the seasons and a battle between death and life. According to Tiddy, this fertility observance, along with one that involved the obtainment of a spiritual power, by consuming part of, or establishing contact with, a proper representative, is preserved in certain traditions in England with the action of the death and

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[10]Tiddy, p. 70.

[11]Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough, pp. 12-13.

resurrection of a character occurring in the sword dance and the mummers' play.[12]

Although their numbers and names may vary considerably in the surviving mummers' plays, it is possible to examine certain types of characters who recur frequently in twentieth-century folk plays. There are at least two central characters who engage in a battle in which one is slain (or at least injured). Then, there is a doctor who revives the slain fighter. Other minor characters who frequently appear are a clown or fool; a doctor's helper, often called Jack Finney; a "man-woman"; and Beelzebub.[13] The development of the two characters who engage in a battle is quite obviously an outgrowth of the death and resurrection theme discussed above in relationship to pagan rituals. The doctor, as the one who revives the slain character, may very well be a development from the early medicine man who often conducted the rituals of the pagan societies.[14]

Tiddy has also speculated upon the origins of certain minor characters, who may have been created for dramatic purposes or who may have developed from the ancient pagan rituals. For example, a lad dressed in female garments assumes

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[12]Tiddy, pp. 70-72.

[13]Ibid., p. 73.

[14]Ibid., pp. 74-76.

the role of a "man-woman" character. Tiddy suggests, in accordance with the principle of "contagious magic", that the part may have originated in those pagan practices in which female apparel was put on for the purpose of affecting fertility. Tiddy also raises the possibility that in the very early societies women performed the agricultural duties, and, thus, the rites affiliated with agriculture, whereas men were primarily concerned with hunting. After the domestication of animals, men could assume the agricultural duties and the attendant rituals in which the earlier female role was retained by disguising men as women.[15] This latter possibility mentioned by Tiddy is based largely on theories developed by Chambers.[16] In The Mediaeval Stage, Chambers indicates that the object of worship of the farmer-women would quite naturally assume a female form as the "earth-goddess" and that the hunter-men, hunting under the open sky, would quite naturally conceive of a "heaven-god". As the men assumed the agricultural duties, the earlier distinction between an "earth-goddess" and a "heaven-god" perhaps lingered on.[17] Without committing himself to any particular viewpoint, Tiddy goes on to raise yet a third possibility in considering that the "man-woman" character may have developed from a ritual

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[15] Ibid., pp. 76-77.

[16] Ibid., p. 77. See also, Chambers, pp. 105-07.

[17] Chambers, pp. 105-07.

marriage in which women were forbidden from taking a part.[18] Although none of Tiddy's suggestions can be conclusive, the thorough discussion of the development of this character is illustrative of the idea that a minor character may also be a holdover from earlier pagan rites.

Finally, minor characters, such as the Fool and Beelzebub, could be in some way affiliated with the early ritual with some nothing more than characters whose origin can be traced to participants in a dance. Although Tiddy seems to believe that the minor characters can be more satisfactorily explained as developing from the pagan rituals, the possibility remains that these characters were added to the central action for dramatic purposes as the mummers' play evolved.[19]

An aspect of the folk festivities that deserves attention in a discussion of folk drama is the processional. Enid Welsford in her detailed analysis of the court masque calls attention to the folk custom of "mumming" from which she believes the court "momerie" to have developed. Among the folk, mumming involved a processional of disguised people that moved from house to house, stopping for dancing or playing "mumchance," a dice game.[20] Margaret Dean-Smith

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[18]Tiddy, p. 77.

[19]Ibid., pp. 76-79.

[20]Enid Welsford, The Court Masque, p. 30. See also, Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages 1300-1660, I, 198.

expands upon information provided by Welsford in considering the English masque to be of folk play origin.[21] Dean-Smith sheds some light on the purpose of the procession, indicating the purpose and action of the folk mummings to be quite similar to that of the masque, the purpose being "to bring prosperity and goodwill, either by the act of perambulation with dances or other enactments performed in station . . . or by the proferring of a gift or some symbol . . . and receiving in exchange other gifts . . . ."[22] In all likelihood, the mumming can be traced to the ritualistic observances of pre-Christian peoples.[23] Whatever the eventual development of the mumming practice, mumming appears in origin to be related to the attempts of pagan people to convey luck.[24]

Folk mummings were prohibited by church edicts of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries although those of the nobility were apparently allowed. The mummings were evidently popular then and of importance to the medieval folk although the Church disapproved of them.[25] Of course, such activities attracted unruly crowds, and the element of

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[21]Margaret Dean-Smith, "Folk-Play Origins of the English Masque," Folk-Lore, LXV (1954), 74-76.

[22]Ibid., p. 81.

[23]Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages 1300-1660, I, 198. See also, Welsford, p. 30.

[24]Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, I, 400.

[25]Welsford, pp. 37-38.

disguise allowed the troublemakers to remain unidentified.[26] Brody considers the procession or "visit" to be an "essential" element that can still be observed in present-day mummers' plays although the exact manner of the procession may vary from locality to locality.[27] Southern, likewise, verifies the importance of the "processional element" by stating: "The processional element in the, apparently stationary, Mummers' Play is noticeably common, once one looks for it."[28]

Scholars, then, have established the importance of the processional in the English folk play, but one wonders if it has anything specifically to do with the suggested origins of the play. Welsford provides some information that may be pertinent in considering the essential element in the masque lying in the procession of masked persons and in seeing in this element a relationship to the ritualistic observances of ancient people the world over. Moreover, she notes that the mumming activities cluster around those times during the year when thoughts are turned toward the necessary provision of food.[29] These mummer activities, sometimes involving dramatic

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[26]Wickham, p. 202.

[27]Brody, pp. 16-17.

[28]Southern, p. 57.

[29]Welsford, pp. 37-38.

representations of "death and resurrection" were for the purpose of affecting by "imitative magic" the growth of crops.[30]

Before considering masks and costumes, a discussion which will return to the costume element in the processional, one should investigate the importance of other peripheral actions of the folk play, such as that in which a character, often a woman, sweeps with a broom to clear an area for the actors.[31] Such action can be viewed as a practical device for moving spectators away from the area in which the play is to be performed.[32] There is also the possibility of the woman and the broom being associated with witchcraft and magical practices attributed to witches.[33] Chambers acknowledges the practical method of clearing the area for the actors, but he sees more significance in the sweeping. He also mentions that the woman is called the Old Witch in a play at Bassingham; however, he rejects the notion of the witch's broom in favor of a less obvious but solidly supported

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[30]Ibid., p. 3.

[31]Chambers, The English Folk-Play, pp. 211-12.

[32]Arthur Beatty, "The St. George or Mummers' Plays: A Study in the Protology of the Drama," Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, XV (1906), 276.

[33]Laurence Gomme, "Christmas Mummers," Nature, LVII (1897), 176.

opinion.[34] In a play at Askham, the woman who wields the broom has a power like the doctor's to cure. Furthermore, in many plays, the broom is used not by the woman but by a minor character known as Little Devil Dout. Chambers concludes that the broom has to do with the dispensing of good or bad luck. He mentions an old superstition that forbade on the first of the year the removal of ashes or fire in a dwelling and Little Devil Dout's remarks that he may do so.[35]

The act of sweeping leads one to a consideration of another important feature of the English folk play, e. g., the circle. The circular clearing of an area may also be a practical act that has connections with pagan magical rites.[36] Southern points out that the circular formation is the natural one for a crowd around a scene of action, allowing all spectators to see clearly and putting all of them at approximately the same distance from the center of the action. In considering the circular organization, Southern suggests that such a method of separating the audience from the actors would be among "the primitive players' resources."[37]

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[34]Chambers, The English Folk-Play, pp. 211-12.

[35]Chambers, The English Folk-Play, pp. 211-12.

[36]Brody, pp. 18-20.

[37]Southern, pp. 57-58.

It has been seen that the sword dance too is a dramatic presentation that involves death and resurrection.[38] Violet Alford has some comments related to the importance of the circle in her attempt to trace the origins of the English sword dance. Since the sword dance is performed in a closed circle that is never broken during the performance, Alford has given considerable attention to the circular formation. She points out that circular chain dances have been depicted in rocks and on early works of art, one depiction believed to date as early as 3400 B. C., and concludes that circular chain dances existed prior to the introduction of metal and that chain dances, therefore, evolved into sword dances. Alford states that her idea that the sword dance evolved from the circular chain dance is formed with the knowledge that sword dances existed in those European areas that are also affiliated with the mining of metals.[39] Early people could obviously conceive of the valuable metal as being magical. Dancing priests who guarded the metal are referred to in Greek and Latin writings. It is also interesting to note that one of the duties of these dancing priests was to bring forth Spring.[40]

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[38]Brody, p. 5.

[39]Violet Alford, Sword Dance and Drama, pp. 13-16.

[40]Ibid., pp. 16-17.

Once again, the student of the English folk play is faced with a feature that could be reasonably explained as a practical solution to a dramatic problem, but there is no reason to exclude the possibility of the practical solution being related to an early magical rite. Brody comes to this very conclusion after examining the views of both Southern and Alford. Brody points out that Southern connects the mummer presentation to ritual drama by placing the practical clearing in the realm of primitive devices, the same device also being used in folk presentations in Tibet and Mexico. Brody concludes that the circle in itself indicates little about the origin of the mummers' play, but in conjunction with other elements that have been examined, it seems quite reasonable to view the circle as one affiliated with magic and early magical rites.[41]

Some consideration should be given also to the costumes and masks accompanying folk plays, for they too are apparently indications of the origins of the play. As early as 1897, Laurence Gomme had described in Nature the activities of the Christmas mummers.[42] Gomme realized even then that the significance of the mummer presentations lay not in the dialogue but in the action, believing the circle to

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[41]Brody, pp. 18-20.

[42]Gomme, pp. 175-77.

represent a magic ring and the death and resurrection episode to represent the battle of the seasons, a representation prominent all over Europe. In support of his opinions, Gomme calls attention to the costumes of the mummers and attempts to connect them with ancient vegetation and animal cults. Although the mummers with which Gomme was familiar used paper costuming, he raises the possibility that the paper costumes were adaptations from the earlier use of leaves. There are some examples of peasant festivities using leaves and of mummers using animal disguises.[43] In another early but more complete study of the English mummers' play, Arthur Beatty also believes the paper to represent leaves or green branches and points to ample examples of the use of both in English folk festivals, such as the St. George celebration at Carinthia, as well as in festivities in Transylvania and Roumania.[44]

In more recent times, Southern has given close attention to the costumes of mummers, saying that costumes other than those made of paper have come into use. However, he adds: "The true Mummer dons 'papers'."[45] Southern also, at least hints at a more universal and ritualistic significance

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[43] Ibid., p. 176.

[44] Beatty, pp. 291-92.

[45] Southern, p. 47.

in the costumes by seeing in the fully costumed mummer figure a resemblance to costumes in such other part of the world as Bavaria and Africa.[46]

Frazer explains that, in many seasonal festivals, a person representing the "spirit of vegetation" is costumed with tree parts and flowers and goes through a pretended death. He traces these practices to those in which a king or priest, representing a god, was put to death. It was thought in this practice that, as the power was weakened by the material body in which it resided, it had to be transferred to a new king. Thus, the "old representative" was slain in order to transfer the spiritual power into another representative. Frazer further states: "The killing of the god, that is, of his human incarnation, is therefore merely a necessary step to his revival or resurrection in a better form."[47]

Welsford believes that the activities of mummers can be linked to trees and animals as objects of pagan worship. Both leaf and animal costumes have been known to be used in mumming festivities. Welsford sees the practice being based upon the idea of "contagious magic" and the hope that the magical power can be transferred to the people and the area around them. She further believes that the animal disguises

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Frazer, pp. 348-49.

may be linked to a time when, after the death of a sacrificial animal, the folk spread its blood about and used its hide and horns as costumes in order to extend its beneficial powers to everyone. She indicates that ultimately many of these festivities may be explained by the ancient custom of killing a representative of a god in order to revive the god's powers.[48] Welsford concludes that this attempt to transfer power, prosperity, and luck to the whole community is evident in the mummers' processional, which has already been discussed, and in the mummers' quête,[49] the collection of money from the audience at the conclusion of a performance.[50]

Some folk plays include a wooing scene, an episode so prominent that it cannot be ignored in considering the origin and medieval development of the English folk play.[51] In this type of folk play, a woman is wooed by a male character. Although there is an episode involving death and resurrection, it may be subordinate to the wooing episode. It is important to note that the episodes of death and resurrection occur somewhere in the play and that this type of folk play is

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[48]Welsford, pp. 5-6.

[49]Ibid., p. 6.

[50]Ibid., p. 4.

[51]Charles Read Baskervill, "Mummers' Wooing Plays in England," Modern Philology, XXI (1924), 225-26.

restricted to a certain area, namely, to the East Midlands.[52]

Charles Read Baskervill, perhaps the first scholar to attach much importance to the wooing scenes in the English folk plays, sees in these scenes another survival of ancient pagan ritual, involving a "'sacred marriage.'"[53] Regarding "the sacred marriage", Frazer explains those European ceremonies in which human representatives of the "spirits of vegetation" were married. On the basis of "imitative magic", the actual or pretended wedding of the representatives was to help bring about the sexual reproduction of plants.[54]

Baskervill says that a "constant element" in the wooing plays is that of a female character rejecting an old man in favor of a younger one and concludes:

> There is little doubt that the rejection and marriage symbolize the virgin union of the representatives of the new season and the displacement of the representatives of the old season. With the wooing a renouveau, or slaying and reviving of one of the chief characters, is often found in a form that seems to be an integral part of the symbolism of the wooing plays.[55]

Baskervill compares the English plays with folk plays that survive in the Balkans in which a marriage takes place in a

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[52]Brody, p. 6.

[53]Baskervill, 226.

[54]Frazer, p. 161.

[55]Baskervill, 227.

plot that also involves a plow. In England one such play occurs on Plow Monday, and some folk plays have characters referred to as "'plow lads'" and "'plow boys'". Baskervill, therefore, argues that the plow further links the wooing play to ancient fertility rites and that the similarities in the plays in the Balkans and in England are "due not to any influence of a relatively modern period but to the retention of the same pagan symbolism in both . . . ."[56]

Baskervill, then, proceeds to discuss the possible intermingling of the folk plays with those of "semi-professional" actors. He points out that the theme of wooing is a frequent occurrence in literature and in human activities, regardless of the time span involved. Baskervill thinks that folk plays of the wooing type may have influenced literary wooing plays and vice versa.[57]

It is this latter point of Baskervill's that allows Chambers to disagree with some of Baskervill's theories concerning the origin of the wooing episode in the mummers' play. Chambers re-emphasizes Baskervill's point that wooing is a common feature in all times and adds:

> The theme of wooing, as Professor Baskervill himself points out, is a natural one in any age of society. It does not, like the unnatural notion of a revival

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[56] Ibid., 228-29.

[57] Ibid., 229-30.

> after death, require any such recondite explanation as the survival of a fragment of early mentality affords.[58]

Chambers also believes the symbolization involved in people of various ages representing the old and new seasons to be an unlikely one for the makers of the early folk plays. In further support of his opinions, Chambers mentions that the slaying of an old man is not an invariable action in plays with which he is familiar.[59] Whether the wooing scene is a remnant of the pagan ritual or whether it is a much later addition, the wooing plays like the other folk plays under consideration can logically be traced to an ancient ritual of death and resurrection.

Viewed as the descendant of ancient pagan rituals, there are certain prominent features of the English folk play that have become attached to its central action and that require an explanation. First of all, why are the folk plays frequently called mummers' plays? Here, one is faced with a difficult problem, for the ultimate derivation of the word "mummer" is uncertain. Chambers suggests that the actors may have simply obtained the name from sophisticated activities affiliated with the practice of mumming. He does mention that attempts have been made to derive the word "mummer" from the low German word mumme, meaning "'a mask'," and to

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[58]Chambers, The English Folk-Play, p. 233.

[59]Ibid., pp. 233-35.

affiliate the term with "'mum'," meaning "'mute'." Although silence originally may have been a dominant feature, Chambers points out that the present folk plays are not silent. As far as there being affiliation with "secrecy" in the use of disguise, he indicates that such a practice would not have been appropriate in the ancient "public cult" from which the folk play developed.[60]

Welsford devotes several pages in The Court Masque to the possible origins of such terms as "momerie" and "mumming," and feels that the forms of the word in many languages denote a "face-mask" more often than "silence".[61] She considers as reasonable that the word may be traced back to a Greek term mommo, which was apparently something frightening and which, in turn, may have been derived from the name of the underworld gooddess, Mormo. She speculates that, if her reasoning is sound, the association of "mask" with Mormo may come from the persons who masked themselves as the goddess.[62] On the other hand, Brody, who prefers the term, "men's dramatic ceremony," to the term "mummers' play," calls attention to the possibility of the word, "mummer," coming into English from the Dutch word momme and the Danish word mumme, which,

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[60] Ibid., pp. 226-27.

[61] Welsford, pp. 32-33. See also, pp. 30-36.

[62] Ibid., pp. 33-35.

likewise, have to do with a mask. Whatever the ultimate source of the word, Brody shows that "mummer" is a vague, inaccurate term because of the affiliation of the word with silence. Furthermore, although disguise may be important in folk plays, not all of the plays of the type under consideration are always called mummers' plays.[63]

The importance of the folk plays occurring at definite times in the year has been indicated; however, some attention must be given to the times that the plays now take place. Most of the English folk plays are now performed during the Christmas season, although some occur on other holidays with several being presented on Easter.[64] If the plays are of pagan origin, one must consider how a pagan ritual concerned with the death and resurrection of the year became associated with certain holidays, especially such Christian ones as Christmas and Easter. Chambers explains that many folk practices, including plays, apparently were attracted to the important Christian holiday of Christmas after the introduction of Christianity into Britain. He does point out that several plays are performed at times other than Christmas, and of particular importance are those performed on Plow

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[63]Brody, p. 4.

[64]Chambers, The English Folk-Play, p. 4.

Monday, which was "probably dislocated from its primitive date, the earliest of the spring feasts."[65]

Unless it is carefully examined, there is one final feature of many mummers' plays that may serve to obscure the ultimate origins of the play. In many folk plays, the hero is St. George, and such a play is often known as a St. George Play.[66] Alfred W. Pollard was hardly concerned with the origin and development of the mummers' play when he mentioned in a footnote that "the influence of the old play of St. George of Cappadocia is remotely traceable in the Christmas mummings."[67] Nevertheless, since that time, there have been attempts to trace the character of St. George to a literary source. Chambers suggests that St. George may have been more important in religious plays than is evident from the extant ones. Chambers proceeds to review the legend of St. George and its part in literature, with especial emphasis upon the possible influence of a sixteenth-century work by Richard Johnson entitled the Famous Historie of the Seaven Champions of Christendom.[68] Tiddy suggests that the hero, St.

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[65]Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, I, 226-27. In the following chapter (ch. 11, pp. 228-48), Chambers gives a thorough account of folk practices that became affiliated with the Christmas season.

[66]Beatty, pp. 275-76.

[67]Alfred W. Pollard, ed., English Miracle Plays Moralities and Interludes, p. lix., fn. 2.

[68]Chambers, The English Folk-Play, pp. 170-85. See also The Mediaeval Stage, I, 220-21.

George, came into the folk play via the Cycle of Romances in which St. George is a prominent figure. He also points out that St. George would quite naturally fit into the folk plays of death and resurrection because, in the original eastern legend, St. George is killed but restored to life by the Archangel Michael.[69] Alford is of the opinion that St. George crept into the folk plays at a date earlier than that of the Johnson work. Alford's study was published a number of years after that of Chambers, and with more examples to draw from, she finds little in the lines and action of the plays that are derived from Johnson's work. She does, however, seem to believe the St. George character is derived from some earlier recorded work.[70]

On the other hand, Beatty calls attention to the fact that St. George became the patron saint of England as early as 1349 and was quite likely well-known to the medieval English people. He, therefore, sees no reason to assume that St. George came into the mummers' play from a literary source. The play that Pollard alluded to is not extant, and it appears plausible "that the saint may have stepped directly out of the church story into the popular play."[71] Moreover, Beatty

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[69]Tiddy, p. 75.

[70]Alford, pp. 50-53.

[71]Beatty, pp. 277-81.

points out that another strong indication that the St. George character was a non-literary attachment to the mummers' play lies in the fact that the character in the play is not always consistent with the character of the legend. For example, in the folk play, St. George is sometimes slain, and sometimes not. Furthermore, the dragon, so prominent in the legend, is not always included in the plays. The action of the doctor curing the slain character or characters also apparently has no basis in surviving religious drama. Beatty suggests "that the St. George incident is very roughly laid on over some older story, which evidently did not place any special stress on the death of any particular person or persons."[72] Benjamin Hunningher evidently agrees with Beatty and finds no precedence established in medieval Christian drama for the general resurrection of all dead characters.[73] Karl Young, who does not discuss the origin of St. George in the folk play, notes that in some cases St. George is slain, and in some cases not, re-emphasizing that the central theme of the mummers' play is one of death and resurrection and not a celebration of a certain hero.[74] Regardless of the origin of the character of St. George in the folk plays, the central

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[72] Ibid., pp. 284-85.

[73] Benjamin Hunningher, The Origin of the Theater, p. 102.

[74] Karl Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church, I, 11-12.

theme of death and resurrection as an indication of the pagan origins of the English folk play must always be kept in mind.

The ultimate origin of the mummers' play is evidently in the ancient rituals of the pagan people. Most scholars seem to agree that the central theme and action in the folk play is the killing and reviving of a character and that this action represents the death and rebirth of the year. Other features of the folk play may also have evolved from the central ritual or may be later additions, some obviously attached after the introduction of Christianity.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MIDDLE ENGLISH CAROL

A significant type of Middle English poem with dramatic overtones is the carol, which persents a problem somewhat unlike that of the English folk play. Whereas there was general scholarly agreement of the ultimate origin of the folk play, there is still some controversy concerning the ultimate origin of the carol. Nonetheless, the carol, like the folk play, has been the subject of considerable speculation regarding its medieval development and its association with the folk. It is useful to establish first just what is meant by the carol form, for it is a key element in many of these theories.

Richard Leighton Greene calls attention to the many indistinct references made to the carol but contends that the carol during the Middle Ages had a definite meaning and was recognized as a particular type of lyrical poetry.[75] He defines the carol as "a poem for singing, on whatever subject, in uniform stanzas and provided with a burden, a choral

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[75]Richard Leighton Greene, ed., The Early English Carols, pp. xiii-xiv.

element which is sung at the beginning of the piece and repeated after every stanza."[76] Moreover, he places an emphasis on the burden in carols, explaining that it is the distinguishing sign of the carol. He considers that the burden, which is sung at the beginning of the carol as well as after each stanza, identifies the work as a distinct type of medieval poem. Since he is convinced that the burden is such an important part of the carol form, he also feels it necessary to distinguish between "burden" and "refrain," thus defining "refrain" as "a repeated element which forms part of a stanza" and "burden" as "a repeated element wholly outside the individual stanza-pattern."[77] He points out, so well, that the carol often, but not always, follows a definite rhyme scheme, in which the first three lines of each stanza rhyme with each other, and the fourth and final line of the stanza rhymes with the two lines of the burden, a couplet (aaabBB).[78]

Other scholars verify the reasonableness of Greene's definition. Rossell Hope Robbins also stresses the importance of the burden, having discovered that in more than one hundred of the preserved medieval carols, the beginning words

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[76]Richard Leighton Greene, ed., A Selection of English Carols, p. 1. See also, Greene, The Early English Carols, pp. xxii-xxiii.

[77]Greene, The Early English Carols, p. cxxxiii.

[78]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 1.

of the burden are included after every stanza, suggesting that the burden was to be sung not only at the beginning of the carol but also after every stanza.[79] Musicologist John Stevens lends support to Greene's theory from a musical point of view and adopts Greene's definition in determining the carols to be included in his collection of fifteenth-century carols. He sees in the burden and the stanzaic rhyme scheme a connection of the carol with definite lyrical types in other European countries.[80]

It is rather certain, from the preserved manuscripts of medieval carols, that the carol form was firmly established in England by the fifteenth century with only an extremely small number of extant carols composed prior to 1425.[81] The nature and use of the carol prior to the fifteenth century are mainly matters of speculation, and several scholars have met the challenge. Many of these speculations have taken interesting turns, and such speculations concerning the medieval use and development of the carol are important starting points in the attempt to trace the ultimate origin. Greene believes the English carol is closely related to the Old France carole,

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[79]Rossell Hope Robbins, "The Burden in Carols," Modern Language Notes, LVII (1942), 16-17.

[80]John Stevens, ed., Mediaeval Carols in Musica Britannica, IV, ed. Anthony Lewis, xiii.

[81]Rossell Hope Robbins, "An Early Rudimentary Carol," Modern Language Review, LIV (1959), 221.

a song and dance combination[82] and, from the numerous references and descriptions in medieval writings and pictures, has reconstructed the probable carole form,[83] in which all dancers joined hands and either formed an open chain or a closed ring, sometimes alternating between the chain and the ring. The group stood and marked time while the leader sang a stanza and then went to the left as the whole group sang the burden.[84]

Greene thinks that one of the most telling indications that the carol was understood by the medieval English people as song and dance involves the legend of the Kölbigk carollers. Goscelin, an English monk, recounts the story in a Latin work entitled the Life of St. Edith. The story is related by one Theodoric, who claims to have been one of the ring-dance participants cursed by a priest when they refused to stop dancing in order to go to mass. Greene argues that this incident evinces that the English could understand the story in 1080 with no apparent need of an explanation of the nature of the carol.[85]

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[82]Greene, The Early English Carols, p. xxiv. See also Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 2.

[83]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 7-8. See also Greene, The Early English Carols, pp. xxi-xxxii.

[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid., pp. 5-6.

No carols are extant from the twelfth century, but R. M. Wilson has compiled some evidence to show that by this time the carol existed as a popular form in England. Wilson mentions that William FitzStephen of the twelfth century gives a description of what apparently was a type of ring dance in London. Furthermore, Giraldus Cambrensis in his twelfth-century work, Gemma Ecclesiastica, relates the account of dancers singing in the churchyard. According to this account, a priest who had heard the singing of the night unintentionally began the morning mass with words from the secular song, words which Wilson translates as meaning "'Sweetheart, have mercy'". The Bishop of Worcester, therefore, forbade the singing of that secular song in his diocese.[86]

Greene shows that forms of the word "carol" appear also in a Middle English work, the Cursor Mundi, believed to have been written near the beginning of the fourteenth century. Here, Greene interprets the word as having basically the same meaning as the Old French carole, e.g., a ring-dance combined with singing.[87]

Robert Mannyng of Brunne adapts the legend of the Kölbigk carollers in his fourteenth-century work, Handlyng

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[86]R. M. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, p. 255.

[87]Greene, The Early English Carols, pp. xv-xvi. See also Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 3.

Synne, a poem to which Greene refers as an indication that the carol was well-known in Mannyng's time. The setting for the event in Mannyng's work is England:[88]

> And fyl þys chaunce yn þys londe,
> Yn Ingland, as y vndyrstonde,
> Yn a kynges tyme þat hyght Edward
> Fyl þys chau⟨n⟩ce þat was so hard.[89]
>
> (l. 25-28)

Furthermore, in the conclusion to the poem, Mannyng feels that it is necessary to remind his English audience of the dangers of carolling:[90]

> Þys tale y tolde 3ow to ⟨make⟩ 3ow aferde
> Yn cherche to karolle, or yn cherche3erde,
> Namely a3ens þe prestys wylle:
> Leueþ whan he byddeþ 3ow be stylle.[91]
>
> (l. 262-65)

There is the possibility that the French carole was imported into England directly from France after the Norman Conquest of 1066. However, R. M. Wilson calls attention to certain developments within Anglo-Saxon England that may have given rise to some kind of native song-dance combination, independently of any French influence. He points out that the Latin work, De Gestis Herewardi Saxonis, reveals that a heroic celebration involved the singing and dancing women

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[88]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 5, 7.

[89]Robert Mannyng, "The Dancers of Colbek," in Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose, ed. Kenneth Sisam, p. 4.

[90]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 7.

[91]Mannyng, p. 12.

and speculates that songs about Anglo-Saxon events, known as cantilenae, could have either developed a practice or developed from a practice similar to that of the carol. Moreover, Wilson notes the work of Thomas of Ely in the twelfth century, who relates a story about the Anglo-Saxon ruler, Canute, who, upon hearing the singing of monks, composed a song of his own, which Wilson claims eventually became a carol. Possibly, then, certain developments within Anglo-Saxon England were contributing to a tradition that could have given rise to a kind of song-dance combination. At any rate, it is known that music had advanced far enough in England by the time of the Norman Conquest so that the carol form, if not native, was readily adaptable into English.[92] Greene also raises the possibility that the women of Anglo-Saxon England knew some sort of song and dance combination. He remarks that, despite the variation in detail, the basic structure, observable in the carol form, of a solo stanza and a group burden, was known over a great period of time in many European countries.[93]

In addition to establishing that the Middle English carol was related to the song and dance practices of the folk, some scholars have sought to go beyond the medieval French carole to the ultimate origins of the carol. For

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[92]Wilson, pp. 253-55.

[93]Greene, The Early English Carols, p. xxxiii.

example, Greene suggests that the carol may be traced to a very distant past beyond medieval Europe and believes it to be ultimately affiliated with pagan dances, some of which figured in the religious observances, including the fertility rites which may have involved the amorous activities of women.[94]

In his attempt to reconstruct the beginnings of lyrical poetry, Sir E. K. Chambers finds from anthropology that the beginnings can be related to the emotional expressions that accompanied the physical actions, both work and leisure, of the people.[95] He shows the importance of the stanza-burden form in the very early folk song, explaining how a capable leader would soon become the stanza singer, indicating when the group should join in the singing of the burden. He further believes that from this folk song leader the minstrel and eventually the trouvère developed. The burden, of course, becomes "a literary ornament" rather than "an essential element" as it was among the folk; however, the literary burden is, nonetheless, indicative of the primitive origin of the stanza-burden form.[96]

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[94]Ibid., p. cxi.

[95]Sir E. K. Chambers and F. Sidgwick, eds., Early English Lyrics Amorous, Divine, Moral, and Trivial, pp. 259-60.

[96]Ibid., p. 260.

Chambers completely reconstructs the probable manner in which carols and *caroles* ultimately originated, as follows:

> The instinct to emotional self-expression in rhythm as I have suggested elsewhere, finds it outlet, not only in response to the rhythms of labour in such folk activities as the swing of the sickle or flail or the pull of the oar, but also in the rhythms of play, when the nervous energies, released from the ordinary claims, are diverted into unremunerative channels, and under the stimulus of meat and wine the idle feet of the chorus break into the uplifting of the dance. This we may believe to have been notably the case at critical seasons of the agricultural year, when our primitive ancestors went in procession about the fields of their village, to secure fertility to their crops and herds, gathering finally in a ring of ecstatic dancing around some notable copse or tree, which was regarded as the special habitation of the fertilization spirit. And as the spirit presided over human as well as other fertility, it was natural that women should take a leading part, and that the impulse of the dance should be amorous. So, at least, we may speculate. Originally the song which accompanied it may have been no more than an inarticulate outcry. But it came to centre round a leader, who traced a theme, while the rest, from time to time, iterated his phrases, or later were trained to break in at fixed intervals with a recurrent formula, which emphasized the significance of his intention. And in this way, we may suppose, the *carole*, with its stanza and refrain, came into existence.[97]

Although scholarship has established the reasonable assumption that the carol finds its ultimate origin in pagan rites, the fact remains that most of the carols that have survived from the Middle Ages are of a religious nature.[98] John Speirs finds nothing remarkable in the fact that

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[97]Sir E. K. Chambers, *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages*, p. 69.

[98]Greene, *The Early English Carols*, p. cxi.

medieval religious lyrics, including the carol, should be the ones most likely to be preserved since it was primarily church officials who were charged with this responsibility. Speirs points to numerous church records condemning folk customs involving singing and dancing as evidence that the secular songs of pagan origin persisted even though the religious ones were those that were written down.[99] Chambers observes that the clerics were particularly upset because such singing and dancing, often involving women, was occurring within the church ground itself.[100] Wilson finds it a bit "ironical" that many of the fragments of the early, secular carols are preserved through quotations in clerical declamations.[101]

Although it is evident, then, that many church officials became concerned about the popularity of secular carolling, there remains the problem of how the carol form got into the hands of the clergy. Arthur K. Moore, for example, thinks that the Church used the secular form for religious purposes:

> The "Godlification" of the old genre was part of a well-conceived plan to substitute devotional song

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[99]John Speirs, Medieval English Poetry, p. 46.

[100]Chambers, English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages, p. 69.

[101]Wilson, p. 256.

for profane and thus promote religiosity with the Devil's own merry instrument.[102]

Greene observes that the Church continually encountered problems in medieval Europe in its attempt to combat survivals of pagan customs. Since prohibitions against those festivities of the folk that involved singing and dancing were issued time and time again, he concludes that the denunciations in themselves of such practices were ineffectual. Instead, the Church attempted to adapt these practices to the benefit of Christianity.[103] Edith Rickert points out that such a policy in regard to the carol would go back to the time when St. Augustine was in England and would be in keeping with "the policy of substitution in place of prohibition."[104] To facilitate the Christianizing of England, Pope Gregory directed St. Augustine, during the year of 601, to adapt, rather than to abolish completely, pagan customs to the service of Christianity and even to replace the areas of pagan worship with Christian structures.[105]

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[102]Arthur K. Moore, The Secular Lyric in Middle English, p. 158.

[103]Greene, The Early English Carols, pp. cxi-cxiii.

[104]Edith Rickert, Ancient English Christmas Carols, pp. xiv-xv.

[105]Charles Read Baskervill, "Dramatic Aspects of Medieval Folk Festivals in England," Studies in Philology, XVII (1920), 22. See also, Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, I, 95-96.

On the other hand, Chambers suggests that, in the carols, Christian aspects were attached to an earlier form, even though Christian themes are most evident in surviving carols. Chambers, again, insists that the stanza-burden form verifies the primitive origin of the carol, maintaining that the rhyme change in the last line of the stanza of many of the carols is indicative of the time when such a change by the leader would serve to notify the group that they were to begin the burden.[106]

The hand of the learned, probably ecclesiastical, in the extant medieval carols, is shown by the occurrence of Latin lines in the carols.[107] Greene thinks that the Franciscans occupied a key position in converting the secular carols into religious ones. After reviewing the part played by the Franciscans in the religious poetry of Italy and France and after noting the interest of St. Francis himself in music and poetry, Greene alludes to the work of such English Franciscan poets as Thomas of Hales and William Herebert. Since the Franciscans had arrived in England in the early part of the thirteenth century, and considering their part in medieval poetry, he feels it safe to suggest that the English Franciscans may have had a hand in

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[106]Chambers and Sidgwick, pp. 293-94.

[107]Greene, The Early English Carols, p. lx.

developing the religious carol.[108] Other scholars support the idea that the Franciscans were important in the development of the Middle English lyric. Chambers, for example, notes the efforts of the Franciscans, recalling that St. Francis had impressed "upon his brothers the duty of . . . turning song to the service of heaven."[109] Musicologist Frank Ll. Harrison supports musically the importance of the Franciscans in the development of the carol, noting that "the appearance of the earliest pieces of devotional polyphony to English words was contemporaneous with the first period of their preaching in England."[110]

Rossell Hope Robbins, who, as it will be seen, was later to challenge the theory that carols originated in the customs of the folk, in a 1938 article, discusses the possibility of the Franciscans being instrumental in using secular songs for religious purposes. Robbins, in this article, mentions the Red Book of Ossory, which was begun by a Franciscan bishop in 1316, and which contains several Latin songs in addition to fragments of English and French vernacular ones. Robbins suggests that the bishop, understanding that the people enjoyed the vernacular songs, may have decided that the

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[108] Ibid., pp. cxxi-cxxiv. See also, Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 12-15.

[109] Chambers and Sidgwick, p. 288.

[110] Frank Ll. Harrison, Music in Medieval Britain, p. 417.

clergy should use popular tunes for religious songs composed in Latin. Thus, the fragments that preceded the Latin songs in the book may be interpreted as the indication of the tune to be used. In this case, the fragments would probably be burdens since the lines are often metrically dissimilar to the first line of the stanza.[111]

At any rate, it is relevant that, among medieval carols of known authorship, the name of the Franciscan James Ryman is prominent, and Greene believes it reasonable to assume that several "anonymous carols" may be of Franciscan authorship.[112] Greene also recognizes John Audelay, who, though a chaplain in an Augustinian monastery, has not been identified with any particular order. John Audelay, however, did write a carol about St. Francis.[113] Finally, Greene sees in the carols "signs of strong Franciscan influence on the subject matter":

> The tempering of the austerity of Christianity by the appeal to tender emotion and personal love for Christ, the invocation of pity for His sorrow in the cradle and suffering on the cross, which is particularly to be noted in the lullaby and Crucifixion carols, are part of the legacy of Francis to the centuries which followed his ministry.[114]

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[111]Rossell Hope Robbins, "The Earliest Carols and the Franciscans," Modern Language Notes, LIII (1938), 239-41.

[112]Greene, The Early English Carols, pp. cxxvi-cxxviii. See also, Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 47-48.

[113]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 48.

[114]Greene, The Early English Carols, p. cxxvii.

On the other hand, in an article published in 1959, Rossell Hope Robbins poses an alternative to this traditional theory, as follows:

> In opposition to this "pulse of flying feet" theory, I suggest the earliest Middle English carols were made by ecclesiastical authors and composers specifically for singing in church processions, and that this function is likewise that of at least 80 per cent of all extant carols.[115]

He explains that burdens and refrains in carols are often from religious musical compositions, written in Latin and employed in processions.[116]

After finding only eight of the twenty-one carols composed prior to 1425 to be "nondevotional", Robbins again refers to the Red Book of Ossory:

> The Red Book of Ossory, which is the key to the theory of English carols deriving from dance songs, also holds the key to English carols developing out of Latin processional hymns. The first Latin poem in the Red Book is a perfect carol, and it is therefore a facile assumption that, since the Latin was based (musically) on a vernacular piece, English (and possibly French) poems existed in the same form . . . .[117]

Obviously, he concludes that the Latin piece in carol form evolved from the musical pieces for church processions rather than the song and dance practices of the folk.[118]

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[115]Rossell Hope Robbins, "Middle English Carols as Processional Hymns," Studies in Philology, LVI (1959), 560.

[116]Ibid., p. 563.

[117]Ibid., p. 578.

[118]Ibid., pp. 578-79.

Although his ideas have not been prevalent among literary scholars, Robbins notes the fact that some musicologists, like Manfred F. Bukofzer, Catharine K. Miller, and John Stevens, have supported the notion that carols were used as processionals.[119] Stevens, for example, finds that the "polyphonic carol" is mainly included in manuscripts that were composed by educated Church officials, and he assumes that they were used in both ecclesiastical and nonecclesiastical processions. Stevens, however, says of the "monophonic carols" that they are probably the remnants of many "popular tunes" no longer in existence.[120] Manfred F. Bukofzer believes that the inclusion of carols among pieces for use in the liturgy indicates the possibility of carols being incorporated in the liturgy itself. He also analyzes the similarities of the carol to the "processional hymn with repetenda."[121] Catharine K. Miller follows the ideas of Margit Sahlin in suggesting that the Church processions utilized the carol. In outlining Sahlin's position, Miller adds, however, that "the religious and didactic carol of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries . . . . had been adopted by the Church from popular usage in the fourteenth century,

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[119] Ibid., p. 563. See also, fn. 16.

[120] Stevens, p. xiv.

[121] Manfred F. Bukofzer, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music, pp. 148-150.

retaining the technique of the earlier dance-song which paralleled, in certain ways, that of responsorial chant."[122] In her consideration of technical musical terminology that might link the carol to processional usage, Miller points out that carols are to be found in manuscripts that include much processional material and that some are marked in such a way as to indicate their use on Church feast days.[123]

A scholar who finds reason to believe that the English carol originated in the Church is W. T. H. Jackson, who points out that the verse form of a burden preceding the stanza as well as following it was commonly employed in the Church. He thinks it unlikely that the French carole would be borrowed in England when other foreign forms with higher standing were not. He adds that, regardless of origin, and in contrast to Continental poetry, popular influence on the English lyric is quite evident.[124]

If the ultimate origin of the word "carol" were known, much information might also be gained concerning the ultimate origin of the poetic form known as the carol. Unfortunately, the ultimate derivation of the word is unknown, and supporters

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[122]Catharine K. Miller, "The Early English Carol," Renaissance News, III (1950), 63. The work of Margit Sahlin's referred to is Étude sur la carole médiévale, a 1940 dissertation, unpublished.

[123]Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[124]W. T. H. Jackson, Medieval Literature, p. 191.

of both theories of origin have plausible explanations concerning the etymology of the word. Chambers offers the following etymology of "carol":

> The term is of French origin, and philologists differ as to whether it owes its derivation to the Greco-Latin chorus, through chorea, a dance, or choraules, the flute-playing accompanist of a dance, or to corolla, a little crown or garland. In either case, the sense of a "ring" is there . . . .[125]

Greene, too, believes that the word "carol" comes into English from the Old French word carole, and thinks that it may go back even to the Greek word choraules, entering the vernacular via the Latin.[126]

Robbins has the following comment on the origin of the word:

> Whether or not Margit Sahlin's derivation of carol from kyrie of the mass be accepted, nevertheless in France kyrielle appears as early as the twelfth century to describe a refrain song evolved from the kyrie for use in church. . . . The tradition of a vernacular hymn with refrain, called a kyrielle, is just as clear as that of a vernacular dance song, with refrain, called a carol.[127]

In 1962, Greene defended his earlier position against that of Robbins, maintaining that the musical pieces, always in Latin, used in Church processions were dictated by Church authorities. He also turns for support to a musicologist,

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[125]Chambers, English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages, p. 66.

[126]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 2.

[127]Robbins, "Middle English Carols as Processional Hymns," 580-81.

Frank Ll. Harrison,[128] who had noted in a footnote ". . . that carols were sung in ritual processions is untenable, since the ordinals laid down the chants to be sung for processions throughout the year."[129]

Followers of both theories, however, agree on one point--the Middle English carol was no longer used as a primary form after 1550, although they offer different reasons for the downward trend. According to Robbins, the reason may be found in the Litany as it was sung as a replacement for the processions, the latter being prohibited in the Church after 1547.[130] According to Greene, the carol's importance was lessened by the English Reformation and changing court fashions. However, he notes that although the carol declined, it did not die out after 1550 but continued in broadside songs and was used in the drama of the Tudor period.[131]

Even if one wishes to accept the idea that the carol got its inception in the Church, he is aware that there are certain themes in some medieval carols that suggest an intermingling, somewhere along the line, of pagan and Christian

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[128]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 44-45. See also, fn. 1, p. 44.

[129]Harrison, p. 417, fn. 4.

[130]Robbins, "Middle English Carols as Processional Hymns," p. 570.

[131]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 20-21.

elements. For example, carols exist dealing with the theme of carrying a boar's head prior to a Christmas feast.[132] That the boar has been important in the Yule festivities of early Scandinavian people is clearly indicated by Frazer. There also exists a tradition of making a "Yule Boar", a loaf shaped like a boar frequently incorporating the final corn harvested. At a later time, when the corn was planted, the loaf was mingled into the seeds, as well, and fed to the men and animals responsible for the plowing, the idea being that "the corn-spirit" will aid in the growing of the crop. Frazer traces this practice to a time in which sacrifices involved a boar and probably a human being.[133] The first two stanzas of a carol extant in a manuscript in the British Museum (MS. Addit. 5665) and included in Greene's A Selection of English Carols indicates such an intermingling of a pagan custom with Christian ideas:

> The borys hede that we bryng here
> Betokeneth a Prince withowte pere
> Ys born this day to bye us dere;
> Nowell, nowelle!
>
> A bore ys a soverayn beste
> And acceptab[l]e in every feste;
> So mote thys Lord be to moste and leste;
> Nowell, [nowelle!][134]

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[132] Ibid., p. 32.

[133] Frazer, p. 535.

[134] Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 91-92.

Greene explains that this is the only boar's head carol of which he knows that makes this head "a symbol of Christ" although the carol (MS. 354 in Balliol College, Oxford) preceding this one in his collection indicates that the boar's head is "to be served in Christ's honour."[135]

Other carols involving a pagan theme are those that deal with the holly and the ivy. William J. Phillips places these carols among the "Nature carols" and believes that the holly and ivy theme is ultimately related to the worship of nature. Phillips points out that "tree-worship" is a feature known all over the world. He further sees in the holly and the ivy the representation of the sexes, the former representing the male, and the latter the female. In many carols there is the implication of a controversy between the sexual representatives.[136]

Frazer verifies, moreover, that among primitive people plants were often interpreted as sexual representatives. The notion has a logical basis in that the sexual components of a specific plant do reproduce, and among some species an individual plant can be identified as "male" or "female".[137] Chambers also mentions that during the winter

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[135]Ibid., p. 209. The carol mentioned from the Balliol College manuscript is found on p. 91.

[136]William J. Phillips, Carols, pp. 56-57.

[137]Frazer, pp. 131-32.

primitive people would likely find "the fertilization spirit" in the evergreens, adding that "amonst other evergreens the holly and the ivy, with their clustering pseudo-blossoms of coral and of jet are . . . adequate representatives of the fertilization spirit."[138]

Arthur K. Moore also stresses a pagan association in the holly and ivy carols but believes that the ultimate understanding of these carols lies more in the "dioecious" aspect of holly than in the fascination of early people with the appearance of the holly and ivy plants. He thinks that, ultimately, the sexual implication resided in the holly alone because it is known to be "dioescious" and concludes that the "monecious ivy" was perhaps a later addition.[139] In several practices of folk origin, the two plants occur separately.[140] At any rate, Moore concludes with a reference to the intermingling of Christian and pagan elements in the holly and ivy carols:

> The independent tradition of holly in connection with sex symbolism and the ambiguities in the carols proper seem sufficient documentation for the conjecture that the ceremony was caught up in song after the well of folk-belief had been muddied by Christian or other influences. The question of contamination aside, it is indeed remarkable that such primitive custom

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[138]Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, I, 250-51.

[139]Arthur K. Moore, "Mixed Tradition in the Carols of Holly and Ivy," Modern Language Notes, LXII (1947), 554.

[140]Ibid., p. 555.

should be reflected in a genre cultivated largely by religious hands.[141]

Greene in his careful analysis of the medieval carol has, of course, given some attention to the holly and ivy group of carols. He mentions, as well, that, although Christian ideas figure in this group, the plants are surely affiliated with earlier traditions.[142]

The burden, quoted from two different versions of the same carol, illustrates the idea of a contest between the sexual representatives. The first burden is from a manuscript in the British Museum (MS. Harley 5396):

> Nay, Ivy, nay, hyt shal not be, iwys;
> Let Holy hafe the maystry, as the maner ys.[143]

The second version of the carol burden comes from a carol that is in a manuscript in Balliol College, Oxford (MS. 354):

> Nay, nay, Ive, it may not be, iwis,
> For Holy must have the mastry, as the maner is.[144]

Greene explains that the position of ivy, here, may be traced to the superstition of its being "unlucky" if "the first foot on Christmas" was a woman.[145]

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[141] Ibid., p. 556.

[142] Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 32-33.

[143] Ibid., p. 92.

[144] Ibid., p. 93.

[145] Greene, The Early English Carols, p. ci. See also, Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 33.

Greene also calls attention to those carols that commend ivy, one of which "is wholly secular and refers to the plant's remaining green in a north of England winter and to its physical qualities as good medicine and as a preservative of masonry."[146] The burden and first stanza of this carol from a manuscript in the British Museum (MS. Egerton 3307) is sufficient to illustrate this praise:

Ivy ys good and glad to se;
Ivy is fair in hys degre.

Ivy is both fair and gren,
In wynter and in somer also,
And it is medecinable, I wen,
Who knew the vertus that long therto;
Ivy,
It is god and lusty
And in hys kynd a wel god tre.[147]

The above discussion of the "boar's head" and "holly and ivy" carols strongly suggests that, in the medieval carols, there is an intermingling of pagan and Christian elements, but the theory indicates little in the way of a connection of these carols to any type of song and dance combination, and it should be considered whether they lend any support to the notion that the carol form is related to such a combination. Rickert has indicated that an incorporation of both singing and dancing in the pagan-affiliated ceremonies involving the carrying in of a boar's head or a game with

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[146] Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 32-34.

[147] Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 94.

holly and ivy was surely intended.[148] Greene thinks that the carols about the boar's head signify some sort of a procession. Greene further reveals contemporary evidence that may link the boar's head carols with a song and dance combination, recalling that at Queen's College, Oxford, there is still an annual event involving the processional carrying of a boar's head. In this procession, the participants follow the ancient carol form of proceeding during the group singing of the burden and ceasing movement during the solo singing of the stanza.[149]

A distinction can now be made, therefore, between "religious" carols and "secular" carols, as Cecil J. Sharp has recognized:

> Wassail songs, and carols associated with the May-day festival, are pagan survivals, which, although they have since been modified by contact with Christian customs, must be sharply distinguished from the carols connected with the festivals of the Church, which latter were the direct outcome of Christian belief.[150]

One should note, however, that, although such a distinction is useful in tracing literary origins and in examining literary influences, the distinction is not of necessity a reflection of literary merit. For example, in analyzing

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[148]Rickert, p. xiii.

[149]Greene, The Early English Carols, p. lviii. See also, Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 22, 32.

[150]Cecil J. Sharp, English Folk Song, p. 125.

lyrical poetry, Speirs thinks that prime consideration should be given to "whether or not the poem is a good poem," and "good poems" can be found in either category.[151] David M. Zesmer, moreover, reminds the student of lyrical poetry that the distinction between a religious and a secular lyric is not always easy to make since there may be an overlapping of images.[152]

Since so many of the carols were obviously intended for use during the Christmas season, one must seek an explanation for a song and dance form, originally pagan, also related to a Christian season. First of all, one finds that Greene rejects the concept that the English carol is intimately connected to the French Christmas song known as the noël, arguing that not only may the noël and the carol vary considerably in form, but that the noël can only be traced to the fifteenth century and is, thus, perhaps a much later development than the English carol.[153] Furthermore, it has already been noted that the determining factor in classifying a medieval work as a carol is the verse form and not its eventual association with Christmas.[154]

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[151]Speirs, p. 47.

[152]David M. Zesmer, Guide to English Literature, pp. 139-40.

[153]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 4.

[154]Ibid., pp. 1-2, 4.

Chambers, however, recognizes the aspect of Christmas rejoicing in the carols and acknowledges that Christian themes appropriate to the Christmas season eventually dominated the genre. Nevertheless, one recalls that Chambers finds the stanza-burden form to be a verification of the primitive origin of the carol and thinks that "the religious element is the superadded and not the primitive one."[155]

F. M. Padelford sees Christmas in the Middle Ages as a time of varied activities. He thinks that, since Christmas was intended to draw attention away from pagan practices common to that time of year, many of the pagan customs probably persisted in the carols.[156] Greene, too, notes that Christmas was a replacement for a pagan holiday, and carols of a religious nature dealing with Christmas themes were, perhaps, intended by the clergy to divert attention from the pagan activities that were so popular around the time of Christmas. Greene finds another reason for the Christmas association in the carol's affiliation with the Franciscans, explaining that the use of joyful, religious songs during the Christmas season was in itself a characteristic of the Franciscans.[157] He also suggests that the

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[155]Chambers and Sidgwick, pp. 293-94.

[156]F. M. Padelford, "Transition English Song Collections," in The Cambridge History of English Literature, II, eds., Sir A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, 378.

[157]Greene, The Early English Carols, pp. cxxix-cxxxii.

carol was an appropriate item at the feasts, both religious and secular, that were given in giant halls most commonly during the Christmas season, and, thus, the abundant carols dealing with Christmas themes perhaps arose.[158]

That the carol is a significant element in the evolution of Middle English lyrical poetry and, as thus, deserves scholarly attention is generally accepted,[159] but the reason for its being considered in a discussion of the dramatic traditions of the folk is not clear. For one thing, it has been seen that the carol partakes of the elements of drama in its connection with singing and dancing. Chambers even thinks that caroles may have developed some sort of dramatic representations. He suggests, moreover, that song games of a dramatic nature preserve even today the mark of the carole.[160] Greene cites an example of one such game that retains this ancient carol procedure, familiar to many American children as "Looby Loo." The children form a circle and move around during the singing of the burden; however, during the singing of a stanza, they stop to place various parts of the body within the circle.[161]

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[158]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 27.

[159]Wilson, p. 252.

[160]Chambers, The English Folk-Play, pp. 232-33.

[161]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp. 49-50.

Singing and dancing are obviously attributes of the carol, and several authorities on drama and the theater have recognized the importance of this activity in primitive ritual drama. For example, A. P. Rossiter speaks of the ritualistic observances behind drama and asserts that "the simplest and most primitive is the dance."[162] Edmund Fuller says that rhythm is an important component of any art, theorizing that early man observed the apparent rhythm in natural phenomena and "seeking to understand and to master through imitation . . . developed the first form of drama: dance."[163] Sheldon Cheney similarly suggests that the primal element in drama was the dance, pointing out that, although primitive dances were neither "dramatic" nor "theatric," in the "designed movement" of early man can be observed "the germ of drama and of theatre."[164] He also verifies that, among the primitive cultures studied in recent years, dance is frequently found in ritual drama.[165] Karl Mantzius also mentions the prevalence of dancing among primitive cultures and suggests that in primitive societies "artistic aspirations manifested themselves in a mixture of

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[162]A. P. Rossiter, English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans, p. 15.

[163]Edmund Fuller, A Pageant of the Theatre, pp. 3-4.

[164]Sheldon Cheney, The Theatre, p. 11.

[165]Ibid.

the four arts: music, dancing, acting and poetry."[166] He sees dancing as the earliest artistic form and believes that dancing became affiliated with religious rites originally as "involuntary expression" and eventually as "a symbol."[167] Finally, A. M. Kinghorn detects in the combination of the various arts the beginnings of drama and suggests the universality of this process:

> In such combinations of dancing, singing and recitation we have the essential beginnings of a dramatic art which developed along strangely similar lines in widely-separated countries and even continents over many centuries.[168]

One must now consider whether the carol had any affiliations with those dramatic folk presentations of the early English people, specifically those presentations which grew out of ancient pagan ritual out of which evolved the English folk play. First of all, it is quite clear that singing and dancing were integral components in the folk festivals of the English people. Chambers, after reviewing the idea that the dance made an early appearance in the activities of the folk, points out that "in all the Germanic languages the same word signifies both 'dance' and 'play,' and in some of them it is even extended to the cognate ideas of

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[166]Karl Mantzius, The Earliest Times, A History of Theatrical Art, I, pp. 4-5.

[167]Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[168]A. M. Kinghorn, Mediaeval Drama, p. 45.

'sacrifice' or 'festival.'"[169] He, therefore, concludes that dancing, and its accompaniment singing, were important elements in European folk festivals.[170] Chambers suggests, as well, that the religious observances of primitive people would give shape to two basic forms of the dance, one being a procession in which the participants paraded to various areas and community structures, and the other being a round dance in which the participants formed around a religious symbol. He sees this latter type maintained in such customs as those involving the Maypole.[171]

There is also some evidence to show that folk singing and dancing were related to festivities like those mentioned in the previous chapter in which animal disguises were used. For example, Bamber Gascoigne shows that European church leaders, as early as the fifth century, had complained of such activities.[172] He refers to a Bodleian Library manuscript portraying people both dancing and wearing animal disguises.[173] Welsford has also spent some time analyzing this same manuscript, which she assigns to the year 1344, and has tried to identify the types of dances in which various

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[169]Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, I, 160.

[170]Ibid., 160-61.

[171]Ibid., pp. 164-66.

[172]Bamber Gascoigne, World Theatre, p. 14.

[173]Ibid.

groups of persons are involved, speculating that a group of women may be dancing a carole.[174]

There is, then, the strong probability that the carol was among the songs and dances of the medieval people and that it was in some way a part of the same folk festivities that gave rise to the English folk play. Moreover, both the folk play and the carol have been shown to be related to ancient fertility rites. However, although the carol was perhaps a part of folk festivities, one aspect of which involved the death and resurrection of the year, it is extremely difficult to establish any exact relationship betwen the carol and the ritual involving the death and resurrection of the year, or to know at what point the carol became a part of such festivities.

Baskervill clearly shows, in his study of the Elizabethan jig, that dancing, frequently involving some kind of dramatic representation, was prevalent among the leisure activities of the Middle Ages.[175] He further explains that the word "carol" was one among several in medieval usage that indicated both singing and dancing.[176] It will be recalled that Baskervill had seen in the wooing episodes of

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[174]Welsford, p. 43.

[175]Charles Read Baskervill, The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama, pp. 6-7.

[176]Ibid., p. 10.

the mummers' plays a remnant of a pagan ritual involving a "'sacred marriage'". Baskervill also interprets the rejection by a female character of an older man in favor of a younger one as a symbolization of one season replacing the other.[177] In his study of the jig, Baskervill connects the wooing theme with the singing and dancing diversions of the folk, which took place at other times of the year as well, believing that the activities may have involved dancing and vocal accompaniment with wooing being presented in a dramatic manner.[178] At a later point, he returns to a discussion of the wooing theme in the mummers' plays and makes a connection between the wooing theme in song and dance with the wooing theme in folk drama, indicating that, although the wooing episode in the folk play may be ultimately connected with ancient ritual, the plays were probably influenced by contact with the wooing theme elsewhere in the songs and games of the folk.[179] Baskervill points to folk games in which rival wooers contend for the hand of a young girl, noting that, even though these games are prominent in

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[177]Baskervill, "Mummers' Wooing Plays in England," pp. 225-27.

[178]Baskervill, The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama, pp. 18-19.

[179]Ibid., pp. 250-51.

festivities during the springtime and summertime, the rival wooers also show up in mummers' plays of the winter season.[180]

Chambers acknowledges the importance of the work of Baskervill on the wooing theme in English folk plays, although he disagrees with Baskervill on some points concerning the development of the carol. Chambers also sees the carols as dealing with wooing themes, but does not think that the carol was derived from "the primitive ludus."[181] He mentions that carols were diversions appropriate to any time of the year. He further calls attention to the prominence of young women in carol performances in contrast to their absence in the ritual drama, believing that "the mimetic instinct" found "a fresh start in the caroles."[182] Elsewhere, Chambers, basing his conclusions partly on the work of the French scholar M. Gaston Paris, explains how he thinks the carol is related to the activities of women, seeing the carol as ultimately affiliated with spring activities in which the participants were female and which are the basis of contemporary European festivals.[183]

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[180] Ibid., pp. 248-49.

[181] Chambers, The English Folk-Play, pp. 232-33.

[182] Ibid., p. 233.

[183] Chambers and Sidgwick, pp. 268-70.

In whatever manner the carol may have become associated with the English folk play, there is striking twentieth-century evidence that the carol form and the theme of death and resurrection have existed side by side. Greene describes a festival taking place on May Day in Padstow, Cornwall, involving a "hobby horse."[184] There is a procession that retains the ancient carol form of moving during a general singing of the burden and stopping during the stanzas of certain songs. He thinks, as well, that this festival is connected with the death and resurrection theme of the folk play since a song that accompanies the May Day celebration refers to St. George and makes mention of the arrival of summer and the passing of winter.[185] Richard Southern, who has also studied this celebration, sees in it a connection with the death and resurrection theme, for at one point "the Padstow Horse" goes down but rises again.[186]

Both the English folk play and the carol, consequently, seem to be related ultimately to ancient pagan customs, especially to the fertility rites, the carol form, somewhere along the line, becoming a part of those same festivities that involved the theme of the death and resurrection of the

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[184]Greene, The Early English Carols, pp. xxxii-xxxiii, cii-civ. See also A Selection of English Carols, pp. 9-10.

[185]Ibid.

[186]Southern, pp. 40-43.

year. It will now be possible to determine if the dramatic traditions of the folk played any part in the rise of English literary drama and to investigate, in turn, any influences which this medieval religious drama may have exerted upon dramatic folk customs.

CHAPTER III

INTERACTION OF FOLK DRAMA AND MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS DRAMA

The Christianizing of England changed some aspects of the folk drama. In the case of the folk play, such elements as characterization and performance time were influenced by the movement. In the case of the carol, church officials early gained control over the genre and used it for their special purposes. The folk, then, apparently intermingled aspects of Christianity with aspects of the old pagan religion, but what remains to be considered is whether the reverse was true. That is, did the dramatic folk presentations under consideration, here, exert any influence on the drama that issued forth from the Christian Church, from the liturgical drama through the mystery and miracle plays?

The role of the Christian Church in the advancement of English medieval literary drama has elicited a large amount of scholarly comment. The process of this development, once drama was established, has been well-traced. What is clouded with a greater amount of uncertainty is the ultimate origins of this great phenomena in the history of English literature. It will be useful to review the comments of some authorities on the rise of Church drama before proceeding

to examine whether or not there was any significant point of contact between the medieval religious drama and those aspects of folk drama--the folk play and the carol--considered in this investigation.

Since the Church had been rather adamant in its opposition to the Roman theater and to any remnants of that theater that survived in the minstrel tradition and had also denounced dramatic representations among the folk, Sir E. K. Chambers finds it somewhat extraordinary that English literary drama should rise from the services of the Christian Church itself[187] but continues to discuss the early appearance of the dramatic characteristics in the Catholic service.[188] Karl Young, likewise, asserts that a separate drama was the creation and advancement of the Church.[189] Young also puts a great deal of emphasis upon the dramatic elements inherent in the Catholic liturgy, among which are dialogue and the manner of action in the performance of the service.[190]

However, dramatic elements are not enough, because the student of medieval English drama must also be concerned with

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[187] E. K. Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, II, 2.

[188] Ibid., p. 3.

[189] Young, p. 12. See also, p. 1.

[190] Ibid., pp. 79-80.

the development of dramatic elements into actual drama. For example, Young insists that dramatic factors in themselves are not actually drama. According to him, "impersonation" is required if a work is to be properly designated as drama. He thinks, then, that drama will have been established at the time in the service that people, assuming the role of characters, present this characterization in story form.[191]

Hardin Craig believes that the matter of how religious drama originated has been made more complicated than necessary. Although the Church officials were probably unaware of the literary significance of what they were doing, he suggests that it is they to whom the origin of medieval English drama should be ascribed. He indicates that it is confusing to speak of dramatic elements which are not actually drama unless the term "dramatic" is carefully defined. He further disagrees with Young regarding what is basic to drama, insisting that along with "impersonation" must occur "action" and "dialogue" and that when these three elements had united, even if the union was unintentional, drama had been created.[192]

Although he recognizes the unusual circumstance of the Church being the creator of drama, David M. Zesmer,

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[191] Ibid., pp. 80-81.

[192] Hardin Craig, English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages, pp. 19-20.

nonetheless, points out that several requirements for well-developed drama came from the Church tropes, which were established by the ninth century. He lists the following as components of a well-developed drama and finds that they sprang from the tropes: "gesture, action, dialogue, impersonation, and even costumes and stage properties."[193]

The way that medieval religious drama emerged from the liturgy of the Church has been precisely studied in such works as The Mediaeval Stage by Sir E. K. Chambers and The Drama of the Medieval Church by Karl Young, and it is not necessary to elaborate upon this development for the purposes of this present study. However, some comments on the beginnings of liturgical drama and on the tropes should be made, because it is in connection with these very beginnings of Church drama that some have sought to establish a link between the medieval religious drama and the practices of the folk.

Young defines the trope "as a verbal amplification of a passage in the authorized liturgy, in the form of an introduction, an interpolation, or a conclusion, or in the form of any combination of these."[194] He thinks of particular importance for the subsequent development of English drama

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[193]Zesmer, p. 268.

[194]Young, p. 178.

was a trope incorporated in the Easter service, its singular importance being attributed to its becoming the first known play to be performed in the Church.[195] Chambers also declares that the Easter trope, identified as the Quem quaeritis, was the beginning of Church drama.[196] Basing the account upon a recorded reference by the Bishop of Winchester, George K. Anderson, in a brief but good description, explains that this Easter trope deals with the appearance of an angel who informs the Marys that Jesus has been resurrected.[197]

The scholars of medieval drama have, of course, given attention to tropes other than the Easter one. Zesmer, for example, gives a succinct explanation of the development of the tropes, explaining how they evolved from simple musical pieces into presentations with dialogue and some action. The earliest tropes were part of the Easter service but were later incorporated into the Christmas service as well.[198]

Some scholars have given attention to the purpose of the early Church drama in the Church's attempt to communicate

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[195]Ibid., p. 201.

[196]Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, II, p. 10.

[197]George K. Anderson, "Old and Middle English Literature from the Beginnings to 1485," A History of English Literature, ed. Hardin Craig, p. 133.

[198]Zesmer, pp. 270-71.

with the people. Alan S. Downer says that the tropes were established for the purpose of making the Latin ritual understandable and meaningful to the people.[199] He points out that the early Easter plays were incorporated into the Church service itself, but from these plays more fully developed plays evolved.[200] In speaking of the Easter trope from which Church drama is believed to have evolved, Anderson explains the purpose in terms of making even more impressive the content of the trope and in terms of a human instinct for the presentation of things in a dramatic manner.[201] In giving attention to the rise of medieval drama within the Church itself, Oscar G. Brockett is not quite so certain as to why the Church created dramatic presentations, but he also assumes it was for the purpose of teaching the people vividly, adding that the Church Latin was incomprehensible to most of the churchgoers and that the incorporation of dramatic presentations within the liturgy itself was a logical extension of the frequent use of "spectacle" in the service. Brockett also believes that the various divisions of the Church calendar aided the evolution of Church

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[199]Alan S. Downer, The British Drama, p. 5.

[200]Ibid., p. 7.

[201]Anderson, p. 133.

drama with the indication of the proper topics for a particular time of the year.[202]

On the other hand, Arnold Williams is very cautious in designating a particular Easter trope in the tenth century as the origin of Church drama. According to him, this trope cannot be identified with accuracy as the beginning of medieval religious drama because it cannot be determined with certainty that earlier tropes did not meet the requirements of drama nor that some tropes which obviously do meet the requirements were not actually earlier than that Easter trope.[203] Williams adds that any kind of chronological arrangement of the Christian drama of the Middle Ages is subject to question.[204] Karl Young himself notes: "The very beginnings of the practice of embellishing the accepted liturgical text are, it must be confessed, hidden in obscurity."[205] Although Anderson accepts the notion that drama developed from the Christian services, he also mentions that drama is the most elusive of any medieval literary form, reminding one that, with the certainty about many aspects of

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[202]Oscar G. Brockett, The Theatre, pp. 102-03.

[203]Arnold Williams, The Drama of Medieval England, p. 10.

[204]Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[205]Young, p. 179.

its development, there are those areas which remain and must remain inconclusive.[206]

What many of these comments point to is that the very beginnings of drama in the Church are surrounded by a great deal of uncertainty. One wonders, then, if there is any room for considering the pagan folk influences on these beginnings. Young recognizes the infiltration of other influences on the drama once it moved outside the Church,[207] but he insists that the medieval drama inside the Church was not directly affiliated with such folk dramatic presentations as the mummers' play.[208] Craig sees as rather fruitless the seeking of the origin of drama in the various secular activities of the medieval people even though the discussion of such activities may be interesting.[209]

Other scholars have sought to establish some connection between Church drama and that of the folk. In light of the large amount of uncertainty enveloping the early development of Church drama, some have speculated upon the motivational factors of the Church in establishing its own drama. For example, Allardyce Nicoll, in acknowledging the vagueness surrounding the beginnings of drama, can only conclude that drama

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[206]Anderson, pp. 132-33.

[207]Young, p. 1.

[208]Ibid., pp. 10-12.

[209]Craig, p. 20.

was a development from the Christian liturgy. He finds it likely, however, that the creation was fostered to some extent by the desire of the Church to divert attention from the pagan folk customs.[210] Before the turn of the twentieth century, T. Fairman Ordish, finding the answers unsatisfactory, suggests the following observation in relationship to Church motivation in creating the drama:

> In relation to the mediaeval history of England they [medieval religious plays] are extremely important; and when they are so studied, the obvious direction of inquiry will be into the condition of things amid which they were introduced, into those pagan performances of a dramatic character which they were devised to supplant.[211]

Arthur Beatty in his article on the mummers' plays contributes little about the Church drama, but makes one interesting and relevant point, claiming "that the central theme of the St. George plays is similar to the central doctrine of the Christian Church."[212] Beatty suggests that the liturgical drama dealing with Christ's resurrection and the subsequent success of that drama might be due to the existence of a similar event in the folk plays, insisting that the development of other topics in the liturgical

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[210]Allardyce Nicoll, The English Theatre, p. 3.

[211]T. Fairman Ordish, "Folk-Drama," Folk-Lore, II (1891), 317-18.

[212]Beatty, p. 324.

drama occurred after the dramatic presentation dealing with the resurrection.[213]

Benjamin Hunningher indicates that the Church origin of drama might be too unusual to be acceptable in light of the Church's active opposition to the theater throughout much of its history.[214] He also thinks that more than mere coincidence may reside in the introduction of drama into the Church on Easter: what would be more natural, in view of the theme of death and resurrection in the folk plays, than to introduce drama that dealt with Christ's victory over the grave? He further finds that it was quite a period of time before the Easter drama moved from the theme of death and resurrection and came to include other aspects of Christ's life.[215] He takes note of the liturgical drama's encompassing the theme of Christmas and points out that pagan festivities which the Church found so distasteful seemed to be very prominent around both Easter and Christmas.[216] Although he confesses that his suggestions cannot be accepted as certain, he believes his conclusions are based on solid evidence.[217]

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[213] Ibid.

[214] Hunningher, p. 1.

[215] Ibid., p. 105.

[216] Ibid., p. 103.

[217] Ibid., p. 106.

Elsewhere in this paper the Church's willingness to turn pagan customs and festivals to its own benefit has been discussed. Hunningher seems to think that this "adoption policy" is also relevant to a discussion of the origin drama. He explains how Pope Gregory the Great formulated this policy and concludes that it, though highly successful for the Church, has served to obscure various origins for later generations.[218]

On the other hand, Bertha S. Phillpotts suggests that there was more behind the decisions of the Church to incorporate drama than the desire to replace pagan dramatic presentations. She points out that, though the local parishes may have allowed the liturgical drama, in the main, the Church opposed such a drama, at least before it was profitable. She thinks that the employment of Church drama was a result of the priests, who would likely identify with the popular feeling, trying to satisfy the desires of the Teutonic people, who were already very familiar with drama as an important element in religious observances. In support of her opinion, Phillpotts shows that the Church drama makes the earliest appearance in those areas, including England, which contained persons of Teutonic background,

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[218] Ibid., pp. 93-94.

especially the regions that were later taken over by Scandinavian groups.[219]

Although he acknowledges the dramatic elements inherent in the liturgy, John Speirs finds it difficult to accept that the liturgical drama could suddenly burst forth, independently of surrounding circumstances. He indicates that something would be needed to compel that division of drama and liturgy which eventually resulted in the mystery plays. Speirs confirms that a ritualistic drama already existed among the people who had been Christianized and that they probably thought such a drama to be necessary and suggests that the "negative ecclesiastical policy of repression was complemented by the positive remedy provided by the emergence of a Christian ritual drama and its remarkable development."[220]

The motivation of the Church in establishing its own drama is an important consideration in literary history as it serves as an indication of the amount of interaction between the Church drama and the folk presentations which included the mummers' play and such song-dance practices as the carol, but in some ways it, too, is only incidental to the drama itself. Whether the event is interpreted as a

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[219]Bertha S. Phillpotts, The Elder Edda and Ancient Scandinavian Drama, pp. 208-09.

[220]Speirs, pp. 308-09.

competitive device to combat pagan practices or is seen as a natural tendency on the part of human beings to present things in a dramatic manner, the cultural significance of the creation itself must be acknowledged.[221]

Regardless of the motivation of the Church in establishing its own drama, it can be noted that folk drama like Church drama issued from religious ritual. Speirs has called attention to ritual drama being the primary element in religions, Christian or otherwise, the world over.[222] Vera Mowry Roberts verifies that religion is the basis of drama, among primitive societies as well as the Greek and the European Christian ones.[223]

It should always be kept in mind that the English folk drama, probably even the carol, in its origin was as assuredly religious as that which issued from the services of the Christian Church, even if the religions are of a different nature. Phillpotts believes that the religious significance in folk drama is evinced by the persistence of the folk in presenting their festivities on the Church ground itself in the face of clerical condemnations.[224] She concludes that the folk considered the performance of these

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[221]Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, II, 2-3.

[222]Speirs, p. 308.

[223]Vera Mowry Roberts, On Stage, pp. 5-6.

[224]Phillpotts, p. 209.

activities of ritual origin essential to their well-being and believed that the sacredness of the Church property made it an appropriate place for the performances.[225] Speirs, too, calls attention to the use of Church property for pagan festivities, which included dancing, and the clerical condemnations that these ritualistic practices brought about.[226] Frederick Monroe Tisdel, also, gives attention to the folk bringing their dramatic activities into contact with Christianity,[227] citing examples of festivities which took place on the church ground and incorporated dancing as a prominent feature.[228] Among these examples is the familiar story of the Kölbigk dancers,[229] which was offered by Richard Greene as evidence that the carol was common practice in medieval England.[230] Tisdel explains that the success of folk practices, in spite of Church condemnations, was largely the result of a confusion, dating from the era of Rome, and mixing the pagan and the Christian practices.[231]

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[225] Ibid.

[226] Speirs, p. 309.

[227] Frederick Monroe Tisdel, "The Influence of Popular Customs on the Mystery Plays," The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, V (1904), p. 329.

[228] Ibid., pp. 329-30.

[229] Ibid., p. 329.

[230] Greene, A Selection of English Carols, pp, 5, 7.

[231] Tisdel, p. 331.

He thinks that this confusion allowed the incorporation of folk activities into those of the Church.[232]

Before looking more directly at possible influences of the folk on the medieval religious drama, it might be worthwhile to observe the opinions of some scholars of the general effect, from a literary point of view, of the intervention of Christianity upon the folk drama. Ordish, for example, interprets the subsequent history of English literary drama in terms of an intermingling of the pagan and the Christian aspects, with pagan elements changing the medieval religious drama to the extent that the Church eventually abolished these plays. He proceeds to examine the secular influence on the literary drama into the Renaissance and Elizabethan periods.[233] R. J. E. Tiddy offers a somewhat different observation, believing that Christianity intervened with its own drama, developed from both the English and the continental churches, at a time when the pagan religion in England was establishing a drama. He further thinks that the Church drama was more successful than that of the folk although the latter quite likely was still important to the people and was perhaps even tolerated by Christian clerics when it kept its distance from the

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[232]Ibid., p. 340.

[233]Ordish, pp. 321-22.

Church itself.[234] Phillpotts thinks that "Teutonic ritual drama" split and became a part of both Church drama and folk drama during the Middle Ages, merging once more in Elizabethan drama.[235] After acknowledging the importance of Phillpotts' work, Speirs suggests that the merger may have occurred before the Elizabethan drama in the mystery plays.[236] He cautions against thinking of the mystery plays as chronological history[237] and suggests an idea that ties the Christian plays very intimately to the ancient rituals of renewal, seeing the mystery cycle as an event which in the minds of the people had to be performed every year in order to assure their welfare. According to Speirs, the medieval people were not simply portraying past occurrences but were actually re-doing the past in an event in which "past and future are mutually present."[238] He interprets individual plays from the Towneley manuscript in terms of their ritualistic significance, emphasizing the frequent theme of some kind of revival after an apparent death.[239] Finally, he suggests that the Church may have recognized a

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[234]Tiddy, p. 90.

[235]Phillpotts, p. 211.

[236]Speirs, p. 307.

[237]Ibid., pp. 312-13.

[238]Ibid., p. 314.

[239]Ibid., pp. 318-72.

certain pagan affiliation in the mystery plays, and this recognition may be a better explanation for the eventual distaste of the Church for the plays than one that sees the distaste in terms of people becoming unruly at the presentations.[240]

It is interesting to speculate on what would have happened in the field of English drama if the Church had not established its own drama during the Middle Ages. Ordish is of the opinion that, if historical events had been different, the elements of "Northern mythology" could have created "a Northern literary drama."[241] On the other hand, W. T. H. Jackson believes that, with no support from the learned, the political, and the ecclesiastical elements in the society, it is unlikely that the folk plays would have evolved into any kind of notable drama.[242] Interesting as it may be, the question of what would have happened if the Church had not established its own drama must remain inconclusive. What is left for the literary student to consider is what did happen and not what might have happened if circumstances had been different.

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[240] Ibid., p. 373.

[241] Ordish, p. 319.

[242] W. T. H. Jackson, The Literature of the Middle Ages, p. 278.

Williams stresses that, although the folk may have developed actual plays with impersonation and a story-line, because of the lack of recorded references to such plays in the early Middle Ages, folk drama cannot and will not be verified as the progenitor of medieval literary drama.[243] Williams does add, however, that after the Bible and the Church, folk drama exerted a considerable influence upon the medieval religious drama.[244]

Regardless of whether or not the Church created its own drama in response to the folk drama of pagan origin, one is aware of the fact that another significance of the folk plays existing at the time the Church was evolving its own drama can be detected; because if the Church's dramatic presentations were to be effective, there had to be a receptive audience. Felix E. Schelling, in considering possible influences of folk customs on the Church drama, thinks that the most that can be ascertained is a mental attitude, formed by folk traditions, that made the people receptive to dramatic performances. He believes that the Church officials took advantage of this knowledge and used drama for religious purposes.[245]

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[243]Williams, p. 6.

[244]Ibid.

[245]Felix E. Schelling, English Drama, p. 12.

Several other scholars have mentioned a possible folk influence on the Church drama in terms of what might be called a dramatic atmosphere or the paraphernalia that accompany a dramatic atmosphere. Harold Child recognizes what he calls "the spirit of play,"[246] thinking that the folk activities may have exerted an influence on the development of drama by establishing the playful and pleasurable aspect.[247] Child also mentions that "the ritual itself came to include many elements--disguise, combat, procession, dance, song, action--which, arising from whatever symbolical and ritual origins, lent themselves easily to the spirit of play, and approximated to the acted drama."[248] Child discusses the relationship of pagan customs to the history of drama outside the realm of play, concluding little in respect to literary development,[249] and, though he, moreover, gives a detailed analysis of how some sort of plays developed from the festivities of the folk, he does not here direct his attention to the concern of this chapter--the influence of folk drama directly on medieval religious drama.[250] Benjamin

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[246]Harold Child, "Secular Influences on the Early English Drama," in The Cambridge History of English Literature, V, eds. Sir A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, 29.

[247]Ibid.

[248]Ibid.

[249]Ibid.

[250]Ibid., pp. 29-35.

Brawley also thinks that the pagan celebrations supplied to drama some rather general characteristics, dealing mainly with those components that have to do with the actions, the movements, and the costumes.[251] Roberts, too, comments on the secular influence from folk drama. In speaking of the moralities, she indicates that didacticism had to be removed if the drama was eventually to distinguish itself; moreover, the folk, who had already incorporated the principle of pleasure in their drama, were the logical ones to bring about the removal.[252] Finally, Sir A. W. Ward brings in the mummings and disguisings, which were important in their inclusion of character roles and in their link between the dramatic presentations of the folk and those taken up by the nobility.[253]

Dramatic representations, besides those belonging to the Church, were widespread. As Speirs notes, medieval references to such presentations occur in such works as Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight. Moreover, the folk themselves have preserved into recent times dramatic activities which

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[251]Benjamin Brawley, A Short History of the English Drama, p. 9.

[252]Roberts, p. 91.

[253]Sir A. W. Ward, "The Origins of English Drama," The Cambridge History of English Literature, V, eds. Sir A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, 10.

can be traced back to ancient origins beyond the Middle Ages.[254]

Evidently, the Church was quite aware of those types of folk traditions that involved the folk play and the carol. Sir Ifor Evans explains that there were Church denunciations of folk presentations,[255] but similar activities were taken up by "the lower clergy," who employed the mask and the dance and developed such practices as that of the Boy Bishop.[256] He further explains that the festivities were instrumental in allowing the Church to develop its drama.[257] Ward describes the incorporation of pagan traditions in celebrations which originated in the Church, finding in such activities as the Feast of Fools and the Boy Bishop a comical characteristic that became quite important in English drama.[258] Another scholar who notes the infiltration of pagan practices in the clerical realm is Tisdel, who calls attention to the dancing and the use of disguise in the Feast of Fools.[259]

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[254]Speirs, pp. 309-10.

[255]Sir Ifor Evans, A Short History of English Drama, pp. 20-21.

[256]Ibid., p. 21.

[257]Ibid.

[258]Ward, pp. 7-8.

[259]Tisdel, p. 332.

Chambers notes, in his discussion of the Feast of Fools, the incorporation of folk customs in the feast, including the change in societal position. Other similarities to folk practices that he notes include dancing, feasting, processions, and the use of costumes and masks. The costumes sometimes involved the use of plants, and the masks were grotesque. Chambers speculates that the masks possibly resembled beasts and substituted for those costumes, derived from real animals, used in the festivities that encompassed a feast as well as a sacrifice.[260] He also studies the Boy Bishop ceremony, which has many similarities to the Feast of Fools and in all likelihood incorporated folk customs.[261]

In speaking of the folk festivals, Ward reminds one that singing and dancing were prominent features and that some of the festivals were actually transformed into plays, concluding that any influences on the drama were more in the area of action than vocal parts.[262] Jackson recognizes the widespread occurrence of the folk drama during the Middle Ages but is rather uncertain about the influence upon actual

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[260]Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, I, 326-27. For a detailed description of the Feast of Fools, see chapter XIII, 274-300, and chapter XIV, 301-35.

[261]Ibid., p. 368. For a detailed description of the Boy Bishop ceremony, see chapter XV, 336-71.

[262]Ward, p. 7.

drama, allowing some influence in the areas of comedy and characterization.[263]

So far, the focus has been upon the creator of medieval religious drama, the Christian Church, and has considered many external factors that may have motivated the Church to create a drama of its own and many factors that may have contributed to the decisions of the Church to develop the drama in the way in which it did. Furthermore, some of the discussion has involved a wider compass of folk customs than the two that are the primary concern of this paper. For example, it seems possible for one to accept the notion that the Church was a major impetus behind the development of medieval literary drama, but it is also reasonable for one to consider that the Church was aware of the folk dramatic presentations and that such presentations may have influenced Church decisions in regards to this development of religious drama. One may now consider the actual creation itself--the Christian religious drama--and search for evidence of any influence that the two types of folk drama under consideration, here--the folk or mummers' play and the carol--may have exerted upon the early growth of religious drama.

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[263]Jackson, The Literature of the Middle Ages, p. 278. See also, Jackson, Medieval Literature, p. 246.

The scholar is now no longer faced solely with speculation or with the need to piece together scattered references into a logical sequence, for a vast body of medieval religious drama is extant for him to examine. The present task may, at first, then seem to be a simpler one than that of identifying external factors in the origin and growth of medieval religious drama, but it should be pointed out that the investigation relies to a large extent on one-sided evidence. Williams, it will be recalled, has ruled out the identification of the origin of medieval drama in folk drama on the basis of insufficient written evidence of folk plays prior to the fifteenth century.[264] Tiddy also notes that, although there is evidence of earlier complaints of the Church against some sorts of pagan festivities, it is around the fifteenth century before any recorded references are made as to the existence of folk plays.[265] Anderson, likewise, indicates that any connection between folk drama and church drama is difficult to ascertain because all known folk drama is dated after miracle plays.[266] Nonetheless, Tiddy mentions that one can view surviving folk presentations that descended from earlier times.[267] It does seem possible

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[264]Williams, p. 6.

[265]Tiddy, p. 91.

[266]Anderson, p. 134.

[267]Tiddy, p. 90.

in light of the extant religious plays and the recent studies of the folk drama to consider whether or not there were any points of contact between folk drama and the medieval religious drama.

There is, first of all, the question of the relationship of the folk to the creators of the mystery and miracle plays. Ordish thinks that the mystery and miracle plays of medieval England should have the term "literature" applied to them rather cautiously; he considers their literary standing to be somewhat like that of "chap-books," and he believes the plays to have been designed with the purpose of religious didacticism.[268] Speirs, on the other hand, rejects the notion that medieval religious drama was for the purpose of teaching uneducated people, and he suggests an examination of the plays in rejecting such a notion and in supporting the idea that they were a cooperative effort of the clerics and the lay guilds.[269] He observes that aspects of both the pagan ritual and the Christian one were brought together in the mystery plays and does not think such a blend can be attributed to the Church officials alone.[270] Mentioning the development of a more distinct cleavage between the folk and other elements in medieval

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[268]Ordish, p. 318.

[269]Speirs, pp. 310-11.

[270]Ibid., pp. 373-74.

society, Tiddy suggests that the authors understood and even held the folk attitudes.[271] He is of the opinion that many good aspects from folk literature are observable in the medieval religious drama.[272]

Considering the medieval religious plays, one may examine certain elements of action and of characterization and see if possibly they owe anything to the folk. Chambers makes mention of the secular and humorous growth in medieval religious plays once they were trasnferred to lay control,[273] indicating that comedy was most easily introduced in the characters who were without specific Biblical description.[274] He observes that in the Kalends as well as in the Feast of Fools characters existed similar to the devils of medieval Christian drama.[275]

Tiddy also notices a resemblance to the folk play in the sphere of comical characterization, pointing to the Devil and the Garcio in medieval religious drama. The Garcio is similar to the somewhat impudent lad of folk drama, although Tiddy realizes that this character could be as

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[271] Tiddy, p. 97.

[272] Ibid., p. 98.

[273] Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, II, 90.

[274] Ibid., pp. 90-91.

[275] Ibid., p. 91.

logically explained as a formation for dramatic purposes. The point is that this scholar sees the incorporation of the Garcio in the medieval religious plays as a device to interest the people viewing the plays.[276] He goes beyond the time scope of this paper in analyzing popular influence in English drama; however, in his discussion of the moralities, he makes an observation relevant to the time era under consideration, discovering in the Vice and similar characters an affinity connecting folk drama to later drama:

> Make every possible allowance for the universality of the dramatic instinct and, even so, it is still difficult--to me it is impossible--not to believe that the Morris fool, the Doctor's man, Beelzebub, the fool of the Mummers' Play, the clown of the Sword Play, the devils of the Moralities and the Interludes are all, by dint of their mischief or their black faces or their fooling, ultimately one and the same.[277]

At any rate, all the characters are the kind that the people then would certainly enjoy.[278]

Tisdel also gives some consideration to the comical development of the Devil, explaining how the people had changed the serious idea that was held by the clergy.[279] He points out, moreover, that, in the popular mind, there was a certain amount of confusion concerning the Devil and

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[276]Tiddy, pp. 96-97.

[277]Ibid., pp. 112-13.

[278]Ibid., p. 113.

[279]Tisdel, pp. 334-35.

supernatural beings of pagan beliefs.[280] Tisdel further observes that, in the opinion of many church officials, dancing was among the trappings of the Devil.[281] Dancing and singing were included in the antics of the Devil when he appeared in the Christian plays.[282] One can hardly help but wonder if the Devil and his associates ever included secular carolling among their capers.

Tisdel notes the bickering of the devils, which reminds him of folk festivities involving a battle of the seasons.[283] He observes the frequency of such bickering in the medieval religious plays, as in the case of Noah and his wife and the soldiers and the women in Slaughter of the Innocents.[284] Speirs alludes to the conversations of the devils in the Last Judgment of the Towneley manuscript and sees these speeches as superior, in a poetical sense, to the remainder of this particular play and, in the majority of cases, to the entire cycle of the Towneley manuscript. He thinks that these devils are very similar to the underground beings, who were the opponents of light, in pagan belief and

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[280] Ibid., p. 335.

[281] Ibid., pp. 336-37.

[282] Ibid., p. 337.

[283] Ibid., p. 338.

[284] Ibid., p. 339.

sees them as similar in their brand of humour to the devils of this and various other cycles.[285] Speirs also calls attention to the arguments in the mystery plays with one showing up early in the case of Noah and wife.[286]

Another aspect of the medieval religious play which Tiddy thinks reflects the conventions of the folk play is that of conflict. He thinks that the medieval religious playwrights created the customary type of boastful and arrogant character.[287] In speaking of Herod and Pilate in the mystery plays, Speirs identifies them as both villianous and humorous and also notes their boasting and raving, seeing in them a parallel to the Turkish Knight of folk presentations. He further adds that these three characters may have originated in the combat of pagan rituals involving representatives of old and new.[288] He suggests that the character of Pilate varying from the Biblical figure may be because the medieval religious drama required Jesus having an "antagonist" modelled upon the traditional ones. If such reasoning is accurate, Herod and Pilate provide another link between pagan dramatic rituals and the medieval religious plays.[289]

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[285]Speirs, p. 362.

[286]Ibid., p. 322.

[287]Tiddy, p. 96.

[288]Speirs, pp. 348-49.

[289]Ibid., p. 349.

In the Towneley Second Shepherds' Play, Speirs also notes that Mak comes in, and in acting as if he were not himself, resembles Herod, Pilate, and the adversaries of folk drama in his boastful actions.[290] Tiddy observes the unrealistic manner in which characters of higher society and elevation were treated in the religious plays, pointing to such characters as Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate, and Octavian, concluding that these types of characters are in contrast to the impressive realism with which the humble ones are handled.[291]

There are a number of other elements outside the central action and characterization of the plays that should be considered in investigating the likenesses between the Church drama and the practices of the folk. For example, it will be recalled that the circular formation was of the utmost importance in the performance of the mummers' play.[292] Richard Southern has given a description of the area in which the mummers' play in Marshfield is given.[293] Here the crowd forms around the area in which the play is to occur; the actors enter and set up a circular formation with each one in a specific place on the edge of the circle. Actors either present their parts from their places or travel to other parts of the circle, including the central part. Southern

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[290] Ibid., p. 342.

[291] Tiddy, p. 97.

[292] Southern, pp. 57-58.

[293] Southern, p. 60.

sees a similarity in this performance to the performances of the medieval religious drama of the Round.[294] According to Southern, this latter type of performance involved elevated tents, placed in a circle around a plain area that eventually became known as "the Place" in England. With such a set up, an actor could travel from his tent to another tent or to the central part of "the Place." Since the tents were elevated and the actors had to descend to travel to another area, special persons were used to keep the way clear from the tents to the central part of the Round.[295]

In another example of elements outside the central action and characterization, Chambers mentions the play about Noah, which was presented by a guild in Hull in which there was a processional carrying of an ark associated with the performance.[296] He speculates that this procession may be related to similar processions in many coastal areas.[297] He has commented upon folk processions related to fertility observances and shows that in coastal areas the divine beings responsible for agriculture came in time to be responsible also for the events upon the sea. He explains that in these areas a ship is carried in procession.[298]

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[294] Ibid.

[295] Ibid., pp. 98-102.

[296] Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, II, 119-20.

[297] Ibid., p. 120.

[298] Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, I, 120-21.

In the discussion of folk characteristics in the medieval religious drama, something more specific can be said of the carol. Edith Rickert sees a similarity in the thematic structure indicating that carols and mystery plays were both involved in "the popularisation of religion."[299] She says that carols were sometimes used in the mystery-play presentations and thinks that, in general, carols exhibit a dramatic nature, concluding that some carols may have been inspired by the religious plays.[300] F. M. Padelford states that the dramatic presentations in the Christmas service exerted an influence upon the carols with the same incidents being treated in both. He is somewhat surprised in not finding more carols in the religious plays dealing with the birth of Christ.[301] In the Richard Hill manuscript, editor Roman Dyboski classifies some carols as "'dramatic carols,' being songs in dialogue form."[302] Many of these have Mary and Jesus conversing.[303] William J. Phillips indicates the popularity of carol singing between

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[299]Rickert, p. xvi.

[300]Ibid.

[301]Padelford, p. 378.

[302]Roman Dyboski, ed., Richard Hill, Songs, Carols, and Other Miscellaneous Poems, p. xx.

[303]Ibid.

the scenes in the mystery presentations and says that the carols eventually were used in the mystery plays.[304]

It must be remembered, though, that the word "carol" has often been used in a rather general sense. Richard Greene, one recalls, identifies the carol as a certain type of medieval poetry which has "a burden, a choral element which is sung at the beginning of the piece and repeated after every stanza."[305] Is there any evidence that carols following the specific literary formula set down by Greene were included in the presentation of mystery plays? Greene calls attention to two songs that are identified in a Coventry play. He thinks the two songs are actually part of one carol, although the manner in which they are written in the play text hinders one from seeing them being related to the carol form.[306] In the Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors, the first part of the carol, identified as "Song I," is as follows:

> As I out rode this enderes night,
> Of thre ioli sheppardes I saw a sight,
> And all a-bowte there fold a star shone bright;
> They sange terli terlow;
> So mereli the sheppards ther pipes can blow.[307]

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[304]Phillips, p. 24.

[305]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 1. See also, Greene, The Early English Carols, pp. xxii-xxiii.

[306]Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 197. See also, Rickert, p. xvii, and Phillips, pp. 105-06, for mention of this play and the carol.

[307]Hardin Craig, ed., Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays, p. 31.

The second part of the carol is identified as "Song III" and is as follows:

> Doune from heaven, from heaven so hie,
> Of angeles ther came a great companie,
> With mirthe and ioy and great solemnitye,
> The sange terly terlow;
> So mereli the sheppards ther pipes can blow.[308]

These two songs may be compared with the burden and first two stanzas of a carol found in a manuscript in the Bodleian Library and included in Greene's A Selection of English Carols:

> Tyrle, tyrlo,
> So merylye the shepperdes began to blowe.
>
> Abowt the fyld thei pyped full right,
> Even abowt the middes off the nyght;
> Adown frome heven thei saw cum a lyght.
> Tyrle, tirlo
>
> Off angels ther came a company
> With mery songes and melody;
> The shepperdes anonne gane them aspy
> Tyrle, tyrlo.[309]

Greene also calls attention to the singing of the shepherds in a play in the Chester Cycle, and thinks the inclusion of a carol may be indicated by Latin instructions, in the Adoration of the Shepherds, directing the shepherds and their helpers to sing cheerfully. Greene says some manuscripts have what could be the burden or a refrain from a carol.[310]

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[308] Ibid., p. 32.

[309] Greene, A Selection of English Carols, p. 71.

[310] Ibid., p. 197.

In the Adoration of the Shepherds, included in The Chester Plays, edited by Hermann Deimling, the footnotes explain the additions in other manuscripts after the stage directions, following line 458: "B adding: sing tooly holy holy loo, W: Singe troly loly troly loe, h: Singe troly, loly, lo."[311]

Any carols, of course, included in the mystery plays may have been of a thoroughly Christian nature. However, if the origins of the carol are in the pagan customs of the folk, the inclusion of carols in the religious drama, would provide at least an indirect connection of the religious drama with the folk, since the carol belonged first to the folk, not the Church.

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[311]Hermann Deimling, ed., The Chester Plays, p. 151.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

A study of medieval Europe, including England, is an enormous task. Much is unrecorded and unknown. What is recorded often requires massive sorting and ordering; nevertheless, since a complete perception of English literary history hinges upon an understanding of this shadowy era, attempts must be made to bring together facts and opinions that have a bearing upon that history. In this study, the author has analyzed two prominent folk dramatic traditions of medieval England--the folk play, or mummers' play, and the carol--in terms of their significance in the evolution of the literature of the Middle Ages and contends that both played a role in the development of Christian drama, from liturgical plays through the mystery and miracle plays.

The folk play, or mummers' play, was defined in this investigation as that dramatic representation of the people dealing with the theme of death and resurrection. This play evidently emerged from pagan religious observances, and whatever its eventual development, retained its mark of origin in its theme. The play was obviously altered through the years in its encounter with other forces, most notably with

Christianity. The ultimate origin of the carol, on the other hand, remains somewhat obscure. It is known that the carol was developed as a Christian religious genre, but the carol was also a popular secular form with the people and, in all probability, is of pagan origin.

The carol as poetry has been thoroughly analyzed by many scholars in its lyrical aspects, but because of its affiliation with movement and vocal expression, it may also be considered in its dramatic aspects. Since singing and dancing were intimately affiliated with folk observances and since the carol involved singing and dancing and was popular with the people, it is reasonable to conclude that the carol was incorporated into the folk dramatic festivities.

As far as the development of English drama is concerned, the Church was a major impetus behind that development. The word origin is somewhat perplexing, for the inception of a literary art depends largely upon an individual's definition and interpretation of the term. Without becoming involved in a discussion of the point at which the origin of the drama occurred, let it suffice to say that the Christian Church in England established a drama; however, to a literary student, as important as the establishment is what happened to the drama once it was established. It is not at all reasonable to assume that the Church drama was a

form isolated from its environment, and since that environment included secular folk practices of pagan origin, it is profitable to search for folk influences upon the progression of medieval religious drama.

Medieval Christian drama is written; medieval folk drama is not; but they existed side by side. Christianity obviously changed folk plays in characterization and performance times, but by the same token, folk drama had ample opportunity to influence the Christian drama. Some characters and some elements of action are such important components of more recent folk presentations that it is safe to conclude that they were involved in the folk drama prior to the advent of Christianity in England, and that similar characters and actions in medieval religious drama owe something to folk influence.

Singing evidently occurred with frequency in the Christian dramatic presentations of the Middle Ages, and in view of the popularity of the carol form with both the folk and the ecclesiastical authorities, it is also safe to conclude that the carol form, at least in its vocal aspect, was incorporated into the medieval religious drama. Admittedly, the carol was probably thoroughly Christianized before it was employed in the religious plays, but its use in the plays would provide an indirect link to the folk if the carol originally belonged to them.

At any rate, it is hoped that a knowledge of the conditions surrounding the advancement of medieval drama and a knowledge of those aspects of dramatic folk traditions that were influential in the evolvement of literary drama will be of use to the individual who wishes to study the religious drama of the medieval period. The medieval religious plays are certainly worthy of the literary scholar's attention and in themselves contain an immense literary significance; nonetheless, it is this author's belief that a full understanding of that drama depends upon an understanding of certain dramatic folk traditions, *e. g.*, the folk play and the carol, that coexisted with the beginnings of literary drama.

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