

FOLKLORE STUDIESDOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-383-5-43>**PREREQUISITES FOR THE STUDY OF BRITISH FOLK PLAY****ПЕРЕДУМОВИ ВИВЧЕННЯ БРИТАНСЬКОЇ
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British folk play is a kind of folklore drama. Its theoretical studies rely on the investigation of British folklore texts by G. L. Gomme [6] (school of rituals and myths), J.D.A. Widdowson [2] and E. Köngas-Maranda [8] from Sheffield Centre of English Cultural Traditions and Language Study, as well as P. T. Millington [9] and T. Pettitt [10] whose specialization lies withing British dramatical texts. T. A. Green claims that the exploitation of the notion “folklore drama” is quite vague, thus, suggesting to use it only for those folklore texts that include an interaction between two or more actors on a mandatory basis [7, c. 846].

British folk play (BFP) belongs to drama folklore genres, being an integral part of carnival culture of Great Britain. It is a rhyming text, which is performed during Christmas, New Year, Easter, Halloween as well as All Saints’ Day and Plough Monday, that makes it fixed in the realm of carnival discourse. The plot of the play is constant, and its structure includes the following – introduction, opposition, battle, bargain, magical cure, guising; the former and the latter are optional elements.

The literature review revealed the absence of a unified definition to this traditional folklore play. For instance, some researchers emphasize BFP functioning as a means of transferring traditional values [Brody, p. 3]; others consider the motive of life and death to be the central idea [Dillard, c. 98]; still others pay their attention to the way of performance, i.e., according

to T.A. Green, folk play is a performance of a certain script which covers also mimesis and role distribution among two and more actors, and abides by the principles of esthetics and communicative performance models [7, c. 428].

The main problem that a researcher may face, is confusion which is related to the name of the genre itself. The most wide-spread name is Mummer's play, originated from the way of its first performances: from Middle English *mom*, which is the minimal sound a person can make with their lips closed [1]. Another version points out a German "Mumme" and a Greek "mommo" as a horror story or a frightening mask for children [11]. This version characterizes the manner of folklore play performance.

Other names are the Guizers, Christmas Rhymers, Plough Jags, Plough Bullocks, Morris Dancers. The latter was not very accurate as folklore play could not be a dance, albeit it could include some of the elements of Sword Dance. E. K. Chambers states that Sword Dance can be the main element of BFP, sometimes it is repeated several times during one performance, occasionally, it can be prolonged on purpose [4, c. 10]. The diversity of BFP names indicate its popularity in Great Britain, acquiring specific features in different regions of the country.

The diversity mentioned above presupposes the opportunity to classify our subject-matter basing on various features. Reviewing A. Brody's works, it is possible to notice that he identifies two basic characteristics, namely, strict time of performance and the presence of a compulsory motive of death and resurrection [3, c. 3]. The latter provided the division of BFP into "Hero / Combat", "Sword Dance Plays" and "Multiple Wooing Plays". However, such classification concentrated the attention on the death leaving out the resurrection. Another approach to classify BFP was suggested by P. T. Millington, who generalized all the texts into Quark Doctor Plays [9, c. 10] setting aside the structural element of the plot.

Having studied BFP texts themselves, we have noted that BFP is a hybrid genre. This supposition is based on the combination of texts tonality: on the one hand, they combine tragedy and comedy, which are separate storylines; on the other hand, BFP can integrate separate folklore genres – drama, lyrics and dance. The incorporation of a lyrical modus does not change the essence of BFP, moreover, by substituting some of its structural units, lyrics not only preserves the initial idea, but also contributes to the emotivity of the play, being an attractor, which helps to focus the audience attention to certain parts of BFP. So, hybrid character of the play highlights its inner paradigmatic connections (drama, lyrics and dance), as well as syntagmatic ones (the sequence of factual and conceptual structural units).

To sum up, the literature review of prior achievements in BFP studying has set a list of issues, starting from providing a comprehensive definition to the play, revealing peculiar features of the genre in question to discovering the factors that effected the formation of BFP as a genre.

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