

was set in a neat exposition of how the evidence has come down to us and, obliquely, of how academics interrogate their sources.³ Eure (Alison Peebles) and Bellenden (Gerry Mulgrew) appeared with Lyndsay (Liam Brennan) as characters, framing the ‘reconstruction’ and setting it in its political context. It was presented as something of a reading: most of the actors carried their scripts (from necessity or to symbolise documentary evidence?), and there were several sets of modern eye-wear balanced on otherwise convincingly sixteenth-century noses.

This method of reconstruction may inevitably have unbalanced the overall effect. The opening scenes of the *Satire*, where Solace, Wantonness, and Placebo plot to introduce the King to Sensuality, could not easily be converted to the macho dialogue described in the report between the ‘courtious Placebo Pikthanke and Flatterye’ (one of the Vice/fools in the *Satire*) boasting of their martial exploits; so this was fairly rapidly passed over. We did not even get a visual balance of frivolous and serious characters — only Solace (Callum Cuthbertson) appeared as a Presenter figure, though he was a very dominant one. The gist was the ‘sad matter’ of political reform, which Gregory Thompson the director described in an interview on the project website as ‘a more intellectual exercise’, and therefore inevitably ‘less fun’.⁴ This subscribes to the generally accepted idea of entertainment: but is having one’s brain exercised on a hot political topic so much less ‘fun’ than being bludgeoned with scatology/slapstick? Judging from William Dunbar the Scottish Court enjoyed both. Here the humour was shifted to the ironic commentary provided by the historical figures on their own and our attitudes; not to mention the ever-present current subtext on the way Scotland should be governed.

Like all reports of plays by diplomats, this one was slanted consciously or unconsciously to the topics Eure thought Cromwell wanted to hear about, and we are dependent on it for our interpretation of what the Interlude was like, and about its reception. We do not actually know how heavily the political part weighed. After the colourful sunlit extravaganza of the *Satire*, the Interlude as presented to us came over, even via the same words, as a much more introverted and sombre political discussion, suited to its elite and influential audience.

A real and unexpected strength was that we were persuaded that we were watching real people. The costumes looked like real clothes, the actors looked and sounded like real magnates (though Archbishop Gavin Dunbar’s mitre was somewhat exaggerated, Billy Riddoch looked as if he could well have been responsible for the Cursing now carved in granite and