Rehearsal Diary

15/1/2013

We began at the end of the play, as the Director, Greg Thompson, was intrigued by the strangeness of Folly’s entrance when the drama seems to have been resolved. Greg believed the key to the play is working up to Folly’s sermon and making this seem part of the whole.

Having read the speech, the academics spoke about the importance of the concept of folly for political discourse, and its universality. The Erasmian notion that without folly both humanity and society would stop – who would get married if not for folly, for instance?

The fact that Diligence constantly makes proclamations, like a Herald, was noted. We discussed whether Diligence was a fictionalised version of Lindsay in his courtly role – but also his theatrical one. Diligence appears to ‘stage manage’ the events of the play.

John the Commonwealth was understood as a Scottish version of the John Bull figure.

The difference between the two versions of the Satire – 1540 and 1550s – was considered. 1552 seems to be something of a ‘comeback’ for Lindsay. However there is a difference also between 1552 and 1554 – the first being a civic event and the second involving the highest powers of the Scottish court as audience.

Scottish difference from England would become something of a theme over the rehearsal period. The Declaration of Arbroath was invoked by Gerry Mulgrew and the notion that independence is down to the Scottish people rather than the king. The king rules the people but not the land and can be removed at any time.

These differences inflect the drama. In Scottish drama, the problem of Vices is the corruption of the people, in English drama the problem is the corruption of the king – and keeping vice away from him.

What does it say that Flattery escapes at the end of the play though? Is this a comment on language? Like Diligence, Flattery has something in common with what Lindsay does, as rhetoric and poetry are closely linked to flattery. Flattery’s naming of all of the Cupar locals was seen to have similarities with a “celebrity roasting’.

We also discussed the importance of the genre of satire. *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* is like a Menippean satire i.e. ‘All Cretans are liars; I am a Cretan’ – it sets up its resolution or climax and then undermines and destabilises it.

We then moved on to the ‘interval play’ or the section between the Pardoner and the Pauper between the two parts of the *Satyre*.

We considered how radical it is that Pauper sits on the king’s throne. It was suggested that just as the Pauper doesn’t buy into pardons, he doesn’t buy into empty signifiers such as thrones. The interval play is iconoclastic in many ways, for instance when Pauper fights with the Pardoner and throws his relics in the water. This is a microcosmic representation of a key act of the Reformation – but it is also Erasmian in that everything is false or questionable in the play.

The seriousness of Pauper’s story really emerged during the reading of it. Despite its hyperbolic touches and tendency towards comedy, this is a serious tale of woe. Particularly radical seemed Pauper’s claim ‘Ane consuetude against the commonweal should be nae law’.

It was seen as structurally significant that a comic set piece occurs around Pauper’s entrance through which he *sleeps*. When he wakes up it is as if the serious matter of the play begins again.

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The play was read through in its entirety for the first time.

Brief discussion of the Geneva Bible and its dangerous nature, i.e. the gloss that says it is justified to kill a tyrannical king.

The actors – Alison Peebles, Tam Dean Burn, Gerry Mulgrew and Peter Kenny - were incredibly useful in terms of working through the pronunciation on this day and changes began to be made to our version of the script on the basis of their knowledge of Scots tongue.

The devalued status of women in the text was brought up by Alison. They have no other function than sexuality, and marriage defines their role - the Prioress leaves her job to become a wife.

We considered what to do about the reading out of the parliamentary legislation at the end – does it need modernising? How can we make the declaration of parliamentary acts interesting? Does it need to be?

17/1/2013

Gerry Mulgrew pointed out that this is a ‘non-urban’ text, saying that unless you pick out the Doric in it, it sounds wrong.

Discussions about whether to modernise or let the language speak for itself continued to pepper the conversation, and would continue to do.

We also read through the version of the interlude that had been produced by Greg Walker and Ellie Rycroft. It largely worked except for the reconstruction of the Vice’s mentioned in Eure’s letter. The possibility of using Eure’s letter as a framing device was mooted and we agreed to try this in the next draft.

The differences between the two parts of the *Satyre* was noted. Greg Thompson said that Part Two of the *Satyre* was like “verbatim theatre” while Peter Kenny noted the first part was like a “mummer’s play”. While the first part was strikingly “personal and political” according to Greg T, *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*is more rambling, and practical, “the enacting of legislation”. Tam Dean Burn said it was like a piece of “agit prop theatre” from the 1960s/70s.

Like the Opening Ceremony of the London Olympics, *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* was thought to mix entertainment with a serious message about the state of the nation.

18/1/2013

The need for different loci came to the fore including an elite secular locus for Temporality and the Merchants who are connected spatially at line 1277, as well as a punishment locus.

What Chastity and Verity should look like was discussed and the need for visual references became clear.

Also the use of water in the play emerged as a question to explore – what and where is it, and what is its function? Does the word ‘stank’ have any particular connotations?

We all became interested in Diligence too, especially his role in the first half of the play. Is he on-stage throughout this? If so, where? Do we witness Diligence watching the play and how would he react? What does it say about Diligence that he doesn’t intervene on the king’s waywardness?

The need for the research team to investigate parliamentary history also became clear. Greg Thompson said he needed to know more about the state of parliament in 1554 given the difficulties the country had faced between James’ death and Mary of Guise taking over as regent.

21-23.1.2013

The play began to open up to us through the intervention and authenticity of the Scots voices that read it as the rehearsals continued.

As the rehearsal period moved to the end, the ‘undramatic’ end of the parliament was discussed from various angles. Tom Betteridge asserted that this difficulty is not a mistake – that while vice is theatrical, attractive and appealing, virtue is not, and this is the point that Lindsay is making.

This problematic aspect of the play from a modern perspective is actually a message that reform is boring and that political change is lengthy and procedural.

Greg Walker added that In the ‘typical’ morality you simply purge the king’s body or replace him – but without a king, as in *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, this same effect has to be achieved through legislation.

How to make this work in a modern context remains a major question that the theatre team will have to address when rehearsals start in May.