

The Description of the 1540 Interlude

To the Right Honorable and my very goode Lorde, my Lordes Prevy Seale,

[f.137r] Pleas it your goode Lordeshipe to be advertisede¹ that at the meating whiche I had with twoe gentle men of the King of Scotts Counsaile at Caldstre² for suche buysynes³ as I have advertised your lordshipe of in myn other lettre with of our procedings in the same. I hade diverse commynyngs⁴ with Mr Thomas Bellendyn, one 5of the saide [C]oun[ce]llours for Scotlande, a man by estymacion apperaunte⁵ to be of thage of fiftye yeres or above, and of gentle and sage conversacion, specially touching the staye⁶ of the sprituallie⁷ in Scotlande. And, gathering hym to be a [man] inclyned to the soorte used in our soverains Realme of England,⁸ I dide soe largely breke with hym in thoes behalves⁹ as to move to knowe of hym of whate mynde the King and 10counsaile of Scotland was inclyned unto concernyng the Busshope of Rome,¹⁰ and for the reformacion of the mysusing¹¹ of the sprituallie in Scotlande, wherunto he gentlie and lovinglie aunswered, shewing hym self well contented of that commynyng, [and] did saye that the King of Scotts hym self, with all his temporall Counsaile was gretely geven¹² to the reformacion of the mysdemeanours of Busshops, Religious 15persones¹³, and preists within the Realme. And so muche that by the Kings pleasour, he being prevey therunto,¹⁴ thay have hade ane enterluyde¹⁵ played in the feaste of the Epiphanne of our Our Lorde laste paste,¹⁶ before the King and Quene at Lighgive,¹⁷ and the hoole counsaile, spirituall and temporall.¹⁸ The hoole matier whereof concluded upon the Declaracion of the noughtines¹⁹ in Religion, the presumption of 20busshops, the collucion²⁰ of the spirituall courts (called the concistory courts in Scotland), and mysusing of preists. I have obteigned a noote frome a Scotts man of our sorte, being present at the playing of the saide enterlutyde, of theeffecte thereof, which I doe sende unto your lordshipe by this berer.²¹ My lorde, the same Mr Bellendyn shewed me that after the said enterluyd fynished, the King of Scotts dide

¹ Informed.

² Coldstream, a town on the river Tweed, south-west of Berwick.

³ Business.

⁴ 'Communings': discussions.

⁵ Appearing.

⁶ Restriction/reform.

⁷ Clergy.

⁸ i.e. Eire took Bellendon to be of a reformist disposition.

⁹ 'I frankly broached the subject with him of those matters...'

¹⁰ The Pope. Because they denied the supremacy of the Pope, Henry VIII's government insisted he be referred to only as the Bishop of Rome.

¹¹ Abuses.

¹² 'Greatly given (i.e. strongly inclined).'

¹³ i.e. The regular religious, monks, nuns, and friars.

¹⁴ 'Privy to (i.e. part of) (the plan).'

¹⁵ Interlude.

¹⁶ The most recent feast of the Epiphany, i.e. 6 January 1540.

¹⁷ Linlithgow, a royal palace and town, west of Edinburgh.

¹⁸ 'The entire Royal Council, both the spiritual lords (bishops, priors, and abbots) and the temporal (lay) 20lords.'

¹⁹ Naughtiness/abuses.

²⁰ Collusion/corruption.

²¹ The bearer of the letter.

25call upon the Busshope of Glascoe being Chauncelour,²² and diverse other busshops,
exorting thaym²³ to reform thair facions and maners of lyving,²⁴ saying that oneles
thay soe did, he wold sende sex of the proudeste of thaym unto his uncle of England,
and, as thoes wer ordoured, soe he wold ordour all the reste that wolde not a mende.²⁵
And therunto the Chauncelour shuld aunswer, and say unto the King that one worde
30of His Graces mouthe shuld suffice thayme to be at commaundement,²⁶ and the King
haistely and angrely²⁷ aunswered that he wold gladely bestowe any words of his
mouthe that could a mend thaym. I am alsoe advertised by the same Mr Bellendyn
that the King of Scottes is fully mynded to expell all sprituall men from having any
auctoritie by office under His Grace, either in household or elles-where within the
35Realme, and daily studiethe and devisithe for that entente...²⁸

At the Kinges Majesties Castell of Berwike,²⁹ the 26th day of January (1540),
Your Lordships, at commaundement,
Wyllm Eure.

[f. 138r]

The Copie of the nootes of the interluyde.

In the first entres come in Solaice, whose parte was but to make mery, sing ballettes³⁰
40with his ffelowes, and drinke at the interluydes³¹ of the play, whoe shewede³² firste to
all the audience the playe to be played, whiche was a generall thing, meanyng nothing
in speciall to displease noe man, praying therfor noe man to be angre with the same.³³
Nexste come in a King, whoe passed to his throne, having noe speche to thende of the
playe, and thene to ratifie and approve as in playne parliament all thinges doon by the
45reste of the players whiche represented the Thre Estes.³⁴ Withe hym come his
courtours Placebo, Pikthanke, and Flatterye,³⁵ and suche a like garde,³⁶ one swering
he was the lustiest, starkeste,³⁷ best proporcioned and moste valiaunte man that ever
was, an other swearing he was the beste with longe bowe, crosebowe, and culverein³⁸
in the world, an other swearing he was the best juster³⁹ and man of armes in the world,

25²² Gavin Dunbar, Archbishop of Glasgow and Chancellor of Scotland.

²³ Them.

²⁴ Either 'their fashions and manners of living', i.e. lifestyles, or 'factions, and manners of living', their divisions and intrigues and their lifestyles.

²⁵ 'Unless they did so, he would send six of the proudest of them to his uncle (the King) of England
30(Henry VIII), and, whatever Henry did with them, he (James) would do with all the rest who would not
amend (reform) themselves.'

²⁶ 'Would secure their obedience.'

²⁷ 'Hastily (quickly) and angrily.'

²⁸ 'Studies and plans every day to achieve that end.'

35²⁹ Berwick Castle (Northumberland).

³⁰ Ballads.

³¹ 'During the intervals.'

³² Described.

³³ i.e. The play had no personal or specific satirical targets, so no-one should take offence. A traditional
40defence of political satire in the period..

³⁴ The Three Estates of Parliament, the temporal and spiritual peers and the burgesses.

³⁵ Placebo ('I will please'), Reward-Seeker, and Flattery.

³⁶ Crew.

³⁷ Strongest.

45³⁸ Culverin (small firearm).

³⁹ Joust.

50and soe furthe during thair partes. Ther after came in a man, armed in harnes,⁴⁰ with a sword drawn in his hande, a Busshope, a Burges man,⁴¹ and Experience, clede like a doctour,⁴² whoe sete thaim all down on the deis,⁴³ under the King. After thayme come a Poor Man, whoe did goe uppe and downe the scaffald, making a hevie⁴⁴ complaynte, that he was heryed⁴⁵ through the courtiours taking his fewe⁴⁶ in one place, and alsoe
55his tacks⁴⁷ in an other place, wher throughte he hade s[k]ayled⁴⁸ his house, his wife and childrenen beggyng their brede, and soe of many thousaund in Scotlande, whiche wolde make the Kynges Grace lose of men if His Grace stod neide,⁴⁹ saying thair was noe remedye to be gotten; for thoughe he wolde suyte⁵⁰ to the Kinges Grace, he was naither acquaynted with Controuller nor Treasurer,⁵¹ and withoute thaim myght noe
60man gete noe goodenes of the King. And after he spered for the King,⁵² and when he was showed to the man that was King in the playe, he aunsuered and said he was noe king, ffor ther is but one King, whiche made all and governethe all, Whoe is eternall, to Whome he and all erthely kinges ar but officers, of the whiche thay muste make recknyng,⁵³ and so furthe mucche moore to that effecte.⁵⁴ And thene he loked to the King
65and saide he was not the King of Scotland, for ther was an other King in Scotlande, that hanged John Armestrang with his fellowes, and Sym the Larde,⁵⁵ and many other moe, which had pacified the cuntrye, and stanchd thifte,⁵⁶ but he had lefte one thing undon, whiche perteyned aswell to his charge as th[other].⁵⁷ [f.138v] And, whene he was asked what that was, he made a long narracion of the oppression of the poor by
70the taking of the corse presauente beistes,⁵⁸ and of the heryng of poor men by concistorye lawe, and of many other abussions of the spritual[itie] and churche, withe many long stories and auctorities. [And] thene the Busshope roise and rebuked hym, saying [it] effered not to hym to speake such matiers,⁵⁹ comaundinge hym scilence, or elles to suffer dethe for it, by thair lawe. Therafter roise the man of armes,
75all[ed]ginge the contrarie, and commaunded the poor man to speake, saying thair abusion hade been over longe suffered, withoute any law. Thene the Poor Man shewed the greate abusion of busshopes, Prelettes, Abbottes, reving⁶⁰ menes⁶¹ wives and doughters, and holding thaim, and of the maynteynyng of thair childer, and of

⁴⁰ Harness (body-armour).

⁴¹ Burgess.

50⁴² Dressed like a doctor of law.

⁴³ Dais.

⁴⁴ Sorrowful

⁴⁵ Harried/oppressed.

⁴⁶ Feu, a fixed rent on land.

55⁴⁷ Tax.

⁴⁸ 'Skail': to break up or disperse a home.

⁴⁹ 'And so have many thousands of men in Scotland, which would leave the King short of men if His Grace stood in need (of raising an army).'

⁵⁰ Take his suit.

60⁵¹ The chief officers of the royal household, who controlled access to the King.

⁵² 'Asked for the King.'

⁵³ An account (of their performance).

⁵⁴ 'And a lot more to the same effect.'

65⁵⁵ The two border rieviers (bandits), John Armstrong of Gilknockie, hanged at Carlinrigg in 1530 and Simon Armstrong, alias 'Sym the La[i]rd', hanged in 1536, both under James V's jurisdiction.

⁵⁶ 'Stopped theft.'

⁵⁷ 'Which was as important a part of his responsibilities as the rest.'

⁵⁸ Animals taken as 'corpse presents', mortuary fees paid on the death of the owner.

⁵⁹ 'It was not his role to raise such subjects.'

70⁶⁰ Stealing/kidnapping.

⁶¹ Men's.

thair over bying of lordes and barrons eldeste sones to thair doughters,⁶² where
80thoroughe the nobilitie of the blode of the Realme was degenerate,⁶³ and of the greate
superfluous rentes that perteyned to the churche, by reason of over muche temporall
landes given to thaym, whiche thaye proved that the Kinge might take boothe by the
canon lawe, and civile lawe, and of the greate abomynable vices that reiagne in
clostures,⁶⁴ and of the common bordelles⁶⁵ that was keped in closturs of nunnes. All
85this was provit by Experience. And also was shewed th'office of a busshope,⁶⁶ and
producit the Newe Testament with the auctorities to that effecte. And thene roise the
Man of Armes and the Burges, and did saye that all that was producit by the Poor Man
and Experience was reasonable, of veritie and of greate effecte, and verey expedient
to be reafourmede⁶⁷ with the consent of parliament. And the Busshope said he wold
90not consent therunto. The Man of Armes and Burges saide thay wer twoe, and he bot⁶⁸
one, wherfor thair voice shuld have mooste effecte. Theraftre the King in the playe
ratefied, approved, and confermed all that was reheresed.⁶⁹

Bibliography

Greg Walker, *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, Wiley Blackwell, 2000, pp. 921-924.

⁶² The complaint that prelates were able to use large cash dowries to 'buy up' the sons of noblemen as husbands for their illegitimate daughters, thus 'polluting' noble blood-lines is a theme returned to in the 751552-54 play.

⁶³ Contaminated.

⁶⁴ Cloisters, i.e. monasteries, friaries, and convents.

⁶⁵ Brothels.

⁶⁶ 'It was revealed what the responsibilities of a bishop (really) were.'

80⁶⁷ Reformed.

⁶⁸ Only.

⁶⁹ 'All that had been said to that point.'