

## Group A: Greg Walker

Dan Breen (Ithaca College) :

### Reasoning the Need: Poverty, Religion, and Politics in Bale and Heywood

This essay will examine the ways in which staged representations of debates and of acts of petitioning are deployed to address the concept of need in Heywood's *Play of the Weather* and Bale's *Kynge Johan*. Possessed of political, spiritual, and economic dimensions, need is identified in late medieval and pre-Reformation writing as an especially difficult issue both because of its implication in so many different conceptual fields and because of the complex interpretive and practical problems it creates. The assessment of and response to need demand both a process of discernment, and the existence of social and/or spiritual institutions that possess the authority to implement this process and to distribute resources. However, because of the constantly changing nature of church doctrine and ecclesiology—as well as of the Tudor political landscape—between the early 1530s and 1559, the spiritual and political resources that might be drawn on in response to need as a conceptual and a practical problem could not always be located securely within a clearly intelligible dispensation of authority. Need thus becomes an even more opaque ethical issue that is difficult to make legible given the instability of early and mid-century spiritual and political institutions and vocabularies. The resulting inability of secular and spiritual powers to address this problem adequately hints in these plays at a broader uncertainty regarding the status of political and religious authority.

Jeanne H. McCarthy (Georgia Gwynett College):

### The Received Tradition and Reading Performance Clues in the Early Moralities

Reading early modern interludes for clues about how they might have been staged--without imposing "post-Enlightenment" assumptions about theatrical practices, and particularly about the actor's trade--remains a critical challenge. Two early printed interludes that raise a number of questions about the literacy levels of early performance, assumptions about hall stagings, and the relevance of such theater to pre-Elizabethan royal audiences or courts are John Skelton's Henrician-era *Magnyfycence* (ca. 1519), an allegorical moral comedy defending the importance of "Measure" in self-governance but whose vices also embody specific rhetorical devices, and the Marian morality *Respublica* (ca. 1553), similarly concerned with proper governance and authored by the grammar school playwright and evangelical polemicist Nicholas Udall. Skelton, in particular, represents an arguably unintegrated voice in critical narratives of the drama. Reconciling his play with prevalent understandings of hall staging, popular and continental alignments with the Vice tradition, Henrician era politics, and the use of the interlude to meet audience expectations for entertainment has been thought to be settled matter, but elements of Skelton's biography (including his being an educator), his understanding of print authorship, his promotion of English "speaking," and his stated objection to the introduction of Latinate classical performance into the English grammar school performance tradition, point to a self-consciously learned and literate performance tradition. That tradition appears to be

relevant to Udall's comedies as well. Udall's status as a Latinist and grammar school teacher perhaps similarly accounts for his works being so imperfectly integrated in understandings of the emerging drama and popular performance practices. I wish to consider Skelton's and Udall's allegorical moral comedies--one possibly, and the other even more likely, I argue, initially performed by a royal chapel--as inviting a reimagining of the allegorical performance tradition in its uses of space, its authorship practices, and in its impact on the relationship between the dramatic text and performers.

**Julie Prior** (University of Toronto):

“[K]iss ere you go, / And see you be friends”: Reconciling violence, shrew-taming, and companionate marriage in *Tom Tyler and his Wife*

ABSTRACT

Little is known about the performative context of *Tom Tyler and His Wife*, a shrew-taming play circa 1550-1560 featuring the didactic figures of Destinee, Desire, and Patience alongside the type-characters of the abused husband, his shrewish wife, and her gossiping alehouse friends. The play's author is anonymous, and the original text is not extant, thus clues about production must be taken largely from the 1661 printed text; the Prologue notes that the play was performed by “prettie boyes” (Schelling 7) and the epilogue's “God preserve our Noble Queen” (872) seems to position the play in the early Elizabethan theatre.

In order to provide interpretative context for *Tom Tyler*, this paper makes speculative connections between generic and performative elements in *Tom Tyler* and other shrew-taming narratives preceding it, for instance, the c. 1550 ballad *A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin*, and John Heywood's 1533 *A Mery Play Betwene Johan Johan, the Husbände, Tyb, his Wyfe*. Central challenges the paper will address include: Who exactly performed the play—is it possible to pinpoint which 1550s boys' company produced it? What other shrew-taming plays interact with this text, and can these help us pinpoint things about performances of this play? In attempting to answer these questions, this paper considers *Tom Tyler's* paradoxical representations of companionate marriage alongside its graphic staging of abject violence and shrew taming in order to argue that theatrical context may well have played a large part in mitigating the initially apparent conflicts among the play's incongruent visions of marriage, violence, and friendship.

**Group B: Ellie Rycroft**

**Sheila Coursey** (Michigan):

ABSTRACT

*Nice Wanton* is an intensely melodramatic moral interlude warning of the dangers of lax parenting that would put even the most lurid public service announcements to shame. It was first anonymously printed in 1560 by John King, titled *A Pretty Interlude Called Nice*

*Wanton*. There are diverging theories as to where and when *Nice Wanton* was performed, between court performance for Edward and/or Elizabeth or more provincial performance. However, it is universally agreed that this play was performed by a boy's troupe, likely for court or another semi-elite audience.

While the records and history of *Nice Wanton's* first performances remain an active realm of debate, my paper instead focuses on two twentieth-century adaptations of the interlude. I will be visiting the Columbia University archives in January in order to access set designs and lectures surrounding a 1911 production of *Nice Wanton* at the New Theatre in New York. Likewise, I'm working with the Bristol University theater archives to obtain digital copies of notes and documents surrounding a 1964 revival of *Nice Wanton* at the Bristol Old Vic Trust. I'm particularly interested in exploring how *Nice Wanton* was positioned as part of a theatrical montage or festival— for example, at the New Theater, *Nice Wanton* was performed as part of a series that included the miracle play *Noah's Flood*, excerpts from *The Winter's Tale*, and *A School for Scandal*. Likewise, the Bristol Old Vic production was part of the Bristol Shakespeare Festival. Given the challenges of pinning down its original court performance for Edward and/or Elizabeth in existing archives, my paper will explore how the contexts of these twentieth-century performance practices might offer new inroads for research and performance into the theatrical legacy of an otherwise under-read moral interlude.

**Nova Myhill** (New College Florida):

Allegory and Oratory: Externalizing Internal States in *The Play of Wit and Science*

During Fall semester of 2019, I directed a student performance of John Redford's *The Play of Wit and Science*, which will serve as the basis for my work in this seminar. Written in around 1540 for the child choristers of St Paul's Cathedral to perform at the court of Henry VIII, the play survives in a single MS, British Library Additional 15523; the first section of the play is missing, but two additional Wit and Science plays, the anonymous *Marriage of Wit and Science* (c. 1570) and Francis Merbury's *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* (1579) provide possible beginnings, which I cobbled together into a complete if idiosyncratic script. During the rehearsal process, we have been interested in the challenge of presenting allegorical characters, which we have been working on in the context of early modern pedagogy and rhetoric, in particular, ideas of gesture from Bulwer's *Chirologia* (1644). I'm also interested in the ways that allegorical representations of education emphasize the continuities and elide the differences between the experience of being a student in the sixteenth century and now, and in how to take advantage of the focus on external manifestations of internal states in the modes of both allegory and performance.

**Jessica Winston** (Idaho State):

“What's the Point of a Radio Play? *The First Stage* and the Post-War BBC”

In the mid-1950s, BBC radio's Third Programme presented *The First Stage*, a series of early English plays adapted for radio by John Barton and produced by Raymond Raikes. The series was ambitious, consisting of thirteen, sixty- to ninety-minute episodes broadcast over the course of a year and covering drama from the medieval mystery plays through *The Spanish Tragedy*. In so doing, the series offers some of the only existing professional productions of many sixteenth-century plays, such as *Gammer Gurton's Needle*—rarely performed dramas that listeners, if they knew them at all, would likely only have known from reading them at school or university.

It is striking that aspects of the series – framing lectures, editorial cuts, and musical soundscape – construct the plays as audio renditions of written texts. Other aspects, however, present the plays as lively, if esoteric experiences in radio theatre, performances that would be comprehensible and enjoyable, even if a listener missed the framing lecture or had never encountered the play before. In this way, the series constructs each play as both audio text and free-standing artistic artifact. This paper explores why the series so deliberately constructs the plays as both, and yet not quite text or performance.

I argue that construction of the series implicitly intervenes in post-war debates about the function of radio drama in the changing media landscape of 1950s Britain. The series presents radio drama as an educational tool existing in a third space and a third medium, separate from but defined by other spaces and modes—that is, different from but defined by school, with its written texts, and professional theatre, with its embodied and visual modes of performance. By offering a developed presentation of plays that listeners would have only encountered in a limited way, if at all, in these other spaces, the series presents radio drama as a way to bridge school and theatre—as a way to offer backgrounds and contexts to more canonical plays taught in school and performed on the professional stage.

### **Group C: Tom Betteridge**

**Erin E. Kelly** (University of Victoria):

#### Texts Out of Time – The Complex Contexts of Early Tudor Drama

How might we contextualize plays that refuse to stay attached to a particular historical moment? *Godly Queen Hester* was surely first written and performed and possibly even revised in the 1520s, but it wasn't printed until 1561. What are we to think of the performance and interpretive possibilities of this play across four decades? Evangelical polemical plays like the anonymous *New Custom* and the works of John Bale seem to have emerged in response to particular church controversies. Can we imagine that (or how) such drama could be understood differently in the context of complex religious and political debates across the sixteenth century? Pinning down the dates when some plays first appeared onstage may prove impossible. *Tom Tyler*, which survives in a 1661 quarto with a title page declaring it was "Printed and Acted about a hundred Years ago," is a text we can call an early Tudor play, but did it originate during the reign of Mary I or Elizabeth I? Does dating this play's composition matter more than figuring out what different types of interest the play might have attracted for "about a hundred Years"? By presenting a series of case

studies of texts out of time, my essay will suggest the interpretive possibilities that could result from varied approaches to contextualizing early Tudor drama.

**Megan Snell** (University of Texas)

Abstract

Representations of Herod's "Massacre [or Slaughter] of the Innocents" in art and drama depict horrific brutality toward infants and the terrible grief of their mothers. Yet how exactly this violence plays out in the choreography and dialogue of the English Corpus Christi cycles is both theatrically and tonally strange. Not only do Herod's soldiers often crack crass jokes, but the object of their violence is something that spectators potentially feel *for* but understand as *unfeeling*: a baby prop. Unlike older children in drama, who often articulate the cruelty they experience (e.g. Young Macduff's "He has killed me, mother!"), baby-props introduce particular requirements and challenges for performing theatrical violence: other actors must verbalize and simulate the action. In my paper, I explore how the Herod "Massacre of the Innocents" mysteries may serve as a dramaturgical model for baby-props in peril in early modern drama. After analyzing the methods of the Herod mysteries for performing infant violence, I turn to the attempted infanticide of Aaron's son in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. Contextualizing this scene within the dramaturgical model for infant violence offered by the Herod plays, I track how *Titus Andronicus* recreates some of the same representational complexities but rearranges and repurposes elements of the Herod model, shifting the target of the violence while still embracing a bloody outcome.