The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque

This book takes a new look at the courtly masque in early seventeenth-century England. For a generation, the masque has been a favourite topic of New Historicism, because it has been seen as part of the process by which artistic works interact with politics, both shaping and reflecting the political life of a nation. These exciting new essays move importantly beyond a monolithic view of culture and power in the production of masques, to one in which rival factions at the courts of James I and of Charles I represent their clash of viewpoints through dancing and spectacle.

All aspects of the masque are considered, from written text and political context to music, stage picture and dance. The essays, written by distinguished scholars from around the world, present an interdisciplinary approach, with experts on dance, music, visual spectacle and politics all addressing the masque from the point of view of their speciality.

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THE POLITICS OF THE STUART COURT MASQUE

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To
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Acknowledgements

Note on the text

Quotations from English Renaissance texts have been modernized throughout. For Shakespeare, we have relied on David Bevington (ed.), *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 4th edn (1992, updated 1997).

Introduction

David Bevington and Peter Holbrook

Masques were often dismissed as mere trifles of entertainment during the Jacobean years when that genre experienced its most remarkable development. Francis Bacon declared 'masques and triumphs' to be 'but toys'. For illustration, he need have looked no further than the featherbrained Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*, who 'delight[s] in masques and revels sometimes altogether' (1.3.111–12). Even Prospero in *The Tempest*, as deviser of a wedding masque for his daughter, passes the event off as 'Some vanity of mine art' (4.1.41).

Writers of masques were of course sensitive to the charge. Ben Jonson, in his *Neptune's Triumph* (1624), devised to celebrate the return from Spain of Prince Charles without a Spanish bride (much to the delight of most English observers), brings forward a Poet with his tale of woe. Wryly comparing his craft with that of the Cook, with whom he is conversing, the Poet calls himself 'The most unprofitable of [the King's] servants . . . A kind of Christmas engine, one that is used at least once a year for a trifling instrument of wit, or so' (lines 20–2). Jonson was all too aware of what his critics said of his courtly enterprises. Plutus, masquerading as Cupid in Jonson's *Love Restored* (1612), scornfully characterizes masquing as 'a false and fleeting delight', nothing more than 'The merry madness of one hour' that is sure to cost its devotees 'the repentance of an age' (lines 31–3).[1]

Writers of masques and observers of the courtly scene were none the less at pains to defend masquing. Jonson lauded the masque as 'lay[ing] hold on more removed mysteries'.[2] In Thomas Campion's *The Lords' Masque* (1613), no less an authority than Orpheus assures Entheus (Poetic Fury): 'Nor are these musics, shows, or revels vain / When thou adorn'st them with thy Phoebean brain'.[3] Bacon's demeaning reference to 'toys' occurs in an essay in which he offered shrewd advice to the aspiring masque presenter. The royal and noble sponsors of these shows took them seriously, to judge by the time, energy and money expended on them.

The Poet's acknowledgement in *Neptune's Triumph* of the triflingness of his masque is, in this context, a complex idea. While he drily acknowledges an outward resemblance between his own vocation and that of the Cook, both of whom serve up dishes, poetic and otherwise, to the court's taste, the Poet also takes a sly dig at the Cook. In that person's self-confidence, officious advice-giving and willingness to cater to every taste, Jonson skewers the presumptuous incomprehension of his art by a court that is complacently willing to equate his artistic concerns with those of the appetite and to expect that the court's tastes are to govern every aspect of the artist's production. At the same time, the likening of a Poet to a Cook has a defensive value for Jonson. Through it he can disown any riskily large political intention, and take shelter behind the innocuous role of entertainer from those malicious 'state-decipherer[s]' and 'politic picklock[s]' who plagued him in the public theatres.[4]

The contradictory significances of this exchange between Poet and Cook reflect the difficulties of Jonson's position. For, as author of a masque celebrating the return of the brideless prince, he was in a delicate spot. Was he in effect to celebrate the failure of James's long-cherished hopes of a Spanish marriage for his son, as ecstatic London crowds had done some months earlier?[5] Or was he to insinuate regret at the collapse of the King's plan for peace with Spain – a plan with which Jonson may well have sympathized? Together, Cook and Poet explore the difficult matter of their satisfying, each in his own way, the diverse tastes of their customers:

COOK: Were you ever a cook?
POET: A cook? No, surely.
COOK: Then you can be no good poet, for a good poet differs nothing at all from a master-cook. Either's art is the wisdom of the mind.
POET: As how, sir?
COOK: Expect. I am by my place to know how to please the palates of the guests; so, you are to know the palate of the times, study the several tastes, what every nation, the Spaniard, the Dutch, the French, the Walloon, the Neapolitan, the Briton, the Sicilian, can expect from you.
POET: That were a heavy and hard task, to satisfy Expectation, who is so severe an exactress of duties; ever a tyrannous mistress, and most times a pressing enemy.
COOK: She is a powerful great lady, sir, at all times, and must be satisfied. So must her sister, Madam Curiosity, who hath as dainty a palate as she, and these will expect.
POET: But what if they expect more than they understand?
COOK: That's all one, Master Poet, you are bound to satisfy them.

(lines 23–40)

Jonson's pugnacious attitude towards his auditors suggests that he finds them incapable of comprehending his artistic purpose and wilfully determined to be unsatisfied. Yet he also betrays a concern lest he be unable to pick his way among the radically contradictory preferences of this audience. The rueful and bewildered tone of the Poet reflects Jonson's awareness that the factionalized nature of courtly opinion about the Spanish Match, and about foreign policy generally, dooms *Neptune's Triumph* from the start. As David Riggs has put it, 'regardless of what [Jonson] wrote, someone would take offense'.[6] The dialogue between Cook and Poet is Jonson's bid to pre-empt such offence by making explicit the hopelessness of his task. In what amounts almost to an appeal for clemency, Jonson makes it clear that his is the impossible job of entertaining an ideologically divided court with a political entertainment.

The conversation between Cook and hapless Poet in *Neptune's Triumph* encapsulates many of the interpretive problems that bear upon a consideration of the court masque. How weighty, or trifling, were masques? What was the nature of the relation between masque and audience? As to the first point, we may need to ask what 'trifling' actually meant to the Renaissance court. The art of courtliness, Patricia Fumerton tells us, was that of the artful trifle: the sonnet, the miniature, the elaborately designed and lavishly provided-for dinner party.[7] Trifling, in that courtly context, was hardly synonymous with the unimportant; in a world of small-scale, interpersonal power relations, the slightest details of self-presentation – of gesture, deportment, manner, dress – were sure to resonate with significance. The Renaissance court, as Richard Halpern observes, provided a setting in which 'the power of sovereignty work[ed] primarily by making itself visible'.[8] In such a milieu, where the surface was, in a sense, precisely what mattered, the trivial assumed a startling importance.

The case for redefining what we mean by 'trivial' has been eloquently put by Norbert Elias in *The Court Society*. Whereas status in a money economy need not be continually asserted to maintain its effectiveness, Elias argues, status in a courtly society depends for its very existence upon display. Finely nuanced conduct becomes endowed with a special weight:

We are apt to ask today: why were these people so beholden to external appearances . . . to [the] superficial? But . . . this assessment of what was centrally important to court people as 'superficial' springs from a quite specific structure of social existence. We can to some extent allow ourselves today to leave real social differences concealed . . . because the relationships between

people mediated by wealth and profession, and the resulting differentiation of people, remain unambiguously real and effective even when not expressed directly in their public manifestations.[9]

In the early modern court, prestige was either visible or non-existent.

The masque, then, considered even in its most superficial aspect – as a spectacular dance party, or what David Lindley has described as 'an elaborate frame for . . . an aristocratic knees-up'[10] – was none the less socially and politically significant. In Elias's sense, it was a display of power and standing. Renaissance court culture in all its manifestations could be singularly serious and untrifling about play – in Inns of Court revelling, for example, or in Accession Day celebrations. Festivity took on the function, as Desmond Bland has noted, of a 'training-ground' in nobility, and was acknowledged as such by the involvement of monarch, councillors and nobles.[11] Accession Day celebrations were occasions of extravagant, elaborate, and, from one perspective, superficial displays, like the masque; yet they were also attempts to garner, secure and enhance prestige at the heart of power. From a courtly viewpoint, all such entertainments were, if trifling, importantly so.[12]

As the most developed courtly pastime and formal social occasion of the English Renaissance, the masque was thus significant, even if some of its spectators may have been uncomprehending of, or indifferent to, its deeper poetic and scenic meanings.[13] Moreover, as 'the most inherently topical of all seventeenth-century art forms',[14] the masque was unavoidably and consciously political. The key to its political nature, and hence the key to critical interpretation, lies in its reception. What was the nature of the court audience, and what was its relation to such spectacle? What range of responses did the masque allow for? How far did it permit sceptical or ambivalent reactions? Do we need to think of divisions among an audience, as *Neptune's Triumph* would seem to suggest? These questions are central to our understanding of the ideological effects of a major English Renaissance symbolic form.

The essays gathered here re-open the question of the 'trivial' importance of the masque and related forms of courtly entertainment chiefly in the reigns of James I, and, to an extent, Charles I. In so doing they build upon recent advances in our understanding of the relations between society and culture in the early modern period, and upon the rehistoricized temper of Elizabethan Renaissance studies over the past decade and a half that has directed special attention to the Stuart masque. The present essays take as axiomatic the proposition, advanced by New Historicist critics among others, that Renaissance literature

'did not simply reflect history but in a sense . . . helped to make it'.[15] This proposition is arguably even more true of the masque than of other literary forms in the period, if only because many of the most powerful individuals in the land participated in its elegant rituals. A literary form so devoted to the art of self-fashioning and role-playing in the drama of power has warmly recommended itself to a new generation of critics interested in the arcane processes by which political and social authority invents and replicates itself. As Martin Butler will show, in his essay that provides a theorizing basis for this collection, the 'entanglements between culture and power' presented in the court masque have inevitably fascinated New Historicist criticism.

Stephen Orgel, working in conjunction with Roy Strong, deserves to be recognized as the initiator of modern studies in the masque. More broadly, though not a New Historicist himself by any narrow or orthodox designation, he has been an important precursor of a good deal that New Historicism has uncovered in this field.[16] Although, as Martin Butler will explain, the essays in this collection undertake to move beyond Orgel's early work in the direction of seeing factional diversity at court to which the masque necessarily responded, they do so with full appreciation of the brilliant groundwork that Orgel has provided. In his own contribution to this present collection, Orgel sees division in the court as astutely as does anyone else. To the extent that Orgel's intent in his original and pioneering work focused on James as king, showing how the masque might be seen to embody Stuart power as the 'expression of the monarch's will, the mirror of his mind',[17] Orgel's findings remain importantly true even while they need, and deserve, to be enriched by consideration of other, discordant voices in the competitions for power that sought out the masque as a medium of political self-definition. Early and late, Orgel's 'thick description' of the mentality embodied in the masque has illuminated in the courtly context 'the role of symbolic forms in human life'.[18]

Orgel and others interested in the masque, and in the broader cultural phenomena to which Stephen Greenblatt has given the useful names of 'negotiation', 'circulations of energy', 'containment' versus 'subversion' and the like, owe an important and openly acknowledged indebtedness to Clifford Geertz and Lawrence Stone. Geertz, in his anthropological analysis of what he calls 'the theater state' in nineteenth-century Bali and in other studies, offers an especially pertinent model for the Stuart masque.[19] His point, in brief, is that the ceremonies and myths of political rule became, for nineteenth-century

Bali as they do for many other cultures, a kind of self-fulfilling reality in which the leaders of a culture act out roles in ceremonies designed to mythologize those leaders' divine origins and authority. Through ceremonies of music, dance and public display, the leaders essentially become what they have created through their impersonations of power; the medium of the ceremony becomes the reality of political authority. This anthropological approach is a sceptical one in that it sees power as the end product of illusions that are being consciously manipulated. New Historicism in the 1980s, for its own cultural reasons, found this view of politics immensely applicable to the California and then the United States of the Reagan era, whilst the Cultural Materialists in Great Britain found a similar wry solace in a method of analysis so germane to the social and political practices of Thatcherism. The Renaissance court masque flourished in this environment as con-firmation that some things in the world of political power never really change. Whether the manipulations of power were perceived quite as cynically in Renaissance England is another question, but examination of the process itself has brought significant new illumination of the cultural context of the court masque.

Lawrence Stone's *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (1965), and his later work, including *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (1977), have exercised considerable influence on New Historicist critics by arguing that England's great families declined in influence under the Tudors and Stuarts.[20] One result was a scramble for ways in which England's ruling class might maintain the fiction at least of their import-ance to the nation. An outmoded feudal aristocracy turned to chivalric rituals such as the tournament as a means of mythologizing its function as a warrior class deserving the claim of ancestral greatness. Richard McCoy, Perry Anderson, Anthony Esler, Raymond Southall, Eric Mallen, Paul Siegel and others have further enriched our understand-ing of this phemonenon by their analyses of ways in which a frantic neo-chivalric cult of honour by the Earl of Essex and other aristocrats sought to idealize an imagined medieval past as an ideological bulwark against what they perceived as an unravelling of the social fabric. Paul Hammer's essay on Essex in this present volume adds still more illus-tration.[21] Confronted with such a decline, England's aristocracy turned to the masque especially as one vital means of asserting claims of political significance and of sorting out lines of authority. The work of Stone and others thus focuses our attention on a world of frantic courtly emulation in which the masque was destined to become a potent if multi-edged instrument in the negotiation of power.

This New Historicist approach to Jacobean court politics needs to be seen as part of a larger revolution in historiography of the period, a revolution in which the 'Whig Liberal' interpretation of English history (as seen for example in the work of G. M. Trevelyan), insisting teleologically on an inevitable progression towards civil war and the securing of political liberties under a constitutional monarchy, has given way to a revisionist view concentrating on specific moments of history and rejecting any simplified binary opposition between Tudor or Stuart governments and their critics. This revisionist history has also taken as its premise the omnipresence of rivalry and factionalism in court politics, and has generally seen King James I as a more complex, intellectual and successful ruler than the champions of Whig Liberalism would allow.[22] To dispense with the old notion that civil war was inevitable in the early seventeenth century is to make possible a new view of the Stuart masque; it need no longer be represented as the doomed and empty gesture of a court culture bent on its own destruction, and can instead be viewed as a serious representation of princely power. This present volume aligns itself with the new revisionism to the important extent of arguing that the court was not monolithic, and that the masque, as the principal genre of the court's self-representation, was much more than a simple occasion for self-congratulation. It was instead the site of negotiation over England's most pressing problems and clashes of personality.

In a similar fashion, the 'linguistic turn' in historiographical developments advocated by J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner has redirected attention to the way in which shifts in discourse can announce larger ideological locutions and changes. Pocock insists, for example, that too often, in the more traditional historical methods of analysis that preceded the current revolution in the study of history, 'the coherence of a work or body of political writing, as political philosophy or as political theory, was mistakenly identified with its character as a historical phenomenon'. A historian should not attempt to 'furnish his author with a degree of coherence he did not in fact achieve'. Skinner similarly argues that a basic inadequacy afflicts both those who have attempted to understand a work of the past in the context of religious, political and enonomic factors, and those who insist on the autonomy of the text as 'the sole necessary key to its own meaning', because both methodologies 'commit philosophical mistakes in the assumptions they make about the conditions necessary for the understanding of utterances'. The modern critic or historian must realize that 'it will never in fact be possible simply to study what any given classic writer has *said* (especially

in an alien culture) without bringing to bear some of one's own expectations about what he must have been saying'.[23] These strictures, we submit, apply with particular force to the Stuart masque, and require that a new reading of the masque attune itself to a methodology that is as fully aware as can be of its own premises and preconceptions. In a similar vein, we believe that interpretations of the Stuart masque must bring to bear a reconsideration of audience and its place in the discourse of power at court, enriched as well by an understanding of the valences of masque performance.

A corollary of the recent revolution in historiography is that the court masque needs to be viewed as a diverse expression of conflicting arenas of interest within the court culture, rather than as primarily a symbolic ceremony vital to the reproduction of monarchal power. Whereas the scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s emphasized sovereignty and the power of a prince,[24] in an attempt 'to reconstruct the mentality of monarch-centered power',[25] today's scholarship has begun to move towards an increasingly complex picture. The very title of Stephen Orgel's *The Illusion of Power* (1975) declares his fascination with Clifford Geertz's mythologizings of authority through state-sponsored ceremonials centred on the monarchy. Similarly, Jonathan Goldberg assumes a centrality of monarchical power in his *James I and the Politics of Literature*.[26] Finding ambiguity at the heart of the Jacobean court masque, Goldberg attributes that ambiguity to the divisions of James's own personality and policies; the masque mirrors the struggle in the King himself between order and anarchy. These powerfully resonant theses, we will argue, can be further enhanced if the disjunctions thus noted are also explored in multi-faceted interpretations that stress the role of other court factions than that represented solely by the King.

For some critics of recent years, including Goldberg himself, a potential weakness of New Historicist emphasis on sovereignty is that it may end up reproducing early modern society's ideological misdescription of itself.[27] Jonson's *Oberon* (1611) would appear indeed at first to celebrate a power relationship in which all is seen to flow from an omnipotent prince, represented in this masque by the aptly-named Pan. Yet we would do well to consider that even if Jonson's own agenda impelled him towards a strongly monarchical model, he was not the only deviser of masques for the court; nor was King James the only significant patron. As Martin Butler and Tom Bishop will argue, Prince Henry's political role in the dynamics of *Oberon* is every bit as compelling as that of King James.

Recent studies by Richard McCoy, Leeds Barroll, Barbara Lewalski, Malcolm Smuts and others have accordingly begun to focus on cultural forms, from neo-feudal chivalry to the researches of the Society of Antiquaries into Britain's ancient constitution, that offered an alternative political agenda to the monarchy's claim to mythological greatness.[28] The present collection of essays engages in the debate at this point, adopting what Lloyd Davis has called 'a less sovereign-centred approach to the masque'[29] in order to describe in some detail the complexities, ambiguities and uncertainties of court politics and culture in the early modern period. In our view, the masque, rather than being simply the expression of monarchal power, was available for use by other interests, and functioned at the intersection of rivalrous political discourses.[30]

The court itself in this volume thus often appears as fluid and conflicted. What we hope to have undertaken is a deepening politicization of the masque; and by 'politics' we mean not solely the idealisms of Tudor–Stuart political theology but the actual political processes through which things happened. However much the Tudor and Stuart monarchs may have fashioned images of themselves as absolute rulers, authority in those regimes was less a one-way transmission of power than a complex negotiation – not wholly unlike that of more democratic societies – involving conflict, compromise and exchange. We are interested most of all in the ways in which masques negotiated among a range of commitments.[31] Our focus is on what J. R. Mulryne has recently called the 'strains and contradictions to which masquing texts and masquing occasions testify'.[32] Our approach has been to consider the court less as the organic creation of an all-powerful monarch than as an arena in which competing interest groups jockeyed for position – a court that was dynamic, unstable and volatile, and in which a poet such as Jonson might well find himself in a delicate position.[33]

Our attempt has been to provide a cohesive argument rather than a scattered selection of essays on a topic of mutual interest. We have tried to keep the project whole and unified by selection of subjects, arrangement of those subjects in a continuous line of argument, and communication among those who have taken part. The overarching argument of the book runs as follows:

New Historicism has made a huge contribution to our understanding of the Stuart masque by showing how masques thematized and enacted the Renaissance theatricalization of power. At the same time, the focus on monarchy as a pervasive influence in the creation of the

masque has sometimes had the effect of homogenizing the masque into a single-minded instrument of royal policy, and has sometimes obscured the necessary matter of addressing history as process. Even Jonathan Goldberg's analysis of the masque as simultaneously subversive and self-abasing interprets this ambivalence as a reflection of a divided royal will. To the extent that we can discern fractures in place of a monolithic image of absolutism, we can better begin to appreciate the give and take of accommodation and realignment that go to make up a communal event like the production of a masque. *Oberon* (1611) divides its focus between Oberon himself (representing Prince Henry) and Pan (King James) in a form of doubleness that reflects Henry's growing emergence as a 'significant competitor in the arena of power with his father'. These 'colliding priorities' spell trouble for Jonson as author of the text (Martin Butler).

To step back for a moment into Elizabeth's last years and to the Accession Day celebrations of 1595 is to see that the events nominally devised to praise the Queen do more to dramatize, in the debate between Love and Self-Love, the Earl of Essex's predicament as challenger to what Richard McCoy has dubbed the Elizabethan 'chivalric compromise'. That compromise allowed courtiers to flaunt their ambitions in chivalric display while subordinating ambition to royal service. The Accession Day event was so crucial to Essex's campaign of self-promotion that he essentially devised it himself, with the help of Francis Bacon and others. The event was a success if we measure it by what appears to have been Essex's design: 'upstaging Elizabeth on her own special day' of celebration (Paul E. J. Hammer).

James I's pacifist foreign policy was bound to influence his view of how court festivities should celebrate his reign. His was the strategy of a *politique*, balancing off the Catholic powers of the Continent against the Dutch and other Protestant communities. James's policy, advanced for its time, had notwithstanding to contend with a legacy of fanaticism, as well as the crypto-Catholicism of Queen Anne. Strains and equivocations are accordingly evident in Samuel Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, performed at court in 1604. Though commissioned by Queen Anne, who favoured a pro-Spanish pacifism, it none the less reveals Daniel's affiliation with the more interventionist Protestant politics once championed by Sir Philip Sidney and the Earl of Essex. Daniel's successor as purveyor of masques to the crown, on the other hand, was more aligned with James's pacifism. Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* (1609) honours the ideology of peace. Queen Anne appears to

have been a force behind this entertainment, as its politics suggest (Peter Holbrook).

Jonson's *Oberon* (1611), dividing its centre of attention, as we have seen, between the images of Pan (King James) and Oberon (Prince Henry), takes on intense political meaning when examined in terms of the Prince's actively performative role in that masque. Henry's 'charisma', to use Clifford Geertz's term, manifested itself in the Prince's dancing. The King's personal disinclination to join the dancing cast him in a role of supporting things as they were, while Henry's more interventionist role lent itself to a contested dialectic that was 'mapped out on the floor in the masque performance itself'. Eyewitnesses attest to the importance of Henry's grace and facility as the central figure in a performance designed to support his growing claim to eminence at court. His dancing role had to be convincingly performed to reify his authority, and evidently was so, through newly devised choreographies that were painstakingly rehearsed (Tom Bishop).

Similarly, we must realize that the first ten years of the Stuart reign saw the forwarding of Queen Anne's programmes in ways that were not always consistent with those of her royal husband. From the start, the Queen created dominant roles for her favourites among court ladies in the dancing of new masques. Her first masque, Samuel Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604), departed notably from its immediate predecessor, 'The Orient Knights', sponsored by the King. *Twelve Goddesses* was danced by twelve ladies and twelve gentlemen instead of the eight mostly unmarried men who had danced 'The Orient Knights'. The political significance of the ladies' performance was bolstered by the social importance of the occasion. The women dancers, some of them married, had evidently been chosen because they enjoyed the Queen's friendship and support; youthful beauty and unmarried status seem to have counted for less. Spatial arrangements of the women signified their roles in an encoding of courtly power. *The Masque of Blackness* (1605), Jonson's first masque, seems to have appealed to James as an idea, but its success came about largely through Anne's instigation. Again, the core of noblewomen dancing with the Queen were seen as literally close to Anne and enjoying her special recognition (Leeds Barroll).

Indeed, *The Masque of Blackness* shows Jonson and Inigo Jones following the lead of Queen Anne. The undertaking was designed to enlist the magic of theatrical performance on behalf of Anne's bold presentation of herself as royal consort. The costumes, designed according

to her specific stipulations, revealed her more or less literally as the King's unmanageable wife. Some men were professedly shocked by the courtesan-like appearance and black complexion of the courtly women dancers, and yet the occasion struck others as exotically sumptuous. The complex issue of blackness lent to the masque an aura of strangeness that accorded well with the Queen's political agenda. Thus did Anne establish a new transgressive mode of womanliness, one calculated to arouse masculine anxiety and yet present itself as newly fashionable. Blackface was repeated some seven months later on the royal visit of Queen Anne's brother, Christian IV of Denmark, and by 1611 (in *Love Freed*) such exotic costuming had become de rigueur. By challenging the very notion of what constitutes masculinity, as in *Hymenaei* (1606), the Queen's new masques led some observers to wonder whether James was master in his own house (Stephen Orgel).

The antimasque served in all such masques as a site of contestation and potential subversion. These subversive tendencies could, in some circumstances, be viewed as 'contained' by the surrounding masque itself and its royalist celebration. None the less, the Jonsonian antimasque developed into an extended opportunity for Jonson to talk on remarkably familiar terms with the King. Such a view of Jonson's antimasques challenges the often-heard view of him as a creature of royal sycophancy. Jonson's own political biases may well have led him to support James's pacifist foreign policy and other aspects of his rule, but the antimasque was Jonson's creation, and as such it provided a space in which Jonson could give expression to what he saw as unruliness in court politics. Even if the forces of anarchy in the antimasque can often be recuperated into the spectacular triumphs of order with which the masques customarily end, the antimasque at the very least 'creates the anxiety which makes obvious the purpose and importance of containment'. The voices of holiday misrule, giving expression to discontent on the issues of the day, are not entirely silenced. Containment is more effective in Jonson's early masques; in his later work, like *Time Vindicated* (1623), we find in the antimasque a more natural home for riot and exuberant subversion (Hugh Craig).

In long-standing rivalries of court and City, as well, we can see dissonances and conflicting points of view that betoken a changing social order, along with recognition of a need for negotiation of those differences. The public shows of the London companies and the private masques of the Jacobean court are interestingly alike in their modes of presentation. Both enact through symbolic spectacle a set

of ideological claims. Ceremonial traditions like Lord Mayor's Shows and masques existed not so much to exacerbate differences between civic and courtly constituencies as to 'negotiate longstanding conflicts concerning status and finance'. King James understood the need to ingratiate himself with the London companies. The installation of Henry as Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester in 1610, for example, offered a rich opportunity for negotiating an exchange of both courtesy and money. Earlier, in 1607, Henry had attended the midsummer feast of the Merchant Tailors' Company, giving occasion for a double focus of attention anticipating that of the King and Henry during the performance of *Oberon* in 1611. The Lord Mayor's Show of 1605 had celebrated *The Triumphs of Reunited Britannia* in a way that laid claim to venerable British ancestry for all parties concerned, civic and royal. The memory of Henry was to remain warm in civic pageantry long after his death, in implicit endorsement of his Protestant and interventionist ideas on foreign policy that the crown seemed increasingly to have forgotten as it steered towards the treacherous shoals of the Spanish Match (Nancy E. Wright).

Although the greatest dramatist of the Jacobean era was never commissioned to write a masque for the court, William Shakespeare did write a masque into *The Tempest*. He saw that play performed at court in late 1611 and again during the winter of 1612–13 on the occasion of the marriage of James's daughter Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine, Frederick. The play was also publicly performed, and seems to have owed its first loyalty to its paying audience. These circumstances invite a comparison of the masque in *The Tempest* with Thomas Campion's *The Lords' Masque* (1613), written specifically for the royal wedding. Campion's masque examines the role of the creative artist in the context of an art form dependent upon a hierarchical structure of authority, and is, from first to last, a celebration of the absolutism that is to be perpetuated by the royal and politically inspired marriage. Shakespeare's masque re-presents the court masque for a paying audience and, at the last, asks for that audience's applause as the confirming sign of its endorsement. Such a re-fashioning of the court masque for a popular audience is enormously suggestive about the politics of masquing. Prospero bears some resemblance to King James. Both are imperfect rulers, self-indulgent, arrogant and impolitic, too proud in their learning, too ready to cast the administration of the state onto others. At the same time, Shakespeare's masque engages with a celebrated issue of its day, the royal marriage and its presumed mediating role in continental

politics. Shakespeare's version of the masque implicitly welcomes the Jacobean royal marriage as a political and dynastic event, even if Shakespeare's play first appeared some two years before the marriage actually took place. The model of political sovereignty, so central to Stuart ideology and dramatized in Prospero's plot, is revealed as deserving of loyalty even though morally flawed, while the dramatist makes clear his allegiance to his true patrons in a capitalist enterprise (David Bevington).

A masque in performance consisted of much more than its verbal script. We need always to bear in mind that the spectacle and dancing were the main event, and occupied considerably more playing time than is evident from reading a text. At the same time, deciphering clues as to the exact nature of the dance is notoriously difficult. The texts themselves repeatedly allude to the evanescent nature of dance and spectacle. How did dancing engage in the complex negotiation of political and social dialogue with which this volume is concerned? One approach is to explore early seventeenth-century comments on masquing, which are often hostile in their puritanical dislike of indecency and affectation. George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, was a special target of vituperation for his promoting of French customs at the Stuart court. In him especially, French-style deportment was regarded as effeminate. We can tell a good deal from Puritan diatribes about 'womanish' periwigs, styles of clothing, perfume and other cosmetics; we also learn from dancing manuals about imported styles of galliard, dancing on tiptoes, *congé*, *plié*, kissing of the hands, and much more. Similarly, we can gain insights into the instabilities between 'male' and 'female' movement codes by examining the role of young performers in the masque. Here Mary Villiers, daughter of the Duke of Buckingham, offers a highly visible model. Dance integrated young performers into the masque spectacle, socializing them as young impersonators of the values of the Stuart court (Barbara Ravelhofer).

When we consider the politics of music in the Stuart masque, in the court of Charles I as well as that of James I, we observe the intrinsic power of music to incite as well as to unite. Although no complete musical score for an extant masque survives, the problematic cues of musical setting are everywhere apparent in music's ways of differentiating the subversive energies of the antimasque, for example, from the confirming resonances of a masque's finale. Musical codes, always slippery by nature, are especially so in the early modern period; we must be careful to avoid the compartmentalizations of musical settings

and look for ways in which music underscores (as it were) 'the masque's omnipresent anxiety about its own legitimacy'. Elaborate and showy performances, in singing as in dancing, are unambiguous markers of sophistication through which the politically powerful like Buckingham learned to compete for courtly favour. Above all, the masque writer's task is to exploit the 'educative and curative properties that music derives from its heavenly affinity . . . bringing them down to earth in the ceremonious masque'. The use of music in the Stuart masque increasingly subordinated itself to royal power as Charles I commissioned an idealized image of his court and its entertainment, ever more dominated by metaphors of transformation and apotheosis. Milton, alienated as were many Englishmen by the increasing authoritarianism of the Stuart court, found good cause to meditate on the 'question of the source of music's authority' in his masque, *Comus* (David Lindley).

Comus (1634) is, then, the end point of our journey. Milton found himself writing in a world presided over by a king who dismissed Parliament and reissued James I's controversial *Book of Sports* encouraging dancing and festivity. Courtly masquing idealized Charles and Henrietta Maria in Neoplatonic and pastoral terms as Heroic Love and Divine Virtue, symbolically united in their joint responsibility of bringing under monarchical control all the unruly and mutinous elements of a population symbolized in the antimasque. The Queen's Roman Catholicism exacerbated divisions in England's social and political structure, helping to formulate a poetics of court entertainment that Milton and other Protestants were bound to regard as anathema. Under these polarizing circumstances, Milton found a welcome patron in the Countess of Derby, at her estate of Harefield in Middlesex, and wrote *Arcades* for performance there perhaps in 1632. In it, Milton undertook to reclaim the pastoral for a noble Protestant countess and her household, with text and music fitted to the religious politics of the occasion. *Comus* was commissioned by the Earl of Bridgewater in 1634 in the same spirit of seeking to remedy the fundamental values of a court genre perceived as having gone fatally astray. *Comus* is thus a reformed masque reflecting Puritan religious and political sensibilities. The contrast between it and *The Temple of Love* (1635), by William Davenant and Inigo Jones, encapsulates at the close of our narrative the contested role of the Stuart masque, as the rulers and intellectuals of England sought through performative art to act out in fictive personae the claims of a divided society (Barbara Lewalski).

Perhaps the foregoing summary of the book can convey our sense of its integrated argument. We should explain what the book does not attempt to do. A volume on the masque in the early modern period could, of course, begin much earlier at the start of the Tudor reign; for this story, the reader is referred to Sydney Anglo's *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* and to Gordon Kipling's edition of *The Receyte of the Lady Katerine* (written to celebrate Katharine of Arragon's marriage to Henry VIII's son Arthur), among other studies.[34] Queen Elizabeth's reign was not especially known for its masques, but she certainly did witness other entertainments that could have been included in our deliberations. The Inns of Court were actively involved in Christmas revels.

Our book chooses instead to focus on the period under James I when the masque underwent a new definition and a vast increase in expense of production. We devote somewhat less space to the Caroline masque, though the story of increased social and political polarization does provide the setting for our concluding exploration of music in the masque and of Milton's *Comus*. Our emphasis is designedly literary, though with careful attention as well to dance and music in the essays of Tom Bishop, Barbara Ravelhofer and David Lindley. Inigo Jones does not play as large a role in this study as he does in the fine edition of Jones's work by Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, or indeed as in the masque as it was actually performed. This book devotes rather little attention to visual aesthetics of the masque, to the machinery and stunning trompe l'oeil effects that so impressed eyewitnesses. Perhaps, despite its interest in a cross-disciplinary genre, this book is ultimately wedded to a literary and even Aristotelian preference for theme and idea over spectacle. The book has few pretensions as a work of archival historical scholarship; Paul Hammer is a professional historian, while the rest of us are literary in our affiliations. We are none the less deeply interested in historical process and its interaction with the Stuart court masque, and have sought as varied a means of exploring that interaction as our training makes possible.

NOTES

1 See *Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion* and *Love Restored*, in David Lindley (ed.) *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments, 1605–1640* (Oxford, 1995); further quotations from *Neptune's Triumph* are from this edition.

2 *Hymenaei*, lines 16–17, in Stephen Orgel (ed.), *Ben Jonson: Selected Masques* (New Haven, 1970).

3 H. A. Evans (ed.), *English Masques* (London, nd), p. 75.

4 Induction, *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. E. A. Horsman (London, 1960), line 139.

5 See Thomas Cogswell, 'England and the Spanish match', in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–1642* (London, 1989).

6 David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), p. 289. On Jonson's two images of himself in this masque, the 'high-brow and uncompromising artist' and the 'genial entertainer willing . . . to gratify all tastes' – Poet and Cook – see Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 297.

7 Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago, 1991); for contemporary attitudes to the masque, see esp. p. 237, n2. See also Jonas A. Barish, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy* (Cambridge, MA, 1960), p. 271 (cited by Fumerton).

8 Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital* (Ithaca, 1981), p. 3.

9 Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, 1983), pp. 93–4.

10 Introduction, Lindley (ed.), *Court Masques*, p. x.

11 Desmond Bland (ed.), *Gesta Grayorum, or the History of the High and Mighty Prince Henry Prince of Purpoole, Anno Domini 1594* (Liverpool, 1968), pp. xxiv, xvii–xviii.

12 From an anti-courtly viewpoint masques are complicit with tyranny. Representatives in a commonwealth live soberly, but a king is 'adored like a demigod, with a dissolute and haughty court about him, of vast expense and luxury, masques and revels, to the debauching of our prime gentry male and female . . .'. See *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* in *The Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Frank Patterson (New York, 1932), VI, p. 120.

13 On the importance of the pleasure provided by masques, and by the dancing particularly, see Graham Parry, 'The politics of the court masque', in J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (eds.), *Theatre and Government under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 113–14.

14 Leah Sinanoglou Marcus, '"Present Occasions" and the shaping of Ben Jonson's masques', *English Literary History* 45 (1978), 201.

15 Martin Butler, 'Early Stuart court culture: compliment or criticism?', *The Historical Journal* 32 (1989), 435. For a similar view, see Carolyn Porter, 'Are we being historical yet?', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 87 (1988), 782.

16 On the work of Orgel, Strong, and D. J. Gordon as New Historicism *avant la lettre*, see H. Aram Veeser (ed.), *The New Historicism* (New York, 1989), p. xiii, and Jonathan Goldberg, 'The politics of Renaissance literature: a review essay', *English Literary History* 49 (1982). Goldberg argues that their work showed the 'role that art played in the court . . . and its status as a political event' (539). Key studies include Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, MA, 1965) and *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the Renaissance*

(Berkeley, 1975); Orgel and Strong (eds.) *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 vols. (London, 1973); essays by Gordon collected in *The Renaissance Imagination*, ed. Orgel (Berkeley, 1975). Critics writing earlier in the century also stressed the political function of masques. See Mary Sullivan, *Court Masques of James I: Their Influence on Shakespeare and the Public Theatres* (New York, 1913) and E. W. Talbert, 'The interpretation of Jonson's courtly spectacles', *PMLA* 61 (1946), 454–73.

17 Orgel, *Illusion of Power*, p. 45.

18 Clifford Geertz, 'Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture', in his *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 1973), p. 29.

19 Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theater State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980).

20 Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (Oxford, 1965), esp. pp. 11–13; *The Family, Sex and Marriage, 1500–1800* (London, 1977).

21 Richard McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley, 1989); Raymond Southall, '*Troilus and Cressida* and the spirit of capitalism', *Shakespeare in a Changing World*, ed. Arnold Kettle (London, 1964), pp. 217–32; Perry Anderson, *The Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1974), esp. pp. 119–27; Anthony Esler, *The Aspiring Mind of the Elizabethan Younger Generation* (Durham, NC, 1966), esp. p. 224; Eric Mallin, 'Emulous factions and the collapse of chivalry: *Troilus and Cressida*', *Representations* 29 (1990), 145–79; Paul Siegel, 'Shakespeare and the neo-chivalric cult of honor', *Centennial Review* 8 (1964), 39–70; and Paul Hammer's essay in this volume.

22 See, for example, Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (Boston, 1990); Maurice Lee, Jr., *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI and I in His Three Kingdoms* (Urbana, IL, 1990); Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I: two kings or one?', *History* 68 (1983), 187–209; and, as an encapsulation of the older Whig-Liberal view, George Macaulay Trevelyan, *History of England* (London, 1926).

23 J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York, 1971), esp. pp. 6–11, and Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas', *History and Theory* 8 (1969), 3–35, esp. 3–6.

24 Alan Liu, 'The power of formalism: the New Historicism', *English Literary History* 56 (1988), 725.

25 Halpern, *Primitive Accumulation*, p. 3.

26 Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Baltimore, 1983).

27 Thus in Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980), 'all discourse' pays 'homage to the Queen': Goldberg, 'Politics of Renaissance literature', 533.

28 'Elizabethan chivalry' was a system in which the Queen 'conceded a great deal' to her 'factious aristocrats', according to McCoy, *Rites of Knighthood*, p. 18. Butler, 'Early Stuart court culture', argues that studies of English

Renaissance culture too readily see it as in 'collusion with the mechanisms of royal power' (p. 425).

29 Lloyd Davis, 'Powerful illusions: praise and presence in Elizabethan and Jacobean court drama', *AUMLA: Journal of the Australasian Language and Literature Association* 83 (1995), 14.

30 The possibility that masques 'encode . . . the political positions of [the] noblemen and women who sponsored or took part in them' is raised by David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London, 1993), p. 17.

31 In *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 1988), Stephen Greenblatt replaces the hitherto master concept of 'power' (oriented towards the charisma of a monarch) with 'negotiation', which stresses the ways in which cultural works and political authority are products of exchanges of one kind or another. The essays collected here tend to view the masque as the product of such transactions rather than as the unified artwork of an author-monarch; on all of these issues, see *Shakespearean Negotiations*, pp. 2–7.

32 Mulryne and Shewring (eds.), *Theatre and Government*, p. 11.

33 On the polycentric character of the English court, see Malcolm Smuts, 'Court centered politics and Roman historians', Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Stanford, 1994), pp. 23, 24. On the independence of Queen Anne's court, see Barbara Lewalski, 'Anne of Denmark and the subversions of masquing', *Criticism* 35 (1993), and Leeds Barroll, 'The court of the first Stuart queen', in Linda Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge, 1991).

34 Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969); Gordon Kipling, *The Receyte of the Lady Katerine* (Oxford, 1990).