Exclusion was not entirely foreign to the idea of the court masque, both in terms of who was allowed to view the masque (exclusively aristocratic audiences) and who to perform in them (actors and members of the royal court). But even if convention limited the general public=s role in the masques, the court was still interested in presenting them as spectacularly and heedless of cost as possible; for if the public was not allowed to see them, the members of the court were, and in many ways it was to them that the masques were specifically directed. It had been a fundamental tenet of Renaissance thought well before Jonson and James I that courtiers needed to be both virtuous and supportive of state power; Castiglione=s *Book of the Courtier* (published in 1528), which served as the model for court behavior for several centuries after its publication, was designed to teach virtue to members of the court so that they might discern the worth of their lord=s actions and advise him as to the proper course of action in a given situation. Of course the monarch possessed the greatest power at court, but a set of loyal courtiers could help extend his/her power considerably more than he/she would be able to manage on his/her own, especially in England with a chaotic Parliament that continued to increase its control over government. Thus it was in the best interest of the court to remind itself continually of its nobility, virtue, and power, and how acting virtuously would help it maintain these qualities; as Orgel puts it, AWhat the noble spectator watched he ultimately became@ (*Illusion* 39).

The masques, then, served as a mirror of royal power and prestige, reflecting the characteristics of royalty back to the audience from which such characteristics were derived. Consider, for example, this passage from Jonson=s masque *Oberon*:

> *Silenus.* . . . this indeed is he,
>
> My boys, whom you must quake at when you see.

> He is above your reach . . .
> Before his presence you must fall or fly.
>
> He is the matter of virtue, and placed high.
>
> His meditations to his height are even,
>
> And all their issue is akin to heaven.
>
> He is a god o=er kings, yet stoops he then
>
> Nearest a man when he doth govern men,
>
> To teach them by the sweetness of his sway,
>
> And not by force. . . .
>
> >Tis he that stays the time from turning old,
>
> And keeps the age up in a head of gold;
>
> That in his own true circle still doth run,
>
> And holds his course as certain as the sun.
>
> He makes it ever day and ever spring.
>
> Where he doth shine, and quickens everything
>
> Like a new nature; so that true to call
>
> Him by his title is to say, he=s all. (*Oberon* 253-74)

Here, Silenus speaks at length of the king=s virtue and mildness (as many critics have pointed out, James I was known as a pacifist king), willing to Astoop . . . nearest a man when he doth govern men,@ yet still Aa god o=er kings,@ A placed high@ and out of reach. Continual references are made to images of heaven and the movement of the celestial bodies, in accordance with Renaissance thought on the holiness of the planets= spherical motion (AThat in his own true circle still doth run, / And holds his course as certain as the sun@). The spectators are told that he has power over time, the heavens, and England=s prosperity, and finally, that he represents

Aall@ things; Ahe is the matter of virtue.@ And the chief of those who will praise the king (though in accordance with masque tradition he will never actually speak [1]) is none other than, in true mirror fashion, King James=s son Prince Henry, in the title role of Oberon. And the son=s reflection of the father is a public one; through the vehicle of the masque, both current state power and the process of succession is upheld. There are numerous other examples of this support of royal authority in Jonson=s masques: in *The Masque of Queens*, the opening antimasque of twelve witches, representing a host of vices (Ignorance, Suspicion, Credulity, etc.) is banished by a mirror masque of twelve virtuous queens, Queen Anne at their head.[2] As before, they do not speak; but clearly, introduced by Fame and Virtue, they are the center of the masque=s structure and mirror idealized courtly virtue to the members of the court watching them. In *The Vision of Delight*, the character of Fant=sy lists the king=s divine virtues, making reference to his generative powers and presence which Amaketh this perpetual spring@ (*Delight* 190). In *Neptune=s Triumph*, King James is put in the position of Neptune, and praised for his

[1] Not much has been written about this interesting fact concerning the masques. Clearly, members of royalty were meant to be seen and worshiped without sinking to the social level of the actor (even if the actor was not as low on the social scale as has been traditionally supposed), but one wonders if there may not have been other more practical concerns as well. Given the unfortunate forays of the monarchy into the field of *writing* masques, is it possible that discretion became the better part of valor when it came to trying to *act* in them? Whatever the case, there are almost no accounts of a royal figure speaking during a masque=s performance.

[2] In his notes to this masque, Jonson sourly comments that he avoided introducing each hag one by one when they first entered because to do so Ahad been a most piteous hearing, and utterly unworthy any quality of a poem, wherein a writer should always trust somewhat to the capacity of the spectator, especially at these spectacles, where men, beside inquiring eyes, are understood to bring quick ears, and not those sluggish ones of porters and mechanics that must be bored through at every act with narrations@ (125). Perhaps this comment is more from praise of the former than criticism of the latter, but Jonson=s echo of the previously cited line from Hamlet- Athe groundlings, who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise....@ (III.ii)--is eerie none the less.

constancy and ability to Akeep the earth in firm estate@ by the masquers (*Neptune* 373). In all these examples, the masque upheld, mirrored, and explicated royal power for the watching court audience, asserting the importance of the virtuous court and the divine qualities of the monarch around which it revolved.

Thus far, I have followed Orgel and Strong in their concept of the masque=s reflection of royal authority. And yet, if the masques did represent a *mirror* of royal power, then again the movement of each performance was twofold: the monarch and court=s gaze (and tacit approval) was directed inward, literally into the performance of the masque, while the virtues of the audience were reflected by the masque back towards the audience. This was enhanced by methods of perspective, as Limon points out:

> . . . characteristically the second general movement in the masque-in-performance went outwards from the stage picture towards the court=s center--the king . . . The central position of the monarch was also marked by the laws of perspective . . . the king=s eye is directly opposite the vanishing point and on the same level as the illusionary horizon. Thus the space between the king and the stage picture was the main acting area, surrounded on three sides by spectators. (*Masque* 68)

This Amain acting area@ included within it the dancing floor, violating the separation of performer and spectator, and allowed for the creation of a liminal space where the performance *actually* took place. That this acting area existed in the middle of the king=s perspectival field is critical to understanding its liminal status. For much of the actual staging of the masque, the performance during which the monarch=s virtues were elucidated, did *not* take place at the

extremity of the monarch=s vision (directly in front of the vanishing point, on the proscenium stage itself) but rather *below* his line of sight, between the raised royal box and the raised proscenium stage. In fact, the king would be forced to lower his gaze to bring the action taking place in the Aacting area@ within his field of vision; and in so doing would be looking at an in-between spot--Turner=s liminal space. One=s vision turned outward, reflected back on itself inward, would meet at about this spot as well--and thus the performance of royal power took place in the space between the actual court and its reflection in the masque.

This is further supported by the actions taken by the court to ensure the monarch=s visibility by the audience. It has long been understood by critics of the masque, initially Orgel and Strong, that the masque-in-performance--in fact, any performance at which the sovereign was in attendance-- involved two lines-of-sight, two perspectives: the first, the king>s vision of the action on stage, and the second, the audience=s vision of the king as he watched the performance. So important to royal interests was this raised royal box at the center of the audience=s perspective that when King James visited Oxford in 1605, his original seating place was moved out of its better perspectival position, at the court=s order, to a higher one so that he might be more easily seen by the audience (Orgel, *Illusion* 14). But though this is an interesting principle, it is I think an incomplete one; for if the audience=s perspective was directed towards the stage *through* the monarch, where did he actually fall in their line of sight but in the middle, the space between the audience member and the performance on stage. This was even more explicit in the masque, where the audience would surround the royal box and yet still have their unique perspectives on the ongoing performance. For them, the box existed within the liminal space as well, and not simply a physical one; in the place between aristocrat and monarch, a kind

of status liminality was created as well. This is similar to the placement of the royal party during royal entries or street pageants, where the honored guests became both objects of the gaze of the other onlookers and residents of the transitional, liminal space through which the other onlookers= gaze would have to pass to watch the performance on the stage. In the watching of and participating in the masque, both the interconnection of the two groups (the royal party and the court audience) and the potential inversions of they and the hierarchies they represented were highlighted by the liminal space in which the masque was performed and observed.

In many other ways, masque performances united audience members with each other. One portion of this was of course an outgrowth of the makeup of the audience, which was exclusively aristocratic and whose members as a consequence were much less distinct from each other than they might be in the public theaters (though even there the actual diversity of the audience was not always as evident as is often assumed). The absence of the lower classes in such circumstances certainly could have implied social separation, but would not have reinforced social hierarchies to the degree I have suggested the public theaters did. But even more than this, the arrangements of the masque made it difficult to establish clear distinctions between any groups other than the king and his closest circle, clearly highlighted in the central royal box, and the larger court whose members sat in the seats against the walls around it. Indeed, as Orazio Busino describes, even those who otherwise would not have been pleased to sit near each other were forced to do so regardless of their own wills; for ultimately, the court itself was on display, and the image of royal unity (with the exception of the king=s box) had to be maintained at all costs:

> On reaching the royal apartments his Excellency was entertained awhile by one of

> the leading cavaliers until all was ready, whilst we, his attendants, all perfumed and escorted by the master of the ceremonies, entered the usual box of the Venetian embassy, where, unluckily we were so crowded and ill at ease that had it not been for our curiosity we must certainly have given in or expired. We moreover had the additional infliction of a Spaniard who came into our box by favour of the master of the ceremonies, asking but for two fingers breadth of room, although we ourselves had not space to run about in, and I swear to God that he placed himself more comfortably than any of us. I have no patience with these dons; it was observed that they were scattered about in all the principal places. The ambassador was near the king; others . . . sat among the Lords of the Council; others were in their own box taking care of the ambassadress and then this fellow must needs come into ours. (Hinds 110-12, excerpt in Nagler 149)

Several things are immediately notable about this passage, besides the amusingly exasperated tone in which it is written. First of all, there is no impression here either of excessive luxury or space for the court members not in the king=s inner circle; most were crammed into the boxes provided for them, with little flexibility possible for those who might have not wanted to sit in their Ausual@ box. Whatever flexibility could be allowed was determined by the master of the ceremonies, who as a official court representative had nearly total control over where people would sit and with whom. Yet this was tolerated by the courtiers because of their Acuriosity@ about the event to come (a powerful testament to the strength of the court masque=s attraction for its audience in general), and as a result the masque forced individuals from a variety of different backgroundsBin this case a Spaniard with VenetiansBto interact with each other in

some fashion. Nor was this the only place of interaction, since as Busino describes these Adons@ were scattered about in Aall the principal places,@ which suggests not only that audience member interactions were commonplace but that there were numerous places favored by either sight lines to the stage or (perhaps) visibility to the rest of the court which could have allowed a number of individuals to tap into the power of visual representation. (One might draw a connection to the practice of buying seats on the stage in the public theatersBalthough this was laughed at in the public realm in a way no one would have thought to do at court.) Quite unlike the public theater practice of separating audience members based on economic and social rank, this method tended to elide the distinctions between masque-goers, making them all representatives of a single court which in its focus on the king and the masque that glorified him (not unproblematically, as I will discuss shortly) reaffirmed its connection to him. Perhaps the masque was indeed a hegemonic project of sorts, one which unified its audience with a common goal and vision of king- and courtiership.

The presence of women in the masque was similarly substantially different than what was found in the public theater, and in fact was startlingly more evident than in a great deal of drama which had preceded it. This was made obvious from the very beginning of Jonson=s masque writing, since his first major masque was both commissioned and performed by Queen AnneBwhose earlier exploits in the masque had already attracted a great deal of attention, as Dudley Carleton makes clear when he says that in Samuel Daniel=s *Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* the Queen Ahad a trick by herself for her clothes were not so much below the knee but that we might see a woman had both feet and legs which I never knew before@ (Lee 55, also quoted in Riggs 121). Obviously Carleton was as much scandalized by the queen=s attire as by

her actual presence in the masque, but the anxiety over her sexuality and display of that sexual agency is equally clear. His sense of propriety would be stretched to its limit after the performance of the masque of the following year, prompting his famous letter in which his anxiety reached new levels on both racial and sexual grounds. Nor was Carleton the only one who reacted in this way. According to Brockett, the Apresence of women in speaking roles was so unusual at this time, and knowledge of the court performances sufficiently well known, that when William Prynne in *Histriomastix* . . . listed >women actors, notorious whores= in the index, he was fined 5,000 [pounds], expelled from the legal profession, deprived of his academic degree, had his ears cut off, and was sentenced to life imprisonment@ (182-83). (This quotation is in reference to plays staged in the court in the 1620s, not masques, but its description of the traditional role of women in dramatic productions sheds light on their likely reception in the court masques as well.) Suzanne Gossett argues that the masque audience was fully and uncomfortably aware of the role of women in masque productions, both because of the practice of using both women and men to perform women=s parts, which certainly would have generated some perceived inconsistency in the production, and because they knew of Anne=s direct involvement in the works. This discomfort often manifested itself in direct action against the masque or actors within it, in the form of letters critical of them to others which made it clear that letter writers like Carleton at least expected a favorable hearing from his audience. Moreover, the continuing uncertainty of women=s roles in society in generalBnot by any means as the result of a movement of liberation at this point, but rather one of gradually widening opportunities for women in family settings and elsewhereBmade the reactions against their participation even more substantial (Gossett 113). Apparently, however, this did not slow the

rate of their involvement; as time progressed, in fact, women took more and more active roles in court productions, culminating in the early 1630s when women actually spoke on the masque stage (Gossett 97). This innovation came over thirty years prior to its appearance on the public stage during the Restoration. As Gossett goes on to comment, the significance of these parts was highlighted by the need to identify role with actor, especially when inside jokes were being made about the associationBand this reflected a substantial difference from public theaters of the time, in which (as I have already pointed out) some suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience was necessary for it to accept the portrayal of the womanly Desdemona or sexually mature, worldly-wise Cleopatra by a young boy. In the court theater, the identity of the silent masquersBdistinguished in this case from the professional actors of the antimasque and other large speaking partsBwas fundamental to the understanding of the masque=s message and its assertion of royal power and virtue (Gossett 96). This is not to suggest, of course, that these were unproblematic attempts on the part of audience members to simultaneously identify female courtiers with masque roles and not identify acting boys with the more prominent speaking female roles; clearly some confusion must have occurred, and the commentary on Anne and others indicates the difficulty many had in reconciling the different conditions of performance. But despite this difficulty, women rapidly gained in prominence as participators in the masque to a much greater degree than in the public theater, and this in turn went a long way towards connecting the female members of the court audience with the female performers in the court masque they viewed.

This leads to a consideration of the connections between actors and audience in general in the court masque, and an investigation of this area again reveals increasing associations

between the two groups. Most simply, many courtiers themselves performed roles within the masque; generally non-speaking, and for a long time well distinguished from the speaking roles, but nonetheless significant components of the masque structure. Like drama in ancient Athens, productions here pulled directly from their potential audiences for many of their performers, and like that drama, the sense of connection between both groups must have increased as a result. But even more than this, masques increased the potential for involvement between the participants and spectators; as Orgel has noted, ANot only is [the masque] about the court it entertains, but its masquers are members of that audience . . . The drama is properly a form of entertainment, and involves its audience vicariously. The masque is a form of play, and includes its audience directly. . . . Every masque concluded by merging spectator with masquer, in effect transforming the courtly audience into the idealized world of the poet=s vision@ (Introduction to *Masques* 1-2). Orgel=s use of the term Aplay@ is instructive here, as it suggests the idea of interactivity and contact between performer and spectator, and of course as Orgel explicitly says the masque Amerge[s] the spectator with masquer,@ unifying the two positions. This is borne out by examining the texts of the masques themselves. In *Hymenaei*, a masque celebrating the marriage of the Earl of Essex and Lady Frances Howard, several dances are presented of such intricacy that the linked couples actually spell out letters of significance to Essex=s name, continually making reference to the principles of union and harmony represented within the marriage ceremony itself. The commentary concludes with Jonson=s statement that at the end of the formal dance the masquers A*dissolved, and all took forth other persons, men and women, to dance other measures, galliards and corantos, the whilst . . . song importuned them to a fit remembrance of the time*@ (*Hymenaei* 306-8). In *The Masque of Queens*, the masquers

(including Queen Anne herself) dance themselves, then *Atook out the men@* watching and dance with them, A*almost to the space of an hour with singular variety@* (*Queens* 494); in *Lovers Made Men*, the masquers A*take forth the ladies, and the revels follow@* (*Lovers* 114); in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, the masquers A*danced with the ladies, and the whole revels followed; which ended, Mercury called to him in [a] . . . speech, which was after repeated in song by two trebles, two tenors, a bass and the whole chorus@* (*Pleasure* 288-90); in *A Masque of the Metamorphosed Gypsies*, the actors refer directly to specific audience members, giving speeches (Afortunes@) in their honor (*Gypsies* 304-654); in *The Fortunate Isles, and Their Union*, the characters of Proteus, Portunus and Saron A*go up to the ladies@* and sing to them, importuning them not to Ahide / The joys for which you so provide@ and asking AIf not to mingle with the men, / What do you here? Go home again.@ (*Fortunate* 395-99); and in *Chloridia: Rites to Chloris and Her Nymphs*, Jonson and Jones= final collaboration, the masquers A*dance with the lords@* at the end of the masque production (*Chloridia* 257). In all these cases and many others, masquers interacted directly with their courtly audience. This interaction was encouraged by such other masque elements as the letter dances of *Hymenaei*, repetition of Mercury=s speech by the chorus in *Pleasure*, the gypsies= fortunes delivered to audience members in *Gypsies*, and the comments by characters in *The Fortunate Isles* about the importance of women in such events, providing the Ajoy@ of mingling with men and reeemphasizing the value of harmony and unity within England and its court.[3] The direction here was towards reducing space between

[3] It has been noted by several critics that James I=s own opinions towards women were ambivalent at best, reflected in his passionless relationship with Queen Anne and his well known relationship with the Earl of Buckingham (Riggs 267-70). The qualities of the masques I have just outlined suggest two possibilities as a result: first, that James=s oft-cited pacifism and desire for unity, celebrated continually within the masques, allowed he (and Jonson by extension) to

performers and audience members, or perhaps more accurately to make that space a more complex and less discrete one. Thus actors continually passed between stage and viewing area physically, leaving the interior of a mountain which opened to release them or stepping from the clouds which had descended to the stage and entering the audience to interact with its members before returning back to the world of fantasy from which they came. They also did so artistically and socially, encouraging their audience to interact and identify with their charactersBseasons, legendary figures, godsBand themselves, royal figures and regular court members alike. The fact that the masque took place within this space of transition, this liminal space, emphasized the extent to which all involved in the event, audience member or actor, were integrally involved in

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consider a neo-Platonic alternative to either sexual relationships between men and women or dividing the two sexes entirelyBan alternative envisioned in the continual Amingling@ of men and women shown in the masque=s dances and elsewhere. Second, it is possible that this alternative was more Jonson=s vision than James=s, and that in his emphasis on interaction between the sexes here Jonson was again engaging in the time-honored tradition of instructing and counseling the king towards some greater virtueBa far cry from the Ashameless flattery@ Jonson has often been accused of in masque criticism.

its production in a way impossible in the public theaters.

For more of this last idea, that of identifying with characters and those who portrayed them, I wish to look briefly at two masques and their specific social conditionsBfor it is important to emphasize that in line with liminal space=s ability to invert and make fluid otherwise rigid social hierarchies, the appearance of certain courtiers in certain roles and situations within masque productions was often designed to create specific social effects. *The Vision of Delight*, presented at Christmas time in the year 1617, was intended not only to celebrate the Christmas season at court through its usual displays of wealth and craftsmanship, but also to celebrate the appearance of new lights in James=s sky: the emergence of George Villiers, who was made the Earl of Buckingham by the king the night before the masque=s performance and who was decidedly favorable to Jonson=s artistic endeavors (Riggs 248). Jonson reinforced this warming relationship between the king and Villiers in several clever and striking ways. The masque begins with the appearance of Delight, accompanied by Grace, Love, Harmony, Revel, Sport and Laughter, followed by Wonder. Several antimasques of phantoms and phantasms are presented for these viewers by Fant=sy, called upon by Night, which though they provide pleasure and command attention are somehow lacking in substance. Fant=sy herself complains that the instability of her inventions might be unequally received by her audience, since Ait is no one dream that can please these all; / Wherefore I would know what dreams would delight >em, / For never was Fant=sy more loath to affright them@ (*Delight* 50-52). Fant=sy=s anxiety over the potential of her dreams to repulse her audience is instructive, as is the way in which she chooses to avoid such a negative reception: learn what dreams *will* delight her audience. In the bewildering array of potential dreams listed by Fant=sy in the lines

that follow, the audience is whirled from images of ostriches, bellows, bagpipes, windmills and mousetraps to onions, shuttlecocks, barbers, crabs and ropemakers (*Delight* 53-106). This disjointed collection of fantastical images is too incoherent to be processed by any observer, much less decided among by him/her, but fortunately the masque provides a solutionBthe appearance of the bower of Zephyrus, accompanied by the singing of Peace, as Wonder amazedly asks Awhat is this? Grows / The wealth of nature here, or art?@ (*Delight* 132-33). The intended answer, of course, is the grace of James and the art of Jonson, and as the bower opens to reveal the masquers A*in the glories of the spring*@ (*Delight* 160-61), Wonder continues his stunned inquiry, concluding by asking AWhose power is this? what god?@ (*Delight* 189). Fant=sy=s replyBthe Aking / Whose presence maketh this perpetual spring, / The glories of which spring grow in that bower, / And are the marks and beauties of his power@ (*Delight* 189-92)Bdoubled by the choir=s affirming song draws the now undivided attention of the audience through the king=s person to the bower where the masquers sit. Finally, Fant=sy=s highlighting of the king=s favor which Acall[ed] [the masquers] to advance@ (*Delight* 202) encourages the beginning of the revels, essentially concluding Delight=s vision and the masque.

On its surface, this appears a fairly simple example of extended compliment to the king, but closer examination reveals that it represents a far more elaborate message. The antimasque here is not made up of Delight, Grace, Love and the rest; this group must be present at the selecting of the proper road to true delight and its members stand as witnesses to the virtue of the ultimate choice. Instead, the antimasque is performed by the group of phantasms which dance upon Fant=sy=s command (and Night=s request) and are immediately seen by Fant=sy as potentially objectionable and certainly insubstantial. No one dream will please all, and Fant=sy

longs for a unifying vision which will bring all present together in common celebration. The suggestion here goes well beyond the usual condition of chaos replaced by order: here, chaos is represented as that which results from too many choices, too many possibilities. Given the number of courtiers continually vying for James=s favor, it seems not unreasonable to draw the comparison; Jonson himself was concerned about solidifying his own position at court, and reducing the options of courtiers in the king=s favor to those favorable to Jonson was a logical goalBand of course, this masque was in large part written to highlight Villiers=s rise to prominence within that sphere. Dismissing the host of potential candidates for unification, represented by the antimasque of phantasms, as too disconnected and fantastical for the role, Fant=sy finally reveals the bower of Spring, containing the masquers and representing stability and beauty of the highest order, made so by James=s grace and favor. So far Jonson has successfully portrayed too much freedom as the enemy, tacitly rejecting the current host of potential suitors as flattering sycophants who lack substance. But in a particularly adroit maneuver, Jonson concludes his project, as Riggs points out, by focusing attention on the choice that James *did* make: AThe line of vision that ran from the throne to the bower which held the newly created Earl of Buckingham directed James=s gaze to the object of his delight; at this climactic moment the operation of the royal will became fully visible to everyone in the Banqueting Hall@ (249). Of course, it could be objected that the king had already made Villiers an earl, and that Jonson was simply backing the winning horse. But the point here is that Jonson=s masque reinforces James=s choice in a way that is both clear and elegant, and allows him both to compliment the king on his wisdom in making his particular selection and Villiers on his success in convincing the king to do so. In essence, Jonson weighs in on the relationship

between James and Villiers without challenging those opposed to itBbut the message is clear nevertheless. Villiers=s star would continue to rise within the court for some time, and Jonson=s (as he had hoped) rose with it. *The Vision of Delight* was a gesture of support the Earl would not forget, and he would call on its maker again for a similar task four years later.

In *A Masque of the Metamorphosed Gypsies*, the band of gypsies are changed by King James=s favor into courtiers of special worth and magnificence, though not before they have entertained all present with their exotic charm and apt wit (often the function of characters in the antimasque). The masque was more simple in setting and design than many of Jonson and Jones=s previous collaborations, and on its surface seemed not to be particularly remarkable. But the historical situation and circumstances of the masque demonstrate the extent to which it was also used as a vehicle for social advancement. The Earl of Buckingham commissioned the masque for performance in 1621, as the news of his rumored relationship with James was becoming widespread, and was produced for James=s visit to Buckingham=s home in that year. Despite its simplicity, the masque retained its usual expenses for its producers, as Buckingham paid Jonson an advance of one hundred pounds for the masque=s writing; moreover, the transformation of a portion of Buckingham=s new home to a place suitable for masque staging and audience seating, no small expense on either account, also put a significant drain on his resources. More tellingly, he and his retainers played the part of the gypsies in the antimasque (Riggs 267-70) (an unheard of situation given the previous attempts to keep members of the court out of speaking [thus Aacting@] roles within masques), thus ensuring identification between his group and the gypsies they played. And finally, the masque itself was full of thinly veiled references to the illicit relationship between the two men, from relatively innocuous ones

like AThe house your bounty=ath built, and still doth rear / With those high favors, and those heaped increases, / Which shows a hand not grieved but when it ceases@ (*Gypsies* 13-15) to more explicit ones like A. . . please you enter / Him, and his home, and search them to the center@ (*Gypsies* 24-25). Why would Buckingham have spent so much, and risked no small level of embarrassment and exposure from his unusually extensive acting role and the masque=s subject itself, on the empty spectacle of the masque performance?

Of course there is always the possibility that Buckingham simply exercised bad judgment, but this seems unlikely given his prior status at the courtBand the political savvy it took to get him there. The logical answer must be that the masque possessed a degree of influence other forms of entertainment and communication did not possess, and that its efficiency in conveying its message to a court audience was considerable. The fact that this was initially performed away from London certainly helped lower the level of controversy it could have generated, but other factors were also at play: the conditions of the masque allowed Jonson to make playful reference to the relationship between the earl and the king without fear of reprimand, since as with the Feast of Fools of earlier times it was permitted to poke fun at, even highlight, potentially embarrassing facts about figures of authority in the fluid, shifting conditions of stage performance without fear of censure. Moreover, the masque=s transformative powers could be fully utilized here, but with a difference: if before the characters of the antimasque, representing disorder, chaos, and misrule were inevitably banished by the appearance of allegorical figures of myth, legend, and divinity played by figures of royal authority, here the same characters were Atransformed@ from one state to anotherBfrom discord to harmony, and from wild, exotic, dangerous gypsy to stable, familiar, noble gentleman, all

through James=s benevolent, altering gaze of grace. Of course the allure of the wild antimasque gypsy was not entirely removed by this method, as indeed it was not intended to be, but in general the bestowal of favor and noble bearing on the masque=s performers represented an act of transformation and transition very similar to other elements observed in the masque=s physical staging, where actors would move from stage to dancing area and back again freely, and ultimately confirmed the king=s ability to bestow favor on his favorites within and without the masque structure. Riggs makes the interesting point that Aboth gypsies and court favorites are marginal beings, but their very marginality gives them an empowering and attractive freedom@ (270). What Riggs calls marginal, I would call liminal, insofar as both roles are outside, often between, social hierarchies and therefore can pass into and out of them with relative freedom of movement. They are thus transitional positionsBlike the gypsy, the court favorite was always on the move, and given his otherwise ordinary court status constantly had to switch allegiances, be in one house or another, to keep resentment of the favorite=s privileged position among the other courtiers to a minimum. Fixity and stability was not in the cards for Buckingham or any other favored member of a monarch=s court. In other words, if the masque in other areas reinforced the transformative powers of kingship, as Orgel and Strong would have it, in this case it reinforced the validity of James=s transforming Buckingham from simple courtier to honored favorite, with all the requisite power and influence bestowed by that latter title. Thus through the mystical power of the masque performance Buckingham was actually reifying his claim to actual power within the court, in the eyes of the court itself. And the message was apparently welcome: this was by far Jonson=s most popular masque, repeated two more times in subsequent years and ultimately revised to include the fortunes mentioned earlier, further

examples of social interactivity and historical/political awareness of the specific moment. For Buckingham, the *Gypsies Metamorphosed* gave him an opportunity to affirm his position of court prominence without fear of overexposure, and was both a bold statement on the nature of his relationship with King James and in turn Jonson=s relationship with him (no less strong because it was a poet-patron and not lover-lover coupling in this latter instance). Furthermore, it reemphasized Jonson=s own abilities to write of controversial issues deeply troubling for the court and transform their supposed vices into virtues. Jonson=s earlier attempts to be equally candid with political commentary in the public theater play *Eastward Ho!* had met with considerably less favor from the court, leading to stern disapproval and imprisonment (Riggs 122-24). Even if *Gypsies* was written more to James=s liking, its potential indiscretions could easily have attracted as much negative attention from other powerful forces within James=s inner circle, and all evidence suggests that such attention was not excited by any of its performances. The one obvious variable was the masque form itself.

Socially, then, the masque helped connect audience and performers, and its explicit and more subtle messages were extremely influential in moving specific courtiers higher in the court=s esteem. As with theater of antiquity, its liminal status allowed it to envision differences in hierarchyBand, as the evidence I have cited demonstrates, it was often successful in turning its fact into fiction. All this supports the claim that the masque was a great deal more subtle, and certainly more encouraging of interaction and interplay between performer and spectator, than previously supposed. But what of its political conditions? Of all the masque criticism currently available, the vast majority of it has focused on the masque=s specific political implications, generally claiming that its glorification of royal rule and spectacular flattery in fact did a

disservice to the court, preventing it from seeing the real problems with James=s rule in its obsession with finding new ways to praise his achievements. But as I hope has become clear by now, such criticism has actually done disservice to the masques themselves, since they were not only *not* wholly flattering to the king and his court at all times but in fact could be critical of his policies and posit unusual solutions while still engaging in the elaborate, ritualized praise seized upon by Graham Parry and Martin Butler as the masques= raison d=etre (see Introduction, pages 5-6). Before I return to this point, though, I wish to briefly look at the political impact of masque performances, which all agree were considerable.

On one level, the masque=s political implications were immediate and far-reaching. James was anxious to display the power of his court not simply to itself but to others, and so the presence of foreign visitors at masque occasions (and where they would be placed when present) was a source of considerable anxiety for the monarch and his advisors. As Orazio Busino=s commentary suggests, these efforts were not always wholly successful, and deciding where to place various ambassadors in proximity to the king=s box was a matter of great diplomatic concern. On at least one occasion, a masque *(Neptune=s Triumph for the Return of Albion*) had to be canceled because a suitable compromise of ambassador attendance and placement could not be reached; the French and Spanish ambassadors could not be invited together and Athreatened the most dire diplomatic reprisals if the other were given priority@ (Orgel, *Illusion* 77). These were not small matters; as Parry states, the Amasques were occasions of state. The presence of foreign ambassadors emphasized the sense of the court being on international display@ (115). But in all cases, the court was anxious to express and affirm its royal power through the opulence and grandeur of the masque productions. Orgel comments:

> To the Renaissance, appearing in a masque was not merely playing a part. It was, in a profound sense, precisely the opposite. When Inigo Jones and Ben Jonson presented Queen Anne as Bel-Anna, Queen of the Ocean, or King James as Pan, the universal god, or Henry Prince of Wales as Oberon, Prince of Faery, a deep truth about the monarchy was realized and embodied in action, and the monarchs were revealed in roles that expressed the strongest Renaissance beliefs about the nature of kingship, the obligations and perquisites of royalty. (*Illusion* 38)

Parry expresses this opinion in even stronger terms:

> . . . a masque had to entertain the whole court and to associate everyone with the glory of the occasion and the celebration of the monarch, so the political innuendos, which could be divisive, had to be unobtrusive. Magnificence was the prime requirement of a masque, for that quality expressed the splendour of the court in the most undeniable way. . . . Both James and Charles felt the masque to be indispensable to their concept of state, for they continued to fund these shows well beyond their means. They must have calculated that their value as advertisement outweighed their cost to the exchequer, for they knew that [these masque performances helped] . . . to vindicate the mysterious power of majesty that still held men in awe. In the final count, a masque was a display of political magic, and would last as long as the divinity of kings was credible. (115)

Certainly these are valid claims to a degree. The fact that both Charles and James continued to commission and fund masques well after the time they could afford to do so, as well as the anxiety surrounding the presence or absence of foreign dignitaries at the performances, indicates

the stake the court had (or felt it had) in preserving the masque as a mode of political and social communication. Nor was this limited to specific political messages. In a very real sense, the belief that kingship could be expressed through public performanceBthe connection between *art and power*, as Roy Strong famously linked the phrase in the title of his book concerning spectacle in early modern EnglandBwas an acknowledged fact by political philosophers, rulers, and citizens alike. The transformative power of the stage to uplift or debase those in actual positions of authority was commonly understood from the earliest days of ancient theater, and unlike the public theaters of the time, the trend here continued to be towards inviting the audience to believe it had a specific role in fulfilling the common purpose within this forum: the glorification of the ruler, his court, and those who made up its community.

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