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Jonson's Jacobean Masques and the Moral Imagination

NATHANIEL STROUT

In the six decades since T. S. Eliot observed of Ben Jonson's court masques that the artistry of spectacle was no longer fully appreciated, we have learned a good deal about the complexity of a genre once easy to dismiss as excessive flattery of princes who ought to have been spending time on state affairs instead of spending on entertainment money they did not have. We better understand, for example, Jonson's skillful handling of such formal restrictions as a king who stayed a spectator, and the need to include dancing. We better understand the contributions to the masque of the scenic designer Inigo Jones. And we have had traced for us the ways the structure and content of Jonson's masques generally, and in some cases specifically, reflect the political concerns of the day.¹

That the performance of a masque was a state occasion of some importance is attested to by the frequent disputes between ambassadors to James's court over precedence at those expensive evenings. Masques were meant to demonstrate the ruler's generosity and authority, to show off the magnificence of "that great name Britannia, this blessed isle" (*Blackness* 216).² It is worth remembering, however, that James is praised in Jonson's masques for his virtue as well as for his power, and that to Jonson the context of a masque was moral as well as political. Looking back at over twenty years of writing for the court in the introductory remarks to his first Caroline masque, Jonson granted primary importance to the great claim of his age about the moral seriousness of literature, acknowledging the importance of royalty only in a parenthesis:

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all representations, especially those of this nature in court, public spectacles, either have been or ought to be the mirrors of man's life, whose ends, for the excellence of their exhibitors (as being the donatives of great princes to their people) ought always to carry a mixture of profit with them no less than delight.

(*Love's Triumph* 2-7)

Perhaps we can no longer fully appreciate the Jonsonian masque because the current fascination with the ways literature illustrates various forms of social and cultural power leads us to discount moral claims. Besides, we also tell ourselves, authorial statements of intent do not often explain authorial practice. Nevertheless, I submit, the changing shapes of Jonson's Jacobean masques reveal his moral commitment as much as his interest in what might be termed the politics of spectacle.

The ethical import of the celebratory sections of Jonson's masques—the educating praise, the orderly dances, the harmonious voices, the scene of light—is well known.³ I am interested, however, in the consequences for a masque as a whole of the Renaissance commonplace that literary works mirror life. In particular, if one reflects the other, then reading is the equivalent of worldly experience and, as Milton puts it in *Areopagitica*, “whatever thing we hear or see, sitting, walking, travelling, or conversing, may be fitly called our book, and is of the same effect that writings are.”⁴ To Jonson, the act of reading implied the active exercise of understanding and judgment; therefore he published, with extended commentary for the reader, plays like *The Staple of News* and *The New Inn* that failed to please audiences in the theater. Thus a Jonsonian masque exhorts spectators to “read” James as they “would do the book / Of all perfection” (*News* 310-11). The question, though, is whether watching a masque or a play “is of the same effect” as reading it.

In the theater the willing suspension of disbelief carries with it the potential suspension of critical judgment. Instead of judicious assessment as a prelude to virtuous action, audiences may simply rest content when their expectations of plot and character are fulfilled. And if art mirrors life, this aesthetic complacency can be paralleled by moral complacency. In *An Apology for Poetry*, Sidney ascribes to literature a superior capacity for bringing about virtuous action by placing images of virtue before “the imaginative and judging power.”⁵ But evident in Jonson's plays are strong doubts that the imaginative experiences offered by drama, especially the unqualified

happy endings of popular comedy, encourage moral awareness. From theatergoers, as has often been noted, Jonson sought judgment over uncritical empathy, active insight over passive enjoyment.⁶

In the masquing hall the problem of audience complacency was more severe than in the theater. For one thing, writers of masques faced, as Jonas Barish has remarked, “a society not so much aspiring after as joyfully contemplating its own well-being, the possession of the blessings it considers itself to have achieved.”⁷ At a performance, that is, the dancing courtiers, the king sitting on a throne directly across from the stage, and the glittering audience itself could expect to be as much on display as Jonson’s poetry. They could also expect to enjoy the demonstration, central to the Jonsonian masque, of how the monarch’s virtue and power are both the cause of and the occasion for the triumph of harmony and order over the cacaphony of folly and vice. That the masquers descended from the performing area to join with the court in celebratory dances further reinforced the complacent notion that masques presented a dressed-up version of the actual, not a morally improving version of the ideal.

Worse still, whereas the Jacobean theater audience encountered a fundamentally verbal form, Inigo Jones’s scenic designs were at least as important to the court as Jonson’s words. Obviously, Jones’s theatrical machines could make virtue’s triumphs more immediately vivid than could words alone—a positive potential for bringing ideals alive in the minds of spectators that Jonson explored in his early masques. But Jones’s stagecraft, as Stephen Orgel has shown, made increasing use of perspective settings for his special effects in the main masque.⁸ As a result, a masque’s idealized figures increasingly appeared less like symbolic abstractions that needed to be thought about, and more like descriptive surfaces that needed only to be looked at. The powerful immediacy of the visual experience, in turn, could readily disable “the imaginative and judging power,” either by making it easier for the audience to accept the essentially passive act of seeing as an adequate substitute for the mentally active search for significance, or by making it easier for the audience to accept the vicarious as an adequate substitute for the actual.

According to Orgel, “for Jonson, one of the most compelling aspects of Jones’s theater was the way it could make the stage’s illusion merge with the court’s reality.”⁹ But this formulation fails to distinguish between the reality of watching a performance in the masquing hall and the reality of performing actions in the world at large. I shall argue that Jonson’s later Jacobean masques seek to remind the court that attending performances of moral fictions—no

matter how visually convincing they are—is not the equivalent of attending to the actual state of one's moral well-being. Given what the court expected and what Jones was ever more able to do, Jonson's means to this end were limited in extent and success. But one is especially notable in light of the frequent recourse in Jonsonian criticism to “the distinction between things as they are and things as they should be,” to “the interplay between the pure vision and the impure context.”¹⁰ In the later masques the context gradually becomes the work itself, and the vision of things as they should be becomes the responsibility of the beholders to imagine and to act on, not just of the poet to portray.

As a dramatist, said Coleridge, Shakespeare is the poet of “expectation in preference to surprize.”¹¹ To Jonson, fulfilling expectations risks inducing moral complacency. He thus tries in the court masque to be the poet of the unexpected: “I have not seen the place could more surprise” (150), says Wonder in *The Vision of Delight* (1617), as the figure models for onlookers the proper response to the rapid change of scene that occurs in all of Jonson and Jones's collaborations. Even in *The Gypsies Metamorphosed* (1621)—in which, as Jonson's epilogue at Windsor delightedly announces, the poet was “assisted by a barber and a tailor” (1398), not Jones's machines—the perception of James as an ideal monarch comes suddenly upon the palm-reading captain of the gypsies (played by the royal favorite, the Duke of Buckingham):

You live chaste and single, and have buried your wife,
 And mean not to marry, by the line of your life.
 Whence he that conjectures your quality learns
 You're an honest good man and have care of your bairns.
 Your Mercury's hill too a wit doth betoken,
 Some book-craft you have, and are pretty well spoken.
 But stay! in your Jupiter's mount what's here?
 A king? A monarch? What wonders appear!
 High, bountiful, just, a Jove for your parts,
 A master of men, and that reign in their hearts.

(281-90)

Jonson wants the abrupt shifts of scene and rhythm in his masques both to mark and to prompt the gaining of new insight.

But relying on surprise as an artistic principle invites inappropriate responses from the audience. If, for example, the imagination is bound by conventional preconceptions, then the new may wrongly

be judged wanting, as happened when the court thought *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618), in the words of one observer, “came far short of the expectation” (quoted in H&S 10:576). On the other hand, if the new is sought uncritically, then novelty wrongly becomes valuable in itself—a foolish curiosity satirized repeatedly in Jonson’s later antimasques. Further, there were limits to the surprises masques could attempt. Although “Jonson was constantly experimenting with a form that was, in large measure, his to define,” he still had to include such expected elements as graceful dances, glorious spectacle, and fulsome praise of masquers and monarch.¹² In *Neptune’s Triumph for the Return of Albion*, Jonson’s masque for 1624, a poet complains that it is 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” (33-35). A cook answers that the full variety of audience expectations must be met, that all palates must be satisfied, even if “they expect more than they understand” (39). The poet, in other words, implies that authors usually have to fight against audience expectations while submitting to them; the cook, that having to fit the work to what the audience expects is not a burden but an inherent part of being a poet.

Neither figure, however, argues that audience expectations can simply be ignored. Thus, whether or not the poet expresses Jonson’s own frustration, whether the cook is right or just gets the last word, the discussion is a sign of Jonson’s concern about the distorting effect of expectations on perception and judgment. Just as authors must consider how to adjust to the expectations of audiences without sacrificing the integrity of their artistic visions, so audiences must consider the value of holding to conventional preconceptions of art. As a figure who looks for the usual symbols of the man in the moon—“his dog at his girdle and the bush of thorns at his back” (102-103)—is told in the antimasque of *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon* (1620): “if that bush of thorns should prove a goodly grove of oaks, in what case were you and your expectation?” (104-106). Unexamined expectations, and the preconceptions on which they are based, leave us unprepared to respond intelligently to what happens, whether in a work of literature or in life itself.

It is easier, though, for us to assess a work in light of what we already think than to reassess ourselves while thinking about a work. In the first decade of James’s reign, Jonson concentrated on overcoming this all-too-willing complacency through direct appeals to the imagination and judgment of masquagoers. The masques in the 1616 folio, for example, regularly make their moral points by

straightforwardly celebrating the triumph of virtue, harmony, and order over their opposites. This pattern, so pervasive it can misleadingly appear normative for the Jonsonian masque in general, is perhaps most obvious in *The Masque of Queens* (1609), in which witches representing vice are instantly vanquished by the sudden appearance of Heroic Virtue and the symbolic splendor of Queen Anne and her companions seated in the House of Fame. At the end of the work, the masquers themselves are physical proof that goodness exists: "Who, Virtue, can thy power forget / That sees these live and triumph yet?" (516-17). Similarly, in *The Golden Age Restored* (1615), placed out of chronological order at the end of the folio, when the Iron Age, "calling forth the evils" (32), rebels against Jove's rule in an antimasque dance, Pallas shows her shield and freezes the dancers in a tableau of vice: "Die all that can remain of you but stone, / And that be seen awhile, and then be none" (77-78). Astraea and the Golden Age then appear, and by joining in the revels the masquers and the court both celebrate and participate in the return of the goddess of justice to earth.

In the folio masques, moreover, the final words often recall the glories of the evening, even as the masquers are being called away by day. *Oberon* (1611), for example, ends claiming that the sun is hastening to rise "lest, taken with the brightness of this night, / The world should wish it last, and never miss his light" (367-68). *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly* (1611) closes implying that what happens in the work is more important than what happens afterwards:

Now, now gentle Love is free, and beauty blessed
 With the sight it so much longed to see.
 Let us, the muses' priests and Graces go to rest;
 For in them our labors happy be.

(325-28)

Even the satiric *Love Restored* (1612), which makes fun of those trying to get in to see a masque, concludes by reaffirming the worth of masquing.¹³

If, however, the triumph of virtue is too convincing, if the ending of a masque looks backward too longingly, an audience already prone to complacency can decide that watching and dancing sufficiently demonstrate its moral sensibility. Some of Jonson's later masques address this problem by reminding the court, in the words of the closing song of *The Vision of Delight*, that "as night to sport,

day doth to action call” (229). Masquing in these works is treated as an evening of relaxation, not a morally valuable activity in its own right. Before the end of *Pleasure Reconciled*, for instance, the dances are said to be instructive both for masquers and for those watching them:

For dancing is an exercise
 Not only shows the mover’s wit,
 But maketh the beholder wise,
 As he hath power to rise to it.

(240-43)

Yet Jonson is not as satisfied as he is in, say, *The Golden Age Restored* with the moral possibilities of dance. The final song of *Pleasure Reconciled* sends the masquers back to the paths of virtue after a night of entertainment:

These, these are hours by Virtue spared
 Herself, she being her own reward,
 But she will have you know
 That though
 Her sports be soft, her life is hard.
 You must return unto the hill.

(297-302)

The masquers then “danced their last dance, and returned into the scene, which closed, and was a mountain again as before” (318-19).

Orgel’s comment in *The Jonsonian Masque* on this last bit of stage business indicates how difficult it is to counteract the potential of a masque to give the false impression that experiencing a work is the equivalent of experience in the world: “All the masque can do, Jonson seems to say, is to offer a moment in which a vision of an ideal becomes a poetic and dramatic experience—becomes, in other words, a reality.”¹⁴ Subsequent masques, significantly, point courtiers and king more directly toward the reality experienced outside the masquing hall. In *Pan’s Anniversary*, the masque for James’s birthday in 1620, for example, the masquers do not return “into the scene.” Instead, the same figure who promises that “surely the better part of the solemnity here will be dancing” (70-71) also reminds both masquers and audience of their regular responsibilities in a closing eight-line address that begins: “Now each return unto his charge” (240). On a larger scale, after the revels of *Time*

Vindicated to Himself and to His Honors (1623) the Chorus, singing what in an early masque would have been the last song, admires the brilliance of the masquers within the masque world:

We hope that now these lights will know their sphere,
 And strive hereafter to shine ever here,
 Like brightest planets, still to move
 In th'eye of Time and orbs of Love.

(371-74)

Unexpectedly, however, Diana enters and, in a long epilogue, calls the masquers back to virtue from the world of Sport and Cupid, the two figures who watch over the dances of the revels. The Chorus then ends the work singing praise for James that is also advice the audience can act upon only in the proper theater for moral action—the world at large:

Follow his ample
 And just example
 That hates all chase of malice and of blood,
 And studies only ways of good
 To keep soft Peace in breath.

(423-27)

We know from a contemporary observer that *Time Vindicated* set its antimasque satire of the poet George Wither before “a prospective of Whitehall, with the Banqueting House” (quoted in H&S 10:649). In this masque, in effect, the court begins outside the masquing hall and, with the closing advice, is returned there.

At the same time as the endings of Jonson's masques begin to point outward from the performance, the inner experiences the masques offer onlookers begin to change as well. “Above all,” Orgel has written, “to Jonson, the audience must be made to do more than view the spectacle—they must see the significance of the symbolic figures and of the central device on which the masque depends.”¹⁵ But if “to make the spectators understanders”—the title of the preface to *Love's Triumph Through Callipolis* (1631)—was always Jonson's goal, his methods grow more attuned to likely lapses in an audience's attentiveness. In early works like *The Masque of Queens* the spectators are simply presented with straightforward embodiments of ideals that, as always with Jonson, are at once political, aesthetic, and moral. Even in *Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists at Court*, the latest masque published in the 1616 folio, Mercury can

contrast the “imperfect creatures” (161) Vulcan produces as evidence of alchemy’s supposed artistry with the “excellence of the sun and Nature” (164): “Vanish, I say, that all who have but their senses may see and judge the difference between thy [Vulcan’s] ridiculous monsters and his [James’s] absolute features” (169-71). The difference is to be seen in the truly artful depiction of nature in the main masque, which was helped into being by Inigo Jones’s stagecraft: “At which the whole scene changed to a glorious bower wherein Nature was placed with Prometheus at her feet, and the twelve masquers standing about them” (172-74). The masque then pauses so that all may be “a while viewed” (174).

In Jonson’s next masque, however, just looking is not enough. Where Mercury asks nothing of spectators “but their senses,” *The Vision of Delight* models for its audience an actively questioning, imaginatively engaged desire to understand what one sees. Wonder, who remains silently on stage throughout the antimasque, is moved to speech by the sight of “the bower of Zephyrus”: “Wonder must speak or break: what is this? Grows / The wealth of nature here, or art?” (132-33). Wonder’s enthusiasm increases when the Bower opens and the masquers are “discovered as the glories of the spring” (160-61): “what better change appears?” (163). How is it, Wonder goes on to ask, that trees and flowers are blooming, the seas and rivers are calm?

How plays the yearling with his brow scarce broke
 Now in the open grass? and frisking lambs
 Make wanton salts about their dry-sucked dams,
 Who to repair their bags do rob the fields?
 How is’t each bough a several music yields?
 The lustly throstle, early nightingale
 Accord in tune, though vary in their tale?
 The chirping swallow called forth by the sun,
 And crested lark doth his division run?
 The yellow bees the air with murmur fill?
 The finches carol, and the turtles bill?
 Whose power is this? what god?

(178-89)

In their immediate context the questions are important because the answer is the king the work is praising. But the questions are also important because in them Wonder describes a pastoral ideal that not even Jones could have fully depicted on the stage. Whereas *Mercury Vindicated* takes the visual contrast between main masque and

antimasque for granted, *The Vision of Delight* implies that the audience must not only look at the set, but imagine the ideal it is meant to represent. "Only through wonder, or admiration," Eugene Waith has explained, "can the approximation of the ideal in the actual be seen."¹⁶ I would stress that in this masque, unlike its predecessors, the approximation is the work itself, and the ideal is in the mind's eye of the beholder, albeit one on the masquing stage.

Modeling the proper sort of response to a masque in a masque is as far as Jonson could go to encourage the active mental engagement of his audience without disturbing the imaginative fabric of his fiction. But when, the year after *The Vision of Delight*, Jonson reacted to the court's initial disappointment by revising the morally coherent *Pleasure Reconciled* into the artistically disjointed *For the Honor of Wales*, he necessarily interfered with the straightforward vicarious involvement of the spectator. When the main masque of *Pleasure Reconciled* was repeated forty days after the original performance, it was preceded by an antimasque of comic Welshmen who mock the morally significant events in the first version. There, Hercules, exemplifying active virtue, scatters both the mindless pleasure seekers who adore "the voluptuous Comus, god of cheer" (164) and a group of pygmies who seek revenge for Hercules' defeat of their fellow emblem of earthly vice, Antaeus. Where pygmies dance in *Pleasure Reconciled* and, to honor Comus, there is "a tun now brought in to dance, and so many bottles about him" (62-63), *For the Honor of Wales* has the far more prosaic "dance of men" (289) and "dance of goats" (314). In between the two, a character asks rhetorically: "Is not better this now than pigmies? This is men, this is no monsters, and you mark him. Well, call forth your goats now; your ursip sall see a properly natural device come from the Welse mountains: is no tuns, nor no bottles. Stand by there, sow his ursip the hills; was drunkenry in his eyes that make that device in my mind" (295-300). "Nothing is more proper, nothing more natural," wrote Jonson in *Queens* to defend the conceptual appropriateness of placing figures from different historical eras on stage at the same time (*Complete Masques*, p. 547). (They are all alive in the eternal present of fame.) The "properly natural device" of goats, however, relies on the everyday notions of realism Jonson parries in his comments to the reader of *Queens* and in the drunken comments of Hercules' Bowl-bearer in *Pleasure Reconciled*: "Ha! You look as if you would make a problem of this. Do you see? Do you see? a problem: why bottles? and why a tun? and why a tun? and why bottles to dance? I say that men that drink hard and serve the belly in

any place of quality . . . are living measures of drink, and can transform themselves, and do every day, to bottles or tuns when they please" (63-70). The Welsh goats are thus less a piece of authorial self-criticism than a further, though more indirect, response to those who weigh artistic propriety against their conventional preconceptions instead of a work's conceptual coherence.

That *For the Honor of Wales* exchanges conceptual coherence for an abrupt shift from the comic realism of the Welshmen to the symbolic world left over from *Pleasure Reconciled* can in part be explained as the result of not being able to rework in less than two months the costumes, music, dances, and scenery of the main masque. But Jonson clearly found the doubling of a moral difference by an artistic one appealing. His subsequent masques, as a disapproving Barish has complained, regularly "transplant the audience from one plane of artistic reality to another."¹⁷ For example, in *News from the New World*, the first masque after *For the Honor of Wales*, two heralds proclaim the news of a poet's recent trip to the moon and fool others on the stage with inventive descriptions of the society the poet supposedly found there. All the while, the two acknowledge to the audience that their accounts are merely the product of "the fant'sy that begot 'em" (15). Among the creatures the heralds say live on the moon are Volatees, a strange cross of bird and man, but in contrast to the heralds' other fabrications, the Volatees appear on stage as representatives of lunar reality. Herford and Simpson have commented on the unsettling effect of this for those expecting consistent planes of imaginative experience: "we are, as it were, hitched out of the world of comic realism, where romance exists only as ludicrous make-believe, into the world of the Masque, where it is the order of the day. While we are still laughing at the yarns of the Second Herald, they suddenly come true" (H&S 2:313). Or rather, they suddenly look true. They suddenly look as substantial on the masquing stage as the foolishly credulous figures in the antimasque, the costumed courtiers in the main masque, and the embodied abstraction of Fame rising in Jones's set at the end of the work. As Orgel has noted, "a realistic scene implies that seeing—not hearing, or understanding—is believing."¹⁸ If the heralds had been right about the world in the moon, the Volatees would be as properly natural as goats in Wales. But in this masque seeing is not believing; the visual is not the actual. The work insists that spectators stay alert to the error of accepting without question any illusion that looks real.

The masques following *News* similarly require spectators to pay attention to what they are looking at. *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, written the year after *News*, relies, as Dale Randall has argued, on the tension between accepting the surface fiction and an indirect awareness—heightened by ironic verbal resonances—of the real courtiers who spoke the lines.¹⁹ Undoubtedly, the much-remarked linguistic inventiveness of this masque owes a good deal to the absence of Jones's theatrical spectacle. The works Jonson composed for the new Banqueting House, though, were all subject to the problem of Jones's visually convincing images. We have seen how one of the masques, *Time Vindicated*, adopts the strategy of pointing the audience away from the performance. Others make use of a particular kind of self-referentiality. In *The Masque of Augurs* (1622), *Neptune's Triumph*, and *The Fortunate Isles and Their Union* (1625), antimasque dances are said to result from the creative efforts, such as they are, of Vangoose, "a projector of masques" (*Augurs* 101-102), of a Banqueting House cook, and of "the company of players" (*Isles* 286), respectively. All three masques, that is, contain verbal references to the reality that performances are illusions.

Although the reference is the most direct in *The Fortunate Isles*, Jonson's final Jacobean masque, it is fullest in the rehearsed but, owing to an ambassadorial dispute, never performed *Neptune's Triumph*. In that work the antimasque is a discussion, held before the audience that would have gathered in the Banqueting House to see the masque, between a cook who ostensibly works in the Banqueting House kitchens and a masque-writing poet: "A kind of a Christmas ingine, one that is used at least once a year for a trifling instrument of wit, or so" (19-21). The two talk about their attitudes toward audience expectations, about the general value of anti-masques, and about the details of the Twelfth Night masque to come—a conversation, in other words, that almost completely merges the reality of the court as it awaits the performance of the main masque with the actual performance of the antimasque.

According to the cook,

there is a palate of the understanding as well as of the senses. The taste is taken with good relishes, the sight with fair objects, the hearing with delicate sounds, the smelling with pure scents, the feeling with soft and plump bodies, but the

understanding with all these, for all which you must begin at the kitchen. There the art of poetry was learned and found out, or nowhere, and the same day with the art of cookery.
(41-47)

But the work as a whole does not bear out Orgel's contention that the idea "that poetry cannot be intellectualized" is Jonson's own.²⁰ Even the cook wants to hear the poet explain the "device" (83) of the main masque before experiencing it—and the explanation runs to some fifty lines. To Jonson, visual and other non-verbal effects should depend on verbal information supplied by the poet. Words, not senses, are what "make the spectators understanders."

This position is implicit in having Wonder in *The Vision of Delight* verbally describe how "every sense / Hath several objects" (170-71). Yet Wonder merely models on stage the transformation of the perceived by the imagination of the perceiver—as does the captain of the gypsies in *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*. Had there been a performance of *Neptune's Triumph*, the audience would have been prompted by the poet's prior explanation to transform for itself the immediate, predominantly visual experience of main masque spectacle into the imaginative and intellectual experience of perceiving and understanding allegory. Having been told, as it were, what to look for, the audience could not, or so Jonson hoped, take what it saw at face value.

It might be objected that my argument, like the tales of the heralds about the world in the moon, has "all this while . . . adventured to tell . . . no news" (*News* 270-71). Jonson's quarrel with Jones, after all, is well-known and its grounds, thanks especially to D. J. Gordon, well investigated.²¹ But there is an important difference between Jonson's irritation with Jones for presuming creative equality between poet and architect, and his concern that Jones's theater helps the masque create a false equality between experiencing a performance and moral experience. It is this concern that leads in the later Jacobean masques to efforts to turn audiences from complacent celebrators of what looked like virtue's actual triumphs into mentally active participants in moral fictions. That the efforts were slow to develop reflects the difficulty even Jonson had in recognizing all the implications of Jones's designs. That the efforts were only partial reflects the difficulty even he had in keeping under verbal control an event the court—and his collaborator—expected to be predominantly non-verbal.

Eventually, of course, the poet would lose to history and to human nature his battle against the passivity and complacency that could be induced by a masque's structure and be reinforced by what the architect made the masque look like. Because Charles danced where his father had watched, there is essentially no imaginative gap in a Caroline masque between the noble fiction and the real nobility performing it. Just as important, the more skillful Jones became at making his special effects look natural, the more easily the court could accept simply seeing a performance as a substitute for a deeper understanding of moral responsibility. "It is probable," Una Ellis-Fermor once observed, "that Ben Jonson crippled himself as an artist by his moral imposition."²² It could, however, be said that the court masque ultimately crippled Jonson's efforts to impose moral seriousness on the form.

NOTES

¹Eliot's 1919 essay on Jonson is reprinted in *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934). Notable studies of the formal qualities of the genre include Dolora Cunningham, "The Jonsonian Masque as a Literary Form," *ELH* 22 (1955):108-24; W. Todd Furniss, "Ben Jonson's Masques," in *Three Studies in the Renaissance*, ed. B. C. Nangle (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 89-179; and Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965). For Jones, see Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975), esp. 1:1-75. For the general political implications of the masque, see Orgel's *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975); Eugene Waith, "Spectacles of State," *SEL* 13 (1973):317-30; and Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1983). For more specific analyses, see Leah Sinanoglou Marcus, "'Present Occasions' and the Shaping of Ben Jonson's Masques," *ELH* 45 (1978):201-25; and "The Occasion of Ben Jonson's *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*," *SEL* 19 (1979):271-93; and Sara Pearl, "Sounding to Present Occasions: Jonson's Masques of 1620-5," in *The Court Masque*, ed. David Lindley (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 60-77.

²The masques are quoted from Orgel's modernized *Complete Masques* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), and hereafter cited parenthetically by line. Where the punctuation matters to my argument, I have checked the text in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1952). I cite the edition hereafter as H&S, giving volume and page, and modernize spelling when quoting from it.

³See especially Ernest William Talbert, "The Interpretation of Jonson's Courtly Spectacles," *PMLA* 61 (1946):454-73; and John C. Meagher, *Method and Meaning in Jonson's Masques* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1966).

⁴*John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), p. 733.

⁵*An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (London: Thomas Nelson, 1965), p. 107.

⁶See especially Peter Carlson, "Judging Spectators," *ELH* 44 (1977):443-57.

⁷Jonas A. Barish, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), p. 244.

⁸See Orgel's "To Make Boards to Speak: Inigo Jones's Stage and the Jonsonian Masque," *RenD* 1 (1968):121-52; and his introduction to *The Complete Masques*.

⁹*Complete Masques*, p. 32.

¹⁰Gabriele Bernhard Jackson, *Vision and Judgment in Ben Jonson's Drama* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), p. 1; Alexander Leggatt, *Ben Jonson: His Vision and His Art* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 274.

¹¹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor, 2 vols. (2nd edn.; London: Dent, 1960), 1:199.

¹²*Complete Masques*, p. 37.

¹³Jeffrey Fischer, "Love Restored: A Defense of Masquing," *RenD* 8 (1977):231-44.

¹⁴*The Jonsonian Masque*, p. 185.

¹⁵*The Jonsonian Masque*, p. 93.

¹⁶"Things as They Are and the World of Absolutes in Jonson's Plays and Masques, 1616-25," in *The Elizabethan Theatre IV*, ed. G. R. Hibbard (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), p. 122.

¹⁷Barish, p. 256.

¹⁸*Complete Masques*, p. 24.

¹⁹Dale B. J. Randall, *Jonson's Gypsies Unmasked* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1975).

²⁰*The Jonsonian Masque*, p. 93.

²¹Gordon's 1949 essay, "Poet and Architect: The Intellectual Setting of the Quarrel between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones," is conveniently reprinted in *The Renaissance Imagination: Essays and Lectures by D. J. Gordon*, ed. Orgel (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975), pp. 77-101.

²²Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation* (4th edn.; rpt. New York, Vintage, 1964), p. 117.