'Youthful Revels, Masks, and Courtly Sights': an introductory study of the revels within the Stuart masque

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Invocation

Although at heart the masque is an entertainment of dancing, scholarship in this century has concentrated on the literary and design elements. An outstanding body of scholarship has illuminated the artistic, intellectual and political importance of the Stuart court masques, paying testimony to the complex cultural achievement of their makers. The dance elements have been marginalised in the discussion. This is chiefly a consequence of the much smaller body of evidence left behind, but also because scholarly work on seventeenth century dance is a comparatively recent development. However, fresh historical research, including the reconstruction of dances, is now leading to a firmer grasp of the nature of dancing at the time of the masques. This understanding, both of the practice of dancing and attitudes to its place in society, can help the scholar make sense of the evidence related to the masque.

Three genres of dancing were employed in the Stuart masque: professional dance in the antemasque; choreography in the noble style in the courtiers' entries; the current ballroom repertoire in the revel. No choreographies for the antemasque and the courtiers' entries have survived. This aspect can only be understood by a close examination of the surviving music, the occasional descriptive account, evidence from Italian and French theatre and social dance, and the literary context. The dancing of the revels can be approached by the same means, but also through knowledge of the systems that have a bearing on social dance.

This aspect of the masque has left behind the scantest records and has therefore been given the scantest treatment by scholars to date. This provides two goals to motivate an enquiry into the revels: to open up the topic of the revels for discussion, and to see how far current knowledge of dancing in the ballroom can illuminate the sparse evidence.

Definitions of 'revel'

We must commence by defining the term 'revel', as failure to do this in the past has led to some confusion. In his discussion of the dances of the revels, Sabol conflates the revels of the masque with revels in general.[1] The word has both a general and a particular meaning. It refers to sociable entertainment in a broad sense:

> 'an occasion or course of merrymaking or noisy festivity, with dancing, games, masking, acting or other forms of lively entertainment.'[2]

The term can specifically mean the danced activity within the whole revel. It can also be the term for the social dancing within the masque:

> '...dancings for their recreation and delight, commonly called Revels...' Dugdale.[3]

Such dancing may in itself form part of a whole revel. Its earliest usage implied wildness and impropriety, when the bounds of decorum broke under the strain of pleasure-seeking:

> 'Riotous or noisy mirth or merrymaking. Late Middle English'[4]

Soon, a concomitant meaning came into play in which 'revel' designated a social occasion shaped by art. Not only might a ball, a game or a play be conducted in an orderly fashion, but a sequence of such events might be linked by a single conception or device to make an artistic whole. This kind of revel might be enacted for a particular celebration. It required leisure for the revel to unfold, therefore certain seasons of the year were more conducive to this activity. The Christmas season in particular was the opportunity for such activity, as winter enforced idleness, whilst Christ's birth was a pretext for celebration for non-Puritan Christians. A revel provided a release from the cares of the world, when normal duties and responsibilities were suspended, and when the imagination could be engaged creatively. The spirit of a winter revel is captured in Thomas Campion's song:

> 'Now winter nights enlarge
> The number of their houres,
> And clouds their stormes discharge
> Upon the ayrie towres:
> Let now the chimneys blaze,
> And cups o'erflow with wine:
> Let well-tun'd words amaze
> With harmonie divine.
> Now yellow waxen lights
> Shall waite on hunny Love,
> While youthfull Revels, Masks, and Courtly sights,
> Sleepes leaden spels remove.
>
> This time doth well dispence
> With lovers long discourse;
> Much speech hath some defence,
> Though beauty now remorse.
> All doe not all things well;
> Some measures comely tread,
> Some knotted Ridles tell,
> Some Poems smoothly read.
> The Summer hath his joyes,
> And Winter his delights;
> Though Love and all his pleasures are but toyes,
> They shorten tedious nights.'[5]

Thus dancing, masquing, riddles, poems and amorous conversation were the pastimes of his revel, heightened by the intimacy of warmth and light set against the dark world outside. The literature of the revel has a European tradition, with Baldesar Castiglione as the most well-known author in England. The evening gatherings of Elisabetta Gonzaga were an opportunity for pleasure and serious discussion:

> 'In their company polite conversations and innocent pleasantries were heard, and everyone's face was so full of laughter and gaiety that the house could truly be called the very inn of happiness.'[6]

Castiglione describes how a company of men and women gather to enjoy social intercourse, presided over by the Duchess herself. Whilst enjoying the company of the ladies 'freely and innocently'[7], this 'was accompanied by the most careful restraint.'[8] The pastimes included '...constant music and dancing, sometimes intriguing questions were asked, and sometimes ingenious games played...'[9] A revel was governed by the needs of the participants, and could be conducted both informally and formally.

Spontaneity was an essential quality of the revel, but the provision of entertainment at court was too complex and too important to be left to chance. The Master of Revels, based at The Revels Office in Clerkenwell, administered the cycle of plays, masques, barriers, shows and other entertainments on behalf of the monarch, wherever the court was lodged.[10] The monarch was the true head of the revels, and the Master of Revels was the court official who executed his or her wishes, as well as regulating public entertainment. The Master of the Revels had to co-ordinate all the elements that contributed to an evening's performance, but his orderly management still had to contend with chance. Shows might be cancelled at the whim of the monarch or suddenly recalled.

The Tudor records show several masques planned and taken to court only to be cancelled e.g. a mask of six virtues January 6 1573.[11] A good example for the Jacobean age is *The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn* by Beaumont Shrove Tuesday 1613. It was intended to be the third successive masque for the wedding of Princess Elizabeth, and the company of masquers rode in procession to court, only to be turned away, as neither James nor an audience could stomach another show. When it was shown on the Saturday (ie in Lent), James called back the first and second antemasque entries to perform again 'but one of the Statuas by that time was undressed.'[12] Spontaneity was still the spirit of a formal revel and a factor to be reckoned on in overall management.

'Revelling' comprised a number of artistic, communal activities, either riotous or controlled, but as we have seen above, dancing was the quintessential activity of a revel. Equally, the quintessential product of social intercourse in dancing was love. Only in a ball could the young and marriageable meet with decorum, and pursue a courtship. This notion dominates the images of dancing in poetry, prose and song. Thus the words 'revel' and 'reveller' became synonymous with 'dance' and 'dancer', but enriched with the magic of youth and love. In the poem *Orchestra*, Sir John Davies describes the Sun courting the Earth:

'And, like a reveller in rich array,
Doth dance his galliard in his leman's sight,
Both back and forth and sideways passing light.'[13]

Whilst the rhetoric of love dominates the revel, it was in itself a pretence. In reality, only a few of the participants were engaged in courtship, the rest comprising close relatives, married people, and single people either too young or too old to be courting. As we shall see below, dancing partnerships reflected the whole spectrum of social connections, not exclusively those of courtship.

A revel was based on the active participation of the audience: it was a game played out between all participants. Even when the audience was physically passive, as when enjoying a play, their hearts and minds were actively engaged in the world created by the players.[14] In the service of the revels, professional actors recognised that the audience had, at the least, commanded the entertainment and were responsible for its existence. Shakespeare draws attention to this assumption in his Prologues and Epilogues. The opening speech of Chorus in *Henry V* is an invocation to the audience's imagination to flesh out the bare bones of their presentation:

'Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts:
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance.'[15]

Prospero's speech at the end of *The Tempest* plays on the game between players and audience, too:

'Now 'tis true,
I must be here confined by you,
Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
Since I have my dukedom got,
And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island by your spell;
But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands.'[16]

Whether the revel takes the form of a comedy, a show, a ball, or a masque, it can only proceed with the consent of all players in the game: both audience and performers. It will only be effective if the participants contribute their greatest skills and respond with enthusiasm.

The extended revel at Christmas

The psycho-social powers of the Tudors and Stuarts allowed them to play out the game of a whole revel, extending across several weeks, despite the interruptions of normal routine. In the extended revel a series of communal artistic events were united by an imaginative conceit. The Inns of Court provided the ideal setting: a strongly traditional communal life; a young and learned membership, and a close connection with the court. Such seasonal revels were contemporary with the history of the masque[17], with records running at least from the early years of Henry VIII's reign to the last years of Charles I's peace. The extended revels were particularly essential to the keeping of Christmas, and were presided over by a mock-monarch, in the tradition of festive mis-rule and role reversal. The Prince d'Amour reigned at Middle Temple, Pallaphilos at the Inner Temple and The Prince of Purpoole at Gray's Inn: these roles were played out by young men prominent in the community, and every member played a part in the fictitious court. The Christmas Courts were treated seriously by the monarch and the true court. The game was enjoined on the government's side by visits exchanged between the two monarchs using normal State ceremony. The dignity of the Christmas Prince was positively supported by men of power:

'He [Lord Chancellor Bacon] dined at Gray's Inn, to give countenance to their Lord or Prince of Purpoole, and see the Revels.'[18]

It was possible for significant matters to be treated allusively in these revels.[19] Robert Dudley created the role of Pallaphilos at the Inner Temple revels of 1561/2, as an emblematic presentation of his intentions towards the Queen. 'Pallas' is the Queen as wise ruler. 'Pallaphilos' is her lieutenant, the second Perseus, who shields and supports his mistress. Thus Dudley, through the events of the revels, hints at the protection he could provide against division amongst the nobility, in particular the problem posed by the Grey faction. This proposal of a political marriage is then given a human shape in the chief event of the revel, at which he and twenty four knights:

'...masked with Bewties dames.'[20]

Thus, by dancing with Queen Elizabeth in the revels of the masque, Dudley was able to court the Queen, in jest as it were, and to cunningly employ the ambiguous play of truth and

fiction in the revels in opening up delicate negotiations.

The best documented extended revel is the Gesta Grayorum of 1594: the Christmas court at Gray's Inn[21]. The device of the reign of the Prince of Purpoole linked events throughout the two Christmas seasons: the twelve days from Christmas Day to Epiphany, and the period from Candlemas to Shrovetide. The break, in which normal business was attended to, was explained by the pretence that the Prince had visited Russia. This was supported by the visit of a Russian ambassador, and the fiction in the Masque of Proteus that the Prince had fought, with distinction of course, in wars in Tartary.[22] The court of the Prince of Purpoole was visited by members of the Temple Inn, by courtiers such as Robert Cecil and the Earl of Essex, and finally by her Majesty.

The account of the Gesta Grayorum tells of a concerted cycle of masques, comedies, shows, balls, feasts, banquets and barriers that would have required advance planning and firm administration to achieve. However, there was still an element of unpredictability in the revels programme. Disorganisation and bad temper marred one evening's entertainment, dubbed 'The Night of Errors', which was played out in the presence of the ambassador from the Temple Inn. To restore the good name of Gray's Inn and repair bad relationships a Masque of Friendship was offered several days later, coupled with the investiture of the Temple ambassador and his retinue with The Order of the Helmet. Planning, coupled with rapid response to change, required a good master. The choice of Prince by the members of Gray's Inn was crucial as their reputation depended on the success of the Revels. In 1594 they chose:

'...one Henry HELMES, a Norfolk gentleman, who was thought to be accomplished with all good parts, fit for so great a dignity; and was also a very proper man of personage, and very active in dancing and revelling.'[23]

The position of Master of the Revels was an honour, but also a responsibility, as the pleasure of the whole community depended on the incumbent. Even less consequential revels than the Gesta Grayorum needed a controller: an office that would normally fall to the most important person present. A letter from Lady Arabella Stuart to the Earl of Shrewsbury from the Queen's court at Fulston, Sittingbourne, Kent of 8 December 1603 gives the modern reader a glimpse of the management of lesser revels. She is complaining at being forced into childrens' games:

'So I was by the Mistress of the Revelles not only compelled to play at I know not what, (for till that day I never heard of a play called Fier,) but even persuaded, by the princely example, to play the childe againe. This exercise is mostly used from ten of the clock at night to two or three in the morning; but, that day I made one, it began at twilight and ended at supper-time.'[24]

Clearly both Henry Helmes and Queen Anne shared character traits as controllers of the revels: energy, imperiousness and accomplishment. Outside court circles, the master or mistress of the revels could be chosen by lot. The office of Twelfth Night King and Queen was traditionally filled by placing a pea and a bean in the Twelfth Cake, so that the couple who chanced to find them in their slice was crowned and then presided over the festivities. This only worked because the revels complied to an agreed format, so that every member of the group knew what to expect.

Revels were essential to the life of a community. They were an activity which made plain and reinforced the social bonds. The conduct of a revel determined the status of the institution,therefore at court, the ability to create magnificence went hand-in-hand with the ability to govern.[25] One event of the Gesta Grayorum is a debate between counsellors on the business of a prince, in the style of the discussions of Castiglione's *The Courtier*. The arguments from the Sixth Counsellor move smoothly towards the value of pleasure in a prince's life, which the Prince of Purpoole accepts graciously:

'for a Prince should be of a cheareful and pleasant spirit, not austere, hard-fronted, and stoical; but, after serious affairs, admitting recreation, and using pleasure, as sauces for meats of better nourishment.'[26]

Again, this fictional debate represents a genuine one current amongst learned men which proposed a proper study of philosophy and the arts as the 'Art of Revels'. The Musaeum Minervae, for example, (see masque *Corona Minervae* below) was proposed as an academy of the arts, *c* 1630, with a constitution that included the gentlemanly skills of riding, defence and dancing, with the arts of music, painting and sculpture, alongside practical skills in arithmetic, anatomy and languages. The founder was to be Thomas Kinnaston who argued for the utility of such an academy for all the liberal arts under one roof in London,[27] Puritan resistance to the genteel and artistic curriculum prevented the expansion of this concept. After the Civil War, the rational sciences, were separated from the arts, leading to the founding of the Royal Society in 1660, several of the small Carolingian academies being,subsumed into the Royal Society in 1662.[28]

Dancing was also an essential component of communal life. The records of the Inns of Court preserve admonishments when the custom was neglected.[29] In a strictly masculine society, it was customary for the men to partner each other. On St. Thomas Eve, 20 December 1594 Henry Helmes commanded the dancing:

'So his gentlemen-pensioners and attendants, very gallantly appointed, in thirty couples, danced the old measures, and their galliards, and other kinds of dances, revelling until it was very late...'[30]

Similarly, Prince Charles headed festivities in 1624, when James I was in bed with the gout, as the Venetian Ambassador, Zuane Pesaro, noted:

'The ambassadors were entertained for a state banquet, at which his Highness took his father's place; and amid the rejoicings and the music they had dances among themselves, although no ladies were present.'[31]

There are references to ladies partnering each other as well. Dancing was a means of displaying precedence and skill as well as being the main recreational activity of the time.[32] However, dancing was most enjoyable when shared between men and women. One thread of the discourse on the revels was that they were graced by the presence of ladies. When the sixth counsellor defends pastimes to the Prince of Purpoole, he lists in negative form the essential ingredients of a revel:

'No feasting, no music, no dancing, no triumphs, no comedies, no love, no ladies?'[33]

By pin-pointing the important elements of the general revels, a context can be created for studying the revels in the masque. It is clear that the revel shaped by art was a powerful imaginative game highly prized by the ruling class. It combined order and leadership with a spirit of spontaneity and unpredictability. Social dancing was always seen as the key activity: it was the ultimate game of love. At its best, a revel celebrated the pairing of men and women in the chaste dance of courtship. The revels in the masque, as a microcosm of the whole, should display the same elements.

Categories of masque

The masque was a truly Protean creature, as each production aimed to surprise and delight. The basic structure was malleable: elements were altered, combined and re-combined to produce changes. Rather than analysing masque types according to literary content or chronology, it is useful here to define types according to the physical activity and participants. This is particularly necessary in relation to the revels aspect of the masque. One of the key factors here is the social status of the performers. A revels section could only occur when the masquers were the peers of the audience: for one thing a degree of intimacy was involved in dancing; for another the court held the prerogative of accomplished dancing, which was not to be usurped by those of inferior birth.

After a wide reading of most extant masque texts, I propose six broad categories: the march, the professional masque, the noble masque, the masque with antemasque, the running masque and the masque to present a banquet.

The march

A march is the simplest of dances: rhythmical pacing to music. This masque is the oldest form but the most enduring. A group of performers, whether noble, civic amateur or professional enters, costumed and vizarded, and marches round the performing area. A Presenter may explain and describe them to the audience. They may carry imprese, or similar symbolic devices, or gifts to present to the individual honoured by the occasion. The function of the march is to deploy the costume so that the audience can enjoy the sumptuous display and decipher the emblems. This type of masque is depicted in the Unton Portrait,[34] and was often used to entertain Queen Elizabeth (for example, on her progress to Norwich).[35] 'March' and 'masque' could be interchangeable terms, as in the tune called 'Lord Zouche's March' and 'Lord Zouche's Mask'. This tune is very suitable to a march with its rousing, duple time melody. A march could also be a feature of a more complex masque (e.g. *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* S. Daniel), and is the staple of drama and ballet throughout theatrical history from *Macbeth* to *Sleeping Beauty*. As a type of masque, the march contained no choreographed dances and no revels.

The professional masque

From the same tradition of disguising and mumming,[36] professional performers could represent comic, grotesque or fantastic characters in costume. They might be vizarded to improve the effect, but there was no need to hide their real identity. The performers used dialogue and dancing in the entertainment, but their lowly status precluded a revels section. Account books of the Office of Revels record many such performances, but they were considered of little consequence so few texts survive. During the seventeenth century, quasi-professional performances in this mode were presented by children and higher household servants. High-spirited gentlemen occasionally broke the bounds of decorum by speaking and dancing in a professional style.

The noble masque

Of equal antiquity to the professional masque, the noble masque allows a group of gentlemen or ladies to adopt a fantastic disguise or false persona and make an entry to an invited audience of peers. The sumptuous costume always included a vizard to hide the performer's identity. The pretence for their arrival was narrated by a Presenter (who could also be a gentleman), or explained through dialogue, song and music executed by professional performers. Scenic effects and moving structures might contribute to the action. These are the setting for the centrepiece of the noble masque: the specially choreographed dances. However, equally essential to the consummation of the action, was the dancing between audience and masquers in the revels. After this, the masque concluded with another choreographed dance and further speech and song.

The masque with ante-masque

Under Ben Jonson's management, the theatrical potential of the noble masque was increased by combining it with the professional masque. The masque with ante-masque was the dominant form during the reigns of James I and Charles I. The antemasque was danced by professionals, and it is my impression that the purely professional masque declined as a consequence. As we shall see later, under the right circumstances the revels between noble masquers and audience were also included.

The running masque

The masque form was taken up as a portable entertainment, whereby a performance could be taken from house to house in one locality. This was called 'the running masque' and unfortunately very little evidence for it remains. As it was an activity for the gentry to entertain their peers, there was the possibility of the revels taking place. This manifestation of the masque is true to the essential spirit of the masque as the entry of exotic strangers into a company. It also belongs to the tradition of guisers (or Hallowe'en callers, or Mischief Night, or Plough Monday players) which forms part of popular entertainment today.

The masque to present a banquet

A masque could be mounted as an elaborate means of presenting food. Speeches, songs and mime were combined with choreographed dances, but the audience participation was to consume the food, rather than to dance. The few surviving examples of this form are discussed below, but they show that Shakespeare was copying a known phenomenon in *The Tempest*. In Act 3, scene 3 Prospero arranges for a banquet to be presented to Alonso and his company but then whisked away before they can taste the food. The banquet is brought in by 'several strange shapes' who are described as dancing around it and employing mimed gesture.

Who's dancing?

A closer look at the transition from masque simple to masque with antemasque reveals the social attitudes to dancing that governed the revels. Between 1606 and 1610 there were

several experiments to expand the dance content of the noble masque. Ben Jonson presented a double masque for the wedding of the Earl of Essex and Lady Frances Howard in *Hymenaii* of 1606. His text makes this plain:

> On the night of the masques (which were two, one of men, the other of women...'[37]

A double masque was not one of Ben Jonson's inventions. Dual entries of men and women had been known since the time of Henry VIII. However, in the era of the Stuart masque, the double form was only used three times: the other two double masques being Campion's *Lords Masque* and Davenant's *Salmacida Spolia*. *Hymenaii* is based on the Roman rite of marriage, and pays tribute to the union of 'two noble maids' (the virgin bride and groom). The entry of men represents four humours and four affections who threaten the ceremony of Hymen. This role required the eight gentlemen to dance out onto the stage ('leapt forth to disturb the sacrifice to the union'),[38] and to finish the dance around Hymen's altar with their swords drawn. They then sheathed their swords, after being admonished for their lack of knowledge of the rite by Reason. The stage-action of noble masquers was always confined to dancing only: speaking and acting were not decorous. Thus this brief interplay and mimed action is very significant in theatrical terms. The intemperate, unreasonable and ignorant behaviour of the men is contrasted with the entry of women personating Juno's powers, and dedicated to marriage. Their entry dance is attended by Order, the servant of Reason, whose presence prevents the men from confounding the ladies' 'measured steps'. With the appropriate procedure restored, the two masques combine to form eight couples. The third entry embodies several key ideas: the proper union of man and woman; the beneficial effect of reasonable woman on intemperate man; the strength of social order represented by the dancing chain; the importance of knowledge as the soul of outward display, and finally a personal tribute to the married couple by spelling the bridegroom's name in letter-figures. Jonson has therefore conceived the dancing as bearing the key ideas of the masque, and to achieve his effect he has, for this one occasion, extended the activity of the gentlemen masquers into mime.

In 1607, Campion also explored a new dimension for courtly dancing in *Lord Hay's Masque*. For this wedding celebration, he develops the theme of the conflict between the virtue of virginity and the virtue of procreation. This is represented by a debate between Cynthia, protectress of female chastity and Phoebus Apollo, champion of procreative masculinity. The stage action has nine Knights of Apollo enchanted into golden trees because they had violated the sanctity of Cynthia's forests. The intercession of Phoebus with Cynthia results in their release from enchantment: they emerge first clothed in a leafy habit, and secondly restored to their full knightly robes. The nine gentlemen masquers commenced the masque on stage disguised as fifteen-foot high golden trees. They danced their first entry to one of Campion's dance-songs: 'Move Now With Measured Sound'. The text makes plain that the dancers employed the full range of dance patterns: 'winding waies', 'high-graced Hayes', 'sliding rounds' and 'joyne three by three'.[39] The illusion must have been delightful but dependent on the strength and spatial awareness of the dancers, encased in a model tree with moving branches. The transformation scene required the trees to sink three feet into the stage, whilst the top of the trees

opened out to reveal the masquer, who was then raised up again, whilst the tree was whisked away below. As a feat of endurance and dexterity, this entry has no concordance in the extant texts. It may be noted that Campion also gave mime action to the masquers in *The Lord's Masque*, when the men wooed the women, who had earlier entered as statues, and then came to life. Jonson makes a similar demand on his male masquers in *Lovers Made Men* (see below), although the performance took place at Essex House, not Whitehall.

These two masques show both Jonson and Campion requiring the noble masquers to perform in a different vein from usual. Thus they enriched the spectacle, whilst serving the meaning of the masque. As no-one of inferior rank took a dancing role, decorum was preserved, and the revels took place. From 1608, Jonson began to risk the involvement of other groups of performers that could employ more expressive or strongly contrasting dance actions, particularly the rich vein of comic and grotesque dancing to be found on the public stage. His first attempt was cautious: he used children. Unlike non-noble adults, children could not give offence. Besides, they were frequently used as torchbearers, so their presence in masques was customary. For example, in *The Masque of Beauty* 1608, the torchbearers were presented as Cupids playing about the Throne of Beauty. The description reveals the mixed social group that was acceptable when using children:

> '...a multitude of Cupids (chosen out of the best and most ingenious youth of the Kingdom, noble and others) that were the torchbearers, and all armed with bows, quivers, wings and other ensigns of love...'.[40]

It was only a small step to arrange a dance for the torchbearers. Thus, for the wedding of John Ramsey, Viscount Haddington a month later, Jonson made two experiments. The story concerns Venus, searching for her son Cupid. On discovery, he is in the company of twelve boys'...most anticly attired, that represented the sports and pretty lightnesses that accompany Love...'[41] Cupid invites them to dance:

> 'With your revel fill the room
> That our triumphs be not dumb.'

> 'Wherewith they fell into a subtle capricious dance to as odd a music, each of them bearing two torches, and nodding with their antic faces, with other variety of ridiculous gesture, which gave much occasion of mirth and delight to the spectators.'[42]

It is interesting to note the interpretation of this scene by Chamberlain, who saw:

> 'Venus...her son; who, with his companions, Lusus, Risus, and Jocus, and four or five wags, were dancing a matachina, and acted it very antiquely.'[43]

By describing the dance as a matachina,[44] Chamberlain confirms that this dance was not from the noble genre, but belonged to the realm of professional foolery. No information is available at present of the identity of the twelve boys, but this absence of information is probably indicative of their humble status. It is likely that they were either members of one of the boys' companies of players, or apprentices seconded from one of the adult companies.

The second novel device in *The Haddington Masque* concerned the noble masquers. Twelve gentlemen person-

ated the signs of the Zodiac which preside over the hour of marriage. Jonson explains in his description[45] that their four dances, devised by Thomas Giles and Hierome Herne, were interspersed between the verses of the sung Epithalamion, which he prints to be read whole as a poem. This integration of song and dance into a single sequence is unique in the masque canon, and shows Jonson, as so often, an innovative artist in the form. However, it is also interesting to note that the extant text makes no mention of a revels episode, and I have found no evidence as yet to contradict this. This absence leads to the conjecture that Jonson forestalled problems over the decorum of including dancing boys in a noble masque, by devising an ending that precluded the social dancing. Thus the absence of the revels in *The Haddington Masque* may be a touchstone to the sensibilities threatened by Jonson's use of antemasque.

A year later Jonson was able to pursue his use of the antemasque as a powerful artistic tool in *The Masque of Queens* (1609). The use of male actors to present the witches in two dances was given the sanction of the Queen as commissioner of the masque. As embodiments of ill-repute, the witches heightened the representation of good fame by Anne and her noble ladies.[46] What is more, they were completely routed by the appearance of the Queens in the House of Fame. The triumph of virtue over vice was a deeply serious issue: yet, the theatrical device of routing the witches so swiftly, meant that the male actors quit the scene before the Queens entered it, thus preventing any unseemly mingling of professional and courtly, and so the revels took place.

However, the combining of professional performer with noble amateur was still capable of giving offence. Samuel Daniel was the mouthpiece for those who wished conventional decorum to be preserved. He makes plain in his description of *Tethys Festival* (1610) that his antemasque is presented by noble children: Zephyrus played by Charles, Duke of York (aged nine) and 'eight little ladies near of his stature'[47] as naiads, who dance about him. Daniel drives the point home in his final statement:

'And in all these shows this is to be noted, that there were none of inferior sort mixed amongst these great personages of state and honour, as usually there have been, but all was performed by themselves with a due reservation of their dignity.'[48]

The Queen as Tethys and her thirteen ladies, as river nymphs, invited the lords to dance as usual, thus confirming the complete decorum of the occasion. Daniel, and like-minded traditionalists, did not prevent the establishment of the antemasque however, so that Jonson's notion of combining the professional masque with the noble masque in a dynamic whole became the norm.

The structure of antemasque, main masque and revels dominated performances in noble households, as well as at court. This included masques at the Inns of Court. The genteel members of the Inns (apart from the professional lawyers) were accepted as the peers of the court, although in reality their social backgrounds ranged from small gentry to noble.[49] In addition, they enjoyed a prerogative of excellence in dancing.[50] These factors allowed the gentlemen of the Inns of Court to initiate the revels, even when they took a masque to court. For example, Beaumont's masque of 1613 for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine:

'The Knights take their Ladies to dance with them.'[51]

In the next reign, when Shirley's *Triumph of Peace* was offered by the four Inns in 1634, Bulstrode Whitelocke observed:

'The Queen did the honour to some of the Masquers to dance with them herself, and to judge them as good Dancers as ever she saw; and the great Ladies were very free and civil in dancing with all the Masquers, as they were taken out by them.'[52]

Here Whitelocke portrays the ladies of the court consenting to dance in the revels, and by this participation giving their approval to the whole masque. This is in contrast to other occasions (see below) when the ladies declined to dance, refusing to play the game.

The revels as a ball

In England, the social dancing was incorporated into the action of the masque to make a coherent whole. After dancing with the audience, the masquers returned to the scene, either to execute the final entry (which might form an exit!) or to be celebrated by a final episode of song, speech or action. In France, le grand bal was an important element of the ballet de cour,[53] but it was an addition to the evening's entertainment and was initiated after the completion of the ballet. The masque poets relied on the thread of their discourse remaining intact across the distraction of the social ball. The audience's imagination continued the game after the revels: it is possible that each dancing member of the audience became more deeply involved through their engagement with the protagonists in the revels. Masque writers were set the task of writing at least elegant, if not eloquent, introductions to the revels, and equally to pick up the action smoothly afterwards. These portions of the text are very revealing, and will be examined shortly.

A major change to this system was effected by Queen Henrietta Maria, in line with the French practice with which she was familiar. The first extant masque text commissioned by the Queen for performance in Shrovetide 1631 (*Chloridia*) reveals that the revels were removed to the end of the performance in the manner of the French grand bal. Her masques of 1632 (*Tempe Restored*), 1635 (*Temple of Love*) and 1638 (*Luminalia*) follow the same pattern. Meanwhile the King and the Inns of Court continued the English pattern of incorporating the revels into the action for their three masques of 1631 (*Love's Triumph through Callipolis*) and 1634 (*Triumph of Peace* and *Coelum Britannicum*). In 1638, the King moved his revels to the very end of the action, but still rounded off the spectacle with a Valediction of three verses (*Britannia Triumphans*). The last court masque was mounted in the Christmas season of 1640 jointly by the King and Queen. This was Davenant's *Salmacida Spolia*, and no ball was included either during the action or at the end. Instead Charles and Henrietta Maria sat in the chairs of state to watch the final transformation of the scene and listen to the chorus. The evidence is silent on the effect of this on the audience. At the least, it suggests that the spectacle was preferred over social engagement, which would emphasise the growing political isolation of the King and Queen at that time. It may also show a preference for a coherent presentation with artistic control of the theatrical climax, without the vagaries of the revels or the dissipation of energy into a ball. A motive of this nature

would be in tune with contemporary trends in English theatre, where the play as game, dictated by occasion, had given way to the play as a reiterative commercial venture.

'Much labour to be well described'

For information on the revels in the masque we are reliant mainly on the texts of the masques themselves, augmented by eye-witness accounts when they are generous in their information on this aspect. Masque texts of the Stuart era were published very soon after the first (usually the only) performance. For example, *The Spring's Glory* by Nabbes was performed on 29 May 1638, for Prince Charles' birthday, and the text was entered at the Stationers' Register on 23 June 1638. The texts were published as souvenirs of the occasion, and to give an opportunity of vicarious pleasure to those unable to attend the performance.

Chamberlain in his copious letter writing gives insights into this practice, while providing clues to the performance of masques whose texts have not survived:

'The Masque at York-House were not worth the sending, but that it was so free from flattery' (6 December 1623)[54]

The letter writers inform us that the forthcoming publication of each masque text was common gossip at court, and supervised by the poet. Dudley Carleton to Chamberlain:

'The maske at night requires much labor to be well described; but there:is a pamflet in press wch will save me that paynes...'[55]

Viscount Lisle to the Earl of Shrewsbury:

'...and for the devise of it wth all the speeches and verses I had sent it to your Lo: ere this if I could have gotten ym of Ben: Johnson.'[56]

Publication was also a means of promoting the fame of the poet as inventor of the device, whilst paying tribute to the visual glories and spectacular elements. Flattery of the participants was a function, too.

English publications modelled themselves on the Italian 'descrizioni' which aimed to provide a full record of the event, so far as it could be conveyed in words.[57] The music and designs have survived by chance, as functional scores and drawings for the professional contributors. Campion is the only poet to have presented music with his text, and for *Lord Hay's Masque* he included one costume design. The masque descriptions attempt to convey the event in all its facets, but Jonson varied from this practice by asserting the primacy of the literary text. He drew attention to the power of his words by including exposition of the moral and learned content of his masques, which he considered the 'soul', as opposed to the 'body' of the visual design. Here he was in contention with both Samuel Daniel, who considered a masque as primarily a 'shew',[58] and Inigo Jones who endeavoured to convey meaning through visual symbolism, employing the Neo-Platonic process of wonder. This debate, sometimes acrimonious, is aired very fully by literary critics.[59] For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to note the need to be circumspect in treating the texts as wholly accurate records. They have been shaped by the poet's conception of his own image in relation to posterity, albeit in minor adjustments.

It has to be said, too, that the spoken words were the easiest to record. The costume, the scenery and the music provided a major challenge to the poets' descriptive powers. Dynamic aspects, such as scenic changes and the dancing, were virtually beyond effective description. Apart from the occasional inspired phrase, writers fall back on literary models or formulaic phrases to record the danced episodes. For example, Ben Jonson appears to make a most telling account of the third dance of the ladies in *The Masque of Queens*:

'...the motions were so even and apt and their expression so just, as if mathematicians had lost proportion they might there have found it.'[60]

However, he has clearly adapted a complimentary passage from the text of *Balet Comique de la Royne*:

'si bien l'ordre y estoit gardé, et si dextremet chacun s'estudioit à observer son rang et cadence: de maniere que chacun creut qu'Archimede n'eust peu mieux entendre les proportions Geometriques, que ses princesses et dames les pratiquoyent en ce Balet.'[61]

Probably, we can only infer a shared intention to create a harmonious dance here.

There is little surviving evidence of the working practices of the professionals involved in producing the masques. One presumes that the poet was present at some of the rehearsals of the choreographed dances, and had been engaged in discussions with the dancing masters in planning the entries. It appears that the masque was entirely collaborative and no one artist had overall control of the event: this accords with theatre practice of the time.[62] Certainly, Ben Jonson, for one, had a firm insight into the nature of dancing and exploited it fully in the integrated presentation of an idea.[63] He had a reasonable chance of retaining some memory of the choreographed dances for his record, but there are only brief notes on the dancing in his texts. The revels, in contrast, comprised a spontaneous and unrehearsed episode, over which the poet had no control, and thus had even less material on which to base a description. Eye-witnesses only see the dances once, so are in a worse position to retain enough information to record the dancing. However, they tend to have a much greater interest in the revels than the poet, as the performances of the participants were a source of much import and delight. We are indebted to a few of them for vivid depictions of the revels they observed.[64]

Acknowledgement of the revels in all texts are models of succinctness, almost invariably one sentence:

Britannia Triumphans (1638): 'The masquers dance the revels with the lords.'[65]

or

The Fortunate Isles (1625): 'The revels follow.'[66]

On the occasion of this performance another observer, the Venetian ambassador Zuane Pesaro, noted:

'They danced for four hours after midnight. His Majesty was present and enjoyed it greatly.'[67]

Thus the laconic statements represent several hours of social dancing at the heart of the theatrical event. However, when viewed in sequence, the accumulative effect of these comments is useful evidence of the procedure and content of the revels.

Absence of revels

Before investigating the revels that took place, it is interesting to consider why the revels are absent from the records of a small number of Stuart masques. In preparing this article, I have consulted 55 masque texts. Of these, 39 contain an episode of social dancing: 34 as revels within the action of the masque, 5 as balls at the conclusion of the spectacle. I have been unable to consult William Browne's *Masque of the Inner Temple* (1617), but Enid Welsford refers to a revels section in her account.[68] This makes a tally of 40 out of 56 masques. This leaves only 16 masques which apparently had no revels. As we shall see, both social constraints and artistic decisions lay behind the decision to omit an essential feature of the Stuart masque.

Three masques are certainly professional masques. Ben Jonson's *Masque of Christmas* (1616) employs a Presenter as Christmas and ten children as Christmastide symbols led in by Cupid and Venus. The dialogue is concluded with a dance by the company. Jonson's *Masque of Owls* (1624) is a march, in which the Presenter as Captain Cox presents the six owls in turn. They neither speak nor dance. The content of *The Spring's Glory* (1638) by Thomas Nabbes could only have been delivered by professionals. The action includes a so-called antemasque of beggars. Finally a speaker representing Spring calls forth Ceres and Bacchus, Venus and Cupid, Lent, Christmas and Shrovetide, to express their reformation from sensuality and contention in 'a moderate measure'. As these characters are all speaking parts, and they retire back into the scene at the end, their status as professional performers is clear, therefore no revels could take place. However, it is interesting to note that this last dance has the same function as a noble entry to represent Neo-Platonic order and harmony.

The status of the performers is also the key to another group of four masques lacking revels. *Cupid's Banishment* (1617) was written by White for a girls' school at Deptford for a visit by Queen Anne. Clearly, the young girls were not her peers, either in age or status, and could not invite her to dance. If they had been grown women, the position may have been different. There is plenty of evidence for women partnering each other, and we can assume that Anne of Denmark would have danced on the slightest pretext! Similarly, *Cupid and Death* (1653) was presented by a school for young gentlemen where the choreographer Luke Channell taught dancing. The second performance (1659) was held on the Military Grounds in Leicester Fields. The dance content belongs to the antemasque genre, so this factor, combined with the dancers' youth and social status, prevented a revels episode occurring. The two masque-like entertainments by Milton, *Arcades* (1633) and *Comus* (1634) demonstrate similar characteristics. The intended performers were the young members of noble families, and the masques were devised as self-contained poetic dramas, incorporating dance, but not extending into the realm of social interaction.

The consumption of edibles was the central activity of another group of three masques without revels. These are *The Triumphs of the Prince d'Amour* (1636) and *Corona Minervae* (1638), both designed to present a banquet, plus *The Masque of the Four Seasons* (?1612) which presented a feast. *The Triumphs of the Prince d'Amour* was performed by gentlemen of the Middle Temple to entertain the Elector Palatine. It is an example of the masque within an extended revel, as the

Prince d'Amour presided over the masque as a mock-monarch extending his hospitality to a real prince. The two dances in the masque were antemasques. The final episode concerned the entry of twelve men, representing Labourers on a Fruitfull Soyle, bearing precious fruits on square frames covered in green boughs. When these were placed together they formed a delicious banquet 'that look'd as it were hidden in a Grove'.[69] This triumph was supported by songs and symphonies composed by Henry and William Lawes. *Corona Minervae* demonstrates the same elements of an extravagant entertainment comprising antemasque dances, although the performers are unidentified. The presentation by the Musaeum Minervae was to promote proposals for an academy of the arts, to complement the education available at the universities and The Inns of Court. The entertainment was calculated to appeal to the very young Royal children: James, Duke of York and Princess Mary. It expounded upon the sweetness of learning, then led the children into the Temple of Minerva where they discovered that all the books were edible sweetmeats. Thus the interactive dimension of the masque form is used for effective instruction and delight. Each of the four courses of a meal are introduced by speeches from Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn in *Mask of the Four Seasons*. At the conclusion the Seasons summon their representatives to perform a dance. Winter's Gamboles, Autumn's Drunkards, Summer's haymakers and reapers and Spring's morris dance are in the antemasque vein, pre-empting any revels in any case.

The Gypsies Metamorphosed (1621) stands alone in the masquing canon. It was written by Ben Jonson for George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham and four gentlemen as gypsies. The gentlemen have been identified as Baron Feilding, Endymion Porter, John, Viscount Purbeck and Gervase Clifton.[70] Whilst noble in rank, the five men speak and dance in a professional acting mode. Their game is to tell the fortunes of their audience of peers as if they were gypsies. The conclusion of the masque is their metamorphosis into their real identities, and to perform a final dance as gentlemen. The cast also includes actors plus eight performers as clowns and their wenches. These perform a country dance during which the gypsies steal amongst them to pick their purses and grope their plackets. This representation of a social dance may be intended as a mock-revel. The style of performance and the mingling of professional and noble was likely to cause offence and no revels were offered. The protagonists took the precaution of performing the masque out of town. It was offered on three occasions with alterations to suit each audience: at Burley-on-the-Hill, Belvoir and Windsor. One may conjecture that it was modelled on the running masque idiom. Buckingham was fond of breaking decorum: for example, he took the role of a fencing master in a lost masque for the King and Queen's birthday in 1626. Disapproval was expressed by Reverend Joseph Mead:

> 'His grace took a shape upon the other Thursday night, which many thought too histrionical to become him...never before then did any privy counsellor appear in a masque.'[71]

Here 'masque' means the antemasque, as the main masque was danced by the Queen and ten ladies. An interesting corollary to this episode is Jonson's *Lovers Made Men* (1617) in which the gentlemen masquers danced the antemasque as ghosts of Lovers who drink from Lethe. They then pass

through a grove to emerge as living Men to dance the main masque. The revels followed, however, as the gentlemen had not broken decorum by taking speaking roles or acting in an extraordinary manner.

Four masques were written by Jonson for 'Gentlemen, the King's Servants':[72] *Love Restored* (1612), *The Irish Masque* (1613/14), *The Golden Age Restored* (1615) and *Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists at Court* (1616). The absence of music and designs for this group suggests that they were not accorded the full dignity of royal masques. James was very tight-fisted in 1612, in response to Puritan criticism of extravagance.[73] *Love Restored* is particularly interesting. Strong argues that it formed part of Prince Henry's festival policy, which he inaugurated with the celebration of his investiture as Prince of Wales and intended to embrace the marriage of his sister Elizabeth. The gentlemen performers of *Love Restored* were from his own household, and not his father's.[74] The conclusion of *Love Restored* comprises three songs: the second appears to address the ladies, using the language of a conventional invocation to the revels; the third also echoes the usual call to cease the revels. Stephen Orgel is convinced that the second and third songs are the framework for the social dancing. In contrast, Sabol draws attention to a letter by Chamberlain which describes the ladies as spurning the men's invitation to dance on this occasion. (At the time of writing, I have been unable to trace this reference.) However, if the ladies of the audience had felt themselves to be insulted by invitations to dance from members of Prince Henry's household then that would explain the disparity between the poetry and the narrative silence on the revels, in that the poet made plans for the revels, which were annulled by the refusal of the ladies to participate.

The sequence of three masques from Christmas 1613 to 1616, plus *The Vision of Delight* (1617) given by unspecified protagonists, filled the gap left by Prince Henry's untimely death, until Prince Charles's debut in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*. The participants in *The Irish Masque* were five English and five Scots from the household chosen for their excellence in dancing.[75] The names of Sergeant Boyd, Abercrombie and Auchmouty were frequently designated 'high dancers' by correspondents of the time. They were members of the new breed of Scots gentlemen, personal servants to the king, on their way up to higher office, land and knighthoods. Abercrombie and Auchmouty (Groom of the King's Bedchamber) both danced and revelled in later masques. In the meantime, the text of *The Irish Masque* offered no pretext for the revels. Did Ben Jonson play safe after the scandal of the previous season and present this masque as a professional entertainment? In contrast, *The Golden Age Restored* was planned as a debut for George Villiers. He had spent 1609–1612/13 travelling in France and Italy with his brother 'to gain experience.' They had spent time in 1611 in Angers where an informal academy existed, which gave them a chance to improve in the manly skills of riding, fencing and dancing, in addition to studying the classics.[76] On return to England, Villiers was introduced to James during the Summer Progress of 1614. The faction that wished to thwart Somerset worked hard to promote a new favourite with the results that by the winter of 1614, Villiers was Cupbearer (i.e. a gentleman servant), and a masque was planned as a showcase for his physical beauty and dance skills. The personnel of *The Golden Age Restored* comprised Lords as well as gentlemen: this line-up, supported by James'

burgeoning infatuation with Villiers, provided an acceptable social group for the revels. The revels also took place in *Mercury Vindicated*, suggesting that the social status of these 'gentlemen, the king's servants' had been reconciled.

This story, and the discussion of the *Haddington Masque* shows how touchy the English were about status, in an age of social mobility. The enforced intimacy of dancing challenged this acutely. However there remain two masques without revels where the provenance of the performers was impeccable, as they were the monarchs. The lack of a revels section can only be attributed to an artistic decision. *Albion's Triumph* (1632) was the first masque designed by Inigo Jones independently of Ben Jonson. The poet was Aurelian Townsend, but the emphasis was on the visual aspects rather than the words. The king danced as Albanactus, presenting a sacred figure of power, attended by fourteen consuls. After a single masque dance, he placed himself by the Queen in the Chair of State whilst the scene unfolded and singers as Companions of Peace celebrated virtuous rule. This concluded with a valediction 'to Hymen's twin, the Mary-Charles'. Thus the consummation of the action is an apotheosis of the king and queen as peaceful rulers. This is in the same vein as the ending devised by Jones and Davenant for *Salmacida Spolia*, in which the blessed pair are also celebrated as embodying perfect government. The apotheosis is accompanied by the Chorus who finally declare:

> 'We are dispatched, to sing your praise above'.[77]

Thus, the communal activity of dancing is replaced by a theatrical sentiment, which probably left the disenchanted audience unmoved. The lack of dance is a symptom of fundamental political and artistic change.

The poetry of the revels

When the masques do include the revels, the poet composed a poem or song of bidding to the revels and similar words commanding a cessation of the mingled dancing. These are generally addressed to the audience of ladies, praising their beauty and urging them to be kind in their favours to the gentlemen masquers. Some, as in *Oberon*, stress the duty of the masquers to dance with the expectant audience:

> 'And these beauties will suspect
> That their forms you do neglect
> If you do not call them forth.' (1st Fay)[78]

Thus, Jonson is evoking the spirit of the game between audience and performers that is the essence of a revel. The Second Fay responds in this duet:

> 'Or that you have no more worth
> Than the coarse and country fairy
> That doth haunt the hearth or dairy.'[79]

Here he dwells on the role of status in the revels, by making the imputation that the Knights might be reluctant to embark on the ball as they are too humble. After the revels, a Song calls the Knights away describing the mortal ladies as so beautiful that they can even enchant the fairy. Phosphorus, the Day Star, adds his plea to the song, stressing the coming of morning, which is uncongenial to fairies. Jonson has, therefore, woven compliments to the ladies into the fiction of the Fairy Knights. The poignant and chaste mood he evokes is very suitable to the persona of Prince Henry in his first masque.

A similar delicacy is apparent in The *Masque of Blackness* performed by ladies. Rather than encouraging the ladies forward to take partners from the audience, a song (labelled 'a charm' in the text) urges them home to the sea to avoid being entangled with the 'sirens of the land.'[80] After the revels, this plea is reiterated in an echo song, claiming that their partners will follow them to the sea, if they truly love them. In fact, the language of this portion of the performance is so delicate that there are no gender words. If the reader came across these passages out of context, he/she would have no clues as to whether the masquers were men or women, or the gender of their partners.

The invocation to the revels in a wedding masque allows the poet to address the business of the marriage night. In Campion's *Lord Hay's Masque*, the second episode of revels is introduced briefly by Night:

> 'Come Flora let us now withdraw our traine
> That th'ecclipst revels maie shine forth againe.'[81]

Night then commands an end to the dancing as she is growing tired, and the nuptial bed is ready:

> 'Hymen long since the bridall bed hath drest
> And longs to bring the turtles to her nest.'[82]

The passing of night and the coming of day is a frequent theme at the end of masques.

In *Hymenaii*, Jonson provides no bidding song. The third joint entry has ended with a chain linking hands, which is held whilst Reason expounds on the chain as a symbol of perfect union. The eight men and eight women then move from the figure to the audience to choose partners. By carrying the emblem straight to the spectators, and doubling the pairings, the symbol of union is given great power. After a period of social dancing, a short song reminds the dancers that night is wasting fast, but the dancers carry on with the ball. A second attempt by Reason and Hymen jointly to bring the revels to an end is successful. This device of seeming to fail to call a halt to the dancing shows skilful blending of fiction and reality. Reason and Hymen refer to the groom waiting to go to bed:

> 'The longing bridegroom in the porch
> Shows you again the bated torch.'[83]

Thus the imagery is sensuous, but still chaste.

The poetry of the revels stresses the importance of proper love between men and women, with dancing as the best expression of such amity. The theme ranges through many variations:

love as an aspect of the Golden Age which is now enacted on earth in the revels (*The Golden Age Restored*);

love is the quintessence of life (*Lovers Made Men*);

the ladies have learnt to dance from the Graces so that they surpass Venus in allure (*Time Vindicated*);

the ladies appear to be dressed and perfumed in all the treasures of the antique world, so must prove they can love a man (*The Fortunate Isles*);

man is dull without woman (*The Triumph of Peace*);

the men should double their glory by dancing with the women (*Masque of Heroes*);

womanly peace and love is the necessary counterpart to martial Honour (*Coelum Britannicum*);

a charm against attitudes and manners that spoil social dancing (*Huntingdon Masque)*.

Thus the compliments are graciously turned in terms of the masquers' personae and pretext for arrival in the theatre of action.

In 9 out of 39 masques there are no words of bidding or dismissal. Several of these are masques by men, but in investigating this factor I discovered that all the masques by women were very reticent at the moment of invitation to the revels. Of the body of extant masque texts for the Stuart courts, only eight were presented by women. The first masque of James' reign was *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* by Samuel Daniel. The song preceding the revels is a commentary on the fact that social dancing will now take place:

> 'Whiles worth with honour make their choice
> For measured motions ordered right,'[84]

and a celebration of fame. Similarly, the speech after the revels announces the departure of the goddesses. There is no attempt to woo the audience as partners. This is in the same vein as the speeches for the revels section in *The Masque of Blackness*. In the matching masque of *Beauty*, the poetry restricts itself to praise of the purity of the ladies' hearts. The other masques have no induction to the revels. The *Masque of Queens* is typical of the avoidance of verbal expression. The sequence of action for the ladies comprises two danced entries, then the measures with the men, a short song praising Queen Anne, the third entry, the galliards and corantoes with the men, and then the fourth entry. This seems like a formidable task for the twelve ladies concerned! The omission of an invocation to the revels, or neutral tone of the few in existence, in ladies' masques must be significant. It was accepted practice in a formal ballroom for ladies to invite gentlemen to dance, as part of the rhythm of dancing in order of rank. However the wider social scene placed women in a passive role, and did not allow them to initiate courtship. This may be the source of the poets' reticence, whereby a rhetoric of courtship by women of men did not exist. The few ladies' masques (only 9 texts between 1603 and 1640) may have emphasised the role of dancing in Platonic relationships or have followed a different procedure for inviting partners in the revels. This point will be picked up when considering the organisation of the revels.

The revels were viewed by many as the crux of the masque. The entertainment of a masque could be received at two different levels, not necessarily self-exclusive. At one, it was a show: a delight to ear and eye, providing amazement and admiration. At the other, it was a deeply serious exposition of political and moral virtue, providing food for thought for the educated man. The delight helped the observer to learn the moral. Thus the prosaic and sociable thinker saw the masque as the setting for a ball. The scenery, the poetry, the music and the antemasque dancing were pleasant devices to set off the jewel of the dancing of the nobility. For artists such as Jonson and Jones, and their intelligent and well-educated patrons, such as Prince Henry, the revels was the critical

moment of transition, in which the truth of the fiction was carried out to the real world of the audience.[85] This notion was implicit in every masque with revels, but poets also chose at times to make the revels the pivot of the whole invention.

Chapman's masque for the wedding of Princess Elizabeth in 1613 is self-consciously traditional in format, being essentially an excuse for the arrival of strangers who commune with the ladies. An ironical tone is set by Plutus, as Presenter, who comments on the scenery:

'Rocks? Nothing but rocks in these masquing devices? Is Invention so poor she must needs dwell amongst rocks? But it may worthily have chanced (being so often presented) that their vain custom is now become the necessary hand of heaven, transforming into rocks some stony-hearted ladies courted in former masques... It moves, opens, excellent.'[86]

With his mockery of conventional scenery, the speaker also implies that the business of a masque is the social dancing, and that the ladies in the audience do sometimes refuse partners. The action is located in Britain, a fixed island, around which the rest of the world rotates. The rotations have brought the sun-worshipping Knights of Virginia to these shores, who are revealed in a mine of gold within the rocks. The central activity of the masque takes the form of a rite in which the celebration of the physical sun is replaced by the glorification of James as King, combined with the celebration of Love and Beauty. The Virginian Knights first pay homage to James, in two choreographed dances followed by one episode of revels. Then they pay homage to Love and Beauty with a second episode of revels. However, the ladies had been given their task earlier in the masque:

'Dance, ladies, in our Sun's bright rays,'[87]

These words are addressed to them in song whilst the masquers are still in the heavens, before they have even entered the dancing space. Their beauty is celebrated in the rites of love, whilst James, as Presence, illumines them. This idea is then linked to the wedding, so that Frederick is characterised as Love and Elizabeth as Beauty. Thus the harmonious and chaste social dancing of the revels can also be read as a symbol of marital union.

The masque is closed by Plutus who, in verse this time, again uses a gentle irony to connect the fiction with the actuality of the occasion. He dismisses the Knights and invites them to the banquet, acknowledging that they have completed the rite:

'Come, Virgin Knights, the homage ye have done
To Love and Beauty and our Briton Sun,
Kind Honour will requite with holy feasts
In her fair temple;'[88]

Chapman has pursued, in a light and gracious vein, the civilising effect on pagan and primitive beings of Platonic love. Neo-Platonic thought viewed chaste love on earth as a stepping stone to the purer love of God.

The argument of Jonson in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618) proved that the excesses of Pleasure (exemplified by Comus and dancing wine barrels) could be overcome by Virtue. The idea is demonstrated in the revels. The masquers personate twelve princes who have studied the ways of Virtue long and hard, and who are now brought down from Mount Atlas to prove their ability to combine Pleasure with Virtue.

They are conducted in by Daedalus to perform two labyrinthine dances, which reveal their knowledge and mastery. The real test of their learning, however, is to lead out the ladies to dance, and they are incited to the revels with the challenge:

'It follows now you are to prove,
The subtlest maze of all, that's love,'

They are exhorted to enjoy the beauty and company of their partners, without breaking decorum:

'For what is noble should be sweet,
But not dissolved in wantonness.'[89]

After a lengthy, and probably exhausting, episode of social dancing prolonged by the demands of the King, the masquers were commended for passing the test. However, they could only maintain their virtue by constant study, and so, to conclude the masque, they danced into Atlas hill. Thus it was the revels which clinched the argument that Pleasure can be reconciled to Virtue, with the aid of knowledge. It is likely that this idea bypassed the majority of the audience: the Venetian Ambassador, Orazio Busino, makes no comment on the meaning of the spectacle in his lengthy dispatch.[90] However, the dancing impressed him. If it gave delight to other members of the audience then the Neo-Platonists would have been content too, as the moment of earthly beauty was an inkling of celestial harmony, albeit unwittingly felt.

The revels unravelled

A practical mind begins to look behind the evidence to discern the organisation of the revels. Whilst we will probably remain largely ignorant of how this element of the masques was managed, we can draw on our understanding of the conduct of balls to interpret the shreds of evidence in the texts and contemporary correspondence.

It is clear that the company had certain assumptions about the proceedings: the phrase 'the whole revels' is often used, and the sequence invariably starts with the measures, after which come the livelier dances. Where the revels are enacted in two episodes (in 4 or 5 masques only), the first comprises the measures, and the second 'their lighter daunces as Currantoes, Levaltas and galliards.'[91] The participants in the revels were therefore familiar with a certain rhythm or sequence of events. It is on such a structure that spontaneity can ensue, without resulting in disorder. Likewise the duration of the revels, and the particular dances enjoyed, were at the discretion of the participants:

'After this Dialogue, the Masquers daunce with the Ladies, wherein spending as much time as they held fitting, they returned to the seates provided for them.'[92]

However they are a company, so order is also dependent on a controlling individual: a master (or mistress) of the revels. Only a few clues remain to suggest this was the case, but the comparison with the larger entity of revels would support the notion. James I clearly relished the role, which was his by right. There seems to be no certain record that he danced in the revels himself, although he was well-trained as a dancer in his youth. Nevertheless he enjoyed watching dancing. He exerted his power over the revels by curtailing them if he was tired (*Oberon*) or urging the dancers to continue (*Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*).[93]

A rare reference to Queen Anne as mistress of the revels in a masque concerns the entertainment provided on her visit

to Lord Knowles at Cawsome House, near Reading. The gentlemen masquers: '...took forth the Ladies, and danced with them, and so well was the Queene pleased with her intertaiment, that shee vouch-safed to make herselfe the head of their revels, and graciously to adorn the place with her personall dancing.'[94]

Not only does this description by Campion confirm the spontaneous response within the formal structure, it also lays bare the key concept driving the noble masque. This is that, by dancing, the monarch and the court give their most precious gift: themselves. In dancing, they reveal something of their own self and seek to bring delight with their own skills, not those of a hired craftsman.

While James and Anne were willing to take personal control of the revels, a court official must also have been charged with conveying decisions. At *Oberon* James 'sent word that they should make an end,'[95] for example. Commonsense suggests that the group of masquers needed to be certain that an agreement had been reached that the revels were concluded: they were under the full gaze of a large audience. There would need to be accord with the musicians playing for the dancing, on both content and duration. There would also need to be a means of giving word to the speakers or singers as to when they should come in with the words that urge the cessation of the revels. Certainly, it would not be up to a paid actor or musician to decide when that moment had come. Masque texts also show that the command to cease should appear to stop the social dancing:

'...these solemn revels, which continued a long space, but in the end were broken off with this short song.

A SONG
Cease, cease you revels, rest a space;
New pleasures press into this place,
Full of beauty and of grace.'[96]

Discreet management was needed to bring all this about affably. The team of mechanics and other performers scattered about the set and hall, would also need to be alerted to the cessation of the revels. It must be remembered that there was virtually no back-stage or wings to conceal the business side of the production. Did the mechanics sneak off to the buttery whilst the dancing 'continued a long space'? The question remains as to who functioned as the administrative link between the contributing practitioners of the masque? Was this office filled by a dancing master comparable to a Maestro di Ballo in Italy? A court dancing master would have an entirely appropriate status, combining in his office both servant status and pedagogic familiarity with his masters. Or did the Master of Ceremonies that James appointed to deal with ambassadors also have responsibility for the ballroom? As this office was a branch of diplomacy rather than household management, this seems unlikely. The Master of Revels had responsibility for the practical management of the masques, but it was a clerking function with wide responsibilities outside the court, rather than one concerned with the intimacies of court life. The dancing master might be best equipped for the function following his close acquaintance with the courtly dancers, their repertoire of both choreographed entries and social dances, and court etiquette. He was also amongst the highest servants in rank, according to the levels of pay recorded,[97] and his intimacy with the royal household. Another candidate for a managerial role might be

the poet, provided he was from the theatre, but a bourgeois writer would have much less experience (and acceptability) at court than the court dancing master. The dancing master seems to be the obvious choice, but this profession has left so few traces to posterity that we may never be sure. There is also the possibility that there was no single higher servant involved, but that the whole management was a collaboration by the different groups involved. This is a matter for further investigation.

On the other hand it is quite clear that the rules of precedence were followed in inviting partners to dance, as happened at any reasonably formal ball. This is the kind of organising structure understood by all present that may preclude overt management of the occasion. The principal masquer invited the principal member of the audience, and the rest followed in order:

'The prince took the queen to dance, the earl of Southampton the princess, and each of the rest his lady.'[98]

Thus Prince Henry led out his mother; the Earl of Southampton as second in rank partnered the Princess Elizabeth. Similarly:

'...each took his lady, the Prince pairing with the principal one among those who were ranged in a row ready to dance, and the others doing the like in succession...'[99]

What is less clear is how successive invitations were organised. In a formal ball, after the principal lady had danced with the principal gentleman, she would then invite the gentleman next in rank, and he in his turn the next lady. Thus the dance was handed down from the highest to the lowest, and declared the bonds of the social group. Whether this was the pattern of the revels is hard to discern. The impression given by the poetry of the revels and circumstantial evidence is that the masquers alone invited partners from the audience. The only counter evidence to this concerns two ladies' masques. As said above, the poetry of the revels in *The Masque of Blackness* is neutral as to gender. When calling the ladies away from their partners, the general pronoun 'they' is used, which encompasses both sexes:

'If they love,
You shall quickly see;
For when to flight you move,
They'll follow you, the more you flee.'[100]

A supporting scrap of evidence comes from Broderie's report on *The Masque of Queens*. As French ambassador, he, his wife and daughter were welcomed to the masque by the Queen herself. In the revels, one of the lady masquers had invited Charles, Duke of York (aged 8) to dance, who, in his turn, invited Broderie's daughter. This may be an insight into a convention operating only when a ladies' masque occurred: that the ladies made an initial invitation but that the men then alternated in inviting partners. That would also explain the neutral tone or complete absence of the rhetoric of love associated with ladies' masques. The action of Prince Charles may also have been untypical, arising out of his extreme youth.

It is unlikely that all members of the audience were expected to dance. Of the hundreds of ladies present, only those seated near the State and close to the dancing space were accessible to be invited and brought to the dance floor.

Those in boxes further back or placed on the scaffolds rising behind the throne would have been out of range. The seating arrangements followed the same logic of precedence as the dancing, so there was no conflict here. However, a favourable position implied a commitment to dancing:

'...those who were ranged in a row ready to dance.'[101]

The etiquette of the ballroom meant that an invitation to dance should be accepted. It was exceptional and of great import for ladies to be 'stony-hearted.' As an invitation to dance conventionally came from someone superior to you, then refusal would give offence. In a masque, the invitation was couched in the language of courtship, so a refusal was also a personal affront. Thus the double game of precedence and courtship was played out in the revels. There were risks involved, and La Broderie in his engaging frankness describes his dilemma at *The Masque of Queens*. While being convinced that the event was being performed mainly for his benefit, he knew that his own dancing would make him (and his monarch, by proxy) a laughing-stock. So he sent word to Her Majesty via one of her ladies that he should not be asked to dance:

'...je la fis prier dès le matin par une Dame de mes amies qui devoit danser avec elle, de ne m'y point obliger.'[102]

His successor, M Laverdin, used the excuse of mourning to be absent from a masque entirely, to cope with the same problem of incompetence as a dancer. It is no wonder that poor dancers felt nervous about being drawn into the revels. They were a show-case for the best dancers at court, performing under the close scrutiny of the ruling elite. Prince Henry, Prince Charles and the Duke of Buckingham earnt much praise for their performance in the revels, as well as the special entries of the masques. This may have been mingled with sycophancy, but less important people were also praised:

'...Mr Comptroller (Sir Thomas Edmond's) daughter bore away the bell for delicate dancing.'[103]

Masques were timed, also, to allow the best dancers to be present in the audience. *Time Vindicated* was hurried into production before Mademoiselle St Luc left England with her father, the French Ambassador. Both she and her mother were important figures in the revels, according to Sir John Astley.[104]

'Both severally and promiscué'

An investigation of the dances employed in the revels will also reveal the nature of the challenges imposed on the dancers. Many masque texts mention dance-types up to 1616; after this only the general term 'the revels' occurs. Whether this is due to an assumption that all readers knew what 'the revels' meant or whether the dance content was too changeable for the records to cope is unclear. We know that dance technique was changing during the period 1620–1640, but the dance names remain constant. As stated above, there is a consistency in the sequence of dances: first, the measures; secondly, the lighter dances. These latter comprised galliards, corantoes, lavoltas; durettoes are mentioned twice; brawles and moriscos once each. Eye-witness accounts extend the repertoire into pavan and branles de Poitu (*Oberon*); passamezzo, canaries and spagnolettas (*Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*) and the country dances Half-Hannikin and The Soldiers March (*Time Vindicated*). Fortunately, we can make

sense of this evidence from other sources. However, two dances are puzzling. Durets or durettoes appear to be lost dances, our only knowledge of them coming from the *Masque of Flowers*, and Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple*. According to Sabol, the duret is a single tune of which several versions exist in English and Continental collections. He prints a version from William Ballet's Lute Book (1590–1610) for lyra viol. It is a pretty tune in coranto rhythm, furnishing four phrases equivalent to three double steps each. The mention of moriscoes amongst the revels dances for *The Masque of Flowers* is problematic as our current understanding of the morisco is as a solo or group professional dance. This would not have formed part of a court ball. Perhaps 'morisco' had a secondary meaning now lost, or the gentlemen of Gray's Inn were unconventional in their revels or the term was used loosely by the anonymous author of the description.

The measures (described only once as 'the old measures' in *Ulysses and Circe* 1615) can be understood in the light of the surviving evidence from dancing at the Inns of Court.[105] A series of six manuscripts, each acting as an aide-memoire, lists a body of dances, which by *c* 1606 (MS Douce 280) are called 'the old measures.' They are identified as forming the revels at the Inns of Court in the period roughly from 1570 to 1670, and some are identified specifically with Lincoln's Inn, Middle Temple and Inner Temple. The core dances comprise short set choreographies to specific tunes in pavan and almain measure. The instructions relate to the performance of each dance by one couple.

Each dance is short and simple. It is very easy for a number of couples to dance them together in a hall, and it is hard to imagine from their simplicity that they were danced by one couple at a time. However, it is only in the two latest accounts of the Black Almaine that there is an implication in the wording that the dance was performed by several couples at once:

'Then all on the Women Syde stand still and the men sett and turne.'[106]

The measures belong to the communal life at the Inns of Court. They would have been known to courtiers from their own participation as students and as visitors to Inns of Court revels. We cannot assume, of course, that this particular group of measures also formed the communal repertoire of the court. However, we can use this evidence to form a general idea of the genre of dancing called 'measures.'[107]

Simple dances, well-known to participants, with terre-à-terre steps are the ideal repertoire to start a ball. Participants are comfortable intellectually because they either know the dances or can make a decent showing in them if partnered well. They are also comfortable physically with movements that ease the legs and body gently into action. At a masque, the audience will have been sitting for a long time both during the performance and the waiting beforehand. The masquers will have been dancing in a different mode and focusing on their role in the drama. They need time to shift their consciousness into the mode of social dancing. If the measures are indeed communal, they also allow a number of people to dance together. This also takes the pressure off for a while, before the challenges of dancing alone as a couple.

Branles and country dances are communal forms by definition and they are repetitive and familiar. In *Oberon*:

'The prince took the queen a third time for 'los branles

de Poitu', followed by eleven others of the masque.'[108]

Thus Prince Henry invited his mother to dance and led her in the line dance of a branle de Poitu with eleven of the gentlemen masquers. This episode occurs at the close of the revels, as do the country dances mentioned for *Time Vindicated*. Of the two dances named, by Sir John Astley,[109] Half-Hannikin is included in Playford's *English Dancing Master* 1651. It is a longways dance for as many as will during which partners change constantly, so that everyone dances with everyone else, before finishing with original partner.[110] When St John Pory was reporting on *Hymenaii* to Sir Robert Cotton he wrote:

> 'They danced all the variety of dances, both severally and promiscué...'[111]

'Severally' refers to dancing in turn, not in a company; 'promiscué' means in a mixed company. Thus he gives the impression that both dancing alone as a couple and dancing in a group were aspects of the revels. Half-Hannikin certainly deserves the description 'promiscué'.

Framed by the measures at the beginning and possibly the branles and country dances at the end, the galliards, corantoes, lavoltas, canaries, passamezzi and spagnolette were the proving ground of the serious dancers. They are well documented by the dance instruction books of the time: Caroso, Negri, Lupi, Arbeau, and sketched briefly by the Inns of Court manuscripts.[112] 'Lighter dances' refers to the energetic quality of the characteristic steps, as well as the contrast with the more dignified motion of the measures. The dances require either a constant rebounding motion or marked elevation in jumps and lifts. These dances are for one couple at a time to show their mastery, whilst others watched. This factor helps the reader understand the circumstances described by the observers:

> '...The prince took her for a coranta which was continued by others,...'[113]

So, after the prince and his mother had danced a coranto together, other couples took turns in showing their idea of the same dance form. Similarly:

> 'Last of all they danced the spagnoletta, one at a time, each with his lady, and being well nigh tired they began to lag,...'[114]

Thus whilst couples danced 'severally' the audience were able to compare different performances of the same dance form in quick succession.

The spagnolette of Caroso and Negri are set dances to the spagnoletta tune for one couple or a trio. A sketchy account of The Spanioletta given in Inns of Court MS Douce 280 reveals a loose structure incorporating lifts for the man and the woman.[115] No music is provided here, but the dance can be done to the melody common in Europe at the time called Spagnoletta. La Volta similarly has a simple format of a passeggio around the room, interspersed with sequences of the man turning whilst lifting the lady in the air. The sequence is simple, but skill and good rapport are needed to make the dance elegant yet exciting.

Galliards, corantoes, canaries and passemezzi are improvisatory forms. The rhythm and style of the dance is fixed, and the pattern of exchange between the dancers is laid down. Within this framework, the dancers build their own

sequences of steps in 'mutanze'.[116] The mutanze might have been prepared in the practice room, and a vocabulary of steps and combinations acquired with the aid of a dancing master. It would also have been possible for talented dancers to invent new steps, jumps or turns in private, in order to impress others. Competent dancers could rely on a familiar repertoire of mutanze they had rehearsed: outstanding dancers could risk making fresh combinations spontaneously. The male dancer took the lead, but the woman could respond in kind. The canaries mutanze of Negri demonstrate how the lady's sequence echoes the movement motif of the man. The improvisatory nature of the dancing means that the dancers were not only scrutinised for grace and skill, but also for their inventiveness within the dance form. The revels could be a forcing-ground for excellence, as dancers vied for supremacy, urged on by the King and the audience. At *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, James became irate at the flagging dancers:

> '...they began to lag, whereupon the king, who is naturally choleric, got impatient and shouted aloud, 'Why don't we dance? What did you make me come here for? The devil take you all – dance!' Whereupon, the Marquis of Buckingham, his Majesty's favourite, immediately sprang forward, cutting a score of lofty and minute capers with so much grace and agility that he not only appeased the ire of his angry lord but rendered himself the admiration and delight of everybody.'

Whether he made amends as a solo dancer, or accompanied by a partner as he should have done is unclear, particularly where Buckingham is concerned. However, the ball continued with the masquers rising to his challenge, but in partnership with the ladies:

> '...one after the other, with various ladies.'[117]

Girolamo Landi records a similar episode of rivalry at the revels for *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon* (1620)

> 'His Majesty took part with much gaiety and greatly enjoyed the agility and dancing of his son and of the marquis who contended against each other for the favour and applause of the King and to give him pleasure.'[118]

Again, we must assume that the two men display their skill in partnership with ladies invited from the audience. Landi also reveals James' interaction with the revels, even as a non-dancer.

Also under scrutiny are the manners of the dancers. Another point of interest to Busino in viewing *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* was that Prince Charles excelled in his bows and the courtesy shown to his Majesty and his partners. This was a point in his favour, as the Prince, though musical and graceful, was too young to have the stamina of a grown man. The overall impression is that all revels were conducted in an orderly fashion, with the formal manners of a court ball, despite the unusual ambience. Dudley Carleton was clearly amused by the demeanour of the Spanish Ambassador at the *Masque of Blackness* when the Queen and her ladies painted their faces and arms black as a disguise, instead of the usual vizard:

> '...he was taken out to dance, and footed it like a lusty

old Gallant with his Country Woman. He took out the Queen and forgot not to kiss her hand, though there was Danger it would have left a Mark on his Lips.'[119]

It was generally considered judicious to be extra-careful of courtesy in the company of masked strangers, as a mask hid rank. If you did not know exactly who you were dealing with, it was much safer to err on the side of politeness.

Vizards, disguises and licence

A very special ambience was created by the wearing of face masques and exotic clothing, which placed the revels at a masque on a different level from a straightforward ball. Noble masquers always wore a vizard to hide their identity, so that their participation in a theatrical event could be tolerated by society. This was a conventional action; it is unlikely that the disguises were impenetrable. Indeed, when a member of the royal family danced in a masque they wore a different costume, or a distinguishing band, to separate them from the group. The vizards are never shown in Inigo Jones' designs or masquing portraits, but are frequent items of expenditure, and are sometimes mentioned in the texts and correspondence. An exception proves the rule. The Gray's Inn *Masque of Mountebanks* was censured by Chamberlain:

'...their show, for I cannot call it a Masque, seeing they were not disguised nor had vizards.'[120]

The vizards were little more than face-coverings, made of soft leather and perfumed. They were not designed to express an emotion or pronounced character except that of pleasant humanity. They probably only excited comment when they were answerable to the costume:

'their vizards of olive colour but pleasingly visaged' (*The Virginian Knights*)[121];

'their hair fair and long, their vizards fair and young.'[122]

'Masquers, with wizards like starres' (*Huntingdon Masque*)[123]

In the Unton portrait the vizards are red, which to our eyes seems incongruous to the silver and white costumes and long fair hair of followers of Diana.

It is hard to determine what effect the wearing of a vizard would have had on the dancers. Several years' experience of reconstructing masques with modern dancers has led to some insights.[124] However, vizards were familiar items of apparel for women in Stuart times, being worn to protect both the reputation and the complexion of the wearer when sallying forth into the public arena. Men, too, would have been accustomed to covering their faces with masks, scarves and visors. So some of the effects reported by modern wearers of masks might diminish with familiarity. Disorientation and a heightened consciousness are two important effects. Linked to this is the feeling of liberation from normality: that restraint is temporarily in suspense. Clearly, the conventional function of the mask – to allow amateurs to take on a histrionic role – supports the notion that this freedom was also experienced by the seventeenth century masquer. The spirit of licence induced by the wearing of a mask must have been abroad to some extent in the revels. However, the decorum of the occasion would have prevented this developing into licentious behaviour. Shakespeare evokes this social tension in

Romeo and Juliet, Act l, Scene 5. The masked visitors are received at the Capulet feast and welcomed as dancing partners. When Tybalt recognises Romeo as a Montagu he is restrained from taking action in order to preserve the decorum of the feast. Meanwhile, the stranger who has been allowed in under the licence of a mask, has been able to make a liaison with the Capulet daughter, which would have been impossible in normal circumstances. The crucial moment of intercourse is a brief, private conversation as dancing partners, in a public arena. This scene is an imitation of the formal ball or revel. In other countries, and in eighteenth century England, the mêlée of the mascherata and masquerade in a more open society would provide the circumstances for licentious behaviour and immorality 'for as many as will'! For the Stuart courtier in the revels of a masque, the spirit of licence remains part of the game of courtship, but not its practice.

The mood is heightened by the gorgeous clothing of the dancers.[125] The men's costumes were designed to enhance their virility, with extraordinary richness of fabric and decoration. The colours were chosen to be effective in the light, and intensified with gold and silver decoration. The detail was fine, so that it could also be appreciated at close quarters. Helmets and headpieces increased stature, being furnished richly with plumes and symbolic motifs. Wigs were also worn when necessary to denote the role. It seems unlikely that these head coverings could be easily doffed in a bow, as was a normal part of ballroom courtesy. However, the evidence is silent on this matter. The women's clothes were also designed to enhance their femininity. With the same rich colouring and decoration, the fabrics were lighter and the cut more revealing than fashionable clothes. Skirts clung to the leg more than usual, as the stiff petticoats and farthingales were not worn. Bodices were cut low, or breasts covered with semi-transparent gauze. More remarkable to contemporaries, however, was the shortening of skirts to the calf. The combined effect of these adjustments was to reveal more of the female body than was usual in public. This was another element contributing to the mood of a revel. In response to this glory on the part of the masquers, the audience presented themselves in their richest clothes and most sumptuous jewellery, whilst all this magnificence was intensified by the unusual concentration of light in the setting.

What was the effect of the vizards and disguises on the audience? Firstly, a mask is enough of a disguise to cause confusion over identity: blacking up, as used by the ladies in the *Masque of Queens*, can be even more effective. The formal ending of a masque was the unmasking to reveal the identity. The relationship with a masked partner was at least ambiguous, referring to the known individual and the assumed persona (Fairy Knight, Fiery star, a son of Peace, Law and Justice, etc). The mask blanked out facial expression and reduced eye-contact, which are essential elements in social dancing. Modern masquers report that this induces a tension in the revels, and requires extra effort in physical rapport to maintain the social energy on which the dance depends. The revels were also governed by the presentation of the masquers in the drama and danced entries of the main masque. In these, the vizards serve to unify and de-personalize the individuals (with the exception of Royalty). The 'feature' of the individual was thus moulded into the 'form': the idea represented by the group. Thus they embodied a conceit that transcended the prosaic individual. This was the moral spring of the

masque. It was crucial that the audience received this moral, and it was brought home as the masquing group, in form, came forward to dance with the audience. Thus the audience were confronted with divine and virtuous beings, who invited them to participate in the most intimate, public act: that of dancing. In accepting a masquer as partner, each member of the audience affirmed the moral they represented:

> 'Masques were games as well as shows, balls as well as ballets; what the spectator watched he ultimately became.' (Stephen Orgel)[126]

Even though we must accept that not all the participants were able to receive the revels at this level, yet the proximity of vizarded and disguised dancing partners was still an effective moment of theatre. When W.B. Yeats was exploring the power of ritual drama in *The Hawk's Well*, he commented in his stage directions:

> 'These masked players seem stranger when there is no mechanical means of separating them from us.'[127]

He understood that the proscenium arch ultimately reduced the impact of an idea, and sought in his verse-plays to return drama to a more intimate setting.

The dancing space for the choreographed entries and the revels was the floor of the hall immediately in front of the Presence. Steps led down to the dancing place from the low stage which supported the artificial setting: 'the work' or 'machine'. Thus a partner from the audience stepped into the imaginary world of the masque, took hands with the protagonists and contributed their own artistry to the whole. There was no 'mechanical means' of separation from the audience, rather there was a continuum of space, of lighting, of status and of participation. The revels were an integral part of the action of a masque, not an interpolation. Inigo Jones confirmed this exquisitely in *Britannia Triumphans*, by arranging for the scenic effect to continue throughout the ball:

> 'After this some ships were discovered sailing afar off several ways, and in the end a great fleet was discovered, which passing by with a side wind tacked about, and with a prosperous gale entered into the haven. This continued to entertain the sight whilst the dancing lasted.'[128]

The metaphor of beautiful order presented in the design was matched by the harmony of the social dancing.

Valediction

This survey of the evidence available for an understanding of the revels within the Stuart masque reveals their importance to the whole structure. The revels may have left few traces in the literature but this does not diminish their worthiness as a subject of research. As we have seen, the revels were a heightened form of the court ball, imbued with the magic of poetry and love. Graced by resplendent costume and scenery, supported by the most accomplished musicians, observed by the most knowledgeable audience, the leading dancers of the day vied to produce a consummate performance with their partners. In accordance with the revels concept the progress of the ball was dictated by the wishes of participants, under the control of a leader, within the limits set by good order. During the dancing, the masquers and their partners (unprotected by the vizard of convention) revealed their personal quality and dancing skills to a critical audience. Either

implicitly or explicitly the revels assisted in conveying the moral of the masque to the audience in a dynamic and vivid manner. The masquers, embodying divine virtue, embraced the audience in a dance, who in their turn gave credence to that virtue by accepting the partnership.

In the course of exploring the revels, particularly the reason behind their absence from some productions, further insights can be gained into significant trends in dancing at this time. Firstly, there was the struggle to mingle performers of varied status, in order to extend the range of dancing. The acceptance of the antemasque and the masques by gentlemen servants, as denoted by the presence of the revels, allowed the development of expressive dancing by professionals. The range and power of the antemasque entries expanded during this period, to become embryonic ballets. No doubt, this was also encouraged by French models, just as the shift towards separation of the revels from the main action followed the French model. The artistic integrity of the libretto was taking precedence, at the expense of the sophisticated use of audience imagination and participation. However, these trends towards professional performance and artistic control were the pre-conditions for the development of an English ballet. If Charles I had been able to continue to patronise art, and with two competent princes to succeed him as performers, dance as a theatre art might have been an English prerogative. However, the Civil War curtailed the activities of the Court and ultimately destroyed the choreographic achievements of the Stuarts.

The revels within the English masque thus remain a unique phenomenon: social dancing integral to art, conveying meaning without alteration to its essential nature. This was possible due to the combination of conditions prevailing in the reigns of James I and Charles I. The social dancing of the nobility was at a peak of excellence and repute; both courts were dedicated to the highest principles of theatrical art; writers and artists of genius were to hand; yet professional theatrical dance was at an early stage of development. These factors went hand-in-hand with great matters of State. The decline of the status of the revels to that of adjunct to the masque was contemporary with a shift of power from the King to the people. Finally, when the monarchy was destroyed, so too were the revels. With the resumption of the theatre and the court after the Civil War and the Commonwealth, the revels had gone for good. Whilst 'masque' lingered on as a term for an entertainment combining music, song, drama and dance, it never again comprised the revels.

As the revels resulted from the social networks of the Stuart Court, they defy reconstruction. Modern dancers might be able to mimic the dance technique, copy the costume and create a suitable performing space, but they can never reiterate the hierarchies and relationships on which the ball depended. Constructive use of an informed imagination can substitute for this and poets can help. The love poetry of the age contains allusions to the masque and revels. For example, Thomas Campion (dancer, poet and musician) draws on the visual memory of masques to enliven an imaginary scene. He depicts the ladies 'with roabs like Amazons, blew as Violet' partnering their love-lorn Knights.

> 'Looke, looke neere the grove where the Ladies doe tread
> With their knights the measures waide by the melodie,
> Wantons whose travesing make men enamoured;
> Now they faine an honor, now by the slender wast

He must lift hir aloft, and seale a kiss in hast.'[129]

Thus he brings to life for the modern reader, the vision of delight enjoyed by the audience at a revel.

This essay has sought to explore the possibilities of developing a description of the revels within the Stuart masque, from an initial base of the surviving texts of those masques. The story of the revels is enmeshed in the study of the literature, the drama, the politics, the social history and the dance of the age, therefore posing many problems of analysis. If, as Stephen Orgel states:

'[the revels] came to be a defining feature of the genre',[130]

then an understanding of this element is essential to the history of the Stuart masque. Rather than being a frivolous distraction, the revels confirmed the deep moral of the whole masque-game.

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