Perplexive Perspectives: The Court and Contestation in the Jacobean Masque

A radically novel mode of visual representation emerged during the Florentine Renaissance as a potent means of representing the control of spaces: linear perspective. This new representational mode was developed in the context of Florentine economic centralisation and rationalisation; it was a function of the increasingly efficient mapping and planning of urban spaces subjected to a centralised ruling 'gaze'.[1] Perspective was introduced into England at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth by painters such as Isaac Oliver and other artists aware of continental trends. One avenue through which it entered the English context was via the lavish scenery created by Inigo Jones to accompany Ben Jonson's masques at court during the reign of James I (1603–1625). The Jacobean court masque, however, was a multi-faceted work of art in which perspective, as one element of the theatrical ensemble, appears to have been riddled by contradictions which made it a less than assured mode of asserting spatial control. In this transitional phase, before perspective representation attained hegemonic status as a configuration of visual space, its workings were laid bare by virtue of their imperfect functioning in a specific artistic situation.

Court entertainments had constituted an element of earlier royal festivities, but the masques presented to James I surpassed prior celebrations in their exorbitant expense and in their employment of technical innovations. When Ben Jonson described the opening moments of the first documented masque at the court of James I, *The Masque of Blackness* (1605),[2] his account of the scenery attested to a struggle to express the new form of visual organisation: 'First, for the scene, was drawne a *Landtschap*, consisting of small woods, and here and there a void place fill'd with huntings; which falling, an artificial sea was seene to shoote forth, as if it flowed to the land, raysed with waues, which seemed to move, and in some places the billow to breake, as imitating that orderly disorder, which is common in nature' (169–70: 24–30). Jonson's use of gothic script emphasises a visual mode evidently still felt to be foreign to an English context. Closely associated with the new

'landtschap' painting was perspective representation, whose intricacies Inigo Jones had familiarised himself with during his travels in Italy.[3] The court masques provided a forum in which the new visual form could be introduced to English audiences, an undertaking apparently not without difficulties.

If one commentator, Peter Hausted, remarked in 1632 that this form of theatre 'freely and ingenuously labored rather to *merit* then *ravish* an *Applause*' through its use of visual and dramatic artifice, it is nonetheless clear that the court masque, like other royal entertainments, constituted an exercise in political persuasion.[4] Perspective gave plastic expression to aspirations to absolute rule. In this article, I shall argue that perspective, as a central element of the rhetoric of royal power, was however dogged by contradictions in its inaugural phase in the English context – partly as a result of its place in an heterogeneous ensemble which also included elements stemming from older theatrical traditions; and partly as a result of anomalies inherent to the workings of perspective representation itself. Conceived as a visual mode of spatial control, the newly introduced visual form inevitably encountered considerable resistance from court spectators. The uneasy coexistence of residual and emergent regimes of visual organisation created a contradictory and unstable complex of spatial forms which resonated with power struggles at the Jacobean court. In what follows, I will deal first with the regime of control evinced in perspective's place within the Jacobean masque, as well as with the structural contradictions of such modes of politicised representation. I will then go on to examine instances of contemporaries' scepticism with regard to perspective as a visual configuration of space, and the consequences of such scepticism in the context of the court of James I. In this way, I hope to contribute, within a specific political context, to the history of a hitherto largely hegemonic mode of spatial representation whose contingent character has in recent years been increasingly recognised by theoreticians of visual discourses.[5]

The Monarch as Centre of the Masque

The *mode* of representation embodied in the perspective stage-decorations which Inigo Jones created all through the reign of James I was initially unfamiliar for Jacobean spectators. However, the *function* connoted by the new visual techniques was well known to contemporaries: the masque was a way of dramatising concepts of order and disorder, and the visual medium employed to do this issued a pointed message about the spaces of order under the monarch's jurisdiction. In the stage curtain painting at the opening of *The Masque of Blackness*, a hunt shows nature ceding to the presence of human culture; under James I, hunting emblematised the monarch's control of the environment. The numerous plaques erected in the forest around James's hunting seat at Royston marking the places where the otherwise pacific

monarch had slain a deer or a stag were a clear expression of this royal will to mastery. But the hunting scenes on the 'landtschap'-stage curtain also announced another mode of control of nature's disorder. Inigo Jones was a 'picture-maker' by profession, who regarded his masques as 'nothing else but pictures'.[6] The scenic tableaux of the masque were cast according to the conventions of linear perspective, an artistic form which arranged the elements of nature in its primaeval disorder according to the mathematical laws of optics, and whose role in the visual aspects of the court masque grew in importance as long as Inigo Jones was involved in its production. Thus not only the *content* of the landscape alluded to the royal viewer and his control over a realm presented as docile pastoral; the *form* of visual appropriation of that landscape was also emblematic of a central overview of the panorama spreading out from the central royal gaze. This principle of control extended to Jones's power to reproduce, via mechanical means (the cunningly contrived sea which could imitate the force of untamed nature) unlimited control of unruly nature, seen here in its tamed form as 'orderly disorder'.

Crucial to the Jacobean masque and generator of the hierarchised spatial structures enumerated above was an instance qualitatively separate from its stage-based universe: the monarch himself. The court masque was essentially a centripetal system with the king as its centre. This centrism was a tangible figure of the political system of absolutist monarchy concentrated at court.[7] Typically, Inigo Jones could write in 1632: 'In Heroic Virtue is figured the King's majesty, who therein transcends as far common men as they are above the beasts, he being the only prototype to all the kingdoms under his monarchy of religion, justice, and all the virtues joined together.'[8] Similarly, John Hampden said of the monarch: 'He is the first mover among these orbs of ours, and he is the circle of this circumference, and he is the centre of us all, wherein we all as the loins should meet. He is the soul of this body, whose proper act is to command.'[9] Such centrism was borne out by the monarch's role in the structure of the masque.

Time and time again, contemporary accounts as well as the masque texts themselves note that the signal for the court masque to begin was the king taking his seat in the royal box. Jonson's masque descriptions frequently open with formulae such as 'First, then, his Matie being set, and the whole Company in full expectation . . .', or 'His Matie being set, and the loude Musique ceasing . . .' (282: 23–24; 681: 1). To wait for the king to be seated was no mere act of courtesy, but far more a constitutive element of the masque's functioning. Essential for the performance was the *setting in place* of the principal spectator, the royal viewing subject – to such an extent that the monarch's departure could and did on occasions mark the termination of the performance.[10] The importance of the king's being seated is explained in large part by the use of perspective scenery in the court drama, a radical new departure in English theatrical history. The royal box, the 'State', was itself no innovation in court entertainments;[11] what was new was the functional

connection between the 'State' and the novel perspective scenery. For only upon the king's arrival in the royal box could the perspective scenery, which did not make complete sense from anywhere else, become the object of perception.[12] The perspectival mode of representation necessarily constructs an ideal viewer standpoint from which the picture can be perceived coherently. Other positions entail some degree of distortion of the illusion of reality conveyed by the perspectival image. Perspective scenery literally assigns the spectator a specific, privileged, ostensibly 'central' place.[13] The masque was thus structured by a radically new visual mode of organising space; the monarch was placed in the centre of this novel spatial order.

The perspective structure made the king's viewing position the unique and central audience position. This is patently clear, for instance, in the ground plans drawn by Inigo Jones portraying the hall and stage for the court performance of *Florimène* in 1635, which would largely have reflected a continuation of Jacobean practices.[14] The stage is almost exclusively gathered behind the proscenium, between the progressive layers of perspective scenery leading back to moveable doors, behind which was a rear wall with a gallery for deities 'above'. Moving from the proscenium back towards the other end of the hall, there is first a large open space, beyond which the king's box is positioned. The audience surrounds the open space and the king's box on three sides, so that some of those on the sides would have had a view across the dancing space or the king's box to the audience on the other side, and would have been sitting more or less side-on to the perspective stage. Those sitting behind the king's box would have had a view across the top of the royal heads and over the dancing space towards the perspective stage; their view of the perspective scenery would have coincided largely with that of the monarch himself and his immediate entourage, except for the fact that the royal retinue may have obstructed their line of sight. Other spectators could see, with varying degrees of congruence, the spectacle, the king watching the spectacle, and segments of the audience. But only the king and his entourage saw the perspective scenery from the optimal position it imposed. The perspective stage curtain and scenery of the masque implied a single individual gaze which was necessarily that of the monarch, and without which the masque could not begin – without which the window onto the ideal masque world (the framed perspective picture was frequently imagined as a window)[15] could not be opened. Thus the King's gaze both called the masque into being, sanctioned and structured the visibility of the masque, and was reflected back to the gazer in the masque's scenery and machinery as a confirmation of his centrality.

The crucial importance of the royal gaze for the functioning of the masque translated a fundamental attitude to royal power made concretely manifest in the court performance. The centrality of the king's position gave physical expression to the king's primacy in the political order. The optical structures of stage and scenery established a line of sight which led, concretely and

dynamically, to the monarch. In *Oberon* (1611), the eponymous hero's palace opened up to the spectators' gaze, a gaze guided by the axial line of the perspective scenery: '*within a farre off in perspective, the knights masquers sitting in their seuerall sieges: At the further end of all,* Oberon*, in a Chariot*.' Reciprocally, it was the same perspectival axis, that of the monarch's line of sight, which guided the young prince's progression across the stage, onto the dancing floor and eventually towards the king: '*At the further end of all,* Oberon*, in a Chariot, which to a lowd triumphant musique began to moue forward, drawne by two white beares, and on either side guarded by three* Syluanes*, with one going in front*' (351: 293–99). Orazio Busino, chaplain to the Venetian Embassy, recorded in 1618 the completion of this movement along the axial line of sight to the King himself at the end of *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1617/18): 'When the performance of these twelve accomplished knights was completed . . . the Prince went in triumph to kiss his royal father's hands.'[16] The royal gaze not only provided the conditions of possibility of the performance, but also of its consummation in the masquers' arrival in the court itself.

In terms of political pragmatism, the axis of sight in the court masque suggested the king was the origin of civic order and harmony in general. Perspective was associated with the rebirth of classical learning and with a concomitant world of classical harmony, of which the monarch was implicitly portrayed as the motivating central figure. James himself set great store upon concepts of classical imperial government, and upon the systematic regularity of Roman law as opposed to the less orderly precedence-based common law which he found upon accession to the English throne, and which frequently served as Parliament's weapon against his pretensions to autocracy.[17] Significantly, perspective appeared during the Renaissance as a powerful mode of representation and control of public spaces by a centralised commanding instance. When the French king Henri II entered Lyon in 1548, he had *trompe l'oeil* perspectives hung at the confused intersections of the winding medieval streets in order to express royal mastery of the urban space.[18] Thus the masque's perspective scenery expressed a geographical and political control directly attributed to royal agency.

It is no accident, then, that the earliest extant design on paper for a perspective stage-set in England is a scene sketch for *Prince Henry's Barriers* (1610), portraying the revealed St George's Portico (complete with the carefully drawn lines of the stage boards converging in the vanishing point at the deeper end of the portico), thereby symbolically focusing religious-nationalist supremacy.[19] In a masque of the same year, *Tethys' Festival*, the scenery of Milford Haven was drawn 'according to perspective', with similar nationalist implications.[20] Milford was the Welsh harbour at which Henry VII, Prince Henry's precursor and historical exemplary model, landed in 1485.[21] Here, the use of perspective, with its central axis of sight linking place and the royal gaze, played upon the centralised unity of the kingdom expressed in James's

son's role as ruler of the Welsh principality. This current political unity in turn referred back Henry VII's earlier action of reconciling the warring houses of York and Lancaster, playing on the Henrican lineage. In this context perspective also worked powerfully to suppress alternative connotations of Milford Haven as a locus of national vulnerability, a place where *enemy* forces could invade the realm.[22] Thus Wales could be seen as a discrete geographical and ethnic entity, but one joined to Britain so as to underline the new-found coherence of Great Britain under James, who employed it as a precedent in his arguments for the unification of Scotland and England.[23] The perspective view, with its connotations of framing and possession, thus embodied territorial mastery, in turn establishing the historical legitimacy of the new Prince. Novelty was thus given the legitimacy of a continued tradition, via the contemplation of a landscape which was simultaneously other and integrated to the whole. All this was sanctioned, indeed activated by the spectator-king's constitutive central gaze towards the stage.

The role of the royal gaze as central anchor point for the perspective scenery and hence for the metaphors of political order is made particularly clear in the description of the opening moments of the *Masque of Blackness*: 'the *Scene* behind, seemed a vast sea (and vnited with this that flowed forth) from the termination, or *horizon* of which (being the leuell of the *State*, which was placed in the vpper end of the hall) was drawne, by the lines of *Prospectiue*, the whole worke shooting downewards, from the eye; which *decorum* made it more conspicuous, and caught the eye a farre off with a wandring beauty' (171: 82–89). Jonson's convoluted syntax conveys the difficulty of explaining a radically new pictorial language, but also his determination to make an emergent aesthetic form understood and appreciated, to give it hegemonic legitimacy. Jonson was struggling to formulate the constitutive role of the principle of 'horizon line isocephaly', the rule of construction which deemed that the vanishing point be placed level with the portrayed figures' heads, and also at the height of the viewer's line of sight.[24] Thus the centre of the performance is the chair of state, on a level with the horizon, which in turn marks the vanishing-point of a vast sea. This surrounding sea is the visual equivalent of the outer world described in the masque's songs, across which African queens travel in confirmation of the centrality and superiority of England. Jonson's vertical paradigms are functions of the royal eye: the 'upper' end of the hall, where the chair of state is placed, is opposed to the 'downwards' pull of the entire scenery in its harmony of constituent parts ('decorum'), 'the whole worke shooting downewards, from the eye'. Up and down are thus expressions for inner and outer, centre and periphery. The attraction of the royal eye outwards/downwards towards the horizon is reflected back towards the perceiving self by the performance, addressed visually to the royal spectator. This returning visual vector was echoed by the masque's songs, which confirmed the King of Albion as the embodiment of the new centre of the world. What was at stake

in Jonson's description was thus the vector of attraction which returned along the king's line of sight, 'flowing forth' towards the monarch. The whole movement of the masque gravitated towards a centre, namely the monarch of Albion, just as the songs told of the flow of the seas from the outer perimeters of the world, in Eastern Africa, towards the Western Ocean and 'Britannia' itself.

The central position of the monarch as defined by the concrete operation of the rules of perspective representation was intimately connected with the emergence of a novel individual subjectivity. Panofsky notes that perspective representation questioned the validity of other-worldly metaphysical axioms and pushed individual experience into the epistemological foreground over and against *a priori* conventions and received traditions. 'The decisive innovation of *focused perspective* epitomises a situation which focused perspective itself had helped to bring about and to perpetuate: a situation in which the work of art had become a segment of the universe as it is observed – or at least, as it could be observed – by a particular person from a particular point of view at a particular moment.'[25] This particularity constituted the observer as an individual. The perspective stage ostensibly propagated ideal universals of classical harmony for the enlightenment of the masque's spectators at the court.[26] Paradoxically, however, the individualising operation of the perspective method also interacted with other elements and resulted in a marked exclusiveness of the masque event.

The classical erudition Jonson inscribed in the masques was one reflection of the doctrine of *arcana imperii*, state secrets to be understood only by the king and not to be shared with the common populace – culminating, for instance, in James's 'Proclamation against Excesse of Lavish and Licentious Speech of Matters of State', aiming to suppress public discussion of foreign policy, which was issued in December 1620. The masque, with its heavy weight of classical allusion, created a similar situation of exclusive knowledge in which only the poet and the king would have understood many of the references embedded in the characters' dialogues. In this respect, the royal spectator, in accordance with the optical elitism of the perspective method, had a privileged view of the dramatic event or access to its content not available to the majority of the viewers.[27] In Renaissance theories of perspectival representation, the centric ray, the visual axis between spectator and vanishing point, as the shortest and thus most distinct line of visibility, came to acquire connotations of direct access to truth. A clear epistemological privilege was accorded to the central, direct axis of view.[28] The monarch, as spectator, placed at the culmination of this centric ray, was physically figured as privileged recipient of special knowledge. In the primacy accorded to the king's view upon the world, given concrete expression in the implicit functional structures of perspective representation, we have a curious avatar of perspective (in Panofsky's description) as 'an objectification of the subjective'.[29]

The privilege of the private over the public manifest in the doctrine of the *arcana imperii* could, however, easily topple over into a disabling solipsism. Signor Valaresso, the Venetian envoy, claimed that 'no man knows what is really passing in the king's mind; he is sagacious, deep and impenetrable'.[30] James's predilection for the notion of *arcana imperii* implied an exceedingly restricted community of political understanding excluding even the rest of the court. The King would retreat to his country houses, displaying a noticeable reluctance to deal with the workings of the kingdom, except for brief stays in London or rapid perusals of official papers at the end of a day of hunting. Only a few faithful members of the court were prepared to accompany him upon these hunting sorties, many preferring to stay in London. James's retreat from public appearances into a private sphere frequently imperilled his own political aims. In his dispatches for 1607, Nicolo Molin, the Venetian ambassador, spoke of a monarch disinclined to rule, interested only in the hunt, and leaving everything in the hands of his council.[31] The king's self-imposed isolation from political events went so far as to include his absence from London during Parliament's discussion of his cherished project for the Union of Scotland and England; the Venetian ambassador wrote: 'The Lords of Council have with great justice pointed out to his Majesty that his continued absence from the city, especially while the question of the union is on, is very injurious to the negotiations.'[32]

This isolation was exacerbated by several factors. James's clear commitment to verbal means of communication in preference to visual meant that he neglected a vital mode of contact with his new subjects upon arriving in England. James attempted to conduct public relations via the written word, in contrast to Elizabeth, who had skilfully manipulated public performance. His book *Basilikon Doron* was brought into circulation in a new edition in 1603 to offer the English population an idea of James's pragmatic and down-to-earth approach to government. But as a printed tract, it remained for the great part inaccessible to the population, the intended public relations exercise thus going awry.[33] Despite evidence of good will, James effectively cut himself off from his new kingdom, especially through his reluctance to appear in public and satisfy the people's taste for royal spectacle: Thomas Wilson wrote that the people looked for more of the gracious affability which the good old Queen had afforded them, but the King 'naturally did not love to be looked on, and the formalities of State were but so many burdens to him'; in 1607 the Venetian ambassador noted that James was 'despised and almost hated by the common people', largely because of his all too obvious coldness towards them in public situations.[34] (It would be interesting to know the political resonance of *Coriolanus* (1606), whose eponymous hero makes no pretence of participating in the public spectacle expected from him during his election as consul, thus gaining the plebeians' hatred, in a kingdom whose monarch was equally loath to invest in visual public relations.) The withdrawal of the court masque from the public sphere into the exclusive enclosure of Whitehall, and

the inaccessibility of its language even for many members of the court, exemplified the kind of policy which gave James an unfavourable profile in the eyes of the populace and even among the government.

Diversely-Inclined Spectators

Even within the court, the king's ostensibly all-powerful central position in the masque could become solipsistic and disabling. Perspective representation offers the viewer a singular, individualised place and to that extent it entails not just an increase in centralised control, but, equally, a renunciation of other sites of vision. It is significant that the development of the technique of linear perspective involved the elision of binocular vision: Brunelleschi's inaugural experiments with perspective employed a mirror to capture a panorama funnelled through a small hole in a painting as a single planar image, conveying the singularity of the perspective viewpoint by suppressing the bifocal character of ocular perception.[35] It was only in the nineteenth century that techniques involving stereoscopic view and permitting the reconstruction of a multiplicity of viewpoints would be reintroduced as a popular mode of representation.[36] As Edgerton points out, pre-perspective portrayals of civic space experienced it 'almost tactilely, from many different sides, rather than from a single, overall vantage', whilst the 'fixed view-point [of perspectival painting] is elevated and distant, completely out of plastic or sensory reach of the depicted city'.[37] Similarly, James as the subject of monarchic perspectival vision ceded power over a wide range of points of view upon his own person. Earlier modes of visible royal presence involved an absolute display of power, exerting massive control, or at least manipulation, of the public gaze via royal processions or ritualised executions. Elizabeth in particular had insisted upon participating in a very immediate sense in processions and entertainments, which allowed her to measure the reactions of her audience and modify her own performance accordingly; she also orchestrated highly skilled and coercive performances to manage relations with her courtiers.[38] She was prepared to invest considerable effort in her public appearances, closely monitoring their effects so as to attain the political results she desired. In contrast, James, by retreating to a privatised and privileged position of self-gratifying narcissism, gave up control of the larger field of visibility formerly governed by spectacular royal presence. Thus he ceded his monopoly upon representations of himself even within the very narrow and intimate sphere of the court.

In the masque, he shared intimate knowledge with the few selected courtiers who had access, for example, to a view of the perspective scenery in a manner not available to others, or to the classical allusions with which Jonson adorned the masques. Conversely, however, James was less in command of the whole process of representation of his own royal selfhood.

Indeed, he often chose to see only what pleased him in the performance; he was generally prone to take compliments and tributes literally, thus losing sight of the larger pragmatic and thoroughly Machiavellian context of flattery.[39] What James saw in flattery, whether in the masque or elsewhere, was his own status as a celebrated individual, rather than his location within the complex context of others' productive political strategies. In James's narcissism we see a forerunner of a form of individual subjectivity appositely characterised by Foucault's notion of 'subjection', which captures the ambivalence embedded within this mode of selfhood.[40]

The emergence of perspective representation has been interpreted in the context of the sceptical and relativist 'perspectivism' of Jacobean drama, based as it is upon the primacy of a subjective vantage point.[41] In one respect, however, perspective representation functions in a manner anything but sceptical, for it simultaneously elides and thus mystifies the participation of the subject in the construction of the panorama being viewed. The crucial organising agency of the perceiving subject in perspective representation is almost never evident in perspective pictures; indeed, the frequent presence of a 'frame' underlines and reinforces the 'objectivity' of the perspective view, naturalising what is in fact a highly constructed illusion and reifying its process of production. The perspectival representation, while constructing a viewing position for the spectator and making that position the key to the configuration of the features portrayed, simultaneously elides the subject's vital participation within the field of vision of linear perspective.[42] It is a similar reification of the process of production which appears to have deceived James, allowing him to remain happily oblivious to his passive role within the positioning process worked by the perspective method of representation.

There are indications, however, that the new mode of centralised representation had severe limitations as a way of representing royal power. Critics have noted an all-pervasive sense of anxiety evident in the masque texts as to whether the masques would be correctly understood by the audiences.[43] Certainly this appears to have been less than certain. In *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon* (1619/20), Jonson has a printer tell how a neighbour of his, a 'spectacle-maker', 'by a Trunck . . . , a thing no bigger than a Flute-case . . . has drawn the Moon through it at the boare of a whistle, and made it as great as a Drum-head twentie times, and brought it within the length of this Roome to me . . .'; at which the Chronicler scoffs: 'Tut, that's no newes; your perplexive Glasses are common' (516: 85–92). What is alluded to by the Chronicler's malapropism is the so-called 'perspective glass', indicating in some usages the telescope (made in England by Thomas Harriot, for instance, from 1609 onwards),[44] but also the glass used in the composition of perspective drawings to physically replicate the plane of intersection at the foot of the visual pyramid.[45] Jonson's adjective '*perplexive*' – playing on a rare usage meaning 'perplexing' (OED) – implies that the employment of perspective vistas and other novel optical distortions of

normal sight could still cause perplexity to subjects abruptly discovering themselves 'subjected' to the viewer's position. A famous example is that of the bewildered spectator at an Oxford performance as late as 1636, who only saw in the flats designed for the perspective stage by Inigo Jones something like bookcases jutting out from the walls of a library.[46]

There were however other reasons why the new perspective scenery may have caused perplexity among the spectators. Jones's attempt to make a new mode of 'prospective' vision available to most of the courtiers probably failed because, as noted above, it was only available to the king.[47] What was more concerning was the concomitant diversity of perceptions of royal power and its representations. Ample proof of the possibility of multiple – and dissenting – views of the masque can be seen in the divergence between Jonson's account of the opening scenes of the *Masque of Blackness*, presenting the waves and the concave shell which carried the masquers, and Sir Dudley Carleton's sharply disparaging description of the same scene:

> At Night we had the Queen's Maske in the Banquetting-House, or rather her Pagent. There was a great Engine at the lower end of the Room, which had Motion, and in it were the Images of Sea-Horses with other terrible Fishes, which were ridden by Moors: The Indecorum was, that there was all Fish and no water. At the further end was a great shell in form of a Skallop, wherein were four Seats; on the lowest sat the Queen with my Lady *Bedford*; on the rest were placed the Ladies *Suffolk*, *Darby*, *Rich*, *Effingham*, *Ann Herbert*, *Susan Herbert*, *Elizabeth Howard*, *Walsingham* and *Bevil*. Instead of Vizzards, their Faces, and Arms up to the Elbows, were painted black, which was a Disguise sufficient, for they were hard to be known; *but it became them nothing so well as their red and white, and you cannot imagine a more ugly Sight, then a Troop of lean-cheek'd Moors*.[48]

Likewise, where the Venetian ambassador wrote to the Doge and Senate that the masque was 'very beautiful and sumptuous', another spectator saw the display of finery with other eyes, describing the masque up to the point of the dancing, then finishing with the comments: 'Which I saw not, nor harkened after further. But [I] tell it you only for this that you discerne the humor of the tyme. It cost the King between 4. and 5000^{li} to execute the Queen's fancye.'[49] Not surprisingly, as this comment testifies, it was the king's dedication to conspicuous, visible consumption which attracted most conflicting reports and reactions, so that the visibility of the royal spectacle might well be viewed in ways not intended by its principal patron. James himself wrote in *Basilikon Doron* of the danger of misinterpretation of royal actions by a '*Hydra* of diversly-enclined spectatours'.[50] It is thus perhaps of more than passing significance when two gentlemen at the opening of *Cymbeline* (1610–11?) note that the courtiers 'wear their faces to the bent / Of the king's looks' but harbour quite contrary views of current affairs of state, views imperceptible to the royal gaze and therefore beyond the reach of his power (1.1.13–14) – possibly an oblique comment on the situation at Whitehall after nearly a decade of James's reign.

The perspectival portrayal of reality was far from hegemonic in the early modern era. Well-known paintings by Holbein and Van Eyck (*The Ambassadors* and the Anolfini painting, for instance) deliberately foregrounded the illusory character of perspective painting elaborately.[51] In the Jacobean court masque, the reified and distanced quality of the pictorialised stage-designs went hand in hand with the transgression of the masque stage-space by the masquers: the subsequent dances within the hall itself united masquers and courtiers in a symbolic extension of the mythic characteristics of the masque-world into the real world of the court. This conjunction of quite heterogeneous modes of representation meant that the use of perspective in the Jacobean court masque was by no means absolute or uncontaminated. Such anomalies in the usage of perspective method were not uncommon at this period: Hilliard's pupil Oliver was already beginning to use perspective in the 1590s, though only a few connoisseurs would have understood such paintings at this early date; Inigo Jones began to use thorough-going perspective only around 1615; around 1620, Paul van Somer's portrait of James included a glimpse of the revolutionary Banqueting Hall (built according to classical architectural principles, of which perspective optics were a central element) in an eminently *pre*-perspective mode of appearance: the building and the king are pressed together to make the building an emblematic physical embodiment of the motto expressing divine right.[52] Likewise, there was a manifest contradiction between the king's assertions of inscrutability and secrecy and his retreat into an elitist space of privatised knowledge, and his continuing rhetorical use of older metaphors of theatrical visibility.[53]

The masque itself embodies this contradiction, shifting between illusionist perspective stage and open stage. Thus the court masque hovered uncertainly on the border between a residual mode of massive visibility of royal power, and an emergent mode of individual perspective gaze which constructed the king as a monadic gazing individual; the king was the object of the courtiers' and ambassadors' gaze, whilst at the same time being installed in the privileged position of single perspective viewer. Simultaneously, the individualist perspective mode of representation in which the king was inserted was itself manifestly unstable, both privileging and disempowering the monarch. Clearly, the very form of the masque was ridden with tensions belying its declaration of a finely maintained cosmic harmony.[54]

The Instability of Theatrical Power

The theatrical space of the masque was profoundly unstable, and its messages of royal legitimacy equally fragile. In a curious moment in *Prince Henry's Barriers*, the Lady of the Lake, just discovered, admires the court she sees before her:

> How brighter farre, then when our Arthvr liu'd
> Are all the glories of this place reuiu'd!
> What riches doe I see; what beauties here!
> What awe! what loue! what reuerence! ioy! and feare!
> What ornaments of counsaile as of court! (323: 23–324:27)

The act of gesturing deictically towards the court so as to attribute, in an operation of verbal transfer, the qualities of the divine masque world to the court and monarch, occurs frequently in the masques. Oddly, however, this action confuses the categories of actor and spectators. Who, here, is looking at whom? Who is spectator and who is audience? Here, the court itself is subjected to the Lady's gaze, its members become part of the spectacle. If James was the principal spectator of the masques composed to celebrate him, and thus the explicit subject of their exposition of royal power, to what extent did he find himself caught in a role that was passive and powerless – 'subjected' to the mechanisms of theatrical representation?

The instability of vectors of gaze evident in the passage from *Prince Henry's Barriers* points to conflicting ways of seeing the person of James I which had been increasingly evident since his accession to the throne in 1603. As a Scot, he was regarded with suspicion, and many of his actions did little to allay the xenophobic fears of his subjects.[55] Where Elizabeth had used patronage as a means of negotiating in conflicts between herself, court and parliament, James was perceived as reserving ostentatiously lavish favours for a small group of Scottish courtiers. The costs run up by his court in peacetime far exceeded those of Elizabeth in time of war.[56] James soured the general population by his grudging participation in, or complete absence from, public celebrations such as the recent funeral procession for his highly popular son Henry.[57] James's diplomatic endeavours to make peace with Spain made him a supporter of the Catholic cause in the eyes of many, including members of the court, who desired a more militant association with the Protestant states on the continent. He had increasing difficulty persuading Parliament to grant him funding for his lavish spending, and after the failure of his efforts to gain moneys for the celebrations around Prince Henry's creation as Prince of Wales in 1610, he effectively ruled without Parliament from 1611 to 1621.[58]

The instability at the heart of the masque's representations of power and its vulnerability to alternative interpretations meant that the masque-author was obliged to take into account quite contradictory attitudes to royal power. These constraints can be illustrated by a further example from *Prince Henry's Barriers*. Henry (alias Meliadus) receives from Arthur, by the mediation of the Lady of the Lake and Merlin, a shield,

> wherein is wrought
> The truth that he must follow; and (being taught
> The wayes from heauen) ought not be despisd.
> It is a piece, was by the fates deuisd

> To arm his maiden valure; and to show
> Defensiue armes th'offensiue should fore-goe. (326: 94–99)

James has just been praised in the immediately preceding lines for re-uniting Scotland and England. Now the author of the masque must try to steer a middle way between Prince Henry's popular warlike aspirations, with references to 'maiden valure' and the gift of a shield (a few moments later he will be compared to 'Mars, or one that had / The better of him, in his armor clad' – 327: 142–43), and his father's pacifist goals: the preference for defensive rather than offensive combat is a compromise solution between the contradictory, if not to say incompatible, ideals of Monarch and young Prince. Shortly afterwards, the writer comes down on the side of the paternal pacifism, justifying this, however, with an appeal to the transition from mythical pre-history to modern times:

> There were bold stories of our Arthvrs age;
> But here are other acts; another *stage*
> And *scene* appears; it is not since as then:
> No gyants, dwarfes, or monsters here, but men.
> His arts must be to gouerne, and giue lawes
> To peace no lesse then armes. (328: 171–76)

Merlin's long discourse upon the shield is a panegyric of peaceful governance, finishing thus: 'These, worthyest Prince, are set you neere to reade, / That ciuill arts the martiall must precede' (329: 211–12).

In contrast to these verbal genuflections in James's direction, there then follows a panegyric upon warlike heroes of British monarchy, Richard Coeur de Lion, Edward the Black Prince and Henry V – but not without elements of warning against arrogant over-reaching or careless neglect of subordinates' loyalty (329: 218–333: 334). This section, in turn, is followed by effusive praises of James's union of Great Britain, placing this in the context of a historical progression from Henry's reconciliation of the white and red roses which culminates in James's joining of the rose and the thistle, while Ireland contributes a laurel wreath and thus completes the union of Great Britain (333: 335ff). Further on, Henry (alias Meliadus) awakes somnolent Chivalry (334: 380ff), but is immediately reigned in by Merlin's warning:

> Nay, stay your valure, 'tis a wisdom high
> In Princes to vse fortune reuerently.
> He that in deeds of *Armes* obeyes his blood
> Doth often tempt his destinie beyond good. (335: 405–409)

Thus the masque constantly oscillates between praise for James's peaceful union of Great Britain, and admiration for Henry's warlike chivalry, finding a middle course in the topos of moderate, restrained chivalry.

Yet the contents of this discourse upon peaceful government can be taken as an oblique thrust at James. For if the ideals of peace are those of James,

many of the activities supposed to flourish under peace were not necessarily being encouraged by the Monarch in the eyes of his critics: 'th'increase / Of trades and tillage' (329: 187–88), 'To set his owne aworke, and not to see / The fatness of his land a portion bee / For strangers' (191–193), 'obserue what treasure here / The wise and seventh Henry heapt each yeere' (199–200), 'the eighth Henry . . . girt his coast / With strength [. . .] to which [. . .] did great Eliza adde / A wall of shipping, and became thereby / The ayde, or feare of all the nations nigh' (203–10). These admonitions to Henry as future monarch can also be understood as reproaches to James as current monarch, whose massive royal expenditure was thought to be draining the national economy, whose peace-making was considered to be prejudicial to English trading interests abroad, and who, despite some manifestations of interest in the shipping industry, did not maintain Britain's naval power in the way his predecessor had done. Criticism is possible here, in the last analysis, because the direction of gaze is never stable; the king can become the active master of an adulating gaze, but can also become the passive object of admonition.

The perspective stage thus worked to confuse categories of gaze and observation, to the extent that it created a place for the viewing subject, thereby constituting that individualised subjectivity in a thoroughly coercive but also ambivalent process, one which was enabling but also potentially disabling for the ostensible manipulator of political power. The Renaissance use of perspective was clearly understood by its practitioners as a mechanism for controlling the visual experience of the spectator.[59] Viewers, however, were no less wily: Francis Bacon took an equally cynical view of 'prospective' in his essay 'Of Seeming Wise': 'It is a ridiculous thing and fit for a satire to persons of judgement, to see what shifts these formalists have, and what prospectives to make *superficies* to seem body that hath depth and bulk.'[60] Here perspective representation is laid bare as a mode of fraud and deception, perceived as manipulating the viewer's common sense. Bacon's corrosive sarcasm is indicative of the fact that from the moment of its introduction into the English context, perspective representation as an instrument of political power was vigorously contested: in part because its cohabitation, in a transitional period, with earlier modes of representation, rendered it a deeply unstable form of representation; and in part because the contradictions generated by the subject position underlying the perspective method reinforced the already acute tensions surrounding the reign of James I so as to exacerbate rather than alleviate the vulnerability of the monarch's policies.

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Notes

1 See Leonardo Benevolo, *Fixierte Unendlichkeit: Die Erfindung der Perspektive in der Architektur*, trans. Rainer Spiss (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1993), p. 11; Samuel Y. Edgerton, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 35, 115–20.

2 All references to Jonson's masque texts give page and line numbers in Ben Jonson, *The Sad Shepherd/The Fall of Mortimer/Masques and Entertainments* in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1941), Vol. VII.

3 Graham Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603–42* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), Chapter 5. See also Jones's travel diaries in the margins of his copy of Palladio: *On Palladio: Being the notes by Inigo Jones in the copy of 'I quattro Libri dell architettura' di Andrea Palladio 1601 in the Library of Worcester College, Oxford. Reproduced by Courtesy of the Provost and Fellows* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Oriel Press, 1970), Vol. I: Preface, Notes and Transcription; Vol. II: Reproduction of the Worcester College Copy of Palladio.

4 Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court* (London/Berkeley: Sotheby Parke Bernet/University of California Press, 1973), I, 8.

5 See for instance Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace* (Paris : Editions Anthropos, 1974), pp. 25, 34.

6 John Summerson, *Inigo Jones* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 15; John Peacock, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones: The European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 52; Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 55–6.

7 See David Morse, *England's Time of Crisis: From Shakespeare to Milton* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 65ff.

8 Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals 1450–1650* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1984), pp. 159–60.

9 Strong, *Art and Power*, pp. 159–60.

10 John H. Astington, *English Court Theatre 1558–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 182.

11 See for instance John Orrell's quotation from a Works account entry of Winter 1601–1602, describing preparations for a performance at Whitehall, in *The Theatres of Inigo Jones and John Webb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 3.

12 See Allardyce Nicoll, *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), p. 34.

13 See Martin Burkhardt, *Metamorphosen von Raum und Zeit: Eine Geschichte der Wahrnehmung* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1997), p. 153.

14 See Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 28.

15 See Jerzy Limon, 'The Masque of Stuart Culture', in Linda Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 217.

16 Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, I, 283.
17 See Jonathon Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne and Their Contemporaries* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 33ff, 47.
18 Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 22–3.
19 Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, I, 164.
20 Samuel Daniel, *Tethys Festival* in David Lindley (ed.), *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments 1605–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 57; Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, I, 193.
21 John Pitcher, '"In those figures which they seeme": Samuel Daniel's *Tethys' Festival*', in David Lindley (ed.), *The Court Masque* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 36.
22 See Garrett A. Sullivan, *The Drama of Landscape: Land, Property and Social Relations on the Early Modern Stage* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 135–7.
23 Sullivan, *The Drama of Landscape*, p. 157.
24 Edgerton, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Perspective*, pp. 26–7.
25 Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1955), p. 278.
26 Interesting parallels to my thesis can be found in Rudolf zur Lippe, *Naturbeherrschung am Menschen II: Geometrisierung des Menschen und Repräsentation des Privaten im französischen Absolutismus* (Frankfurt/Main: Syndikat, 1979), Pt. 1, for the context of French absolutism at almost the same period, and in Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimad, 1966), Chapter 1, in its meditation on the role of the Spanish monarch in founding representation.
27 See Jonathon Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, p. 57.
28 Edgerton, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Perspective*, pp. 69, 86.
29 Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, p. 66.
30 David Mathew, *The Jacobean Age* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971), p. 17.
31 'Ma molto pui dispiace l'aver Sua Maesta abbondonato in tutti e per tutto il governo die sui regni, rimettendo il tuto al suo Consiglio, non volendo egli nè pensar nè ad altro che all caccia.' Quoted in Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, p. 83.
32 Alan G. R. Smith, 'Constitutional Ideas and Parliamentary Developments in England 1603–1625', in Smith (ed.), *The Reign of James VI and I* (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 168.
33 Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*: The Scottish Context and the English Translation', in Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, p. 52.
34 Cited in David Harris Willson, *King James VI & I* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), p. 165; Alan G. R. Smith, 'Introduction', in Smith (ed.), *The Reign of James VI and I*, p. 4.
35 See Hubert Damisch, *The Origin of Perspective*, trans. John Goodman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), pp. 143–51.
36 See Heidi J. Nast and Audrey Kobayashi, 'Re-Corporealizing Vision', in Nancy

Duncan (ed.), *BodySpace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 76–9.

37 Edgerton, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Perspective*, pp. 9–10.

38 See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 162–8; Carole Levin, '"We Princes, I Tell You, Are Set on Stages": Elizabeth I and Dramatic Self-Representation', in S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds), *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History and Performance 1594–1998* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 113–24.

39 See Willson, *King James VI & I*, pp. 167–8.

40 Foucault, 'Le sujet et le pouvoir', in Daniel Defert and François Ewald (eds), *Dits et écrits 1954–1988* (Paris : Gallimard, 1994), IV, 227.

41 Manfred Pfister, *Studien zum Wandel der Perspektivenstruktur in elisabethanischen und jacobäischen Komödien* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1974), p. 42.

42 See Victor Burgin, *In/Different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 142–3.

43 David Lindley, 'Introduction', in Lindley (ed.), *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments 1605–1640*, pp. xi–xii.

44 Christopher Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution – Revisited* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 126.

45 See John Orrell, *The Quest for Shakespeare's Globe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 20–7.

46 Strong, *Art and Power*, p. 156.

47 Peacock, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones*, p. 162.

48 See *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, X, 448.

49 Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, I, 89–90.

50 James I, 'To the Reader', *Basilikon Doron* in Charles Howard McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Works of James I, Reprinted from the Edition of 1616* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), p. 9. (This section does not appear in the 1599 edition.)

51 On these paintings, see Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), pp. 82–3; Colin MacCabe, 'Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure', in Francis Barker, et al. (eds), *Literature, Society and the Sociology of Literature: Proceedings of the Conference held at the University of Essex, July 1976* (Colchester: University of Essex, 1976), pp. 63–4; Burkhardt, *Metamorphosen von Raum und Zeit*, p. 120; and more generally, Pierre Francastel, *Peinture et société: Naissance et destruction d'un espace plastique: De la renaissance au cubisme* (Lyon: Audin, 1951), pp. 42–7, 51.

52 Peacock, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones*, p. 44.

53 See Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, p. xiii.

54 See Lindley, 'Introduction', in Lindley (ed.), *The Court Masque*, p. 2.

55 See Conrad Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 258–9.

56 Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments*, pp. 271–2.

57 Graham Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd*, pp. 21, 87; Willson, *King James VI & I*, p. 165.

58 J. L. Kenyon, *Stuart England* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1983), p. 68.

59 Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, I, 7.

60 Francis Bacon, 'Of Seeming Wise', in Mary Augusta Scott (ed.), *The Essays of Francis Bacon* (1625) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 114.

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