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Shakespeare and the Masque 化装剧

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PREFACE

First, a note on documentation. Footnotes for each chapter appear at the end of the chapter. A list of abbreviations of periodical titles will be found at the head of the List of Works Cited, p. 225. In the footnotes I have frequently referred the reader to studies of topics under discussion, while not actually quoting from them. Thus the bibliography contains not only all plays, masques, poems, books and articles from which I have quoted, but also a number of titles which have helped to shape my ideas about Shakespeare and the masque.

Second, some words of thanks. My colleague, John Tinkler, has given chapter III a close reading and made suggestions about stylistic changes, some of which I have followed. My committee has been most understanding and helpful in the reading of this dissertation, especially as deadlines approached and I grew anxious. Professor Hugh Richmond, my Second Reader, offered valuable criticism of chapter II, and, as the footnotes will show, his Shakespeare's Sexual Comedy gave needed direction to chapters I and II. To Professor Stephen Orgel, the Director of my project, I owe a large debt. I value equally his praise and criticism. He has been able to lead me back to my argument when it eluded me. His suggestions for revision always proved right. And, as anyone

familiar with the literature will know, his studies of the masque have provided my thesis with some of its central foundations.

Finally, a dedication: to my wife, Betty, who knows the misery of enforced deadlines. She has followed this work chapter by chapter, typed it in various stages of composition, and has commented with deadly accuracy on its stylistic infelicities. I have benefited not only from her sure criticism of the written word but also from her generous encouragement. The latter is a hard quantity to measure in its effect, but without it I never could have finished. Nor could I have begun.

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INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's interest in the masque was deep and sustained. This type of Renaissance entertainment occurs in seven of his plays, Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, Timon of Athens, The Tempest and Henry VIII. Most of these masques have at least the beginnings of a recognizable device or fiction worked out in either the masque figures themselves and their costumes or their speech and actions. The combination of play and masque is inherently interesting, given the generally antithetical nature of the two forms, a contrast particularly pointed in the way each regards its audience. On the one hand the masque avoids establishing a barrier between its ideal world and the world of its spectators, it being understood from the outset that the former is an aesthetically realized analogue of the latter. Popular drama, on the other hand, operates on the initial assumption that its world is independent of the spectators' world, is, from the view of the audience, somewhere else. Whether or not this opposition was clear to John Chamberlain, his description, in a letter to a friend, of Campion's Lords' Masque (1613) indicates that at least in Jacobean times the two forms were conventionally thought of as somehow different:

That night was the Lords maske whereof I heare
no great commendation save only for riches,
theyre devises being long and tedious and more
like a play then a maske.¹

It is therefore significant that Shakespeare wrote masques into his plays throughout his career, in the process demonstrating a thorough working knowledge of the form and an ability to turn it to excellent dramatic ends. Nor was he alone in the practice of incorporating masques in his plays, as even a casual survey of the period's dramatic literature demonstrates.²

As a rule, critical response to this phenomenon has been neither commensurate with Shakespeare's skilful use of the form nor engaged by the paradox of containing antithetical dramatic types within the same structure. At one extreme, the masques are treated as inferior to the plays which contain them, as unfortunate examples of Shakespeare's debasing his art to satisfy public taste. Edward Capell's strictures on Prospero's masque in The Tempest provide an early representative view:

This masque was written in compliance with fashion, the time swarming with them (witness the works of Jonson, which in manner are sunk by them) and against the grain seemingly, being weak throughout, faulty in rimes, and faulty in its mythology . . .³

This bias against the masque remains even today. Thus J. M. Nosworthy says, in a discussion of Shakespeare's late career,

it is legitimate to surmise that he regarded this species of entertainment as something ephemeral which did not, at this late stage, accord with his accumulated dramatic wisdom and the gravity of his thought.⁴

At the other extreme are enthusiastic arguments about the effect of the masque on Shakespeare which are vitiated by careless and imprecise terminology. Writing in 1910, J. W. Cunliffe had begun to worry about this problem:

In spite of the efforts of modern scholarship to restrict the application of the word 'masque' to a clearly defined form of court entertainment, the term is still used by Shakesperean critics with a degree of looseness which is likely to cause confusion . . .⁵

When, more than fifty years after this essay, one reads that the whole of Love's Labour's Lost is a grand masque in which the low comic scenes are antimasque foils to the main double masque of lords and ladies, or that the vision of the Leonati and descent of Jupiter in Cymbeline V. ii is a masque,⁶ Cunliffe's concern takes on considerable point. It would seem essential that we be able to distinguish the masques in Shakespeare's plays from the plays themselves and those scenes which have masque-like elements from those which are actually represented as masques. To move from the abortive masque of Muscovites in Love's Labour's Lost V. ii to the whole play as a masque necessarily overlooks Shakespeare's intelligent and discrete use of the form as a commentary on characters and their actions in the play. To speak of a double masque with antimasque foils in the context of the 1590's is to rewrite the history of the masque's development, ignoring all the available data. To label an apparitional vision and theophany as a masque fails to recognize the very different sorts of relationships the audience of each enjoys with what it sees, letting go by discriminations essential in a play like The Tempest, whose represented audiences are subjected to a variety of spectacle which includes both apparitions and a masque. The confusion which results from blurring these kinds of distinctions obscures two central points: Shakespeare was seriously interested in the masque and an expert practitioner of it in his own plays. Furthermore, such critical

distortion makes it difficult to appreciate the playwright's understanding of a contemporary dramatic form and his responsiveness to its development.

The present study first examines Shakespeare's use of the masque in four plays, Love's Labour's Lost, As You Like It, Timon of Athens and The Tempest⁷--the masque of Muscovites, the masque of Hymen, the masque of Cupid and Amazons and the masque of Iris, Ceres and Juno--in both their extra-dramatic and dramatic contexts, and then turns to the question of the court masque's influence on Shakespeare's later career as manifested in the romances. One chapter is devoted to each incorporated masque under discussion. The organizing principle of these chapters has been the belief that Shakespeare was alert and sensitive to the development of the masque form and aware of its dramatic potential when used in plays. Thus each masque is studied first as a masque in its own right, placed within the genre's history, and then seen as an element of speech, song and spectacle within a dramatic structure. In turning to the masque within the play we get an unobstructed view of those surrounding circumstances--the masque's dramatically represented occasional context--which in large part determine the content and thrust of the entertainment, as it did in fact at the courts of Elizabeth and James. The play is thus a world on which we can get readings by studying the design of its reflector, the incorporated masque. These intercalated entertainments say a great deal about the characters who present them and take part in them, as well as about the dramatically realized societies which nourish them. Here questions of character, theme and imagery are taken up.

A good deal of scholarship in recent years has been devoted to the later romances, although the influence of the masque on Shakespeare's later dramaturgy has typically been confined to brief mention of masque-like scenes in these plays or to their structural affinities with the masque. Having studied the playwright's use of the form in his plays in chapters I-IV, in chapter V I enter into a discussion of Shakespeare's response to the Jacobean court masque as evidenced in Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest. Although the masque is at a great remove from Shakespeare's theatre, what happens in the Banqueting House at Whitehall does not go unnoticed at the Globe and Blackfriars. Not only do spectacle, dance and music occur in the romances in a variety of ways, but the assumptions which bring these elements into being are examined in a dramatic context. The controlling conventions of the court masque and its expanding scenic technology provide an impetus for the dramatist to explore his medium from a fresh perspective and suggest radical questions about the nature of drama. These explorations and questions, as they take form in the romances, are the main concern of the final chapter.

FOOTNOTES: INTRODUCTION

¹The Letters of John Chamberlain, ed. N.E. McClure (Philadelphia, 1939), I, 424.

²See Inga-Stina Ewbank, "'These pretty devices': A Study of Masques in Plays," A Book of Masques in Honour of Allardyce Nicoll--hereinafter cited as A Book of Masques--(Cambridge, 1967), pp. 405-48.

³Quoted in H. H. Furness, ed., The Tempest (1892; rpt. New York, 1964), p. 193.

⁴"Music and its Function in Shakespeare's Romances," SS, XI (1958), p. 68.

⁵"The masque in Shakspeare's plays," Archiv, CXXXV (1910), p. 71.

⁶M. T. Jones-Davies, "Le divertissement de cour dans l'oeuvre de Shakespeare," EA, XVII (1964), 440; John P. Cutts, "Shakespeare's Song and Masque Hand in The Two Noble Kinsmen," English Miscellany 18, ed. Mario Praz (Rome, 1967), p. 60.

⁷I exclude Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing and Henry VIII from extended discussion because the masques which these plays contain have no texts. In the case of Romeo and Juliet and Much Ado About Nothing there is neither formal presentation of the masquers nor a specific device suggested by disguise. In the case of Henry VIII we do have a disguise--the King and some of his courtiers are dressed up as shepherds. But there is no prologue to explain his presence and nothing in their actions to suggest a raison d'être for the costume. This scene is taken from Holinshed and represents a translation of source material into dramatic terms. As such it is less revealing than the playwright's created masques in a study concerned with Shakespeare's knowledge of the form and its conventions. For a discussion of Shakespeare's use of Holinshed for this scene, see J. C. Maxwell, ed., Henry VIII (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 150-52, who points out that Anne Bullen's presence is Shakespeare's invention.

CHAPTER I: LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST

The Masque of Muscovites

The masque of Muscovites in Love's Labour's Lost has served many scholars in their attempts to date Shakespeare's play. Few have dealt with the masque's dramatic function, however, and in suggesting various sources for Navarre's entertainment the interest of the majority has been in fixing termini of composition for the play rather than in exploring Shakespeare's knowledge of masques and his understanding of the form. My interest is two-fold in this chapter: to describe the kind of masque Shakespeare has here incorporated and to examine its dramatic function within the play.

Commentators have frequently cited the Gray's Inn celebrations of 1594-5 as having provided Shakespeare with the idea of a Muscovite masque.¹ It will be helpful to review briefly those parts of the Grayans' festivities relevant to the discussion. By the fictions of Gray's Inn, six Knights of the Helmet have just come back from a series of adventures in Russia, where, having aided the Russian emperor against the Tartars, they managed to capture three persons of unknown identity ("attired like Monsters and Miscreants") whom they now bring before the Prince of Purpoole, ruler of the Grayans' mock state (p. 43). It is disclosed that these three are Envy, Malcontent and Folly. The Knights remove the potential killjoys, and re-enter "in a very stately Mask, and

[dance] a new devised Measure; and after that, they [take] to them Ladies and Gentlewomen, and [dance] with them their Galliards, and so [depart] with Music" (p. 44). At this point the Russian ambassador is announced, "who came in Attire of Russia, accompanied with two of his own Country, in like Habit" (p. 44). After due formalities of presentation and address, in which the Knights of the Helmet are praised for their part in the Tartar campaign and their surprising an "Army of Ne-gro-Tartars," this embassy gets down to business. Theodore Evanwhich, the Emperor of all Russia, wants Henry, Prince of Purpoole, to send him the original six Knights of the Helmet, plus an additional hundred, to help him put down completely the Tartars (pp. 44-46). The Prince of Purpoole is only too glad to grant Russia's request, and after addressing himself to other momentous questions of state (pp. 47-51), he makes the following pledge: "Our Self, with Our chosen Knights, with an Army Royal, will make towards our Brother of Russia, with my Lord here, his Ambassador, presently to join with him against his Enemies, the Negarian Tartars; more dreadful, the Barbarian Tartars . . ." (p. 52). The pledge concluded, there is a farewell of dancing and revelling for the court of Purpoole, and the next morning Prince, Knights and embassy set out on their imaginary journey to Russia, to remain there until Candlemas (p. 53). Upon the Prince's return, excuses are sent to Queen Elizabeth for his failure to present himself to her at once. In a letter to Sir Thomas Heneage the Prince mentions the debilitating effects of the long journey from Muscovia and his "Sickness at Sea" (pp. 54-55). This is the last use made of the Russian fictions in

Gesta Grayorum. The remainder of the celebrations is taken up with the masque the Grayans produced at court March 3, 1595, The Masque of Proteus (pp. 57-67), which is seen as a recompense for the Prince of Purpoole's inability to pay his respects to Elizabeth as soon as he had returned from Muscovia. Echoes of the Russian elements in Gesta Grayorum seem fairly clear in Love's Labour's Lost. The court of Navarre's device of a Russian disguise in conjunction with their masque, the utilization of blackamoors in the entry,² and Rosaline's mock--"Seasick, I think, coming from Muscovy" (V. ii. 393)--come to mind.

H. H. Furness, in his edition of the play, includes a note by Ritson on Navarre's Muscovite gambol:

A mask of Muscovites was no uncommon recreation at court long before our author's time. In the first year of King Henry the Eighth, at a banquet made for the foreign ambassadors in the parliament-chamber at Westminster: 'came the lorde Henry, Earle of Wiltshire, and the lorde Fitzwater, in two long gounes of yellow satin, travarsed with white satin, and in every bend of white was a bend of crimosen satin after the fashion of Russia or Ruslande . . .'³

As Fred Sorensen has noted, although Hall's Chronicles, from which Ritson is quoting, "seem remote enough from Shakespeare . . . we remember that exactly the same account that appeared in Hall was printed by Holinshed in 1587."⁴ Here is what Shakespeare would have read there:

On Shrouesundae the same yeare, the king prepared a goodlie banket in the parlement chamber at Westminster, for all the ambassadors, which then were here out of diuerse realmes and countries. The banket being readie, the king leading the queene, entered into the chamber, then the ladies, ambassadours, and other noble men followed in order.

The king caused the queene to keepe the estate, and then sate the ambassadours and ladies, as they were marshalled by the K. who would not sit, but walked from place to place, making cheare to the queene and the strangers: suddenlie the king was gone. And shorlie [sic] after, his grace, with the earle of Essex, cam in appparelled after the Turkie fashion, in long robes of baudekin, powdered with gold, hats on their heds of crimson veluet, with great rolles of gold, girded with two swords called cimiteries, hanging by great bauderiks of gold. The next came the lord Henrie earle of Wiltshire, and the lord Fitzwater, in two long gownes of yellow sattin, trauerse with white sattin, and in euerie band of white was a band of crimson sattin after the fashion of Russia or Rusland, with furred hats of graie on their heads, either of them hauing an hatchet in their hands, and boots with pikes turned.

. . . The torchbearers were appparelled in crimson sattin and greene, like Moreskoes, their faces blacke; and the king brought in a mummerie.

. . . After them entered six ladies, whereof two were appparelled in crimson sattin and purple . . . Their faces, necks, armes, and hands, couered in fine pleassants blacke; some call it Lumbardines, which is maruellous thin; so that the same ladies seemed to be Nigers or blacke Mores.⁵

Thus it is not necessary that Shakespeare should have experienced first-hand the Gray's Inn festivities, or any other entertainment of Russian theme, in order to get the idea of a Muscovite masque with its Moorish trappings. Here was a description of one ready for use in 1587. Other commentators have turned to the newly awakened Elizabethan interest in contemporary Russia. Sir Sidney Lee noted the arrival in England in 1583 of a Russian embassy on a mission to obtain an English bride for their Czar, Ivan the Terrible.⁶ Richard David points out that "The voyages of Richard Chancellor and the Burroughs had opened up trade with Russia and a trading company, the Company of Muscovy Mercants, was formed in

1584."⁷ Giles Fletcher had published his description of the country and its inhabitants--Of the Russe Common Wealth--in 1591, and this may have provided a material impetus for the Russian parts of Gesta Grayorum.⁸ H. B. Charlton suggests that the years 1590-92 were "remarkable for the special interest then taken in Russian affairs."⁹ He cites the large amount of diplomatic traffic between Russia and England at this time concerning commercial matters, and shows that the pompous style of address the Russian emperor required (a characteristic examined by Fletcher) had prompted Queen Elizabeth to a few sarcasms in her own correspondence with the ruler. "So it seems to us that in 1591-2 the Russian masque has a special point, and moreover the only sort of point which makes it something more than a piece of extraneous and elementary fooling."¹⁰

In all this source material, the only masque of Russians is that remarked by Ritson, the description of which has been taken verbatim from Hall by Holinshed. It is therefore conceivable that Shakespeare had this early Tudor masque in his head when he came to write Love's Labour's Lost. Whether many of his contemporaries would have run across it, either in Hall or Holinshed, is quite another question. It does seem likely, however, that the audience of Shakespeare's play would see in Navarre's Russian disguise an allusion to one or more of the recent events, from the Russian marriage mission of 1583 to the Gray's Inn revels of 1594-95. It is noteworthy that there does not appear to have been a Russian masque between the one Hall describes and that of Love's Labour's Lost, nor reference to one.¹¹ Interest in Russia, its

ambassadors, the country, its inhabitants, abounds, but the device of masquing as Muscovites appears, from the perspective of 1590-95, decidedly newfangled.

The Russian gambit, despite its smart topicality, is made to serve in an entertainment remarkably conventional in its formal aspects--almost *démodé*--for Navarre's trend-setting court. This type of masque is encountered in England throughout the 16th century, and in Shakespearean drama we find it utilized, with some variation, in Romeo and Juliet, I.iv-v, Much Ado About Nothing, II.i, Timon of Athens, I.ii, and Henry VIII, I.iv. Like the masques in the two former plays, that of Love's Labour's Lost is put together rather hurriedly. This impromptu quality typified the simple masquerade as it was developing in Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries.¹² Unlike the masquers in Romeo and Juliet and Much Ado About Nothing, however, Navarre and his court feel their production warrants certain literary embellishments. When Romeo suggests the possibility of a speech to explain their masquing, Benvolio rejects the idea as old-fashioned.¹³ In any event, either with or without "such prolixity," what Navarre and his courtiers try to do had been done many times before, and at least once with participants some of whom proved as intractable as the Princess and her ladies. In the third year of Henry VIII's reign,

On the daie of the Epiphanie at night, the kyng with xi. other wer disguised, after the maner of Italie, called a maske, a thyng not seen afore in Englande, thei were appareled in garmentes long and brode, wrought all with gold, with visers and cappes of gold, and after the banket doen, these Maskers came in, with sixe gentlemen disguised in silke bearyng staffe torches,