Book Reviews

Martin Butler. *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. Pp 447.

Martin Butler's new book explores the court masque under James I and Charles I, covering the period from James's accession in 1603 until the performance of the last Stuart masque (*Salmacida Spolia*) in 1640. Butler has published widely on Caroline drama and the Stuart court masque and is currently editing, with Ian Donaldson and David Bevington, the forthcoming *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson. Theatre and Crisis, 1632–1642* (Cambridge: CUP), Butler's 1984 monograph, was crucial to the re-evaluation of received notions of the decadence and frivolity of Caroline drama as it argued for hitherto neglected complexities in the relationships between the different theatres (popular and elite), their frequently overlapping audiences, and contemporary political tensions.

In *The Stuart Court Masque,* Butler is again interested in complicating the political dimensions of a genre that has often been read either as a trivial and self-indulgent art form or as a state propaganda machine designed to glorify the monarch and his court. Butler argues that the Stuart court masques both reflected and helped to shape a continually fluctuating political narrative. As such, the masque can no longer be read as one-dimensional and purely celebratory. Butler adroitly negotiates the difficult terrain of 'a form in which the transcendent meets the contingent, extravagance tips into redundancy, and the purposeful and pleasurable are locked in indissoluble embrace' (8–9) by providing a wealth of archival and contextual material in order to situate the masques in particular and specific moments of historical conflict and change. The book's initial chapters reveal a decidedly anthropological perspective as Butler engages in the kind of 'thick-description' contextualization propounded by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz. Butler considers the economy of the masque as a kind of ritual of excess, or potlatch, arguing that

'the economic excess of masquing had as much to do with the self-definition of a community built around prestige and honour as it did with any more narrowly defined political objective' (77).

Butler's structural approach, in which each chapter opens with a representative anecdote followed by critical analysis, emphasizes his stated aim of moving away from New Historicist methodologies (which were themselves characterized by just such anecdote and analysis structures) and into what Butler refers to as a 'new historiography'. Perhaps Butler evokes the New Historicist tradition in order to offer a way of moving beyond it and instead to foreground an empirical, archival approach to contextualizing text and performance. The wide array of source material evident in the book testifies to Butler's desire to empiricize and particularize the masques' political contexts, as he considers the masque texts alongside archival sources such as letters, household inventories, diplomatic communications, manuscript libels, and account books.

Butler acknowledges in his first chapter the groundbreaking early work done by Stephen Orgel in *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge MA, 1965) and *The Illusion of Power* (Berkeley, 1975) and by Jonathan Goldberg in *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Baltimore, 1983) in recuperating the court masque from 'generations of critics' for whom 'masques were an embarrassment' (9). He calls into question, however, the way in which Goldberg's analysis, by concentrating on the masques as instances of Jacobean 'doubleness', returns to the 'vexing subversion/containment debate that followed New Historicism everywhere' (16). Such an analysis, Butler maintains, elides the masques' significant potential to 'signal change or conflict' (16) by locating any intimations of dissent within a framework that ultimately works to legitimate royal authority. Butler also confronts Orgel's univisualist conception of the court masque, arguing that the masques responded to the needs not only of the crown but of other sponsors and spectators as well.

The book's later chapters shift towards close readings of the function of specific masques in creating a public identity for the crown and the nation. Butler argues that in his early reign particularly James I struggled to find 'a coherent iconography for the identity of the Jacobean court' (92) given the three diverse nations over which he ruled. Not all of the masques performed in this period treated the subject of Union in the same way and Butler argues that their divergent positions point to the fact that 'court culture did not simply ventriloquize the royal will but mediated between political elites, conscripting and orchestrating into a political body the members of

this complex institution' (124). Even as the masques sought to represent a coherent national identity, they exposed the tensions and difficulties inherent in such a project.

Butler offers a compelling analysis of the roles of the queens consort in his fifth chapter, 'The Consort's Body'. His isolated discussion of Anne of Denmark's and Henrietta Maria's roles in the court masques, however, contributes to an unfortunate impression that women's participation in the masques occurred in a framework apart from and other than the court contexts which Butler otherwise so convincingly elucidates. The chapter does successfully argue that, unlike other arenas of public life, 'masques were privileged spaces where new kinds of female agency could develop' (130). Women's participation in the masques ranged from sponsorship to performative aspects such as dancing and singing, and included speaking parts in Townshend's (and Henrietta Maria's) 1632 *Tempe Restored* at least. Butler argues that the queens' masques were symbolically complex, revealing 'not outright subversion so much as an ongoing tension between female self-assertion and male control' (131). The queens' households were politicized spaces that drew competing factions into each woman's circle of influence. Masques such as Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* and *Tethys' Festival* and Davenant's *Luminalia* played a vital role in forming and publicizing such alliances.

Butler's treatment in 'The Revival of Chivalry' of the masques sponsored by and for Prince Henry in the period before his premature death in 1612 is exceptional. Prince Henry's court (kept from 1610 until his death) was a site of competing iconography between the king and his heir; the young Prince's courtiers drew on the symbolism of the chivalric code and Arthurian legend in order to celebrate him as a militant protestant champion. Butler argues that *Oberon, The Fairy Prince,* which appeared directly before the attainment of Henry's majority, 'aimed not only to signal Henry as James's successor, but to express the climate of reform with which he was increasingly identified' (188). For Butler, a crucial aspect of this and other masques often ignored in critical treatments is their expression of and engagement in foreign policy concerns. He does much to remedy this lacuna, focusing throughout the book on the ways in which the court masques espoused or debated foreign policy, on the competition between foreign dignitaries for entrance to this privileged space, and on their responses to the masques' symbolic programs. In this vein, Butler regards the revival of chivalry surrounding Henry as a place for courtiers to express 'attitudes that were out of step with Whitehall' (174), including the desire for a more aggressive assertion of England's

alliance with such fellow protestant nations as the Netherlands against the power of Spain and the Hapsburgs. The relationship between king and heir was not simply antagonistic, however, since 'the Prince's autonomy was complicated by the fact that he was, quite literally, affiliated to the King' (177); Butler's analysis takes care not to oversimplify such nuances.

For Butler, the death of the Prince of Wales marked a turning point in the masques, which generally became less preoccupied with foreign policy debates and instead turned to look inward, evincing concerns with the domestic economy and the preferment of political and personal favourites. Butler provides a perceptive analysis of the role of the favourite in late Jacobean and early Caroline masques like *Love Restored, The Golden Age Restored, Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue,* and *The Gypsies Metamorphosed.* The eighth chapter, 'The Jacobean Crisis', explores the political dimensions of Jacobean masques after the beginning of the Bohemian Crisis in 1618 and during the contentious negotiations for Charles's Spanish Match. Butler considers Charles's 1623 voyage to Spain as 'the severest challenge to [James's] authority in the entire reign' (264) and argues that the masque meant to celebrate his return, *Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion,* empowered Charles more than any previous entertainment even as it celebrated James and affirmed his sovereignty. The late Jacobean entertainments, Butler argues, became more partisan, affirming the peaceful foreign policy endorsed by James but increasingly contentious among court factions. The masques thus 'helped to reinforce those polarizations which were gradually working to unsettle the early Stuart state' (275) and as a result tended to confirm the impression that James was a rigid and inflexible policy-maker intolerant of dissenting opinions.

The book's final two chapters explore the changing nature of the masques in Charles's early reign and in the years leading up to civil war. Without ignoring moments of crisis in the 1630s and 40s, Butler nevertheless stresses the revisionist perspective that the civil war was by no means an inevitable and unpreventable occurrence. Butler challenges assumptions that the Caroline court danced blithely on as gathering tensions 'outside' led inexorably towards conflict, and he takes to task those critics who consider the masques to be 'politically naïve, if not a cause of the coming crisis' (284). Butler considers masques of the early reign like *Love's Triumph, The Triumph of Peace, Albion's Triumph, The Triumphs of the Prince D'Amour,* and *Britannia Triumphans,* arguing that their conspicuously 'triumphant' names represented a masque culture that focused closely on the personality of the king and that aimed 'to proclaim the monarch as leader' (287). The Caroline masques

were innovative in a number of ways, and Butler persuasively argues that these innovations — the relative structural looseness of the masques, the immediate printing of the masque texts, and the reinvention of masques as 'triumphs' — served a new political agenda. They helped to define and polarize political factions in the later reign as Charles's glorious and triumphant masques became more obviously distanced from his increasingly rigid and inflexible political identity.

Admittedly outside Butler's scope in this book are masques and entertainments performed away from the court space. The gap is a discernable one, since Butler concludes the book with a suggestive discussion of the extent to which Milton's *Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* (1634) 'was constituted in telling ways against the Whitehall masques' (353). This conclusion hints at an entire dimension of masques and entertainments occurring outside the centre, and a consideration of this element in relation to the court masques could certainly have enriched the study. Butler addresses this limitation, noting that James Knowles's forthcoming book will explore festival culture occurring in the provinces and great houses. Appended to the book is an exceptionally useful and detailed annals of masques and entertainments that includes great-house theatricals as well as court entertainments. Butler's book is a valuable and elegant contribution to the study of the Stuart court masque and will be integral to the reassessment of its complexly political nature.

Kirsten A. Inglis

Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney (eds). *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Pp 234.

The title of Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney's new collection deliberately juxtaposes two concepts often still considered incompatible. Can 'computers', with their binary and uncritical approach, really provide insight into 'the mystery of authorship'? Craig and Kinney's neurologically-informed introduction suggests that creativity depends on a necessarily limited series of patterns within the seemingly infinite human brain. Linguistic computing depends on the belief that some of these patterns and habits of mind can be identified and extrapolated using machines, allowing us to uncover a dis-