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Laurence Shafe

How did the Caroline court masques reflect the concerns and self-image of Charles I?

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All that are harsh, all that are rude,
Are by your harmony subdued;
Yet so into obedience wrought,
As if not forced to it, but taught.[1]

This verse from the final song of the final masque at court indicates the King's desire to bring peace to the country didactically rather than through force. Of course, this failed and Charles has as a result been seen as a weak, isolated and deluded monarch who spent his time on aesthetic pleasures while his realm collapsed into civil war.[2] Mark Kishlansky describes a litany of historians that see Charles in this way and even in 2006 a professor of history said of Charles "one might wonder what his strengths as King had been," but in order to understand Charles's self-image we must try to understand those strengths.[3]

Kishlansky argues that the evidence for many of Charles's faults is weak or non-existent and he says Charles placed the greatest value on "order, peace, domesticity, spirituality and aesthetics" but he was a victim of an upsurge of anti-Catholic bigotry, a fiscal system that impoverished the crown and changing attitudes about the relationship between a subject and his sovereign. He goes on to argue that he was principled, truthful, willing to make compromises, forgiving, flexible and a man of his word who travelled widely around the country. This is a very different image from that presented in most history books and one that is perhaps closer to his personal self-image. We must remember that as late as 1637 Charles described himself as "the happiest king in Christendom" and it is a mistake to interpret his reign in the light of the events of 1640 onwards.[4]

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[1] From *Salmacida Spolia* by William Davenant and Inigo Jones, see D. Lindley, The Politics of Music in the Masque, *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 292

[2] M. Kishlansky, Charles I: A Case of Mistaken Identity, *Past and Present*, No. 189 (Nov. 2005), p. 41-49. The list of Charles's faults includes "crass stupidity", "weak of limb", "slow of speech", "short of self-confidence", "an inability to compromise", "transparent dishonesty", "authoritarian", "inaccessible", "self-righteous", "deceitful", "secretive", "tactless", "arrogant" and "naïve"

[3] T. Harris, *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy 1685-1720* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), p. 10

[4] R. Strong, *Van Dyck: Charles I on Horseback* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), p. 27

Central to Charles's self-image was his absolute belief in the divine right of kings. He regarded it as his duty to rule and he expected his subjects' absolute loyalty and unquestioning obedience. He regarded the basis of government as through his goodwill not because he was bound by law, and he believed he was answerable only to God.[5] This belief was inculcated into him from an early age and is laid out in detail in his father's book *Basilicon Doron*, for example,

> *"[A good King] acknowledgeth himself ordained for his people, having received from God a burden of government, whereof he must be countable."*[6]

As he viewed himself as divinely appointed his self-image was associated with the attributes of God and, allegorically, the gods of mythology. Gods exhibited ideal, Platonic attributes such as Justice, Peace, Fame and Glory. These abstract attributes were personified in mythology so that they could be seen and interact with the other gods and with mortals. Charles could therefore represent these personifications in art to reinforce his self-image. In a masque they were represented by his courtiers, by the design of their dress, by the words spoken and the action performed and by the overall setting and theme.

I will suggest that for someone who was totally convinced of his divinely appointed role the masque was an effective way to teach the "harsh" and the "rude". Within this didactic programme Charles ruled by example and took on a limited set of roles like an actor on a stage. The primary roles identified by Roy Strong are emperor, knight, lover, hero and god to which, as we shall see later, we must add philosopher.[7] These roles reflect his self-image and were closely interrelated, for example as Philogenes in *Salmacida Spolia* "the love of the king for the queen is mirrored in the love for his people, which in turn mirrors that heavenly love that binds the whole cosmos in universal harmony."[8] Through his role as Garter Sovereign Charles linked his knightly role with a religious theme and in *Callipolis* he is suitor knight to his queen, a theme which in *Albion's Triumph* is linked to his role as an ancient British king and in *Coelum Britannicum* as a knight.[9]

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[5] C. Wedgwood, The King's Peace 1637-1641 (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1983), p. 64

[6] Wedgwood (1983), p. 63. In his address to Parliament on 21 March 1609 James goes even further when he states "for Kings are not only God's lieutenants, and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called Gods." Strong (1972), p. 89

[7] Strong (1972), p. 95

[8] Strong (1972), p. 88

[9] St. George was the patron saint of the Order of the Garter; see Strong (1972), p. 59, for *Callipolis* see p. 65, for *Albion's Triumph* and *Coelum Britannicum* p. 74. Although it is less relevant for an active

Charles had many concerns but they can be summarised as money, foreign policy and religion. We can also add dissent although Charles believed his divine authority required unquestioning obedience and so the idea of dissent was more of a puzzle to him than a concern. This is indicated by the theme of *Salmacida Spolia* in which a "harsh" and "rude" population must be taught how to behave. In other words, Charles believed his subjects were in dissent because they failed to understand the rightness of his absolute authority and God-given right to govern. It was Charles's failure to recognise dissent as expressing an alternative point of view that needed to be dealt with that exacerbated the situation that led to his overthrow.

Money, or the lack of it, was at the root of many of Charles's problems as he could not implement his policies without the agreement of Parliament. He sought to overcome this problem first by trying to work with Parliament and later by raising money through taxes that were arguably within the King's prerogative, such as the ship tax.[10] The avarice of his courtiers and their failure to support him financially is discussed later in *Salmacida Spolia*.

His foreign policy was often in conflict with Parliament as he continued his father's policy of peace and this required him to form associations with Catholic countries. The masque enabled Charles to present his peace policy directly to the foreign ambassadors at court.

Charles had many problems and concerns regarding religion. For example, he decided to bring the Scottish Church into conformity with the Church of England which ultimately led to an unpopular war with Scotland.[11] He agreed peace treaties with Catholic France and Spain and married a French Catholic princess.[12] He appointed and supported Archbishop William Laud, "the greatest calamity ever visited upon the Church of England."[13] Finally, and perhaps in the end most seriously, these steps caused his personal religious beliefs to be questioned. Charles's concern was then to address these conflicts by finding ways to explain to Parliament and the country the correctness of his views.

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masque all these roles are often overlaid by the attribute of melancholy, a fashionable hallmark of all those eminent in philosophy, politics, poetry and the arts and associated with passivity, gazing into the infinite, the colour black, greenwood trees, academic learning and meditation, see Strong (1972), p. 95-96

[10] Sharpe, (1992), pp. 105-130

[11] Kishlansky (2005), p. 46

[12] Sharpe (1992), pp. 65-70 and pp. 168-173

[13] Sharpe (1992), p. 276

The Caroline Masque

The court masque was an important phenomenon across Europe and as well as being an entertainment it conveyed crucial messages to ambassadors and courtiers. "It is the very essence of a masque that it is an elitist 'mirror'."[14] That is, the message it conveys is the one the king wants to reflect. Although it was once dismissed by historians as the most "narcissistic and exclusive of genres" but Sharpe points out the fact that "a monarch as hard-working as Charles devoted so much time to entertainments alerts us to their political significance."[15] It has also been pointed out that the masques were not merely a 'mirror' but did provide "cautious but unmistakable critiques of Charles's policy".[16]

In general a masque presented a world view of the divine monarch based on the authority of mythology and ancient references made memorable through the use of music, dancing, and theatrical effects. The basic message was power presented simply and clearly, backed by the authority of antiquity and reinforced through exotic and expensive spectacle. In order to spread the propaganda the annotated text of each masque was published and distributed.

Charles was very different from his learned father who, although he disliked the arts, allowed them enormous freedom. Charles loved the arts but he used them as a tool to demonstrate and support his self-image. This difference lies at the heart of the difference between Jacobean and Caroline masques. James did not become personally involved in masques but Charles took an active part and is likely to have had a firm grip on the images and symbolism used to project his self-image across all forms of artistic production.

During James's reign theatre had become an important method of communication as well as big business and by the time of the Caroline court "fictions were not seen as retreats from reality, but an engagement with it in order to mediate higher truths."[17] It was also the case that theatre and masques were not simply an entertainment but were extremely important

[14] I. Ewbank, Masques and Pageants in B. Ford (ed.) *The Cambridge Cultural History of Britain, Volume 4: Seventeenth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 113
[15] Sharpe (1992), p. 227
[16] This issue is discussed in M. Butler, Politics and the Masque: "The Triumph of Peace", *Seventeenth Century*, 2:2 (1987: July), pp. 117-141. The quote is from S. Orgel and R. Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 volumes (London and Berkeley, California, 1973), Vol 1, p. 63
[17] Sharpe (1992), p. 223

politically, in fact "theater and politics were so closely meshed by 1649 that they became nearly indistinguishable."[18]

Charles and Henrietta Maria both took an active role and the involvement of the Queen was significant as many of the themes of courtly love had been brought by her from the French court. [19] Charles's various roles have been discussed but when they appear together "…Charles is generally presented as the embodiment of Heroic Virtue, and Henrietta variously glossed as Divine Beauty or Love…"[20] Thus "Heroic Virtue was fused with Love and Beauty together making a force whose power was represented as irresistible to the State."[21] Their union is also seen as uniting Peace (Charles the son of the peace-loving James I) with War (Henrietta Maria, the daughter of the warrior Henry IV of France). This was very different from the Jacobean court and was associated with "The shift to the cult of Platonic love"[22] in the Caroline court and in the end "Love was the unofficial religion of the Court."[23]

This symbolism was also used in other art forms, for example, in many paintings of the period such as Rubens *Allegory on the Blessings of Peace*, 1629-30 and Honthorst's *Apollo and Diana*, 1628.[24] In broad terms all the art of the Caroline court was intended to reinforce the self-image of Charles, from, for example, the busts of Charles I by Le Sueur and the Ruben's ceiling in the Banqueting House to the masques themselves.

The cost of a masque was high, a typical masque cost the same as building a country house and one masque cost £20,000, the same as a small army.[25] However, the cost has been overstated by many historians. The finances of Charles are complex but by 1641 the King's income was £899,482 and in the year of his death the deficit he had inherited from his father was virtually wiped out, and so the masques were expensive but affordable.[26] Nevertheless, they were viewed by opponents of the King as an outrageous waste of money and this view

[18] N. Maguire, The Theatrical Mask/Masque of Politics: The Case of Charles I, *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Jan., 1989), p. 7
[19] "…the King and Queen were accomplished dancers, and chose to star in their own masques…," see G. Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603-1642* (Manchester: Manchester University press, 1981), p. 184. Also see Strong (1972), p. 65 regarding the queen's French influence
[20] Parry (1981), p. 184
[21] Strong (2004), p. 235
[22] Parry (1981), p. 189 and Strong (1972), p. 66
[23] Parry (1981), p. 190
[24] O. Millar, Charles I, Honthorst, and Van Dyck, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 96, No. 611 (Feb., 1954), pp. 36-42
[25] This masque, *The Triumph of Peace*, was paid for by four private societies, see Wedgwood (1983), p. 62 and G. Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603-1642* (Manchester: Manchester University press, 1981), p. 194
[26] Sharpe, (1992), p. 125 and p. 129

has been propagated ever since and they are generally regarded as a simple extravagance by a King who, it is argued, was so out of touch with reality that it eventually led to Civil War.[27]

An alternative explanation is that Charles was using the masque as a propaganda weapon in a war of ideas. If he had been successful in educating his court and through them the country it would have been a justifiable expense. To us this appears a naïve objective but we must remember that, as Carlyle wrote of the Stuart period, it was "an age full of pageantry, of grotesque Symbolising."[28] The masque gained authority from being founded in antiquity and solid learning and this aspect helped support Charles's message.[29] However, Charles failed to take into account cultural changes that had been brought about by the theatre and this resulted in alternative interpretations by the viewer and reader. As Sharpe points out, festivals were ineffective as a means of communication and influence.[30]

There were also wider socio-political issues that doomed Charles's efforts. Sharpe explains that, "The chain of communication between central government and the locality had lost important links—and lost them at a time when local politics had begun to develop its own momentum."[31] It is not clear why communication broke down but Thomas Cogswell suggests it was related to "the new 'underground' system for the circulation of news" that was entirely beyond the government's control.[32]

By looking at the masques more closely we can understand the messages more clearly and how they supported Charles's self-image and addressed his concerns. The principal Caroline court masques are:

1625 *The Fortunate Isles* (Jonson)
1631 *Love's Triumph through Callipolis* (Jonson)
1631 *Chloridia* (Jonson)
1632 *Albion's Triumph* (Townshend)
1632 *Tempe Restored* (Townshend)

[27] See C. Main's review of Stephen Kogan's The Hieroglyphic King: Wisdom and Idolatry in the Seventeenth-Century Masque in *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer, 1988), p. 357. Kogan describes the "Caroline temper" as "arrogant and seductive", "pompous and nasty", Charles as having no good qualities and Caroline masques as having "a deep-rooted superficiality".
[28] Ewbank (1992), p. 105
[29] Sharpe (1992), p. 230 points out that in the case of the *Triumph of Peace* 3,000 copies were sold.
[30] K. Sharpe, Representations and Negotiations: Text, Images, and Authority in Early Modern England, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 3, (Sep., 1999), p. 880
[31] K. Sharpe, "Crown, Parliament and Locality: Government and Communication in Early Stuart England, *English Historical Review* 100 (1986), p. 334 and p. 322
[32] T. Cogswell, The Politics of Propaganda: Charles I and the People in the 1620s, *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Jul., 1990), pp. 189

1634 *The Triumph of Peace* (Shirley)
1634 *Coelum Britannicum* (Carew)
1635 *The Temple of Love* (Davenant)
1638 *Britannia Triumphans* (Davenant)
1638 *Luminalia* (Davenant)
1640 *Salmacida Spolia* (Davenant)

All the masques were designed by Inigo Jones and written by Ben Jonson from the start of James's reign. In 1631 they quarrelled and from that point masques were written by others and "Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong suggest that the King himself may have been the chief collaborator with Jones on the masques after 1631."[33]

In order to show more specifically how masques reflected Charles's concerns and self-image I will look at two in more detail, *Chloridia* and *Salmacida Spolia.*[34]

Chloridia[35]

> *"…Chloridia proposes a fable that shows the earth radiant with divinity as the gods decide to make earth co-equal with heaven…"*[36]

The story reinforces Charles's image as a God, hero and knightly lover by showing how Britain, under his rule, was equal to Heaven. To signify this Jupiter (Jove) commands Chloris to deck the Earth with flowers as the equivalent to the stars in Heaven.

> *It is decreed, by all the gods*
> *The Heaven of Earth shall have no odds,*
> *But one shall love another:*
> *Their glories they shall mutual make,*
> *Earth look on Heaven, for Heaven's sake;*
> *Their honours shall be even:*
> *All emulation cease, and jars;*
> *Jove will have Earth to have her stars*
> *And lights, no less than Heaven.*

The imagery of classical mythology could be used to give authority to the message and for entertainment as it appealed both to the learned scholar and through Jones's costume design to the salacious. However, any presentation of mythological gods had to be rationalised with the Christian beliefs of the court and Charles's view of himself as a representative of God on earth. This had been a problem for Christianity since the early Renaissance and the normal

[33] Parry (1981), p. 185
[34] *Chloridia* is the last masque written by Ben Jonson and *Salmacida Spolia* is by Davenant and was presented at court on Tuesday, 21st January 1640, for both masques see D. Lindley (Ed.), *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments 1605-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 147-154, pp. 200-213, pp. 259-260 and pp. 269-271
[35] The text of *Chloridia* is taken from Lindley, D. (Ed.), *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments 1605-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 147-154
[36] Parry (1981), p. 187

solution was to treat the myths allegorically, a strategy that was "familiar to Christian interpreters of the Bible, who were accustomed to read biblical narratives on both a literal and an allegorical level. By allegorical interpretation any myth could be given a Christian meaning."[37]

Through allegory the masques therefore could represent God and the Christian Heaven with lesser gods personifying Neo-Platonic attributes such as Jealousy and Fame. In this way Charles could construct, through Jonson and Jones, a very clear Christian message. For example, in the above passage Jove, representing the Christian God, is recognising Charles's realm as a Christian Heaven on earth but without the danger of blasphemy.

An important aspect introduced into the masque was the antimasque, a performance or series of performances before the masque itself started that highlighted the moral of the masque through presenting its opposite. It was popular as it presented the opportunity for outlandish and lewd entertainment. It was presented by professional actors who took the part of evil and disruptive elements. The antimasque became a way of introducing a more exotic, spirited and outrageous entertainment at the start of the masque to get the audiences' attention. The antimasque is always brought to an end by the King or his courtiers appearing to start the masque proper.

In *Chloridia* the antimasque is based on the idea of Cupid being banished to Hell and then an angry Cupid rising from Hell. A man dressed as a dwarf on a horse appears as the "Postilion of Hell" and announces that Love so entertained Pluto and Prosperine that Pluto has postponed torments for eternity.

> *"Love hath been lately there, and so entertained by Pluto, and Proserpine, and all the grandees of the place, as it is there perpetual holiday, and a cessation of torment granted, and proclaimed for ever!"*

Cupid then dances with Jealousy, Distain, Fear and Dissimulation followed by various other dances including Tempest, the four winds, Lightning, Thunder, Rain and Snow. Then suddenly Jupiter stops the tempest, peace reigns and Chloris appears with her fourteen nymphs. Two more songs are sung and Juno (queen of the gods and associated with marriage and war) appears with airy spirits in the clouds. After another song Fame is seen

[37] G. Miles (ed.) *Classical Mythology in English Literature: A Critical Anthology* (London: 1999), p. 10

standing with her trumpet in her hand; and on the hill, are seated four persons, presenting Poesy, History, Architecture, and Sculpture.

They each say a line, sing a chorus and the masquers then dance with the lords. The lines can by modern standards be judged trivial but they can be imbued with significance. Fame, representing Charles's current and lasting renown and reputation, is based on "learned poesy" (poetry) and through architecture to "raise thee high" and sculpture "that can keep thee from to die" Charles reputation will survive "severe history". It is interesting that Fame does not depend on the aesthetic qualities of the arts but on their learning and their ability to create a lasting monument to that learning. This reinforces his image of himself as a philosopher king who will go down in history for his learning and be remembered through architecture and sculpture.

This is not the message of a King in fear and desperation but one who is proud of his achievements and believes his fame will survive "severe history". We also know that he thought it was important as "From November onwards the King was daily rehearsing the masque which was to be given at the Christmas revels."[38] *Chloridia* was one of the masques that inflamed Puritan sensibilities as not only did women appear on stage but "the Queen and her ladies may have appeared bare-breasted."[39] This criticism of the masque's morality must have reduced its effectiveness as a tool for public education.

Salmacida Spolia[40]

Salmacida Spolia was written by Davenant and although he has been described as having produced two weak masques in *The Temple of Love* and *Britannia Triumphans* he showed "competence that approached mastery in, *Salmacida Spolia."*[41]

Salmacida Spolia was the last masque to be performed and was "one of the most elaborate ever to be mounted…"[42] It was held twice in 1640 at a time when Parliament had been recalled to approve raising money to fight the Scots.[43] Many of the masquers were known to be opposed to the King's policies and this raises the question of why they should have been selected. One possibility is that the King was hoping that he would convince them of the

[38] Wedgwood (1983), p. 310
[39] Parry (1981), p. 192
[40] The text of *Salmacida Spolia* is taken from D. Lindley (1995), pp. 200-213
[41] Parry (1981), p. 196
[42] Wedgwood, C., The King's Peace 1637-1641 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), p.310
[43] Lindley (1995), p. 269

correct world view through involving them in presenting the message clearly, lavishly and entertainingly. According to Graham Parry, through "*Salmacida Spolia*…Charles hoped to rally to his side the men he believed most influential in the nation."[44]

This masque, like many others, is based on the Divine Love between the King and Queen. It starts with Discord trying to bring disorder to England as she has brought it to the rest of Europe. They are stopped in their activities by a secret power which is the King and his court appearing. The King is named Philogenes or Lover of the People, and he is rewarded by the Queen being sent down from heaven by Pallas.[45] It therefore reinforces his image of himself as lover, hero and God.

This is followed by two ancient parables. In the first a tribe of fierce and cruel barbarians is reduced to the sweetness of the Greeks by serving them with water from a fountain called Salmacis. In the second a battle takes place between the Peloponnesians and the Argives during which both sides suffer great damage and slaughter. The King out of mercy and clemency approves the first proverb.

This can be interpreted as presenting a choice. Either the country accepts the sweet water of reason of the King's wisdom or there will be a civil war which will result in the destruction of both sides. The King is signalling to the court that he is willing to go down either path but his mercy, in the face of rebellion and dissent, is to choose the path of sweetness and reason. The implication is that the dissenting courtiers should do the same. Here we see the masque being used to address his concern about dissent by wisely choosing the path of reason and peace.

Suddenly, another antimasque starts with a Fury appearing through storm and tempest out of a fiery earth with snakes in her hair and breasts hanging down to her waist. She starts a speech in which she complains that England has been at peace too long and calls down the Furies to create a storm that will cover the country. She describes the rich as full of avarice and not supporting the state financially and she describes the ambitious poor obeying "The false, in hope to rule whom they betray". This directly addresses Charles's concern about money and clearly he believes part of the problem is his courtiers' failure to support him financially.

[44] Parry (1981), p. 200
[45] The text of the masque is taken from D. Lindley (1995), p. 200-213

The antimasque ends and the scene changes to a calm landscape of pleasant trees with vines covered in grapes.[46] Concord appears out of heaven and is joined by the Good Genius of Great Britain and they sing "Why should I hasten hither, since the good I bring to men is slowly understood." They add that people lay too cheap a price on their blessings and Concord says "I shall be valued when I'm gone." Genius persuades Concord to stay to support Philogenes, the wise and great King whose fate it is to rule in adverse times.

This is followed by twenty separate antimasque performances ranging from "An ancient Irishman, presented by Mr Jay" to "four grotesques or drollities, in the most fantastical shapes that could be devised."

The antimasques are partly entertainment, partly a clear and simple didactic message; the country is on the brink of war because the King has been betrayed by the rich not giving him enough money and by the poor seeking to rule. It has also been caused by the country being at peace for so long that people have stopped thinking about their blessings ("On every blessing they possess; Th'enjoying makes them think it less"). Here we see Charles's rationalisation of the nation's dissent—it is a result of his being so successful as peacemaker that his subjects now take their blessings for granted and have the time to discuss their smallest concerns and turn them into major issues.

A chorus led by Concord and Genius then sings in praise of the Queen Mother as "the spring" that gave rise to the "fair partner of our monarch's throne." The stage divides and the King appears on a gold throne with his lords about him. The third song talks about the dangers of rumours ("Murmur's is a sickness epidemical") but how the King through mercy did not punish "vulgar sickness as a sin". They end by saying that through his "strength of virtues" the King is "fit to govern".

The Queen and her ladies then descend from the clouds. Various themes of praise are sung – "You that are so wisely studious", "Lovers are chaste" because of her, and "The valiant take from her their fire." The King and Queen then dance together and this is followed by a song of praise and wonder at their beauty.

[46] Another common theme of the masques is that of the pastoral and Neo-Platonic arcadia; see R. Strong (1972), pp. 77-81. This is also associated in other works of art with the king as hunter and killer of vices, another variation of St. George defeating the biblical serpent

The scene changes and eight figures representing the spheres appear followed by "a heaven opened full of deities". This is followed by a song in praise of the King and Queen that includes the quote that starts this essay and finishes,

> *That we may wish your sceptres ruling here,*
> *(Loved even by those who should your justice fear)*
> *When we are gone, when to our last remove*
> *We are dispatched, to sing your praise above.*

This final verse suggests a political settlement. If the courtiers that are criticizing the King loved him instead then they do not need to fear his justice. Finally, there is a reminder that it is the gods in heaven that praise the King not any earthly power, his authority comes directly from heaven.

Salmacida Spolia supports the King's self-image as a peaceful, divine, just and merciful king. With the country on the brink of civil war it is interesting that the message has not changed to a more forceful one, such as the divine retribution that will occur against those who oppose the King. To the end the King remains loyal to his beliefs, principles and self-image.

Conclusion

Charles was not our best monarch but many of his weaknesses appear from recent research to have been over-stated. When considering the masque it is easy for us to see it as a frivolous and expensive luxury in which the court indulged while dissension grew across the country. We are inclined to think Charles should have spent more time governing and less time practising his "galliard, dancing on tiptoes, *conge*, *plié*, kissing of the hands, and much more".[47]

However, there is an alternative explanation of the masque. Although widely questioned by modern historians Clarendon wrote in the *History of the Rebellion* in 1646 that the "peace and plenty and universal tranquillity for ten years was never enjoyed by any nation" and he likens the years of Charles's personal rule to a golden age.[48]

Roy Strong writes that "The decade and a half before the outbreak of civil war in 1642 witnessed an enmeshing of culture and political ideology on an unprecedented scale" and

[47] Congé is a formal bow and plié a dance movement when the knees are bent outwards keeping a straight back. See D. Bevington and P. Holbrook *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 14

[48] R. Anselment, Clarendon and the Caroline Myth of Peace, *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring, 1984), p. 37

"the masques were at the heart of the court's cultural life."[49] The masque was part of theatre, which in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period became big business; it is estimated that there were over 50 million visits to the theatre between 1576 and 1642.[50] Previously a "hegemonic political culture scripted successfully to underpin the divine authority of monarchs and to contain all dissent" broke down as playwrights created "the master narratives of their culture" which staged regicide and rebellion and "exposed the dissimulations and intrigues that lay in the shadows of divine rule".[51]

The masque was an allegory for the kingdom in which the king had the central role. By employing the best writers and designers, by spending sufficient to create a memorable spectacle and by embodying the authority of antiquity Charles hoped to teach the court and the nation their role as obedient servants. However, the masque was part of a much larger cultural phenomenon, the theatre, which became the prime "new commodity and service" and Jacobean playwrights had already de-mythologized kings and undermined Charles's attempt to use the masque to support his role as the divinely appointed monarch. The masque has been described as a 'mirror' but it was ultimately one that buckled under the weight of cultural change and so failed to reflect the self-image and concerns of Charles in ways he could exploit.

In the end the Caroline masque shows Charles's failure as a communicator. He was influencing and appearing in plays that were by then out-dated and which failed to address the concerns of the period. He was overtaken by cultural changes and failed to respond appropriately resulting in perhaps his greatest and certainly his most tragic performance at his trial and execution.

(Word count: 3,491 - excluding footnotes and quotes)

[49] R. Strong, *The Arts in Britain: A History* (London: Pimlico, 2004), p. 233 and p. 235
[50] K. Sharpe, Representations and Negotiations: Text, Images, and Authority in Early Modern England, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 3, (Sep., 1999), p. 857
[51] Sharpe (1999), pp. 855-856

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