"The Hall must not be pestred": Embedded Masques, Space, and Dramatized Desire

John R. Ziegler

IN Philip Massinger’s The City Madam, Anne, daughter of the prideful Lady Frugal, itemizes her conditions for marriage to her suitor Lacy. Among them is a “friend to place me at a masque” (2.2.115).1 The play locates masques and their audiences within a nexus of fashion, emulation, self-display, social ambition, and theatergoing, pointing to the masque as an object of desire, especially for the upwardly mobile.2 Yet while someone like Anne might be able simply to buy a box for herself and her retinue at the Blackfriars, she could not as easily attend a masque. Entrance to a masque could not be purchased, and the average Londoner had a much better chance of hearing the cry “A hall, a hall! Let no more citizens in there” at the door than of being admitted to the performance (3.2.81).3 This line, spoken by a gentleman usher in George Chapman’s The Widow’s Tears (c. 1605?; printed 1612), neatly sketches the tensions surrounding masquing spaces.4 Because access to spaces where masques were performed was so restricted, the embedded masques contained in a significant number of early modern English plays, most of them Jacobean and early Caroline, could sell a class-based voyeurism—with varying combinations of valorization and critique—to audiences in the commercial playhouses. Such voyeurism, which operates on the same principles as the more commonly discussed sexual voyeurism, lent an eroticism to the space of masque performance, whether actual or represented.

Between the 1590s and 1642, around ninety plays included some version of a masque. As a point of comparison, nearly eighty commercial early modern plays contained dumbshows. However, more than half of these appeared before 1611, after which dumbshows experienced a precipitous and permanent drop-off. Embedded masques, on the other hand, while somewhat less common in each of the two decades between 1611 and 1630, not only maintained consistent numbers following their initial popularity, but actually became more widespread again from 1631 onwards. Despite the enduring and pervasive presence of embedded masques, scholarship to date has dealt with them in almost wholly aesthetic terms and made almost no attempt to account for the social and economic factors underpinning their use. This essay begins
to address that lack by outlining some of the mechanisms by which embedded masques and their productions of space both responded to and participated in the turbulent changes to ideas of social order in early modern London.

Many playgoers would never see a masque in the court or a great house. Admission to a court masque, for instance, depended upon having sufficient rank and connection to the court (for the most part, being an aristocrat or government official), and attendance was technically by invitation only. Even within Patricia Fumerton’s picture of audiences growing increasingly large “as rich merchants and common gentry infiltrated the aristocratic elite,” court officials enforced, to the best of their ability, restrictions on access. Mere wealth did not guarantee entry, nor did rank, as Fumerton herself notes regarding James’s “response to complaints from ambassadors when they were not invited: ‘a Masque is not a public function,’ grumblers were informed, and therefore ‘his Majesty is quite entitled to any Ambassador he may choose.’” Of course, court masques were always a mix of public and private. They were “private” by virtue of their restricted admission, but they were simultaneously “public” in the sense of participating in state matters and including persons of consequence in public life. Plays featuring masques stressed the former at the expense of the latter in a bid to increase their perceived exclusivity (along with the theater’s perceived importance—it could provide access to the hidden practices of public persons), making masques “public” in the second sense: part of the market and available to anyone who could pay for them. Those admitted to actual masques always remained a subset of those who attempted or desired admission. But those not on any guest list might instead go to the theater to watch an impersonation of a masque, to experience the event and its space vicariously. The audience at a performance of The Widow’s Tears, for example, would have seen a “private” nuptial masque including music, a speaking part for Hymen of more than 20 lines, and a dance featuring Sylvans, Hymen, and the bride, Eudora.

The interest of London audiences in voyeuristic representations of the elite was driven by significant increases in the wealth and population of the city during roughly the last quarter of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries. The increased wealth infusing London during this period expanded the possibilities for upward social mobility, which stimulated widespread curiosity about the socioeconomic elite, their fashion, and their behaviors: in short, how to emulate them. It was the era of courtesy manuals, knighthoods for sale, and the eventual abandonment of sumptuary laws. Not coincidentally, embedded masques became a popular device in the first decade of the seventeenth century. They participated in the populuxe market as described by Paul Yachnin: a market composed of “popular, relatively affordable versions of deluxe goods.” Populuxe goods could be practices and cultural output as well as material objects, and the “theater was one of the
originating institutions of the market in populuxe cultural goods, where consumers could enjoy experiences that were redolent of the lives of their social betters."

The impressions of masques that audiences brought to the theater could come from various sources. As Lauren Shohet observes, masques worked "in a diffuse and complex nexus of elite and quasi-public culture." They might, for example, be digested in ballads or have a progress component visible to anyone along the route. In both her recent and previous work on masque reception, she usefully stresses that masques were the objects of both "insider" and "public" gossip and that their texts were distributed both in print and in manuscript, and she cautions us to remember that manuscripts too were sold in bookstalls. She concludes from records of reprintings and complaints of piracy that printed texts of masques produced "lively commercial interest" and retained that interest over time; they were also comparatively cheap—between 2d and 4d, as compared to 1d for a loaf of bread or 6d for many unbound books. Ownership appears to have been widespread, and some texts even included music, encouraging a type of partial in-home recreation. Audiences could also take ideas about masquing from texts like Thomas Middleton's satirical pamphlet The Nightingale and the Ant (1604), which paints the social-climbing dissolution of a prodigal landlord come to London by specifying that he "had been at court and at least in five masques" over Christmas. The final two sections of Thomas Dekker's prose work A Strange Horse Race, At the end of which, comes in The Catch-Pols Masque (1613) use mock descriptions of a masque—apparel, props, torchbearers, dance, and banquet—for satiric ends as well.

Importantly, even those plays that didn’t feature onstage masques also helped to create and circulate images of masques as signals of social achievement. Like The City Madam, another of Massinger’s plays, A New Way to Pay Old Debts (1621–25; printed 1633), associates masques with social advancement. Here, the wealthy citizen Giles Overreach is led to believe that his scheme to marry his daughter to a lord is succeeding and that the lord’s “marriage at court [will be] celebrated / When he has brought your honour up to London” (4.3.97–98). He is told that the “due pomp” of marking his daughter’s entry into the gentry will include “running at the ring, plays, masques, and tilting” (4.3.95). This makes sense to Overreach: “He tells you true; ‘tis the fashion on my knowledge” (4.3.99–100). To Lady Haughty in Ben Jonson’s Epicoene (1609–10; printed 1616), not to have a wedding masque is an offense against ceremony for a bridegroom who has “suck’d the milke of the court” (3.6.78). In fact, it caps her list of missing “markes of solemnitie”: “I must insinuate your errors to you. No gloues? no garters? no skarves? no epithalamium? no masque?” (3.6.83, 87–89). Jonson’s Poetaster (1601; printed 1602) comments on masques in a similar way. It features Chloe, a “gentlewoman borne,” who says she that she became “a citizens
wife; because I heard indeed, they kept their wives as fine as ladies” (2.1.29–31). She taunts her husband, who tries to decorate his residence to appear “courtly,” with her superior social abilities: “Alas man; there was not a gentleman came to your house I your tother wives time, I hope? nor a ladie? nor musique? nor masques?” (2.1.127, 63–65). Plays that actually included embedded masques—which are almost always identified by onstage characters as masques—helped to perpetuate and benefited from the notion of masque participation or attendance as a mark of fashionability and status, for the already elite as well as the socially ambitious. To put it another way, these plays simultaneously fashioned and exploited one of many overlapping theatrical publics.

The masque made its debut on the commercial stage in an atmosphere of increasing wealth and social possibility. At first, from the 1590s through 1611, the majority of plays with embedded masques were performed by boys’ companies in indoor playhouses, venues that attracted a higher grade of spectator, one with more potential for social mobility, than did the open-air amphitheatres. Boys’ companies had traditionally provided entertainment to the court, and had begun their movement toward commercialization and professionalization by charging spectators to attend “private” rehearsals for court productions. So it makes sense that representing masques, the kind of entertainment most inseparable from court culture, first became widespread in children’s troupes. By the time that the Children of the Queen’s Revels first performed The Widow’s Tears, probably in 1610–11 at the Blackfriars and then the Whitefriars, the trend had spread to the adult companies as well, which often played in the less expensive amphitheatres, and so to an even wider audience. The same play, of course, might be performed in both types of venue, as was The Widow’s Tears, with different types of audience response resulting from the different types of space. Later, under Charles I, masques retained their importance in and identification with court life, and so a new generation of playwrights continued to employ the embedded masque until the closing of the playhouses in the 1640s.

Throughout the decades in which the embedded masque was used, the voyeurism it offered entailed a desire to witness not just elite bodies, dress, and behaviors but those bodies, dress, and behaviors within certain types of space. Voyeurism is a way of looking in which the spectator seeks to satisfy desire and exercise (perceived) control over the object(s) of his or her gaze. It is the intention behind the gaze rather than its object or content that defines an instance of looking as voyeuristic, and so the absence of explicitly sexual content does not signal the absence of a voyeuristic impulse. Inequalities of power characterized the voyeuristic desire of the playhouse audience in the same way that they do sexual voyeurism, and these inequalities, in turn, influenced how plays constructed the space of masque performance itself as an object of desire—as eroticized space. This eroticism in turn helped to con-
struct the theater as a more public space (in the sense of a space of social consequence) by placing spectators in a position of perceived power and control. The erotics of space made possible by the dynamics of the audience’s voyeuristic impulse occurs at the point at which wealth, space, and desire entangle. Erotic impulses result from a desire for the inaccessible, and the spaces of the wealthy were not in most cases freely accessible. Michel de Certeau, discussing heterological writing—writing that engenders its “products by means of a passage through or by way of the other” in what he labels a sexual process—asserts that it is precisely the condition of partial failure due to “the inaccessibility of its ‘object’ ” that formulates it as an erotics. His formulation of erotic dynamics applies equally to (inaccessible) space as the object of desire.

In the case of the embedded masque, the inaccessible includes not only the private spaces and entertainments of the elite but also the social ranks to which wealth—that of a successful merchant, say—could not always buy entry. The erotics of the masquing space therefore involves both the failure of the aspiration to see more than representations of the desired space and behaviors and, for some, the failure of economic status to correspond completely to social status.

Embedded masques capitalized on these frustrated (and thus perpetuated) desires. They offered an opportunity to gaze at or watch both aristocrats—or at least representations of aristocrats—and what aristocrats themselves watched. Spectators, especially in indoor theaters, might also have had the chance to watch actual aristocrats watching images of themselves, perhaps even in close physical proximity, a situation which would have helped to blur the distinction between on- and offstage audiences. In these situations, the theater itself would have resembled an actual masquing space, a mixture of public and private. Conceptually, the plays produced versions, attractive though not unreservedly positive, of restricted elite space in the commercial space of the playhouse. Their masques repositioned entertainments normally performed in spaces to which access was constrained by rank in spaces restricted only by the market, and offered them for consumption to a wider range of spectators. To borrow from Yachnin’s description of populuxe goods, they provided audience members “an opportunity to play at being their social ‘betters’ and a limited mastery of the system of social rank itself.” In doing so, they also taught theatergoers something about the artificiality of how elite space was produced. However, this purchased play was transitory. Thus, the space of the theater became a site of incompletely fulfilled desire; the object of desire—the experience of the masque and its attendant spaces, bodies, and behaviors—could then be sold to the consumer again and again.

One of the most fascinating ways by which plays with embedded masques commodified voyeurism was actually to dramatize the desire for the inacces-
sible space of the masque. Plays that did this held out to spectators the added pleasure of a kind of success where many onstage characters failed, and so too a kind of power and superiority: characters were shown struggling for or being denied entrance to masque performances while the audience was permitted (a simulated) access, and allowed to experience those spaces as paying voyeurs.

In order to examine the different ways in which the world of the audience intersects with the world of the play, the remainder of this essay will consider examples of plays that staged and capitalized on desire for the elite space of the masque. The Maid's Tragedy (c. 1610?; printed 1619), performed at an indoor playhouse, and The Two Merry Milkmaids (1619?; printed 1620), performed at an amphitheater playhouse, both depict the struggle over access to space, and both stress the private, secret nature of that space over its public component. Significantly, the former presents the successful enforcement of spatial boundaries, and the latter portrays the successful penetration of elite space by an everyman figure. In these plays, representations of elite spaces and behaviors remain conflicted even as they are marketed to playhouse audiences; their attractiveness is attended by anxiety about increased accessibility and by an undercurrent of critique directed at the very things that they market as desirable.

The Maid's Tragedy, by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, is one of a number of commercially staged plays that dramatize the basic conflict over access to and control over the space of masque performance: the masses desire to get in (and to look), and the elite labor to keep them out (and to keep them from looking). Early in the play, Calianax, a courtier, and his assistant Diagoras work to preserve the space of the court from unwanted onlookers. They are engaged in preparations for a wedding masque to be played before the King of Rhodes, and Calianax knows that "the King will rail" if they regulate access poorly (1.2.2). Aside from the placement of the spectators, which must follow proper hierarchical etiquette, Calianax's primary concern is that Diagoras "look to the doors better" so as not to "let in all the world," a description evoking a fearful jumble of heterogeneity (1.2.1–2). The two men preserve the integrity of the space where the masque will be performed by keeping the doors shut against "such youths and their trulls" as would violate its social and spatial boundaries (1.2.33). After all, such boundaries performed an important social function: one's status allowed entry to the royal space and constructed it as desirable, and occupying that space in turn constructed and/or reinforced that status. The space at court chosen for the masque is "no place" for them (1.2.33).

Even among the elite of Jacobean society, such spatial access could be strictly limited, as the play dramatizes. For instance, after Melantius, brother to Evadne, the bride, identifies himself through the closed door, Diagoras's next concern is to enforce the exclusivity of admittance: "I hope your lord-
ship brings no troop with you, for if you do, I must return them” (1.2.25–26). His somewhat ambiguous choice of words—does “troop” signify a large group of hangers-on or, given Melanitus’s military calling, other soldiers, a group potentially more clearly marked by class stratification?—allows for multiple identifications of the excluded and reinforces the sense of a fear of a private space being overrun by “all the world.” Either way, only Melanitus and his Lady are ultimately permitted to enter, and like the King, the Lady remains nameless, emphasizing her position.

So central is the fear of losing control over spatial boundaries that Calianax frames the entire scene by voicing it. He resents that “the King will have the show i’ th’ court” because it makes his task more difficult, likely because the location is more public and thus attracts a greater number of potential spectators (1.2.3). After he temporarily exits, Diagoras attempts to verify the identities of invitees by yelling to them through the closed doors and dispenses threats to the rest of the offstage crowd: “Stand back there! Room for my lord Melanitus! Pray bear back . . . ! Let the doors shut again! Ay, do your heads itch? I’ll scratch them for you! . . . So, now, thrust and hang!” (1.2.32–35). His wish for the speedy return of his partner suggests that stronger measures might well be taken to protect the masquing space from interlopers: “Would he were here! He would run raging amongst them, and break a dozen wiser heads than his own in the twinkling of an eye!” (1.2.37–39). Maintaining the physical boundary between those whose status allows them to occupy the royally coded space and the remainder of the excluded crowd more than warrants physical violence.

If one did breach the boundary that set off the masquing space (which embedded masques allowed the playhouse audience to do, at least ocularly), one would encounter further sets of boundaries inside, extending the social repercussions of space into the performance area. The importance of precedence in seating at court masques has been well-documented, and Beaumont and Fletcher reproduced that concern on the commercial stage. The entrance and seating of Melanitus’s Lady highlights the importance of hierarchy not just in gaining entry to an elite space but in how that space is then internally arranged. Diagoras explains that the “ladies are all placed above,” except those who are of the King’s party (1.2.28–29). The monarch acts as the focal point of the court masque, and so the closer one’s proximity to him, the greater the status that proximity confers. In other words, proximity to the public figure of the king in this nominally private space measures one’s public importance. In the second quarto of the play, Diagoras continues, “The best of Rhodes sit there, and there’s room,” offering a seat above with the rest of the ladies (1.2.29). In the first quarto, however, the text reads “there is no room,” in which case the referent of “there” is the space nearest the King. Therefore, while the Lady ends up “placed”—a word with significant
social echoes—in the gallery, in both cases, the Q1 reading constitutes a deliberate snub of Melantius (1.2.30). Calianax uses the same tactic shortly thereafter to attack Melantius, whom he considers his enemy. His verbal assault exploits both the internal ordering and construction of space and the social construction of persons through their access to and place within certain spaces. Power over space (and so what can or cannot be seen by others) translates into social power and vice versa. An attempt to deny Melantius entry by virtue of his office having failed, Calianax denigrates him by questioning the right of his Lady to occupy a space “So near the presence of the King” (1.2.59). He asserts that “she must not sit there” because that “place is kept for women of more worth” (1.2.60–61). The multiple meanings of “place” again, appropriately, overlap in these insults. Its frequency and continued oscillation of meaning as the exchange continues suggest a conscious play on the interaction between location and rank in constructing persons and spaces:

MELANTIUS More worth than she? It misbecomes your age And place to be thus womanish.

CALIANAX Why, ’tis well If I stand here to place men’s wenches.

(1.2.62–66)

After Calianax’s insinuation that Melantius’s Lady is available for “placing,” Melantius angrily rejoins that he “shall quite forget this place, thy age, my safety” and murder Calianax for his insults (1.2.67–69). “Place” here describes both spatial and social coordinates, which are mutually constitutive, while it moves denotatively from Calianax’s social position, to the Lady’s location, to the entire royal masquing space. The ideological importance of “place” resurfaces later in the action, when Melantius turns Calianax’s insults against him before the King: "Mark his disordered words, and at the masque. / Diogoras knows, he raged and railed at me / And called a lady 'whore'” (4.2.189–91). Calianax’s disrespect of place, in both senses of the word, is enough to discredit him.

His disrespect of place is also, however, significantly bound up with his sexual disrespect of Melantius’s Lady (her “worth,” or lack thereof, is simultaneously social and sexual), and Melantius’s attack on Calianax is similarly sexualized. That the “place” held by Calianax in his authority over space participates in a sexualized economy of power is signaled by Melantius’s identification of his behavior as “womanish.” Calianax’s reply, with its bawdy pun on “stand,” adds a sexual dimension to placing men’s wenches and reasserts the masculinity challenged by Melantius. Spatial and sexual access overlap, and placing others acquires a gendered coding. The ability to
include or exclude others from, and organize them within, a desired space. It intersects with other types of "masculine" power, becoming another variety of virility and another mark of status.

Following its representations of courtiers maintaining control of access to the masquing space, keeping out those below them in rank, and worrying about their own placement within that space, The Maid's Tragedy then presents to the Blackfriars audience an embedded masque of nearly 150 lines, comparable to the length of some actual masques. This masque, as Michael Neill argues, "prefigures[s] the development of the whole elaborate artifice of structural and rhetorical conceits" throughout the rest of the play, an artifice composed of "a symmetry of inversions and opposites—love and death, marriage and adultery, appearance and reality." To that list, I would add watching and being watched.

In the opening speech of the masque, Night asks Cynthia for light "By which I may discover all the place / And persons, and how many longing eyes / Are come to wait on our solemnities" (1.2.119–21). Night's request illuminates the importance of looking in the economies of status and power and the multiple vectors of the gaze. It also reminds the playhouse audience of its privileged position as watchers. Night, a performer in the masque, returns the gaze of the audience and wishes to distinguish "all the . . . persons" in the audience, presumably to gauge their collective social standing. She comments on the "beauty" (1.2.123) of the audience members, and Cynthia marvels that they look "as if thyself and I / Had plucked our reins in and our whips laid by / To gaze upon these mortals, that appear / Brighter than we" (1.2.130–33). For these showpiece figures of immortality, the elite audience is the real show, and the offstage audience exercises the power of watching both.

When it takes the onstage audience as its subject, the embedded masque, as here, reproduces the voyeuristic imagining that the players represent actual (elite) people on the stage. It thus puts theatergoers (and the various physical areas of the theater) into a relationship of proximity with (representations of) public figures on the stage, and maybe to real aristocrats in the audience, just as would happen for spectators at an actual masque. In doing so, it intensifies the "realism" of the voyeuristic experience and the illusion of access. If characters recognize allusions in a masque to other onstage characters, "real" people within the world of the play, that recognition validates the audience doing the same. That sense of realism may also have been intensified by the artificiality of the onstage masque and its performers, which could have caused the onstage audience to appear all the more real by comparison. Ronald Bedford notes that surviving direct performance accounts "always stress the inalienable world of characters and events as if they were real." He makes a case for defining real in a way that takes into account "the mingled social and theatrical performativity of life in early modern England".
No doubt exactly what is meant by real here is... problematic: but real can very adequately mean 'in conformity with experience or with the observable world,' and in that sense the observable world of Elizabethan London and the experience of its citizens may well have been that their individual selves were for the most part publicly and emblematically represented rather than privately and subjectively conceived and that the performance of a character onstage conformed closely enough to the conditions of social performance operating in real life and hence could be described as 'natural,' 'lifelike,' and 'real.\textsuperscript{36}

In Nathan Field's \textit{A Woman is a Weather-cocke}, Scudamore, comparing his own lover to one onstage, enacts precisely the mingling of "real" and theatrical that Bedford describes:

\begin{quote}
What an internall ioy my heart has felt,  
Sitting at one of these same idle playes,  
When I haue seene a Maids inconstancie  
Presented to the life; how my glad eies  
Haue stole about me, fearing lest my lookes  
Should tell the companie comuented there,  
The Mistris that I had free of such faults.
\end{quote}

(3.2.148–54)\textsuperscript{37}

Scudamore uses stage versions of women—verisimilitudinous versions, in his view, "Presented to the life"—as benchmarks against which to judge his own "Mistris." He concludes that his own woman, and thus his own social identity, is superior to those presented on stage, and his "internall ioy" testifies to the validation that he derives from the act of comparison.

While audience members might not always end up feeling as superior as Scudamore does, they could compare and contrast themselves and their own lives with the onstage objects of their voyeuristic desire and/or imagine correspondences with actual aristocrats in the same way that Scudamore compares dramatic and actual mistresses, thus strengthening their feeling of connection with the elite. Playgoers with an emulative streak might be especially prone to such behavior.\textsuperscript{38} Drawing on pamphlets, stage comedies, and archival evidence from the Bridewell Court Books, Cristine M. Varholy explains that some spectators took from such playhouse comparisons "a desire to touch the fabrics they saw at a distance and to bed the upper-class women whom they saw portrayed."\textsuperscript{39} The result was the use, both in brothels and marriage beds, of opulent clothing in erotic role play that allowed people to pretend to belong to a higher class or to experience sexual encounters with their betters. Their enjoyment depended on the thrill of touching taboo fabrics, but also on the illusion of touching taboo bodies, normally out of reach because of their status.\textsuperscript{40} The same erotic cross-class dynamic applies as well to the onstage masque. It created a relationship of the audience and the different areas it
occupied in the theater to the stage space that compromised the use of spatial boundaries to enforce traditional socioeconomic categorizations by allowing entry to a "masque" performance to non-aristocratic consumers. It also undermined one psychological class barrier of secrecy—"pursuing a mysterious life behind closed doors" to differentiate aristocratic from non-aristocratic classes—by allowing the audience to imaginatively construct itself in close relation to or even as aristocrats.41

When class secrecy is breached on the stage, the next step might be to dramatize a surrogate for audience members accessing elite space, providing them a character onto whom they can project their imaginative self-constructions. The Two Merry Milkmaids takes this step. It was likely performed in 1619, after embedded masques had made their way into the repertoire of the adult companies, and it presented to its amphitheater audience a modified version of the struggle over space, one in which a character from a lower class—in this case, Smirk the clown—successfully infiltrates the aristocratic masquing space. His infiltration places an everyman figure within the masque itself, a figure who functions as a kind of ultimate participant-spectator.

Attributed on the title page to I.C., likely John Cumber, a chief actor and a sharer in Queen Anne’s Company (known until the accession of James I as the Earl of Worcester’s Men), the play displays the same concern as The Widow’s Tears and The Maid’s Tragedy with encroachment upon what is presented as the secret, private life of the elite. The usual enforcement of restricted access plays out, with a breakdown of what happens to the different classes of people who try to gain entry to the revels. Like Chapman’s play, Cumber’s also contains a social climbing plot. The Duke is passing through the countryside, and, in a scene that echoes the later masque sequence, Lord Raymond asks the men to “keepe off the Countrey People, that doe swarme / As thicke as doe the Citie multitude / At sight of any rare Solemnitie” (1.3.291–94). The language of “swarm” and “multitude,” common class-inflected terms, betrays the same anxieties about the socially inferior as Diagoras and Calianax’s descriptions in The Maid’s Tragedy, while “rare Solemnitie” recalls Night’s description of its masque as “our solemnities.”42 There is also an echo of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, in which Hippolyta reassures Theseus that it is but four days until the moon will “behold the night / Of our solemnities” and Theseus includes as part of “this solemnity / In nightly revels” the inset entertainment staged by Bottom and his fellows and mocked by its onstage audience of elite spectators (1.1.10–11, 5.1.352–53).43 Smirk the clown’s response furthers these parallels in attitude, as he threatens violence to preserve the physical barrier between the Duke and the lower classes: “Keepe back there, keepe back, or Ile make your Leather Pelches cry twango else” (1.3.295–96). Dorigene, whose ambition tells her, “Be an Empresse Wench, a Queene, or Duchesse,” disguises herself as a milk-
maid to "ieere the Courtiers" as they pass, takes her first opportunity to negotiate an earldom for her father, and quickly turns that into a marriage (up the social ladder) to the Duke (1.2.171, 116).

By the time that the masque occurs, in the fifth and final act, the social climbing—and the play proper—are basically over. What remains are revels conducted to commemorate the Duke's (second) reconciliation with his wife and to offer an annual stipend as the prize to whoever most delights the Duchess. The exclusivity of admission is established by an exchange between Ferdinand and Cornelius, two courtiers and servants of Lord Raymond. Cornelius asks, "May I not vnder your protection, / Behold the sports[?]" (5.1.30–31). Ferdinand's response is less than encouraging: "I cannot tell, I will not promise you, / For my Lord's very strickt, Ile do my best" (5.1.32–33). The usual watch is set on the door by Lord Lodwicke, with specific instructions to admit only those of sufficient status: "Pray giue 'hem great charge at the outward dores / They admit none but such as are Courtiers, / The Hall must not be pestred" (5.1.59–61). Lodwicke's use of "pestred" communicates both a sense of the doors being besieged by crowds trying to get in and of their status as pests. (A character in *The Malcontent* (1602–4; printed 1604), by John Marston, uses almost exactly the same phrase leading up to that play's masque, prodding, "Oh fool, will ye be ready anon to go with me to the revels; the hall will be so pestered anon" [5.2.10–11].) Smirk enumerates the treatments of different pests, describing how he enters "when Lords and Ladies stand waiting this officer and tother officer, country gentle- men their pates broke, & citizens wiues thurst vp and downe in euery corner, their husbands kept out with flame and Torch, glad to fetch a nap i'th Cloysters" (5.1.77–82).

The admission of the citizen wives who are "thrust vp and downe in euery corner" highlights another dimension of the ordering of the spatial hierarchy. They are permitted to act as boundary crossers on the basis of their sexual appeal. The erotics of the space dictates that the husbands, like the playhouse audience, desire to see and enter the space, and the women increase its desirability. The masquing space is given an erotic charge for the elite as well, by the promise of association with sexually available (middling) women rather than with other courtiers. This scene also makes the erotic attraction of and the desire to be in elite space very literal, by concretely sexualizing it.

The husbands of these sexual and sexualized women, as we have seen, are barred entry as part of maintaining physical—and thus conceptual and social—barriers against such encroachment. According to Smirk, they would be "kept out with flame and Torch." What, for the courtiers, justifies such violence (which, incidentally, staged how badly people want to enter these spaces of private performance)? Why would male citizens be willing to risk having "their pates broke," as happened to poet and member of Gray's Inn Thomas May at *The Triumph of Peace* (1634), when the Lord Chamberlain,
unaware of who he was, broke a staff over the perceived interloper? What is this struggle about? One answer is that the violent vigilance at the doors represents an elite assertion of power in the face of female citizens crossing a boundary into nobly coded space. It affirms control against those who “crowd” the hall, the pestering press. While the wives might gain some power as boundary crossers, repelling the husbands both emphasizes that the wives enter only with the assent of the elite males, and, significantly, that the elite males have the upper (class) hand when it comes to the sexual control of the citizens’ wives.

As stage representations of struggle at the doors to a masque imply, access to real masques was necessarily limited, restricted to professional players, ticketholders or invitees connected to the court, and, in some situations, servants of those performing or invited. While access to masques, like the citizen wives’ onstage boundary-crossing, remained under the control of the elite, representation of masques in the commercial theaters relocated versions of these exclusive (semi-) private entertainments to spaces where persons from a much greater variety of socioeconomic positions could purchase the privilege of spectatorship. It allowed some segments of the audience in commercial theaters to see what their onstage counterparts could not. Staging the masque in the space of the playhouse, as Emily Isaacson argues, “reappropriate[s] the masque for the public to some extent,” thereby questioning the exclusivity of aristocratic dominion over the masque genre. The stage clown was as popular and populist a figure as any, and the penetration of Smirk, the everyman, and his actions in the masquing space take on additional significance as regards the public (unrestricted except by the market) re-appropriation of the masque, in this case in an amphitheater playhouse. Such re-appropriation would have made a claim for the increased importance of the theater as a public sociopolitical space.

Smirk uses a ring that makes the wearer invisible to sneak into the entertainments that comprise the last act of the play. As room is made at the door with “oaths” and “Trunchions” for the lords and ladies to pass, Smirk slips inside “like the aire” (5.1.93–94, 77). While he is invisible, he contemplates living “like a Gentleman,” in part because, he thinks, “And for cloathes, ‘tis nomatter [sic] how I go” (5.1.40, 57–58). The boundaries created by sumptuary customs both helped create social division on their own and interacted with spatial boundaries by marking who did or did not belong in a certain space, who could or could not enter or occupy it. Smirk’s dream of living the gentleman’s life does depend on access not only to spaces like the masquing hall but also to those like the one where he has stolen beef and beer earlier in the day. After Envy and Pleasure have passed over the stage and the masque is about to begin, Smirk pockets the ring to avoid losing it and, becoming visible, he is immediately and insultingly (“How now sirrah, what make you here?”) turned out by the Groom: “And get you gone quick-
ely, or you shall feel— I see you, go, begone this is no place for such as you” (5.1.105, 107–9). Fallen from his temporary status as invisible gentleman, he is “become a wretch again” (5.1.110).

However, he shortly figures out that he owes his invisibility to wearing the ring and re-enters the masquing space. Seeing but unseen, he becomes a very literal voyeur to the proceedings. Having again crossed this threshold, he can again construct himself as having attained a nobility of rank. In fact, he has now risen in his own mind from being “like a Gentleman” to the rank of royalty. When the Duke tries to claim the ring, Smirk protests, “For being invisible, I am a Prince, / And being a Prince no hands is to be laid upon me” (5.1.179–80). His self-identification as a prince points to not only his feeling of enhanced status due to being within the masquing space but also the power of the voyeur vis-à-vis those whom he observes. One aspect of that power is his ability to judge those upon whom he gazes and their actions (in this case, their revels). Smirk rapidly concludes that, as “the miracle” of the kingdom who can “doe wonders,” he is in fact more entertaining than the masque and other revels (5.1.129, 132). He wonders, “Is this all the deuices, sports, and delights, the Duke shall haue for his money: . . . ist all come to a dull Masque?”; so, he determines to “shew his Grace some sport” himself with the help of his magic ring (5.1.121–25).

As a voyeur and someone who comes to feel superior to his superiors, Smirk offers the perfect surrogate for many socially ambitious audience members. He conceives of himself as above both his betters and their behavioral choices, and his reaction to the revels allows for more and less sympathetic audience interpretations. On the one hand, it is his ability to observe without being observed that gives him the power to construct himself as superior and to see the masque as dull. On the other hand, his reaction may also mark him as of the wrong class to enjoy a masque, thus ultimately endorsing the social boundaries that he at first violates. Finally, though, Smirk undeniably retains at least some degree of the power he gains by entering the masquing space. The masque is followed by contests in prose, poetry, and song before a dance closes the revels, and, having gained access to the space as a voyeur, Smirk manages to remain there by imitating and even excelling the other invitees in these gentlemanly exercises and “winning” the revels. In other words, Smirk’s emulation meets their standards better than their own behavior does. Whether this means that he has successfully boundary-crossed and bettered them or merely exposed the boundaries as ineffective failures is open to audience interpretation, but either conclusion would likely have satisfied much of the Red Bull audience.

While Smirk’s initial characterization of the masque as dull did not necessarily diminish its attraction for the audience, it does call attention to the range of potential reactions to and perceptions of masquing. To discuss the masque as if it were universally perceived both unproblematically and posi-
tively, even in plays that present attendance as desirable, would be erroneous. The spectrum of responses to the masque outside the playhouse, from admiration to condemnation, created tensions that necessarily affected its depiction inside the playhouse.

Plays containing embedded masques, therefore, did not present the aristocracy merely as templates for emulation. Because of the socioeconomic variations in audiences between the higher-priced citizen playhouses and the more affordable amphitheatres, as well as the heterogeneous makeup of the audience within any one playhouse, these plays walked a line between encouraging emulation and criticism of the upper classes. While some, like The Maid’s Tragedy, offer longer, complete scenes that basically replicate court entertainments in miniature, others, like The Revenger’s Tragedy and Women Beware Women, include masques that are aborted at various lengths—most popularly, due to abduction or murder. Some few present the masque as a straightforward celebratory moment, many more as an ironic comment on characters, themes, and/or masquing itself and the lifestyle it represents. The opening scene of The Maid’s Tragedy, for example, tells the audience how to interpret the masque as a structural component of the play. The gentleman Strato is asked his opinion because he has “some skill in poetry” (1.1.5), allowing him to be seen as a surrogate for the commercial playwright (a role often ascribed to Prospero in The Tempest, which I do not discuss here for reasons of space). According to him, the entertainment will be only “as well as masques can be” (1.1.7):

Yes, they must commend their King, and speak in praise
Of the assembly, bless the bride and groom,
In person of some god; they’re tied to rules
Of flattery.

(1.1.7–11)

The nuptial masque is indeed flattering to the bride, groom, and assembled guests, but ironically so. It is part of the structural importance of the masque that its exaltation of the newly married couple and their love is badly misplaced. The King has married Evadne to Amintor merely to conceal his affair, and the rites of the marriage bed celebrated in the masque will be refused the new groom by his unchaste bride. This disjunction between the terms of the celebration and what it honors creates a censorious connection between the masque and other things that go on behind closed/locked doors, in secret. Control over space becomes about control over eroticism. The King and Evadne have carried on their affair in private spaces, control over which derives from their (public) status. Their control over these spaces, in turn, allows them to maintain their status and power by maintaining the secrecy surrounding their behavior there. Privacy and power mutually reinforce one
another by means of concealment. The nuptial masque takes place in another private space and functions as another mechanism of concealment, one illusion (the masque) lending authority to another (Amintor and Evadne’s marriage). When viewed in this context, the play critiques court culture and values via the practice of the masque, which was indeed tied to certain generic rules of flattery.

A similar tension plays out in *The Widow’s Tears*, a play concerned, like *The Two Merry Milkmaids*, with the socioeconomic self-advancement of inferior characters. Tharsalio, a younger brother and page to the deceased husband of Countess Eudora, decides to better himself by aggressively courting the widow, who at first tells him to occupy the kennel with her dogs rather than his preferred space of her bed. Eudora’s command after his first suit is to “Shut doors upon him” and post a guard if he shall “dare to come again” (1.2.149–50). However, her protests that she will not “stoop to make my foot my head” (2.4.160) or be caught “to give any glance to stooping to my vassal” are overcome; Tharsalio’s confidence (interpreted, perhaps correctly, by Eudora as brazenness) wins out, and in the next act, his promise to give his nephew Hylus a part in his nuptial show comes to pass (2.4.155–56). In a version of the wordplay on space and rank in *The Maid’s Tragedy*, Eudora invites Tharsalio, “Take your place, worthiest servant” (3.2.79). Earlier, one of his competitors in love tells him that he escapes assault only because of “the place,” which belongs to Eudora, to which Tharsalio replies, “Lord Rebus, the place is never like to be yours / that you need respect it so much”; now he assumes two of the multiple places suggested by his rejoinder: as her husband and in the seat of honor at the masque (1.2.97, 105, 120–22). Some of the tension generated by this masque comes from the potentially problematic motivations of the couple. The masque praises the union as “noblest nuptials,” but a skeptical spectator might call to mind Tharsalio’s stated aim of social climbing or consider Eudora to merely typify the lustful widow, pursuing the young man in the new suit (3.2.97).

The great majority of embedded masques traffic in some balance between offering themselves as a glimpse, however distorted, into the desirable private lifestyle of the elite (or at least into a particular aspect of it) and critiquing that same elite lifestyle. Janette Dillon observes that commercial theater often feels “the need to reprove the audience for enjoying such display for its own sake” while profiting from this very enjoyment. In the case of embedded masques, such reproof is grounded in something more immediate and more concrete than a moral disapproval of empty show. With the embedded masque, there exists an underlying tension between the attractiveness of the masque form itself, what it represents—and, perhaps more importantly, what access to it as a spectator represents—in terms of socioeconomic status, on the one hand, and condemnation of the onstage participants in the masque or their unwholesome uses of it on the other. This tension echoes the manner in
which court masques sometimes simultaneously (covertly) critique and praise royal power and/or behavior.

Smirk’s triumphs over his betters at their own pastimes and Tharsalio’s marriage to Eudora, whose page he had been, make the intangibles of elite behavior, as well as their successful emulation, more accessible by staging them. Tharsalio’s marrying upwards is perhaps the most successful because the most permanent. However, even as these plays map social-climbing behaviors, they still register—and work to some degree to assuage—the anxieties arising from socioeconomic emulation. The fakers, by and large, make it only temporarily: Smirk loses the ring that allowed him entrance to the revels. Even Tharsalio justifies his marrying upward by claiming service as a disguise for his “honorable” descent from a “decay’d” house (2.4.169, 3.1.47). On the other hand, he also assures the pandress Arsace that her own social origins can be elided, that a marriage to “some one knight or other” would “bury thy trade in thy lady-ship” (2.3.32–33). Additionally, the Captain in *The Widow’s Tears* describes the Governor as an “upstart,” “unworthy beast” of “dull apprehension” who was raised from “mean condition . . . / by Fortune’s injudicious hand, / Guided by bribing courtiers . . . / To this high seat of honor” (5.1.140–52). Whether Tharsalio’s rise to his own “chair of honor” at his nuptial masque in truth contrasts with or reproduces the Governor’s, whether or not his claims to pedigree are legitimate, the possibility is made available to the audience to view his social climbing as less transgressive than it would at first appear (3.1.126). These plays temper the potential threats of the eroticization and increased accessibility of elite behavior and elite spaces that public representation offered, consistently exhibiting tension about the attainment of what they present as desirable. They leave the audience the choice to condemn or to covet, or maybe, like themselves, to do both. The onstage failures of upward mobility parallel the failures that always accompany the audience’s voyeurism, the inability to experience the real behavior and space and not the representation or to make social and economic status synonymous—in other words, the unfulfilled desires that spectators continued to pay for and that plays continued to market to them.

**Notes**

Thanks to Mary Bly, Stuart Sherman, Eve Keller, and all of the participants in the 2010 SAA seminar “The Publics of the Public Stage,” particularly Paul Yachnin and Rebecca Lemon, for reading and providing valuable feedback on this essay in its various stages.

2. Anne’s requirement to be placed at masques is directly followed by demands
for the "private box took up at a new play / For me and my retinue" and "a fresh habit / (Of a fashion never seen before) to draw / The gallants' eyes that sit upon the stage upon me" (2.2.115-19). The play also condemns "hopes above their birth, and scale" (1.1.17) of Anne and her sisters by observing that "there are few great ladies going to a masque / That do outshine ours in everyday habits" (1.1.26-27). It similarly condemns their mother's social-climbing by, among other things, naming her desire to know the "what shape this countess / Appear'd in the last masque, and how it drew / The young lords' eyes upon her" (4.4.96-98).

Throughout, I use "masque" as an umbrella term that includes anti-masques, not to make any distinction.

3. All references are to George Chapman, The Widow's Tears, ed. Ethel M. Smeak (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966).

4. Argus's name seems not unimportant here, given his function of monitoring the entrance to the masquing space. Earlier in the play, Sthenia remarks, with Argus present, "Nay, 'twould trouble Argus with his hundred eyes to descry the cause" of Eudora's "solitary humor" (2.4.14-15, 10). The play as a whole is much concerned with both spying and social climbing, themes that resonate with the appeal of embedded masques.


6. Ibid., 140. Fumerton goes on to examine how masques at the Banqueting House were involved in both the creation and "transgression of private space" and made James' "privacy disappear even as it appeared" (148, 156). See Martin Butler, The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 27-57 for further discussion of masque audiences and admission.

7. The expenditure necessary to better one's station of course entailed the complimentary possibility of downward social mobility.

8. I use the term "embedded" masque advisedly. It usefully suggests the inclusion within a play of a distinct unit that is recognizably a masque, but it does not convey the sense that the inclusion is always also a transformation, never only an insertion.


10. Ibid., 315.


12. Lauren Shohet, "The Masque as Book," in Reading and Literacy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, ed. Ian Frederick Moulton (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 146, 155.

13. Ibid., 156, 161-62. See also Shohet, Reading Masques, 81-102 for a detailed discussion of masque texts and their markets.


16. It is worth noting that the early portion of Dekker's text says that it is making
room until the masque and banquet, and it also identifies itself as a building. Later examples of printed texts providing images of masquing are Francis Lenton's verse collections *The Innes of Court Anagrammatist: or, The Masquers Masqued in Anagrams* (1634) and *Great Britains Beauties, or, The Female Glory Epitomized, In Encomiastick Anagramms, and Acrosticks, Upon the highly honored Names of the Queenes most gracious Majestie, and the Gallant Lady-Masquers in her Graces glorious Grand-Masque* (1638).


18. All references are to Ben Jonson, *Epicoene*, in *Ben Jonson*, vol. 5, eds. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (1937; reprint, Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 139–272. There is some chance that the play was also printed in a 1612 quarto, now lost.


21. Indeed, their successful commercialization depended on “their reputation as purveyors of dramatic entertainment to the court and nobility” and the “wider distribution of a product previously reserved for limited audiences of courtiers and aristocrats.” Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare’s Time and Their Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 1–2, 22.


23. For his caution against focusing on content at the expense of intention when considering voyeurism, see Jonathan M. Metzl, “From scopophilia to Survivor: a brief history of voyeurism,” *Textual Practice* 18, no. 3 (2004): 416–17.

24. Metzl calls voyeurism “culturally pathological, imbued with power, gender and other types of non-chemical imbalances” (ibid., 428). To this we can add social and economic imbalances.


28. The play is in most ways built around what goes on behind closed doors be-
coming known. In an analog to the audience breaching the privacy of the masque, the secret of Evadne’s illicit sexual relationship with the King, which we later learn is not a secret to the privileged Gentlemen of the Bedchamber, becomes known. It moves from Evadne to her new husband, Amintor, to Melantius, and so on, setting in motion the wheels of revenge and the various deaths to follow. Secrecy is of course also closely related to the maintenance of honor and reputation.


30. Melantius’s phrase, “When I have seen you placed, madam” (1.2.30), hints at the role that visibility plays in the construction of status through space.

31. Evadne, Melantius’s sister, has replaced Calianax’s daughter Aspatia as bride to courtier Amintor.

32. Cf. The Two Merry Milkmaids: Lord Lodwicke to a “Lady”: “Here Madame you shall face the Duke and Duchess, ‘tis the best place to see in all the Hall” (5.1.86–87).


35. Ibid., 58.

36. Ibid., 55.


38. Charles Whitney makes the case that early modern aesthetics was not separate from praxis and that audiences applied drama or dramatic texts directly to their real world concerns, lives, and behaviors in Early Reponses to Renaissance Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), for ex., 68, 104, 115. Jeremy Lopez similarly notes the “striking . . . correspondence between defenders of and detractors from the stage in their assessment of the theatre’s effects—precisely their inability, or perhaps unwillingness to separate ‘the real and the imaginary’” and argues that “if both the Puritans and their adversaries were willing to argue publicly that a play could affect reality and the lives of its audience, it seems more than safe to assume that this is the kind of assumption playgoers would have brought with them to the playhouse” in Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 31–32.


40. Ibid., 6.

42. The equivalence between spectacle-loving country and city swarms and their love of spectacle also suggest an affinity between city entertainments like the masque and procession or progress, as well as the portability of the rules of spatial order and hierarchy.


45. A similar situation occurs in John Fletcher’s *A Wife for a Month* (1624; printed 1646). Tony, King Frederick’s fool, is assigned to “Looke to the doore” because he “may’st do mischiefe lawfully” (2.4.39–40). The men regulating access to the masque employ the standard terminology of being overwhelmed by the numbers of the lower classes. A servant admonishes, “Looke to that back doore, and keep it fast, / They swarme like Bees about it” (2.6.3–4), while Tony professes amusement at “how they flock hether, / And with what joy the women run by heapes / To see this Marriage!” (2.4.31). He then elucidates the makeup of the crowd for the King, who says that he “will have no such presse” (2.4.60):

Some come to gape, those are my fellow fooles;
Some to get home their wives, those be their own fooles;
Some to rejoyce with thee, those be the times fooles;
And some I feare to curse thee, those are poore fooles,
A sect; people calls them honest.

(2.4.46–50)

Tony’s categorization, it should be noted, makes room in the masquing space for the critique of power, as court masques sometimes did, albeit subtly and within the generic constraints of praise. It also marks an important parallel with Smirk’s enumeration in Cumber’s play: the exception apparently made for citizens’ wives—the pretty ones, anyway. Tony bargains with these women about their desire to be “put . . . in” (2.4.1) and see the wedding and “the brave Masque too” (2.4.12). The wives must, and do, agree not to “squeak” “if a young Lord offer [. . . ] the courtesie” or “grumble, / If . . . thrust up hard” (2.4.17–20). The women say that they “know the worst” and are told, “Get you two in quietly then, / And shift for your selves” (2.4.21–22). All references to John Fletcher, *A Wife for a Month*, in *Beaumont and Fletcher: Dramatic Works*, vol. 6, ed. Robert Kean Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 355–482.

Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels* (1600; printed 1601) also depicts both regulation against “THE THRONG,” as the stage direction reads, and the exceptions made for citizen wives. One character, Asotus, requests, “Cousin Morphides, assist me, to make good the doore with your officious tyrannie” and instructs, “Knocke that simple fellow, there” in reference to a citizen, while Morphides himself gives the order, “Knocke those same pages there” (5.3.4–5, 41, 25). The women, both ladies and the citizen’s wife, are allowed to enter, but Asotus explains that “Husbands are not allow’d here in truth” (5.3.46). All references are to Ben Jonson, *Cynthia’s Revels*, in *Ben Jonson,

46. See Mark Albert Johnston, “Prosthetic Absence in Ben Jonson’s Epicoene, The Alchemist, and Bartholomew Fair,” ELR 37, no. 2 (2007) for remarks on the “erotic equivalence between boys and women” (412). He cites Stephen Orgel’s observation that boys and women “are treated as a medium of exchange within the patriarchal structure, and both are (perhaps in consequence) constructed as objects of attraction for adult men.” (See Stephen Orgel, Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare’s England [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 103). Such an equivalence—here and in boys’ company performance—would have lent an extra erotic charge to the embedded masque for the boy’s company audience, since not only the women but also the men onstage were actually boys. See also Heather Anne Hirschfeld, Joint Enterprises: Collaborative Drama and the Institutionalization of the English Renaissance Theater (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 166, who says, “There has not been enough attention given to the erotics (both same and opposite sex) of the masque, to the possibilities of sexual innuendo and real activity. The banquets before and after the masques were scenes of voluptuousness. Masques themselves hinted at the sexual potential of the masque even as they idealized or platonicized it.”

47. A Wife for a Month provides further evidence that the female citizens would have been perceived to be sexually available. Camillo, a lord, orders, “Keepe back those citizens, and let their wives in, / Their hansome wives” (2.6.5–6). Since they “must have no old women, / They are out of use,” “pretty women” are used to stock the hall, and these women are tagged as sexually voracious (2.4.21–23). When Menallo suggests that the courtiers “Take the women aside, and talk with ‘em in privat, / Give ‘em that they came for,” Tony objects that “The whole Court cannot do it” (2.6.8–9). This erotic charge worries Tony, who claims a danger beyond sexual insatiability: “Besides, the next Maske if we use ‘em so, / They’ll come by millions to expect our largesse” (2.6.10–11). His anxiety about increasing numbers of middling women works both literally and as a metaphorical comment on the potential for encroachment on the nobility.

48. Astington, English Court Theatre, 177. See 175–77 for other evidence of the use of violence in creating and maintaining order at masques.

49. It should be noted that the masquing spaces represented onstage always seem to have doors, to be spaces that can be locked or sealed, that can become hermetic. For a discussion of the use of tickets for admission to masques, see Astington, English Court Theatre, 171. For an example of masque performance including family, friends, and some household servants, see Marion O’Connor, “Rachel Fane’s May Masque at Apethorpe, 1627,” ELR 36, no. 1 (2006) on masques performed at the Fane household in the 1620s, written by daughter Rachel.


51.

52. The full title of the play, A Pleasant Comedie, Called The Two Merry Milkmaids. Or, The Best Words Weare the Garland demonstrates the importance
placed on of the scene of Smirk's victory at the revels. G. Harold Metz, Introduction to *The Two Merry Milkmaids* (New York: Garland, 1979), lxxxviii, calls Smirk the "authentic representative of the rising middle class—he began life as a stainer and at the end of the play is a gentleman." Metz too notes that the clown makes "fools of his social betters" (lxxxviii) but focuses on the roles that his intelligence, resolve, and wit play in his triumphs (lxxxviii–ix).


54. Voyeurism itself can be seen as both an assertion of power and an admission of anxiety, as noted in Metzl, "From scopophilia to *Survivor,*" 417.

55. See Hirschfeld, *Joint Enterprises*, 72–77 for the masque in *The Maid's Tragedy* as a satire of the genre and "an exposure of the frailties of masque distinction and distinguishing" (73). Such an interpretation need not replace or negate viewing the masque scene itself as a pleasurable/aspirational/desiring look behind the closed doors of aristocratic spaces.


57. She later has a similar reaction to Arsace the bawd, an impulse to control access to her space: "keep you her out" (2.2.35–36). Still later, in dialogue that closely echoes the conversations at the doors of the masque in *The Maid's Tragedy*, Argus (along with Clinia) are reminded to "guard her approach from any more intruders," and Argus asserts that he will beat out Tharsalio if necessary (2.2.63–64). After she rejects Tharsalio again, this becomes laying an ambush at the "next threshold pass'd" (2.2.254).

58. His promise to marry that nephew to Eudora's daughter Laodice also is made good at the end of the play. Eudora, after the masque, disappears from the play until the final scene during which this new marriage is announced.

59. Some tension also arises from the fact that Tharsalio's nephew, in the person of Hymen, praises these newlyweds just after Tharsalio and Lysander have made plans for testing the fidelity of Tharsalio's virtuous sister-in-law Cynthia, who represents the viewpoint that women should never remarry and is eventually, though problematically, proven to be "the only constant Wife" (5.1.706). In contrast to the discussions of Cynthia's constancy, the countess validates the misogynistic picture of weak, false, changeable woman advocated by Tharsalio.

60. Dillon, *Theatre, Court, and City*, 78.