

IMAGES OF LOVE AND RELIGION: HENRIETTA MARIA'S  
CATHOLICISM AND THE COURT MASQUES 1630-40

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# MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

## HIGHER DEGREE THESIS (PhD)

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ABSTRACT

The following study traces a connection, particularly significant for the court masques, between Henrietta Maria's doctrine of Platonic Love and her Catholicism.

Chapter 1 suggests that the type of préciosité adopted by Henrietta was influenced by French Devout Humanism. Its characteristic feature was honnêteté, which advocated the pious uses of pleasure and which connected Platonic love with religion. The concept of honnêteté helps to explain characteristics of court drama, and the moralistic yet pleasure-seeking tone of Charles's court.

Chapter 2 shows that Platonic ideals of Beauty and Love were important in the Catholicism introduced to court in 1630 by the Queen's Capucin Friars, and that the language used in court literature in relation to Henrietta was used in Catholic literature in relation to the Virgin Mary. In a cult of the Virgin established at court, the Queen became identified as the representative of Mary. The connection has particular significance in court masques.

Chapter 3 analyses the masques in terms of their visual images, through which ideas of Platonic Beauty and Love were given expression on the stage. The analysis suggests that Inigo Jones created images for the King and Queen that harmonised on the visual level with their respective religions, and that these images, together with Jones's stage itself, were closely connected with the visible forms of religious ceremony in both the Anglican and the Counter-Reformation Catholic Church. It is further suggested that court masques referred to contemporary debate over issues of religious ceremony, and that, through the images of "Divine Beauty" created for the Queen, they defended the validity of "Beauty" in Anglican worship.

Chapter 4 suggests that, in the Queen's masques, the visual images associated with the Queen were also appropriate to the Virgin, and hence related to the Catholic element in the Queen's doctrine of Platonic Love.

The Queen's masques thus contain a double level of meaning, referring both to the progress of Love, and of Catholicism, at court. New meaning is given particularly to The Temple of Love and Luminalia in this context. Chapter 5 suggests that in the masques the marriage of the King and Queen became symbolic of a union, under discussion at the time, between the Anglican and Roman Churches. A comparison is made with works reflecting similar ecumenical hopes at the Valois court, and a new level of religious meaning is given to Tempe Restored, Coelum Britannicum, and The Temple of Love. The theme of union was further emphasised by the way in which the King and Queen, representing their respective religions, took on the roles of Christ and Mary.

In conclusion, the connection between Henrietta's Catholicism and her doctrine of Platonic love illuminates many aspects of court life and culture that have formerly been neglected, or interpreted in contradictory ways. In particular it adds new and vital meaning to court masques.

I hereby certify that this work has not been  
submitted for a higher degree to any other  
university or institution.

*Erica Vevers*  
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My interest in the subject of the thesis has extended over many years, and in that time I have received help from more people, and in more ways, than it is possible to acknowledge individually. Many of my obligations have been to the Libraries in which I have worked from time to time to collect material, and I would like to express my thanks for courteous assistance to the staffs of the British Library, London; the Henry E. Huntington Library, California; Stanford University Library, California; Fisher Library, University of Sydney; the Public Library, Sydney; and Macquarie University Library. More particularly I would like to thank friends and former colleagues at Macquarie University, among them Associate Professor Elizabeth Liggins, Dr. Ruth Waterhouse, and Dr. James Brown, each of whom helped by their interest when I was planning the work. My greatest debts are to Professor A.M. Gibbs, who supervised the initial stages of the work, read and discussed lengthy early drafts, and who kindly ordered prints from the British Library for me; and most recently to Dr. A.D. Cousins who supervised the final stages of the thesis, helped with problems of organization, and whose good counsel and readiness to assist were a constant encouragement.

I should like to thank Macquarie University Research Fund for making available the services of the photographic department to enlarge some photographs; and Judy Faulkner, whose care in typing goes far beyond the line of duty.

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PREFACE

This study examines an area that has received very little critical attention, the relationship between Henrietta Maria's Catholicism and the fashions of préciosité and Platonic love that she fostered at the English court. The influence of Henrietta's fashions on court literature in the 1630's has been the subject of several studies, but little work has been done on the origins of her préciosité since J.B. Fletcher (in the early years of this century) traced it back to the Hôtel de Rambouillet and the romance L'Astrée. Moreover, there has been only one critic to my knowledge (G.F. Sensabaugh, whose work will be noticed later), who has recognised any relationship between Henrietta's social fashions and her religion. Henrietta herself, however, made no great distinction between them, and entertainments and devotions were never far apart in her mind. In this thesis I shall argue that préciosité, Platonic love, and contemporary French Catholicism were in fact connected, and that in England the connection took on particular significance in the court masques.

The first two chapters of the thesis attempt to look at the development of préciosité in France in the early years of the seventeenth century, to consider those aspects of the fashion that Henrietta, by temperament and upbringing, would have been most likely to adopt, and to take into account forces that might have shaped or changed the fashion after it was introduced to the English court. My study of préciosité suggests that it was considerably influenced, particularly in French court circles, by the Devout Humanism of St. François de Sales, and that by the late 1620's religious influence had mingled with the romance influence of L'Astrée to form a type of préciosité that was characterised by the concept of

honnêteté. Honnêteté came to prominence in France in 1630, and Walter Montague, a devotee of French culture and a favourite of the Queen, translated one of the earliest works on the subject into English, and introduced similar ideas to the court in works of his own. An examination of court literature connected with the Queen suggests that Henrietta adopted this honnête type of préciosité from about 1629 onward. Honnêteté placed a greater emphasis on piety than earlier préciosité had done, while at the same time insisting on the importance of pleasure and the attractive graces of women in leading men to God. In this type of préciosité, "Platonic love" did not have the same meaning that it had, for example, in L'Astrée, of love without fruition, and of exaggerated devotion to a mistress. In honnêteté the ideal of love was, rather, one of mutual love and marriage. Women were idealised as the embodiment of Platonic ideals of Beauty and Virtue, but they were accorded admiration and respect, not as unattainable goddesses, but as the guardians of social harmony and the executors of Heaven's will. This was the ideal recommended to women in contemporary French works, and it is the ideal put forward in poetry and plays written for, or favoured by, the Queen.

A connection between Devout Humanism and the Queen's love fashions, unexceptionable in France, took on significance at the English court in terms of the Queen's Catholicism, especially with the arrival in 1630 of Capucin Friars to serve in the Queen's chapel. Capucinism was built on Platonic ideals, and the Friars paid special devotion to the Virgin Mary, whom they praised as the exemplar of Beauty and Love. The language of Platonic love was therefore a common element in the Queen's social fashion and in her religion, and a connection between the two was emphasised when a cult of the Virgin, sponsored by the Capucins and led by the Queen, was

established at court. Contemporary Catholic literature suggests that the Queen, as the embodiment of ideals of Beauty and Love on earth, became the champion and representative of the Virgin. Catholic pressure on the Queen to proselytise gave practical interest to the connection, and, I believe, was an important motive for Puritan attacks in the thirties on Henrietta's fashions and the court stage.

The connection between Henrietta's Platonic love and her Catholicism became most significant in court masques, where Neoplatonic ideas of Beauty and Love, particularly of the kind favoured by the Queen, were expressed through visual images on the stage. These images in the Caroline masques were less restricted in meaning than the images created by Inigo Jones for earlier masques, in which Ben Jonson had been careful to make the meaning clear by reference to classical and Renaissance sources. In the Caroline masques Jones's emphasis was on stage spectacle, often virtually unaccompanied by words; his stage images therefore were "open-ended" in the sense that they could be interpreted largely in terms of the interests of the participants and of the spectators. Religion was a subject of close concern to the King, the Queen, and the Court, and I believe that the visual images of masques took on significance in terms of the urgent questions of religion being debated during the decade. The visual arts themselves in the 1630's were closely tied to the issue of religious ceremony, and Charles's court was well qualified to interpret meaning expressed in visual terms. For this reason I have made the visual arts a central focus of the thesis. It has seemed to me, in analysing the masques from a "spectator's" point of view, that Jones built up two distinct sets of visual images around the King and Queen, representing two sides of his own interest in the arts, and suggesting the complementary qualities of "body" and "soul" made familiar by



Neoplatonic theory. The images for the King stressed the qualities of Reason, Strength, and Harmony which Jones found in Neoclassical architecture, the images for the Queen stressed the qualities of spiritual Beauty which he found in Counter-Reformation art. The qualities embodied by these images were also designed to harmonise with the King and Queen's respective religions: images for the King suggested the classical strength and Christian purity which Charles regarded as the qualities of Anglicanism; images for the Queen suggested the "spiritual" beauty of Counter-Reformation art, and gave visual expression to the ideal of Beauty which was a part, both of the Queen's doctrine of Platonic love, and of her Catholicism.

In the second half of the thesis I will argue that the coming together of the two sets of images for the King and Queen in the masques is significant, on several different levels, of important relationships between the King and Queen's religions. On one level it represents the joining of spiritual Beauty (which Charles saw as an essential of religion) with the Reason and Strength of Anglicanism, and refers to one of the principal issues of the decade, the controversy over ceremony in the Anglican Church. On another level it refers to a projected union, under consideration by Charles at the time, between the Anglican and Catholic Churches. The relationship between the King and the Queen in the masques suggests the terms on which such a union might, in Charles's view, have been effected. I will suggest that the masques presented by the Queen (Chloridia, Tempe Restored, The Temple of Love and Luminalia) are given new and important meaning in relation to the Queen's religion, forming a sequence which reflects the Queen's allegiance to Catholic interests, and reflecting a progress of both Platonic love and Catholicism at court. In all the masques the relationship between the King and Queen is built up in such a way that, representing Anglicanism and Counter-Reformation

Catholicism respectively, the King and Queen take on symbolically the roles of Christ and the Virgin Mary. My argument therefore suggests that religion in the masques was more than just a vague aura of Neoplatonism: it was a principal part of the subject-matter. The Queen's masques, usually regarded as vague in expression and generalised in meaning, have quite specific meaning in terms of the Queen's religion, and new significance is given to the whole sequence of masques of the thirties in terms of the principal religious issues of the decade. The connection between Henrietta's Platonic love and her Catholicism therefore emerges as a significant factor at court, giving a new importance to her influence and illuminating many aspects of court life and culture.

Every student of the masque owes a debt to Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong for their catalogue of Inigo Jones's designs, which has made it possible to put the masques into their proper visual context, and I have drawn extensively on their suggestions of the visual sources of masque designs. Orgel and Strong were also the first to point to the doctrine of Platonic love in Caroline masques as having political significance, and hence general religious significance, since politics and religion under the Stuarts were so closely allied. My interpretation adds to theirs in demonstrating an actual connection between Platonic love and religion, and hence adds another, more specific, level of meaning to these masques. I am indebted, too, to Frances Yates, whose work has influenced the writing of my last chapter, and whose studies on the Valois court are a monument to research on Neoplatonism, religion, and court entertainments. I do not know whether she was working towards a comparison of Valois and Caroline court entertainments, but one of her earliest books (The French Academies) referred in passing to similarities between the two periods, and one of her last books (Theatre of the World) considered

Jones as an inheritor of the Valois tradition of stage "magic." She would certainly have been the person best qualified to make such a comparison, and I hope that she would have agreed with some of the ideas in this study.

In preparing this work I have trespassed into the fields of social history, literature, art, religion, and the stage, a necessary undertaking in treating a mixed form like the masque. I am conscious that readers whose specialty lies in any one of these fields may find gaps or oversimplifications in my treatment, and I hope that they will feel stimulated to add to what I have said, or to correct my mistakes.

They never saw piety but in one dresse, that  
thinke she cannot sute her selfe according to occasions,  
and put her selfe so farre into the fashion, as may make  
her the easilier accostable, and yet retaine her dignity  
and decency.

- Walter Montague, Miscellanea Spiritualia  
(sig. 63<sup>V</sup>), dedicated to Henrietta Maria.



Henrietta Maria. Painting by Sir Anthony van Dyck.

Collection of Mr and Mrs Charles  
Wrightsman, New York