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Performing Diplomacies: The 1560s Court Entertainments of Mary Queen of Scots

‘Thair began the masking, which from year to year hath continewed since.’¹ John Knox’s notorious fulmination against the courtly entertainment of Mary Queen of Scots’ personal reign, in particular its ‘excessive dancing’, implies that her court was exceptionally devoted to performance and display. In the eyes of Knox and other reformers, the lively performance culture of the court straightforwardly revealed the moral and religious shortcomings of its monarch: ‘In fiddling and flynging’ she was ‘more exercised then in reading or hearing of Goddis most blessed word’; ‘banketting, immoderat dancing’ are linked to avarice, oppression of the poor, and ‘hurdome that thairof enseuis’.²

In diagnosing the investment of the court in such spectacle as not only excessive, but a result of individual taste and moral failing, the reformers were plainly simplifying a far more complex phenomenon. Mary’s court may well have attracted their suspicion: Gordon Donaldson has established the French dominance, and the relatively lowly born status of the queen’s household, both of which may have caused tensions.³ But the court was no more obviously committed to dancing and display than those of Elizabeth I, or of Catherine de Medici in France, both of whom were at times congratulated for honourable and appropriate magnificence.⁴ Although each court had its own character and culture, valuing and employing entertainments in different ways, a powerful international rhetoric of performance and spectacle had developed. It is well recognised, too, that by the sixteenth century all the courts of Europe were fully versed in the power of court performance as an instrument, however minor, of prestige, of diplomacy, of politics and sometimes even of government itself.⁵ Court performances were

¹ John Knox, *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*, in D. Laing (ed.), *The Works of John Knox* (Wodrow Society, 1848), ii, 314.

² Knox, *Works*, ii, 333, 362. See also George Buchanan, *The Tyrannous Reign of Mary Stewart*, ed. and trans. W. Gatherer (Edinburgh, 1958), 61, 64.

³ G. Donaldson, *All the Queen’s Men: Power and Politics in Mary Stewart’s Scotland* (London, 1983), 60–69.

⁴ See, e.g., *Calendar of State Papers: Venice [CSP Venetian]*, ed. R. Brown and C. Bentinck (London, 1890), vii, 97; Roger Ascham, cited F. Mumby, *Elizabeth and Mary Stuart: The Beginning of the Feud* (London, 1914), 225; Pierre de Ronsard, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1948), xiii, 35–36; Michel de Castelnau, *Memoires* (Paris, 1621), Bk. 5, 303–4.

⁵ See, e.g., S. Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969); R. Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450–1650* (Woodbridge, 1984); G. Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, 1998).

watched, and frequently enacted, by some of the most powerful figures in the land, and often reported by diplomats and foreign ambassadors. This makes the line between recreational relaxation and political statement inevitably permeable; as is that between private life and public display in the life of the sixteenth-century court more broadly, and ultimately even between the 'two bodies' of the monarch.⁶ Court entertainments lived on these shifting interfaces, expressing and mediating a court not only to itself, but to all who interacted with it.

The performances at the royal court of Scotland during the 1560s need to be understood in the wider arena of the European community of court spectacle: they expressed not only Mary Stewart's personal preferences, but important aspects of her national and international policies. In Scotland, as in other European kingdoms, court entertainment provided a site where the personal and the public figures of the monarch might feed into each other. In the publicly visible life of the court, even those entertainments that seem to avoid politics can have political implications. For the Scottish court the most significant comparators are the courts of France and England. These were the two kingdoms with which Scotland had the most intimate and influential, if tense and shifting, political relations. Mary Stewart's upbringing in France had educated her cultural tastes in French forms and provided her with French *maîtres du jeu*. Entertainments in both Scottish and English courts also demonstrate a consciousness of the close proximity of the two British realms and the analogous positions of their young unmarried queens. There are occasions when both Mary and Elizabeth use court performance as a direct means of addressing their 'gud suster' or the problems she presents.

All three courts demonstrate their familiarity with the sixteenth-century's language of performance in spectacle, allegory and image. There are differences of scale and focus, France concentrating more on elaborate visual spectacle asserting harmony and magnificence, while the English court tended to host plays of argument and debate. But the same visual and theatrical motifs recur across all the national borders: the snaky-collared personification of Discord on the triumphal arch welcoming Charles IX to Lyon in 1564 (where English ambassadors invested him with the Order of the Garter) reflects the 'captive Discord' who would have been bound in the prison of Extreme Oblivion before Mary and Elizabeth had they met as planned at Nottingham in July 1562, or the preserved design for a masking costume for Discordia by Primaticcio, designer of court entertainments

⁶ See E. H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957); M. Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London, 1977). In Scotland the court poetry of William Dunbar and David Lindsay testifies to this culture: see, e.g., P. King, 'The Goldyn Targe: a Chaucerian Masque', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, xix (1984), 115-133; C. Edington, *Court and Culture in Renaissance Scotland: Sir David Lindsay of the Mount* (East Linton, 1995), 89-114.

for the French royal family including Mary Stewart.⁷ John Hall has suggested that Primaticcio's design for a masking costume for a wise (or foolish) virgin was influenced by an Elizabethan disguising presented to French nobles visiting the English court in 1561.⁸ Sung or spoken debates between Love and Chastity were performed at all three courts between 1564 and 1565.⁹ Michael Lynch persuasively links the firework attack on a fort at Stirling at the baptism of James VI in 1566 with spectacles in the elaborate royal tour of France undertaken by the young Charles IX (1560-1574) in 1564-5.¹⁰ Similar 'fort-holdings' were widely popular in the later sixteenth century, adaptable to many courtly purposes in all three countries.¹¹ European court culture clearly shares, even in detail, the rich but familiar vocabulary of performance on which all three courts drew for their particular ends.

Contemporary attitudes to these entertainments are crucial in determining their meanings as performances. Then, as now, they could be dismissed as frivolous distractions from the serious business of the court. Thomas Randolph, the English ambassador during most of Mary's personal reign, excused his infrequent dispatches in early 1563 by remarking that, 'I had nothing to write, for we had so little to think on, that we passed our time in feasts, banqueting, masking, and running at the ring, and such like'.¹² Similar judgements are made in both England and France.¹³ However, the more elaborate entertainments of the sixteenth century were, as Jean Wilson points out, clearly 'recognised as propaganda ... [as] ... indicated by the speed with which they were described in print'.¹⁴ Even those who were dismissive of performance were quick to attribute political significance to certain entertainments we might now consider very slight. In fact apart from financial records we most often know about court performances from diplomatic observers and historians who felt them worth recording alongside more obviously political events. In spite of Francis Bacon's later scorn of such things as 'but toys, to come amongst such serious

⁷ *The Royal Tour of France by Charles IX and Catherine de' Medici: Festivals and Entries, 1564-6*, ed. V. E. Graham and W. McAllister Johnson (Toronto, 1979), 193; 'Dramatic Records from the Lansdowne Manuscripts', ed. E. K. Chambers and W. W. Greg, *Malone Society Collections*, pt. 2 (1908); J. Hall, 'Primaticcio and court festivals', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, lviii (1975-6), 353-77.

⁸ Hall, 'Primaticcio', 373.

⁹ Robert Keith, *The History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland* (Spottiswoode Society, 1845), ii, 220; *Royal Tour*, 24-5; *Calendar of Letters and State Papers: Spanish [CSP Spanish]*, ed. M. A. S. Hume, vol. 1 1558-1567 (London, 1892), 404.

¹⁰ M. Lynch, 'Queen Mary's triumph: The baptismal celebrations in Stirling in December 1566', *ante*, lxxix (1990), 1-21. The French Royal Tour was arranged by Catherine de Medici to reinforce the position of her son.

¹¹ P. Butterworth, *Theatre of Fire: Special Effects in Early English and Scottish Theatre* (London, 1998), 99-128.

¹² *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots 1547-1603 [CSP Scot.]*, ed. J. Bain (Edinburgh, 1900), ii, 8.

¹³ E.g., *CSP Venetian*, vii, 3; Castelnau, *Memoires*, 303.

¹⁴ J. Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth I* (Woodbridge, 1980), 6.

observations', court performance in the sixteenth century was widely recognised as one of the many languages of diplomacy.¹⁵

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The entertainments of the Marian court need to be considered in the light of this well-established and highly-nuanced European tradition. On Mary's arrival in Scotland in 1561 the proliferation of festive performance generated by and for her was identified by several observers as deriving from France. Knox dismissed not only the queen's own entertainments, but those presented to her by the burgh of Edinburgh as French imports: 'In ferses, in masking, and in other prodigalities, faine wold fooles have counterfooted France.'¹⁶ Knox's xenophobic reaction was as much political as aesthetic: bitter antagonism to the French in Scotland and suspicion of Mary as a product of the French court made the accusation of French influence an easy political weapon. Yet even Mary's supporter John Leslie, writing later in the 1580s, asserted the same influence although locating it further back, remarking of James V's marriage visit to France in 1537, 'their wes mony new ingynis and devysis ... as of banquetting and of menis behaiour, first begun and used ... fassionis they had scene in France'.¹⁷ The regency of Mary's French mother Mary of Guise reinforced the connection: it appears, for example, that the elaborate entertainments presented in Paris at Mary Stewart's marriage to the dauphin in April 1558 were deliberately imitated in the burgh celebration encouraged by the queen regent when the marriage was 'conterfute' in Edinburgh that June.¹⁸ Although there is evidence of a lively Renaissance culture of performance and spectacular entertainment at the Scottish royal court at least as far back as James IV at the beginning of the sixteenth century, contemporary perception among Scots appears to identify France as the major influence during Mary's reign.

There is plenty of evidence that during her upbringing Mary did participate fully in the elaborate entertainment culture of the French court. According to John Leslie this continued until her final days in France which were spent with the duke of Lorraine who provided 'ane magnifique triumphe' followed by 'pleasant farces and playes'.¹⁹ These spectacles reaffirmed to the departing Scots queen her own status in France, and the support of her noble family. The full flowering of French court spectacle as a political tool under Catherine de Medici did not develop until after Mary had returned to Scotland,²⁰ but there

¹⁵ Francis Bacon, 'Of Masques and Triumphs', *Essays* (London, 1906), 115.

¹⁶ Knox, *Works*, ii, 287-8.

¹⁷ John Leslie, *The Historie of Scotland* (Bannatyne Club, 1830), 154.

¹⁸ S. Carpenter and G. Runnals, 'The entertainments at the marriage of Mary Queen of Scots and the French Dauphin François, 1558: Paris and Edinburgh', *Medieval English Theatre*, xxii (2000), 145-161.

¹⁹ Leslie, *Historie*, 295.

²⁰ On Catherine de Medici and court spectacle, see *Royal Tour*; and E. Ruegger, 'De Grace Dieu à Circé: le ballet de cour au XVI^e siècle et son livret', *Théâtre et Spectacles Hier et Aujourd'hui: Moyen Age et Renaissance* (Paris, 1991), 145-162.

are many records of rich performances of dance, song, scenic device and debate at the courts of Henri II (1547-1559) and François II (1559-1560). These performances often had political dimensions: we know that Mary herself took the role of a Sybil in a performance to welcome Henri II back to court in 1554, addressing her future husband with a speech celebrating her own political and dynastic identity:

Delphica Delphini si mentem, oracula tangunt,
 Britanibus junges regna Britana tuis.²¹

[If Delphic oracles move the mind of the Dauphin, you will join Britain's realms with your Bretons.]

The content of these performances usually appears as straightforward celebration and the demonstration of royal magnificence. Yet even before Catherine de Medici's acknowledged policy of using spectacle to reassure and unite the country after the end of the first War of Religion (1562-4), there was a French tradition of employing such entertainments to assert security in the face of conflict or threat. During the brief reign of François II, Mary was received with her husband at the château of Chenonceaux on 31 March 1560 by a spectacular *trionphe* involving figures of *Renoméé*, *Victoire* and Pallas.²² The pageants of this glorious entry suggest only calm and splendid success; yet for the participants it must have tacitly addressed, by its very lack of overt acknowledgement, the recent threats of Protestant uprising, the tensions and disaffection among the nobility, and the insurrection and attack on the court at Amboise barely two weeks earlier. Ruegger traces back at least to 1554 'ce phénomène de vie des spectacles comme conjuration des menaces politiques'.²³ Given this background, it seems probable that Mary Stewart brought to Scotland from France both a personal delight in courtly performance, and a general sense of spectacle as a means of asserting political confidence and stability.

It is clear that Mary's Scottish court did very quickly establish a culture of entertainment more lavish and spectacular than had been seen in the immediately preceding years. Here, however, Mary's most immediate comparator in the management of her court was not France but England. In her own early years as monarch Elizabeth I also took lavish pleasure in courtly performance, the Italian ambassador Tiepolo reporting in 1559 that 'the Queen's daily arrangements are musical performances and other entertainments'.²⁴ Like Mary, she plainly enjoyed,

²¹ Cited in J. Phillips, *Images of a Queen: Mary Stuart in Sixteenth Century Literature* (California, 1964), 4. Mary's speech refers to her status as queen of Scots and her claim to the English throne, as well as her future marriage to the dauphin.

²² L. Dimier, *Le Primatice, Les Maitres du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1928), 185-6.

²³ Ruegger, 'Grace Dieu', 152-3.

²⁴ *CSP Venetian*, vii, 101.

and prided herself on, her own skill as a dancer.²⁵ But overall Elizabeth appears as a shrewd observer more often than as a performer. Both Spanish and Italian diplomats mention ‘the Queen very fine in her presence chamber looking on at the dancing’; or that ‘she takes marvellous pleasure in seeing people dance’.²⁶ Although more than ready to perform herself on occasion, she appears more deliberate, more concerned with effect in her participation.

Evidence from the early years of Elizabeth’s reign suggests that she was also, perhaps because of the uncertainties of her path to the throne, more sharply aware than Mary of the role of performance in controversy and in the manipulation of opinion. In her first months as queen she apparently tolerated, even supported, explicitly controversial court disguisings such as the 1559 Twelfth Night ‘mummery ... of crows in the habits of Cardinals, of asses habited as Bishops, and of wolves representing Abbots’.²⁷ Although such partisan performances were later sharply suppressed,²⁸ Elizabeth was plainly aware of the use of court performance in establishing her Protestant identity, in shaping opinion and debating political issues.

It is tempting to crystallise the different attitudes of the English and Scottish queens through tellingly comparable moments from their first triumphal entries into their capital cities.²⁹ At her coronation entry Elizabeth was presented ‘with a book generally supposed to be the New Testament in English, which the Queen clasped in her arms and embraced passionately, returning thanks’.³⁰ Jean Wilson points out the political significance of Elizabeth’s action, and her readiness to seize the theatrical occasion for a significant political performance of her own. Mary, encountering an almost identical presentation at her official entry into Edinburgh was, at least according to Knox, a far less accomplished public performer. When the English Bible along with a psalm book was presented to her by a child emerging from a descending globe, ‘sche began to frown; for schame sche could not refuse it’ but she hurriedly handed it on to a Roman Catholic member of her train.³¹ The simple explanation, of course, is that the English Bible was a welcome symbol to

²⁵ The most famous anecdotal evidence is recorded by James Melville: see *Sir James Melville’s Memoirs*, ed. T. Thomson (Bannatyne Club, 1827), 125.

²⁶ *CSP Spanish*, i, 71; *CSP Venetian*, vii, 101.

²⁷ *CSP Venetian*, vii, 11.

²⁸ E.g., at Cambridge in 1564, see *Records of Early English Drama: Cambridge*, ed. A. H. Nelson (Toronto, 1989), 242-3.

²⁹ For illuminating discussion of both entries in the context of the genre, see G. Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford, 1998), 125-9, and Chap. 6.

³⁰ *CSP Venetian*, vii, 15; Wilson, *Entertainments*, 6-7.

³¹ Knox, *Works*, ii, 288. See A. A. MacDonald, ‘Mary Stewart’s entry to Edinburgh: An ambiguous triumph’, *Innes Review*, xlii (1991), 101-110; P. Davidson, ‘The entry of Mary Stewart into Edinburgh, 1561, and other ambiguities’, *Renaissance Studies*, ix (1995), 416-429; A. R. MacDonald, ‘The triumph of Protestantism: The burgh council of Edinburgh and the entry of Mary Queen of Scots, 2 September 1561’, *Innes Review*, xlviii (1997), 73-82. Herries confirms that the books were ‘emblems of her defending

the Protestant Elizabeth but an affront to the Roman Catholic Mary, and each reacted accordingly. But the contrasted handling of the public theatrical situation reported by onlookers (biased as they may have been) suggests that the two queens, though both aware of the power of royal performance, responded differently to the political possibilities of spectacle.

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The earliest entertainments of Mary Stewart's own Scottish court show few overtly political dimensions: we hear of dances and masking at court, the nobility playing in tilts and disguised war-games, spectacular celebrations at noble weddings. Evidence presents these occasions as primarily domestic, a means for the court to give itself pleasure by spectacle and performance. George Buchanan, among others, associated these early entertainments primarily with the French entourage who had accompanied Mary to Scotland, claiming that after her arrival 'the rest of that year was spent in honourably sending away the French who had ceremoniously accompanied the Queen; and in sports and entertainments'.³² Various occasions do seem especially to have involved the French visitors. Lining materials for masking costumes were issued to French *valets de chambre* and to M. Damville, son of the constable of France, in October 1561.³³ Mary's uncle the marquis d'Elboeuf, then a young man of twenty-five, is recorded as participating in various quasi-theatrical events during December, from a private masking visit to a young woman in the town (sparking near riots as part of a feud being played out between Bothwell and Arran),³⁴ to a magnificent 'running at the ring' on Leith sands with the combatants 'dysguised and appareled thone half lyke women, and thother lyke strayngers, in straynge maskinge garmentes'.³⁵

While court masking itself had been well-established for many years, it is arguable that both the flirtatious masking visits, and the cross-dressed battle sports might show particularly French influence. Domestic 'amorous' masking was a well-established tradition in France, with its etiquette the subject of a light-hearted section added to Martial

³¹ (*continued*) the Reformed Relligion. This was scarce savorie to her at the first entrie! But she went on.' Herries, *Historical Memoirs of the Reign of Mary Queen of Scots*, ed. R. Pitcairn (Abbotsford Club, 1836), 56. Mary was apparently similarly discomfited at her entry to Perth two weeks later, falling sick and leaving the procession after taking a dislike to pageants which 'dyd to playnely condemne the errors of the worlde' (*CSP Scot.*, i, 555).

³² Buchanan, *Tyrannous Reign*, 55.

³³ *Inventaires de la Royne Descosse Douairiere de France [Inventories]*, ed. J. Robertson (Bannatyne Club, 1863), 127-8.

³⁴ Although d'Elboeuf was identified as the prime mover in this masking visit, it seems to have been engineered by the earl of Bothwell as a mischievous encounter with a young woman believed to be the lover of the young earl of Arran, the son of the duke of Châtelherault and Bothwell's political enemy: *CSP Scot.*, i, 582-3; Knox, *Works*, ii, 315-320.

³⁵ *CSP Scot.*, i, 576.

d'Auvergne's popular *Arrets d'Amour* in 1528; such masking was especially associated with *messieurs les mignons*, the young men of the French court.³⁶ Joseph Robertson points out that France also offers contemporary parallels to the cross-dressed tilting.³⁷ Mary herself most probably witnessed a running at the ring during her own reign in France, in which another of her uncles, the Grand Prior, dressed as an Egyptian woman, while the duke de Nemours was costumed as a burgher's wife. But if France was the inspiration for such performances, the Scottish nobility seem to have taken part with equal enthusiasm. The marquis was accompanied on his domestic masking visits by the earl of Bothwell and Lord John who also, with the Lord Robert, took part in the running at the ring. These latter two were Mary's half-brothers, commendators of religious houses at Coldingham and Holyrood but now, like their elder half-brother Lord James, converts to the reformed religion.³⁸ In spite of Knox's ire, the reformed nobility of Scotland clearly did not at this stage object to the teasing magnificence of courtly performance, and 'Lord Robert and the women won the ring'.³⁹

More elaborate entertainments early in 1562 accompanied important weddings. In January Randolph mentions 'much good sport and pastimes' at the marriage of Lord John with Bothwell's sister;⁴⁰ but it is the February wedding festivities for Lord James, the queen's oldest half-brother and most senior adviser, later earl of Moray and regent, that were seen as especially symptomatic of the new performance culture. The wedding followed the belting of Lord James as earl of Mar and it was the celebration of these events that prompted Knox's anger against spectacle and excess: 'The greatness of the bancquett, and the vanitie used thairat, offended many godly. Thair began the masking, which from year to year hath continewed since.'⁴¹ Masking itself had in fact been established at the Scottish court long before: there are records under James V of 'play gounis to the Kingis grace to pas in maskrie' back in 1535.⁴² It seems to have been the scale and splendour of the entertainments that were considered new. The *Diurnall of Remarkable Occurrents*, claiming the marriage accompanied 'sik solemnitie as the lyk hes not bene sein befoir' is more explicit, describing the queen's hosting of the banquet at Holyrood with 'greit and diverse baling, and casting of fyre ballis, fyre speris and rynnng with horsis'.⁴³ Dance and music was combined with

³⁶ See M. Twycross and S. Carpenter, *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Aldershot, 2002), 172-9.

³⁷ *Inventories*, p. lxxvii; Pierre de Brantome, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1823), iii, 154-5.

³⁸ *The Heads of the Religious Houses in Scotland from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. D. E. R. Watt and N. F. Shead (Scottish Record Society, 2001), 40, 96.

³⁹ *CSP Scot.*, i, 576.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, i, 590.

⁴¹ Knox, *Works*, ii, 314.

⁴² *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland [Treasurer's Accounts]*, ed. J. Balfour Paul (Edinburgh, 1877-1913), vii, 255.

⁴³ *A Diurnall of Remarkable Occurrents that have passed within the Country of Scotland since the death of King James the Fourth till the year MDLXXV* (Bannatyne Club, 1833), 70.

firework display and war sports on a clearly lavish scale. It seems probable that the 'xxxvij elnis of reid and quhite taffeteis to be maskin claithis of divers prices', provided to the court tailor on 31 January, were intended for these festivities.⁴⁴ The spectacle appears to have impressed even the French. Pittscottie claims 'that same day Monseur Martis [marquis d'Elboeuf] quhilk was the quenis grace moder broder confessit that he saw nevir sic ane brydill in france nocht the kingis awin brydill'.⁴⁵

We should remember that Moray, although at this stage conciliatory to his Roman Catholic half-sister, was a committed reformer. His readiness to participate with the queen in such display clearly irritated Knox who had personally preached on moderation at the wedding service, and perhaps other Protestants. Buchanan claimed later that the festivities at the marriage 'bitterly offended his friends, and provided the envious with grounds for slander'.⁴⁶ But Moray does not appear to have found the magnificent disguising of courtly entertainment improper or uncomfortable. In the rather chaotic scramble over Mary's possessions after her deposition in 1567 Moray, by then regent, received a quantity of elaborate 'Maskyne Cleise' from the royal wardrobe, comprising at least thirty spectacular costumes, some in matching sets.⁴⁷ If the lavishness of court entertainment was really initiated by Mary and her French education, it was clearly accepted by the Scottish nobility as an appropriate and successful means of asserting the status and power both of individuals and of the court itself.

Another noble wedding a few months after Moray's was the occasion for more magnificent entertainment, reinforcing and expanding the role of such performance at the new court. In May 1562 Randolph reported that 'Lord Fleming shall be married on Sunday next ... the Quene makethe the feaste'.⁴⁸ John, the fifth Lord Fleming, was a brother of one of the queen's four Maries, sharing ties of both blood and religion with Mary.⁴⁹ The queen not only provided the feast but also decked the bride: ten ounces of gold trimming, costing £25 was supplied 'to garneis ane gowne to my Ladie Flemyng agane hir mariage'.⁵⁰ The queen's generosity to her household and close companions frequently seems to have been expressed in such gifts of festivity. There are many instances of her providing clothing, banquets and the accompanying entertainments for weddings, most notoriously the mask for the marriage of her *valet de*

⁴⁴ *Treasurer's Accounts*, xi, 103. Records suggest that a 'masking cote' used about 7 ells of cloth, a team generally involving six or more dancers with matching costumes: see Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks*, 133-35.

⁴⁵ Robert Lindsay of Pittscottie, *The Historie and Cronicles of Scotland From the Slauchter of King James the First To the Ane thousande fyve hundreith thrie scor fyftein zeir* (Scot. Text Soc., 1899), ii, 173 n.7.

⁴⁶ Buchanan, *Tyrannous Reign*, 64-65.

⁴⁷ *Inventories*, 185-6.

⁴⁸ *CSP Scot.*, i, 622.

⁴⁹ Donaldson, *All the Queen's Men*, 58.

⁵⁰ *Treasurer's Accounts*, xi, 162.

chambre Bastien Pagez for which she left Darnley in the Kirk o'Field, thereby avoiding the explosion in 1567. This mode of largesse demonstrates another well-established role of courtly entertainment in the sixteenth century: the splendour of display could constitute a public performance of royal munificence, a performance which honoured both donor and receiver in enacting the glory and the generosity of the monarch.⁵¹

The personal celebration of the Fleming wedding extended into an entertainment with wider and more overtly political implications. Pittscottie records that:

the same day me lord Fleming was marieit wiht great treumphant maid, to wit, thair was maid wpon the locht of Airthour saitt gaillayis and ane castell maid alsua thair of tymmer and greit artaillze schot in everie syde, the quens grace and the nobilitie present, quhilk wes done befor the ambassadour of Swadin conforme to the fegour of the seige of Leytht.⁵²

The water battle, combined with a probably pyrotechnic 'fort-holding' by Dunsapie Loch in Holyrood Park, confirms that sophisticated martial and firework theatre was already established in Scotland, providing an interesting technical forerunner to the elaborate spectacle four years later at the baptism of James VI at Stirling. According to Pittscottie's account, however, the aim was more than aesthetic. It was performed before a Swedish ambassador, in Scotland possibly for marriage negotiations between Mary and his king.⁵³ The fort-holding was apparently designed to recall the siege of Leith in 1560, a ferocious assault by the English, aiding the Protestant Lords of the Congregation, on the French supporters of the Roman Catholic regent, Mary of Guise. The wedding spectacle, with its galleys and water-battle, seems to refer to the earlier phase of the siege, a sea-assault initiated in January 1560.⁵⁴ Both this assault and the land siege that followed were in military terms unsuccessful in ousting the French forces of the queen regent. But since the siege was only concluded with the death of her mother and the negotiated departure of French forces from Scotland, we might not expect Mary to have wholeheartedly welcomed its festive re-enactment. The outcome of the assault in the Treaty of Edinburgh, accepted though never finally ratified by Mary and her then husband François II, was an uncertain victory. For the queen and her circle at the Fleming wedding, however, the siege's transformation into a triumphant entertainment may have reinforced its emblematic status as a danger averted and controlled, its victory more secure, its conflict demonstrably no longer a threat to the stability of the realm.

⁵¹ Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks*, 131-3.

⁵² Pittscottie, *Historie*, ii, 176.

⁵³ See *CSP Scot.*, i, 621-630.

⁵⁴ See *The Journal of the Siege of Leith 1560*, in *Two Missions of Jacques de la Brosse*, ed. G. Dickinson (Scot. Hist. Soc., 1942), 56-121; *CSP Scot.*, i, 300-1.

Within these first few months of Mary's reign we already find a range of performances and entertainments, fulfilling a range of purposes: dancing and masking for private pleasure, which could become an assertion of the character of the court or its monarch; deliberate enhancement of the glory of the court through the splendour of the spectacle presented; public demonstration of the monarch's generosity and the privileged status of the recipient; and control of political events by their translation into festive terms. Although on the face of it none of these entertainments carried, or was designed to carry, any obvious political weight, they all contributed to a climate in which the wider political identity of the court and the monarch were partly formed by performance.

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There are two intertwined strands of court performance during Mary's reign in Scotland. Before considering the more deliberately political entertainments it is worth pursuing some of the implications of her personal pleasure in courtly performance. According to Knox she was explicit about her delight in such entertainment: 'Hir commoun talk was, in secreat, sche saw nothing in Scotland but gravitie, which repugned alltogetther to her nature, for sche was brocht up in joyusitie; so termed sche hir dancing, and othir thingis thairto belonging.'⁵⁵ Knox's sarcastic reflections on such 'joyusitie' assert a link between courtly dance and masking performance, and sexual licence, ascribing the phenomenon to French influence.⁵⁶ For him performance was intrinsically bound up with both sexual and political offence. Even at the time this was an extreme view. Music and dance supplied the commonest mode of European court entertainment at the time, and Renaissance courts were by the later sixteenth century well supplied with theoretical analyses of the dance that presented it as a neo-platonic image of cosmic harmony.⁵⁷ More practically, contemporary diplomatic comment suggests that dance was generally accepted as an appropriate mode of courtly spectacle, dignifying the court and providing a suitable showcase especially for its younger members, along with a means for both sexes to be involved in assertions of personal and political harmony. Criticism might be levelled at excessive dance entertainment, but rarely at dancing itself.

It is arguable however that Mary's pleasurable participation in court dance entertainment tended towards the personal rather than the public end of the spectrum. Those commenting on Elizabeth's performances suggest a fairly calculated sense of public effect: 'at the dance the Queen performed her part, the Duke of Norfolk being her partner,

⁵⁵ Knox, *Works*, ii, 294.

⁵⁶ See Knox's reflections on the 'Mask of Orleans', *Works*, ii, 318-9.

⁵⁷ See M. McGowan, *L'Art du Ballet de Cour en France, 1581-1643* (Paris, 1963), ch. 1; Ruegger, 'Grace Dieu'.

in superb array.⁵⁸ Sir James Melville apparently recognised the official quality, famously distinguishing her performance as ‘high and disposed’ in comparison with Mary’s.⁵⁹ Court observers suggest that Mary danced more readily, more informally, and less self-consciously than her cousin. Passing comments reveal dance as a natural feature of her court life, marking all ordinary festivity. Some commentators claimed that the informality of her dance performance could be surprising. Knox, most explicitly, accused the queen of excessive public intimacy with the young and unfortunate Chastelard in one particular dance ‘in the which man and woman talkis secreatlíe’.⁶⁰ Later, the French ambassador de Foix told Catherine de Medici in January 1565 that she might find it strange that while the newly re-instated earl of Lennox, recently returned to Scotland, ‘mène le plus souvent ladicté dame à la dance, quelquefois, à faulte d’aultre, ung de ses gentilzhommes servans’.⁶¹ Both men may have overemphasised the level of personal involvement in these performances: Knox acknowledged that ‘secret talk’ was a formal, if deplorable, part of the dance in question, and de Foix that such dancing behaviour was ‘ordinaire et tous les jours accoustumé en Escosse’. But such comments suggest that Mary did manifestly enjoy the more personal pleasures of dance.

In his influential dance manual of 1588, *Orchésographie*, Thoinot Arbeau lists different kinds of public role for dance performance:

les Roys & princes, commandent dances & mascarades, pour festoier, recepuoir, & faire recueil ioyeux, aux seigneurs estrangiers. Nous practiquons telles refiouissances aux iours de la celebration des nopces, & ez sollemnités des festes de nostre Eglise.⁶²

[Kings and princes command dances and masks, to celebrate, receive and welcome foreign nobility. We use such festivity on days of wedding celebrations, and at the festive ceremonial on Church holidays.]

All these public manifestations of dance entertainment can be found at the Scottish court (even though, as Arbeau himself acknowledges, ‘les reformez abhorrent telles choses’). But Arbeau also outlines eloquently the particular pleasures of performance for the individual dancer. Dance is, he claims:

vne espece de Rhetorique muette, par laquelle IO’rateur [sic] peult par ses mouuements, sans parler vn seul mot, se faire entendre, & persuader aux spectateurs, quil est gaillard digne destre loué, aymé, & chery.⁶³

⁵⁸ *CSP Venetian*, vii, 27.

⁵⁹ Melville, *Memoirs*, 125.

⁶⁰ Knox, *Works*, ii, 368. Chastelard was later executed for invading Mary’s bedchamber. ‘Commoning’ between male and female dancers was, however, a distinguishing feature of Italianate mask dancing (see Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks*, 169-72).

⁶¹ Alexandre Teulet, *Relations Politiques de la France et de l’Espagne avec l’Ecosse au XVIe Siècle* (Paris, 1862), ii, 189.

⁶² Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesographie* (Lengres, 1588), Aiii^v.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Bi^r.

[A kind of silent rhetoric, by which the orator can by his movements, without speaking a single word, make himself understood, and persuade the spectators that he is gallant, worthy to be praised, loved and cherished.]

In her own day Mary's public image as queen was interpreted both positively and negatively as bound up with just such demonstrative expression of desire and desirability.⁶⁴ It seems entirely probable that her pleasure in dancing asserted, in addition to any formal element of entertainment, a desire to be 'loué, aymé, & chery'. Her behaviour in court was always readily emotionally demonstrative, a fact frequently reported by diplomats and observers.⁶⁵ Courtly dance provided an arena in which the private and public roles of the monarch could interact, allowing Mary to perform an image of herself as queen in which both were important.

One step beyond dance was masking, by the later sixteenth century widespread through all European courts. The commonest pattern involved a team of masked dancers, drawn from the members of the court, in matching, elaborate though not necessarily representational costumes, who would perform exhibition dances themselves and then take partners from among the unmasked court spectators. Sometimes this might include formalised elements of scenario; but dance was at the core of the mask. The mask form thus involved spectacular costume, though not necessarily impersonation, a teasing play with anonymity and identity, and a deliberate unsettling of any boundary between 'performance' and 'participation'.⁶⁶

Mary's court plainly enjoyed masking activities throughout her personal reign. 'Masks' are frequently mentioned at court celebrations and weddings. Accounts and inventories record many masking garments, properties or materials towards them: 'deux manteaux de masque faitz de taffetas blanc'; 'damas blanc pour faire six gibesieres [knapsack, hunting bag] de bergers pour des masques au nopces de Monsieur de Saint Cosme'; 'troy rest de taffetas orangie chengent contenant xxviiij aulnes demy cart qui furt employe pour les masque qui fit la Royne le jour de son bonque'; 'vj maskis, the pece xx s'.⁶⁷ Old clothes and hangings would furnish materials for masking costumes: 'Je rompu vng soye de velours bleu pour faire trois grands bonnetz a la Souisse pour faire

⁶⁴ For discussion of issues of desire and femininity at Mary's court, see S. Dunnigan, 'Rewriting the Renaissance language of love and desire: The "bodily burdein" in the poetry of Mary, Queen of Scots', *Gramma*, iv (1996), 183-95; 'The creation and self-creation of Mary Queen of Scots: Literature, politics and female controversies in sixteenth-century Scottish poetry', *Scotlands*, v (1998), 65-88; D. Parkinson, "'A Lamentable Storie": Mary Queen of Scots and the inescapable *Querelle des Femmes*', in L. A. J. R. Houwen, A. A. MacDonald and S. Mapstone (eds.), *A Palace in the Wild: Essays on Vernacular Culture and Humanism in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Scotland* (Louvain, 2000), 141-160.

⁶⁵ *CSP Scot.*, i, 551, 628, 641; ii, 3 *et al.*

⁶⁶ Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks*, 169-90.

⁶⁷ *Inventories*, 136, 144; *Treasurer's Accounts*, xi, 358.

des masques.⁶⁸ An impression of the splendour of the masking garments comes from the 1569 list of costumes handed over to the Regent Moray: the 'vj coitis begareit with quheit and reid satyne and dropit with cleith of gold' suggest the dazzling effect of a team of matching dancers; while the 'coit of quheit armosing tauffateis, hingand full of schakaris, broderit with gold' accompanied with its 'howde of quheit and reid tauffateis, full of schakaris' confirm Francis Bacon's observation that 'oes, or spangs, as they are of no great cost, so they are of most glory'.⁶⁹ Display, performance and disguise were clearly important and pleasurable elements of the life of Mary's court, contributing to the public definition both of the monarch and of courtly allegiances.

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It is against this background that we must read the more explicitly political entertainments of Mary Stewart's reign. Most of these address Anglo-Scottish relations, as do a number of contemporary English court performances. The implied dialogue that can be traced between the entertainments of the two courts is both politically and expressively revealing. A broad overall difference in the culture of performance emerges: Mary's entertainments tend to focus on the personal relationship between herself and the English queen, employing a visually assertive mode of spectacle and show, emphasising harmony and security. Elizabeth more often watched performances focusing on the political issues raised, in dramas or narratives of debate and analysis. The differences testify to the expressive range of sixteenth-century court performance as a language of political intervention.

In the early weeks of 1562, in the first winter festivities of Mary's reign, each court witnessed a performance concerning the other. On 18 January 1562 Robert Dudley brought to the court at Whitehall from the Inner Temple a play, mask and triumph. Scholars have established that the play was *Gorboduc*, addressing the question of the English succession, while the mask explored in allegorical terms the marriage possibilities for Elizabeth, enacting Dudley's own worthiness as a suitor.⁷⁰ As Marie Axton's detailed and revealing analysis points out, 'when they took their entertainments to the Court the Inner Templars offered the Queen advice on the two most controversial political questions of the day: her marriage and the succession.'⁷¹ It is the question of succession which involved the position of Mary Stewart. At the end of the play's story of tragically divided inheritance and civil conflict, a discussion on the succession to Gorboduc's line in Act V apparently explicitly attacks the

⁶⁸ *Inventories*, 141.

⁶⁹ *Inventories*, 186; Bacon, *Essays*, 115. Bacon also observes that white was an especially good colour for masking costumes as it was one of those 'that shew best by candle-light'.

⁷⁰ M. Axton, 'Robert Dudley and the Inner Temple Revels', *The Historical Review*, xiii (3) (1970), 365-378.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 374.

claim of the Roman Catholic and foreign Mary Stewart to be recognised as Elizabeth's heir: 'in no wise admit / The heavy yoke of foreign governance.'⁷² An oblique allusion to the threat to national peace and security that Mary represents also seems to appear in the snaky-haired figures of the Furies, associated with discord and division, who appear in one of the play's dumbshows.⁷³

The question of Mary's right to be recognised as Elizabeth's rightful heir was a live and thorny one that dominated the relationship between the two queens. Throughout the first years of Mary's personal rule the question remained the primary cause of tension between the two, threatening all efforts to establish a personal friendship. It is indicative of the performance culture of Elizabeth's court that drama was recognised as a proper arena in which such delicate and potentially explosive issues might be explored, and the queen herself addressed, influenced or persuaded.

There is no evidence that reports of this anti-Marian performance reached Scotland: although it concerned Mary, the play was aimed at Elizabeth and the court of England, addressing an ongoing internal debate.⁷⁴ However, some three weeks later Randolph sent an account to Elizabeth's secretary William Cecil of an episode at a banquet at the Scottish court. Though scarcely an entertainment, it is plainly a deliberate courtly performance and one that sought to address political issues beyond its immediate audience:

'upon Shrove Twesdaye at nyght, syttinge amongst the lordes at supper in the syght of this Quene, placed for that purpose, she dranke unto the Quenes Majestie, and sent me the cuppe of golde which waythe xvijj or xx unces.' After supper in giving her Majesty thanks, she uttered in many 'effectueus' words, her desire of perpetual amity, and talked long with me thereon in the hearing of the Duke and Huntly. I thought it my duty to signify this for your honour to report to the Queen's Majesty.⁷⁵

Randolph perceives the apparently informal moment as a carefully managed performance. The health-drinking and the symbolic largesse of the gold cup are clearly designed as a public enactment of Mary's personal commitment to English friendship. The subsequent conversation is an extension of the performance, apparently deliberately held in the hearing of the duke of Châtelherault and the earl of Huntly, important members of the privy council. While the duke was committed to the reformed religion and Huntly was a Roman Catholic, both were well known to favour amity with France rather than England.⁷⁶ Although

⁷² Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, *Gorboduc*, in *Two Tudor Tragedies*, ed. W. Tydeman (Harmondsworth, 1992), 1.1688.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁷⁴ Mary did, however, hear of and complain about a 'discourse haid at Lyncollis Innis' on her position in the succession in 1566. See *CSP Scot.*, ii, 304.

⁷⁵ *CSP Scot.*, i, 603. This occurred during the festivities accompanying Moray's marriage.

⁷⁶ A. White, 'Queen Mary's northern province', in M. Lynch (ed.), *Mary Stewart: Queen in Three Kingdoms* (Oxford, 1988), 54-55.

superficially a commonplace piece of courtesy, the moment was clearly recognised as theatrical, designed to be seen and to impress a number of different audiences.⁷⁷

It seems characteristic that Mary herself enacted the scene as an assertion of her amity to Elizabeth. It is not a comment upon, but an intervention in, a relationship which the performance defines as a personal one. Its implications are, however, plainly political and its audience is conceived in political terms. The gesture is performed as a political statement to the Scottish court in general and to the opponents of English amity in particular. Yet the official representative of England has been set up as the prime spectator. Randolph is 'in the syght of this Quene, placed for that purpose'; and he is a spectator through whom the spectacle will pass to a yet more important audience: 'I thought it my duty to signify this for your honour to report to the Queen's Majesty.' The tiny performance is aimed beyond the walls of Holyrood and the court of Scotland, right into the court of England itself.

Mary's emphasis on her personal relationship with Elizabeth as the means to resolve political differences underlay the negotiations for an interview between the two queens in England in the summer of 1562. These advanced to an almost final point: safe-conducts, passports and even provisions were arranged, and the Scottish nobles were summoned to prepare to leave Edinburgh on 15 July. Only at the very last minute did the English withdraw, citing the religious conflict in France which threatened the delicate relationships between the three countries. Royal interviews of this kind, ostensibly opportunities for diplomatic negotiation at the very highest level, were not only accompanied by lavish entertainments and spectacle but were in themselves a form of theatre in which monarchs enacted both their own magnificence and their glorious alliance with each other.⁷⁸ Preparations suggest that Mary and the Scots well understood the importance of such display.⁷⁹ The interview was seen on both sides as an important courtly show, as well as a personal and political meeting.

Most revealing, however, is a detailed account of the formal entertainments devised for the meeting by the English court. Arrangements were so advanced that Cecil had received and carefully vetted a plan of the 'Devyses to be shewed before the quenes Ma^{tie} by waye of maskinge, at Nottingham castell, after the meteinge of the quene of Scottis'.⁸⁰ Spread

⁷⁷ Its significance is confirmed by Knox who thought it worth recording in his own history: 'for his [Randolph's] Maistres saik, she drank to him [in] a coupe of gold, which he possessed with greattar joy, for the favour of the gevar, then of the gift': Knox, *Works*, ii, 314-5.

⁷⁸ The Field of Cloth of Gold is a spectacular example: see Anglo, *Spectacle*, 137-69.

⁷⁹ Randolph reports discussion of 'the great charges to this Queen and realm, of such "solemne meetinge"'; the problem of suitably spectacular costume was finally solved by deciding 'that all men shall wear black cloth, for the Queen herself has not cast off "her murnynge garmentys which wyll holde in verie myche monye."' *CSP Scot.*, i, 608, 621.

⁸⁰ Chambers, '*Lansdowne Manuscripts*', 144.

across three evenings, these masking scenarios were designed to celebrate the political significance of the meeting of queens in appropriately spectacular mode. Though carefully uncontroversial, the devices covertly imply some assertion of English control.

The masks followed traditional patterns. Each evening would present an elaborate entry of maskers, riding strange beasts or in triumphal floats. An allegorical narrative would be played out, each evening concluding with masking dances. Overtly the performances present a poised celebration of mutual alliance. They opened with:

Pallas rydinge vppon an vnycorne, havinge in her hande a Standarde, in w^{ch} is to be paynted ij Ladyes handes, knitt one faste wth in thother, and over thand^{es} written in letters of golde / ffides / ⁸¹

Pallas, already an image with some association with Elizabeth, borne by the Scottish unicorn, carries a banner asserting the equality and friendship of the two queens. She was followed by:

ij Ladyes rydinge togethers thone vppon a golden Lyon, wth a crowne of gold on his heade, thother vppon a redd Lyon wth the like crowne of gold. ⁸²

These ladies, though identified as the virtues Prudentia and Temperantia, ride on the golden lion of England, the red lion of Scotland. Behind them are brought ‘captive Discorde, and false Reporte, with ropes of gold about there neckes’, who are then confined in the prison of Extreme Oblivion. The second night brought Peace, riding an elephant, to live with the two ladies in the Castle of Plentie. The resulting prosperity was disrupted on the third evening by Disdain on a wild boar, bringing his captain Prepence Malice to banish Peace and liberate Discord and False Report. Discretion and Valiant Courage, armed by Patience and Temperance, are sent against them, overcoming the vices who threaten ‘the perpetuall peace made betwene those ij vertues’. ⁸³ The enacted harmony between the two queens would then ripple out into the courtly spectators, as on the first evening ‘thinglishe Ladies to take the nobilite of the straunger and daunce’, while on the second ‘thinglishe Lordes shall maske wth the Scottishe Ladyes’. ⁸⁴

Conceived to be played before the two monarchs, these spectacular entertainments assert their equality, reject ancient discord and ‘False Report’, and celebrate the perpetual treaty of friendship which the queen of Scots was thought to pursue. ⁸⁵ The performance might almost

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 145.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 145, 146.

⁸⁵ Mary had clearly been taught from childhood to pursue this image. In an autograph letter to Elizabeth she wrote, aged only eleven, of ‘a perpetual memory of two Queens in this isle joined in inviolable friendship’: *CSP Scot.*, i, 194.

be seen to dramatise a letter from Mary to Elizabeth in January 1562: 'the matter being so knit up, and all seed of dissension uprooted, we shall present to the world such an amity as has never been seen.'⁸⁶ The show was undoubtedly intended to be read in such a way. Its performance frustrated by the failure of the interview, it was apparently made over for a different meeting of reconciliation ten years later. In June 1572 the French marshal Montmorency visited the English court to conclude a peace negotiation which briefly resurrected friendly relations between England and France. For that occasion Revels accounts record the construction of 'A Castell for Lady peace to sytt' and 'A prison for discord', along with 'vj yardes of cheyne with the golde lether ... A Bolte shackles & a collar for Discorde' with 'Curling of Heare made of Black silk for Discordes heade'.⁸⁷ The images of the intended Nottingham masks clearly constituted an enduring visual language of peace, appropriate for any meeting of reconciliation.

But hindsight introduces a further reading of the planned shows, a reading which although not active in summer 1562 might be seen as latent in the congratulatory images. Explicitly the mask represented the two queens to themselves as poised and equal virtues, Prudentia and Temperantia, with equal power, equal commitment to peace, equal roles to play in its defence. The action overall is governed, however, by the opposing forces of Pallas and Discord. These are both common figures in such congratulatory shows, figures that Mary would have encountered in festive celebrations in France.⁸⁸ But even so early in Elizabeth's reign, tradition had already begun to link her to Pallas, the virginal goddess of wisdom. She had been so figured only a few months before in the mask accompanying the performance of *Gorboduc*. The wild-haired Discord, on the other hand, came in the English view to be associated with the queen of Scots. In the *Gorboduc* dumbshow the threat of conflict posed by Mary's claim to the succession and the invasion from the North is, though obliquely, associated with the snake-headed Furies. Elizabeth herself famously came to characterise Mary as the 'daughter of debate, that discord aye doth sow'.⁸⁹

There is no reason to assume that such an opposition was intended to be realised had the two queens actually watched this entertainment in 1562, in fact quite the contrary since Cecil's vetting of the plans was designed to control the political impact of the show. But it is interesting that the theatrical language of courtly performance so readily allows for such a reading, and entirely likely that an English court audience would have been quite acute enough to read it in that way at a different political juncture. The meanings of such shows depend as much on the political circumstances of performance as on the performance itself.

⁸⁶ *CSP Scot.*, i, 587.

⁸⁷ A. Feuillerat, *Documents relating to the Office of the Revels in the time of Queen Elizabeth* (Louvain, 1908), 157-8.

⁸⁸ See notes 7 and 22.

⁸⁹ *The Poems of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. L. Bradner (Providence, 1964), 4. For further analysis, see Axton, *Queen's Two Bodies*, 48-9; Phillips, *Images of a Queen*, 81-84.

This is crucially true of an entertainment at the Scottish court eighteen months later, during Shrovetide 1564. Randolph describes an elaborate banquet, with each course accompanied by music and pageantry celebrating Eros, Chastity and Mutual Love. Superficially the show again seems entirely traditional, echoing similar love/chastity debates at other Renaissance courts.⁹⁰ But the moment of performance was dynamically informed by the particular political context, turning the apparently neutrally decorative entertainment into an eloquent if enigmatic diplomatic statement.

Since 1562 the focus of Anglo-Scottish relations had shifted towards the queen of Scots' marriage and English approval for any match. By the end of 1563 Elizabeth had ruled out a wide range of foreign suitors, causing Mary deep frustration and leading Randolph to conclude shortly before Christmas that 'some think the Queen's sickness is caused by her utterly despairing of the marriage of any of those she looked for'.⁹¹ At the end of December Randolph, under orders from England, began to hint to her the advantages of an English match.⁹² The new year opened with a sustained and dazzling period of 'mirth and pastimes' culminating in a series of Shrovetide banquets.⁹³ Randolph interestingly interprets this season of entertainment as politically motivated, even while acknowledging that those motives are unclear: 'The banquete insueth here upon; what divelyshe devises are imagined upon that, yt passeth all moste the wytte of man to thynke! lyttle good some saye is intended to some or other.'⁹⁴ He draws parallels with similar banquets hosted by Mary's mother before 'the troubles' of 1559 erupted in violent conflict between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic regent.⁹⁵ Knox also claimed the 1564 entertainments were 'done upoun polessie',⁹⁶ confirming the contemporary reading of court performance as intrinsically political.

The love/chastity entertainment emerges from this climate of heightened political awareness. The dispatch in which Randolph describes it to Cecil opens with a long reflection on the queen's marriage. He then speaks of 'marvellous sights and shows, singular devices' at the climactic banquet of the season; Mary herself, and her ladies and gentlemen who served at the feast, were strikingly 'all yn whyte and blacke'.⁹⁷ Randolph

⁹⁰ See note 9.

⁹¹ *CSP Scot.*, ii, 30.

⁹² *Ibid.*, ii, 31-33.

⁹³ See *ibid.*, ii, 34, 41; *Miscellany of the Maitland Club* (Edinburgh, 1840), ii, 391-2.

⁹⁴ *CSP Scot.*, ii, 46.

⁹⁵ This earlier case confirms the political illegibility of court festivity: Randolph read Mary of Guise's festivity as calculated to distract attention from her plan to go 'about to suppress "Godes worde"': John Leslie saw an equally political but opposite intention of reconciling the Protestant lords 'thinking be that and siclike familiar intertenement to have stayed all thair interprices' (Leslie, *Historie*, 269).

⁹⁶ Knox, *Works*, ii, 417.

⁹⁷ *CSP Scot.*, ii, 47. Although the colours are common, this could be read as a compliment to Elizabeth who claimed them as her own in a comparable English court performance a few months later (*CSP Spanish*, i, 368). On the other hand, the first masking

then describes three successive courses, accompanied by ‘blind *Cupid*’, ‘a fayer yonge Maid’, and ‘a yonge Childe set forth like vnto Tyme’. The accompanying waiters sang verses celebrating, respectively, Love, Chastity and Mutual Love, with the final song articulating an openly political position, concluding with an explicit statement of harmony between Mary and Elizabeth:

*Rerum supremus terminus
Ut astra terris misceat,
Regina Scota diliget
Anglam, Angla Scotam diliget.*⁹⁸

[Though the last end of the universe confounds heaven with earth, the queen of Scots will love the English queen, the English queen the queen of Scots.]

This combination of spectacle and impersonation, music and song, was plainly aimed by Mary at an English as well as a Scottish audience. As two years previously, Randolph is alert to the symbolic performance of amity: ‘My Sovereign was drunk unto openly, not one of 300 persons or more, but heard the words spoken and saw the cups pass between.’⁹⁹ But now Mary also stressed the verbal content of the performance, openly indicating that it was intended for Elizabeth’s ears. She told Randolph that the feelings expressed towards the English queen were:

more in heart than in outward show, as these verses shall testify, which she gave me in my hand, ‘(the self same that were songe)’ and willed me to do with them as I liked. I trust your honour will present them to the Queen’s majesty.¹⁰⁰

Randolph enclosed these copies of the verses with his letter: a lyric in Italian celebrating the power of Cupid; Latin verses by George Buchanan asserting the power of Chastity; and finally Buchanan’s *Mutuus Amor*, which concludes with the assertion of unshakeable love between the queens of England and Scotland.¹⁰¹

Mary’s presentation of the lyrics to Randolph ensured that the mask had a double audience: the Scottish court at the banquet, and the English monarch beyond. Buchanan’s complimentary verses might easily have been sent directly to Elizabeth, as had happened before.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ (*continued*) costumes recorded at the Scottish court, for James V in 1535, were also black and white.

⁹⁸ Keith, *History*, ii, 220.

⁹⁹ *CSP Scot.*, ii, 47.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, ii, 47

¹⁰¹ All the verses are printed in Keith, *History*, ii, 220. For Buchanan’s ‘In Castitatem’ and ‘*Mutuus Amor*’, see *Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Ruddiman and P. Burmann (Leiden, 1725), ii, 409-10, 418; for translations, P. Ford, *George Buchanan: Prince of Poets* (Aberdeen, 1982), 139, 159.

¹⁰² See, e.g., *CSP Scot.*, ii, 637.

The more indirect course Mary chose suggests that she felt it important that the English queen was aware of the performance context. The theatrical enactment of amity to Elizabeth within the Scottish court was itself part of the mask's political implication, transforming personal friendship into diplomatic statement. Elizabeth is defined as the 'audience' not of the entertainment itself, but of the Scottish court watching and hearing it: the gesture of amity becomes a kind of 'play within a play'.

Traditional as it is, the imagery of the performance was also carefully chosen. The opposition of love and chastity was topically charged at this moment when marriage negotiation was so live an issue. The dominance allowed to 'Chastity, conqueror of alluring love' may well compliment Elizabeth, while the resolution of what initially seems a marriage debate into sisterly affection apparently signals Mary's continuing willingness, in spite of her known unhappiness with the situation, to prefer Elizabeth's favour to the marriage she so desires. It is not clear, however, whether the show suggests that Mary will continue to defer to Elizabeth's advice on her choice of husband, or whether it simply asserts that whatever choice she makes cannot affect the alliance between them. Such ambivalence is by no means uncommon in courtly pageantry.¹⁰³ But the entertainment as a whole recalls the half-joking assertion made earlier in the reign, 'that thys Queen wysshed that one of the two were a man, to mayke an ende of all debates'.¹⁰⁴ The two queens, Buchanan's lyric implies, are indeed effectively married to each other.

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The following year, of course, theatrical marriage to Elizabeth was superseded by real marriage to Darnley and antagonism between the two queens. Although there is no record of deliberately political entertainment associated with these developments, Randolph tends to identify Mary's shifting allegiances partly through the implications of informal court performance. In October 1564 he reports 'she danced long "and in a maske playenge at dyce, loste unto my lord of Lenox a prettie juell of crystall well sette in golde"'.¹⁰⁵ This informal court masking activity reveals a reconciliation with the re-instated earl of Lennox, only recently permitted to return to Scotland; by the end of February Lennox's newly arrived son Darnley 'being required by Murray, danced a "galiarde" with the Queen'.¹⁰⁶

The notoriously rapid development of the relationship between the couple accompanies an apparent increase in unofficial quasi-theatrical activity. The match was seen at the time as impulsive and emotional rather than politically considered, and the queen appears to have used

¹⁰³ See MacDonald, 'Ambiguous Triumph', and Davidson, 'Entry'.

¹⁰⁴ *CSP Scot.*, i, 570. Only a few weeks before this entertainment the earl of Argyll had joked with Mary when she mentioned an English marriage, 'Is the Quene of Englande become a man?' (*CSP Scot.*, ii, 33).

¹⁰⁵ *CSP Scot.*, ii, 88.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, 128.

the resources of informal performance to assert her personal, rather than political engagement. In the middle of Darnley's April illness in Stirling which is generally assumed to have triggered the sudden growth of intimacy between the two,¹⁰⁷ Mary followed an unusually elaborate Easter Mass, wanting 'nether trompet, drumme, nor fyffe, bagge pype, nor taber',¹⁰⁸ with a playful public 'hocking' on Easter Monday:

On Monday she and divers of her women apparelled themselves like 'bourgeois' wives, and went upon their feet up and down the town, of every man they met they took some pledge for a piece of money to the banquet; and in the same lodging where I was accustomed to lodge, there was the dinner prepared and great cheer made, at which she was herself, to the great wonder and 'gasinge' of man woman and child!¹⁰⁹

Randolph, unsympathetic to the Darnley match, stresses the inappropriate self-display of this entertainment, 'Thys is myche wondered at of a Quene'; but theatricality seems to have been an important element of this stage of the courtship. There is unusually high expenditure on coloured taffetas, silks, velvets and masks during the month, conveyed to the queen by 'Johnie Ramsay, passand of Edinburght to Striviling witht certane merchandice concernyng the furnetour of the Quenis grace for the Maii plais'.¹¹⁰ According, again, to Randolph, Darnley joined the queen in similarly playful performance very shortly before the official marriage in July: 'That afternone she and my lord Darlye walked up and downe the towne dysguysed untyll suppertyme, and returned thither agayne.'¹¹¹ Like her great uncle Henry VIII thirty years previously, Mary seems to have seen a natural affinity between marriage and masking.¹¹²

The formal performances for the wedding itself, on 29 July 1565, appear to avoid explicit engagement with its fraught political context. Elizabeth's disapproval of the match, the general absence of international representatives, and the opposition of many of the Scottish nobility, including Moray, made the marriage a contested and contentious event. There are no eye-witness accounts, though Knox insisted that 'during the space of three or four days, there was nothing but balling, and dancing, and banquetting'.¹¹³ However, texts survive for *Pompae* composed by George Buchanan for the wedding celebrations which provide a more detailed view.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ See, e.g., A. Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots* (London, 1969), 270-277.

¹⁰⁸ *CSP Scot.*, ii, 148.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, ii, 148. For Easter Monday hocking customs, see R. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun* (Oxford, 1996), 207-213. These are not recorded as traditional in Scotland.

¹¹⁰ *Treasurer's Accounts*, xi, 359.

¹¹¹ *Selections from unpublished manuscripts in the College of Arms and the British Museum*, ed. J. Stevenson (Maitland Club, 1837), 119-20.

¹¹² Eustace Chapuys, the emperor's ambassador to Henry VIII's court, commented in 1538, 'He cannot be one single moment without masks, which is a sign that he purposes to marry again'. *CSP Spanish*, v (2), 520.

¹¹³ Knox, *Works*, ii, 495.

¹¹⁴ Buchanan, 'Pompa Deorum in Nuptiis Mariae', 'Pompae Equestres', in *Opera*, ii, 400-403.

The first entertainment presented a series of gods and goddesses praising the power of marriage and of love, and celebrating the queen as one of the band of five 'Maries'. The second performance brought in bands of exotic visitors to congratulate the couple: mounted horsemen from Ethiopia and the North, nymphs from Neptune, knights of Virtue, of Pallas and Cupid all offer allegiance to the couple. The queen's four Maries also performed a mask celebrating the return of Salus, the goddess of life and health. None of these masks engage openly with political questions, seeming instead to centre largely on the closest members of the court and the personal prosperity and welfare of the married couple.

As with the Shrovetide banquet of 1564, however, the traditional materials are likely to have acquired more explicit resonance from their inevitably political context. The first, in which Diana laments that marriage is stealing one of her band of five Maries, develops into another chastity/marriage debate. A range of classical gods assert the superiority of fertile marriage as the source of continuity, of new virgins, new soldiers and new Maries. These commonplace wedding sentiments may well have carried a sharper edge, given the angry opposition to the marriage of the virginal Elizabeth. This would be further complicated by the fact that any children conceived in it, by parents who both had claims to the English succession, would carry implications for the English as well as the Scottish throne. The structure of the second mask might also suggest broader political issues: as Ian McFarlane points out, it echoes the form of many French courtly shows in which bands of visitors enter to honour the monarch, a motif Buchanan repeats in the baptismal celebrations for the couple's son eighteen months later.¹¹⁵ Such shows, asserting the extent of royal power, constructed the ruler as the stable and magnificent centre around whom the world revolves.¹¹⁶ However, the choice of visitors at this wedding mask seems uncontentious: the lands represented are exotically distant from Scotland's reality, while the allegorical Knights of Virtue, Wisdom and Love tend to shift the focus from the particular to the more generalised. The form and splendour of the entertainment suggest French influence; but in spite of its tacit reflection on Elizabeth, the performance seems to look more inward than outward, celebrating the personal fulfilment of marriage and the joy of the immediate courtly household, while avoiding direct engagement with the broader and far less consensual implications for the realm.

The marriage marked a crucial shift in relations between Scotland and England, one effect of which is that Randolph came to lose his position at the Scottish court. Late in 1565 he was expelled for undiplomatic activities, removing our chief political eye-witness for the performances

¹¹⁵ I. D. McFarlane, *Buchanan* (London, 1981), 233-4.

¹¹⁶ For French examples, see Ruegger, 'Grace Dieu.' For later Scottish examples, see Alexander Montgomerie, *Works*, ed. J. Cranstoun (Scot. Text Soc., 1887), 'The Navigatioun', 205-12; 'A Cartell of the Thre Ventrous Knights', 213-4.

enacted there.¹¹⁷ Scantier evidence from other sources suggests that in spite of the demands of the Chaseabout Raid, caused by Moray's rebellion, in the months following the marriage, and indeed the rapid deterioration in relations between the queen and her husband, performance continued to play an important part in court life. Expenses over the Christmas season 1565-6 imply ongoing masking activity, with payments for lavish fabrics alongside what seem to be props: 'Item, ij dosane of flouris maid of fedderis, ... iij li; Item, ane creill to put thame in, ... ij s; Item, thre grit dice, ... iij s.' We also find 'certane merchandice in ane grit pan3eour' decorated by the painter, thirty-two sheets of gold foil for gilding, and even pyrotechnics: 'to Charlis Burdeaulx for certane fire werk maid to his grace [4 li.].'¹¹⁸ The announcement of the queen's pregnancy on New Year's Day apparently emerges from a context of celebratory performance.

The first occasion for more official diplomatic entertainment and international recognition presented in February 1566, when the French ambassador Rambouillet arrived to invest Darnley with the Order of St Michel. Despite increasing ill-feeling between the king and queen, both took part in several days of magnificent performance designed to honour the ambassadors, and through them the French king. Randolph, though by now banished to Berwick for supporting the Protestant rebels, heard of 'a costlye maske in which the Quene her howsbonde and David [Riccio] were with vij other in riche attire'.¹¹⁹ The participation of the royal couple, known by now to be in conflict, appears as so often to employ performance to assert glorious harmony in the face of tension. On the second day:

at evin our soueranis maid the maskrie and mumschance, in the quhilk the quenis grace, and all hir Maries and ladies wer all cled in mens apperrell; and everie ane of thame presentit ane quhingar, bravelie and maist artificialle made and embroiderit with gold, to the said ambassatour and his gentilmen, euerie ane of thame according to his estate.¹²⁰

Masking was, as we have seen, an established means of performing largesse: the theatrical enactment of lavish royal generosity, especially where the monarch performed personally, enhanced the honour and value of the gift.¹²¹ Care was taken to turn the souvenir Scottish daggers into spectacular dramatic props, the queen's Master of the Wardrobe providing 'iij quartier de veloux noyr pour faire vij fourreaux a des

¹¹⁷ Randolph shared the English opposition to the Darnley marriage. Maurice Lee concludes that from this period his dispatches are prone to misrepresentation: *James Stewart, Earl of Moray* (New York, 1953), 139n.

¹¹⁸ *Treasurer's Accounts*, xi, 439-440.

¹¹⁹ Bibliothèque Nationale, MS anglais 130, f. 48^v; cited A. Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1853), iv, 248.

¹²⁰ *Diurnal*, 87.

¹²¹ See note 51; also S. Carpenter, 'The sixteenth-century court audience: Performers or spectators?', *Medieval English Theatre*, xix (1997), 3-14.

dacques d'Ecosse'.¹²² The male dress of Mary and her ladies adds a teasing though familiar ambivalence to the performance. Cross-dressing was not uncommon in court masking, extending the central pleasure in playful disguise and the flirtatiously heightened awareness of royal or noble identity beneath the mask.¹²³ Mary herself was alleged to have also enjoyed cross-dressing on more informal occasions. Her father-in-law the earl of Lennox, after the murder of his son, claimed that 'man's apparel ... she loved oftentimes to be in in dancings secretly with the King her husband, and going in masks by night through the streets'.¹²⁴ The queen was also recorded as alert to cross-gender experience, reportedly wishing she were a man 'to know what life it was to lie all night in the fields, or to walk upon the causeway with a jack and knapsack'.¹²⁵ Such claims about the play with gender identity push courtly acceptance towards a faint edge of scandal.¹²⁶

It is not clear how visually daring a gesture the mask for the French ambassadors may have been: men's 'masking cotes' in the sixteenth century tended to be 'garmentes long and brode', often with hoods and hats that disguised the masked wearer's shape.¹²⁷ Although perfectly possible and potentially striking, it is not certain that Mary, now five months pregnant, masked in doublet and hose. The wardrobe accounts that accompany the entry for the daggers mention cloth of gold to make flame-decorations only on 'vj abillement de masque pour des femme' which does not suggest that flamboyant maleness was the defining characteristic; nor is it mentioned in contemporary letters and accounts of the event. The male masking dress was, however, appropriate to the gift of the daggers and may have at least covert bearing on Mary's deliberate assertion of her own sovereignty and known resistance to granting Darnley the crown matrimonial.¹²⁸ But its immediate effect was probably to throw teasing emphasis on the gracious participation of the pregnant queen rather than raising any seriously provocative public questioning of gender.

The final entertainment of Mary's personal reign was appropriately the most ambitious: the climactic triumph celebrating the baptism of the infant James in December 1566. Michael Lynch has already fully established the broadly French influence on this spectacle, both in form

¹²² *Inventories*, 162.

¹²³ For contemporary comment on disguise and noble identity, see Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Thomas Hoby and ed. J. H. Whitfield (London, 1974), 99-100.

¹²⁴ R. H. Mahon, *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study of the Lennox Narrative* (Cambridge, 1924), 130.

¹²⁵ *CSP Scot.*, i, 651.

¹²⁶ For fuller discussion of gendered performance and its complex significance in Mary's court, see Parkinson, 'Lamentable Storie'. On this episode, see also C. McManus, 'Marriage and the performance of the romance quest: Anne of Denmark and the Stirling baptismal celebrations for Prince Henry', in Houwen *et al.* (eds.), *Palace in the Wild*, 179.

¹²⁷ Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks*, 169-70.

¹²⁸ Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 296-7.

and in purpose.¹²⁹ Its masks, entries and martial pyrotechnics echo those of French triumphs, while the aim of asserting confident glory and consensual harmony in the face of internal political tension reflects Catherine de Medici's use of spectacular entertainment as a means towards domestic peace.¹³⁰ But we should also consider the baptismal celebrations in the local context of Scottish court performance. While the triumph is the only really international spectacle of Mary's personal reign, almost all its elements can be paralleled from the court entertainments of the preceding five years. With all its French influence, the spectacle offers the culmination of a domestic tradition, rather than a wholly unfamiliar and newly imported display.

The triumph involved masks, spectacular decorated floats, and the outdoor firework entertainment of an assault on a fort. Buchanan's congratulatory lyrics for the mask, like his wedding *Pompae*, present a series of groups bringing gifts and homage to the infant prince and his mother: Satyrs, Naiads and Northern Mountain nymphs (Orcades) address the prince, Nereids and Fauns the queen.¹³¹ But this time the choice, and the words, of the visitors celebrate the public rather than the private roles of those honoured. The maskers addressing the future king offer tribute from different areas of his realm. The woodland satyrs celebrate the Lowland countryside, the Naiads the streams and rivers, and the Orcades the wild Highland mountains. In pastoral mode, they envisage the prince growing to be a hunter, joyfully engaging with the territories of his land. The Nereids and Fauns who honour the queen, focus on her virtue and constancy; it is her joy as mother of a king, rather than her own regal power that predominates. This procession of gift bearers closely resembles those of French court entertainments. Mary (and even Buchanan) may well have attended one particular spectacle by Mellin de St Gellais in 1554, which presented three groups of nymphs – of the waters, of the forests and of the fields, the last leading two chained satyrs, each group addressing Henri II and celebrating the natural world.¹³² Ruegger points out how this show was produced at a time when French peace was newly threatened by the English. It offers a revealing political as well as theatrical parallel to the Stirling entertainment. Buchanan's graceful neo-classical mask celebrates the prince dynastically and within his kingdom, employing generalised pastoral imagery to show him cherished by the whole realm of Scotland.

¹²⁹ Lynch, 'Queen Mary's triumph.'

¹³⁰ The baptismal triumph might almost be read as a response to the message of congratulation sent by Catherine de Medici and Charles IX to Mary on James's birth: 'they think her most important object will be to reconcile her subjects to each other, if there yet remains any enmity among them on account of the past, and to preserve peace and tranquillity in her dominions', *Letters of Mary Queen of Scots*, ed. A. Strickland (London, 1843), i, 33.

¹³¹ Buchanan, 'Pompae Deorum Rusticorum dona ferentium Jacobo VI & Mariae matri ejus, Scotorum Regibus, in coena quae Regis baptisma est consecuta', *Opera*, ii, 404-5. For translations, Davidson, 'Entry', 426-9.

¹³² Ruegger, 'Grace Dieu', 152-3. Buchanan was in Paris at this time, and writing court verse.

Part of the spectacle accompanying this mask involved the satyrs:

with lang tailis and whippis in ther handis, runnyng befoir the meit,
quhilk wes brocht throw the gret hall vpon ane trym engyn, marching as
apperit it alain, with musiciens clothed lyk maidins.¹³³

Though common in court entertainments, there is no evidence that such theatrical vehicles had appeared before at Mary's court (unless the 'deux vieux dras del lin pour couurir deux licornne' in 1564 suggest some such device).¹³⁴ But it is unlikely to be a complete innovation: Pittscottie's account of the Tournament of the Black Lady in 1507 implies that even back in the time of Mary's grandfather the Scottish court had witnessed similar spectacular machinery.¹³⁵ More unusual was a disruption caused by the attendant satyrs. According to Melville:

the sattiers wer not content only to red rown, bot pat ther handis behind
them to ther tailis, quhilkis they waggit with ther handis, in sic sort as the
Englismen supponit it had bene deuysed and done in derision of them.¹³⁶

The outraged visitors turned their backs and sat on the floor in protest at the tail-wagging, which supposedly referred to the old Scots joke that all Englishmen are born with tails. This improvised episode, comic in retrospect if embarrassing at the time, is revealing of the particular communicative possibilities inherent in the most formal court spectacle, as well as the crucial importance of performance in determining meaning. If the satyrs' behaviour was, as Melville suggests, a deliberate slight, it demonstrates the opportunity for performers to import or alter meaning according to circumstance. The episode also testifies to the shift in Mary's political allegiances: although there is no suggestion that the queen was party to the joke, such mockery would plainly have been unacceptable in the pro-English entertainments of the earlier 1560s.¹³⁷

The incident may also confirm the different approaches to performance in the Scottish and English courts. As Elizabeth's entertainments more often engaged in argument and debate on specifically topical affairs, the English courtiers seem readier to interpret court spectacle as carrying combative and topical reference. Mary's entertainments, like those of France, tend towards less particularised assertions of magnificence, and Melville at least seems to assume that this is how court spectacle should be taken. The English nobles were 'daftly apprehending that quhilk they suld not seam to haue understand ... the Englis gentill men committed a gret error to seam till vnderstand it as done against

¹³³ Melville, *Memoirs*, 171. See Primaticcio's design for a satyr masking costume for a waiter, Dimier, *Le Primaticcio*, Pl. 39.

¹³⁴ *Inventories*, 145.

¹³⁵ Pittscottie, *Historie*, i, 244.

¹³⁶ Melville, *Memoirs*, 171.

¹³⁷ The English recovered their dignity by claiming that the satire was revenge devised by the French 'for dispyt, that the Quen maid mair of them then of the Frenchemen', Melville, *Memoirs*, 172.

them'.¹³⁸ Although a trivial dispute over precedence and respect, the story does confirm certain patterns of difference between the two courts in the perception of performance and its expressive role.

The explosive fort-holding which followed beside the kirk-yard in Stirling is plainly a recapitulation, if a grander one, of the firework assault at Dunsapie loch back in 1562. Michael Lynch has cogently argued that the general theme, echoing French models, was a celebration of victory against conflict and chaos. But the Scottish Treasury records which provide our evidence are not clear enough to determine the underlying narrative as one in which 'the various assailants, all threatening war and chaos, were repulsed and the royal castle remained intact'.¹³⁹ The records mention nineteen costumes for five groups of assailants: lanzknechts, moors, horsemen and highland wildmen in groups of four, with three 'contrefait devillis'.¹⁴⁰ The wild highlanders, clad in goatskins 'from heid to fute' were responsible either solely, or in conjunction with the others, for the management of the fireworks.¹⁴¹ These combatants fought 'within and without the forth', but the records fail to distinguish attackers from defenders. Significantly all the men appear to have been 'soldiouris of the companyes' or gunners with technical competence in artillery, rather than members of the court, suggesting that the management of the special effects was more important than the identity of the performers. Unlike many famous fort-holdings, the honour of the house of Stewart or of the Scottish nobility was not directly involved or represented.¹⁴² If the fort had symbolic significance it is not recorded: what struck the historian of the *Diurnall* was only the 'artil3erie, schot fyre ballis, fyre speris, and all vtheris thingis plesand for the sicht of man'.¹⁴³ This focus on spectacle supports the probability that, as in comparable fort-holdings, the pyrotechnic climax was the destruction of the fort rather than the repulsion of the invaders.¹⁴⁴ If the assault demonstrated the magnificent reassertion of peace and stability in the Stewart line, it seems to have done so by its general splendour rather than by direct representation.

Scotland's court was not large enough to need or sustain an equivalent of the English Office of the Revels, and nothing is known of who initiated, devised and managed most of the performances of Mary's court. But the Stirling shows allow us some glimpse of how the system functioned. We can, for example, recover details of the various personnel

¹³⁸ Melville, *Memoirs*, 172.

¹³⁹ Lynch, 'Queen Mary's triumph', 10.

¹⁴⁰ *Treasurer's Accounts*, xii, 406 (full record 403-8).

¹⁴¹ For the association of Highlanders with pyrotechnic destruction, see S. Mapstone, 'Introduction', in Houwen *et al.* (eds.), *Palace in the Wild*, pp. vii-ix.

¹⁴² The Fontainebleau fort-holding of 1564, and that at Warwick before Queen Elizabeth in 1572, both involved royalty or nobility as performers. See Castelnau, *Memoires*, 305; Butterworth, *Theatre of Fire*, 167-9.

¹⁴³ *Diurnall*, 105.

¹⁴⁴ This was the case at both Warwick and Fontainebleau; see note 135, and Butterworth, *Theatre of Fire*, 104.

involved in creation and organisation. George Buchanan's authorship of masking speeches is established from texts published in his collected works. A widely respected European humanist who had worked in France for most of his adult life, Buchanan had already published Latin plays as well as celebratory verse for court festivity in France, before returning to Scotland in the early 1560s. Although to modern eyes his mask lyrics seem only 'elegant trifles',¹⁴⁵ it is a mark of the cultural value placed on courtly entertainments that an eminent scholar of international reputation was employed in this way. But although responsible for the words, it is not clear whether Buchanan designed the scenarios. This was not necessarily conceived as a literary role: some part at least of the Stirling spectacle is explicitly ascribed to Bastien Pagez, one of the queen's French *valets de chambre* and, according to Buchanan: 'ane Auernois, a Man in greit Favour with the Quene for his Cunning in Musike, and his merie Jestng.'¹⁴⁶ Melville claims Pagez 'deused' the satyr entry that offended the English, an ascription that was apparently public knowledge since one of the furious visitors threatened to 'put a dagger to the hart of that Frenche knaif Bastien'.¹⁴⁷ It is not clear that Pagez, or indeed anyone else, had single overall control of the Stirling entertainments; but his role, great or small, is revealing of theatrical organisation in the court.¹⁴⁸ He was a favourite of the queen and like her Italian secretary Riccio also employed as a singer. The combinations of roles are interesting: both men occupied the intimate post of 'chamber child' to the queen, both were performers, but each was also responsible for wider royal business, which in Pagez' case included the devising of performance.

While the indoor entertainments were apparently organised by individual members of Mary's courtly household, the fort-holding spectacle was under the overall control of John Chisholm, 'comptrollar of the artailyerye'.¹⁴⁹ It seems that he was not only in charge of the fireworks but of the whole scenario of the assault, providing performers from among his men and organising the various costumes required. There is no record of his liaison with a court producer or access to the resources of the court wardrobe. The fact that he initially paid for the costs of the spectacle himself before finally persuading the queen to sanction proper finance from the Treasury seems to confirm the apparent autonomy Chisholm had in devising the show.¹⁵⁰

The separate roles of all three men raise wider questions about the ultimate control of entertainment at Mary's court. Each of them appears

¹⁴⁵ McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 285.

¹⁴⁶ Buchanan, *Ane Detectioun of the Doings of Marie Quene of Scottis*, in *Collections relating to the History of Mary Queen of Scotland*, ed. J. Anderson (Edinburgh, 1727), 22.

¹⁴⁷ Melville, *Memoirs*, 172.

¹⁴⁸ Forty ells of taffeta were provided to Bastien on 3 December 'preparatevis for the baptisme', but it is not clear whether this was for theatrical purposes: *Treasurer's Accounts*, xii, 35.

¹⁴⁹ *Treasurer's Accounts*, xii, 403.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xii, 404.

to have had some degree of creative freedom. Buchanan's texts are published alongside his other works as part of his original and independent literary output. Bastien was clearly assumed to have personal responsibility not only for devising his show but also for the political satire imported by his performers; while Chisholm was paid for the 'dressing and overseing and causing to mak this triomphe of fyrework'.¹⁵¹ Yet equally, the political and diplomatic functions of these and other entertainments suggest fairly careful control from the centre. Cecil's vetting of the English plans for the Nottingham masks demonstrated political oversight at a high level of entertainments which to modern eyes might appear merely decorative. Although there is no hard evidence, the Scottish performances plainly imply similar central intervention, most probably from the queen herself.

It is very clear, for example, that Buchanan's 1564 verses on the harmony between the Scottish and English queens, copied by Mary to Elizabeth with a claim that they were intended 'more in heart than in outward show',¹⁵² must at the very least have had the queen of Scots' prior knowledge and assent and much more likely that they were a specific commission. While we cannot tell whether the same is true for the Stirling masks, their notable absence of reference to the prince's father suggests similar high-level guidance. Darnley pointedly absented himself from the celebrations, but it remains striking that Buchanan, committed to the Lennox family and shortly to use his literary skills to attack rather than honour Mary, makes no reference to the prince's father in this entertainment. Either he had accepted Darnley's marginalised position, or had instruction to leave him out. Records of the fort-holding also hint at Mary's personal involvement. During the preceding weeks messengers were sent to the queen at Dunbar and Craigmillar, not only to seek finance but 'to informe hir hienes of the proceeding of the foirsaid fyrework conforme to hir grace precept thairupoun'.¹⁵³ While the nature and detail of this 'precept' are unclear, it implies something more than a general request for a firework display.¹⁵⁴

All the evidence suggests that the entertainment culture of the Marian court centred very actively on the queen herself. Her personal pleasure in participation, role-play and spectacular display led to her use of performance in advancing and managing her relations with members of her own court. More significantly, perhaps, she appears to have had a determining role in the political employment of court performance to advance diplomatic ends. Unlike the English court, in which

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xii, 408.

¹⁵² *CSP Scot.*, ii, 47.

¹⁵³ *Treasurer's Accounts*, xii, 404.

¹⁵⁴ Other evidence points to Mary's surprisingly personal attention to the material culture of her court. Her master of the wardrobe, recording the re-use of a number of elaborate church vestments for decorative purposes, carefully notes that they were 'all brokin and cutt in hir awin presence': *Inventories*, 53.

entertainments seem largely to have been presented to the queen as means of honouring her or of exploring political issues, and where direct control apparently resided with Elizabeth's ministers rather than herself, the smaller world of Scottish court performance suggests a more immediate involvement of the queen as a direct moving force. Less analytical than English shows, Marian court performances, possibly influenced by the example of Catherine de Medici, employed court spectacle as a minor but apparently direct intervention of the monarch in promoting local, national and international harmony and stability. It is perhaps ironic that given the temper of the Scottish political situation these performances came to be represented as exhibitionist and inflammatory exercises in luxury and frivolity, rather than as the joyous demonstration of peaceful security that seems to have been intended.

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Within a few months of the baptismal triumph Mary's personal reign was effectively over, her court and its entertainments dissolved. Within a year it was Moray, now regent for the infant James, who was seeking English support. In December 1567 Mary's complicity in the murder of Darnley was for the first time publicly asserted in the Scottish parliament. Over Christmas 1567-8 festivities at the English court included a play on the story of Orestes, glossed as 'a Tragedie of the king of Scottes'.¹⁵⁵ As in the ballad published in Edinburgh a few months before, Mary, Darnley and Bothwell are shadowed in the story of Clytemnestra, Agamemnon and Aegisthus.¹⁵⁶ Later in 1567 a play of *The Historie of Horestes* was published in London, probably by John Pickering of Lincoln's Inn.¹⁵⁷ Whether or not this is the play performed at court, it plainly addresses with some sophistication the immediate political aftermath of the murder of Darnley and Mary's subsequent marriage with Bothwell, and is likely at the very least to provide a fair idea of the possible nature of the court performance.¹⁵⁸

Pickering's drama presents the personal dilemma posed for Horestes by his murderous and adulterous mother, with figures of Nature and Revenge offering him conflicting advice on avenging his father's death. But the situation is more than familial: Horestes brings his problem to the King Idumeus, who is advised by his Council to support an attack on Clytemnestra on grounds of good government. After Horestes takes his revenge, his action is debated, defended and validated by the King and his advisers, the play closing with a salutation to Elizabeth and her

¹⁵⁵ Feuillerat, *Documents*, 119.

¹⁵⁶ PRO, SP/52/13 no 47 (broadsheet); cited *CSP Scot.*, ii, 329.

¹⁵⁷ *Horestes*, in *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, ed. M. Axton (Cambridge, 1982). See also *John Pickering's Horestes* (1567), ed. K. Robertson and J.-A. George (Galway, 1996). Pickering served as speaker of the House of Commons later in Elizabeth's reign. See J. E. Phillips, 'A re-evaluation of *Horestes*', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, xviii (1955), 227-44.

¹⁵⁸ Although nominally presented by the publisher for actors, the play calls for the kinds of scenic and casting resources that would be most easily available at court.

Council, 'In setting up vertue and vyce to correcte.'¹⁵⁹ Horestes' personal dilemma is thus re-presented as an issue for the sovereign in council, a problem of safeguarding the stability of government and of the public assertion of national justice. The real focus is not Clytemnestra/Mary, but the difficult decisions faced by Horestes/Moray (for James) and Idumeus/Elizabeth. It is a play of debate and persuasion, urging and sanctioning political action against those identified as murderers of Agamemnon/Darnley.

Like Gorboduc back in 1561, the 'Tragedie of the king of Scottes' dramatised and debated for the English court the problems presented by Mary Stewart. We do not know how Elizabeth received their advice, but she clearly accepted the drama as a valid means through which the issues might be explored. While we find no such use of drama at Mary's court, her father and mother were both familiar with politically engaged discussion plays. An interlude, probably by David Lindsay, performed for James V at Linlithgow in 1540 intervened directly and critically in affairs of church and government reform, while in 1554 Mary of Guise as regent attended a public performance of Lindsay's more elaborated *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* which carried these contentious issues to a wider audience.¹⁶⁰ Both rulers, though in different ways, not only accepted but deliberately exploited the opportunity given by drama to analyse and advance political issues.

Comparison of all these various court entertainments might suggest a broad difference between Protestant and Roman Catholic understanding of courtly performance. The entertainments at Elizabeth's Protestant court, like Lindsay's proto-Reformation plays, use drama primarily as an arena for debate or argument. Performances explore conflicts and problems, urging judgement. At the French and Scottish courts of the 1560s performance, though equally political, tends to the visual more than the verbal, to the assertion of harmony rather than the analysis of problem. But it is over-simple to see these differences as primarily religious. At these political moments the French monarchy and Mary Stewart were both defending traditional ways, while Elizabeth, James V and Lindsay were all concerned with issues of change and innovation in the church and monarchy. This in itself may account for the varying theatrical emphases without regard to religious affiliation. What the differences certainly demonstrate is the rich variety of possibility in court performance as a language of politics. The brief but bright flourishing in Mary's reign may cast a longer shadow than we have yet recognised, ultimately informing the complex enactment of royal authority in the Stuart masque under her son, fifty years later in England.

¹⁵⁹ *Horestes*, ed. Axton, l. 1198.

¹⁶⁰ For a full discussion of these shows, Lindsay, and the role of performance at the Scottish court, see Edington, *Court and Culture*; Walker, *Politics of Performance*, 117-162.