A Queen and a Masque. Samuel Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* as a Mirror of Anne of Denmark's Political Aims

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Abstract

This study focuses on the role played by Anne of Denmark in the English court during the first years of the reign of James I and on her creative use of the masque to convey, in both symbolic and allegorical ways, the idea of herself as a subject endowed with a peculiar political identity. From this perspective, the article analyses *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604) by Samuel Daniel - the first masque commissioned by the Queen - interpreting it as an attempt on Anne's part to appear as the center of a power that, though subordinate to the King's authority, demands its own autonomy and a function complementary to that of the sovereign.

Parole chiave

Samuel Daniel; Jacobean Masque; Sovereignty

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1. The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses

On the evening of 8 January 1604, as part of the festivities for the first Christmas celebrated by the Stuart sovereigns at their new English court, Samuel Daniel staged the masque *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*. Commissioned by the powerful Lady Lucy Harington Russell, Countess of Bedford, on behalf of Queen Anne of Denmark, wife of James VI and I[1], the masque was performed in a place of venerable age, the Great Hall of Hampton Court, and danced by the queen herself and eleven ladies belonging to her personal retinue, her inner circle.

Despite the show's perfect success and the unanimous applause of those present, dwelt on at length in the reports of two eyewitnesses, the young diplomat Dudley Carleton and the Spanish ambassador, Juan de Tassis, Count of Villamediana[2], from the following year onwards the queen entrusted others – Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones – with the task of producing the major court masques that she sponsored[3]. One of the reasons

[1] Though Anne is the most common spelling in English, there are various clues suggesting that the Queen herself considered the Danish "Anna" to be her name. For example, she signs herself Anna in a 1603 holograph letter to James ("I rest/yours Anna R."); similarly, in a Scottish account of 1590, her oath of office when she was crowned Queen of Scotland begins: "I Anna, by the grace of God, Queen of Scotland". One of the stanzas of the poem by John Burel, also of 1590, describing the form and manner of the Queen's Scottish coronation, begins: "Anna, our well-beloved Queen"; John Dowland's *Lachrimae* (1604) is dedicated to "the most sacred and gracious princess Anna Queen of England"; and again John Florio offers the second edition of his well-known *Italian Dictionary* to "the Imperial Majesty of the highest-born Princess, Anna of Denmark" (see Leeds Barroll, *Inventing the Stuart Masque*, in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, edited by David Bevington and Peter Holbrook, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 136 note 1).

[2] See Berta Cano-Echevarría and Mark Hutchings, *The Spanish Ambassador and Samuel Daniel's* Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*: A New Document*, «English Literary Renaissance», 42, 2, 2012, pp. 223-257; of particular importance are pages 227-233, to which we also refer for the rich apparatus of explanatory and bibliographical notes. See also *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain 1603-1624. Jacobean Letters*, edited by Maurice Lee Jr., New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1972, p. 54. The count of Villamediana was one of the protagonists of the intense peace negotiations that culminated in the Treaty of London at Somerset House in August 1604 and its ratification at Valladolid the following year. The political and propagandistic importance of spectacles of this type is also reinforced by the chosen topic of Daniel's masque, in which we can see an indirect celebration of the ceasefire with Spain, proclaimed by King James in March 1603.

[3] In any case, the decision did not lead to a rift or compromise a relationship of esteem and trust that endured without a breach until the queen's death (1619). For example, in 1604 Daniel was appointed Licenser for the Children of the Revels at the wishes of the Queen (see Edmund K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1923, p. 49; Robert E. Brettle, *Samuel Daniel and the Children of the Queen's Revels, 1604-5*, «The Review of English Studies», 3, 10, 1927, p. 162; J. Ronnie Mulryne and Margaret Shewring, *Theatre and Government under the Early Stuarts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 72). In 1607 he was made a groom of the Queen's Privy Chamber, "a purely nominal role but one that he proudly attached to his name in print" (Ian F. MacInnes, *"Some Gothicq barbarous hand": Poetry and foreign policy in Samuel Daniel's Epistle to Prince Henry*", «Apposition», 2009, http://appositions.blogspot.com/2009/05/ianmacinnes-daniels-epistle-to-prince.html, last consulted: May 2024). In 1610, a second masque was commissioned from him, *Tethys' Festival*, composed to celebrate an event of great importance: the investiture of her oldest son Henry as Prince of Wales. Daniel also wrote two "pastorals" for Queen Anne: *Arcadia Reformed* – performed in 1605 at Christ Church during a royal visit to Oxford and published the following year under the new title *The Queen's Arcadia* – and *Hymen's Triumph* – performed in February 1614. Nonetheless, as stressed by Joan Rees, at least initially "[t]hough Daniel enjoyed the Queen's favour […], it is probable that he

for this choice should perhaps be sought in a difference of opinion – between Daniel and Anne – on the specific messages that she evidently wished to see conveyed by these court entertainments, playing on the multiple levels of meaning that could be activated by the modes of representation of the queen on stage.

2. Theatre and Government

As we shall see, the decodification of *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* cannot be separated from an analysis of these modes, albeit within a visual and symbolic framework that paid tribute to the king and glorified his political action.

After ascending to the throne, James I Stuart presented himself as the incarnation and guarantor of an ideal, a dream that had always been fostered and that now seemed within reach: the unification of Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland, and the creation of a "Great Britain" through the indissoluble bond of a "Great Marriage". The desire for peace, inside and outside the domestic borders, encapsulated in the motto *Beati pacifici* that James affixed even to the title page of the printed edition of his works (1616), was to substantiate his political actions. In his view, peace was "the greatest blessing a monarch could bestow upon his subjects"[4]. This ideal was not universally shared, and some feared that it might turn out to be "disappointing and unpopular […] to a nation longing for glory after the decline of Elizabeth's last years"[5]. Indeed, the policy implemented by Elizabeth, generally shrewd and based on controlling and managing conflicts, had in particular situations and on specific issues revealed itself to be firm and unmoveable, playing on the nationalistic and warlike impulses of sectors of the court and of society. There is no doubt that, from the earliest years of James's reign, some Protestant fringes "idealized the Elizabethan years, when England had led the fight against the Antichrist". This sort of "Elizabethan legend" was fed by images of heroism incorporating two well-defined and powerful traditions: "that of aristocratic honour and that of the Protestan apocalypse". On the one hand, we find John Fox reinventing "Reformation history as an epic confrontation between Protestantism and the Whore of Babylon"[6]; on the other the noble and fearless figure of Sidney, but also of Drake and his sea-dogs, or again of the Counts of Leicester and Essex, glorified for their deeds in the Low Countries and in Ireland[7]. According to Snow, the third count of Essex in particular,

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had hoped […] to capture the interest of the King and to be employed on weightier matters" (Joan Rees, *Introduction*, in Samuel Daniel, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, edited by Joan Rees, in *A Book of Masques in Honour of Allardyce Nicoll*, edited by Terence John Bew Spenser and Stanley Wells, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 19). A sort of indecisiveness, caused by the desire to accommodate the wishes of both his patrons, emerges in some parts of *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*.

[4] Peter Holbrook, *Jacobean Masques and the Jacobean Peace*, in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, cit., p. 68.

[5] Stephen Orgel, *Jonson and the Amazons,* in *Soliciting Interpretation. Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, edited by Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katherine Eisaman Maus, London; Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 123.

[6] Peter Holbrook, *op. cit*., p. 70.

[7] In this context it is interesting to stress that "[in] several of his writings Daniel kept the spirit of Elizabeth's Essex alive […] and honored his patron with such allusions as 'The Mercury of Peace' and 'The Mars of War'" (Vernon F. Snow, *Essex and the Aristocratic Opposition to the Early Stuarts*, «Journal of Modern History», 32, 1960, p. 224).

having grown up with the myth of "the heroic life and martyr-like death of his father" bemoaned "the decline of honor and other military ideals in James's court [believing that] new titles and dignities should be won on the battlefield and not sold in the anteroom of the presence chamber"[8].

In this context, Elizabeth's name was exalted as an emblem of austerity, Protestant alliances, military preparedness and martial glory in opposition to the perceived extravagance and pro-Spanish policies of James I[9]. Elizabeth had made good her right to the throne "through a combination of policy and extraordinary personal style" and an important component of that style was specifically "the chivalric mythology with which she surrounded herself"[10].

From this chivalric and Protestant perspective, James' approach to the issues of international politics, especially in matters of faith, might indeed appear "cowardly and treacherous"[11].

The result was a division of the court into two separate factions. On one side was a pro-Spanish party, grouped around the Howard family and led by the Earls of Northampton and Suffolk; on the other the devotees of the Sidney-Essex tradition who looked with hope to the very young Henry, who within the space of a few years did indeed become established as the representative of the ideals promoted by militant Protestantism[12]. In this context, Henry Peacham's emblem book *Minerva Britanna* was certainly representative of a polyphonic climate and narrative. Published in 1612, and thus nine years after Elizabeth's death, Peacham's book reflected this revival of Protestant royalist chivalry, anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic. *Minerva Britanna* offered a nostalgic celebration of the world of Gloriana and her knights, a past world but one that evidently remained alive in the minds and hearts of many; a world that fed the mythology created for Henry Prince of Wales. Those who cherished the old ideals, as we have said, projected their hopes onto the heir to the throne, and indeed "in the two years (1610-1612) during which he had his own household, Henry became the focal point for those who wished to put the clock back to 1603"[13].

In this multifaceted context, if we look at court theatre – and the masque in particular – as a symbolic yet telling reflection of how power was expressed, Orgel's statement that "Queen Anne [...] studiously avoided politics and was unsympathetic to her son's ambitions"[14] may seem excessively categorical.

The Queen's personal biography and the steps she took inside the Palace after her arrival in London tell a story that differs at least in part from Orgel's, or is subject to a

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[8] Ivi, pp. 224; 226-227.

[9] See R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, p. 29.

[10] Stephen Orgel, *Jonson and the Amazons*, cit., p. 119.

[11] Peter Holbrook, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.

[12] The role of a very young Prince Henry "as the focus of a militant Protestant opposition", is noted by Stephen Orgel, *Jonson and the Amazons*, cit., p. 123; Kristen McDermott (ed. by), *Masques of Difference. Four Court Masques by Ben Jonson*, Manchester; New York, Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 11; and, within a broader discussion, Peter Holbrook, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-71.

[13] Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth. Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* [1997], London, Pimlico, 1999, p. 187.

[14] Stephen Orgel, *Jonson and the Amazons*, cit., p. 123.

different interpretation. More recently, historians and literary critics, variously influenced by the approaches of new historicism and gender studies, have laid the foundations for a reconsideration and new interpretation of the queen and her cultural and political role[15]. On the premise that the monarchical power of the Stuarts was structured in a more complex way[16], no longer a monolithic but rather a polymorphic entity, these approaches stress Anne's desire to establish her own personal political identity.

Indeed, many elements confirm that Anne, grasping the profound significance of the tensions running through the court, attempted to present herself as a point of convergence between the two factions[17]. She was thus disposed towards peace, even with Spain, but ready to take up arms if needed to reaffirm England's glory anywhere in the world, adopting and glorifying that zeal for martial glory that had inspired and continued to inspire whole sectors of the male Elizabethan aristocracy.

Anne aimed to emerge from the shadow of the King and his circle and to take her place as an independent figure, as a credible and authoritative voice: to do so she needed a different story to be created and told. In the masque she saw the means to convey her own social and political purposes on a symbolic and allegorical level, and therefore personally organized court spectacles. These were not merely entertainment or art, but conveyed the idea of herself and her court as the centre of a power inscribed within a hierarchical model, necessarily subordinate to the authority of the sovereign yet fundamentally autonomous and complementary to the king.[18] The objective was the definition and consolidation of a role[19], following a path whose stages seem to be marked out by the masques commissioned from Jonson, but whose premises can be identified already in *The Vision*, albeit less clearly and more allusively[20]. This ambiguity is unsurprising since *The Vision* attempts to respond to a "tripartite loyalty: to the King, as

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[15] See Leeds Barroll, *Anne of Denmark, Queen of England. A Cultural Biography*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001; Claire McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage. Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing at the Stuart Court*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002.

[16] See Leeds Barroll, *Anne of Denmark, Queen of England. A Cultural Biography*, cit., p. 3.

[17] It would be more correct to speak, at least after Henry's appearance on the political stage and for the brief period during which he occupied it, of three court worlds organized, respectively, around James, Queen Anne, and the young but wilful Prince Henry. These worlds often followed different or conflicting trajectories.

[18] Leeds Barroll, *Inventing the Stuart Masque*, in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, cit., p. 121.

[19] On Anne's desire, for example, to set relations with Spain on a new footing, to end the conflicts under way on the European stage and usher in a period of mutual respect and collaboration, and the consequent changes in the court hierarchies between the ambassador of Spain, Juan de Tassis, and that of France, Christophe de Harlay, Count of Beaumont, see in particular Ernest Law, *Introduction*, in Samuel Daniel, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses. A Royall Masque*, edited by Ernest Law, London, Bernard Quaritch, 1880, pp. 48-49; Leeds Barroll, *Inventing the Stuart Masque*, in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, cit., pp. 124-125 and notes; Berta Cano-Echevarría and Mark Hutchings, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-229.

[20] For a general overview of the Stuart court, of the characteristics of James' reign and an analysis of the relations between the court and the theatre, and the masque in particular, as vehicles for political propaganda a fundamental study is Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power. Political Theater in the English Renaissance*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975. Interesting suggestions can also be found in *The Court Masque*, edited by David Lindley, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1984; and Kristen McDermott (ed. by), *op. cit*.

the central spectator, to the Queen, as sponsor, and to the aforementioned Elizabethan tradition of honor"[21].

To decodify the complex, non-linear message carried by the work we must thus read between the lines, go beneath the surface of the intentions set out by Daniel himself in the first authorized printed edition of the text.

3. *The Vision*, the authorial commentary and the text

In February 1604, in response to the "unmannerly presumption of an indiscrete printer who without warrant divulged the last show at Court"[22], Daniel decided to personally publish an authorized printed edition of the masque, preceded by a long dedicatory letter to his patron, Lady Lucy Harington Russell[23].

The preface certainly served "as a conventional expression of gratitude […] and a desire for future patronage", but it also gave Daniel the opportunity to offer a detailed description of the staging and an illustration of the intentions underlying it. In essence, *The Vision* offers "two sequential texts of the masque: a narrative description incorporating the authorial commentary, and then the 'acted' text […] that accompanied the visual display"[24].

The purpose of the show, Daniel declares, is "only to present the figure of those blessings […], which this mighty kingdom now enjoys by the benefit of his most gracious Majesty, by whom we have this glory of peace, with the accession of so great state and power" (25). In these lines, we find the conceptual cornerstones around which the masque revolves, namely the words "state", "power" and "peace". "Peace", however, is introduced "by the oxymoronic 'glory of peace'"[25]. The splendour of the state, the celebration of the desire for unity and peace advocated by the sovereign suggest a linear design; yet within it, a dissonant element can be glimpsed in the background, concealed precisely within the oxymoron connecting the semantic areas of peace and the heroic and warlike spirit, and governing the entire "vision" elicited by Night and generated by her son Somnus.

The masque opens with Night, "represented in a black vesture set with stars" (31), reaching the cave where her son Somnus sleeps, to wake him and invite him to "beget

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[21] Peter Holbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

[22] Joan Rees, *op. cit.*, p. 25. All textual references are to the edition by Rees cited above. Quotations are followed by the page number in brackets within the body of the text.

[23] About two weeks after the performance, the work was published in a small quarto pamphlet, with twelve pages of text preceded by a title page that reads: *The True Description of a Royall Masque. Presented at Hampton Court, upon Sunday night, being the eight of Ianuary. 1604. And personated by the Queenes most Excellent Majestie, attended by Eleven Ladies of Honour*. The text, acquired and illegally published by the stationer Edward Allde, was sold at his shop near St. Mildred's Church in Cheapside.
Shortly afterwards, Simon Waterson, Daniel's lifelong publisher, issued another text of the masque, in an octavo entitled *The Vision of the 12. Goddesses, presented in a Maske the 8. Of Ianuary, at Hamton Court: By the Queenes most excellent Maiestie, and her Ladies* (see Ernest Law, *op. cit.*; Joan Rees, *op. cit.*; Berta Cano-Echevarría and Mark Hutchings, *op. cit.*, p. 233; John Pitcher, *Samuel Daniel's Masque* The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*: Texts and Payments*, «Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England», 26, 2013, pp. 18-19.

[24] Berta Cano-Echevarría and Mark Hutchings, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236.

[25] Peter Holbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

strange sights, Strange visions and unusual properties" (31) in a dream for the assembled court/audience. The iconography of Night is reminiscent of that in plate LIII of Cartari's *Le Immagini con la sposizione de i dei de gli antichi*, with the difference that in the illustration the garment is light-coloured, and Night presents a series of further characteristics (derived from the descriptions by Pausanias, Virgil and Ovid) ignored by Daniel (Cartari's figure is winged and crowned with poppies)[26].

The "vision" to which the title refers is that of twelve goddesses who abandon the supra-lunar world of rarefied and ideal perfection, and take on corporeal form to reveal themselves to the eyes of the sublunar world. The setting, however, is no longer "in Samos, Ida, Paphos, their ancient delighting places of Greece and Asia", now reduced to barbarism and devastation, but a new paradise on earth, "mighty Brittany, the land of civil music and of rest" (32). It is Iris, the messenger of Juno, who informs the Sibyl, priestess of the Temple of Peace, of the imminent visit of the celestial powers. Introduced by the three Graces who advance holding hands, the procession of deities slowly and solemnly descends from the mountain, with the goddesses moving forwards by threes, alternating with rows of three torch-bearers – three, "a number dedicated unto sanctity and an incorporeal nature, whereas the Dual, *Hierogliphicè pro immundis accipitur*" (29). The triad is also "the figure representing the giving, receiving and returning benefits"[27].

The deities were played, as mentioned above, by ladies of Queen Anne's inner circle, chosen not for specific qualities like youth, beauty or reputation, but merely as representatives of that most trusted following: emblems, idealized projections, surrounded by an aura of perfection, of specific virtues of the individual and of the nation.

Juno, Pallas and Venus lead the procession of celestial powers. Juno, in gold and blue robes with a golden crown and sceptre, is played by Katherine Howard, Countess of Suffolk; Queen Anne is the warrior Pallas, wearing a blue cloak, "with a helmet-dressing on her head […] a lance and target" (27); Venus, here a symbol of the bond of friendship between peoples ("with t'all-combining scarf of amity T'engird strange nations with affections true", 33), is Penelope Rich. The second triad is formed by Vesta, Proserpina and Diana. Vesta (Lucy Harington Russell, Countess of Bedford), "in a white mantel embroidered with gold-flames" (27), recalling her cult, holds a burning lamp in one hand and a book in the other; Proserpina (Alice Spenser, Countess of Derby), "with a crown of gold on her head, presented a mine of gold ore" (27); Diana (Frances Howard Stewart, Countess of Hertford), bearing a gift of "a bow and a quiver," appears dressed "in a green mantel embroidered with silver half moons and a croissant of pearl on her head" (27), exhibiting an attribute, the crescent moon, probably drawn from the

[26] See Caterina Volpi, *Le immagini degli dei di Vincenzo Cartari*, Roma, Edizioni De Luca, 1996, p. 379. Vincenzo Cartari was a humanist at the Renaissance Este court and one of the most popular of the Renaissance mythographers. In his intentions, *Le Immagini de i dei* was to meet the needs of poets and painters representing the history of the pagan gods in images and words. The work was an immense success. After the first edition of 1556, a second illustrated edition was published in 1571, and another 15 new editions appeared between 1571 and 1615 (on the rapport between Daniel and Cartari see Section 4.1).

[27] Françoise S. Carter, *Number Symbolism and Renaissance Choreography*, «Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research», 10, 1, 1992, p. 28.

iconography of the goddess in the *Hieroglyphica* of Valeriano[28]. They are followed by Macaria, goddess of happiness (Lady Elizabeth Hatton), with a caduceus representing Abundance; Concordia (the Countess of Nottingham), wrapped in a red and white cloak, the colours of England and Scotland, symbolizing a union that will bring peace and prosperity; Astrea (Lady Walsingham), with the sword and scales of justice. The procession ends with Flora (Susan de Vere, Countess of Montgomery); Ceres (Dorothy Hastings) and finally Tethys (Elizabeth Howard), the beloved of Albion, adorned with the trident of power. Arriving at the temple – which with its basic four-column structure (the four cardinal virtues) occupied the central area of the stage, perspectivally aligned with the position of the sovereign seated on his throne –, the Graces sing a song that exalts "the blend chain of amity" consisting of "Desert, Reward and Gratitude". The twelve goddesses enter the sacred enclosure one at a time to display their gift, offered "to make glorious both the sovereign and his state" (36). In order: Juno brings "the blessing of power", Pallas, "wisdom and defence"; Venus, "love and amity"; Vesta, "religion"; Diana, "the gift of chastity"; Proserpina, "riches"; Macaria, "felicity"; Concordia, "the union of hearts"; Astrea, "justice"; Flora, "the beauties of earth"; Ceres, "plenty"; Tethys, "power by sea" (26). Once the homage is complete, with the Sibyl illustrating the symbolism of the gifts, the goddesses, "with great majesty and art", start the first dance "consisting of divers strains framed unto motion circular, square triangular, with other proportions exceeding rare and full of variety" (30). When the dance ends, "the Goddesses made a pause, casting themselves into a circle, whilst the Graces again sang […] and prepared to take out the Lords to dance […] certain measures, galliards, and corantos" (30). At the end, Iris reappears and "gives warning […] of the departure of [the] divine Powers" (36). After this, the goddesses "fell to a short departing dance" (37) and then, reforming the original tripartite formation, they return to the mountain[29].

4. Little more than Pageantry

On the level of aesthetics and stagecraft, *The Vision* has been judged "by no means qualified to satisfy the standards applied, in January 1604, to a Court masque", since it is "structureless and old-fashioned"[30], "derivative […] not very significant"[31], lacking in "flexibility, variety and inventiveness" and without that "sophisticated artistry which other men were to create so soon after"[32]. *The Vision* unfolds like a mere procession of goddesses, with the action dispersed between a Cave of Sleep at the upper end of the

[28] See Section 4.2, note 49.

[29] For an in-depth discussion of the use of number symbolism in the choreographies of Jacobean masques and, in particular, on *The Vision*, see Françoise S. Carter, *op. cit*., pp. 27-29.

[30] C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson (eds), *Ben Jonson*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1925-1952, II, p. 270 and X, p. 450.

[31] Enid Welsford, *The Court Masque. A Study in the Relationship between Poetry & Revels*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1927, p. 171.

[32] Joan Rees, *op. cit*., p. 20.

Hall, a Temple of Peace near by it and a mountain at the lower end[33], in practice, "little more than pageantry"[34] to use Orgel's words.

It is highly likely that some of the staging choices made by Daniel were conditioned by the nature of the place in which the masque was performed. Nonetheless there is no doubt that they resulted above all from two factors that deserve a more detailed consideration: first, the way in which Daniel conceived of the masque, very different from the model later established with Jonson; second, the objectives that he attempted to attain, directly or indirectly, by his way of constructing and performing the spectacle.

4.1. Hierogliphice loqui

Daniel always considered the masque predominantly a form of pure entertainment, lacking true literary dignity, pleasing but unsuited to education and teaching[35]. Indeed, he is explicit on this point. The concept, already expressed in his historical poem *The Civil Wars*, published in 1595 and later revised and expanded ("[…] imaginary ground / Of hungry shadows, which no profit breed; / Whence, music-like, instant delight may grow; / Yet, when men all do know, they nothing know"; Book V, 35-40), is taken up again and enriched in the song *Are they shadows that we see?* from the masque *Tethys' Festival* (1610), whose rhetorical structure recalls Petrarch's famous sonnet CXXXII *S'amor non è*: "Are they shadows that we see? / And can shadows pleasure give? / Pleasures only shadows be / Cast by bodies we conceive, / And are made the things we deem, / In those figures which they seem, / But these pleasures vanish fast, / Which by shadows are exprest: / Pleasures are not if they last, / In their passing in their best. / Glory is most bright and gay / In a flash and so away, / Feed apace then greedy eyes / On the wonder you behold. / Take it sudden as it flies / Though you take it not to hold: / When your eyes have done their part, / Thought must length it in the heart"[36].

For Daniel, the spectacle should take the form of a performance that is above all visual and musical, and convey immediately comprehensible meanings. For precisely this reason, he conceived *The Vision* as a luxurious flow of moving emblems, "hieroglyphics for our present intention" (26).

Daniel's links with the tradition and culture of emblems are wide-ranging and well-documented[37]. His first published book of 1585 was a revised and expanded

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[33] C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson (eds), *op. cit.*, X, p. 270.

[34] Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1967, p. 101.

[35] By contrast, Jonson insists on the central importance – within the masque – of the poetic text, to all intents and purposes a literary work, the true soul, according to his definition, of a spectacle of which music, dance and staging are merely the external structure, ultimately frivolous or even superfluous. Jonson poses the question in the introduction to a *The Masque of Blackness* (1605), contrasting the triviality and superficiality of costumes and stage sets (variously described as "the carcasses", "the outward celebration or show"), with the power of the poetic word, "the spirit," capable of redeeming those empty forms, "such superfluity", and thus of being exemplary and learned. This point of view is repeated in *Hymenaei* (1606), here in terms of the relationship between "Body" and "Soul", between the permanent and the ephemeral (Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque*, cit., pp. 103-106).

[36] Francesco Petrarca, *Il Canzoniere, (Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta)*, Torino, Einaudi, 1964, vv. 341-358.

[37] On the rapport between Daniel and the emblematic literature, see Gilbert R. Redgrave, *Daniel and the Emblematic Literature*, «Transactions of the Bibliographical Society», 11, 1, 1909, pp. 39-58; Mario

translation of a work by Paolo Giovio, *THE Worthy tract of Paulus Iouius contayning a Discourse of rare inuentions, both Militarie and Amorous called Imprese. VV hereunto is added a Preface contayning the Arte of composing them, with many other notable deuises. By Samuell Daniell late Student in Oxenforde* (1585). Fully described by its title as a commentary on "Imprese", Giovio's work has also been described as an emblem book without pictorial illustrations[38].

In England, the fashion for and interest in emblems developed late with respect to continental Europe, where the first examples date back to the early 16th century in the form of the aristocratic and chivalric *impresa* (with the aforementioned Paolo Giovio), the mystical and sacred hieroglyph (Horapollo and Pierio Valeriano), or the emblem (Andrea Alciati). According to Freeman, this fashion was destined to last about a hundred years. After some sporadic examples that include Daniel's translation, he gives the chronological limits of 1586, the year of publication of the book by Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (1586), and 1686, in which a book by John Bunyan, *A Book for Boys and Girls*, saw the light. Within these hundred years, we should also mention at least the *Partheneia Sacra* (1633), attributed to Henry Hawkins, and then *A Selection of Emblemes* (1635), by George Wither, *Emblems* (1635), by Francis Quarles, in addition to the anonymous *Ashrea* (1665)[39].

The preface to the translation of Giovio edited by Daniel is of great importance. Within a fairly articulated discourse centred on the four kinds of devices [Liurees, Ensigns, Mots, Imprese] in which "we may discouer our secret intentions by colours and figures"[40], Daniel states the need to progress from the hieroglyph to the emblem. From classical antiquity onwards, hieroglyphic writing had been seen as imbued with a symbolic and sacred meaning, and the sources, up to the Renaissance, unanimously stressed the hypothesis that hieroglyphs signified their form and lacked phonetic value. According to Plotinus, whose reflections underlie the revival of hieroglyphs in the humanistic period, they participate in the *sophia* that gives access to the intelligible world through immediate understanding, offering themselves up immediately to contemplation and skipping the mediation of complex language[41]. In some ways, hieroglyphs are the Platonic language *par excellence* and are interpreted as such in the Renaissance[42]. However, Daniel sees precisely in the absence of this mediation the

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Praz, *Studi sul concettismo* [1964], Firenze, Sansoni, 2014; Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1948; Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque*, cit., 1967, pp. 101-106; Lloyd Goldman, *Samuel Daniel's "Delia" and the Emblem Tradition*, «The Journal of English and Germanic Philology», 67, 1, 1968, pp. 49-63. On emblem culture in England, see Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture*, Boston, Addison-Wesley Longman Ltd, 1994.

[38] See Lloyd Goldman, *op. cit*., p. 50.

[39] See Rosemary Freeman, *op. cit*.

[40] Alexander B. Grossart, *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel. Edited by the Rev. Alexander B. Grossart, D.D., LL.D. (EDIN.), F.S.A. (Scor). In Five Volumes, Vol. IV, Printed for Private Circulation Only*, 1896, p. 16.

[41] See Plotinus, *The Enneads*, edited by Lloyd P. Gerson et al., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, V, 8.

[42] The great rebirth of the hieroglyph from the 15th century is based above all on the exegesis of two texts: the *Corpus Hermeticum* (now dated to the 2nd-3rd century AD and attributed to unknown authors, perhaps Greek); and the *Hieroglyphica* of Horapollo, discovered in 1419 by Cristofaro de' Buondelmonti on the island of Andros. But at least two other works should be seen as true

danger of polysemy, of varied and fantastical interpretations induced by the exotic or bizarre nature of these representations. Only the linguistic codification of the symbol, precisely because it is rich and mindful of cultural and antiquarian traditions, can counter this risk:

> Yet notwithstanding, in my opinion their devise was unperfect, by reason of the diversities of the nature of beasts and other things which they figured. Whereupon they who drewe more neere unto our time seemeth to have brought this art to perfection, by adding mots or posies to their figures, whereby they covertly disclose their intent by a more perfect order[43].

In *The Vision*, Daniel fully applies this conviction to construct a visual representation rooted in mythological and emblematic iconography, in association with an immediate decodification entrusted to "his" word to avoid the "divers significations" that such images have often had, in order to serve exclusively "as hieroglyphics for our present intention" (26).

It is probably in this context that we should identify one of the signs of the influence exerted by Cartari's *Le Immagini de i dei* on Daniel's thought and works. Cartari's treatise is to all intents and purposes a mythographic *corpus*, but for Daniel, beyond the iconographical debts to this text, apparent here as in other works[44], it is more than this. In Cartari's intentions it was words, on their own, that "painted with the pen"

milestones: the fifty-eight books of the *Hieroglyphica* by Pierio Valeriano (1556), or Giovanni Pietro delle Fosse "Secret chamberlain" of Pope Leo X and *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* by Athanasius Kirker, which marks the culmination and demise of the so-called Hieroglyphic Renaissance. For a definition of at least the general reference coordinates of the multiple issues connected to hieroglyphic writing and the meanings ascribed to it see George Boas (ed. by), *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*, New York, Bolingen Foundation Inc., 1950; André-Jean Festugière, *La revelation d'Hermès Trismegiste*, Paris, Librairie Lecroffe, J. Gabalda et Cie Editeurs, 1950-1954; Erik Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphics in European Tradition*, Copenhagen, Gad, 1961; Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964; Roberto Calasso, *I geroglifici di Sir Thomas Browne*, Milano, Adelphi, 2018.

[43] Alexander B. Grossart, *op. cit*., p. 17. The Emblem is codified, starting with the *Emblemata* of Andrea Alciati, as the association of an image and an epigram, accompanied by a short inscription, almost always in Latin. Generally, the emblem conveys a moral lesson, but it is also used in amorous pedagogy, both sacred and profane. The *impresa* is "the symbolic representation of an intention, a desire, a line of conduct (what one wishes to "undertake" or "embark upon") by means of a motto and a figure that reciprocally interpret one another", a sort of "knight's philosophy" (Mario Praz, *op. cit*., p. 54). In the dedicatory letter (*To His Good Friend Samuel Daniel, N. W. Wisheth health*) forming one of the paratexts preceding the translation of Giovio's treatise, Daniel's friend, N. W., establishes the differences between *impresa* and emblem: "The mot of an *Impresa*", he argues, "may not exceede three words. Emblems are interpreted by many verses. An *Impresa* is not garnished with many different Images, Emblemes are not limited. […] Impreses manifest the special purpose of Gentlemen in warlike combats or chamber tornaments. Emblems are generall conceiptes rather of moral matters then perticulare deliberations: rather to give credit to the wit, then to reveale the secretes of the minde" (Alexander B. Grossart, *op. cit*., p. 11).

[44] Ira Clark, *Samuel Daniel's* Complaint of Rosamon, «Renaissance Quarterly», 23, 2, 1970, pp. 153-154.

to create the iconographies thanks to their communicative and explicative power[45]. Cartari's idea of images of antiquity stripped of any supersense and brought back to their primary, essential, connotative meaning with a sensibility that we could describe as archaeological, almost pre-scientific[46], inspires and substantiates Daniel's decision to publish an authorized version of the masque and to preface it with the dedicatory letter in which he "illustrates" in words the structure and development of the spectacle. It is the power of words that makes it possible to communicate the "true" meanings, which lie precisely in the explanation provided. Words strip images of any hidden allusions, restoring them to their essence and purpose, that of acting as the visual equivalents of a discourse as what we could describe as linear allegories, iconographies that bear and convey a single, symbolized meaning.

Daniel constructs his invention as a kind of Platonic figuration, giving "mortal shapes to the gifts and effects of an eternal power, for that those beautiful characters of sense were easier to read than their mystical Ideas dispersed in that wide and incomprehensible volume of Nature" (32). He thus composes his tableau of divinities in such a way that the image captures the attention and gaze of the audience, whilst the word is called upon to express the "true" intention of which each image is the bearer, "according to some one property that fitted our occasion, without observing other their mystical interpretations, wherein the authors themselves are so irregular and confused as the best mythologers" (26).

Thus, what is presented is above all "the hieroglyphic of empire and dominion as the ground and matter whereon this glory of state is built"; immediately afterwards comes the specification of the "blessings and beauties that preserve and adorne it: as armed policy, love, religion, chastity, wealth, happiness, concord, justice, flourishing seasons, plenty: and lastly power by sea" (26)[47]. These blessings and beauties are embodied by the Queen and the Ladies of her close circle, the ornament and framework of a power that, fed by the past, irradiates from the King but is not exhausted in his person.

4.2. Out of the Shadow of Elizabeth I

The Vision was one of the few major Stuart-era masques to be staged outside the Palace of Whitehall. For Anne's first English masque, the court performed in a traditional space, the Great Hall of Hampton Court built by Henry VIII in 1532-1534. This was an unaltered and eloquent emblem of the strength of the Tudor spirit, a "liminal" space, rich in symbolic resonances, that Daniel incorporates and deliberately conveys in his masque. By emphasising the continuity of royal power, the performance space reinforced the idea of ancestry, of a hereditary bond that guaranteed legitimacy, physically and metaphorically bringing the new dynasty into contact and dialogue with the physical

[45] Sonia Maffei, *Cartari e gli dei del Nuovo Mondo, Il trattatello* Sulle Immagini de gli dei indiani *di Lorenzo Pignoria*, in *Vincenzo Cartari e le direzioni del mito nel Cinquecento*, a cura di Sonia Maffei, Roma, GBF, 2013, pp. 63-64.

[46] See Caterina Volpi, *op. cit*., p. 22.

[47] See also Parry Graham, *The Politics of the Jacobean Masque*, in J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (eds), *Theatre and Government under the Early Stuarts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 91.

and conceptual structures of "mighty Brittany" (34) while also more specifically establishing "a resonant series of ties between Elizabeth I and Anna of Denmark"[48].

As mentioned above, the physical structure of this space also necessarily influenced the staging choices. There were no moveable sets to arouse wonder, but three fixed "places" as in medieval *pageants*: the mountain, the cave of Sleep and the temple of peace. Furthermore, there was no "unveiling" of the idealized body of the court, rendered visible and brought into the foreground with the support of complex and surprising theatrical machines; instead, a moving physical body was displayed in a static context that acted as a backdrop. The world in which the vision takes place is mythological and Platonic: the ideas embodied by the symbolic body of the court ladies and the queen contain a tribute to the sovereign, but also concern the role of the consort in general and the nature of Stuart queenship in particular. From this point of view, identified and explained by McManus in her seminal study, prominence is given to the relationship that Anne attempts to establish with her predecessor at the head of the kingdom, Elizabeth I[49]. Pallas, played by Anne, is one of the iconographical references – together with Astrea, Cybele and Tethys – favoured by Elizabeth for her mythical and literary transfiguration[50]. This is thus a semantically structured choice that aims to communicate the military power of a long-standing monarchy whose quest for peace, pursued by James, must never be confused with weakness. This image is recalled and amplified by Astrea, who displays the sword and scales, and by Tethys, emblem of that "power by sea" in which we glimpse an echo of Daniel's lines on England in the collection *Delia* ("Flourish fair Albion glory of the North; Neptune's best darling, held between his arms", vv. 9-10) and of the words of John of Gaunt in praise of England[51]. However, while on the one hand trying to establish and convey the idea of a direct descendance from Elizabeth, Anne simultaneously signals areas of difference, as revealed by a further detail that is in no way marginal.

For *The Vision* there are no surviving designs for the costumes worn by the masquers, and this is because only clothes from Elizabeth's very rich wardrobe were adapted and used. As Lady Arabella Stuart wrote in a letter dated 18 December and addressed to her uncle Gilbert Taylor, Earl of Shrewsbury, "The Queene intendeth to make a mask this Christmas to which end my Lady of Suffolk and my Lady of

[48] Claire McManus, *op. cit*., p. 102.

[49] If we wished, we could push this game of meanings even further and stress that "In commissioning Daniel for the first of Anne's English masques Russell was supporting a poet of the former Pembroke circle as well as a writer previously patronized by Elizabeth I" (ivi, p. 100).

[50] A reference text for reconstructing the complexity and articulation of the myth of Elizabeth, deliberately created and sustained over four decades by public spectacles and courtly chivalry, by private sonnet and public oration, is still Roy Strong, *op. cit.*

[51] "*Gaunt*: This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle, / This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, / This other Eden, demi-paradise, / This fortress built by Nature for herself / Against infection and the hand of war, / […] England, bound in with the triumphant sea […]" (William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, edited by Peter Ure, The Arden Shakespeare, London, Methuen and Co., 1956, II.i.40-44; 61).

Walsingham have warrants to take of the late Queenes best apparel out of the Tower at theyr discretion"[52].

A widespread practice at court, certainly not introduced by Anne, is thus employed to reiterate "the appropriation of her predecessor's corporeal existence"[53], but also to underline a distance: "Only Pallas had a trick by herself, for her clothes were not so much below the knee that we might see a woman had both feet and legs which I never knew before"[54]. Unafraid to defy convention, almost to the extent of causing a scandal, the new queen states her individuality as a physical and non-abstract woman, the mother of future kings and not a virgin without heirs, ready to take up arms if the peace sought and hoped for by the king should prove impossible to achieve through the arts of diplomacy and compromise. This queen is a woman and a mother, capable of supporting her king and consort to pursue autonomous political designs, establish relationships and present herself as a credible and influential interlocutor, however discreet.

Anne, in a still embryonic and controversial way in *The Vision*, in more explicit and articulated forms in the masques by Jonson, introduces an element of dissonance into the symmetrical model traditionally inscribed in the masque: Jacobean queen's masques challenge the discrete terms of power, race, gender, and theatricality. The challenge is posed by images of female excess, bearing no resemblance to the king; the space between James and the stage becomes not conceit but ellipsis, and masquers' bodies, women's bodies, figure opposition rather than compliment[55].

5. Conjunctio oppositorum

In *The Vision* we see a double expressive and figural register. On the one hand, we witness Daniel's attempt to tone down the potential symbolic significance of the *emblemata* he stages with his descriptions by attributing a specific meaning to those idealized icons, which must act only "as hierogliphics for our present intention" (26). All possible allusions to the power of the passions, to violent actions are excluded; each element is brought back into a space of bucolic suspension, governed by harmony, unity and peace. At the same time, Pallas and her mirror-images, Astrea and Tethys, trigger a different movement, a movement of connotative accumulation whose meaning is ambivalent. The queen lays claim to a specific role, which Daniel's linguistic limitations, aimed at exalting "wit and courage" as her main qualities and at subjecting her power to the action of "Providence" (God-King), are insufficient to contain. Anne presents herself as a queen in arms, ready to act in defence of her people, heir to Elizabeth, the bride of England, even capable of surpassing her, transforming the nostalgia for a past

[52] Sara Jayne Steen (ed. by), *The Letters of Lady Arabella Stuart*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 197; Ernest Law, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[53] Claire McManus, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

[54] *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain 1603-1624. Jacobean Letters*, cit., p. 52. The display of nude or barely covered parts of the female body (particularly the breasts and nipples) became increasingly frequent in the Queen's later masques (the designs for the costumes of the twelve queens in *The Masque of Queens* are clear proof of this).

[55] Kathryn Schwarz, *Amazon Reflections in the Jacobean Queen's Masque*, «Studies in English Literature 1500-1900», 35, 2, 1995, p. 294.

already wreathed in legend into confidence in a future of glory and honour. Here the semantic sphere of peace is enriched with lexemes referring to the chivalric and military code, to an aesthetic and a practice of courage, strength, dedication ("true zeal", "might", "armed policy", "power by sea") to the point of perfect coexistence: "this glory of peace", which holds together the two extremes of royalty, Anne and James, Anne the glory of James, a glory that generates a heroic peace.

In the hall at Hampton Court, the sovereign contemplates an idealized staging of power in which the unity and sacredness of the king's mystical body is no longer univocally celebrated, and in which he perceives a wrinkle, a fold in the irreducibility of the multiple to the one. The sovereign is forced to confront an image of the female body capable of embodying the virtues of command and good governance, a body divided into twelve parts, ultimately recomposed not in himself but in the figure of Queen Anne, the mystical and carnal rose that contains and informs all. The performance space of the masque is no longer a clean surface, a mirror of ideal perfection. The mirror, long a metaphor for exemplarity in the sixteenth century – in the wake of a well-established medieval tradition – had in the last years of Elizabeth's reign already taken on the opposing connotations of dissolution, of a disintegration of the idealized projection of the Self. Richard II who in the Shakespearean drama of the same name asks for a mirror to look at himself and recognizes none of his own royalty, and therefore of his essence, in his reflection and shatters the mirror, symbolizes a gap, a fracture in the Renaissance episteme.

In light of the four later masques commissioned from Jonson, it is difficult not to agree with Barroll's statement that *The Vision* already responds to a specific social and political objective that sees Anne intent on promoting "her circle, to establish a context for the exercise of her own politics"[56]. The fairly basic mathematical symbology – the insistence on the numbers three and twelve and on the geometrical figures of the triangle and the circle – reaffirms the pervasive concept of a chaotic multiplicity restored to a hierarchical order (the Chain of Being) that merges and is resolved in the one (King-Sun-God), in a constant mirroring between the sovereign and the ideal image of king and court that the staging displays, in codified and ritualized forms, before his eyes[57]. As mentioned at the start, however, an element of dissonance is created by the "position", by the part that the queen chooses to play: not Juno, "goddess of empire and dominion" and, above all, wife of Zeus but rather Pallas, a goddess in arms, a symbol of intelligence and wisdom.

The redefinition of the performance space of court theatre, encouraged by Anne, particularly in the masques composed by Jonson, but already attempted in Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, reformulates the perfect fixity linking the king to the masque, suggesting a new point of view. The masque is now a mirror that expresses neither exemplarity nor the dissolution and fragmentation of a model, but instead reflects the image of an otherness, understood as the principle of differentiation of the identical. The triggering of this process leads to the possibility of an alternative, a

[56] Leeds Barroll, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
[57] See Françoise S. Carter, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 26-29.

political body generated by a Queen who joins the King, forming a double unity[58], a dynamic rather than a static unity, like the heavens and the earth postulated by the "new philosophy", which reinterprets and recodifies a world out of balance.

Taking the form of the metaphorical meeting place between two opposing elements, the mirror becomes the symbol of a *conjunctio oppositorum*, translating into an oxymoron, the rhetorical figure of the "double unity". This shift in viewpoint and meaning, triggered "by the motion of all-directing Pallas [...] patroness of this mighty monarchy", encapsulates the essence of an incipient desire "to grace this glorious monarchy with the real effects of [the] blessings represented" (36). Anne thus entrusts to theatre the announcement and celebration of this new course led by James and supported by the pillars of chivalric *virtus* restated by the Queen herself, in the garb of Pallas, and echoed by Astrea and Tethys.

In *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, the narration of the deeds of the queen, surrounded by the ladies of her *inner circle*, emphasises her desire to reaffirm the peculiar and autonomous nature of her own role as sovereign. While a reverent deference is owed to James and his royal prerogatives, in the actions, words and forms of their theatrical reflection, Anna claims for herself and glorifies those qualities that, in the judgement of many, were fundamental to the government of a kingdom wishing to impose itself as a solid, respected and feared political player: in other words heroic virtues and the martial spirit erected as a defence and placed at the service of the Kingdom.

On the one hand, then, the ordering and pacifying light radiated by the king shines forth; on the other it is the queen's shield and lance that gleam, as symbols of steadfastness and martial strength. It is this duality that Anna attempts to confirm and to present as a unity with a double nature on various levels of discourse. In her eyes, the exercise of royal authority can only be a reflection of the dual unity inscribed within the circle of the crown and encapsulated in an oxymoron: the force of peace. In the convictions of Anna, and soon of her son Henry too, only a composite but solid disposition of this type could ensure Great Britain's security and prosperity, and the eternal fame of her restless heralds.

A sparse staging and an ancient place tell of the vision of a destiny to which the young prince Henry, encompassing the two souls of the kingdom, was intended to soon give body and substance. History decided otherwise.

[58] See Marina Lops, "Anna di Danimarca, Giacomo I Stuart e la regalità in scena in *The Masque of Blackness*", in *Nuove frontiere per la Storia di genere* a cura di Laura Guidi e Maria Rosaria Pelizzari, 3 vols, vol. III, Salerno and Padova, Università degli Studi di Salerno in co-edizione con Libreriauni-versitaria.it Edizioni, 2013, p. 103.