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The Spectacle of Power: Diplomatic Mediation, Patronage and Cultural Exchanges between the Court of the Medici and the England of James I Stuart

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### 1. Prologue. The politics of exchange "on stage"

Cultural mediation is an essential part of Renaissance patronage; the patron-mediator-client relationship consists of an indirect three-way exchange in which the mediator makes possible the meeting and reconciliation of the two extreme levels, clearly separated by physical, social, and political distances. The modernity of the terms cultural broker and cultural brokerage may seem anachronistic, but it captures the nuanced role adopted by certain aristocratic figures, who brought musicians, composers, poets, scientists, and artists into contact with powerful patrons, mediating between occasional commissions and lasting employment, encouraging the continuity of musical, literary, scientific and artistic patronage through the succession of ruling authorities (in Florence, for the Medici, Ferdinand I, Christine of Lorraine, Cosimo II, Maria Magdalena, Vittoria della Rovere, Leopold, and Giovan Carlo) and the enrichment of the artistic proposal through exchange between the various European courts.[1].

«Art was a political activity when it was conducted at court»[2]. In 1600 the wedding of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV of France offered a considerable opportunity to export, beyond the Italian borders, the principles and style that were at the basis of Florentine spectacle and taste. Similarly, at the end of the previous century, the fashion for the continental tour of noble families through the European capitals of culture had already attracted to Italy, to Rome but above all to Florence, a large number of foreign artists eager to learn at first hand the secrets of perspective and theatrical machinery of the Medici. At their court, the production of theatrical events led to a radical rethinking of the entire concept of staging; the goal achieved by the Renaissance experiments was the last chapter in a series of experiences that had begun in the previous century with Filippo Brunelleschi's sacred representations. The great weddings that were the ideal stage for 16th-century Florentine spectacle, skilfully handled by the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, contributed to the universal resonance of these performances, through a system of propaganda carefully designed for the purpose. Thus began the capillary dissemination of news and reports on the amazing things that were produced at the Medici court, a system of information aimed at glorifying the greatness of the Medici family in the courts of Europe. The 17th century is the one that most bears witness to the processes and effects of this cultural and political osmosis at all levels.

In the England of the Tudors and the Anglican schism, the long years of inevitable cultural and political closure due to the climate of

suspicion and conspiracy that the Church of Rome and the papist factions had subtly established, led to progressive isolation of the country from the rest of Catholic Europe, thus precluding the possibility of interacting with the most prestigious European courts of the Renaissance. England appeared to the eyes of continental ambassadors who came to represent them on English soil as an unattainable potency, which found the most appropriate vehicle for self-representation of power – towards the continental courts and – in the medieval traditions: the great knights' tournaments and the court mimes, which preceded the definitive development of the masque.[3]

With a political programme perfectly balanced between custom and novelty, Elizabeth I, strongly aware of the strategic appeal and political value of entertainment – just as her continental "colleagues" such as the Medici, the Habsburgs, and the Valois – was well aware of the need for the monarch to offer the people and the court celebrations and entertainment, both private and public, «to please the eye of the people»[4] through the visual astonishment and the pleasantness of the sensations aroused in the public, the queen, virago and virgin represented together and inseparably the temporal and divine law.[5]

This was the distinguishing feature of the last period of the Tudor monarchy, to the point that, from the very first years of Elizabeth's reign, Accession Day, the day of the new sovereign's accession to the throne, was raised to the status of a national holiday, as a clear vindication by the Anglican Church of the Catholic tradition of solemnising saints' days during the liturgical year; from here the step towards the spectacularising of the accession was short and soon the official Creation of the monarch evolved into a veritable chivalrous apotheosis of the monarchy, celebrated and represented through the reworked medieval codes of the tournament.

The accession of James I on 24 March 1603 after the death of Elizabeth, and the consequent succession of the Stuart dynasty on the English royal throne, marked the beginning of a new era of openness, tolerance, and social and cultural development; the programme of balance supported by the new king was centred on the figure of the *rex pacificus*, capable of finding the right degree of balance at all levels of power and guaranteeing it for the well-being and prosperity of his kingdom. The tournament, at least as a type of festivity emblematic of the kingdom's politics, came to an end with the disappearance of the Tudor dynasty. With the reign of James I, the English spectacle opened up to the flourishing influences of continental representational instances and all those Renaissance innovations that were by then fully established and rooted in all the major European courts, bringing to the peak of development the spectacular form of court par excellence, the masque.

The innovating trend of the Stuart era did not take long to emerge and radically codify itself in English entertainments customs. The first masque during the reign was Samuel Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, presented at court on the Epiphany 1604 by the new queen and consort of the sovereign, Anne of Denmark. The official spectacle of the new reign was on a day that would henceforth become the privileged date for the most important festive event and represented the power of the English court: the *Queen's Masque*. But it was the following year, on the Epiphany of 1605, that English court entertainment began its journey towards what was to become its definitive rise and codification: *The Masque of Blackness*; the first masque that saw the collaboration between the court poet Ben Jonson and the royal architect Inigo Jones, who supervised the scenic apparatus.

James I was particularly interested in court dances. During his early years in Scotland, he had more than once tried his hand at writing an embryonic libretto for a masque, worthily supported in this passion by his wife Anne.[6] It was soon clear that times were changing and that the thrifty days of Queen Elizabeth were being replaced by moments of great ostentatious magnificence, in logical accord with the new European and Renaissance policy of the Stuart dynasty.

Inigo Jones and Ben Jonson were a crucial element of the kingdom's revival project; the artistic couple that should be employed to spread the image of the new England abroad.[7] The court poet worked hard to develop the original plainness of the masque, in order to transform the performance into a more complex and structured spectacle, following the model of the Florentine *intermedi*, with an alternation of acted, danced and sung parts, according to a precise poetic and ideological programme.

## **2. The Stuart court in search for innovation: the dissemination of the Medici's heritage through the circulation of artists**

Among the many benefits that England enjoyed from James I's policy of openness, the most relevant issue was the opportunity for English art collectors, scholars, and artists to overcome the barriers that had limited them so far and to get closer to the intellectual and artistic ideas of the continent, an opportunity that was a two-way process. It was in this fertile and cosmopolitan climate that the personal and professional vicissitudes of many Italian artists, in our case Florentine, took place; they were strongly desired by the Stuart court, mainly by the heir Prince Henry and Queen Anne, who appealed several times to the Medici court to obtain the best artists who could trigger a process of cultural renewal in England, introducing the artistic, architectural and spectacle principles of the Florentine Renaissance.

It is precisely with this perspective of renewal in the political and artistic system that James I, his wife Anne of Denmark, and their eldest son Henry organised their courts, moving confidently in a well-designed network of diplomatic relations with the main sovereigns of Europe; the privileged interlocutor was strategically identified, both for cultural affinity and prudent evaluation, in the court of Tuscany.[8]

The focus of the negotiations is centred on Prince Henry, the young heir to the throne, towards whom «tutti tengono volti gli occhi [...] come al sole d'Oriente, [...] per natura degno del suo nascimento [...] indirizzato solamente a cose grandi e magnanime» («All keep their eyes turned as to the sun of the East, by nature worthy of his birth, directed only to great and magnanimous things»).[9] His creation as Prince of Wales in 1610, a crucial moment in the designation of leadership and in the programmatic statement of the Stuart dynasty, was the occasion to set the English diplomatic machine into action.

Artists were recruited from all over Europe to create a princely court in imitation of the Medici's, giving renewed splendour to the designated residences of Richmond, St. James, and Woodstock in the Italian style. A modern, Florentine-trained architect was needed: a *homo universalis* at the peak of the professional hierarchy, a court decorator on the formal and ideological model of the Medici festivities, a painter who could perpetuate and spread the image of the future sovereign according to the iconological code of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, following the practical arrangement of their galleries. Not just that: a hydraulic engineer who conceived and realised the gardens, a model of the magnificence of the most prestigious courts (the palaces of Pratolino, Pitti, Saint-Germain-en-Lay and Luxembourg).

Henry's peremptory request to the Grand Duke Cosimo II aimed to obtain the best artists at court:[10] one of the two Francini brothers, Tommaso or Alessandro, at the time engaged in France in the service of Maria de' Medici and Enrico IV. They would be paid a salary more than appropriate to their prestige.[11] Should they be unavailable, the Prince begged the Grand Duke to send from Florence at least some good pupils, «un tal huomo [per] cominciare alla svelta ad introdurci sì belli artifizi» («Such a man [to] begin quickly to introduce such beautiful artifices»).[12] The Francinis could not leave the French court and Cosimo was forced to seek out a valid substitute whose artistic qualities and skills for mediation would allow him to perform this delicate task, also taking into consideration the marriage plans that the two courts had been evaluating of late.[13] It was then decided to appoint the architect Costantino de' Servi, who had already been employed by the Medici both at home and on diplomatic and artistic missions to the courts of Paris, Prague, Innsbruck, and Persia.

The mutual interest of the Medici and Stuart families was perfectly in line with the codified dynamics of political and cultural relations between the courts of the Ancient Regime. On one side, the artist, skilfully trained in tradition, exporting the Florentine architectural and spectacular model, was allowed to consolidate dynastic dynamics; on the other, the priority was to be included in the structure of the European courts, which could only be achieved through the assimilation of the neo-Platonic Renaissance model, still unknown to the English tradition.[14]

### **3. Against the "out-dated" English spectacle: the Florentine intermedio and the renewal of the court masque**

Costantino de Servi's experience at the English court lasted four years, a rather short period nevertheless full of activity, during which the eclectic Florentine artist carried out his commission in the service of Prince Henry as architect, painter, theatre designer, and garden supervisor for the royal palaces.[15] His presence at the court of James I brought a wave of innovation in the conception of art, of the artist's work and of his Renaissance identity as *homo universalis*; although his experience unfortunately remains poor in material evidence, it must be widely re-evaluated for the influence it had on the English cultural scene and above all on the artistic growth of Inigo Jones.

His first year in England he spent working at the various courts of sovereigns and princes, where he increasingly became a key figure in establishing a strategic cultural and political framework between the Stuarts and the Medici, but mainly engaged in the renovation of the royal palaces and gardens. It was around the end of the summer of 1611 that Costantino de Servi's career reached an important turning point. Prince Henry had just obtained permission from Grand Duke Cosimo II to keep the architect in his service and was so satisfied with the architect's work that he decided to give him a commission to stage a masque, almost certainly the annual on the Epiphany night, where organisation at court was well underway at that time of year. The Prince's commission was no doubt of considerable prestige. Inigo Jones, who had brought the masque form to a significant level with Ben Jonson, was still in London and would certainly be willing to carry out this further challenge. Only a year earlier he had created one of the most complex and impressive spectacles in the history of English court: *Oberon*, a masque staged for Prince Henry, the inspirator of its ideological vision. But unexpectedly, this time, the choice of stage designer was Constantino de' Servi, who, however in English court, had not yet shown any proof of his ability or creativity in the entertainment field. It is reasonable to assume that the prince's firm decision to ignore the court's most accredited artist and replace him with a newcomer was determined by his growing discontent towards

the form of the masque as it was codified at the court of his father, particularly with regard to the setting of the scenes and the role of court dances within the performance.

Although Jones had already introduced to England the innovation of the changing scene, acquired on his first trip to Italy (between 1597 and 1598), Henry wanted to be amazed by the daring experiments of the Medici festivals, so he needed an artist who had grown up in the Florentine artistic circle, rather than someone who reproduced by imitation. The Prince observed with interest the European model of spectacle, especially in the Medici court, and the political and ideological message conveyed to the public.<sup>[16]</sup> If considered as an example the case of the masque staged in honour of the visit of Christian IV of Denmark, the queen's brother, and the opinions expressed by many witnesses on this occasion, it can be argued the reason for the displeasure of the prince towards this type of spectacle; the official entertainment at the court of James and Queen Anne was probably not the elevated and flawless celebratory occasion that emerged from the official accounts.

Looking at the Medici model, of which he had been amply informed by the young nobles, his contemporaries, who experienced the traditional continental tour, he was profoundly convinced that festivities represented a crucial vehicle for exalting the royal family in the eyes of foreign visitors; the ceremonial of the court, though complex in its inventions, had to be organised in the most imperative observance of decorum and sobriety: «Banquets and feasts should pass with decency and decorum, and without all rudeness, noise or disorder».<sup>[17]</sup> A rather revolutionary conception for England at the time and in complete contrast to the scenes of chaos and drunkenness bordering on debauchery that evidently were the norm at Whitehall Palace feasts.

The distinguished scholar Sir John Harington describes, with a sarcastic and quite disgusted tone, the festivities organised in 1606 by the King James for the visit of his brother-in-law Christian IV of Denmark; the entertainments were hosted by Sir Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury and Prime Minister of the Crown, at his country residence in Theobalds, Hertfordshire. The Danish King had decided to visit his sister for an official visit to congratulate his brother-in-law on becoming king of England and arrived in London in the summer with his large and «unruly» entourage. Such an important official visit had to be appropriately marked by magnificent entertainments to record such an important political and diplomatic occasion. Instead, it was five days of authentic «bacchanalia», culminating in the performance of the masque *Solomon and the Queen of Sheba*, of which the sober Harington was forced to be, despite himself, a shocked witness. A queen of Sheba, perhaps not too sober, stumbled miserably in her long robes, forgetting the steps that joined the stage to the hall, tipping her homage chest in the lap (or in the face) of the royal guest:

But, alas! As all earthly things do fail to poor mortals in enjoyment, so did prove our presentment hereof. The Lady who did play the Queens part, did carry most precious gifts to both their Majesties. But, forgetting the steppes arising the canopy, overset her caskets into the Danish Majesties lap, and fell at his feet, though I rather think it was in his face. Much was the hurry and the confusion; cloths and napkins were at hand, to make all clean.<sup>[18]</sup>

At this point the merciful Christian decided to grant the unfortunate lady the main dance of the masque to remove the embarrassment of the clumsy dancer; but in the ardour of his benevolence, more likely blinded by the fumes of the alcohol consumed during the banquet, he stumbled too, falling at the feet of his astonished partner. There was nothing else to do but to force the Danish King into a strategic retreat

to the private flats of the Earl of Salisbury, to recover from the blow inflicted on his royal dignity:

His Majesty then got up and would dance with the Queen of Sheba; but he fell down and humbled himself before her and was carried to an inner chamber and laid on a bed of state; which was not at little defiled with the presents of the Queen which had been bestowed on his garments, such as wine, cream, jelly, beverage, cakes, spices, and other good matters. The entertainment and show went forward, and most of the presenters went backward, or fell down; wine did so occupy their upper chambers.<sup>[19]</sup>

Harington's final verdict on the spectacle offered by the court of James is a scandalised, total critique, with a longing for the glorious days at the court of Queen Elizabeth:

I have much marvelled at these strange pegeantries, and they do bring to my remembrance what passed of this sort in our Queens days; of which I was sometimes and humble presenter and assistant: but I neer did see such lack of good order, discretion and sobriety, as I have now done. I have passed much time in seeing the royal sports of hunting and hawking, where the manners were such as made me devise the beasts were pursuing the sober creation.<sup>[20]</sup>

Things were not to change much later, when in 1618 the secretary to the Venetian ambassador Pietro Contarini described the scenes of debauchery that took place at court during the banquet after Ben Jonson's masque *Pleasure Reconciled to Vertue*, performed on Epiphany night:

The table was covered almost entirely with seasoned pasties and very few sugar confections. There were some large figures, but they were of painted pasteboard for ornament. The repast was served upon glass plates or dishes and at the first assault they upset the table and the crash of glass platters reminded me precisely of a severe hailstorm at Midsummer smashing the window glass. The story ended at half past two in the morning and half disgusted and weary we returned home. Should your lordships writhe on reading or listening to this tediousness you may imagine the weariness I feel in relating it.<sup>[21]</sup>

#### **4. The architect at work: the Medici tradition on the English royal stages**

Given these assumptions, it is not difficult to understand why Henry wanted to break away from this type of custom, entrusting the creation of his first masque as Prince of Wales to an artist who was completely foreign to the English tradition, the prototype of the Renaissance man, ambassador of the ideological and cultural achievements of his time. Servi's task was a heavy one, with great expectations, as the prince highly trusted his expertise and hoped for a resounding success of his first official spectacle. Overwhelmed by the commissions incessantly arriving from the royal family, constrained and limited by the short time to organise a spectacle of such magnitude, and perhaps somewhat unsure of being able to succeed in this hard enterprise without a reference model, Costantino de' Servi requested the ministers of the Medici "Guardaroba" to send him as soon as possible, and in great secrecy, the models by Bernardo Buontalenti for the *intermedi* created at the time of Grand Duke Francesco, those «schizi di diverse inventione [...] fatte da Bernardo delle Girandole [...] sì di mascherate, barriere o intermedi» («a quantity of sketches of various inventions that were already made by Bernardo delle Girandole or by others for masquerades, barriers or intermediates»), so to ensure the greatest satisfaction to the Prince:

Desidero che Vostra Signoria faccia uffizio con loro Altezze Serenissime che per quel che mi ha accennato il Principe desidera che io faccia qualche invenzione di balletti alla prima occasione che si usano fare in questi paesi, che ancora non ho visto il modo è loro stile delle invenzioni che usano, e perciò desidero che preghiate Sua Altezza Serenissima che voglia concedere una quantità di schizzi di diverse invenzioni che già furono fatte da Bernardo delle Girandole o da altri si di mascherate barriere o intermedi ne' tempi del Gran Duca Francesco fino a ora, che se bene io potrei per me stesso farle, sa benissimo Vostra Signoria che ognuno cerca di comporre e migliorare alle sua stesse opinioni, siccome che io abbrevierò in un tratto il servizio del Principe intanto vedrò il costume loro e [...] con quella discrezione che mi si porgerà il resto per dare appieno soddisfazione al Principe.[22]

Neither Servi's correspondence nor that of the grand-ducal secretariat makes any further mention of the consignment after this letter, so we do not know whether these *quadernacci* were ever sent to the architect's London residence as requested. However, Costantino's submission is a valuable source that demonstrates once again the Medicean court's practice of conservation and reuse of materials, a further confirmation of the supremacy of the Florentine tradition in the field of architecture and spectacle, which from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century imposed itself on all the courts of Europe.

On 6 January 1612, to celebrate the feast of the Epiphany, the Prince's masque *Love Restored*, written by Ben Jonson, was performed in the new Banqueting House, «a masque at court, by gentlemen the King's Servants».[23] The name of the designer is not indicated on the title page of the booklet, but given the sources in our possession this omission suggests that it could be none other than Costantino de Servi, who had requested the models just for this production a few months earlier. This hypothesis is firmly supported by Roy Strong: «The designer is unknown, but it should logically have been Costantino de' Servi».[24] The absence of the designer's name may be a tacit declaration by the court poet Jonson of the "inferiority" of the foreigner architect, who should not be mentioned, whereas Inigo Jones' name had always been highlighted to celebrate the supremacy of the established artistic royal couple, detainer of the tradition of the English court spectacle. Constantine's trademark is to be found in the only scenic indication that Jonson provides in the text of the masque: the entrance of Cupid's triumphal chariot, before the beginning of the main song and three dances: «Enter Cupid in his chariot, guarded with the masquers».[25] The dramatic idea behind the performance is rather ordinary, mainly focused on the obvious diatribe between the ideal value of love and the material value of wealth; this will finally be defeated in the allegorical apotheosis of the sovereign and his court. The chariot of the god of love is certainly not a particularly elaborate performance, but it does reveal the Florentine seed, following the traditional praxis at the Medici court, well established through the experiences of Buontalenti and Vasari. With this first production, the Florentine architect wanted to establish a new concept in English stage practice: the idea of the stage designer, the *apparatore*, a unique supervisor within the wide and diversified English productive context, regulated by different authorities that underlie the multiple components (professional, semi-professional, amateur, coexisting but not always perfectly concerted) whose the heterogeneous form of the masque represents the exemplary synthesis and iconological peak.

The magnificent celebrations in December 1613, for the wedding of Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, one of the most influential figures at the court of James I and his favourite, were the first real opportunity to test this new model of spectacle, whose direction the Florentine

architect was appointed by the King himself, as the young prince had passed prematurely a few months earlier.

Il Signor Gran Ciamberlano mi ha fatto istantia insieme per il conte di Somerset pochi giorni fa con solenne cerimonie nel gran salone di corte, dove hanno destinato che deva far io le macchine e apparati delle prospettive per un ricco balletto per le feste di Natale, che nonostante le scuse damme fatte del poco tempo, hanno però volsuto che io faccia ogni diligenza mediante le nozze che son preparate del detto conte come deve sapere Vostra Signoria nella figliola del detto Signor Ciamberlan, e perciò io conoscendo di servire in questa parte non solo allor Signorie come a Sua Maestà [...] se mi riuscirà l'invenzione che io ho trovato con detto poco tempo che c'è.[26].

The *Masque of Squires*, libretto by Thomas Campion and *apparatus* by Costantino de' Servi, was a memorable spectacle for the court and the distinguished guests:

La festa fu principiata alle undeci ore della sera e durò sino alle due. Gli apparati e le spese furono grandi, gli spettatori grandissimi, sì per la presenza delle loro Maestà che di una grandissima quantità di dame, cavalieri e popolo, tutti riccamente vestiti.[27].

In the introduction to the masque, Campion gives an account of the organisation of the Banqueting House for the performance. The space of the king's throne, on the smaller north side of the hall, is enriched with Roman-style pillars and enlarged with tiers to host the bridal couple and other members of the royal family; on the opposite side, behind a grandiose triumphal arch framing the stage, the perspective scene is set up[28]. The upper part of the stage is designed by Servi in the tradition of Buontalenti's intermediates, to host the sky with clouds «very artificially shown»; in the lower part, a sea scene is created with two promontories: one entirely covered in rock, the other covered by a dense forest, on each of which are three golden pillars. In the middle of the two promontories is the central perspective representing the sea in which a number of vessels sail, «some cunningly painted, some artificially saying».

The stage reveals a luxuriant garden with benches for the masquers; behind it is a double staircase simulating the shell of Venus «made exceeding curiously in the form of a schalop shell». Here, four knights, «foure Squires», appear on stage and, bowing to the king and queen, begin to narrate the prologue of the story, the introduction to the antimasque.

Servi's invention for the first *artificio* consists in making a cloud with six knights descend from the top of the stage; at the sides of the cloud, on the two promontories, the other six knights are freed from the spell that had turned them into golden pillars and regain their own appearance. As the twelve knights descend from the stage and make their way to the centre of the room, the scene suddenly changes: the promontories disappear, while the sea and the coast are replaced by a view of London and the Thames «very arteficially presented in their place». The masquers then begin their dances, interspersed with three songs and the traditional wedding chorus, *Io, Io, Hymen*. After the last song, four boats appear with twelve sailors dressed in red descending from them and performing a very lively and characteristic dance. «Shouting and tryumphing after their manner». As the sailors leave on their boats, the knights give the bride and groom and the royal family their final wishes, after which the show ends with the traditional «Good night to all».

The name of Costantino de' Servi as the stage designer is recorded by Campion in the introduction to the masque where it is indicated that the set design and costumes are by «M. Costantyne, an Italian, Architect to our late Prince Henry». The judgement that the poet



wants to transmit is neither flattering nor objective or free from personalism: he speaks in terms of a failure of the performance, whose original project, perhaps too complex for the English workers, had to be drastically reduced just a few days before its debut. The architect is accused both professionally and personally of failing to manage the work properly: too self-referential and unable to make himself understood by the craftsmen involved in the installation:

But he, being too much of him selfe, and no way to be drawne to impart his intentions, fayled so farre in the assurance he gave, that the mayne invention, even at the last cast, was of force drawn into a farre narrower compasse then was from the beginning intended.

A similar verdict is expressed by the resident of Savoy who attended the spectacle:

Le feste sono riuscite differenti dall'aspettazione e dai gran preparamenti, dicono, per mancamento dell'architetto ch'è stato un fiorentino che serviva il fu prencipe, che, se va a dire il vero, si è svergognato e fatto mal spendere molti scuti a questi Signori, [...] che quando hanno creduto che il tutto fosse in esser, hanno trovato ogni cosa imperfetta.[29]

These considerations impose a more accurate analysis of the diplomatic position of the Florentine architect[30]. As a strategic pawn of the patrons, he had to be versatile in adapting to the customs and habits of each court while lacking the necessary time; he was often forced to deal with an inadequate workforce and give rather complex technical instructions in an unfamiliar language and without the collaboration of the workers. Not only: de' Servi is not infrequently plagued by mistrust and gossip from colleagues, those «emuli che sono di grand'obbligo sapersene guardare» ("Those emulators whom it is a great necessity to be aware of").[31]

The criticisms made by the two witnesses summoned above, both opposed to Servi and the Medici court he represented, should be interpreted in this light. Campion claims the primacy of the local artist over the "foreigner", mainly due to professional solidarity with Inigo Jones, the royal architect resoundingly dethroned by the Florentine. Then, the Savoia resident represents the political faction competing with the Medici court.[32] They both identified the most critical moment of the staging in the inefficiency of the main artifice of the masque: Buontalenti's cloud that descends from the sky carrying the twelve knights, each enclosed in a Brunelleschi-style niche.[33] However, the problem is most probably not due to an alleged malfunction of the invention (probably coordinated by the Florentine architect with expertise and experience); rather, to a lack of synchronism between the setting in motion of the winches and ropes for the descent of the scenic invention and the musicians' performance, a coordination specifically arranged to cover the noise of the machines as well as to support and emphasise the marvellous apparition:

Quello che si credeva fosse cosa mirabile, ch'era una discesa da una nuvola di dodici Cavalieri riccamente vestiti e ben adornati, che fecero il balletto, fu che aveva accomodato dietro a quella nuvola un ingegno che discese, giusto come si fa quando si calla la porta serazinesca, nella quale erano dodici nicce tutte di un corso, dov'erano assentati li dodici Cavalieri, e nel discenderla si vedevano le corde che la tenevano, e si sentivano le taiole o siano ruote a far l'istesso strepito, come quando si alza o si calla l'antenna di una nave.[34]

By now, the harmonisation of all the scenic elements is a consolidated practice in the Medici dynastic spectacle: a fundamental principle for the court spectacle designer, and thus well present to

Servi, who certainly recognises its priority for the success of the event. The technical problem can therefore be attributed to the lack of effective coordination between the professionals on stage and those behind the stage: a problem that had already arisen during the rehearsals and which was the plausible cause of the reduction of the performance reported by the poet. The failure of the design, in short, is not due to the incompetence of the designer but rather to a failure of coordination between the professionals; and to a breakdown in communication between the architect and the craftsmen: «Finita questa musica, senz'altro suono, solo il strepito delle ruote, [i cavalieri] si misero in ordine sotto a quella nuvola» («When this music was over, without any other sound, only the rattling of the wheels, [the knights] placed themselves in order under that cloud»). [35] The musicians are clearly out of tempo as they fail to synchronise the score with the descent of the cloud and finish their performance before the machine stops. In a hall enveloped in silence, the sounds of the mechanical device are distinctly echoed.

A careful reading of the Savoy resident's account, however, confirms that the critical elements of the performance concern the dramaturgical structure and the musical score (not the perspective apparatus or the scenic inventions which are not further mentioned, save the descent of the clouds). Mediocre, indeed, was Campion's libretto. Maybe the insertion of the "machine" with a descending device is designed to revitalise a dramaturgical structure that is flat in invention and does not suit spectacular scenic translations: «La festa fu cominciata da un'orazione fatta da quattro vestiti poveramente, la quale aveva più presto, al portar della voce, del funebre che d'allegria di nozze» («The feast began with an oration by four poorly dressed men, which had more of a funereal quality rather than a wedding spirit when heard»). [36] Both Welsford and Lindley, leading scholars in the literary form of the English masque, agree that *The Masque of Squires* is one of Thomas Campion's worst poetic proofs: «The construction is worse than usual, and even the lyrics are not particularly attractive». [37] At the root of this "poetic failure" could be a proven inadequacy of the poet to deal with this genre: «Some of the clumsiness often attributed to all Campion's attempts to the genre»; [38] to confirm this not excellent inclination, his equally mediocre proof given for the *Lords Masque* staged the previous year for the wedding of Princess Elisabeth to the Count Palatine of the Rhine. [39] The music by John Cooper and Nicholas Lanier brought no greater joy to the scene, nor the dances performed by the court's professionals and nobles:

Fu cominciato un balletto di dodici diavoli, li quali facevano onesto vedere per la disposizione de li uomini, ma resero malinconia alli detti spettatori [...]. Cantarono alcuni versi in lingua inglese [...] poi cominciarono il balletto assai grave, di non molta fatica, e l'aria assai melanconica [...]. Intanto li dodici Cavalieri si rimessero in ordine e ritirata la musica, cominciarono altro balletto sopra altra musica, e assai ordinario. Finito, danzarono alcune gagliarde; e poi, retirati, comparvero dodici marinari, vestiti di tela e berretta rossa a modo di schiavi, cominciarono un balletto alla paesana, che faceva onesto vedere per i gesti e disposizioni dei giovani e il strepito che facevano con il gridare tutti insieme, e con questo si finì la festa. [40]

The only appreciable moment in the succession of the dances seemed to be the French branle performed by Queen Anne and her ladies:

Finito questo e posato le dame, il detto Conte tornò pigliar la regina e la fece danzare una corrente; danzarono ancora l'istessa corrente gli altri Cavalieri con altre Dame. Finito, li detto Conte tornò a dar di mano alla Regina; fu cominciato un brando alla francese, che fu tutto il bello e il degno di essere lodato in tutta la festa, per esserci la persona della detta Regina, e il vederlo ballare con tanta maestà e grandezza quanto si possi immaginare. [41]

«Non si vide cosa che meritasse di gran lunga l'incomodità di migliaia di persone, che stettero dodici ore aspettando e senza cena» («There was nothing to merit the distress of thousands of people who waited twelve hours without supper»).[42] If we mitigate the partiality of the accounts and consider the type of audience at the Banqueting House, still rather unprepared for such visual codes, it is reasonable to imagine that the spectacle presented by Costantino de' Servi at the court of James I was doubtless marvellous. The changes of scenes at sight, the performance of machines never seen before in the tradition of English entertainment, all contributed to making this masque at the Stuart court one of the most pioneering festive events.

The establishment of the Medicean practice of spectacle on the British scene determined a turning point in the technological and iconological idea of representation. *The Masque of Squires* was indeed an essential milestone for the future of stage production at the English court.

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[1] On the patronage in the courts of Ancient Regime see mainly: G.F. LYTE-S. ORGEL, *Patronage in the Renaissance*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981; E. GOLDBERG, *Patterns in Late Medici Art Patronage*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983; *Patronage, Art and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by F.W. KENT and P. SIMONS, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987; *Magnificenza alla corte dei Medici: arte a Firenze alla fine del Cinquecento*, ed. by M. GREGORI and D. HEIKAMP, Milano, Electa, 1997; S. MAMONE, *Dèi, semidei, uomini. Lo spettacolo a Firenze tra neoplatonismo e realtà borghese (XV-XVII secolo)*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2003; J. COLE, *Music, Spectacle and Cultural Brokerage in Early Modern Italy. Michelangelo Buonarroti il Giovane*, Firenze, Olschki, 2011; C. PAGNINI, *Anna di Danimarca e i "Queen's Masques" (1604-1611)*, in «Drammaturgia», XII / n.s. 2, 2015, pp. 71-88; ID., *Cultura medicea alla corte degli Stuart: neoplatonismo e prassi spettacolare (1603-1613)*, in *Forme dello spettacolo in Europa tra Medioevo e Antico Regime*, ed. by S. MAMONE, Perugia, Morlacchi, 2018; ID., *Luci sullo spettacolo tra i mari del Nord: Anna di Danimarca da Copenhagen al trono di Scozia (1574-1590)*, in «Il castello di Elsinore», 78, 2018, pp. 11-28.

[2] D. HOWARTH, *Images of Rules: Art and Politics in the English Renaissance, 1485-1649*, Oakland, University of California Press, 1997, p. 10.

[3] On the English masque see E. WELSFORD, *The Court Masque. A Study in the Relationship between Poetry & the Revels*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1927; S. ORGEL, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theatre in the English Renaissance*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975; R. STRONG, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450-1650*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1986; J. PEACOCK, *The Stuart Court Masque*, in «Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes», LVI, 1993, pp. 183-208; *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masques*, ed. by D. Bevington and P. Holbrook, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; J.H. ASTINGTON, *English Court Theatre 1558-1642*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; C. PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi, architetto-scenografo fiorentino alla corte d'Inghilterra (1611-1615)*, Firenze, Società editrice fiorentina, 2006; K. CURRAN, *Marriage, Performance and Politics at the Jacobean Court*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009; B. RAVELHOFER, *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume and Music*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.

[4] D. HOWARTH, *Images of Rule*, London, McMillan, 1997, p. 3.

[5] See STRONG, *Art and Power*, cit., and F. YATES, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century*, London-Boston, Routledge, 1975.

[6] For queen Anne's spectacle policy see C. McMANUS, *Women on the Renaissance Stage: Anna of Denmark and Female Musquin in the Stuart Court 1590-1619*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002; PAGNINI, *Anna di Danimarca*, cit., pp. 71-88; ID., *Cultura medicea alla corte degli Stuart*, cit., pp. 143-165.

[7] For Inigo Jones and his activity as court stage designer see S. ORGEL-R. STRONG, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre at the Stuart Court*, London-Berkeley, Sotheby Parke Bernet, University of California Press, 1973; R. STRONG, *The King's Arcadia: Inigo Jones and the Stuart Court*, London, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1973; J. ORRELL, *The Theatres of Inigo Jones and John Webb*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

[8] For relations between the courts of Florence and London, the exchange of gifts and the intermediation of residents see C. PAGNINI, *Ottaviano Lotti residente medico a Londra (1603-1614)*, in «Medioevo e Rinascimento», XVII /n.s. XIV, 2003, pp. 323-408; ID., *Costantino de' Servi*, cit.

[9] *Relazione d'Inghilterra di Marc'Antonio Correr ambasciatore ordinario presso Giacomo I (1611)*, in *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato. Tratte dalle migliori edizioni disponibili e ordinate cronologicamente*, ed. by L. FIRPO, Torino, Bottega D'Erasmus, 1965, vol. I, p. 582.

[10] See PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi*, cit., p. 201.

[11] On the Francinis at the court of Maria de' Medici in France see S. MAMONE, *Firenze e Parigi: due capitali dello spettacolo per una regina, Maria de' Medici*, Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana, 1988. On the fortune of the Italian garden model see L. ZANGHERI, *I giardini d'Europa: una mappa della fortuna medicea nel XVI e XVII secolo*, in *Il giardino d'Europa. Pratolino come modello nella cultura europea*, ed. by A. Vezzosi, Milano, Mazzotta, 1986; *Pratolino tra passato e presente*, ed. by A. BELISARIO, P. GROSSONI e L. ZANGHERI, Siena, Alinea, 1999; *Il sogno del principe. Il parco mediceo di Pratolino*, ed. by M. BECATTINI, Firenze, Polistampa, 2006; L. SPINELLI, *Cantar fuori porta. Storia, spettacoli e protagonisti del teatro mediceo di Pratolino (1679-1710)*, Firenze, Polistampa, 2020.

[12] Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), *Mediceo del Principato (MP)*, f. 4189, now in PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi*, cit., p. 201.

[13] On the negotiations for the Medici-Stuart marriage that Ferdinando I and then Cosimo II had been conducting with Giacomo and Anna for several years see R. STRONG, *Henry Prince of Wales and England Lost Renaissance*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1986; PAGNINI, *Ottaviano Lotti*, cit.; ID., *Costantino de' Servi*, cit.

[14] See PAGNINI, *Cultura medicea alla corte degli Stuart*, cit.

[15] For an accurate reconstruction of the personal and artistic biography of Costantino de' Servi and his experience at the English court see PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi*, cit.

[16] For the Florentine patronage over the centuries, its model of spectacle, its political values and its "exportability" at a European level see MAMONE, *Dèi, semidei, uomini*, cit.; ID., *Serenissimi fratelli principi impresari. Notizie di spettacolo nei carteggi medicei. Carteggi di Giovan Carlo de' Medici e di Desiderio Montemagni suo segretario (1628-1664)*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2003; L. SPINELLI, *Lo "Stanzone delle commedie" di Livorno: esportazione del sistema operistico di*

*corte (1686-1713)*, in «Medioevo e Rinascimento», XVII / n.s. XIV, pp. 409-443, 2003; PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi*, cit.; S. MAZZONI, *L'Italia nell'Europa delle corti. Note sullo spettacolo barocco*, in *Arte Barroco y vida cotidiana en el mundo hispánico*, ed. by P. REVENGA DOMÍNGUEZ, Córdoba, UCOPress, 2017, pp. 229-269; PAGNINI, *Luci sullo spettacolo tra i mari del Nord*, cit., pp. 11-28; S. MAZZONI, «Qualche presa di Farinello». *Carlo Broschi in Spagna*, in «Drammaturgia», XV / n.s. 5, 2020, pp. 83-165.

[17] C. CORNWALLIS, *A Discourse of the most Illustrious Prince, Henry, late Prince of Wales. Written anno 1626*, London, John Benson, 1781, p. 336.

[18] J. HARINGTON, *Nugae Antiquae*, London, Vernon and Hood, 1804, vol. I, p. 348.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice (CSP Venetian)*, XV. 1617-1619, ed. by A.B. HINDS, London, 1909, p. 188 (British History On line: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol15/pp108-126>, accessed 15 December 2021).

[22] «I would like Your Lordship to make a request to their Most Serene Highnesses that from what the Prince has told me he would like me to make some ballet inventions at the first opportunity that they use to make in these countries, since I have not yet seen the manner and style of the inventions they use, Therefore I would like you to beg His Serene Highness to grant me a number of sketches of different inventions that have already been made by Bernardo delle Girandole or by others from the time of the Grand Duke Francis until now, which, if I could make them for myself, Your Lordship knows very well that everyone tries to compose and improve on his own opinions, since I will shorten the Prince's service in a short while while I will see their customs and [...] with that discretion I will be able to do so [...] with that discretion which will be given me the rest to give full satisfaction to the Prince». ASF, MP, f. 1348, c. 213r, now in PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi*, cit., 225-226.

[23] D. LINDLEY, *Court Masques*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 66.

[24] STRONG, *Henry Prince of Wales*, cit., p. 175.

[25] LINDLEY, *Court Masques*, cit., p. 70.

[26] «The Lord Great Chamberlain has asked me for the Earl of Somerset a few days ago with solemn ceremonies in the great hall of the court, where they have ordered me to make the machinery and scenery for a rich ballet for the Christmas festivities. Despite the apologies they have made for the short time, they have, however, wanted me to do all the diligence for the wedding of the said Count, as Your Lordship must know in the daughter of the said Mr. Chamberlain, and therefore I know that I will serve in this part not only Your Lordships as well as Your Majesty [...] if I succeed in the invention that I have found with the little time I have». ASF, MP, f. 1353, c. 202r., now in PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi*, cit., 274.

[27] «The feast began at eleven o'clock in the evening and lasted until two. The decorations and expenses were great, and the spectators numerous, both because of the presence of their Majesties and of a great number of ladies, knights and people, all richly dressed». Archivio di Stato di Torino (AST), *Materie politiche per*

*rapporto all'estero - Lettere Ministri Gran Bretagna*, now in PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi*, cit., p. 288.

[28] Champion's libretto is transcribed in W. DAVIES, *The works of Thomas Campion*, London, Faber, 1969, pp. 263-283. All the following quotations, except where otherwise indicated, are extrapolated from Campion's stage directions included in the introduction and the masque booklet contained in this edition.

[29] «The festivities turned out differently from the expectations and the great preparations, they say, because of the failure of the architect who was a Florentine serving the late Prince, who, if the truth be told, was ashamed and made these Lords spend many scuti, [...] who when they believed that everything was in place, found everything imperfect». AST, *Ministri Gran Bretagna*, cit., now in PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi*, cit., p. 286.

[30] See PAGNINI, *Cultura medicea alla corte degli Stuart*, cit., pp. 153-157.

[31] ASF, MP, f. 1348, c. 213r., now in PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi*, cit., p. 243.

[32] On the courts involved in negotiating the Stuart marriage beyond Florence (France, Spain and Savoy) see PAGNINI, *Ottaviano Lotti*, cit. and ID., *Costantino de' Servi*, cit., pp. 103-152.

[33] For Buontalenti's cloud machine and its tradition see A.M. TESTAVERDE, *L'officina delle nuvole. Il teatro mediceo nel 1589 e gli "Intermedi" del Buontalenti nel "Memoriale" di Girolamo Seriacopi*, Milano, Associazione Amici della Scala, 1991; N. NEWBEGIN, *Feste d'Oltrarno. Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, Firenze, Olschki, 1996; MAMONE, *Dèi, semidei, uomini*, cit., pp. 193-209; ID., *Les nuées de l'Olympe à la scène: les dieux au service de l'église et du prince dans le spectacle forentin de la Renaissance*, in *Images of the Pagan Gods*, ed. by R. DUITTS and F. QUIVIGER, London, The Warburg Institute, 2009, pp. 329-366; ID., *Drammaturgia di macchine nel teatro granducale fiorentino. Il teatro degli Uffizi da Buontalenti a Parigi*, in «Drammaturgia», XII / n.s. 2, 2015, pp. 17-43; A.M. TESTAVERDE, *L'avventura del teatro granducale degli Uffizi (1586-1637)*, in «Drammaturgia», XII / n.s. 2, 2015, pp. 45-69; P. VENTRONE, *Teatro civile e sacra rappresentazione a Firenze nel Rinascimento*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2015.

[34] «What was believed to be an admirable thing, which was a descent from a cloud of twelve Knights richly dressed and well adorned, who made the ballet, was that he had arranged behind that cloud a device that descended, just as one does when one descends the evening door, in which there were twelve niches all of one course, where the twelve Knights were absent, and in descending it one could see the ropes that held it, and one could hear the paddles or wheels making the same noise, as when the mast of a ship is raised or lowered». AST, *Ministri Gran Bretagna*, cit., now in ivi, p. 288.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] WELSFORD, *The court masque*, cit., p. 114.

[38] D. LINDLEY, *Thomas Campion (1567-1620)*, Leiden, Brill, 1986, pp. 216-217.

[39] See PAGNINI, *Costantino de' Servi*, cit., pp. 239-263.

[40] «A ballet was begun by twelve devils, who made an honest impression by the disposition of the men but made the said

spectators melancholy [...]. They sang some verses in the English language [...] then they began the ballet, which was very serious, not very laborious, and very melancholic [...]. In the meantime, the twelve Knights got themselves back in order and, having withdrawn the music, began another ballet to another music, and a very ordinary one. When they had finished, they danced some galliards; and then, having been retired, twelve sailors appeared, dressed in cloth and a red beret like slaves, they began a dance in the country style, which was quite honest to see because of the gestures and dispositions of the young men and the noise they made as they shouted all together, and with this the feast ended». AST, *Ministri Gran Bretagna*, cit., now in ivi, pp. 291-292.

[41] «When this was finished and the ladies had left, the said Count returned to take the Queen and made her dance a corrente; the other Knights danced the same corrente with other Ladies. When this was finished, the said Count returned to shake hands with the Queen; a French dance was begun, which was the most beautiful and worthy of praise in the whole feast, because of the person of the said Queen, and to see her dancing with such majesty and grandeur as one can imagine» (ibid).

[42] Ibid.

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