

Heather A. Hughes

‘MASQUED’ IDENTITY AT THE STUART COURT:
ISAAC OLIVER’S MASQUING PORTRAIT OF ANNE OF DENMARK

When Anne of Denmark – queen consort of James I of England – arrived at Whitehall Palace in 1603, her presence introduced several fundamental changes to the English court. The shift from Elizabeth I’s reign to that of James was accompanied by a new patriarchal system of rule that necessitated a reconceptualization of the queen’s role in the court hierarchy. Whereas Elizabeth had ruled as sole sovereign of England, Anne possessed what one author has referred to as «power once removed»;¹ her title was predicated on her ability to produce an heir, thus granting her no specific political privileges. Marginalized from direct engagement in that arena, Anne claimed the cultural sphere for herself, cultivating an independent royal identity through her patronage activities.²

Anne’s continental roots most likely shaped her understanding of the importance of cultural patronage in building prestige for her adoptive royal family. Her mother, Queen Sophia of Denmark, established her own court in Nykøbing as a center of both artistic and scientific activity. Following her mother’s example, Anne maintained a separate household from her husband, where she appointed her own staff and surrounded herself with artists of her own preference and like-minded courtiers.³ Until relatively recently, the queen’s interests were characterized as trivial and peripheral to James’s court in London. In 1986, Roy Strong wrote:

On the whole, Anne lived for pleasure, passing her time moving from one of the palaces assigned to her to the next [...]. [S]he deliberately avoided politics, devoting herself instead to dancing, court entertainments, and the design and decoration of her houses and gardens.⁴

¹ KATHRYN SCHWARZ, *Amazon Reflections in the Jacobean Queen’s Masque*, «Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900», II, 35, 1995, p. 293.

² For a comprehensive overview of Anne’s patronage activities and the political implications thereof, see JOHN LEEDS BARROLL, *Anne of Denmark: A Cultural Biography*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

³ JOHN LEEDS BARROLL, *Anne of Denmark*, cit., p. 16. Anne’s three sisters followed their mother’s lead as well, presiding over courts throughout Central Europe that witnessed major developments in fine art and performance. See MARA M. WADE, *The Queen’s Courts: Anna of Denmark and her Royal Sisters – Cultural Agency at Four Northern European Courts in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, in *Women and Culture at the Courts of the Stuart Queens*, ed. Clare McManus, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 49-80.

⁴ ROY C. STRONG, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England’s Lost Renaissance*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1986, p. 16.

Such an assessment underestimates the increasing importance of artistic patronage in the early modern European court, as well as Anne's specific role in elevating England's status in this regard. Relatively indifferent to the arts, James remained loyal to the portraitists he had inherited from Elizabeth, especially Nicolas Hilliard.⁵ Meanwhile, his consort was a key agent in the process of reversing the cultural isolation of the late-Tudor era. The artists and architects 'she' appointed were more in touch with contemporary currents in visual representation, such as portraitist Isaac Oliver, her official limner. The French-born painter was actually a pupil of Hilliard's, but he quickly surpassed the master in commissions, owing to his fresh approach to English portraiture, informed by a study of the naturalistic techniques of Netherlandish painting. As a patron, the queen can also be credited with facilitating the introduction of classical architecture to England when she commissioned a new residence from Inigo Jones, the Queen's House in Greenwich.

Alongside famed Stuart tastemakers such as Thomas Howard and her son Prince Henry Frederick, Anne furthered this orientation toward continental visual culture through an active interest in collecting. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, the political and financial stability made possible by peaceful relations with Spain allowed English nobles and their agents to travel freely to acquire paintings by Italian, Dutch, and Flemish masters, as well as portrait medals, jewels, and classical sculpture.⁶ Although a well-appointed art collection might appear a frivolous expenditure, it signaled not only wealth and the princely virtue of magnificence but also the learned sophistication valued in early modern governance.⁷ Anne thus shared the aspirations of the great dynasties of Europe that had already established important collections by the end of the sixteenth century – the Medici in Tuscany, the Bourbons of France, and the Hapsburgs in Spain and Austria.

Anne's masque patronage, however, was the principal conveyor of royal splendor at the Jacobean court. The masque was a scripted form of court entertainment with music, choreographed dance, elaborate stage design, and sumptuous costumes. Although masques had been performed in England during Elizabeth's reign, they played a minor role in court-sponsored pageantry compared to the queen's progresses between royal residences.

⁵ James did have intellectual pursuits, but these were mostly focused on political theory. He hosted a number of continental scholars at his court and penned several treatises on his political theories. See JAMES P. SOMMERVILLE, *James I and the Divine Right of Kings: English Politics and Continental Theory*, in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 55-70.

⁶ See R. MALCOLM SMUTS, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, pp. 117-118.

⁷ R. MALCOLM SMUTS, *Art and Material Culture of Majesty*, in *The Stuart Court and Europe: Essays in Politics and Political Culture*, ed. R. Malcom Smuts, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 97. According to existing inventories, it is quite possible that the core of the collection was appropriated from Henry after his death in 1612. Subsequent collecting activities, however, were completed with guidance from the Earl of Arundel and Isaac Oliver, acting in his capacity as the queen's official limner. See TIMOTHY WILKS, *Art Collecting at the English Court from the Death of Henry, Prince of Wales to the Death of Anne of Denmark*, «Journal of the History of Collections», IX, 1, 1997, pp. 31-48.

Usually reserved to celebrate marriages, masques were also primarily hosted by the nobility in their private estates and employed as a means to curry favor with the monarchy. Under Anne's direction, they became lavish spectacles at the king's court at Whitehall Palace and were commissioned for a broader range of occasions. The queen, who performed in five of these events, also supervised the genre's evolution into the allegorically complex and visually stunning dramatic spectacle that remains a cornerstone in the cultural legacy of the Stuart court.

Around 1610, Isaac Oliver painted a portrait miniature of Anne to celebrate her contributions as both performer and mistress of ceremonies of the court masque (see figure 1). Wearing a diaphanous veil descending from her golden tiara, garlands adorning her hair, and a blue mantle draped across her shoulders, the queen has abandoned all traces of contemporary English fashion for an ensemble recalling the classicizing stage costumes designed by Inigo Jones. The sartorial evocation of classical antiquity is further underscored by the presentation of the queen in profile, a convention derived from the coins and cameos of Roman emperors. The political agency suggested by this format may explain why eighteenth- and nineteenth-century inventories describe this object as a portrait of Elizabeth I.⁸ Although it was not unusual for a portrait of the Virgin Queen to proclaim an independent imperial majesty coded as masculine, a more typical portrait of Anne would characterize her as an ideal feminine counterpart to the king: subservient, beautiful, and sensual.⁹ How do we account for this momentary shift in the Stuart queen's personal iconography?

Previous analyses of this portrait have attempted to connect the image to a particular masque performance. This approach ignores the iconographic complexity of this portrait, as well as the function of the medium itself. A miniature was a small-scale portrait painted with watercolor on vellum. Once mounted onto a cardboard backing, it could be set into a jeweled frame and worn as a pendant or brooch. Yet, these objects were not merely a form of bodily ornamentation. Typically commissioned by a royal and aristocratic sitter as a gift for a particular recipient – such as a court favorite or a foreign leader – a miniature was consciously produced to communicate certain ideas about the subject to its intended audience.¹⁰ Hence, like all portraiture of the early modern period, miniatures were rarely a neutral representation of the sitter's likeness. Although the original recipient of this particular miniature is not known, we can attempt to recapture its political significance. Through an assessment of Anne of Denmark's participation in a selection of early Jacobean masques, this paper will reclassify this image as a self-conscious testament to her important

⁸ While the miniature was in the collection of Dr. Richard Mead (1673-1754), George Vertue's engraving of the work for William Camden's *Annales rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum* (Oxford, Thomas Hearn, 1717) lists the sitter as Elizabeth.

⁹ Compare, for example, George Gower, *Plimpton Sieve Portrait of Elizabeth I*, 1579, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC and John de Critz, *Portrait of Anne of Denmark*, 1605, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

¹⁰ See JOHN PEACOCK, *The Politics of Portraiture*, in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* eds. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1993, pp. 211-212.

contributions to English culture. It will further demonstrate how the queen exploited the communicative power of costume in both visual and theatrical media in order to construct an image of autonomous imperial sovereignty.

Early masque scholarship, as exemplified by the work of Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg, characterized the genre as an exaltation of the kingly powers of the Stuart monarchs, affirming the patriarchal ideologies of James and his heir Charles I.¹¹ Jones's invention of one-point perspective staging is often cited as a manifestation of their absolutist propaganda: this form of staging resulted in a hierarchical viewing experience, whereby the king held the most privileged seat as the masque was presented to his all-powerful gaze. In the past two decades, however, early modern scholars have acknowledged that the majority of early Jacobean masques were 'not' commissioned by the king, but by his consort. Important early revisionist studies by Marion Wynne-Davies and Barbara Kiefer Lewalski highlighted Anne's innovative contributions to the structure and aesthetics of the masque genre.¹² They rightly pointed out that she was responsible for initiating the fruitful collaborations between Jones and writer Ben Jonson. Among the pair's key innovations were Jonson's richly allegorical scripts and Jones's dynamic stage sets and artful costumes; before Jones's appointment, courtiers wore their everyday clothing during performances, rather than the custom-made costumes that he would later bring to the court. According to Jonson, we should also acknowledge the queen's own inspired interventions for the masque; in an early volume of his collected works, he indicates that she gave him the idea for the concept of the antimasque, which was first performed in the *Masque of Queens* (1609) by cross-dressing male performers in the guise of witches:

Her Majesty (best knowing, that a principal part of life in these spectacles lay in their variety) had commanded me to think on some dance, or show, that might precede hers, and have the place of a foil, or false-Masque.¹³

¹¹ STEPHEN ORGEL, *The Illusion of Power; Political Theater in the English Renaissance*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975; JONATHAN GOLDBERG, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

¹² MARION WYNN-DAVIES, *The Queen's Masque: Renaissance Women and the Seventeenth-Century Court Masque*, in *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, eds. Susan P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1992; BARBARA KIEFER LEWALSKI, *Anne of Denmark and the Subversions of Masquing*, «Criticism», XXXV, 1993, pp. 341-355.

¹³ BEN JONSON, *Masque of Queens*, eds. Charles H. Herford and Percy Simpson, in «Ben Jonson», VII, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1941 p. 282. Jonson also gives Anne credit for her involvement in staging the *Masque of Blackness*. While Africans would normally be represented with a black facemask or visor, Anne and Jonson devised an entirely new method, wherein they painted their entire bodies black. He writes, «Hence, because it was her majesty's will to have them blackamoors at first, the invention was derived by me, and presented thus». Herford and Simpson, VII, p. 169.

Rather than viewing her masques as simply an occasion to dress up in expensive, fanciful outfits before a captive audience, the queen appears to have been genuinely invested in the creative process.

Anne's masques were also revolutionary for providing a channel for the importation of Italian culture, especially its classicist currents. Although the queen, whose motto was «La mia grandezza viene dal eccelso» («My power is from the most high»), had a well documented personal interest in Italy, Jones was the major force in assimilating aspects of Florentine performance culture at the English court.¹⁴ The work of Medici *intermezzo* designer Bernardo Buontalenti was a direct source of inspiration for Jones's stage designs. Although it is very likely that Jones had firsthand experience of these performances during his sojourn to Italy sometime between 1598 and 1604, he may also have consulted the festival prints made by the Carracci after Buontalenti's designs.¹⁵ Like the *intermezzo*, the masques were conceived as an ideal, mythological cosmos, and Jones's borrowed elements thus extended to Buontalenti's antique costumes, which Italian theatrical theory deemed to be the most appropriate dress for female performers.¹⁶ Jones's designs reveal that he not only appropriated the flowing mantles, headdresses, and colorful fabrics from the Italian designer, but had also incorporated the latter's elegantly exaggerated Mannerist mode of figural composition, his classically idealized facial features, and his *contrapposto*¹⁷ stances. Finally, designs by both artists represent the figures as though they were in the midst of action, imagining how the costumes would complement the dancing body in the actual performance. Since Jones once famously wrote that masques were nothing but «pictures with

¹⁴ JAMES KNOWLES, *To Enlight the Darksome Night, Pale Cinthia Doth Arise: Anna of Denmark, Elizabeth I and the Images of Royalty*, in *Women and Culture at the Courts of the Stuart Queens*, cit., pp. 24-25. Her diplomatic agent John Florio tutored her in Italian and helped her acquire Italian works for her private library. He may have been responsible for the acquisition of Fabritio Caroso's dance manual, *Nobiltà di Dame* (1600). See MARINA NORDERA, *The Exchange of Dance Cultures in Renaissance Europe: Italy, France and Abroad*, in *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe: Forging European Identities, 1400-1700*, Robert Muchembled general ed., 4 vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, vol. 4, pp. 308-328.

¹⁵ JOHN ASTINGTON, *English Court Theatre, 1558-1642*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 155. For costume ideas, Jones also frequently consulted Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, Jean-Jacques Boissard's *Masquerades*, and Cesare Vecellio's *Habiti Antichi e Moderni*. See JOHN PEACOCK, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones: The European Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 113-158; and JANET ARNOLD, *Costumes for Masques and Other Entertainments c. 1500-1650*, «Historical Dance», III, 1993, p. 13.

¹⁶ For example, Leone de' Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche*. See AILEEN RIBEIRO, *Fashion and Fiction: Dress in Art and Literature in Stuart England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005, p. 82.

¹⁷ From the Italian *contrapporre*, this term refers to the asymmetrical stance resulting from a human figure placing the full weight of the body on one leg. The straight leg and raised hip on that side of the body are counterbalanced by a bent knee and lowered hip on the opposing side. In fine art, this pose was introduced by ancient Greek sculptors to add a sense of liveliness to their figures.

light and motion», his colorful, bejeweled costumes would have created a stunning visual effect as the masquers moved before the scenery.¹⁸

Portraits featuring sitters in their masquing attire emphasize the special status afforded to performers, as well as the importance of costume within these productions. While masques had always been performed by and before England's social elite, Anne exploited her influence over audience and performer invitation to grant or deny status to diplomats, courtiers, and members of the gentry. By offering a permanent record of an otherwise ephemeral event, the visual commemoration of one's masquing career in the form of a portrait further underscored the sitter's prominent position at court. This may account for the predominance of masquing portraits of women, for whom these roles offered unusual visibility, social prominence, and creative expression; though men were the primary performers in Tudor masques, women occupied the most privileged roles in Anne's productions.¹⁹

On at least two occasions, Oliver recorded the likenesses of female courtiers who had wished to memorialize their roles from a particular masque. In his 1983 catalogue of English miniatures, Roy Strong convincingly linked the Victoria & Albert portrait of an unknown masquer to the 1609 staging of the *Masque of Queens* (see figure 2).²⁰ The sitter's breastplate and ornate headdress – composed of a gold coronet, pearl garlands, and translucent veil – are indeed reminiscent of Jones's designs, which conjure the militaristic associations that were emphasized in the masque. Another anonymous portrait, in the Mauritshuis, often referred to as «Flora», has not been adequately connected to a specific design in the literature, but it, too, may portray a performer from *Queens*.²¹ The tied ribbons at her shoulders and the scalloped edges of the fabric also evoke aspects of the original designs, for which Jones consulted Jean-Jacques Boissard's printed series of masquerade costumes, *Mascarades* (1597).²² While these two portraits are very explicit in their reference to the masquing activities of the sitters, Aileen Ribeiro has also discovered subtler allusions in portraits by John Hoskins, Nathaniel Thach, and Robert Peake.²³ In these, the sitters only wear select parts of masquing costume, such as sashes, headdresses, or feathers.

¹⁸ Inigo Jones, *Tempe Restored* (1632). Quoted in JOHN PEACOCK, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones: The European Context*, cit., p. 51.

¹⁹ Sophie Tomlinson argues that, even though Jacobean female performance was limited to the court and did not permit speaking roles, it paved the way for women's performance in the public sphere in Restoration England. See SOPHIE TOMLINSON, *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

²⁰ ROY C. STRONG, *Artists of the Tudor Court: The Portrait Miniature Rediscovered, 1520-1620*, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, 1983, n. 227.

²¹ Strong suggests a date around 1605 because it appears less «assured» than the V&A portrait. However, the works attributed to Oliver do not always follow a consistent stylistic evolution, especially since he employed assistants. See ROY C. STRONG, *Artists of the Tudor Court*, cit., n. 223.

²² JANET ARNOLD, *Costumes for Masques*, cit., p. 12.

²³ AILEEN RIBEIRO, *Fashion and Fiction in Stuart Art and Literature*, cit., pp. 78-89.

Though certain aspects of Oliver's miniature of Anne contain direct references to her masquing career, it is a far more ambiguous image in terms of documenting a specific performance or role. Strong and Graham Reynolds have suggested the queen's role as the Queen of the Orient in *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly* (1611) as one of two potential inspirations for the costume in the portrait,²⁴ based on an existing sketch of a headdress featuring a comparable pearl necklace and hair pendant. Yet, the full-length sketch *A Daughter of the Morn* indicates that the female masquers did not cover their sheer bodices with a mantle, as Anne does in the miniature.²⁵ One could argue that she may have wanted to cover her torso in the permanent record of the performance, but bare breasts were a common occurrence in Jacobean masques, acceptable enough to be recorded in Oliver's «Flora» and Peake's portrait of Lady Elizabeth Pope (ca. 1615).

Alternatively, the *Masque of Beauty* (1608) has been considered as a possible reference point for the miniature,²⁶ but this solution remains unsatisfying. As there are no remaining designs for this performance, we must refer to the published description of Anne's costume for the title character, *Venustas*: «A silver robe, with a thin subtle veil over her hair, and in it; a pearl about her neck and forehead».²⁷ While the veil and pearl accents are certainly present in the miniature, these are rather common accessories for female masque costumes. And, though there may be some metallic thread in the embroidery of her bodice, she does not appear to be cloaked in silver.

Anne's portrait would also be a rather surprising manifestation of «Divine Beauty», as it rejects some of the key signifiers of conventional female beauty employed in early modern portraiture. Oliver has done everything to de-emphasize her femininity, especially in comparison to his other masquing portraits and to the queen's own portraiture up to this moment. Anne was normally quite proud of her ample bosom and went to great lengths to make this a prominent feature in the majority of her portraits (figure 3). In the masque portrait, however, she has completely covered her décolletage. Moreover, her features are hardened and more masculine – with her strong nose and protruding chin evoking an ideal exhibited in classicizing portraits of men, rather than the rosy cheeks and soft, fleshy face typical of contemporary images of courtly ladies. And, by turning toward our right, the queen has reversed the gender conventions for early modern portraiture, which dictated that women turn toward the

²⁴ ROY C. STRONG, *Artists of the Tudor Court*, cit., n. 227; ROY C. STRONG, *The English Renaissance Miniature*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 1983, pp. 165-185. GRAHAM REYNOLDS, *The Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Miniatures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, London, Royal Collection, 1999, n. 52.

²⁵ See illustrations in STEPHEN ORGEL – ROY C. STRONG, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 vols., London, Sotheby Parke Bernet and University of California Press, 1973, vol. I, p. 236-237, fig. 75-76.

²⁶ In her discussion of the portrait, Jennifer Hallam affirms Strong's and Reynolds's views by referring to image as «Divine Beauty». See JENNIFER HALLAM, *Re-Presenting Women in Early Stuart England: Gender Ideology, Personal Politics and the Portrait Arts*, Ph.D. diss., Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 2004, p. 328.

²⁷ STEPHEN ORGEL – ROY C. STRONG, *Inigo Jones*, cit., vol. I, p. 95.

viewer's left, even in the absence of a spouse's pendant portrait. Thus, while this image commemorates her predominance over the only sphere that permitted female agency, this is expressed in the visual vocabulary of patriarchy.

Despite the forceful female presence in Jacobean masques, Anne and her ladies did not shy away from personating historic and mythological women famed for their traditionally masculine attributes. As Clare McManus has revealed in her comprehensive study of Anne's masquing career, the queen frequently mobilized the expressive content of the genre to challenge her secondary status as a consort.²⁸ Beginning with her first performance in 1604's *The Vision of Twelve Goddesses*, the queen literally fashioned herself into a figure of autonomous female authority. As this was before the advent of a masque costume designer, she and the other masquers altered clothing from Elizabeth's wardrobe. Anne further channeled the deceased queen when she opted to personate the figure of Pallas Athena, instead of the expected role of Juno, queen of the gods; she left this role to the Countess of Suffolk.²⁹ Pallas Athena, the virginal goddess of war, was frequently invoked during the reign of the Virgin Queen herself. By appropriating this facet of Elizabethan iconography, Anne modeled herself after a queen who ruled alone, rather than a queen consort, and by consequence, established continuity between the two reigns.

The 1609 performance of the *Masque of Queens*, the first literary work to refer to Anne as the «Queen of Great Britain», celebrated venerable queens of legend and history who ruled without husbands. The masque centered around a procession of twelve masquers, beginning with the Amazon queen Penthesilea, who was personated by the Countess of Bedford. Anne was the last in the procession, in the guise of Bel-Anna, the Queen of the Ocean who «Possessed all virtues, for which one by one/They were so famed».³⁰ Kathryn Schwarz argues that the theme of the Amazon woman – beholden to no man and ruthless in war – is the guiding principle of the entire masque.³¹ Not only does she lead the procession, but Jonson's published notes on the masque also elaborate the significance of each queen in relation to her Amazonian characteristics. On the mythical Bohemian queen Valasca, for example, Jonson wrote:

That to redeem herself and her sex from the tyranny of men which they lived in under Primislaus, on a night and an hour appointed led on the women to the slaughter of their barbarous husbands and lords; and possessing themselves of their horses, arms, treasure, and places of strength, not only ruled the rest, but lived many years after with the liberty and fortitude of Amazons.³²

²⁸ See CLARE MCMANUS, *Women on the Renaissance Stage: Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing in the Stuart Court (1590-1619)*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002.

²⁹ BARBARA KIEFER LEWALSKI, *Anne of Denmark and the Subversions of Masquing*, cit., p. 343.

³⁰ BEN JONSON, *The Masque of Queens*, ed. Stephen Orgel, in *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, New Haven, Yale University Press 1969, lines 393-394.

³¹ KATHRYN SCHWARZ, *Amazon Reflections in the Jacobean Queen's Masque*, cit., p. 307.

³² BEN JONSON, *The Masque of Queens*, cit., p. 346.

Jones's costumes also underscored the martial prowess of these queens by including helmets, breastplates, and swords for some figures. Several designs also indicate that a few women bared a single breast, in a reference to the legend that Amazons removed one to accommodate their bow and arrow. As Schwarz notes, however, «[Amazons] are not a logical idiom in which to celebrate a king [...] at best, [they] suggest the potency of Elizabethan nostalgia; at worst, they pose a direct challenge to the terms of male sovereignty itself».³³ Like Pallas Athena, the Amazon was a common trope implicit in Elizabethan iconography and explicit in sixteenth-century literature, appearing in the work of Shakespeare, Sidney, and Spenser. Yet, the verses of the closing song – «How happier is that Age, can give/A Queen, in whom all they do live» – overtly connect these motifs to the figure of Bel-Anna.³⁴ In a performance ostensibly commissioned to honor the king, the Amazonian motifs are problematic for interpretations of Jacobean masques as outlets for patriarchal authority.

In 1610, Anne reprised her role as ruler of the sea when she assumed the role of the sea-titan title character of Samuel Daniel's *Tethys's Festival*, commissioned by the queen to celebrate the promotion of her son Henry Frederick as Prince of Wales. As sovereign of the sea in *Queens* and *Tethys*, Anne adopted another one of Elizabeth's alter egos, that which Malcolm Smuts has termed «empress of the seas and guardian of the liberties of foreign peoples».³⁵ This trope gained additional meaning through the naval conflict with Spain and the pursuit of a global empire. It was perhaps most clearly expressed in visual terms in George Gower's *Armada Portrait* (Woburn Abbey, 1588), which portrays the enthroned Tudor queen resting her hand on a globe, against a backdrop of the English victory at sea. If one reads oceanic themes into Anne's blue drapery and pearl jewelry, this may account for the misattribution of the sitter when the portrait entered the Royal Collection. And yet, the pairing of nautical and imperial motifs also connects this portrait to the character of Tethys.

The theme of empire persisted and became even more important during the Jacobean period, but with a new emphasis on re-establishing the 'ancient' empire of Britain.³⁶ Despite the misgivings of both his Scottish and English subjects, James attempted to have Parliament ratify a constitution uniting the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Wales. When this failed, he continued to refer to his domain as «Britain» and enlisted the artists and writers of the court to craft a symbolic system to promote the court as British, rather than English. For example, Kim Hall has argued that the conceptualization of ethnic alterity in the *Masque of Blackness* was an important catalyst in the creation of a national

³³ KATHRYN SCHWARZ, *Amazon Reflections in the Jacobean Queen's Masque*, cit., p. 295.

³⁴ BEN JONSON, *The Masque of Queens*, cit., lines 747-748.

³⁵ R. MALCOLM SMUTS, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, cit., pp. 18-19.

³⁶ MARTIN BUTLER, *The Invention of Britain and the Early Stuart Masque*, in *The Stuart Court and Europe*, cit., pp. 68-69.

British identity.³⁷ When the daughters of the African sea god Niger travel to James's court in search of a magical word to transform their skin from black to white, this word turns out to be the very one banned by Parliament just months before: *Britannia*.

Around 1610 Oliver painted a miniature of Prince Henry dressed *all'antica*, situated before a classical niche, and turned in profile toward the viewer's right (figure 4).³⁸ Owing to the direct references to Roman imperial iconography, scholars have linked the young prince's portrait to his political ambitions as royal heir. As the future king of the British Isles – and beyond, considering the colonial aspirations of the English – Henry was poised to be an extremely powerful monarch. This imperial spirit is said to have accompanied his intellectual interest in Britain's own ancient heritage, which he shared with his father. At the same time the question of a contemporary British empire was at the forefront of political discourse in England. The classical revival that had dominated European art and philosophy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was becoming a major cultural and intellectual force within Stuart court circles. Publishers produced a wave of English translations of classical works; Jones, through his architectural and theatrical output, assimilated the classical mode into the fabric of English visual culture; and courtly collectors sent agents to Europe to locate antiquities, such as the sardonyx cameo of Emperor Claudius that may have been acquired by Henry.³⁹

Despite the thematic and visual parallels between Oliver's likenesses of Anne and Henry, scholars minimize the political connotations created by alluding to antique portraiture when discussing the queen's miniature; her masquing career is always given interpretive priority. Yet, her portrait has far more in common with this traditionally masculine mode of imagery than with Oliver's miniatures of anonymous female masquers, and it offers a complement to her persona in *The Masque of Queens*: the queen who represents all the best features of her Amazonian forbears, who challenges patriarchal models of authority. This message is definitively asserted by the Latin inscription, *Servo per regnare* («I serve through ruling»). In this regendering of James's theory of the divine right of kings,⁴⁰ Anne legitimizes her power directly through God, not through her husband.

Previous readings of Anne's and Henry's miniatures have also shied away from inferring any intentionality behind their shared features, despite their approximate contemporaneous dating. Anne's few political interventions as consort usually involved her son, beginning with her persistent effort to reclaim

³⁷ KIM F. HALL, *Sexual Politics and Cultural Identity in The Masque of Blackness*, in *The Performance of Power: Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, ed. Sue Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 1991, p. 3.

³⁸ ROY C. STRONG, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance*, cit., p. 118 and ID. *Artists of the Tudor Court*, cit., p. 142.

³⁹ KIRSTEN ASCHENGREEN PIACENTI – JOHN BOARDMAN, *Ancient and Modern Gems and Jewels: In the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, London, Royal Collection Publications, 2008, n. 1.

⁴⁰ GRAHAM REYNOLDS, *The Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Miniatures*, cit., n. 52.

parental custody while living in Scotland.⁴¹ Preceding and during his brief tenure as Prince of Wales, she also ensured that they had common allies and parallel interests, introducing him to the male family members of her own court favorites and siding with him in his support for important court appointments.⁴² If Henry had not died prematurely in 1612, Anne would have yielded immense influence in his court.

Since she could not rule as sole sovereign of Britain, Anne of Denmark reigned over the fictitious world created by the masque, a reign immortalized by Oliver's portrait. In her study of female representation in Stuart masques, miniatures, and easel paintings, Jennifer Hallam articulates the analogous and mutually affirming functions of portraiture and masquing:

For performers [...] masque participation [...] makes the masque a corollary to portrait painting. A performer's off-stage identity brought additional meaning to her on-stage role. The onstage persona could in turn help to shape the off-stage self.⁴³

Rather than commemorating a specific role, Oliver's miniature represents a distillation of the various personae that Anne embodied in order to redefine her off-stage identity as consort.

In a layering of Elizabethan, classical, and theatrical referents, fused together through costume, Oliver's miniature also mobilizes the queen's instrumental artistic patronage by yoking it to the imperial discourse that pervaded the political and cultural spheres of Stuart England. The portrait makes a further claim for authority on the basis of cultural agency. Through her theatrical patronage, Anne projected a self-image of cultural and intellectual refinement in accordance with continental standards. Since courtly magnificence and cultivation were necessary aspects of a legitimate monarchy, bringing continental splendor to England elevated the queen's status within the court.

It is only fitting that the last masque she organized, *Cupid's Banishment* (1617), was performed at Somerset House, where she lived separately from James from 1614 onward. Rather than participating in the masque, Anne assumed the position of privileged spectator. In her last cultural act, it was her presiding gaze, not the king's, that brought grandeur and virtue to the Stuart court.

⁴¹ JOHN LEEDS BARROLL, *The Court of the First Stuart Queen*, in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, cit., pp. 194-196.

⁴² *Ivi*, p. 207.

⁴³ JENNIFER HALLAM, *Re-Presenting Women in Early Stuart England*, cit., p. 53.



Figure 1. Isaac Oliver, 'Anne of Denmark' (1574-1619), ca. 1610. Watercolor on vellum laid on card, 5.2 x 4.2 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London, Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



Figure 2. Isaac Oliver, 'An Unknown Woman in Masque Costume', 1609. Watercolor on vellum laid on card, 6.2 x 5.1 cm. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 3. Isaac Oliver, 'Portrait of Anne of Denmark, Queen of James I', 1612. Watercolor on vellum, 6.0 x 4.8 cm. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 4. Isaac Oliver, 'Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales' (1594-1612), ca. 1610. Watercolor on vellum laid on card, 5.3 x 4.0 cm. © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.