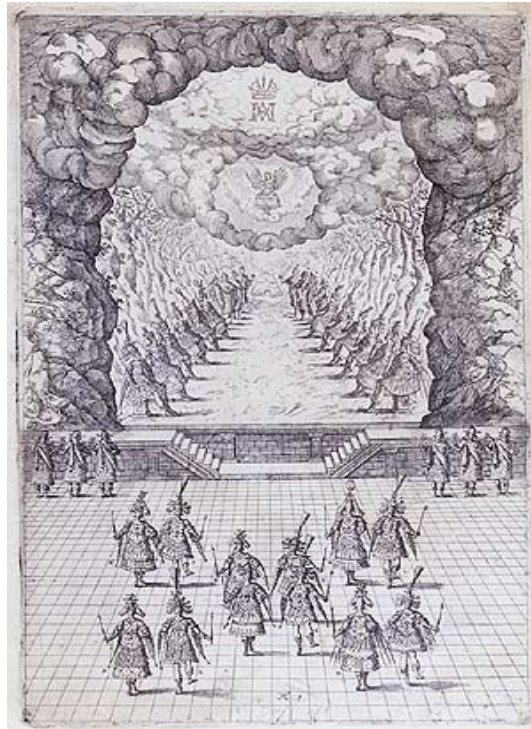


THE PROBLEM IN THE MIDDLE: LIMINAL SPACE AND THE COURT MASQUE

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***The Problem in the Middle: Liminal Space and the Court Masque*, by Gregory A. Wilson (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Digital Press, 2007), pp. vi + 134. \$19.95 paper.**

Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones enjoyed one of the most successful theatrical collaborations of Renaissance England with their spectacular court masques. But their relationship soured over a dispute as to what was most important in the masque: the poetry of the former or the set and costume design of the latter. In part, this quarrel was personal, but to confine it to that alone would be to misunderstand the long-standing tension between text and performance. This book attempts to resolve the debate using a theoretical term developed by Victor Turner: *liminality*, a condition or status *between* two conditions or statuses. Masque criticism has often been founded on the idea of disconnection between stage and seats, but here Dr. Gregory Wilson argues that the masque is in a perpetual state of liminality, existing in the margin between performance and an observing audience. The masque's emphasis on the fluidity of staging, the connection of spectator and performer, and the re-envisionment of social and political hierarchy makes the form more than historically interesting; it negotiates the space between possibility and reality. This book's principal concern is the search for that intervening ground and the resolution of the "problem in the middle."

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