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*The development of
Ben Jonson's Poetry*

by

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*For my parents, my children, and Richard
With special thanks to Joseph A. Mazzeo,
P. Jeffrey Ford,
and the helpful friends who
read the manuscript*

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1. INTRODUCTION

A limited figure, Ben Jonson is continually exceeding our notions of his limits. His nondramatic poetry, like his personality, appears simple. On closer study, both reveal surprising diversity and richness. According to his contemporary biographer, William Drummond of Hawthornden, Jonson liked to refer to himself as "the Poet".¹ He called his early epigrams the "ripest" of his "studies"; he referred to his plays as dramatic "poems"; and he appears to have preferred writing nondramatic poetry to writing plays. In the Cary-Morison ode written near the end of his career, Jonson contrasted the tree that grows in bulk for three hundred years with the "Lillie of a Day"² and implied that his writing for the popular stage was like the oak, his lyrics like the smaller, more precious flowers. Yet most of the bulky criticism of the past three hundred years has gone to Jonson's great comedies. Long overshadowed by the very different accomplishments of his great

¹ "Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden", 1. 636. Biographical information and documents, Jonson's plays and prose are cited from *Ben Jonson*, ed. by C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925-52), hereafter abbreviated as H & S. Quotations from Jonson's plays, *Conversations*, and *Discoveries* in this essay cite the H & S line number in the text, preceded by identifying abbreviations.

² William B. Hunter, Jr., ed., *The Complete Poetry of Ben Jonson* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), 3. All quotations from Jonson's poetry are from Hunter's edition. Epigrams are identified in the text in lower case Roman numerals; poems from *The Forrest* are identified by upper case Roman numerals; poems from *Under-wood* are given according to Hunter's numeration in arabic numerals, and poems from the uncollected poetry by Hunter's numbers in arabic numerals preceded by 'Uc'.

coevals Shakespeare and Donne, Jonson's nondramatic poetry is just beginning to receive some of the attention it deserves.

This study discusses Jonson's nondramatic poems in their primary context, the three printed collections of his nondramatic verse. Jonson's nondramatic poetry is not static; it develops from his earlier to his later work. Moreover, developments in his nondramatic poetry are analogous with similar changes in Jonson's plays and masques written over the nearly forty years of his career as an author. Jonson's poetry has rarely been studied chronologically, and it has usually been slighted in treatments of the plays and masques. Before turning to the three collections of Jonson's nondramatic poetry, then, it may be useful to survey some of the current schemes of reference into which Jonson's work has been set, the modern proscenium arches that tend to frame our approaches to Jonson's work.

One of the persistent ironies of Jonson criticism is that where we have liked, we have rarely loved too much. Jonson's critics tend to sound defensive, sometimes even offensive, about his character. All of Ben Jonson's work radiates "an intense sense of personality", as one of his modern readers comments.³ Jonson is a more "personal" poet than Sidney in that he puts more of his own experience into his literary work, according to another.⁴ Whether or not he put more of himself into his poems than others did, his critics have been able to get more of Jonson out. In this sense, Jonson is a more "personal" poet than almost all of his contemporaries. Available information about his life, works, habits, patrons, and friends, about his literary theories and sources probably surpasses that available for any other major figure of the English Renaissance. Yet the apparently solid figure tends to fragment on closer view like the bright colors of an Impressionist painting. The wealth of historical and biographical information about him is accompanied by an even greater plenitude of myth, anecdote, and conjecture.

³ Jonas A. Barish, "Introduction", *Ben Jonson: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 8.

⁴ Wesley Trimp, *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of The Plain Style* (Palo Alto: Stanford, 1962), 234.

Jonson's friendships and his enmities were unusually strong and his influence enormous, so that much colorful contemporary description of him has come down to us. The most significant early work about Jonson is Drummond's *Conversations*, possibly transcribed from Jonson's own words in 1618-19. Drummond's report, states Douglas Bush, "has contributed more than anything else to establish in place of the magnanimous Renaissance humanist and poet, the popular picture of a burly, arrogant, swashbuckling toper and scabrous gossip".⁵ Most of Jonson's critics since Thomas Dekker have concurred with Drummond's view of Jonson's character. Edmund Wilson translated the usual Renaissance charges against Jonson through the filter of modern psychoanalysis and discovered that Jonson's character and works were those of a disagreeable anal compulsive neurotic.⁶ Even a recent partisan like Jonas Barish labels Jonson insecure, envious, and suspicious.⁷

When Jonson's critics discuss his work as separate from the man, they often find that this intrusively personal poet is unoriginal, unspontaneous, mechanical, and impersonal. Algernon Swinburne ranked Jonson highest among the "giants of energy and invention" in English poetry, but found him inferior to creative "gods" like Shakespeare in lyric singing power and imagination.⁸ Ralph Walker insists that Jonson's poetry must be "depersonalized" from the bricklayer who wrote it.⁹ Many of Jonson's recent

⁵ Douglas Bush, *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600-1660*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 231.

⁶ Edmund Wilson, "Morose Ben Jonson", *The Triple Thinkers* (New York: Oxford, 1948), 213-32; reprinted in Barish, *Essays*, 60-74. John T. French, "Ben Jonson: His Aesthetic of Relief", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 10 (1968), 161-75, follows in Wilson's tracks. Barish's "Introduction" gives a history of early Jonson criticism, and J. G. Nichols, *The Poetry of Ben Jonson* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 1-55, extends the review of criticism's negative bias toward Jonson.

⁷ Barish, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1960), 88. Alvin Kernan's studies of satire show the consistency of the attribution of these characteristics to most satirists as a result of the contradictions of the *persona* they adopt, *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (Yale Studies in English, 142) (New Haven: Yale, 1959), 137-40, and *The Plot of Satire* (New Haven: Yale, 1965), 5-6.

⁸ Algernon C. Swinburne, *Ben Jonson* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1889), 3.

⁹ Ralph Walker, "Ben Jonson's Lyric Poetry", *Criterion*, 13 (1933-34), 430-48.

critics have avoided the pitfalls of prejudice and inconsistency at the expense of breadth of coverage. Typically, they restrict themselves to one *genre* or aspect of Jonson's work, and their restricted views then lead them to draw very different pictures of Jonson's artistic development. Those trying to trace how Jonson's drama develops usually divide his work into three parts: the apprentice works and the four 'humor' comedies written within four years; the four great comic masterpieces written within eight years and flanked by the two tragedies; and the four late plays or "do-dages" spread over a sixteen-year period.¹⁰

To many readers, Jonson's dramatic work seems static. Edward Partridge, concentrating on Jonson's imagery, and Robert Knoll, studying his structures and plots, see Jonson's work as monolithic.¹¹ To these critics the same central concerns dominate all the plays, including ideas such as authority and its abuses, true and false religion, self-deception and deception of others, and appearance and reality. They see Jonson as a man using the same themes and philosophical ideas throughout his life, whose only growth was in the artistic use of these set themes in his great middle plays. On the other hand, John Enck believes that Jonson's plays are constantly innovative. To him each play is a *genre* in itself.¹²

The pictures of Jonson and his art that emerge from the recent studies of his masques are again different from these images of Jonson as playwright. The writers on Jonson's masques stress his attempts to unify the 'body' of the form, that is, its multiple elements of spectacle, music, and dance, with its 'soul' of poetry through the uses of a symbolic 'hinge'. Like the critics of Jonson's plays, writers on Jonson's masques are divided. Some critics like John Meagher and Todd Furniss concentrate on the uniform

¹⁰ The term is from John Dryden's "An Essay of Dramatick Poesie" in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. by H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., et. al., 17 (Berkeley: U. of California, 1971), 57.

¹¹ Edward B. Partridge, *The Broken Compass: A Study of the Major Comedies of Ben Jonson* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958); and Robert E. Knoll, *Ben Jonson's Plays: An Introduction* (Lincoln: U. of Nebraska, 1964).

¹² John J. Enck, *Jonson and the Comic Truth* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin, 1957).

techniques and ideals of the masques, while others trace chronological developments.¹³ C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson watch the precarious unity of the early masques disintegrate as comic realism and visual spectacle gain dominance, whereas Stephen Orgel accents Jonson's growing mastery of the various elements of the masque from the period 1605 to 1625 and discusses the changing nature of Jonson's collaboration with Inigo Jones.¹⁴

The sour but lively satirist of the public stage and the gracefully allegorizing eulogist of the court thus seem to be quite different men and different kinds of artists. Both these sides of Jonson's career may be shown to rest in attitudes common to the moralistic tradition of Christian humanism, though this generalization does not go far toward a specific comprehension of Jonson's work. It is always within the critic's power to abstract an author – or a *genre*, or an age – to some basic common denominator. This approach is particularly easy in the case of Jonson, since his professed critical views and opinions in the *Conversations*, in his prose *Discoveries*, and in the prefaces to his plays are remarkably consistent. Jonson's theory changes much less than does his practice, and even in his practice enough is constant to validate many selective generalizations about the nature of his work. On the other hand, it is easy to knock down half a strawman, so that we find some readers now reasserting the sensual elements in Jonson's writing over the rational, or the comic over the serious, or the moral over the comic, or the static over the dramatic, or the Christian over the classical.

Another way to try to harmonize the apparent differences between Jonson's plays and his masques is to refer them to the varying tastes of their two audiences, the city playgoers and the court masquers. However, these audiences were not totally sep-

¹³ John C. Meagher, *Method and Meaning in Jonson's Masques* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame, 1966); and W. Todd Furniss, *Ben Jonson's Masques*, in *Three Studies in the Renaissance*, ed. by B. C. Nangle (*Yale Studies in English*, 138) (New Haven: Yale, 1958), 97-179.

¹⁴ H & S, 2, 247-334; Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1965); Orgel, ed., *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques* (New Haven: Yale, 1969), 1-39; Orgel, "To Make Boards Speak: Inigo Jones' Stage and the Jonsonian Masque", *Renaissance Drama*, n.s. 1 (1968), 121-52.

arate. Aristocrats attended public plays, and Jonson's plays were performed at court, at the children's and later adults' 'private' indoor theaters, and at several of the popular outdoor theaters. It is extremely difficult to explain any aspect of Jonson's work simply by a reference to his audience or to contemporary tastes. Neither his public plays nor his court masques were uniformly successful with their audiences.¹⁵ Jonson varied his usual contempt for his audiences with an occasional conciliatory note, but he usually looked past his real viewers to an ideal audience of learned minds committed to poetry. Perhaps the only audience Jonson consistently cared for, and pleased, was himself.

A more satisfactory concept than that of audience for the discrimination of Jonson's work is that of decorum, which includes fitness of manner to matter, not only to the intended audience of a work but also to its speaker, occasion, and *genre*. Jonson indicated his continued devotion to the Horatian model of decorum by his translations of Horace's *Art of Poetry*.¹⁶ The concept of decorum is certainly relevant to all *genres* of Jonson's writing, though the interaction between Jonson's uses of the literary conventions on which decorum is based and his deliberate recasting of them is extremely complex. The third major category of Jonson's writing, his nondramatic poetry, has been given much less attention than his poetry or plays. When it has been studied in its own right, it has been approached chiefly in terms of decorum, and, more particularly, of *genre* study and the history of style.

Several characteristics of Jonson's poetry have contributed to its critical neglect. The nondramatic poetry is uneven in quality, and much of it is occasional and commendatory verse, forms which

¹⁵ For criticism of the 'two audiences' idea, see Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York: Columbia, 1941), 139ff.; and Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston, and Middleton* (London: Hart-Davis, 1968), 27. Later Harbage discussed the audiences of the public and private theaters, *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (New York: Macmillan, 1952). W. David Kay, "The Shaping of Ben Jonson's Career: A Reexamination of Facts and Problems", *Modern Philology*, 67 (1970), 224-37, discusses the popularity of the plays; Orgel, *Complete Masques*, 22ff., the unpopularity of many of the masques.

¹⁶ H & S, 8, 303-355, print the two versions of *Horace His Art of Poetry*, with Jonson's Latin text, made ca. 1605 and after 1610.

have lost favor since the seventeenth century. Moreover, just as Jonson's dramas suffered from comparisons with Shakespeare, so his lyric poetry for a time was shadowed by incessant comparisons with Donne, who was favored for his passionate intensity and psychological realism. In other words, the current of taste has generally not favored Jonson's kind of poetry, and he has therefore been admired by but a few, and for only a few of his poems.

In addition to this central problem of taste, questions of chronology and originality have long clouded the study of Jonson's verse. Many of his poems are difficult to date; his critics have therefore avoided a chronological approach and turned instead to Jonson's sources and *genres*. Since Jonson was a copious translator and a deliberate adapter of the classic forms into English, the tracing of his sources has been a major preoccupation, and the discovery of close classical originals for many of his poems produced among many of Jonson's earlier critics a distaste for his supposed plagiarism. This complaint against Jonson is an old one. Inigo Jones jibed, "the good's translation, butt the ill's thyne owne", and Herford and Simpson comment that this is a "brilliant hit".¹⁷ By now, the creative viability of Jonson's free adaptations from the classics is clear, though critics still deride his more exact translations as wooden. Dryden's generous view was that Jonson "invades authors like a monarch, and what would be theft in others is victory in him".¹⁸

The admirers of Jonson's poetry have tended to isolate separate aspects of it for their approval. He appears variously to his modern readers as the pure Elizabethan lyricist, the true neoclassical predecessor of Pope, the vigorous man of wit in the line of Donne, the esthete, the "moralist with no pulpit", the Augustinian Christian, and the one fully serious satirist of the English Renaissance.¹⁹

¹⁷ H & S, 11, 385-86.

¹⁸ Dryden, "Dramatick Poesie", 57.

¹⁹ In order, Willa McClung Evans, *Ben Jonson and Elizabethan Music* (New York: Da Capo, 1965, c. 1929); Felix Schelling, *Ben Jonson and the Classical School* (Baltimore: Modern Language Publications, 1898) and Louis I. Bredvold, "The Rise of English Classicism: A Study in Methodology", *Comparative Literature*, 2 (1950), 235-68; F. R. Leavis, "The Line of Wit", *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (New York: W. W.

T. S. Eliot described Jonson's poetry as "of the surface", and Earl Miner defines him as a leader of the "social mode" in seventeenth-century poetry.²⁰ In short, Jonson's poetry is often pronounced good, and good for us, without necessarily seeming warm, interesting, compelling, or deep. Yet Jonson's nondramatic verse is more various and subtle than these views indicate. The first book devoted exclusively to Jonson's poetry, George Johnston's *Ben Jonson: Poet* of 1945, sought to emphasize Jonson's range of abilities.²¹

The most influential book devoted to Jonson's nondramatic poetry is still Wesley Trimpi's *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style*, published in 1962. Trimpi follows Yvor Winters' revaluation of sixteenth-century poetry in favor of the authors of "the plain tradition, that is to say, the great tradition".²² In these articles of 1939 Winters judges Jonson's lyrics superior to those of Sidney and Shakespeare. The qualities of Jonson's verse that Winters and Trimpi admire are its logical disposition, clarity, directness, strength, urbanity, and adjustment of motive to feeling. Winters introduces terms for describing the plain style and criteria for preferring it to the aureate strain of Elizabethan poetry. He also gives suggestive examples of how to discuss poems of simple denotative diction and obvious meaning. Believing Winters' appraisals and using his terms, Trimpi returns to Jonson's classical sources in order to derive Jonson's plain style from them.

Norton, 1963, c. 1947), 10-36; Walker, "Jonson's Lyric"; John Hollander, "Introduction", *Ben Jonson* (New York: Dell, 1961), 9-26; Kay, "The Christian Wisdom of Ben Jonson's 'On My First Sonne'", *Studies in English Literature*, 11 (1971), 125-36; Kernan, *Cankered Muse*, vii.

²⁰ Eliot is talking about Jonson's dramatic, as well as his nondramatic, poetry, "Ben Jonson", *Essays on Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1956, c. 1932), 65-82, reprinted in Barish, *Essays*, 14-23; Earl Miner, *The Cavalier Mode from Jonson to Cotton* (Princeton: Princeton, 1971).

²¹ George B. Johnston, *Ben Jonson: Poet* (New York: Columbia, 1945).

²² Yvor Winters, "The Sixteenth-Century Lyric in England: A Critical and Historical Reinterpretation", *Poetry*, 53 (1939), 258-72, 320-35; 54 (1939), 35-51, reprinted in *Elizabethan Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. by Paul J. Alpers (New York: Oxford, 1967), 93-125; and Winters, "Poetic Styles, Old and New" in *Four Poets on Poetry*, ed. by D. C. Allen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1959), 61.

Virtually all these critics consider Jonson's nondramatic poetry as static over time. J. G. Nichols in 1969 quotes Herford and Simpson's 1925 view of the unchanging nature of Jonson's poetry in order to affirm it.²³ J. B. Bamborough treats the poetry and prose together unchronologically after a developmental survey of the plays.²⁴ In this essay, I try to reexamine the constant and the changing in Jonson's nondramatic poetry with justice to the full complexity of the subject. Certainly many of Jonson's central preoccupations remain stable throughout his long writing career, and it is on the basis of this constancy that his changes are wrought. Like the monk who sees all the phenomena of this world – from tavern brawls to court coronations – with the steady leveling vision of eternity, Jonson throughout his life sees the world he inhabits in steady contrast with an ideal social order which it is the poet's duty to represent. However, I believe that there are significant changes in Jonson's writing over time. Throughout his life, his work continues to develop, though not necessarily in the post-Renaissance sense of 'to progress'.

Some developments in Jonson's nondramatic poetry can be demonstrated by the solid contrast between Jonson's earlier nondramatic publications, *Epigrammes* and *The Forrest* of the 1616 folio, and his later poems published in *Under-wood*, 1640. Chapters two, three, and four of this study analyze and discuss each of these three collections separately, attempting to be clear and precise as to what is distinctive and characteristic of Jonson's verse in each collection. No attempt is made to elevate "A Celebration of Charis" over "To Celia", for example, but rather to show the different principles upon which the poems of the different periods were written. Close analyses of several poems in each collection seek to illuminate the opaque clarities of Jonson's 'plain style' and to reveal its variations from one period to the next. In the effort not to discount anything important, I have counted many components of Jonson's poetry. These objective measures of style and content are meant to supplement the explications and other

²³ Nichols, *Poetry*, 13, quoting H & S, 1, 120.

²⁴ J. B. Bamborough, *Ben Jonson* (London: Hutchinson, 1970).

traditional methods of criticism used. The figures for these objective counts are presented in tables in the appendix.

After the contrast between Jonson's earlier and later nondramatic poetry has been drawn on the basis of the two folios, chapter five of this study sets up a four-phase division for all of Jonson's work. The two folios divide Jonson's nondramatic poetry into that of the years before and after 1612/13. Dividing each of these periods at the change of reigns gives four periods for Jonson's work: Elizabethan writings, 1597-1603; early Jacobean, 1603-12; later Jacobean 1613-25; and Caroline, 1625-37. These periods correspond approximately to the work of Jonson's twenties, thirties, forties, and fifties. Although there are difficulties in dating many of Jonson's nondramatic poems, I think that the datable poems provide a substantial enough basis for such a division. In particular, I think that this periodization helps to bring into prominence the rather neglected work of Jonson's later Jacobean maturity, that is, of about 1613-25. Because of the paucity of Jonson's play production during this period, the nondramatic works written at this time have often been slighted as well.

The four-period division of Jonson's work proposed in chapter five clarifies the development of Jonson's nondramatic poetry and also corresponds with the development of his masques and plays. When we come to the context of Jonson's work as a whole from the direction of the nondramatic writings, I think that certain patterns and analogies across *genres* become evident in his writing. Chapter five of this study, then, highlights these analogies in Jonson's development rather than assaying a full analysis of the dramatic works. This four-phase division of Jonson's writings, moreover, by being aligned with the reigns through which he lived, reminds us of the greater context beyond the microcosm of one author's work. England from 1597 to 1637 harbored a society in growth, crisis, and transformation. Its literary fashions, its drama, and its audiences all changed fundamentally over this period. Jonson's social attitudes and the objects of his commendation and criticism vary as the years pass, though much in his work remains the same. No attempt is made here to chronicle these changing *milieux*, but only, in the brief concluding chapter six of

this study, to anchor the figure of Jonson's development against the varicolored ground of his age.

2. EPIGRAMMES

Jonson's first book of *Epigrammes* is a short anthology of brief poems on which the author prided himself. *Epigrammes* illustrate the chief concerns and demonstrate most of the stylistic attributes of Jonson's early maturity. Because their subject matter, scope, and development are limited, they provide clear examples of Jonson's typical devices of style at this period, of his consistent themes and ideals, and of his habitual moral stance.¹

Jonson was convinced that his epigrams recovered the true classical *genre* of Martial, the "old way, and the true", as he says in Epigram xviii, in contrast to previous English attempts in the *genre*.² And, in fact, witty paradox or charming anecdote are with Jonson only a means, not the end of his epigrams, as they are to his English predecessors like Harington. Instead, Jonson's epigrams seek to do 'Platonic justice', to give each man his due. To accomplish this, there are two basic classes of epigrams, those of praise and those of blame.³ The poems in Jonson's first book of epigrams

¹ Of all Jonson's nondramatic poetry, the epigrams have probably received the most satisfactory treatment, since they are fairly unified in *genre* and in time of composition. Two articles on the epigrams are Rufus D. Putney, "This So Subtile Sport': Some Aspects of Jonson's Epigrams", *U. of Colorado Studies* (Series in Language and Literature, 10) (1966); and David Wykes, "Ben Jonson's 'Chast Booke' – The *Epigrammes*", *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 13 (1969), 76-87.

² Jonson's patterning of the first four epigrams in his book after Martial's first book corroborates this point, T. K. Whipple, *Martial and the English Epigram from Sir Thomas Wyatt to Ben Jonson* (*U. of California Papers in Modern Philology*, 10) (Berkeley: U. of California, 1925), 387ff.; Hoyt H. Hudson, *The Epigram in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton, 1947), discusses earlier forms of the English epigram.

³ O. B. Hardison, Jr., *The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Idea of*

are about equally divided into these classes. Although poems in both groups often appear similar in form, Jonson does not treat the two classes in the same manner. The positive poems rest on the theory that good men have a duty to do praiseworthy things and that the poet has a reciprocal duty to praise them. According to this theory, good men learn from the examples of virtuous individuals who completely fulfill the ideal requisites of their roles. The epigrams cite a number of related reasons why the poet should write poems of praise: he should praise the virtuous in order to teach the nature of virtue, to set an example for others, to reward virtue, to demonstrate the rewards of virtue, to immortalize virtue, and to encourage the virtuous in remaining as they are. Moreover, singing another's praises benefits the praiser by association in the virtue and immortality of the praised and shows the poet's affection for the person praised. Thus the positive epigrams stress ideal roles and reciprocal relationships – for instance, those between friends, patron and poet, king and country. They also often discuss the nature of praise, fame, and poetry. Since ethics are based on choice, these poems abound in fine distinctions. They weigh values, the alternative choices open to good men, and they explore the differences between the inner worth and the outer appearance of things.

However, only the good can learn by example. The ignorant and foolish, Jonson assumes, cannot be taught since they are not willing to learn. Instead, poetry is to “strike ignorance” and make folly its “quarrie” (lxxxv). Somewhat different means are therefore used to hold exemplary portraits of virtue up to the audience for emulation and to expose vice and folly to ridicule. In his censuring epigrams Jonson often relies on puns and tricks of wit, derogatory images and analogies, cutting descriptions or anecdotes, or simple name-calling. Vices need only be called vices to be known for what they are, and the attitude of contempt that Jonson takes toward them is intended to be our attitude, too. Jonson claims he upbraids the typical vice, not the particular sinner, whereas he

Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina, 1962), gives the history of the Renaissance rhetoric of praise.

gladly names the specific living exemplars of virtue. But goodness is single while vice is manifold, and, paradoxically, his portraits of virtue therefore tend to be very much alike while his descriptions of the vicious are various and often specifically detailed.

Though the positive and negative poems work by diverse means, their real audience is the same. The poems of praise are written to and for their specific subjects, often as letters or occasional tributes, and for the friends, familiars, and equals of the virtuous addressees. Another class of commendatory poems are those originally used as dedications in the books of others. By reprinting them in his own works, Jonson shows that he wishes to commend these works to his whole elite readership and simultaneously to demonstrate his art and judgment in praise. In contrast, only a few of the satiric poems, those to poet-apes or bad critics perhaps, might be intended to be read by their subjects. Jonson did not expect usurers or alchemists or country clowns to read his poems. Epigram xciv sent to the Countess of Bedford with Donne's satires confirms that Jonson expected his satiric poems to be read only by the good. This poem clearly implies that one's literary taste proves one's morality, a contention which is closely related to the Jonsonian and humanist position that only the good man can be a good poet. "Rare poemes aske rare friends", Jonson states succinctly, intimating a reciprocity of understanding between author and reader similar to the reciprocity of friendship. In the particular case of satire, he invokes the convention of its total efficacy. That is, satire is necessarily so effective in hurting the people whose vice and follies it exposes that anyone unhurt, or, better, amused, must therefore be invulnerable to its barbs. And the people who need the instruction of the satires most, therefore, will be the least likely to be willing to read them.

Yet, *Satyres*, since the most of mankind bee
 Their un-avoided subject, fewest see:
 For none ere tooke that pleasure in sinnes sense,
 But, when they heard it tax'd, tooke more offence,
 They then, that living where the matter is bred,
 Dare for these poemes, yet, both aske, and read,
 And like them too; must needfully, though few,
 Be of the best: and 'mongst those, best are you.