Recent Studies in the English Renaissance

ELR bibliographical articles are intended to combine a topical review of research with a reasonably complete bibliography. Scholarship is organized by authors or titles of anonymous works. Items included represent combined entries listed in the annual bibliographies published by PMLA, YWES, and MHRA from 1970 through, in the present instance, mid-2001 with additional items. The format used here is a modified version of that used in Recent Studies in English Renaissance Drama, ed. Terence P. Logan and Denzel S. Smith, 4 vols. (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1973–78).

The ELR series is edited by Elizabeth H. Hageman of the University of New Hampshire and supported by the Department of English, UNH.

RECENT STUDIES IN BEN JONSON
(1991 – mid-2001)

DOUGLAS A. BROOKS

EDITIONS

I. General Studies
A. Biographical. W. David Kay, Ben Jonson: A Literary Life (1995), distinguishes itself from two other recent biographies—Rosalind Miles, Ben Jonson: His Life

1. Funds from the Texas A&M Center for Humanities Research (CHR) paid for books, photocopies, and research assistantships for Alexis Wilson and Kelly Crook, who assisted me with Interlibrary Services and research. Robert C. Evans, David L. Gants, and Richard Harp generously shared information and materials with me. Elizabeth H. Hageman was very helpful throughout.
and Work (1986), and David Riggs, Ben Jonson: A Life (1989)—in its simultaneous focus on Jonson’s efforts to distance himself from the economic and material conditions of the early modern London stage and court, and on the extensive role his compulsive involvement in various rivalries with contemporary writers played in his literary invention. Kay sifts through all of the records, evidence, and anecdotes; analyzes how Jonson transformed the many literary materials he worked from; and reads the multiplex ways Jonson’s work emerged from his engagements with patrons, enemies, and competitors. Ian Donaldson, “Jonson, Shakespeare, and the Destruction of the Book,” in Jonson’s Magic Houses (I,B below), pp. 198–216, contrasts Shakespeare’s seeming indifference to books with Jonson’s passion for them, suggests that this oft-remarked distinction between the two playwrights has been exaggerated, and examines Jonson’s conflicted views about literary posterity.

B. Critical Studies: Monographs. Anticipating current scholarly interest in early modern reading practices and book history, Robert C. Evans, Jonson, Lipsius and the Politics of Renaissance Stoicism (1992), analyzes the handwritten marks and marginal notes Jonson made in his copy of Justis Lipsius’ Six Books of Politics or Civil Doctrine (a facsimile of which is included as an appendix to the book) to show how Jonson read the influential Flemish intellectual’s writings and to elucidate the development of Jonson’s thinking about politics and appropriate political conduct. Evans, Jonson and the Contexts of His Time (1994), focuses on the “micropolitical aspects” of Jonson’s writings—i.e., the poet’s own personal dealings with patrons, rivals, and friends—to characterize more fully his position within early seventeenth-century theater, literary, and court culture. In Habits of Mind: Evidence and Effects of Ben Jonson’s Reading (1995), Evans analyzes handwritten marks and marginal notes that Jonson made in books, including material evidence of how Jonson read his copies of the Bible, the philosophical writings of Seneca, two works by Apuleius, the 1602 edition of Chaucer’s works, and the Latin version of Sir Thomas More’s History of King Richard III. Evans provides appendices at the end of each chapter itemizing the poet’s annotations, and includes facsimiles of some heavily marked pages and a useful topical index. James A. Riddell and Stanley Stewart, Jonson’s Spenser: Evidence and Historical Criticism (1995), further underscore the value of studying how Jonson read and responded to other writers, in this case a contemporary English poet: the re-discovery in 1986 of Jonson’s copy of the 1617 Folio edition of Edmund Spenser’s Works enables Riddell and Stewart to reassess Jonson’s opinion of Spenser by examining, interpreting, and contextualizing the marks and annotations he made while reading the minor poems as well as The Faerie Queene.

Ian Donaldson, Jonson’s Magic Houses: Essays in Interpretation (1997), offers eleven essays that explore issues related to how Jonson represented himself, how he has been represented by others in subsequent historical periods, and how
his work is far more diverse than has been generally acknowledged. (Individual essays will be discussed in subsequent sections below.) Julie Sanders, *Ben Jonson’s Theatrical Republics* (1998), reads Jonson’s Jacobean/Caroline drama for evidence of his thinking about republicanism, finding in plays ranging from *Volpone* to *A Tale of a Tub* an evolving engagement with contemporary political debates over alternative forms of government that is difficult to reconcile with the image of the court poet prominent in much recent Jonson criticism. Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson: Authority: Criticism* (1996), considers Jonson’s criticism, those moments in a range of genres (letters, poems, anti-masques, poems, prefaces, choruses, and conversations) when Jonson engages with and comments upon issues of power, patronage, the status of the theater, theater audiences, authorial autonomy, and the literary production of his contemporaries. An appendix provides a cross-section of these writings. Bruce Thomas Boehrer, *The Fury of Men’s Gullets: Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal* (1997), examines a range of Jonson’s poems and plays, focusing on the author’s intense preoccupation with the digestive tract and alimentary matters such as table manners, over-eating, digestion, and defecation, as well as digestive disorders like constipation, diarrhea, and vomiting. For Boehrer, studying Jonson’s “enduring fascination” with eating and excreting not only sheds light on the poet’s biographical and artistic development and commitment to bringing the past into the present, but also offers socio-historical insights into the culture in which he lived and worked. Comparably biographical and theoretical in its approach, Richard Burt, *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship* (1993) relies on a “Foucauldian, post-Marxist critical perspective” to make an argument about the poet’s increasingly conflicted relationship with the court and a broader argument about the workings of theater censorship in Stuart England.

In *The Birth of Popular Culture: Ben Jonson, Maid Marian, and Robin Hood* (1992), Tom Hayes combines a “neo-Gramsican” approach to folklore with a post-structuralist suspicion of dominant critical narratives, Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque with Nietzsche’s analysis of Greek tragedy in order to show how the folk legends of Maid Marian and Robin Hood were appropriated for popular culture in the sixteenth century. Primarily interested in Jonson’s unfinished *The Sad Shepherd; Or, A Tale of Robin Hood*, Hayes argues that the “masculine author-function” emerged out of “‘popular’ literacy.” A. W. Johnson, *Ben Jonson: Poetry and Architecture* (1994), studies the encomiastic poetry and masques written between 1598 and 1616, finding in them substantial evidence of Jonson’s use of mathematical and architectural principles from Euclid, Vitruvius, and Alberti as well as his interest in the work of Francesco Colonna and Palladio. In the first section of the book, Johnson considers Jonson and Inigo Jones’s thoughts about architectural issues and examines the annotations Jonson made in his copies of the 1586 edition of Vitruvius and Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia*, then uses this evidence in subsequent chapters to show how an architectural aesthetic informs
many of the author’s poems and masques. In *Between Theater and Philosophy: Skepticism in the Major City Comedies of Ben Jonson and Thomas Middleton* (2001), Matthew R. Martin argues that a kind of transfigured epistemological skepticism new to the Renaissance is the key to understanding the city comedies Jonson and Middleton wrote during the first decade of James I’s reign. For Martin, who sees epistemological difficulties and concomitant skepticism resulting in part from the same emergent capitalist forces of exchange that also shaped the development of the professional theater, each of Jonson’s city comedies (*Volpone*, *Epicoene*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*) directly or indirectly deals with potentially traumatic changes in English cultural, spiritual, economic, and political life. In *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare* (1991), James Shapiro sorts through the many levels of imitation, influence, and rivalry that characterized the literary relations among the three playwrights. Shapiro sees in many of Jonson’s early plays an effort to come to terms with Marlowe’s influence, an effort which, once exhausted, compels him to engage with Shakespeare’s influence in later plays such as *The New Inn* and *The Magnetic Lady*.

Contending that a concealment/revelation dialectic best characterizes the playwright’s handling of the very different worlds of court and commercial theater, William W. E. Slichts, *Ben Jonson and the Art of Secrecy* (1994), explores the complex operations of secrecy in *Sejanus, Volpone, Epicoene, Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*, as well as in the political and cultural circumstances in which they were written. In *Wars of the Theaters: The Poetics of Personation in the Age of Jonson* (1998), Matthew Steggle considers satirical comedies such as *Every Man Out of His Humour, What You Will, The Whore of Babylon*, and *The Roaring Girl* that represented living people on stage, seeing in their varied strategic attempts at “personation” the basis for an historicist reassessment of Renaissance drama that challenges modern, anachronistic, and “broadly Jonsonian models” of the relation between text and drama in the period. Similarly historicist in its goals and its approach, Jonathan Haynes, *The Social Relations of Jonson’s Theatre* (1992), focuses on the “War of the Theaters” and reads several of the plays associated with it for what they report about a range of economic, commercial, and cultural factors that shaped the literary production of Jonson and some of his contemporaries. Like Steggle and Haynes, Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (1997), is primarily interested in what drama written for the London stage reveals about the workings of the early modern theater, particularly with reference to playwrights’ contributions to its “institutional legitimation,” and he finds plays such as *Bartholomew Fair, Sejanus His Fall*, and *The Alchemist* to be the most self-consciously preoccupied with issues of social, moral, and political reform. Lesley Mickel, *Ben Jonson’s Antimasques: A History of Growth and Decline* (1999), views Jonson as being intensely concerned with drama’s potential for critiquing court and crown, and the book chronicles the developmental trajectory of Jonson’s insertion
of anti-masques into the masques and entertainments he wrote for James I’s court. Mickel contends that Jonson increasingly relied on the satirical properties of anti-masques to express dissent and call for reform.

Arguing that Shakespeare and Jonson inherited two prominent models of androgyny—“mythic” (positive) and “satiric” (negative)—from Greek and Roman literature, especially from beast-transformation myths, Grace Tiffany, Erotic Beasts and Social Monsters: Shakespeare, Jonson, and Comic Androgyny (1995), explains Jonson’s masculinist resistance to gender fluidity and effeminization by seeing in his involvement in the Theater Wars and in his satires the most fully realized representation of the Renaissance anti-mythic androgyny position. Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, Jonson, Shakespeare and Early Modern Virgil (1998), considers the complexly fluid reception of Vergil’s text in England, aligning alterations in that reception with the country’s transition to Protestantism and capitalism. Tudeau-Clayton argues that Jonson’s Poetaster and his masques rely on Virgil to resist such transitions, promoting an elitist, Catholic, and king-centered agenda, and that Shakespeare’s Tempest is a critique of England’s—and particularly Jonson’s—use of Vergil so as to promote a Protestant decentering of authority and privilege. In Ben Jonson and Cervantes (2000), Yumiko Yamada offers close readings of works by Jonson, Cervantes, and Shakespeare, as well as an analysis of the history of their critical reception, finding in this material much evidence for re-evaluating the significance of Jonson’s artistic and intellectual connections with the Spanish author. Richard Allen Cave, Ben Jonson, is an examination of Jonson’s major comedies, the primary emphasis being Jonson’s dramas in performance; and as Cave reads plays like Volpone or The Alchemist, his goal is to elucidate how they communicate with and elicit responses from audiences. Douglas A. Brooks, From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England (2000), considers Jonson’s anomalous involvement in the publication of his dramatic texts, arguing that Jonson is a transitional figure between the collaborative conditions of theatrical production and the modern, individualized author figure of literary texts.

C. Critical Studies: Collected Essays. (Many of the essays in the collections noted here are treated individually in subsequent sections below.) Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson (2000), collect fourteen new introductory essays by prominent scholars and an extensive bibliography of Jonson editions and scholarship. Essays examine Jonson’s life and learning, the literary/theatrical contexts in which he wrote, various aspects of his dramas, as well as a range of topics including Jonson’s poetry, his admiration of visual and musical arts, his classicism, his critical writings, and the critical reception of some of his major plays. Richard Dutton, Ben Jonson (2000), reprints a number of important scholarly essays on Jonson.
Taken together, the eleven essays in Martin Butler, ed. Re-Presenting Ben Jonson: Text, History, Performance (1999), make a convincing argument that although the Oxford Ben Jonson has been a cornerstone for the scholarly study of Jonson since it was published, it has also helped to keep him from having a wider readership; separately each of the essays considers the impact that the editing of Jonson’s texts has had on the scholarly reception of his work. The eleven essays in James Hirsh, ed. New Perspectives on Ben Jonson (1997), approach Jonson’s work from different theoretical and methodological angles, suggesting the potential for a diversity in Jonson scholarship that has been a given for decades in Shakespeare studies. Dedicated to examining the significance of Jonson’s achievement in being the first English dramatist to publish his plays, poems, and court entertainments in a folio collection, the nine essays in Jennifer Brady and W. H. Herendeen, ed. Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio (1991) approach both the content and the material form of Jonson’s 1616 Works from different perspectives ranging from William Blissett’s discussion of the three Roman plays included in the folio to Kevin J. Donovan’s bibliographical critique of the Oxford Ben Jonson editors’ over-estimation of the folio’s authority.

Julie Sanders, Kate Chedgzoy, and Susan Wiseman, ed. Refashioning Ben Jonson: Gender, Politics, and the Jonsonian Canon (1998), collect nine essays which, in part, strive to re-historicize Jonson’s literary production in terms of popular culture so as to balance out the earlier New Historicism emphasis on his status as a Jacobean court writer. Bringing together fourteen essays by well-known Jonson scholars as well as interviews with theater practitioners and actors, Richard Allen Cave, Elizabeth Schafer, and Bran Wooland, ed. Ben Jonson and the Theatre: A Critical and Practical Introduction (1999), focus on how Jonson’s dramas operate in performance. Individual essays examine contemporary theatrical responses to Jonson by women directors, offer a Lacanian analysis of the differences between the critical orthodoxies on Shakespeare and Jonson, and consider the link between women and theater in some of the late plays such as The New Inn and The Staple of News; a final essay on the theatrical reception of Jonson’s plays in Australia includes a discussion with the actor Geoffrey Rush about his portrayal of Subtle in a 1996 production of The Alchemist.


II. Studies of Special Topics


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who considers evidence from the paratexts of Jonson’s publications, various dedicatory poems and epigrams, and comparative readings of quarto and folio versions of his plays, Jonson relied on print to promote his authorial individuality but remained deeply engaged in worldly social relations. Sara van den Berg, “Ben Jonson and the Ideology of Authorship,” in Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio (I.C), pp. 111–37, contends that Jonson is the first English writer to exploit “the humanist concept of authorship,” and she examines many of the personal, political, and cultural factors that converged to make this unprecedented achievement desirable and possible.

While bibliographers have long noted that Jonson was much more involved in the editing and printing of the plays included in the 1616 Folio than the masques and entertainments, Douglas A. Brooks, “‘If He Be at His Book, Disturb Him Not’: The Two Jonson Folios of 1616,” BJJ 4 (1997), 81–101, reconsiders the evidence of Jonson’s divided involvement, arguing that it originates in the playwright’s perception that dramatic texts written for stage and court presented him with different opportunities for asserting his authorial individuality. Noting that the publication of the 1616 Folio had “unforeseen consequences” for Jonson during the remaining twenty years of his career as an author, Jennifer Brady, “‘Noe Fault, but Life’: Jonson’s Folio as Monument and Barrier,” in Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio (I.C), pp. 192–216, links Jonson’s intense poetic preoccupation with his physical and textual bodies in The Under-wood to his insecurities and fears about the fate of his post-Folio writings.

In “Creating the Author: Jonson’s Latin Epigraphs,” BJJ 6 (1999), 35–48, Robert S. Miola analyzes the Latin mottoes and other paratextual materials included in six quarto texts of plays ranging from Every Man Out of His Humour to The New Inn, and contends that such pre-texts serve to transform Jonson from a playwright into the independent, “sole progenitor” of his plays, his play-going spectators into readers. Evelyn Tribble, “Genius on the Rack: Authorities and the Margin in Ben Jonson’s Glossed Works,” Exemplaria 4 (1992), 316–39, considers Jonson’s use of marginal notes and Latin glosses and argues that his reliance on such textual strategies marks him as a writer who represents both medieval and modern forms of thinking about the origins of an author’s authority.

Scott Cutler Shershow, “‘The Month of ‘hem All’: Ben Jonson, Authorship, and the Performing Object,” TJ 46 (1994), 187–212, examines the theological/theatrical/poetic analogies between the playwright/actor and puppeteer/puppet and contends that a survey of Jonson’s preoccupation with puppetry in plays ranging from Every Man Out of His Humour to A Tale of a Tub reveals the trajectory of his authorship as proceeding from early theological assertions of authorial sovereignty to a more humble view of authorship as self-representation.

Three studies by D. H. Craig focus on issues of linguistic and stylistic evidence. In “Authorial Styles and the Frequencies of Very Common Words: Jonson, Shakespeare, and the Additions to The Spanish Tragedy,” Style 26 (1992),

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199–220, Craig considers the statistical prevalence of fifty common function words (e.g., the, and, I, of, you) in eighteen plays by Shakespeare and Jonson, and that Shakespeare, not Jonson, is the author of the five scenes added to the 1602 printed edition of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Craig, “Jonsonian Chronology and the Styles of *A Tale of a Tub*,” in *Re-Presenting Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 210–32, contends that Herford and Simpson’s view of *A Tale of the Tub* as a reworking of Jonson’s earliest material cannot be substantiated by quantitative analysis of the playwright’s stylistic development. Looking at the statistical prevalence of common function words spoken by characters in 94 early modern plays—seventeen of which were written by Jonson—Craig, “The Weight of Numbers: Common Words and Jonson’s Dramatic Style,” *BJJ* 6 (1999), 243–59, speculates about what a seventeenth-century playgoer might have sensed was distinctive about Jonson’s plays.

B. Sexuality and Gender. Contending that critics of early seventeenth-century satiric comedy have failed to recognize the extent to which a “man’s ass” serves as the satiric locus of many closely linked “anal activities” featured in comedies of the period, Mario DiGangi, “Ases and Wits: The Homoerotics of Mastery in Satiric Comedy,” *ELR* 25 (1995), 179–208, examines the significance of the ass as a signifier for master–servant relations in Jonson’s *Epicoene* and *Volpone* and Chapman’s *The Gentleman Usher*; DiGangi argues that all three plays offer cautionary tales in which the intermingling of homoerotic relations with those of service threatens to undermine a social order grounded in the master/servant dynamic. In “Rape, Rap, Rupture, Rapture: R-Rated Futures on the Global Market,” *TexP* 9 (1995), 421–43, Bruce R. Smith identifies the executions and dismemberments of male bodies in *Edward II, Troilus and Cressida, Coriolanus*, and *Sejanus His Fall* as rapes that punish men for being involved in “homoerotic transactions,” and he argues that the representation of links between violence and homosexuality in these plays and in our society suggests that the spectators of such violence—and homoerotic desire—may either internalize the moral lessons of such displays or subversively derive pleasure from them. Richmond Barbour, “‘When I Acted Young Antinous’: Boy Actors and the Erotics of Jonsonian Theater,” *PMLA* 110 (1995), 1006–22, argues that *Volpone* and *Epicoene* reveal the multiple ways in which such boy actors served as mediators between male and female spectators, and thus enhanced the desire between men and women that was otherwise often frustrated off-stage by mutual feelings of fear, mistrust, and hostility.

David Lee Miller, “Writing the Specular Son: Jonson, Freud, Lacan, and the K(not) of Masculinity,” in *Desire in the Renaissance: Psychoanalysis and Literature*, ed. Valeria Finucci and Regina Schwartz (1994), pp. 233–60, begins by asserting that masculinity in Western culture is simultaneously haunted and enabled by dreamed re-writings of the father sacrificing his son, then examines versions of this dream in the work of Jonson (“On my First Sonne”), Freud, and Lacan to expose and thus interrupt the workings of patriarchy. Concerned with clarifying...
Jonson’s status as an apologist for patriarchy and his position within the antifeminist controversy of his day, Victoria Silver, “Totem and Taboo in the Tribe of Ben: The Duplicity of Gender and Jonson’s Satires,” *ELH* 62 (1995), 729–57, focuses primarily on the proto-Freudian system of totem and taboo he employs in many of his epigrams and dedicatory poems, finding in their appropriative, duplici-
tous, and structurally incoherent defense of patriarchy a subtle indictment of the
very patriarchalist values he would seem to support. In “Aemilia Lanyer and
Ben Jonson: Patronage, Authority, and Gender,” *BJJ* 1 (1994), 15–30, Susanne
Woods compares Jonson and Lanyer’s gendered strategies of writing poems
to male and female patrons in the context of possible familial and social links
between the Jonson and Lanyer circles. Lesley Mickel, “‘A Learned and Manly
Soul’: Jonson and His Female Patrons,” *BJJ* 6 (1999), 69–87, examines the inter-
sections between Jonson’s representations of women in *The Masque of Queens*
and *Epicoene* and his relations with female patrons (as evidenced in a number of
epigrams), concluding that Jonson was deeply interested in the “possibilities of
female agency.”

C. Religion. Ian Donaldson, “Jonson’s Duplicity: The Catholic Years,” in *Jonson’s
Magic Houses* (I,B), pp. 47–65, considers biographical, autobiographical, and an-
ecdotal accounts of Jonson’s honesty and integrity, then analyzes the playwright’s
relationship with the Aubigny family, especially Esmé Stuart, to characterize
more fully the high levels of religious and political duplicity that Jonson and his
contemporaries often felt compelled to practice. George A. E. Parfitt, “Ethics
and Christianity in Ben Jonson,” in *New Perspectives on Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 77–
88, compares Jonson’s intense concern with classical ethics (Cicero and Horace)
and his “lack of engagement” with the metaphysical mysteries of Christianity in
his plays and poems, suggesting that the latter can be traced to the playwright’s
uncertainty about the efficacy of Christian virtue. For James P. Crawley, “‘He
Took His Religion by Trust’: The Matter of Ben Jonson’s Conversion,” *Ren&R*
22 (1998), 53–70, the Jonson that emerges from the personal and historical evid-
ence of his conversion is rather different from the boisterous and aggressive figure
we often see behind the plays he wrote. In “The Puritan Hypocrite in Shake-
speare and Johnson,” *UES* 30 (1992), 1–13, Jeanette Ferreira-Ross examines
Shakespeare and Jonson’s dramatic portrayals of Puritan hypocrisy in the con-
text of contemporary prose and verse denunciations of Puritans, arguing that
whereas Jonson’s plays offer sharp, pointed satires of conventional Puritan figures,
Shakespeare’s explore the psychological origins of hypocrisy.

III. Studies of the Plays

A. General Studies. Katharine Eisaman Maus, “Facts of the Matter: Satiric and
Ideal Economics in the Jonsonian Imagination,” in *Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio* (I,C),
pp. 64–89, finds that the “economic axioms” of the comedies get altered or disappear in other genres and argues that such disparities between bodies of Jonson’s works not only constitute Jonson’s approach to dividing his work into genres, but have also structured much of the criticism that has followed. Janet Clare, “Jonson’s ‘Comical Satires’ and the Art of Courtly Compliment,” in *Refashioning Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 28–47, examines Jonson’s reliance on elements from classical satire in *Cynthia’s Revels*, *Poetaster*, and *Every Man Out*, seeing in his strategic appropriations of these source materials an early critical engagement with Elizabethan court politics. Contending that there was a moment in the early seventeenth century when the effort to reconcile the traditions of satire and comedy broke down, Angus Fletcher, “Jonson’s Satiric-Comedy and the Unsnarling of the Satyr from the Satirist,” *BJJ* 7 (2000), 247–69, locates Jonson’s shift in stance toward satirists between *Poetaster* and *Volpone*. In “Jonson’s Funnybone,” *SP* 94 (1997), 59–84, Alan Fisher reconsiders the question of whether the jokes in Jonson’s comedy are funny, and concludes, from an analysis of moments of potential laughter in several plays, that Jonsonian fun is frequently a slow, sustained propensity for a comic engagement with often serious issues. Norman Newton, “The Palace of Rhetoric: Geometrical and Architectural Form in Ben Jonson,” *DR* 77 (1997), 23–44, examines several moments in which Jonson seems to be structuring his works on various geometrical and architectural principles.

Surveying various encounters between playwrights and the office responsible for censoring and licensing plays (and its occupants, Edmund Tilney, George Buc, and John Astley), Richard Dutton, “Ben Jonson and the Master of the Revels,” in J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring, ed. *Theatre and Government under the Early Stuarts* (1993), pp. 57–86, argues that despite his early run-ins with censorship, Jonson came to recognize that the Master of the Revels was an important ally who was integral to his achieving his authorial aspirations. Martin Butler, “Late Jonson,” in Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope, ed. *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After* (1992), pp. 166–88, reads *The Magnetic Lady*, *A Tale of a Tub*, and *The New Inn* for the ways they engage with various issues and conflicts germane to pre-Civil War England, proposing that they share a number of the same ideological assumptions. Kate McLuskie, “Making and Buying: Ben Jonson and the Commercial Theatre Audience,” in *Refashioning Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 134–54, reconsiders the relation between “the poetics and the economics of the market” in Jonson’s multivalent writing career, identifying some of the delicate balances he had to find as he negotiated his way through the complex interactions of commercial and political agendas in the theater.

Anne Lake Prescott, “Jonson’s Rabelais,” in *New Perspectives on Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 35–54, examines Jonson’s glosses in his annotated copy of Rabelais’ 1599 *Oeuvres*, as well as his use of Randle Cotgrave’s *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611); she finds in the masques and plays a rich array of
allusions to Rabelais that suggest the extent to which Jonson relied on the French writer to satirize “intellectual pretension, the misdirection of ingenuity” and “despotic religious illusion.” In “Jonson’s Copy of Seneca,” *CompD* 25 (1991), 257–92, Robert C. Evans examines a 1599 copy of Seneca’s philosophical writings that contains Jonson’s markings and marginalia, arguing that the playwright’s engaged reading of this text points to how much Seneca’s thought influenced Jonson’s reaction to Stoicism. Two other essays by Evans, “Jonson, Lipsius, and the Latin Classics,” in *New Perspectives on Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 55–76, and “Jonson’s Stoic Politics: Lipsius, the Greeks, and the ‘Speech According to Horace,’” *EMLS* 4 (1998), 1–44, consider the impact of Jonson’s reading of Lipsius’ efforts to reconcile stoic and Christian beliefs on the playwright’s thinking and politics. The former essay treats the topic of Jonson’s reading by providing a list and summary of passages from Latin sources cited by Lipsius in his *Politica* that were marked by Jonson in his copy of that book; the latter looks more specifically at how Jonson’s reading of Lipsius’ citations of Greek and Roman texts in his *Politics* influenced Jonson’s Caroline politics. In a third essay co-authored with Lynn Bryan, “Ben Jonson, Neostoicism, and the *Monita* of Justus Lipsius,” *BJJ* 1 (1994), 105–23, Evans and Bryan examine Jonson’s markings in his copy of another book by Lipsius, the *Monita et Exempla Politica*, contending that the playwright’s engagement with that book indicates the importance of Neostoicism in his thinking. On this issue see also Evans, *Jonson, Lipsius and the Politics of Renaissance Stoicism* (I,B). Evans, “Jonsonian Allusions,” in *Re-Presenting Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 233–48, contends that the study of Jonsonian allusions—allusions made by Jonson to other people and other works, and allusions made by other people and works to Jonson—should be a part of a future edition of Jonson, and he offers a critical paradigm for how such work should be approached.

at Stratford since its opening in 1986 so as to reconsider some of the frequent criticisms of Jonsonian drama in performance made by past stage historians.

James P. Bednarz, “Representing Jonson: Histriomastix and the Origin of the Poet’s War,” *HLQ* 54 (1991), 1–30, examines the call and response between Marston and Jonson in three plays written by each of them comprising the main staging ground for the war of the poets. Contending that *Histriomastix* was written for the Children of St. Paul’s in late 1599, Bednarz, “Marston’s Subversion of Shakespeare and Jonson: Histriomastix and the War of the Theatres,” *MRDE* 6 (1993), 103–28, reads back and forth between Marston’s *Histriomastix* and Jonson’s *Every Man In, Every Man Out*, and *The Case is Altered*; he finds in their various intertextualities new evidence about the nature of the war of the theaters and Marston’s initial intentions. Dennis Quinn, “Polypragmosyne in the Renaissance: Ben Jonson,” *BJJ* 2 (1995), 157–69, considers a range of polypragmatists (busybodies) in works by Shakespeare and Jonson, concluding that only in “To Penshurst” does the latter writer seek to integrate the life of action with that of contemplation. William Blissett, “Roman Ben Jonson,” in *Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio* (I, C), pp. 90–110, briefly surveys the impact of Roman culture on literary production up to the present, then characterizes its impact on Jonson, contending that his borrowings from classical Rome in *Poetaster*, *Sejanus*, and *Catiline* create a complex fusion of the historical and the imaginative.

Pamela Allen Brown, “Jonson among the Fishwives,” *BJJ* 6 (1999), 89–107, argues that figures such as market women in *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and other plays represent a muse-like source of dramatic inspiration for him. John Creaser, “Enigmatic Ben Jonson,” in Michael Cordner, Peter Holland, and John Kerrigan, ed. *English Comedy* (1994), pp. 100–18, contends that many of Jonson’s more obscure comedies should be read as provocations aimed at challenging playgoers to come to terms with some of the more realistic and difficult truths to which he seeks to expose them.

Noting that the Oxford Edition’s favoring of the 1616 Folio over the 1640 Folio has helped to marginalize some of the works included in the latter, Jennifer Brady, “Progenitors and Other Sons in Ben Jonson’s *Discoveries*,” in *New Perspectives on Ben Jonson* (I, C), pp. 16–34, considers *Discoveries*, especially Jonson’s concerns over issues of authorial succession, in light of their impact on Dryden. In “Collaborating with the Forebear: Dryden’s Reception of Ben Jonson,” *MLQ* 54 (1993), 344–69, Brady begins with the Dryden-Shadwell feud over who was the rightful successor to Jonson’s legacy, then reconsiders the extent and nature of Dryden’s allusive reliance on Jonson’s works in writing *Mac Flecknoe*; she concludes that the dramatic poem’s publication in 1682 both inaugurated Dryden’s career as a satirist and weakened Shadwell’s claim on the Jonsonian inheritance in the Restoration. Brandon S. Centerwall, “A Reconsideration of Ben Jonson’s Contribution to Sir Walter Raleigh’s *The History of the World* (1614),” *BJJ* 7 (2000), 539–54, examines Raleigh’s rewriting of texts he relied on for his
History, then considers “The Mercenaries War” section of Raleigh’s History, concluding that the dramatic liberties taken with the original historical source (Polybius’ account) point to Jonson’s authorship of the section and offer us an important glimpse into the playwright’s methods of adapting historical materials for his history plays.

B. Individual Plays

1. The Alchemist. The play has been edited by Brian Woollan (1996) and F. H. Mares (1997).

Ian Donaldson, “Clockwork Comedy: Time and The Alchemist,” in Jonson’s Magic Houses I,B, pp. 89–105, analyzes temporality in the first two acts of The Alchemist, finding in the playwright’s intense preoccupation with time the formal and thematic expression of a view of the world as comprehensible and rational. Observing that Jonson’s exploration of the tensions of domestic living receives its most sustained and subtle treatment in The Alchemist, Donaldson, “Jonson’s Magic Houses,” in Jonson’s Magic Houses I,B, pp. 66–88, examines the trope of the “animated house” in some of the poems, masques, and plays, then turns to The Alchemist, where he considers how the various houses in the play are animated by the hopes and fantasies of their inhabitants. Interested in early seventeenth-century alignments of alchemical processes and apocalyptic thought, Richard Harp, “Ben Jonson’s Comic Apocalypse,” Cithara 34 (1994), 34–43, examines previously un-noticed references to Revelation in The Alchemist and argues that Jonson relies heavily on comic allusions to apocalyptic material in order to highlight the greed and trickery of the play’s characters. Similarly concerned with the play’s ties to contemporary religious matters, Jeanette D. Ferreira-Ross, “Jonson’s Satire of Puritanism in The Alchemist,” SSENG 17 (1991–1992), 22–42, focuses on the precision with which Jonson contextualizes Puritan characters in the play; she argues that the playwright works through a rich cross-section of Puritan and sectarian thought to expose alchemy and Puritanism as comparably fraudulent practices. Peter K. Ayers, “Staging Modernity: Chapman, Jonson, and the Decline of the Golden Age,” CahiersE 47 (1995), 9–27, reads The Alchemist in light of Valerio’s final monologue from George Chapman’s All Fools, contending that both works depart from most contemporary conventional renderings of the myth of the Golden Age by suggesting that the past no longer has relevance to the present.

that the two playwrights have different but similarly purposeful approaches to the use of illusion. For Tony Perrello, “From Costiveness to Comic Relief: Purgation in The Alchemist,” Postscript 15 (1998), 74–81, the London epidemic of 1609 is the primary subtext of Jonson’s play, which he reads in light of contemporary medical lore on treatments for the plague and Bakhtin’s analysis of Rabelais.


In “Zeal-of-the-Land Busy Restored,” in Re-Presenting Ben Jonson (I,C), pp. 174–92, Michael Cordner examines the performance/censorship history of Bartholomew Fair and John Wilson’s The Cheats in the first years of Charles II’s reign, contending that critics have oversimplified their Royalist appeal to Restoration audiences and obscured their concerns with contemporary religious and political tensions. G. M. Pinciss, “Bartholomew Fair and Jonsonian Tolerance,” SEL 35 (1995), 345–59, maintains that Overdo, Busy, and Wasp represent England’s three major religious positions (Established Church, Puritan, and Catholic, respectively) and that, by placing them in the stocks together at the same moment, Jonson is suggesting that one is not superior to the others. Jeanette Ferreira-Ross, “Religion and the Law in Jonson’s Bartholomew Fair,” Ren&R 18 (1994), 45–66, examines Jonson’s methods of satire, especially his combination of parodic allusion and caricature, contending that the play offers a strong critique of the hypocrisy of the extreme Puritan ethos, especially its claims on moral authority. Alternatively, Rebecca Ann Bach, “Ben Jonson’s ‘Civil Savages,’” SEL 37 (1997), 277–93, turns to the emergent discourse of colonization to understand how Bartholomew Fair, as well as The New Inn, collapse the space of the theater with that of the colonies in order to address concerns over the disorder of London and England’s colonial efforts.

Stage booths on the London stage were versatile props used to represent anything from thrones, to tents, to pulpits, to the state; but Gabriel Egan, “The Use of Booths in the Original Staging of Jonson’s Bartholomew Fair,” CahiersE 53 (1998), 43–52, observes that in BF the booth actually represents a booth, and argues that Jonson is toying with the traditional uses of stage booths, door labels, and the dramatic unities themselves to comment upon contemporary conventions of stagecraft. Asserting that Bartholomew Fair is skeptical of the value of relying on one’s poetic corpus to serve as a monument, David Weil Baker, “‘Master of the Monuments’: Memory and Erasure in Jonson’s Bartholomew Fair,” ELR 31 (2001), 266–87, reads the play as a critical examination of two forms of monumentalism available to Jonson: first, the play critiques books as monuments to authorial aspirations for fame (realized in the 1616 Folio, which did not include the play); second, Baker reads editions of Stow’s Survey in light of James
I’s efforts to turn London into a monument, arguing that BF also critiques such urban renewal schemes. Jean MacIntyre, “The (Self)-Fashioning of Ezekiel Edgworth in Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair,*” EMLS 4 (1999), 1-21, reads the character of Ezekiel Edgworth in the context of various pamphlets, ballads, and other contemporary accounts of pick-pocketing in general, and the Christmas cut-purse, John Selman, in particular, analyzing the ways in which both Edgworth and Selman attempt and ultimately fail to fashion themselves as gentlemen. Examining a range of dramatic and non-dramatic texts that anticipated or influenced Jonson’s characterization of Justice Overdo, Rocco Coronato, “Il guidice alla gogna: Panoptikon e occasione festiva in *Bartholomew Fair*” (Italian), RLMC 49 (1996), 13–37, tracks the magistrate as he wanders through the Fair making his “discoveries” and mistakes, ultimately seeing in him both a parodic treatment of the “disguised ruler” tradition and a response to the carnivalesque within the court itself.

Drawing equally on recent German thinking about the nature of cultural memory and English-language early modern cultural studies, Andreas Mahler, “Komödie, Karneval, Gedächtnis: zur frühneuzeitlichen Aufhebung des Karnevaleskens in Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*” (German), Poetica-Zeitschrift fur Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft 25 (1993), 81–128, begins by considering the paradoxical critical reception of Jonson’s “Jahrmarktkomödie” with regard to its status as a “festive” drama, then examines the ways in which a number of elements in the play (its concerns, its structure, the language of the characters, and their narrative and physical movement) suggest not only the potential destabilization of various hierarchies, but also “the originary cultural remembrance of carnival in fiction” (my translation). In “Consuming Mothers/Consuming Merchants: The Carnivalesque Economy of Jacobean City Comedy,” MLS 26 (1996), 73–97, Shannon Miller examines anxieties over England’s emergent capitalist and carnivalesque economy in Middleton’s *Chaste Maid in Cheapside,* where she finds close links between fears of the carnivalesque woman (especially the pregnant body) and insecurity about economic instability, and in Jonson’s *BF,* which anxiously projects the increasingly abstract marketplace onto the bodies of the drama’s carnivalesque women.

Arguing against the positive associations Bakhtin posits among digestion, excretion, and female reproductivity, Lori Schroeder Haslem, “‘Troubled with the Mother’: Longings, Purgings, and the Maternal Body in *Bartholomew Fair* and *The Duchess of Malfi,*” MP 92 (1995), 438–59, sees in Jonson and Webster’s plays a much darker view of the maternal body, one in which women are reduced—in *BF*—to their shameful bodily functions and appetites or—in *Duchess*—to a grotesque, corrupt, and ravenous pregnant body. Identifying the seven women in Jonson’s comedy with deeply entrenched Jacobean stereotypes of adult femininity, Kristen McDermott’s “Versions of Femininity in *Bartholomew Fair,*” RenP (1993), 91–115, examines each of the female characters’ successes.
and failures and sees in the frustration and corruption of their desires a larger symbol of what Jonson wants to communicate about the encroachment of urban life and morality on the fair itself.

Geoffrey Aegler, “Ben Jonson’s Justice Overdo and Joseph Hall’s Good Magistrate,” *ES* 78 (1995), 434–42, considers the similarities between Justice Overdo and a figure, the good magistrate, in Joseph Hall’s *Characters of Virtues and Vices*, arguing that Jonson probably used Overdo to satirize the ideal of the stoic sage that the magistrate, and by extension, Hall himself, represented. Polly Stevens Fields, “Representation and Theatricality in Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*,” *POMPA* (1991), 49–54, contends that Jonson’s strategies of representation are directed at critiquing the self-important theatricality of characters such as Overdo, Busy, and Wasp. In “Enormity and Aurea Mediocritas in *Bartholomew Fayre*,” *BJJ* 2 (1995), 143–56, Martin L. Thomas examines the tensions between Jonson’s classicism and the riotous nature of the play’s depiction of the fair, and concludes that Jonson’s use of realism is steeped in Aristotelian and Horatian principles of dramatic structure.

3. *The Case is Altered*. No individual edition of the play is currently in print.


4. *Catiline, His Conspiracy*. No individual edition of the play is currently in print.

Bruce Thomas Boehrer, “Jonson’s *Catiline* and Anti-Sallustian Trends in Renaissance Humanist Historiography,” *SP* 94 (1997), 85–102, considers Sallustian and anti-Sallustian accounts (especially that of Felicius) of the Catilinarian conspiracy that comprised an important debate in the early modern period, and contends that Jonson appropriated elements from both sides of that debate in order to subordinate them within his own dramatic treatment of the historical materials. In “Politics in *Catiline*: Jonson and His Sources,” *Representing Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 152–73, Blair Worden argues that the playwright filtered his reading of Sallust principally through the lens of Tacitus, Felicius, and Lipsius, concluding that the play offers a portrait of Cicero in which virtuous ends are pursued through Machiavellian means so as to comment on the nature of Renaissance politics. In “‘The Echoe of Uncertaintie’: Jonson, Classical Drama and the Civil War,” in *Refashioning Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 208–27, Susan Wiseman contends that *Catiline* and *Sejanus* provoked complex and problematic responses during the Civil War and beyond. Rocco Coronato, “‘Set Murderous Cicero to School’: Ben Jonson e la prima Catilinaria” (Italian), *Menope* 9 (1997), 43–57, examines how Jonson approaches the task of translating Cicero’s account of Catiline, locating his strategic fidelity to and omissions of the
Ciceronian original in the context of Ascham’s views of translation as well as the playwright’s attitudes toward his readers. Aligning Catiline with a Bakhtinian figure of discord, Roman Saturnalian celebrations with medieval carnivals, and looking at both sets of correspondences in the context of early seventeenth-century carnivalesque practices associated with the Lord of Misrule, Coronato, “Un carnevale nascosto in Ben Jonson: Catilina e le fonti” (Italian) Confronto Letterario 12 (1995), 565–80, reads Catiline in light of questions raised in the play, its Sallustian sources, and Jonson’s stance as an author concerned with the status of the popular voice in politics.

5. The Devil Is an Ass. The play has been edited by Peter Happé (1996).

In “Contemporary Contexts of Jonson’s The Devil Is an Ass,” CompD 26 (1992), 140–76, Robert C. Evans considers a number of contemporary historical and cultural events such as the legal and political crisis of the failed Cokayne project, the prospective marriage of Charles to the Spanish Infanta, and the 1615 performance of George Ruggle’s Latin play, Ignoramus, finding in these contexts much that may have informed Jonson’s writing of the play. Helen Ostovich, “Hell for Lovers: Shades of Adultery in The Devil Is an Ass,” in Refashioning Ben Jonson (I,C), pp. 155–82, sees in the play, especially its sympathetic treatment of Frances Fitzdottrel, evidence that the critical commonplace of Jonson’s misogyny needs to be reexamined in light of the much more complex and informed thinking about women he derived from his relationships with the Sidney women. Peter Happé, “Staging The Devil Is an Ass in 1995,” BJJ 2 (1995), 239–46, analyzes Matthew Warchus’ 1995 production of the play at the Swan Theatre in light of theater critics’ responses to the production.

6. Epicoene, or The Silent Woman. The play has been edited by R. V. Holdsworth (1979).

Ian Donaldson, “Jonson and the Tother Youth,” in Jonson’s Magic Houses (I,B), pp. 6–25, begins by asserting that Truewit’s mention of “the tother youth” is a reference to Shakespeare, then considers the role played by a number of subsequent anecdotal and critical accounts of the two playwrights in the construction of their rivalrous relationship. In “Sir Francis Stewart: Jonson’s Overlooked Patron,” BJJ 2 (1995), 101–27, Martin Butler finds parallels between Stewart and Jonson’s life, politics, and interests in the Jacobean period that shed light on how the printed text of Epicoene and the 1616 Folio may have been received by readers who could understand the cultural symbolism of Jonson’s choice of both English and Scottish patrons. Bruce Thomas Boehrer, “Epicoene, Charivari, Skimmington,” ES 75 (1994), 17–33, aligns Jonson’s self-conscious status as a poet (and the function of Truewit in the play) with the deep ambivalences of popular traditions of retribution, arguing that, like the charivari, which is both retributive and festive, punitive and random, Jonsonian satire is both
discriminatory and popular. Kate D. Levin, “Unmasking Epicoene: Jonson’s Dramaturgy for the Commercial Theater and Court,” in New Perspectives on Ben Jonson (I,C), pp. 128–53, uses Epicoene to illustrate some characteristically Jonsonian aspects of structure, characterization, movement, and stagecraft that are also present in the masques, contending that while some of the elements common to both forms may have made a play like Epicoene obscure and difficult for theater audiences, these same elements constituted formal virtues for audiences of court entertainments who were already deeply familiar with the essential meaning and dramatic function of the spectacles they attended.

Marjorie Swann, “Refashioning Society in Ben Jonson’s Epicoene,” SEL 38 (1998), 297–315, finds Jonson using Epicoene to explore how social relations based on ancestry and bloodlines can be simultaneously transformed and maintained in a proto–capitalist marketplace; Swann argues that while Dauphine’s economic empowerment subverts more traditional notions of patriarchal lineage, Mistress Otter’s self–destructive effort to attain social standing neutralizes Dauphine’s success by reinforcing a social order steeped in lineal reproduction. Karen Newman, “City Talk: Femininity and Commodification in Jonson’s Epicoene,” in her Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama (1991), locates the links in Jonson’s play between London women and commodities in the context of arguments made by Puritan critics and James I himself about the dangerously effeminate nature of excessive regard for clothes, and she contends that the emergent feminization of fashion in the first decades of Stuart England points to a larger cultural process of gendering conspicuous consumption (by men and women alike) as feminine. Asserting that Newman’s arguments about capitalist anxiety and the feminine are reductive and anachronistic, W. David Kay, “Epicoene, Lady Compton, and the Gendering of Jonsonian Satire on Extravagance,” BJJ 6 (1999), 1–33, argues that early modern critics of women were motivated more by misogyny than concerns over emergent capitalism, and that critiques of male extravagance as effeminate by Jonson and his contemporaries can be traced back to Ovid, Plautus, and Juvenal wherein softness, luxury, and foolish passion are equated with the feminized body. In “Masculine Silence: Epicoene and Jonsonian Stylistics,” CollL 21 (1994), 1–18, Douglas Lanier examines several of Jonson’s poems and statements about writing, rhetoric, and authorship for evidence of the “masculinization of poetic style,” then argues that in the characters of Morose, Dauphine, and Epicoene Jonson pieces together a “fantasy of masculine discursive control.”

In “Jonson’s Epicoene and the Complex Plot,” MRDE 11 (1999), 172–225, Barry B. Adams, who examines a number of plays by Jonson, Shakespeare, and Beaumont and Fletcher in light of Renaissance editions and treatments of Aristotle’s Poetics known to have been in Jonson’s library, suggests that Epicoene’s final act is formally and thematically consistent with other Aristotelian “recognition” plays written by Jonson and his contemporaries.
7. *Every Man in His Humour*. The quarto version of the play has been edited recently by Robert S. Miola (2000).

In ‘“Composing the Imperfect”: Ridicule and the Rhetoric of Generosity in Jonson’s *Every Man in His Humour*,’ *BJJ* 2 (1995), 129–41, David M. Whalen contends that the play is deeply rooted in a rhetorical mode of satire that seeks to persuade and teach, rather than ridicule and scorn.

8. *Every Man Out of his Humour*. The play has been edited by Helen Ostovich (2001).

Focusing on Carlo Buffone’s notorious line, “Would I had one of Kemps shoes to throw after You” (4.8.145–46), Bruce Thomas Boehrer, “The Case of Will Kemp’s Shoes: *Every Man Out of His Humour* and the Bibliographic Ego,” *BJJ* 7 (2000), 271–95, examines the editorial history of the play, especially as that history has been shaped by Herford and Simpson’s Oxford edition. Matthew Steggle, “Charles Chester and Ben Jonson,” *SEL* 39 (1999), 313–26, contends that the tavern railer Charles Chester was the basis for Carlo Buffone in *Every Man Out*, and suggests that the close parallels between Buffone and a person Jonson knew compel us to re-evaluate the play as being concerned in part with a rather precarious dissociation of Jonsonian satire from the kind of tavern railing Chester represented.

Helen M. Ostovich, ‘‘So Sudden and Strange a Cure’: A Rudimentary Masque in *Every Man Out of His Humour*,” *ELR* 22 (1992), 315–32, argues that the transformative dramatic impact of the Queen’s appearance on stage in the original conclusion of *Every Man Out* can be fully appreciated only if its masque-like qualities are understood; focusing on numerous conceptual, political, and dramatic resemblances between the concluding scene and masques and civic pageants held throughout Elizabeth’s reign, Ostovich suggests that the original conclusion, reproduced in the printed quarto and folio versions, balanced the play’s larger satiric energies with something that was—at least briefly—mystical, redemptive, and instructive. In a subsequent essay, ‘‘To Behold the Scene Full’: Seeing and Judging in *Every Man Out of His Humour*,” *Re-Presenting Ben Jonson* (1,C), pp. 76–92, Ostovich analyzes the quarto and folio versions of the Paul’s Walk scene, seeing in Jonson’s depiction of this crowded London space the opportunity for theater audiences (and subsequently, readers of the printed texts) to identify with and learn from the many characters who briefly interact there.

Concerned with the significance of “theatrical-self referentiality” in Renaissance drama, Anne Owens, “The Theatre as a Mirror Held to the Theatre: *Everyman out of His Humour* and *Hamlet*,” *QWERTY* (1996), 73–86, argues that *Everyman Out* is often controlling and didactic, suggesting Jonson’s self-important notion of drama’s potential impact; in *Hamlet*, however, the theater’s power to bring about change is often depicted as more tentative and limited.

Recent criticism, following Anne Barton’s lead in *Ben Jonson: Dramatist* (1984), has tended to view Jonson’s late play as expressing nostalgia for Elizabethan times. Julie Sanders, “‘The Day’s Sports Devised in the Inn’: Jonson’s *The New Inn* and Theatrical Politics,” *MLR* 91 (1996), 545–60, however, sees the play as a product of Caroline theater and politics; focusing largely on the role of The Light Heart in the drama, Sanders contends that the Inn is a space that brings together many specifically Caroline concerns such as the social status of alehouses, the recruitment of citizen militias after Charles I’s accession, and the use of female actresses in French theater. Comparing women’s emotional bonds and financial arrangements as depicted in the Frampul home—and in the Revels at the Inn—with historical/anecdotal evidence from households in the period, Helen Ostovich, “Mistress and Maid: Women’s Friendship in *The New Inn*,” *BJJ* 4 (1997), 1–26, contends—contra Barton—that *The New Inn* is not only Caroline in its preoccupations, but also somewhat futuristic in its representation of a Caroline Jonsonian vision of “equal interdependence between men and women.” In “‘But yet the Lady, Th’heir, Enjoys the Land’: Heraldry, Inheritance and Nat(ion)al Households in Jonson’s *The New Inn*,” *MRDE* 11 (1999), 226–63, Sheila M. Walsh focuses on Shelee-nien’s reconstruction of her household and contends that Jonson uses the space of The Light Heart to examine a range of current social and political issues such as the inheritance of property by daughters, the status of long-standing familial notions of Englishness, and new categories of citizenship.

John Lee, “On Reading *The Tempest* Autobiographically: Ben Jonson’s *The New Inn*,” *ShStud* 34 (1996), 1–26, reads Goodstock as a response to Prospero—that is, as a self-portrait of Jonson—and argues that the play supplants Prospero, who represents an inferior Shakespearean imagination, with Goodstock, who represents the superior Jonsonian imagination. Nick Rowe, “‘My Best Patron’: William Cavendish and Jonson’s Caroline Dramas,” *SCen* 9 (1994), 197–212, who also briefly discusses *A Tale of a Tub*, *The Sad Shepherd*, and *The Magnetic Lady*, argues that Cavendish’s patronage had a significant impact on Jonson when he wrote *The New Inn*, seeing in some of the play’s thematic concerns (swordmanship and horses) and the character of Lovel traces of Cavendish’s influence.

10. *The Magnetic Lady*. The play has been edited by Peter Happé (2000).

Focusing primarily on the dramatic fates of Placentia and Pleasance, Helen Ostovich, “The Appropriation of Pleasure in *The Magnetic Lady*,” *SEL* 34 (1994), 425–42, looks at both the frame play and the inner play to argue that Jonson subordinates the female characters to the control of the male characters by denying them their pleasure and strongly endorsing the patriarchal appropriation and degradation of their reproductive bodies. In “Ecclesiastical Censorship of
Early Stuart Drama: The Case of Jonson’s *The Magnetic Lady,*” *MP* 89 (1992), 469–81, Martin Butler surveys past critical efforts to determine why the drama was censored, then argues that Poland’s malapropistic references to Arminians in the fifth scene of Act 1 would have troubled the Court of High Commission during the heated religious debates of the early 1630s.

11. *Poetaster.* The play has been edited by T. G. S. Cain (1996).

In “Horace the Second, or, Ben Jonson, Thomas Dekker, and the Battle for Augustan Rome,” in Paul Franssen and Ton Hoenselaars, ed. *The Author as Character: Representing Historical Writers in Western Literature* (1999), pp. 118–30, Matthew Steggle contends that in *Poetaster* Jonson claims Horace and the literary heritage of Augustan Rome for his project of ennobling plays, while in *Satiromastix* Dekker looks to Horace for much more limited and immediate concerns about the theater. Seeking to qualify the critical consensus that Jonson enthusiastically endorsed royal absolutism, Tom Cain, ‘‘Satyres, That Girde and Fart at the Time’: *Poetaster* and the Essex Rebellion,” in *Refashioning Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 48–70, reads the play for the ways in which it comments on the Essex rebellion, specifically Jonson’s critique of how Essex was handled by the Elizabethan court.

12. *The Sad Shepherd.* No individual edition of the play is currently in print.

Julie Sanders, “Jonson, *The Sad Shepherd* and the North Midlands,” *BJJ* 6 (1999), 49–68, reads Jonson’s late unfinished play in light of its preoccupation with the topographical specificity of its three scenic locations—Nottingham Castle, Sherwood Forest, and the landscape surrounding Belvoir Castle—and argues that Jonson’s handling of rural witchcraft and Maudlin locates the play squarely in regional and national issues of the late 1630s rather than in a nostalgic past.

13. *Sejanus, His Fall.* The play has been edited by Philip J. Ayres (1999).


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Sejanus and Coriolanus,” MRDE 5 (1991), 181–93, considers both classical and contemporary accounts of bodily torture and dismemberment and finds in both plays a common reliance on the body-as-text metaphor to explore the links between politics and tragedy.


Karen Newman, “Engendering the News,” The Elizabethan Theatre, XIV (1996), 49–69, analyzes how The Staple of News positions the emergent publication of news pamphlets within the seventeenth-century English political economy, then turns to the ways in which materialist, economic, and sexual issues converge in the play’s allegorical and dramatic efforts to organize news, moral fable, and gossip hierarchically. Julie Sanders, “Print, Popular Culture, Consumption, and Commodification in The Staple of News,” in Refashioning Ben Jonson (I,C), pp. 183–207, finds in the play a subtle historicist reading of how print was engaged with a number of other important political, cultural, and financial developments. For Mark Z. Muggli, “Ben Jonson and the Business of News,” SEL 32 (1992), 323–40, who reads the play in the context of how news is treated in other Jonson plays, poems, and masques of the 1620s, The Staple of News offers a sophisticated analysis of journalism that subordinates news to drama, but also intimates that the two forms of reporting have much in common. Interested in the similarities between the status of news in seventeenth-century England and the status of the New Historicism anecdote in contemporary literary criticism, Ton Hoenselaars, “Rumor, News and Commerce in Ben Jonson’s The Staple of News,” in Rumeurs et nouvelles au temps de la Renaissance, ed. M. T. Jones-Davies (1997), pp. 143–65, argues that the play’s treatment of the relation between rumor and news self-consciously expresses Jonson’s views about his role in the transition of drama from its popular origins to literary art, from its oral beginnings to printed text deserving of close study.
15. *Volpone, or the Fox.* The play has been edited by Phillip Brockbank (1996) and Brian Parker (2000).

In “Unknown Ends: *Volpone,*” in *Jonson’s Magic Houses* (I,B), pp. 106–24, Ian Donaldson begins by surveying the concluding acts of several Jonson comedies, then turns to a reading of *Volpone,* noting how the play, inasmuch as it privileges processes over endings and refuses to offer comedic reconciliations, fails to comply with generic expectations and conventions. Alexander Leggatt, “*Volpone: The Double Plot Revisited,*” in *New Perspectives on Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 89–105, works through structural and thematic parallels between the actions of Volpone and Sir Pol, then argues that such parallels reveal significant oppositions between the two characters, oppositions that make their dramatic interactions and reversals unsettling. James D. Redwine, Jr, “Volpone’s ‘Sport’ and the Structure of Jonson’s *Volpone,*” *SEL* 34 (1994), 301–21, analyzes Volpone’s sadistic treatment of other characters—his “sport”—in the first three acts, then explores via a scene-by-scene analysis of Act 5 how earlier forms of punishment shape the outcome of the play in such a way that Volpone is ultimately justly punished.

Richard Dutton, “The Lone Wolf: Jonson’s Epistle to *Volpone,*” in *Refashioning Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 114–33, reads the 1607 Epistle in light of the sequence of Jonson’s several confrontations with authority, from the *Isle of Dogs* affair to the implication of involvement in the Gunpowder Plot, finding in this early critical work an author who was at pains to disguise the fact that he was traumatized by such encounters with the state. Howard Marchitell, “Desire and Domination in *Volpone,*” *SEL* 31 (1991), 287–308, considers paternal notions of authorship and the complexities of asserting one’s identity in the theater-like fluid world of an emergent market economy. Concerned with the relational dynamics that Jonson imposes on his characters, Laura Tosi, “Violent Communication and Verbal Deception in Ben Jonson’s *Volpone* and the *Alchemist,*” *Prosper* 6 (1999), 147–61, first notes the playwright’s aggressive behavior in conflicts with rival playwrights and Inigo Jones, then compares the relationships between character couplings (Face-Subtle, Volpone-Mosca, knaves-dupes), arguing that Jonson’s portrayals of violent interactions are politically aware responses to contemporary anxieties. For James Hirsh, “Cynicism and the Futility of Art in *Volpone,*” in *New Perspectives on Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 106–27, an analysis of *Volpone’s* “corrosive cynicism” reveals that Jonson’s own view of his ability to transform the world with his plays is comparably cynical.

also finds the depiction of Venice—its topography, culture, and language—in *Volpone* remarkably well-informed given that Jonson never visited the city, and he analyzes the probable published and personal sources of the playwright’s knowledge in light of how that knowledge was selectively and purposefully used to represent the urban experience of living in London. Jonathan Bate, “The Elizabethans in Italy,” in Jean-Pierre Maquerlot and Michele Willems, ed. *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare’s Time* (1996), pp. 55–74, examines *Volpone*, especially the actions of Sir Pol, in light of real and fictional accounts of Venice by Henry Wotton, Thomas Coryate, and Thomas Nashe.


**IV. Studies of the Masques and Entertainments**

**A. General Studies.** Leeds Barroll, “Theatre as Text: The Case of Queen Anna and the Jacobean Court Masque,” in A. L. Magnusson and C. E. McGee, ed. *The Elizabethan Theatre, XIV* (1996), pp. 175–93, considers the relationship between James I’s Queen and the aristocratic court theater in the particular contexts of *The Masque of Blackness* and *Oberon*; in his reading of these masques and a range of contemporary descriptions of court performances, Barroll finds that such performative events are far too complexly situated in multiple discourses—including dance—to be easily appropriated for the kinds of post-modern narratives of cultural history that have structured much recent criticism of the theater. In a subsequent essay, “Inventing the Stuart Masque,” in David Bevington and Peter Holbrook, ed. *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque* (1998), pp. 121–43, Barroll underscores the importance of Queen Anne to the institutionalization of the Stuart court masque, emphasizing the extent of her contributions to Daniel’s *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* and Jonson’s *The Masque of Blackness* and arguing that the Queen profoundly understood the power of ceremonial spectacle and used it to fashion an identity for herself at court. Stephen Orgel’s richly illustrated essay, “Marginal Jonson,” in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, pp. 144–75, similarly sees Queen Anne as having a significant impact on the
Masque, especially in its complicated use of blackness to express her exoticism and heroism. Nevertheless, Orgel argues that although Anne was primarily drawn to Jonson because his erudition gave a certain legitimacy to the entertainments she instigated, the marginalia of the text of the Masque link Jonson’s erudition to James’s own self-image as scholar-king and thus ultimately subjugate the Queen to the power of the “sovereign and masculine word.”

Peter Holbrook, “Jacobean Masques and the Jacobean Peace,” in The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque, pp. 67–87, finds in Daniel’s The Twelve Goddesses and Jonson’s The Masque of Queens evidence of disparities between royal ideology and that of the masques’ authors or sponsors: Daniel subtly promotes his support of military preparedness against Catholic Spain, although the masque’s sponsor, Queen Anne, advocated rapprochement with that country; Jonson accommodates both the King’s pacifist position and the Queen’s Spanish sympathies. In “The Politics of the Jacobean Masque” in J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring, ed. Theatre and Government under the Early Stuarts (1993), pp. 87–117, Graham Parry contends that although Jonson’s masques were the most consistently emphatic in their affirmation of James’s power, eyewitness accounts of such performances suggest that court audiences paid much more attention to comic antics, food, costumes, and dances than to a given masque’s words.

Tom Bishop, “The Gingerbread Host: Tradition and Novelty in the Jacobean Masque,” in The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque, pp. 88–120, concentrates on the performative aspects of Oberon, the Fairy Prince, the masque Jonson wrote to celebrate the New Year’s Day of Prince Henry’s first—and last—full year of majority, and argues that the physical presence of Henry performing in the masque shortly before his death gave it a uniquely symbolic significance that gets lost when we try to assimilate it within a larger discursive model of masque politics. In “Jonson, the Antimasque, and the ‘Rules of Flattery,’” in The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque, pp. 176–96, Hugh Craig contends—contra Greenblatt—that Jonson’s antimasques frequently critiqued the royal power that the masques themselves were ostensibly intended to celebrate, thus putting on display before the King a rule/unruliness dialectic and increasingly giving Jonson an opportunity to express his “uninhibited, libidinous, violent, and anarchic impulses.”

Martin Butler, “Courtly Negotiations,” in The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque, pp. 20–40, interrogates previous New Historicist readings of masques which, by viewing court spectacles in the over-simplified terms of the subversion/containment debate, overlook more subtle forms of negotiation, accommodation, or realignment that masques accomplished; and he sees in Jonson’s Oberon and Neptune’s Triumph certain contradictions that are symptomatic of “faultlines” within Jacobean absolutism. In a subsequent essay, “Reform or Reverence? The Politics of the Caroline Masque,” in Theatre and Government under the Early Stuarts, pp. 118–56, Butler contends that past scholarship on the masques of the 1630s has allowed them to be unduly haunted by the events of 1642 and that more
recent scholarship by Kevin Sharpe has been too optimistic in viewing masques as sites for the fluid exchange of compliment and criticism. Butler argues that criticism of Caroline court drama must be much more alert to the complex ways that the production of meaning and the circumstances of that production converge in masques, and he offers close readings of works by Jonson, Townshend, Carew, and Davenant—and the historical/political contexts in which they were written—in order to demonstrate that with few exceptions court drama was largely an ineffective means of providing Charles with instruction as to how he should rule.

In “Classical Wonder in Jonson’s Masques,” *BJJ* 3 (1996), 39–57, Robert Behunin contends that the playwright employed the concept of wonder in its classical sense of an arousal of the mind to fresh knowledge and thus designed his court dramas to enable their viewers to gain access to “‘more removed mysteries.’” For John Peacock, “Ben Jonson’s Masques and Italian Culture,” in J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring, ed. *Theatre of the English and Italian Renaissance* (1991), pp. 73–94, who considers early court dramas by Daniel, Jonson, and Campion, an examination of the contexts in which Jonson attempted to distinguish himself from his rivals by resisting theories of representation employed in Italian court entertainments not only reveals the extent to which he nevertheless borrowed from them, but also how he became increasingly self-conscious about the masque as a literary form. In “The Stuart Court Masque and the Theatre of the Greeks,” *JWCI* 56 (1993), 183–208, Peacock locates the progressively contentious dispute between Jonson and Inigo Jones over the notion of “invention” in their very different responses to the neo-Aristotelian vogue in contemporary Italian theater, and he looks back from the end of that relation in 1631 to the collaboration that produced *Oberon*, seeing in the masque and Jones’s designs for it an intense effort—via Causaubon’s neo-classical interpretative schema—to revive the antique satyr play.

Richard W. Schoch, “(Im)pressing Texts and Spectacular Performance: The Quarrel between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones,” *Constructions* 9 (1994), 1–12, turns from specific differences between these collaborators regarding notions of representation and examines, instead, their increasingly irreconcilable positions on presentation. Alternatively, Joseph F. Loewenstein, “Printing and ‘the Multitudinous Presse’: The Contentious Texts of Jonson’s Masques,” in *Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio* (I,C), 168–91, considers Jonson’s intellectual quarrels with his early court drama-writing rival, Samuel Daniel, and argues that the former’s innovative use of the printed page in published texts of his masques and entertainments represents a range of strategies by which he could distinguish his work from Daniel’s. Jean MacIntyre, “Queen Elizabeth’s Ghost at the Court of James I: *The Masque of Blackness, Lord Hay’s Masque, The Haddington Masque,* and *Oberon,*” *BJJ* 5 (1998), 81–100, surveys a number of masques written by Jonson, Daniel, and Campion, seeing in Jacobean court dramas a subtle effort to continue to
honor Elizabeth, even as they sought to subordinate her to James. Finding a number of parallels of structure, theme, and characterization between the works of Joyce—especially Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Ulysses—and Jonson’s masques and late plays, Robert Frumking, “James Joyce and the Masques of Ben Jonson,” JIL 21 (1992), 3–24, contends that Joyce was not only very familiar with many of Jonson’s works, but was also deeply influenced by them. Jose Manuel Gonzalez Fernandez de Sevilla, “The Court Drama of Ben Jonson & Calderon,” SEDERI 9 (1998), 281–90, briefly examines some thematic and political preoccupations common to the court drama of these two playwrights.

In “Dark Incontinents: The Discourse of Race and Gender in Three Renaissance Masques,” RenD 23 (1992), 139–63, Yumna Siddiqui comparatively reads The Masques of Blackness and Beauty against Middleton’s The Triumphs of Honour and Virtue in terms of their respective treatments of several themes, including the body, sexuality, and the emergent discourse of science in the period; for Siddiqui, Jonson’s masques are centered on the monarch’s authority over the whitening of the racialized body, while Middleton’s masque celebrates a potential relationship between merchants and racial Others. Siddiqui contends that in general court dramas wove together discourses of postcolonialism and gender in order to glorify the court and city. Focusing on Jonson’s The Masque of Blackness, Titus Andronicus, and a Restoration adaptation of that play by Thomas Ravenscroft, Joyce Green Macdonald, “‘The Force of Imagination’: The Subject of Blackness in Shakespeare, Jonson, and Ravenscroft,” RenP (1991), 53–74, looks at differences among these works’ treatments of race and argues that although Shakespeare’s play presents a largely incoherent picture of European thinking about blackness, the two subsequent dramas can be located within an influential discourse of demonization of Africans that cohered well with ideologies that nurtured and sustained the burgeoning slave trade. In “Masks of Blackness, Masks of Whiteness: Coloring the (Sexual) Subject in Jonson, Cary, and Fletcher,” Thamyris 4 (1997), 223–47, Suzy Beemer shows how Masques of Blackness and Beauty promote the superiority of whiteness and Englishness, even as they associate sexuality with blackness, then contends that Jonson’s masques seek to suppress white women’s sexuality by displacing desire onto black women, while Cary and Fletcher’s plays strengthen the link between blackness and sexuality by promoting, respectively, the significance of morality and chastity for white women. Rocco Coronato, “Inducting Pocahontas,” Symbiosis 2 (1998), 24–38, considers two court dramas by Jonson (Christmas His Masque and The Vision of Delight) performed before Pocahontas in London in 1616, arguing that her presence at these performances set in motion a complex set of dialectical relations between the self and other, reasoning and strangeness, and paganism and Christianity.

Three recent essays have focused on Jonson’s late entertainments. In “Courtesies of Place and Arts of Diplomacy in Ben Jonson’s Last Two Entertainments
for Royalty,” SCen 9 (1994), 147–71. Cedric C. Brown discusses two country-house entertainments (Welbeck and Bolsover) written for royal visits in 1633 and 1634. Brown examines the political and financial status of these entertainments’ hosts as well as aspects of their staging, noting some resemblances between these late works and Jonson’s early court dramas. James Fitzmaurice, “William Cavendish and Two Entertainments by Ben Jonson,” BJJ 5 (1998), 63–80, argues that Cavendish not only collaborated intensely with Jonson during the writing of Welbeck and Bolsover, but also learned enough from this collaboration to write his first full-length play a year later. Timothy Raylor, “‘Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue’: William Cavendish, Ben Jonson, and the Decorative Scheme of Bolsover Castle,” RenQ 52 (1999), 402–39, analyzes the architecture and decorations of the Castle of Bolsover; finding links between its decorative schemes and Cavendish’s life and poetry, Raylor contends that the setting for the Bolsover entertainment expresses many of the contradictions of its owner’s complex personality represented dramatically by Jonson in the text he wrote to be performed there.

Recent essays by Martin Butler consider entertainments and masques by Jonson that have otherwise received little scholarly attention. In “‘We Are One Mans All’: Jonson’s The Gipsies Metamorphosed,” YES 21 (1991), 252–73, Butler refutes critical studies that see the masque as subversive, arguing instead that an examination of the masque’s circumstances of production—both its initial performance at Burley-on-the-Hill and a revised version performed a month later at court during the 1621 summer recess of Parliament—suggests a far more complicated relationship among Jonson, the masque, and its patron, Buckingham, than merely one of subversion. Given that Jonson had been promised a position in the proposed Academy of Honor and therefore stood to gain much from his relationship with Buckingham, James, and Prince Charles, Butler contends that he constructed a rather positive and supportive fable for his patron in which Buckingham’s integrity is “playfully questioned” in the presence of the King, but ultimately found to be intact. In “Ben Jonson’s Pan’s Anniversary and the Politics of Early Stuart Pastoral,” ELR 22 (1992), 369–404, Butler considers the court drama’s links to the politics of its moment of production; he examines the role of Jonson’s masque in the development of court iconography and the masque’s status as an intervention in the complex politics generated by the European crisis of 1619–21. Concluding that Pan’s Anniversary was first performed on January 6, 1621, not, as critics have maintained, in the summer of 1620, Butler argues that its “clear political agenda,” to support and encourage James’s cautious approach to growing religious tensions in Europe, contributed to an emergent rift between King and court. In “Jonson’s News from the New World, the ‘Running Masque,’ and the Season of 1619–20,” MRDE 6 (1993), 153–78, Butler contends that News and the “Running Masque,” both of which were performed during an especially active season of court dramas between
Christmas 1619 and Shrovetide 1620, are not, as P. R. Sellin argued, the same masque. Based on his analysis of records and personal correspondence, Butler asserts that News was performed no more than two or three times during the Christmas-Shrovetide season; then he depicts the importance of running masques as social rituals that affirmed ties between the court and extra-court political elites. In “Restoring Astraea: Jonson’s Masque for the Fall of Somerset,” ELH 61 (1994), 807–27, Butler and David Lindley see The Golden Age Restored as a useful case for testing strategies of interpreting Jacobean court drama, and they argue that Jonson’s masque is deeply engaged with some of the political traumas of 1616—in particular, the judicial proceedings following the death of Sir Thomas Overbury in the Tower and the factional struggles that brought about the fall of Robert Carr and the rise of George Villiers.

Seeing Jonson’s masques as a site where “low” or “sub”-discourses (witches’ talk, popular-speak, lingua franca, alchemical lingo, body language, obscenity, gossip, and “native” foreign language and dialects) proliferated, Patricia Fumerton, “Subdiscourse: Jonson Speaking Low,” ELR 25 (1995), 76–96, contends that For the Honor of Wales (1618) reveals a linguistic continuum among Welsh, Scottish, and English dialects; for Fumerton, this “continuous variation” points to a linguistic realism—a “here-and-now-ness”—which, absent from prescriptive notions of linguistic use, undermines Bakhtin’s heteroglossic theory of a major/minor language binary and supports Deleuze and Guattari’s thesis that all major languages are always already becoming minor languages of themselves. In “Jonson’s Genius at Theobalds: The Poetics of Estrangement,” BJJ 7 (2000), 297–323, James M. Sutton considers the themes of friendship and hospitality in Jonson’s entertainment at Theobolds and finds ample evidence of Jonson’s recent estrangement from Robert Cecil.

B. Individuals Masques and Entertainments
1. The Masque of Blackness. Asserting that “climate theory” has been largely ignored in the scholarship on early modern notions of race, Mary Floyd-Wilson, “Temperature, Temperance, and Racial Difference in Ben Jonson’s The Masque of Blackness,” ELR 28 (1998), 183–209, considers the ways in which Jonson’s masque not only examines the received wisdom on the relationship between external temperature and physiology, but also anticipates the intellectual shift in the mid-seventeenth century from viewing race within the paradigm of natural philosophy to constructing race in terms of England’s increasingly politicized perception of Africa. For Floyd-Wilson, who reads Blackness in light of one of Jonson’s primary sources, William Camden’s Britannia, the complex politics of its reception at court, and various early modern theories about the origins of the Scottish people, the masque captures an important transitional moment in England’s thinking about what it meant to be English. Bernadette D. Andrea, “Black Skin, The Queen’s Masques: Africanist Ambivalence and Feminine
Author(ity) in the Masques of Blackness and Beauty,” ELR 29 (1999), 246–81, is interested in how Jonson’s two masques conjoin various modes of authority (political, literary, female) with transgressive sexuality and evolving discourses of race, and she argues that Queen Anne’s performance of “blackness” and “beauty” are simultaneously contained by and subversive of contemporary patriarchalist/imperialist paradigms of “whiteness” and “beauty.”

In “‘Defacing the Carcass’: Anne of Denmark and Jonson’s The Masque of Blackness,” in Refashioning Ben Jonson (I,C), pp. 93–113, Clare McManus considers the tensions created in both performative and textual versions of the Masque by the juxtaposition of the “forceful feminine presence” of Queen Anne with the generic functions of the masque form in general and the specifically Jacobean political and cultural contexts in which Jonson wrote Blackness. Kim F. Hall, “Sexual Politics and Cultural Identity in The Masque of Blackness,” in Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, ed. The Performance of Power: Theatrical Discourse and Politics (1991), pp. 3–18, considers how imperialism, race, and gender intersect in the Masque of Blackness and Beauty; such entertainments, Hall argues, reveal the extent to which racial and sexual difference complicated the court’s efforts to promote itself as the “center of a stable, ordered, and ultimately English world.”


2. Hymenaei. In “‘Love’s Friend and Stranger to Virginitie’: The Politics of the Virginal Body in Ben Jonson’s Hymenaei and Thomas Campion’s The Lord Hay’s Masque,” ELH 63 (1996), 833–49, Marie H. Loughlin contends that these two masques’ gestures at unity—royal, marital, and national—are complicated and disrupted by early modern constructions of the body; contrasting Jonson’s efforts to represent the cultural complexities of virginal desire in the context of Frances Howard’s virginity with Campion’s less problematic representation of virginity, Loughlin concludes that the differences between these two masques can be traced to their authors’ different priorities in assessing the ideological links between the virginal body and the Stuart state. Anna Maria Palombi Cataldi, “The Union of England and Scotland Represented at Court in Ben Jonson’s Hymenaei (1666),” in Dieter Stein and Rosanna Sornicola, ed., The Virtues of Language: History in Language, Linguistics and Texts (1998), pp. 201–11, sees James I’s promotion of the Union between the English and Scottish as the primary subtext of the masque’s marital politics.

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3. *The Irish Masque*. James M. Smith, “Effaced History: Facing the Colonial Contexts of Ben Jonson’s *Irish Masque at Court*,” *ELH* 65 (1998), 297–321, considers nationalist ideologies linked to the pacification of Ireland and the factionalism of religious politics in James’s court, arguing that the *Irish Masque* represented an important contribution to shaping the emergent cultural discourse on the status of Ireland in the English nation state. In “Religious Politics in Ben Jonson’s *The Irish Masque*,” *CahiersE* 55 (1999), 27–34, Thomas Rist reads the masque as Jonson’s enthusiastic endorsement of Anglicanism over Irish Catholicism and, by extension, English Catholicism. Jim Sullivan, “‘Languages Such as Men Doe Vse’: The Ethnic English of Ben Jonson’s *The Irish Masque at Court*,” *MichA* 31 (1999), 1–22, examines linguistic elements of the Hiberno-English dialect that were patched together for the masque, concluding that Jonson’s knowledge of Hibernian English was limited and that his effort to represent the speech of the Irish was also constrained by what his audience could understand.


5. *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*. Carol. P. Marsh-Lockett, “Pleasure Reconcild to Vertue in Historical Context,” in *New Perspectives on Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 154–64, argues that the 1619 Twelfth Night masque is an exploration into the relationships between gender and power that examines the patriarchal assumptions of the Jacobean court. John Mulryan, “Mythic Interpretations of Ideas in Jonson’s *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*,” *BJJ* 1 (1994), 63–76, contends that the masque’s interpretation of the philosophical problem posed by the struggle between pleasure and virtue was influenced by Vincenzo Cartari’s *Imagini* (1556) and Natale Conti’s *Mythologiae* (1567).

of a succession of published accounts of witchcraft—including James I’s—and argues that Jonson strips these imaginary women of their power in order to re-invest Queen Anne with a more legitimate, though still magical, form of power as a limited challenge to her husband’s patriarchal authority. Marion Wynne-Davies, “The Queen’s Masque: Renaissance Women and the Seventeenth-Century Court Masque,” in S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, ed. Gloriana’s Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance (1992), pp. 79–104, explores how the involvement of women in the political world of the court was represented in the Masque of Queens and other court dramas, especially the three masques in Part II of Lady Mary Wroth’s Urania.

V. Studies of the Poetry

A. General Studies. Arguing that classical and Renaissance notions about the “nature of true nobility” are at the thematic and technical center of Jonson’s poetic project and intellectual development, Michael McCanles, Jonsonian Discriminations: The Humanist Poet and the Praise of True Nobility (1992), analyzes each of the non-dramatic poems to demonstrate that Jonson was much more self-conscious about his status as a humanist poet than has previously been acknowledged. Both historicist and formalist in its approach, Barbara Smith, The Women in Ben Jonson’s Poetry (1995), also surveys the non-dramatic verse—especially the epideictic poems—and seeks to historicize Jonson’s poetic representations of women by relocating them in the context of his relations with female patrons and of his reading of Juvenal, Martial, and Horace. In Precious Nonsense: The Gettysburg Address, Ben Jonson’s Epitaphs on His Children, and Twelfth Night (1998) Stephen Booth analyzes Jonson’s poems “On My First Sonne” and “On My First Daughter” for the sake of illuminating their relative merits as great poetry.

Robert C. Evans, “Wit and the Power of Jonson’s Epigrammes,” in Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, ed. The Wit of Seventeenth-Century Poetry (1995), pp. 101–18, considers the impact of Quintilian’s writings on Jonson’s repeated use of the term “wit” in his Epigrammes, seeing in 24 of that collection’s 133 poems a close association between the individual/social power of wit and the power of engendering life. Stella P. Revard, “Classicism and Neo-Classicism in Jonson’s Epigrammes and The Forrest,” in Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio, pp. 138–67, argues that Jonson’s choice of poetic genres, the order in which he arranged his poems, and his keen interest in imitating classical styles were deeply influenced by the work of neo-Latin poets such as Pontano, Marullus, and Johannes Secundus. Catherine Bates, “Much Ado about Nothing: The Contexts of Jonson’s Forrest,” EIC 42 (1992), 24–35, argues that the word “not,” which appears in all of the poems, suggests a larger unifying poetic technique throughout, one in which Jonson affirms through negation and thus constantly calls his reader’s attention to the significance of nothing. Asserting that Jonson’s
poems have long been read as promoting a classically-based secular ethics, James P. Crowley, “The ‘Honest Style’ of Ben Jonson’s Epigrams and The Forest,” _Ren&R_ 20 (1996), 33–56, re-examines Jonson’s education and learning and contends that his poetry is deeply engaged with key spiritual, ethical, and religious issues.

Arguing that Jonson’s oft-anthologized poems to Celia subordinate classical tradition and contemporary experience to the “author’s sensibility,” Bruce Thomas Boehrer, “Ben Jonson and the Traditio Basiorum: Catullan Imitation in The Forest 5 and 6,” _PLL_ 32 (1996), 63–84, focuses on Jonson’s revision and adaptation of a Catullan lyric tradition regarding “the kiss” that includes Martial, neo-Latin imitators, and some early modern poets. Ian Donaldson, “The Story of Charis,” in _Jonson’s Magic Houses_ (I,B), 143–61, surveys critical interpretations of the narrative sequence of poems from _Underwood_, “A Celebration of Charis in Ten Lyric Pieces,” contending that because critics have often focused on the poems’ lyric function they have generally failed to interpret the larger narrative of the sequence. Alternatively, Donaldson finds a self-conscious concern with artistry in several passages throughout the sequence and concludes that “Charis” is not autobiographical, as some critics have argued, but rather works on two levels: on one level, Jonson tells the story of a love affair; on the other, he tells the story of how a poet renders such a story in poetry, examining the limits of his own authorial powers.

In “The Dates of Three Poems by Ben Jonson,” _HLQ_ 55 (1992), 279–94, Martin Butler addresses the larger intellectual and political concerns of three major poems from the 1620s subsequently published in _Underwood_ (“An Epistle to a Friend, to Persuade him to the Wars,” “An Epistle Answering to One that Asked to be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben,” and “A Speech According to Horace”) by more precisely establishing their dates of production through a careful analysis of the historical/political circumstances that informed them. Jean le Drew Metcalfe, “Subjecting the King: Ben Jonson’s Praise of James I,” _ESC_ 17 (1991), 135–49, argues that Jonson often endorses James I’s political views by elevating himself to an equal status with the King and linking the King’s values to his own poetic concerns.

Richard B. Wollman, “‘Speak That I May See Thee’: Aurality in Ben Jonson’s Print Poetry,” _BJJ_ 3 (1996), 21–37, contends that recent criticism has ignored the extent to which Jonson continued to worry about how his words and meanings in print would be received, and he offers examples of various techniques employed by the author to promote the hearing of his poetry over the experience of seeing it on the printed page. Stephen B. Dobranski, “Jonson’s Poetry Lost,” _ELR_ 30 (2000), 77–94, considers the author’s motives for calling attention to the missing final eight lines of the 1616 Folio version of the “Epistle to Elizabeth Countess of Rutland” in light of the Countess’ death in 1612 and in the context of other incomplete poems published in the 1640 Folio, concluding...
that Jonson’s decision to publish an incomplete version of the “Epistle” suggests both his ambivalence about the transition from manuscript to print publication and his desire to demonstrate his control over the latter.


Several recent essays have read Jonson’s poetry in conjunction with other seventeenth-century poets. Ian Donaldson, “Perishing and Surviving: The Poetry of Donne and Jonson,” *EIC* 51 (2001), 68–85, examines some of the differences between Jonson and Donne’s views on publication and posterity in light of their personal and poetic interactions. Mark Fortier, “The Muse in Donne and Jonson: A Post-Lacanian Study,” *MLS* 21 (1991), 90–104, finds that Donne and Jonson’s representations of the muse suggest that both poets subordinated themselves to the will of God and patrons even as they sought to advance themselves socially. John Lyon, “The Test of Time: Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne,” *EIC* 49 (1999), 1–21, considers elegies written for these three poets in the context of how seventeenth-century writers viewed the relation between posterity and literary value. Noting that Jonson and Herrick inscribe their names in their poetry much more than their contemporaries do, Line Cottegnies, “Le Poète et son double au XVIIe siècle: L’Inscription du nom dans la poésie de Jonson et de Herrick” (French), *EA* 49 (1996), 259–69, argues that Jonson frequently subordinates the subjects of his poems to the task of his own self-immortalization, while Herrick uses his name to promote a poetics of nostalgia and disenchantment. Joanna Martindale, “The Best Master of Virtue and Wisdom: The Horace of Ben Jonson and His Heirs,” in Charles Martindale and David Hopkins, ed. *Horace Made New: Horatian Influences on British Writing from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century* (1993), pp. 50–85, surveys poetic imitations of Horace in the writings of Jonson and the “sons of Ben” and finds that the father bequeathed to them the confidence to attempt increasingly sophisticated thematic and stylistic assimilations of classical ideas to contemporary English concerns.

B. *Individual Poems*

1. *Inviting a Friend to Supper*. Claude J. Summers, “Jonson’s ‘Inviting a Friend to Supper’ and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke,” *BJJ* 7 (2000), 343–51, suggests that the poem should be seen as a companion to the epigram “To William...”
Earl of Pembroke,” and concludes that Pembroke is most likely the unnamed friend invited to supper. Robert Cummings, “Liberty and History in Jonson’s Invitation to Supper,” *SEL* 40 (2000), 103–22, reads “Invitation” in the context of its sources (Martial), its complex preoccupation with liberty, and other contemporary English accounts of extravagant meals.

2. *On My First Sonne.* Suggesting that Jonson had the preface to Book 6 of Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* in mind when he wrote “On My First Sonne,” Kurt R. Niland and Robert C. Evans, “Quintilian and Jonson on the Deaths of Sons,” *Re: Artes Liberales* 20 (1994), 34–50, analyze how Jonson may have relied on but transformed Quintilian’s thoughts on the death of his sons as he struggled to express his own feelings of grief and loss over his son’s death. Hugh Wilson, “‘Morbus Satanicus’: The Psychomachia of the Deadly Sins in Ben Jonson’s ‘On My First Sonne,’” *BJJ* 7 (2000), 325–41, analyzes the poem in the context of work by other writers—early Christian and early modern—showing how the son’s death compels Jonson to confront three of the seven deadly sins (pride, wrath, and envy).

3. *On the Famous Voyage.* In “The Ordure of Things: Ben Jonson, Sir John Harington, and the Culture of Excrement in Early Modern England,” in *New Perspectives on Ben Jonson* (I,C), pp. 174–96, Bruce Thomas Boehrer sees in “Famous Voyage” both a thematic and structural concern with the rediscovery and preservation of discarded waste material, thus revising standard psychoanalytic readings of Jonson as an “anal neurotic.” Contending that “Famous Voyage” should be read as a critique and disruption of constructions of space in early modern London, Andrew McRae, “‘On the Famous Voyage’: Ben Jonson and Civic Space,” *EMLS* 4 (1998), 1–31, explores the cultural associations between voyages, water, and women that Jonson relies on to fashion a satiric response to the “grotesque urban body” and to imagine, mock heroically, an alternative civic space wherein high and low culture converge. Matthew Prineas, “‘Yet Once More’: An Allusion to Hebrews 12.26–27 in Ben Jonson’s ‘On the Famous Voyage,’” *BJJ* 6 (1999), 277–87, argues that Jonson’s allusion to Hebrews suggests the larger mock-epic ambition of the poem to test readers’ ability to distinguish between the praiseworthy and the worthless, the challenges of the present and the fabled conflicts of the past.

Jenkins, “From Common Wealth to Commonwealth: The Alchemy of ‘To Penshurst,’” *Clio* 25 (1996), 164–80, examines Jonson’s use of women in *The Alchemist* and “To Penshurst” to complicate, even subvert, the ideologies that underwrite the household/state analogy. Ann C. Christensen, “Reconsidering Ben Jonson and the ‘Centered Self,’” *SCRev* 13 (1996), 1–16, argues—against Thomas M. Greene and subsequent critics’ reliance on a gender-neutral or even masculine notion of self-hood—that in the country house poems (“To Penshurst” and “To Robert Wroth”) Jonson’s exploration of what the home signifies reveals a range of women-centered anxieties which are addressed at greater length in his comedies.


VI. Canon and Text

A. Canon. The Jonson canon has remained relatively stable since the publication of the 1640 Folio *Works*, which comprises nineteen plays, twenty-four masques and entertainments, three books of non-dramatic verse, two versions of a translation of Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, *Discoveries*, *An English Grammar*, and fragments of two plays: *The Sad Shepherd*, a pastoral, and *Mortimer His Fall*, a chronicle history.

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James Knowles, “Jonson’s Entertainment at Britian’s Burse,” in Re-Presenting Ben Jonson (I,C), pp. 114–51, restores this long-lost text to Jonson’s canon. Knowles provides an old-spelling text of the civic entertainment performed at the opening of the New Exchange in April 1609, with a brief introductory essay touching on issues related to the recently discovered manuscript and its provenance. In “‘They Say A Made a Good End’: Ben Jonson’s Epitaph on Thomas Nashe,” BJJ 3 (1996), 1–19, Katherine Duncan-Jones presents the transcription of a poem that is a new addition to the canon of Jonson’s poems: “They say a made a good end,” an elegy on Thomas Nashe, along with four associated shorter poems by Humphrey King and other writers. Subsequently, Duncan-Jones re-examines what is known of Nashe’s relationship with Jonson, hypothesizes that Nashe’s death, which she argues occurred in January–February 1601, may have been obscured by tensions related to Essex’s rebellion and execution, contends that Nashe’s recent problems with the civic authorities over the publication of Christs Teares over Jerusalem may have discouraged Jonson from publishing a tribute to him, and provides a close reading of the poem in which she demonstrates Jonson’s authorship. Brandon S. Centerwall, “‘Tell Me Who Can When a Player Dies’: Ben Jonson’s Epigram on Richard Burbage, and How It Was Lost to the Canon,” BJJ 4 (1997), 27–34, examines the historical evidence that points to Jonson’s authorship of this six-line poem, argues for its admission to the canon, then reconstructs the process by which the poem’s link to Jonson came to be marginalized in the Oxford Ben Jonson and subsequently removed from the canon of Jonson’s writings. For information on extant Jonson manuscripts, see the Index of English Literary Manuscripts: 1625–1700, Part 1 (1987), compiled by Peter Beal.

materials); and the related editions (inexpensive individual editions as well as selections, collections, and anthologies).

In “The CUP Ben Jonson: Ruminations on the Electronic Edition,” BJJ 5 (1998), 271–81, David L. Gants, the Electronic Editor of the Cambridge Jonson, reviews some of the more contentious debates over methods of scholarly editing that have emerged during the past two decades, then briefly examines two recent electronic editing projects (Jerome McGann’s edition of Dante Rosetti’s works and Peter Robinson’s edition of Chaucer) and discusses the four principles that have served as the basic editorial criteria for the Electronic component of the Cambridge Edition: expansiveness, portability, capaciousness, and inclusiveness. David Bevington, “Why Re-Edit Herford and Simpson?” in Re-Presenting Ben Jonson (I,C), pp. 20–38, reviews some of the disparities between editorial approaches to Shakespeare and Jonson’s texts, then foregrounds a number of important textual and editorial issues that need to be considered as the Cambridge Jonson is prepared. Sara van den Berg, “Marking His Place: Ben Jonson’s Punctuation,” EMLS 1 (1995), 1–25, examines several examples of the playwright’s characteristic use of punctuation in the context of humanist punctuation practices, and contends that many of these examples indicate the ways in which Jonson’s appropriation of such practices enhanced his authorial presence in his texts. Kevin J. Donovan, “Forms of Authority in the Early Texts of Every Man Out of His Humor,” in Re-Presenting Ben Jonson (I,C), pp. 59–75, considers the ways in which Jonson altered act/scene divisions and stage directions in the 1600 quarto text of Every Man Out for the version of the play included in the 1616 Folio, contending that changes made to the latter—in accordance with neo-classical dramatic practices—obscure many of the former text’s dramatic innovations. Such differences between quarto and Folio texts of Every Man Out and other Jonson plays, Donovan argues, raise important issues for the editors of the forthcoming Cambridge edition.

A number of recent essays have greatly enhanced our knowledge of how the 1616 Folio and some of the individual playtexts were printed. In “Patterns of Paper Use in the Workes of Beniamin Jonson (William Stansby, 1616),” SB 51 (1998), 127–53, David L. Gants demonstrates the significance of analyzing the various paper stocks used by Stansby in printing Jonson’s Workes; for Gants, who begins with a survey of technical developments in the past fifty years that have made the study of paper possible, an analysis of paper distribution throughout the 1616 Folio reveals how the printing of the text proceeded and when in that process Jonson made the revisions to the folio text of Every Man in his Humour. In “The Printing, Proofing and Press-Correction of Ben Jonson’s Folio Workes,” in Re-Presenting Ben Jonson (I,C), pp. 39–58, Gants examines the distribution of the 1616 Folio’s press variants and its press work, finding in this analysis important evidence of Stansby’s non-uniform printing–house practices that should be taken into consideration by future editors of Jonson’s texts. Similarly concerned
about the neglect of the 1616 Folio in twentieth-century textual criticism, Kevin J. Donovan, “Jonson’s Texts in the First Folio, in “Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio (I,C),” pp. 23–37, considers aspects of the printing of the Workes that call into question Herford and the Simpsons’ over-valuation of the 1616 Folio as copy-text for the Oxford edition.

Three essays by James A. Riddell have focused on the textual evidence of Jonson’s Workes. “The Concluding Pages of the Jonson Folio of 1616,” SB 47 (1994), 147–54, reviews recent critical attempts to historicize and theorize the revisions made to the conclusion of the folio text of The Golden Age Restored, then turns to bibliographical evidence, contending that the Astraea/Pallas version is the press-corrected state of the masque’s ending Jonson intended, not the original version of the ending as many scholars following Herford and Simpson have presumed. In “The Printing of the Plays in the Jonson Folio of 1616,” SB 49 (1996), 149–68, and “Jonson and Stansby and the Revisions of Every Man in His Humor,” MRDE 9 (1997), 81–91, Riddell considers several aspects of the printing of Jonson’s Workes and contends, among other things, that the text of Every Man In was the last play in the volume to be printed and that at least some of its revisions may have been mandated by the very material contingencies of its position in the printing sequence.


Working from analysis of twenty-four copies of the 1605 quarto text of Sejanus, Thomas O. Calhoun and Thomas L. Gravell, “Paper and Printing in Ben Jonson’s Sejanus (1605),” PBSA 87 (1993), 13–64, correct a number of mistakes previous bibliographers have made in their descriptions of watermarks, determine that twenty of the copies they examined contain rarely—used English paper originally intended to serve as James I’s letterhead, offer a signature-by-signature analysis of how the text was printed, and conclude that Jonson may have made arrangements to have Sejanus printed on English paper with royal watermarks to
indicate that the play had been sanctioned by the King. In “Jonson’s Authoriza-
tion of Type in Sejanus and Other Early Quartos,” SB 44 (1991), 254–65, John
Jowett argues for a correlation between the verbal and textual that cannot prop-
erly be rendered in modernized editions or photographic facsimiles. Focusing
on Celia’s twenty-one-line speech in the attempted rape scene that appears in
Act 3 of Volpone, Karen Pirnie, “In Changed Shapes: The Two Jonsons’ Volpones
and Textual Editing,” Comitatus 27 (1996), 42–54, examines differences between
the quarto and folio versions of this speech, especially differences in punctua-
tion, and then considers how several modern editions of the play have treated
such variants in light of recent textual and editorial scholarship.

Martin Butler, and David Gants (Electronic editor), will be published simult-
aneously in both print and digital editions. The print edition will consist of
three volumes of modern-spelling primary texts and two additional volumes
of secondary material, such as literary essays, annotations, and illustrations. The
electronic edition will be a Multi-Media Scholarly Archive consisting of the
modern-spelling Print Edition in digital form, a parallel old-spelling edition,
additional annotation and commentary, and digital facsimiles of a wide array of
print and manuscript sources, as well as an expanding archive of sound, video,
and VRML files.

Harp, provides annotated modern-spelling editions of three plays (Volpone,
Epicoene, and The Alchemist) and three masques (The Masque of Blackness, Mercury
Vindicated from the Alchemists at Court, and Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue), selected
contextual readings from other works by Jonson and his contemporaries, a
selection of background and source materials, and twelve critical essays by well-
known scholars. A collection edited by Margaret Jane Kidnie (2000) includes
annotated modern-spelling editions of Poetaster, Or, the Arraignment; Sejanus His
Fall; The Devil Is an Ass; and The New Inn, Or, the Light Heart. Ben Jonson: Four
Comedies (1997), ed. Helen Ostovich, includes annotated modern-spelling texts
of Volpone, Epicoene, The Alchemist, and Bartholomew Fair. The Selected Plays of
Ben Jonson (1989), ed. Martin Butler, offers annotated modern-spelling editions
of The Alchemist, Bartholomew Fair, The New Inn, and A Tale of a Tub. The Alchem-
ist and Other Plays (1995), ed. Gordon Campbell, provides annotated modern-
spelling editions of Volpone, or the Fox; Epicoene, or the Silent Woman; The Alchemist;
and Bartholomew Fair. A recent edition of Jonson’s poetry is Selected Poems of Ben
of individual plays include The Devil is an Ass (1996), ed. Theatre Communications
E. State of Criticism. If the 1980s witnessed the decentering of Shakespeare in the wake of post-structuralism, then in the 1990s a little more space has been cleared in the scholarship for his most famous rival. Moreover, because digital technology is presently perceived as threatening the hegemony of the printed book, perhaps we are now taking an intense interest in the work of an author who, more than any of his contemporaries, seems to have been keenly aware that he was living and writing in the age of mechanical reproduction. The number and range of scholarly studies published in the past decade indicate that Jonson’s work has generated a rich, varied, and significant body of criticism. In the wake of New Historicism, critics have found in Jonson’s poems, plays, and court dramas much evidence of the inter-workings of literature, history, culture, and politics. In particular, scholars have made significant discoveries about the period by focusing attention on the masques and entertainments, the materiality of the Jonsonian text, and Jonson’s reading practices. The filing of nearly fifty dissertations dedicated wholly or partly to Jonson’s work during the past decade suggests that a substantial new generation of scholars is entering the field with Jonson on its scholarly agenda.

The founding of the Ben Jonson Journal in 1994 by Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart, with Robert C. Evans joining as co-editor in 1997, has had a strong impact on Jonson scholarship by providing a forum for a significant variety of critical approaches to the literary production of Jonson and his contemporaries. Approximately twenty percent of the studies discussed in the present essay were published by the Ben Jonson Journal between 1994 and 2001. And while much scholarly work has been done, a glance at the section above devoted to studies of individual plays makes it clear that many of Jonson’s plays have received less attention than they deserve. In many cases, critical neglect of a given play is consistent with the absence of a recent edition of that play. The forthcoming publication of the Cambridge Jonson should encourage scholars to fill in some of these gaps. Scheduled to appear in both print and electronic editions, the Cambridge Jonson will make the large and complex body of Jonson’s writings, as well as a wide range of important records and documents, more accessible to scholars than ever before.

See also (selected)

I. General Studies

A. Biographical.
B. General Critical


III. Studies of the Plays

The New Inn.
