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## Studies in Words: Laborious Ben Jonson's Lexicon

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STUDIES IN WORDS: LABORIOUS BEN JONSON'S LEXICON

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines significant words in Ben Jonson's poetic lexicon that the poet inherited, borrowed, and shaped from antiquity and through the Middle Ages. Jonson used etymology as a means to rhetorical *inventio*, a common practice in the Renaissance. Etymology comprehended more than mere word derivation in the Renaissance but also notably included philological study. Ben Jonson's extensive knowledge of language, history, architecture, the plastic arts, and philosophy is well known, but the extent to which Jonson's knowledge of these subjects contributed to his understanding and use of poetic language is not. Thus this dissertation seeks to explore the intellectual and poetic history of a number of key terms and to demonstrate the extent to which Jonson can be seen to conceive of simultaneously both new and old uses of these words in his distinctively renaissance context, an era characterized by radical change and innovation. In addition, this dissertation compares Jonson's use of important words such as "book," "sense," and "author" to how other authors such as John Donne, George Herbert, John Milton, Shakespeare, Robert Southwell, and Sir Phillip Sidney use them, and demonstrates that these other authors were also to some extent aware of the complex etymological and intellectual history of particularly rich words. John Donne's poem, *Amicissimo & meritissimo* for example, provides contemporary contextual evidence for Jonson's curious understanding of poetic "labour" which aids understanding of the way Jonson redeploys classical language in the Renaissance. This dissertation is meant to be a reference work for a wide range of audiences, useful to both the Renaissance specialist and the undergraduate student alike, and aims to shed light on distinctively renaissance issues that would naturally lead to further inquiry and research.

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I wish to whole-heartedly thank my dissertation committee for the direction that I received throughout the writing of this dissertation. Dr. Timothy Erwin happily distilled his expertise and many years of study of poetry and the visual arts over casual and delightful conversations and for that I am grateful. Dr. Donald Revell inspired me beyond words to wonder at the seeing of poetry—beyond scansion and into music. Only a living poet can do that. Dr. Margaret Harp helped keep things afloat (when I thought that I might sink) and also provided welcome Continental contexts that I would be wise to consider when turning to further research and developing this dissertation into a manuscript for publication.

To the chair of my committee, Dr. Richard Harp, I owe all that I am in arts (How nothing's that!): My digging into words and origins, the great works, classical and renaissance rhetoric and composition, Modern Irish painting and poetry, and most of all, into teaching. This all came about through a rare flood of generosity and patience. He thoughtfully mentored my development with various projects that somehow always suited my inclinations (and yet still kept the door ajar to encourage study of other periods, authors, arts, and of general literary ideas). Add to this that Dr. Harp's office door was always open, just as he was open to discuss whatever was on my mind—whether it were my self-inflated anxieties with *The Gutenberg Galaxy* or with graduate school. I aspire to be like Dr. Harp in many ways, especially to grow to become liberal with my time with students, and to be able to *nascantur in admiratione*—to lead students into the thrill of discovering things on their own.

I would also like to thank Brandon Schneeberger for his friendship and comments. His editorial eye, friendly open criticism, and tireless ear all helped me complete this dissertation.

How can I even begin to thank my parents? Not only did they continually support my efforts throughout all of this but they also kept me grounded. After all, they grew up and went to school in Europe! Regardless of the amount of research I consulted on painting, architecture, history, language, and the like, I have not even come close to equaling their deep yet casual knowledge of these subjects. In addition, they pulled me away from the dissertation a number of times when needed. For example, last summer at Wheeler in the Great Basin National Park we all braved nature's surprises for a couple of days at 10,000 feet—splitting logs, stargazing, and that kind of thing.

Finally, to my wife Kimberlee I know I owe the deepest debts. How many books and papers were scattered all over our tiny house, taking up even our dinner table with findings and research only some of her photographs can tell, many of which she snapped in chuckling disbelief of what nature and necessity can do. What those photographs and these words cannot tell is the endless support and genuine interest we have shared in our mutual study of painting and poetry. I would not have completed this dissertation without the many good and great conversations we had, made possible through patience, which then always resulted in Kim's significant, honest comments. Thankfully, I listened.

DEDICATION

*za Tatko mi i Majka mi koi su mi dali život  
i podrška da bi mogao da ostvarim ovo  
posvetim ovaj rad i moju molitvi  
na Oče naš—*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO BEN JONSON'S LEXICON

This dissertation investigates a number of words in Ben Jonson's lexicon that are related to the way in which he thought about composition, poetry, and authorship. Authorship, it is true, has become something of its own field among scholars and critics of Ben Jonson, and I provide a review of the relevant exemplary literature later in this chapter. Much of the critical work on Ben Jonson's authorship has been driven by the materialistic implications of his literary output and unfortunately does not often raise issues that are imbedded in the language that Jonson uses. A number of critics of Jonson's authorship, for example, rarely consider the way that Jonson himself uses the terms that they discuss, especially words such as "author" and "labor." One of the contributions that this dissertation will hope to make to the scholarly conversation is to complicate significantly the purely materialistic conceptions of Jonson's authorship by demonstrating that Jonson had in mind rich and detailed notions of "author" and "labor" as well as of a number of other related terms. In addition, each term had etymological underpinnings and implications which Jonson had received through tradition and translation. Jonson's conception of the "author" (and poet) had been received from antiquity and from medieval writers. He derived the multiplex meanings of the term "labor" which he uses in a distinctive fashion in his poetry (and was quite well known for using in his time) from repeatedly polishing a translation of Horace's *Ars poetica* and from other places such as the Spanish philosopher Juan Luis Vives' (1493-1540) *De causis corruptibus artium* (*On the causes of the corruption of the arts*).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Published 1531.

My aim in this dissertation is to provide a reference work that features a number of key terms in Jonson's poetic lexicon as an aid for students and scholars to tangibly wrestle with the nature of Jonson's authorial and poetic composition in various contexts. Focusing on particular words found in Jonson's poetry affords the virtue of a specific concreteness in which to examine ideas relative to Jonson's actual authorial practice especially since Jonson's learning was prodigious. R. V. Young reminds critics that Jonson thought of his poetry as a scholarly endeavor, having referred in the preface to his *Epigrams* to that book of poetry as "the ripest of my studies."<sup>2</sup> The facts speak for themselves: Numerous Latin texts that had been at some point in Jonson's possession bear his annotations; he held honorary degrees from both Oxford and Cambridge;<sup>3</sup> his associations with John Selden (who Milton called "the chief of learned men reputed in this land"<sup>4</sup>) and Robert Cotton (whose extensive library attracted scholars from near and far—and still does today) allowed Jonson access to a wealth of books; and finally, Jonson's overall interest in language, etymology, authorship, and poetry can be gleaned from even a cursory reading of works such as his *English Grammar* and commonplace book *Discoveries*. In fact, Jonson's *English Grammar* opens with a division of the parts of grammar of which he identifies the first part to be, "Etymology, the true notation of words."<sup>5</sup> The "true notation of words" in the seventeenth century meant, as the pioneering first editors of Jonson's complete

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<sup>2</sup> R. V. Young, "Ben Jonson and Learning" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, eds. Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> See *Informations to William Drummond* in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson* (cited henceforth as *CWBJ*) Eds. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7 Vols. (Cambridge University Press, 2012), Vol. 5, line 191: William Drummond states that Jonson "was Master of Arts in both the universities, by their favour, not his study," meaning not that Jonson was not learned but that he did not earn those degrees in the typical fashion.

<sup>4</sup> *Aeropagitica*, edited by Sir Richard C. Jebb (Cambridge University Press, 1918), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Book i.i.4.

works noted, “the explanation or exposition of a term in accordance with its etymology.”<sup>6</sup>

Jonson’s interest in Latin and Greek and in the overall enterprise of Renaissance Humanist inquiry leads him naturally to a use of diction that is at once precise and yet paradoxically fluid, and which often demonstrates an attentiveness to philological roots.

Due to Jonson’s interest in the common origins of the meanings of words, what C. S. Lewis has called the “dangerous sense” of the meanings of words becomes an issue for readers and critics of Jonson’s work. Lewis used the term “dangerous sense” to describe the way in which meanings from one era can become misapplied to define words in a previous era that look identical but are used by authors with a different meaning in mind. This occurs, Lewis says, because rich words with multiple meanings tend to gravitate toward a “dominant” meaning based on historical circumstance and usage in each age. This “dominant” meaning often varies from age to age (in his text Lewis gives the examples of the dominant contemporary meanings of *station* and *evolution*).<sup>7</sup> One example I should give here would be the application of a purely modern (post-Marxist) sense of “labor” onto Jonson’s use of the term “labor” which I address in chapters six and seven. Due to Jonson’s own interest in the meanings of words, his poetry (like

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<sup>6</sup> See C. H. Herford Percy and Evelyn Simpson, *Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), Vol. XI, p. 166. Herford and Simpson’s gloss here points to Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, 1. vi. 28: “*Etymologia, quae verborum originem inquirat, a Cicerone dicta est notatio*,” which means, “Etymology inquires into the origin of words, and was called notation by Cicero.” Quintilian continues in this section (1.vi. 28) to explain that Cicero called etymology *notatio* “on the ground that the term used by Aristotle is *σύμβολον* [symbolon] which may be translated by *nota*.” *Symbolon*, a rich term in antiquity from where the English “symbol” comes, suggests the idea of “throwing together” meaning through the symbolic relationship between meaning and sign: *syn* means “together” and *bol-* from *ballein* meaning “to throw.” “Parable” (and the proverb) were thought to have been related to this symbolic idea: “parable” from *para* “next to” and *ballein*. (Also cf. “ballistics” and our word “problem” *pro-* + *ballein*, which literally means, “to throw in front of”). See below, pp. 114f. & 136f.

<sup>7</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Words* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 12-14. *Station* = railway station, *Evolution* = biological evolution.

the poetry of Milton and that of other renaissance authors) necessitates a particular care and attention to etymological and contextual considerations.

Yet in a recent book which examines a number of renaissance writers' curiosity with etymological study, the author Hannah Crawforth noted that, "Renaissance studies [today] has not yet applied the most important insight offered by the New Historicists who have so influenced the field over the past thirty years (and who have been so often criticized for their lack of nuanced attention to the words on the page) to the most fundamental aspect of Early Modern texts: their language."<sup>8</sup> This is unfortunate, Crawforth says, because "the excavation of etymologies is one of the most important activities carried out by – and devices available to – Early Modern writers."<sup>9</sup> Crawforth may push her point a bit too far when she says that "Renaissance studies has not yet applied" the "insight" of New Historicists of looking into language. In the past years there have been a number of such studies on language in the Renaissance such as Edward Le Comte's *A Milton Dictionary*<sup>10</sup> and more recently *Milton's Languages: The Impact of Multilingualism on Style*.<sup>11</sup> These studies too predate the popularity of New Historisist critical fashions. The best books of this sort I have found to be Robert Ray's books on John Donne, Andrew Marvell, and George Herbert which do highlight a number of crucial renaissance words that would likely evoke for modern readers a modern sense of the term but which in the Renaissance either meant something different entirely or at the very least meant much more. For example, Ray defines the word *admire* as: "Verb: (1) to wonder, marvel, or be surprised; (2) to view with wonder or surprise; (3) to look upon with pleasure or approval or

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<sup>8</sup> Hannah Crawforth, *Etymology and the Invention of English in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. viii.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1961.

<sup>11</sup> John K. Hale (Cambridge University Press, 1997). See especially chapter four, "Milton's Arts of Language: Translating and Philology," pp. 67-81.

affection.”<sup>12</sup> Today’s English speakers would typically only recognize sense three and not so much the first two. It is not to say in this instance that *admire* meant something “different” in the Renaissance but just that it meant “more” than our concept today comprehends.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, though Ray provides a solid definition for the common renaissance meaning of the word *admire*, he does not provide a discussion of the relevant etymological or philological information but only the definition quoted above. This is unfortunate because it is the relationship between the word *admire* to the Latin root that provides for term’s depth of meaning. It would be useful for readers to be able to see and understand that there exists a connection between “wonder” and “admire” that comes into English by way of the Latin word *mīrarī* which means “to wonder,” or “to be astonished or amazed,” etc. The Latin prefix *ad-* means “towards,” thus *admire* meaning “toward wonder.” *Mīrarī* is the Latin root from which springs the English word “miracle” too. Still, though Ray does not provide this sort of information, his books are a good resource for locating the distinctly renaissance meanings of seemingly transparent terms. This dissertation, like C. S. Lewis says of his classic work *Studies in Words*, will offer “both less and more.”<sup>14</sup> Less, because I do not always provide concrete definitions for every word that will be discussed; and as for being exhaustive like a dictionary-type work aims, at this point all I can offer is a discussion of a small number of words. I hope to offer more in the sense that I discuss words more generally in terms of their development in various spheres of thought such as literature, philosophy, painting, theology, and I am interested in exploring the semantic relations between

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<sup>12</sup> Robert H. Ray, *A John Donne Companion* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, as noted with the idea of the “dangerous sense” of words above, there were certainly instances in which words meant in the Renaissance something completely different than they do today. The word “sad” is one such word, see Lewis, pp. 75-85. See below, p. 169, for some critics’ use of the dangerous sense of “labor” in Jonson criticism.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

common words shared by these traditions that Jonson was familiar with and uses in his poetry and masques in special ways.

Etymology means the “study to find the true sense” of a word and comes from the Greek *ετυμολογια* (*etymologia*), *etymon* meaning “true sense” and *logia* from *logos*, a word which signified a number of related concepts in the ancient world: “word,” “reason,” “logic,” “meaning,” and so on. Philology, to make a quick distinction, refers to the love of words, to the love of study, and the love of meaning: *philo* is one of the many Greek words for “love” plus *logos*. For Jonson, Milton, and other renaissance writers etymology comprehended both of these ideas of etymology and philology and was prized because writers believed that the knowledge of the origin of a word allowed for it to be used with the original semantic force (and comprehension) from which it came.<sup>15</sup> In addition to this, the accumulated power of a word through its repeated use in tradition consistent with the original sense adds another aspect of strength to a term’s ability to signify precisely an author’s meaning. Saint Isidore (560-636) whose early medieval book the *Etymologies* (*Etymologiarium sive soriginum libri XX*, also known as the *Origines*) has been referred to as “arguably the most influential book, after the Bible, in the learned world of the Latin West for nearly a thousand years,”<sup>16</sup> provides the following definition of etymology:

Etymology (*etymologia*) is the origin of words, when the force of a verb or a noun is inferred through interpretation. Aristotle called this *σύμβολον* (sign), and Cicero *adnotatio* (symbolization), because by presenting their model it makes

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<sup>15</sup> In fact, it would accurate to say that medieval and renaissance authors were more interested in philology than in studying the issues commonly investigated by (the since evolved) modern technical high linguistic sense of etymological study.

<sup>16</sup> Eds. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.



known (*notus*) the names and words for things. For example, *flumen* (“river”) is so called from *fluendum* (“flowing”) because it has grown by flowing. The knowledge of a word’s etymology often has an indispensable usefulness for interpreting the word, for when...[one has] seen whence a word has originated, ...[she] understand[s] its force more quickly. Indeed, one’s insight into anything is clearer when its etymology is known...Etymologies of words are furnished either from their rationale (*causa*), as ‘kings’ (*rex*, gen. *regis*) from [‘ruling’ (*regendum*) and] ‘acting correctly’ (*recte agendum*); or from their origin, as ‘man’ (*homo*) because he is from ‘earth’ (*humus*), or from the contrary, as ‘mud’ (*lutum*) from ‘washing’ (*lavare*, ppl. *lutus*), since mud is not clean, and ‘grove’ (*lucus*), because, darkened by its shade, it is scarcely ‘lit’ (*lucere*). Some are created by derivation from other words, as ‘prudent’ (*prudens*) from ‘prudence’ (*prudentia*); some from the sounds, as ‘garrulous’ (*garrulus*) from ‘babbling sound’ (*garrulitas*).<sup>17</sup>

Davide Del Bello highlights some important points in the passage from Saint Isidore above in his book *Forgotten Paths: Etymology and the Allegorical Mindset*.<sup>18</sup> The translation above by Barney et al. leaves out a corresponding English word for the Latin *colligitur* in the first sentence, Isidore’s original Latin sentence reading, “*Etymologia est origo vocabulorum, cum vis verbi vel nominis per interpretationem colligitur.*” *Colligo*, from *con-* meaning “together” and *lego* meaning “to gather” is where the English word “collect” comes from. Interestingly “to read” in Latin is *lego* (inf. *legere*) which means “to gather” and “to choose or pick out” in

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<sup>17</sup> Saint Isidore, *Etymologiarium*, 1.xxix., in Barney et al., pp. 54-55.

<sup>18</sup> Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007, pp. 105-106. See also chapter six, “*Emithologia: Etymology’s Riddles from 1500-1700*,” pp. 116-134.

addition to meaning “to read.” Isidore uses the passive form of *colligitur* (indicated by the *-tur* ending) which suggests that not only is there is an inference to be made from the “interpretation” of a word, but that there is also a “collecting” or a “gathering” of a word’s *vis*, a gathering of its “power” or “virtue,” “*cum vis verbi*,” a gathering of a word’s meaning from the multiple ways in which it appears in various texts. Del Bello states that, “The verb *colligo* emphasizes the relational nature of etymology...a ‘bundle of *notae*’: ‘Etymology deciphers meanings of words that are signaled in the sequences of letters or letter clusters...that a word is not tied to a one-way meaning. It is, rather a bundle of notes (*notae*) that can be unraveled in various ways.’”<sup>19</sup> In a sense then, the gathering of a word’s interpretation, and thus the gathering of a word’s *vis*, had little to do with the form of the word, its spelling, how it appears to be derived from a particular ancestral word orthographically, but as Isidore’s example *flumen* from *fluendum* above makes clear, what was most important in the study of etymology for medieval writers is the connection of meanings between words—*how* the meaning of a particular term means: *flumen* from *fluendum* because the river “grows from flowing” and because a river “is fluid.” Aristotle calls this kind of connection between meanings and signs a “throwing together” (*symbolon*) because the sign (the word) “bridg[es]...the depths of semantics, the surface of contingent forms, and the essences that they designate.”<sup>20</sup> A relational idea of etymology was more or less the standard view of writers (and educators) in the Renaissance as it was inherited from the Medieval period and accounts for much of the rich symbolism, allusiveness, and allegory of the period.

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<sup>19</sup> P. 106. Here Del Bello is commenting upon Isidore’s quote on etymology by noting the appropriateness of Roswitha Klink’s observations upon Thomas Cistercensis’s conception of etymology. Thomas Cistercensis was a medieval monk who wrote much later than Isidore (ca. d. 1190) and demonstrates a clear reception (and development) of his ideas. See Roswitha Klink, *Die Lateinische Etymologie des Mittelalters* [*The Latinate Etymology of the Middle Ages*] (Medium aevum; philologische studien, Bd. 17. Munich: Fink, 1970).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

The connection between word study in the Renaissance and the prevalence of attention to words in the Middle Ages is one that has not often been discussed. In this dissertation I consider various medieval influences upon Ben Jonson's lexicon and highlight a number of words Jonson uses that have a distinctively medieval resonance, words such as "book" and "light" for example which have ties with the word "author." I also seek to identify some of the allegorical connections for many of the words I look at in Jonson's lexicon and to show how other writers such as John Donne, George Herbert, John Milton, Shakespeare, Robert Southwell, Sir Philip Sidney, Dante Alighieri, and others likewise used the same words with similar historical relational conceptions of their meanings in mind.

Aside from exploring the many issues that the words "author" and "labor" bring about in Jonson's poetry, and their prismatic relations to other words in Jonson's lexicon, another kind of a controlling word that I examine at length in this dissertation is "picture." "Picture" is an incredibly rich word in Jonson's poetry and exploration of the way in which it is used is helpful for assessing the extent to which visual concepts were influential upon Jonson's poetics and authorship (especially alongside the several related words to "picture" in Jonson's poetry such as *paint*, *sense*, and *beauty*). When I first began diving into this word "picture" in Jonson's poetry and prose, to likewise observe its presence in relation to story in the classical literature of Plutarch, Philostratus, Aristotle, and Horace, and also then to read Rensselaer W. Lee's<sup>21</sup> classic discussion of Quattrocento painters, especially the "learned painter"<sup>22</sup> who was "twin brother of

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<sup>21</sup> Ut Pictura Poesis: *The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1967), pp. 41-48.

<sup>22</sup> The "learned painter" could be exemplified well by the painter and theorist Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) and by the painter, inventor, and polemicist Leonardo DaVinci (1452-1519) who actually had a great deal to say about the superiority of painting to poetry.

the learned poet whose prototype was the *doctus poeta* of antiquity,”<sup>23</sup> and Jean Hagstrum’s *The Sister Arts*,<sup>24</sup> it became clear to me that the relationship between “picture” and “poetry” was not only a longstanding one, but also that it is a relationship that Jonson was well acquainted with and explored often in his poetry and masques in this traditional context.

One discovery that I recently made was the presence of ideas related to picture and painting in Plato’s *Cratylus*, a somewhat satirical dialog in which Plato presents a discourse upon etymological issues. One of the big questions that inevitably comes up in the *Cratylus* is: Where do words come from? And, another equally significant question: Do names (*ονομα*, *onoma*) have an actual relationship to the things that they signify, or are the names for things arbitrary? Hermogenes, whose name means “born of Hermes,” is the character in the dialog who does not think that there exists any kind relationship between the sign and the signified, and this view is what leads Socrates to a lengthy digression upon the way in which words and painting (and music) have a common origin—in their imitation of nature. Although I have not (yet) found this text to be discussed by critics who are specifically interested in investigating *ut pictura poesis* (“as is painting so is poetry”) it appears to be an important work because the ideas in it are consistent with Ben Jonson’s explanation (in his commonplace book) of the origins of “picture” and “poetry.”<sup>25</sup> The *Cratylus* compresses together the interrelated nature of “picture” and words (names), and the dialog brings to the forefront the fundamental shared act of imitation that connects the two. Before talking about painting in relation to language, Socrates attempts to get Hermogenes to see his point about the inherently connected nature of sign and signified by using analogies from sign-language:

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<sup>23</sup> Lee, p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Grey* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958).

<sup>25</sup> See *Discoveries*, ll. 1074-1095.

*Soc.* Suppose that we had no voice or tongue, and wanted to communicate with one another, should we not, like the deaf and dumb, make signs with the hands and head and rest of the body?

*Her.* There would be no choice, Socrates.

*Soc.* We should imitate the nature of the thing; the elevation of our hands to heaven would mean lightness and upwardness; heaviness and downwardness would be expressed by letting them drop to the ground; if we were describing the running of a horse, or any other animal, we should make our bodies and their gestures as like as we could to them.<sup>26</sup>

Socrates attempts to demonstrate that (at its most fundamental level of gesture) language does have close ties to some aspect of the nature of the thing that is being signified. After some more discussion upon the nature of imitation and the respective roles of the musician, the painter, and the “namer,” Socrates then presses the analogy between the painter and the one who names—the “namer” or “name giver:”

...just, as in painting, the painter who wants to depict anything sometimes uses purple only, or any other colour, and sometimes mixes up several colours, as his method is when he has to paint flesh colour or anything of that kind—he uses his colours as his figures appear to require them; and so, too, we shall apply letters to the expression of objects, either single letters when required, or several letters; and so we shall form syllables, as they are called, and from syllables make nouns and verbs; and thus at last, from the combinations of nouns and verbs arrive at language, large and fair and whole, and as the painter made a figure, even so shall

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<sup>26</sup> Ed. Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 5 Vols. (Oxford University Press, 1892), Vol. 1, p. 368.

we make speech by the art of the namer or the rhetorician, or by some other art.

Not that I am literally speaking of ourselves...<sup>27</sup>

The connection between nature and the artist in terms of *imitation* neatly identifies one of the issues that will be a continuous refrain throughout this dissertation. From discussing the ways in which Jonson borrows or imitates from classical and other authors, to the way in which imitation spurns creative authorial work, and into to the way in which painting and poetry share a kindred imitative mode, I hope to provide a thoughtful collection of material for others to explore in Jonson's work as well as present avenues for further investigation more broadly.

### **Overview of Criticism on Ben Jonson's Authorship**

Ben Jonson's groundbreaking conception of authorship in the context of the rise of a proto-capitalist print economy has attracted many critics and scholars to debate the nature of Jonson's contribution to the modern understanding of the word "author." Many tend to agree that Jonson's idea of authorship represents a distinctly different idea from the ideas of authorship which were understood in the Middle Ages and in antiquity, while other scholars conclude there to be more of a continuity between the ancient and medieval ideas of the poet and Jonson's role as a literary artist.

The role of the author in the creation of any literary text can hardly be overestimated, and scholars and critics have provided many insights into the modern notion of the "author" by examining Ben Jonson's role in the production of his self-proclaimed *Works*. The 1616 folio edition of Jonson's *Works* has been thoughtfully explored by scholars such as Joseph Lowenstein

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<sup>27</sup> P. 370.

and Richard Dutton.<sup>28</sup> Joseph Loewenstein, in particular, is interested especially in what he calls the “bibliographical ego,” which he understands to be a “specifically Early Modern form of authorial identification with printed writing,” and which can be a useful concept for assessing the nature of Jonson’s authorship.<sup>29</sup> Jonson, in this view, exerted great influence upon the future conceptions of the author through the production of his printed folio due first to Jonson’s consciousness of his unique position in history, namely the rising prominence of a print culture, as well as his ability to negotiate the personal, political, and social aspects of print as a medium for literary production. For these reasons Loewenstein sees Jonson’s “bibliographic ego” as “eccentric:” Jonson’s is “an ego,” Loewenstein argues, that was shaped by prevailing proprietary practices and shaping those that would come after.”<sup>30</sup> In the book, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship*, Loewenstein states that his purpose is to “situate this ‘author campaign’ within the quickening (and mutually interfering) economies of book trade and theater. The possibility of authorial participation in these early economies transforms the way authors present themselves—on stage and on the page—and accelerates the decay of literary patronage.”<sup>31</sup>

Foundational for this approach to criticism of Jonson’s authorship is Richard C.

Newton’s “Jonson and the (Re-) Invention of the Book.”<sup>32</sup> Newton develops the idea that Jonson

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<sup>28</sup> See Richard Dutton’s *Ben Jonson: Authority: Criticism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996) and Joseph Loewenstein’s *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge UP, 2002). Also see Richard Dutton’s “The Birth of the Author,” in Cedric C. Brown and Arthur F. Marotti Eds. *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), pp. 153-178, which places Jonson in the context of fellow writers in the period.

<sup>29</sup> *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship*, p. 1. This first chapter is entitled “An Introduction to Bibliographical Biography” and uses textual criticism to develop ideas about the *author* in the context of print.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> P. 8.

<sup>32</sup> In *Classic and Cavalier: Essays on Jonson and the Sons of Ben*, edited by Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), pp. 31-55.

wrote consciously for immortality through printed text.<sup>33</sup> He acknowledges a debt to Elizabeth L. Eisenstein's multi-volume work *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, a book that thoroughly sought to render the social, economic, and political implications of the move away from script and turn toward the culture of print.<sup>34</sup> Newton contends, quite bluntly:

It is not until the work of Ben Jonson...that we first see the impact of printing on literature coherently assimilated. In Jonson's work we first find a poet appearing in texts which are decisively made for print—in texts proclaiming their own completeness, aware of their own permanence, and creative of their own context. We find in Jonson a sense of the printed text as an authorized and established object of criticism—implying, and imposing from within, its own rules for reading.<sup>35</sup>

Newton builds upon this to explain how print had the effect of fixing the text of an author, finishing it as it were due to “typographically fixed reference points,” versus the manuscript in which the text “is always at least potentially in the process of becoming (or becoming-not) evidenced by the “gloze...surrounding the text...[which] tends to become a part of the text, or at

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<sup>33</sup> See p. 32: “Every writer, perhaps, sets pen to paper with the vision of immortality; so at least those favorites of poets, the topoi of immortality, would indicate...[b]efore printing, all poets could hope, but none could truly expect, to survive.” This is an interesting idea, though somewhat problematic when one considers the ubiquity of the classics and their “authors” (“auctores”) in the Middle Ages and Renaissance—authors who did not participate in a culture of “print” per se. Classical authors exuded a sense of immortality then as they do now, and this is not to mention the popularity of medieval authors such as Chaucer, Gower, and Dante in their own and later times.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 2 Vols. (Cambridge UP, 1979), “Part I focuses on the shift from script to print in Western Europe and tries to block out the main features of the communications revolution. Parts 2 and 3 deal with the relationship between the communications shift and other developments conventionally associated with the transition from medieval to early modern times,” p. xi-xii.

<sup>35</sup> P. 34.



least to dwarf and dominate it.”<sup>36</sup> In Newton’s view, Jonson’s authorial prefaces and conception of his own printed book (1616 folio) as a complete unified product, shifts the emphasis of the “author” away from the reader (the glosser, commentator, critic, etc.) and back towards himself, the originator with whom the *authority* of the text rests. Newton goes as far as to say that “Jonson’s work seems as a whole curiously coherent and responsive to criticism, unchanging even as his readers change.”<sup>37</sup>

Sara van den Berg discussed Ben Jonson’s authorship in the article “Ben Jonson and the Ideology of Authorship” by focusing closely on Jonson’s poetry and frontispiece to the 1616 folio. Van den Berg argues that part of Jonson’s success as an author in print was due to his writing during the reign of James I:

Jonson could become the first poet to capitalize on the new medium of print partly because James, who published his works in the folio in 1616, replaced the performative, theatrical mode of royal self-representation with the new literary mode of print. Jonson emphasizes this link with James by praising the king as a fellow writer who will value a poet’s book (*Epigrammes*, 4).<sup>38</sup>

In addition, van den Berg discusses Jonson’s “care with the preparation of his book,” and states that “the title page can be considered a visual depiction of his personal ideology in relation to the general ideology of authorship available in his culture.”<sup>39</sup> Jonson’s *Epigrams*, the first “book” of

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<sup>36</sup> P. 32.

<sup>37</sup> P. 36. Also see p. 40: “...beyond the literalness both in theme and word of his classical borrowings, beyond his success in defining his writings as complete works and his insistent address of his works to studiers of books, to learned critics, Jonson thematically defines his works in terms which reflect on and intensify the impression of authority and textuality that, in their printed form, he seeks to give them.”

<sup>38</sup> Sara van den Berg, “Ben Jonson and the Ideology of Authorship”. In Jennifer Brady and W. H. Herendeen, *Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), p. 117.

<sup>39</sup> P. 114.

the folio, contains poems that touch on themes closely related to authorship, such as reading, interpretation, and authority, and the very first four poems deal with authorship and Jonson's uneasy realization that his book is a commodity. These poems also, van den Berg states, are "placing the poet as author in four contexts: the classical literary tradition, contemporary society, practical economics, and personal vision."<sup>40</sup> Notably too, van den Berg drew attention to the visual-verbal representation of the author in the poetry which "gives new urgency to the traditional theory of *ut pictura poesis* by exploiting the metaphor of the 'face' as a primary text of self-representation. As Jonson declares in *Discoveries*, 'Man is read in his face' to represent truly the person or the poet."<sup>41</sup> Jonson's "My Picture Left in Scotland" is a poem that presents this kind of visual representation that in van den Berg's view (as also is the verse epistle to Katherine, Lady Aubigny) turns around the usual metaphor of the "face" of a person, that is, turns the metaphor away from working to reveal the false face of a prominent person or courtier as a "masquerade" to instead focusing on the book. Jonson "defin[es] a true book as a true mirror....a good book as a mirror which wicked and foolish men avoid."<sup>42</sup> Like a "true mirror" then, Jonson thought that a book would show a man to himself.

Ian Donaldson takes a slightly different approach to considering Jonson as an author in a 2006 lecture entitled "Shakespeare, Jonson, and the Invention of the Author."<sup>43</sup> Donaldson argues that Jonson *invents* the notion of the author, in the sense of rhetorical *invention*, that is, "as a happy discovery of an already existing term or subject that could be understood in a novel

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<sup>40</sup> P. 118. Also see Jonson's *Epigrams* 1-4: "To the Reader," "To My Book," "To My Bookseller," and "To King James."

<sup>41</sup> P. 131.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* See below, pp. 38-41, 55-57, and 196ff.

<sup>43</sup> In *Proceedings of the British Academy: 2006 Lectures*, 151 (2007), 319-38.

way.”<sup>44</sup> Although several examples of writers<sup>45</sup> who use the term “author” in the Renaissance could be cited, Donaldson believes that it is clear that Jonson is responsible for reorienting the term “author” toward the idea of “authority,” or to the “Sidneyan view of the writer’s god-like role, whose value was mysteriously expressed through, and vested in, the terminology with which it was traditionally associated.”<sup>46</sup> Donaldson investigated the etymology of the term “author” and described the novel ways in which Jonson employed the term, such as how Jonson used the term “author” to distinguish his own role from what he saw Inigo Jones’ role to be in the making of the many masques that they collaborated to create.<sup>47</sup>

Other ways that scholars have investigated Jonson’s authorship are numerous. Many have looked into Jonson’s classicism and concluded that more often than not Jonson uses some kind of source for his poems, plays, and ideas. Donaldson makes a strong point about the way in which Jonson used ancient sentiment as a means through which to develop his own ideas. He demonstrates this by looking closely at a passage in *Discoveries* in which Jonson presumably addresses anecdotes about his own personal memory. The passage, Donaldson shows, nearly verbatim echoes the same statement that Seneca made in the preface to his *Controversiae*.<sup>48</sup> Donaldson notes that, “This passage from *Discoveries* needs to be read with almost surgical care, for it is neither pure autobiography nor mere translation, but a curious blend of both.”<sup>49</sup> Victoria Moul’s recent book *Jonson, Horace and the Classical Tradition* provides another example of this

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<sup>44</sup> P. 329.

<sup>45</sup> Such as James Yeats’ prologues to the *Castle of Courtesy* (1582) entitled “The Author to his Book” and “The Book to the Author;” The preface to Isabella Whitney’s *A Sweet Nosegay* (1573) entitled “The Auctor to the Reader.” These are a few examples of early authors in print who negotiate what appears to be a new role.

<sup>46</sup> P. 330.

<sup>47</sup> P. 331.

<sup>48</sup> *Discoveries* lines 346-365 seem to be the same as Seneca’s *Controversiae*, praefatio, i. 2-5.

<sup>49</sup> Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford University Press, 2011) p. 15.

sort of inquiry into Jonson and the author by presenting many insights into how Jonson, especially in the poetry, is in conversation with classical authors:

Jonson employed allusion to appropriate a range of classical genres, including odes, epigrams, epistles and verse satires. In each case, the potency of these adaptations and redeployments resides in their intertextual ‘dialogue’: the way in which the Horatianism of these pieces is set up against, and in contested conversation with, alternative models of tone and genre...”<sup>50</sup>

The idea that Jonson “redeploys” the genres, forms and techniques of ancient authors he admires is crucial to any thinking about Jonson’s classical allusions and imitations. However, this approach to Jonson’s use of the classics leaves out what should be a primary concern for critics of Jonson’s poetry from the standpoint of the author yet is rarely addressed, namely, what does Jonson do with the classical material? If Jonson is not simply echoing, or to use one of his own terms, “aping,” classical authors and forms, then where is Jonson in all of this?

Although there is still much work to be done in this regard, these ideas are not new. Not only does Donaldson note the “almost surgical” precision that the critic needs in order to distinguish Jonson from his sources, but Richard Peterson has raised the issue of Jonson’s conscious transformation of classical material into his own creations in the book *Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson*.<sup>51</sup> Peterson argues that “imitation” is the “central principle of his [Jonson’s] poetry.”<sup>52</sup> The insights into Jonson’s use of imitation presented in this book, namely that Jonson not only gathers from source authors but transforms their substance (transforms the *sylva*—the “raw materials” that have been gathered from authors and sources)

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<sup>50</sup> Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 135.

<sup>51</sup> New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

<sup>52</sup> P. xiii

into his own unique creations, leads Peterson to challenge the critic of Jonson to not only identify the source that has been used by Jonson but also to identify what Jonson has changed, introduced, or reoriented in his composition (and why).

Consequently there exists a basic need to more completely understand the idea of “imitation” as Jonson discusses it in his prose work and to assess the end to which it is demonstrated in his poems. For Jonson, “imitation” does not mean simply copying, but instead signifies a practice more of a mind with medieval ideas of reading and composition. Jonson’s own statements in *Discoveries* upon the matter of imitation are candid and helpful for ascertaining his thoughts on literary composition. One of the contributions of this dissertation to the ongoing scholarly investigation into this topic will be to demonstrate that Jonson’s practice of imitation shares similarity with medieval practices of authorship.

Chapter two examines some particular instances of Jonson’s use of the term “author” in his poetry and shows that Jonson’s use of the term “author” is consistent with specialized medieval uses of the term “author” though he does also build upon those ideas. This suggests that even though Jonson may very well have been a literary pioneer in the Early Modern book market and in many ways ignited some spark of the modern conception of the author, Jonson also conceived of a distinct role of the literary author. In this chapter I also discuss a number of words in Jonson’s lexicon such as *Book*, *Original*, *Division*, *Eating*, *Digestion*, *Composition*, *Face*, and *Light*.

Chapters three, four, and five investigate words in Jonson’s visual lexicon. Chapter three begins with a review of critical issues relevant to the visual nature of Jonson’s poetry and masques, and then turns to consider the word “sense” in addition to the related words *Picture*, *Sentence*, *Image*, *Memory*, *Imagination*, *Body*, and *Soul*. Chapter four builds upon Jonson’s

understanding and use of “sense” in his poetry and masques and dives into Jonson’s poetic and rhetorical understanding of the word *Picture* along with *Imitation, Ecphrasis, Enargeia, Strike, and Color*. “Beauty” is discussed in chapter five along with *Prudence, Istoria, Color, Mind, Figure, Form, Splendor, Harmony, Claritas, Integritas, Consonantia, Whole, and Cloud*.

The last three chapters focus on “labor,” one of the most significant words in Jonson’s poetic lexicon. Chapter six explores the way that Jonson’s contemporaries referred to the author as “laborious” and in particular draws attention to a Latin poem that John Donne wrote to Jonson about his “labor.” Chapter seven looks at the instances in which Jonson translates the Latin word *labor* that Horace uses in the *Ars poetica* and vice versa—the way in which Jonson translates various other Latin words of Horace’s by using the English word “labor.” In this way the depth of Jonson’s associations with “labor” is established. Several words associated with Jonson’s rich understanding of “labor” are considered in this chapter: *Force, Run, Cupiō, Toil, Art, Nature, Sharpen, Hammer, File, Opus, Opera, Study, Exercise, Virtue, Labyrinth, Aspire, Prove, Examine, Try*. Finally chapter eight returns to some words previously discussed, such as “book” and “eating,” and also considers Jonson’s use of the term “labor” in the poetic contexts of friendship and contemplation along with *Truth, Flatter, Astutus, Craft, Character, Portrait, Guest, Mystery, Manners, Dwell, and Happy*.

My wish is that this work will appeal to a number of audiences, such as the college professor teaching a survey course, the undergraduate or graduate student seeking familiarity with Jonson’s poetry, and also the specialist rifling through for specific information. Each of these words sheds light on issues in the Renaissance, and for this reason I have organized this book as kind of a reference text.

## CHAPTER 2: MEDIEVAL BEN JONSON

Two scholars of the Middle Ages, Alastair Minnis and Mary Carruthers, provide a foundational context for considering medieval ideas of authorship and both scholars inaugurated a major shift in the critical approach to the author in medieval works.<sup>53</sup> Jonson's composition techniques have not been explored in this medieval context of authorship, yet it appears that a number of the ideas of the author in the era preceding Jonson happen to be congenial with his authorial practices. Jonson's unique style of authorship, particularly his practice of "imitation" of forms, genres, words, individual and sections of lines of poetry, and plots supports this, although it should be noted that Jonson did not borrow as obviously as Shakespeare did (many of Jonson's plays have original plots that he did not take directly from sources). In addition to the imitation techniques that Jonson used in his plays and poetry, his commonplace book *Discoveries* exhibits a compilation of proverbial ancient sentiment and suggests that Jonson read and composed in a manner similar to the way in which scholastic writers described the acts of reading, dividing, and ruminating.

### *Division, Store, Gather*

One aspect of medieval authorship that Minnis addresses is the practice of "dividing" a text, which he explores in the section in which he describes the *Forma Tractatus*. In this section,

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<sup>53</sup> Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). See esp. chapters 5-7: "Memory and the Ethics of Reading," "Memory and Authority," and "Memory and the Book."

Minnis discusses the birth of the modern author by looking at “the form of the ‘treatise’ (the *forma tractatus, ordination partium* or *division textus*)” and the way in which a kind of division and arrangement, “had become the product of the work of the human *auctor*.”<sup>54</sup> Medieval authors also exerted efforts in “subdividing works of the *auctores* to facilitate reference, in excerpting materials from *auctores* and rearranging them in convenient compilations...”<sup>55</sup> Jonson’s *Discoveries* exhibit both of these features of division and arrangement, as well as a “commentary” upon authors and ideas. Jonson’s habits of dividing, editing, and commenting upon ancient sentiments, as well as his continual reference and gloss upon old texts, authors, and ideas in *Discoveries*, shares a parallel with a medieval sentiment expressed by Geoffrey Chaucer, who in the *Parliament of Fowels* wrote:

...out of olde felde, as men seyth,  
Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere,  
And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,  
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.<sup>56</sup>

The medieval writers and readers who Minnis discusses in his work tended toward the idea that, “To be old was to be good; the best writers were the more ancient. The converse often seems to have been true: if a work was good, its medieval readers were disposed to think that it was old.”<sup>57</sup> This idea carries forcefully into the Renaissance, though with developments, especially

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<sup>54</sup> Minnis, p. 145. See pp. 145-159 for a discussion of what particular characteristics of composition Minnis argues gave birth to the modern author.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 145.

<sup>56</sup> Ll. 22-25 (quoted in Minnis, p. 9). Writing later, Erasmus was a premier initiator of the Renaissance “Christian humanist” type of literary and scholarly commitment to recapitulating the classics and ancient wisdom in a Christian context, which is a practice that can also be observed in Jonson’s poetry. See Erasmus’ *Adagia* and Kathy Eden’s *Friends Hold All Things in Common: Tradition, Intellectual Property, and the Adages of Erasmus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>57</sup> Minnis, p. 9.



through the humanistic education pedagogy of Erasmus and can be seen in the various rhetorical techniques illustrated in T.W. Baldwin's book *Small Latin & Less Greek*.<sup>58</sup>

An excerpt from Jonson's prose can illuminate this further, especially in the context of composition:

For a man to write well, there are required three necessities: to read the best authors, observe the best speakers, and much exercise of his own style. In style to consider what ought to be written, and after what manner, he must first think, and excogitate his matter; then choose his words and examine the weight of either. Then take care in placing, and ranking both matter and words, that the composition be comely; and to do this with diligence and often....So did the best writers in their beginnings; they imposed upon themselves care, and industry. They did nothing rashly. They obtained first to write well, and then custom made it easy and a habit. By little and little, their matter shewed itself to them more plentifully; their words answered, their composition followed; and all, as in a well-ordered family, presented itself in the place. (1205-1210 & 1223-1228)

In the passage above, Jonson uses a source, an authority, and closely follows a passage from Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (10.3.4-10). The arrangement, "as in a well-ordered family, presented itself in the place," the division, "care in placing, and ranking both matter, and words" are both important aspects of Jonson's ideas for composition, but the emphasis upon the writer "excogitate[ing] his matter, then choose[ing] his words, and examine[ing] the weight of either" demonstrates in action the "creative" role of the author who writes in a similar manner to medieval writers. The author chooses "matter" through "excogitation" (a "thinking out") that is

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<sup>58</sup> Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944.

not identical to the source matter, but instead in dialogue with it. This stage follows a period of *gathering* material together, and an author places what has been gathered in a kind of ready *store*. As Jonson said, “In being able to counsel others, a Man must be furnish’d with a universall store in himself, of the knowledge of all *Nature*: That is the matter, and seed-plot; There are the seats of all Argument, and Invention.”<sup>59</sup> This “store” would not have been artificial in nature, a kind of dedicated “compositional memory” of sorts, but instead literally the poet’s “self:” “The content of the self, its ‘store,’ is all, and Jonson’s intellectual and moral ideal is less one of self-sufficiency than of generous willingness to encounter and assimilate.”<sup>60</sup> This “store” Jonson thought to be the “gathered self,” as he says in his praise of Sir Thomas Roe in *Epigrams* 98, “Be always to thy gathered self the same.”<sup>61</sup>

### ***Flower, Honey Composition***

One common image used by medieval writers and readers who practiced division in reading and composing a text is the image of the flower. In fact books in Jonson’s own library exhibit markings of flowers and hands in the margins at points in the books that he must have thought to be important, and these markings often indicate sententious material or the like.<sup>62</sup> The

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<sup>59</sup> Qtd. in Peterson, *Imitation and Praise in in the Poems of Ben Jonson*, fn. 31, pp. 29-30.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, pp. 29-30.

<sup>61</sup> Line 9.

<sup>62</sup> For an account of Jonson’s library and his annotations see David McPherson, “Ben Jonson’s Library and Marginalia: An Annotated Catalogue,” *Studies in Philology* 71.5 (1974): 1-106, and Robert C. Evans “Ben Jonson’s Library and Marginalia: New Evidence from the Folger Collection,” *Philological Quarterly* 66.4 (Fall 1987) pp. 521-528. Evans lists these marginalia in Jonson’s copy of Martial’s epigrams: “Nearly every poem is underscored, and next to various lines Jonson has drawn flowers, asterisks, swords, or pointing hands. He translates passages, corrects errata, notes connections, and uses the margins to comment on contemporary superiors and peers” (p. 521).

medieval *florilegium* (*flora* + *legere*) was basically a book of flowers—an anthology of excerpted writings of the choicest “sweet” bits gathered from multiple sources. The image of the flower in this context can be traced back to Seneca who discusses reading as “gathering,” and he compares the gathering of the choicest parts of a book to how bees gather pollen from multiple flowers. The crucial next step for reader and bee alike is the transformation of the pollen or gathered text into honey, that is, the sweet fruit or yield:

We...ought to copy [imitari] these bees, and sift [separare] whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading, for such things are better preserved if they are kept separate; then...we should so blend those several offerings into one flavor [in unum saporem varia illa libamenta confundere] that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came.<sup>63</sup>

The *division* of a work is necessary for gathering of material to take place: sententious passages, notable points, in short the “honey”<sup>64</sup> or the choicest parts of the text that compress pages of text into proverb-like utterances would be extracted from works and compiled into a separate book. These *sententiae* then were often used as mnemonic cues for composition as can be seen from Erasmus’ *Adagia*, in particular to aid the process of *inventio* or discovery. The practice of division through proverb and *sententiae* was thus both a component of reading and composition. Division of a text through proverb and *sententiae* assisted comprehension and digestion of material, but division also allowed for an enhanced reading memory—memory of texts and

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<sup>63</sup> Qtd. in Richard Peterson, *Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson*, pg. 7.

<sup>64</sup> An obvious Biblical analogue to this “sweetness of a text” would be the book of Ezekiel 3:3, “And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat *it*; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.” This also brings up the idea of eating and digestion which I address below.

experience being the key component of composition. *Division* as the term suggests, and evident in the quote from Seneca above, involves an active process of separation. As bees store honey into separate cells, so the writer stores away the extracted divisions of a text into separate places, “for such things are better preserved if they are kept separate.” The role of the memory in composition for medieval and ancient writers cannot be stressed enough; it is the memory that linked composition to reading:

Composition is one of the two activities of meditation, and the complement to *division* in designing a memory for inventive recollection. As *division* is the mode of reading, as Hugh of St. Victor says, so composition—the placing together of pieces laid away by *division* and marking—is the mode of text making, what we, imprecisely call writing. The memorized chunks culled from works read and digested are ruminated into a composition—that is basically what an author does with authorities.<sup>65</sup>

The idea of the author as a maker or builder comes through most clearly in the medieval understanding of authorship and composition. “Composition” literally means (*com + ponere*) “to set beside together” or better still, “to construct through arrangement.” Although in the Renaissance there may have been to some extent a conscious rejection of medieval ideas and practices as some scholars have labored to show, writers in the Renaissance were incredibly influenced by medieval techniques of reading and composition. Jonson’s commonplace book reflects these practices and his poetry exhibits a number of these medieval characteristics of composition.

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<sup>65</sup> Carruthers, p. 234.

## *Eating, Digesting, Ruminating*

Another important image that is relevant to the practice of reading, composition, and division, and which Seneca, medieval scholastics, and Jonson all discuss at length, is eating and digesting. Eating or consuming a text is an image that gets at the process of converting another's work into one's own thought—like eating in the sense that a sandwich consumed and digested literally becomes part of one's bloodstream. Eating, and more importantly digestion, also images the act of meditation upon a work, through “ruminating” or chewing upon the matter, repetition of the words and the ideas in the mind. Seneca says that:

the food we have eaten, as long as it retains its original quality and floats in our stomachs as an undiluted mass, is a burden; but it passes into tissue and blood [in vires et in sanguinem transeunt] only when it has been changed [mutata] from its original form. So it is with the food that nourishes our higher nature,—we should see to it that whatever we have absorbed [hausimus, swallowed] should not be allowed to remain unchanged, or it will be no part of us. We must digest it [concoquamus illa]....Let us loyally welcome such foods and make them our own [nostra faciamus], so that something that is one may be formed out of many elements.<sup>66</sup>

The relationship between eating, digestion, and division is summed up in that last sentence quoted above, “so that something that is one may be formed out of many elements.” What is not clear from this quote is the discrimination necessary in the selection of the “many elements,” and tellingly this is what Jonson addresses in his passage upon this idea (p. 28 below). Jonson calls

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<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Peterson, p. 7.

one who does not have any notion of what they “swallow” a “Creature,” as a contrast to the reader who consumes with an “appetite,” that is, one who reads with discriminating taste:

...[is] able to convert the substance, or riches of an other poet, to his own use. To make choice of one excellent man above the rest, and so to follow him, till he grow very he: or, so like him, as the copy may be mistaken for the principal. Not, as a Creature, that swallows, what it takes in, crude, raw, or indigested; but, that feeds with an appetite, and hath a stomach to concoct, divide, and turn all to nourishment....to draw forth out of the best, and choicest flowers, with the bee, and turn all into honey, work it into one relish, and savor, make our imitation sweet: observe, how the best writers have imitated, and follow them.<sup>67</sup>

Richard Peterson notes that Jonson “reverses the order of Seneca’s two metaphors, using as a pivot Horace’s warning about the dangers of servile imitation and reserving for last the more expansive image of the bee, that model of selectivity which both culls the best and produces something select to be consumed by others.”<sup>68</sup>

Medieval accounts of eating, ruminating, and digesting abound and span an incredible length of time from Gregory the Great who wrote in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and continuing on steadily through the era of Hugh of St. Victor six centuries later. In the third book of his *Regula Pastoralis*, Saint Gregory the Great (who apparently had stomach issues himself) spoke about the affinity between the belly and the mind, citing scripture for his dictum *venter mens dicitur*: “But by the appellation of the belly is taught by that sentence in which it is written, *The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, which searches all the secret parts of the belly* (Prov 20:27).”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Discoveries*, ll. 1752-1761.

<sup>68</sup> P. 8.

<sup>69</sup> *Regula Pastoralis*, iii.12.

Carruthers says that Gregory the great added *venter* (belly) to *cor* (spirit, heart) “as a synonym for memory in Scripture.”<sup>70</sup> Hugh of St. Victor said that “it is imperative to replicate frequently the matter one has memorized and placed in the little chest, *arcula*, of one’s memory, and ‘to recall it from the stomach of memory to the palate.’”<sup>71</sup> Rumination, the activity that is common to both the memory and meditation, was thought to be explicitly as “an image of regurgitation...the memory is a stomach, the stored texts are the sweet-smelling cud originally drawn from the gardens of books.”<sup>72</sup>

Two major medieval influences upon Ben Jonson as author can be summed up thus: Imitation through the consumption and digestion of source material and secondly, the practice of *divisio*, or the separating of the fruits or honey of Jonson’s reading into his commonplace book (*Discoveries*) and poems. In a larger context, the medieval influence of division can be readily observed in the Renaissance in the large number of volumes of dictionaries of mythology, proverbs, and *sententiae* that were continuously being printed.<sup>73</sup> The presence of proverbs in renaissance literature has not been satisfactorily explored although the importance of proverbs in composition has been suggested.<sup>74</sup> The reason for this lack of scholarship may be due to a scholarly perception of a shift in emphasis in the Renaissance, a shift away from the wisdom

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<sup>70</sup> Carruthers, p. 206.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. The Latin word *rumenare*, from where the English word “ruminate” comes, meant “to chew the cud; turn over in the mind.”

<sup>73</sup> See for example, Richard Taverner, *Proverbs or Adages* (1539) which was a selection of Erasmus’ *Adagia*, John Haywood, *Dialogue of the Effectual Proverbs in the English Tongue Concerning Marriage*, (1562, 1566, & 1598), John Florio, *Florios Second Frutes, to be Gathered of Twelve Trees, of Divers but Delightful Tastes to the Tongues of Italians and Englishmen* (1591), Jan Gruter, *Florilegium Ethicopoliticum* (ca. 1610), etc.

<sup>74</sup> A couple of sources that demonstrate the richness of inquiry into proverbs in the Renaissance would be Marjorie Donker’s *Shakespeare’s Proverbial Themes: A Rhetorical Context for the Sententia as Res* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992). Also see Richard Harp’s article, “Proverbs, Philosophy, and Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*,” *Ben Jonson Journal* Vol. 16, no. 1-2 (2009): 197-215.

tradition that is noticeable in the work of late medieval/early renaissance authors such as Ficino, Erasmus, More, and Pico, and toward a different kind of reading of authors and practice of imitation.<sup>75</sup> However, as I hope to have shown with Jonson's ideas on division, reading, and imitation, there are significant and clear traces of medieval influence upon his authorial practices.

### *Author*

Medieval writers often debated concepts of "author" and had an interest in exploring the extent to which man participates as "author" or within the scope of creation of the supreme "Author." Minnis describes the various contexts and etymological links that medieval writers and thinkers understood to impact the idea of the term "author:"

In a literary context, the term *auctor* denoted someone who was at once a writer and an authority, someone not merely to be read but also to be respected and believed. According to medieval grammarians, the term derived its meaning from four main sources: *auctor* was supposed to be related to the Latin verbs *agere* 'to act or perform', *augere* 'to grow' and *auieo* 'to tie', and to the Greek noun *authentim* 'authority.' An *auctor* 'performed' the act of writing. He brought something into being, caused it to 'grow'. In the more specialized sense related to

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<sup>75</sup> "What was new [in the Renaissance] was the way classical antiquity was used...Instead of seeing in it a treasure to be exploited (a treasure of wisdom, knowledge, artistic or literary process from which one could draw indefinitely), as had been the case previously, people suddenly realized that the ancient works could be considered as models to be imitated." See Régine Pernoud, *Those Terrible Middle Ages: Debunking the Myths*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 24.



*auieo*, poets like Virgil and Lucan were *auctores* in that they had ‘tied’ together their verses with feet and meters. (p. 10)

Minnis adds to these ideas that the medieval understanding of the author “easily assimilated the idea of authenticity or ‘authoritativeness.’” That Jonson has a number of these ideas in mind when thinking of the writer’s role can be perceived from a passage in *Discoveries* in which he discusses the “making” of a poet, “It is the assertion of Tully,” Jonson says, “if to an excellent nature there happen an accession, or confirmation of learning, and discipline, there will then remain somewhat noble, and singular.”<sup>76</sup> In fact, all three medieval senses of *auctor* seem imbedded in Jonson’s commentary upon Cicero here: the author’s nature to act and perform grows through “learning and discipline” to a “noble and singular” quality.

Medieval thinkers quarreled over the relationship between the writings of human authors and Scripture, Bonaventure once saying of Peter Lombard, the author of the *Book of the Sentences*,<sup>77</sup> that “the Lombard’s work was ‘subordinate to the Bible and should serve it....Reason is ‘subordinate’ to faith: it enables us to understand those things which, by faith, we believe to be most certain.”<sup>78</sup> Thomas Aquinas understood, like Saint Bonaventure, that God is the sole originator or *auctor* “of things and [therefore] can use things to signify, whereas human *auctores* are *auctores* of words and use words to signify. [Ia.I.10]”<sup>79</sup> In simpler terms: God uses

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<sup>76</sup> Ll. 1773-1775.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Lombard’s *Book of the Sentences*, a somewhat obscure book today, was read and commented upon by nearly every medieval theologian. See Peter Lombard, *The Sentences, Book 1: The Mystery of the Trinity*, trans. Giulio Silano (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007), especially pp. vii-xxxii.

<sup>78</sup> Minnis, p. 146.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 73. A further important idea that I will argue is related to Jonson’s poetry follows from this: “When things are used significatively in Scripture, allegorical senses arise; when words are used significatively, we have the literal sense. The literal sense was believed to express the intention of the human *auctor*.” Jonson’s elegies and encomiums both display this idea.

things—matter—to signify, whereas man uses words to signify and thus the roles of God and man in the production of Scripture was understood. This debate between the roles that God and man play in the production of Scripture continued through the Middle Ages and in a very real and immediate way this debate continued into the Renaissance, renewed with vigor due to the issues that Protestants raised in the Reformation regarding Salvation (Justification) and the role of Scripture (the relationship between interpretation and tradition). My point is that this understanding of the relationship between God and man in the broader context of authorship can be seen in Jonson’s poetry on many levels. The medieval debate upon this topic continued into the Renaissance in different guises. I will discuss a number of poems in which this can be observed in order to demonstrate the extent to which Jonson is in dialogue with core medieval ideas in his poetry, particularly with respect to the subjects of his encomiums and elegies.

Renaissance humanists understood the Latinate connections between *auctor* “originator, causer, or doer; one that gives increase,” which developed from the verb *augere* “to make grow” (p. part. *auctus*) which means “to make grow, increase.” The *OED* records usages of “author” in English meaning “God, or creator” beginning in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century John Fisher, a contemporary of Thomas More and Erasmus, uses the word *auctor* in parallel with “maker” to refer to God, saying that God is “Auctour and maker of all thynges.”<sup>80</sup> The King James Bible also connects “author” to the Christian God numerous times, as Donaldson notes in a lecture he gave on the subject: “The word ‘author’ was as old as creation itself, its dignity deriving from its evident association with the godhead, ‘the author of eternal salvation’, ‘the author...of peace’,

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<sup>80</sup> Fisher, *Works*. Qtd. in *OED*.

‘the author and finisher of our faith’.”<sup>81</sup> This kind of usage of “author” can notably also be seen in the poetry of the Renaissance:

Immortal Love, author of this great frame,  
Sprung from that beauty which can never fade;  
How hath man parceled out thy glorious name,  
And thrown it on that dust which thou hast made,  
While mortal love doth all the title gain!<sup>82</sup>

The opening lines of George Herbert’s poem “Love (I)” quoted above identify God (“Immortal Love”) as author of the universe (“this great frame”). The opposition between man’s conception of love and God’s “immortal love” is present throughout the poem, and Herbert is well known for making poems that dramatically portray a dialogue between the speaker of the poem and the divinity upon topics such as this. God can be identified as author in the poem in the several senses identified above simultaneously: of “originator, causer, doer,” as one who “makes grow, increase,” and as the “author of eternal salvation.”<sup>83</sup>

Milton, writing later than Jonson, uses “author” a number of times in *Paradise Lost* in a similar manner and seems to be well aware of the medieval understanding of the term. Milton actually creatively plays upon the medieval meanings of “author” in order to clear God from the creation of evil, and to distinguish essentially the nature of God from Satan. For example in Book II of *Paradise Lost* Satan is referred to as “the Author of all ill” by the poet who renders for readers the “malice” that Satan harbors for mankind, for Satan has come up with a plan to pervert human nature and slyly has his chief mate (Beelzebub) introduce the idea of this undoing man’s relationship with God during the hellish council:

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<sup>81</sup> Shakespeare, Jonson, and the Invention of the Author,” In *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 151 (2006): p. 329.

<sup>82</sup> George Herbert, “Love (I),” ll. 1-5.

<sup>83</sup> For the sense of “author of salvation,” see l. 12, “And wrought our deliverance from th’ infernal pit.”

Thus *Beëlzebub*  
Pleaded his devilish Counsel, first devised  
By Satan, and in part proposed: for whence,  
But from the author of all ill could spring  
So deep a malice, to confound the race  
Of mankind in one root, and earth with Hell  
To mingle and involve... (ll. 378-384)

“Ill” appears to have come into English from the Old Norse *illr* which meant “bad,” “evil,” “ugly,” or “unpleasing.”<sup>84</sup> Later in Book II, Sin calls Satan her “father and author:” “Thou art my Father, thou my author, thou / My being gav’st me; whom should I obey / But thee, whom follow?”<sup>85</sup> St. Michael the archangel also refers to Satan as an “author” during the war in heaven in Book VI:

Author of evil, unknown till thy revolt,  
Unnamed in Heav’n, now plenteous, as thou seest  
These acts of hateful strife, hateful to all,  
Though heaviest by just measure on thy self  
And thy adherents: how hast thou disturbed  
Heav’ns blessèd peace, and into Nature brought  
Misery, uncreated till the crime  
Of thy rebellion? (ll. 262-269)

Milton uses the term “author” in order to draw a clear distinction in creation, as well as to demonstrate the justness of order in God’s creation. In a crucial passage in Book III in which God the Father relates to Jesus that all justice will be satisfied because man had been created free, He says that through disobedience Adam and Eve will become “authors to themselves in all:”

So without least impùlse or shadow of Fate,  
Or aught by me immutably foreseen,  
They trespass, authors to themselves in all  
Both what they judge and what they choose; for so

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<sup>84</sup> From the entry for “ill” in the *American Heritage College Dictionary*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2007) and the entry for the Old Norse adjective *illr* in E. V. Gordon’s classic text, *An Introduction to Old Norse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

<sup>85</sup> Ll. 864-866.

I formed them free, and free they must remain,  
Till they enthrall themselves; I else must change  
Their nature... (ll. 120-126)

Adam and Eve become “authors” in this telling passage, and in doing so alienate themselves from the “Author” of all creation who Milton has Jesus name in Book III: “Eternal King; thee Author of all being, / Fountain of light, thyself invisible / Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sitt’st.”<sup>86</sup> Milton uses the medieval sense of “author” in *Paradise Lost* in a varied manner, playing upon the medieval senses of the term, and in doing so demonstrates the depth and implications of the term “author” when used in different contexts.

Milton’s association of the word “author” with Satan poetically renders the paradox of evil in that it exists in the world but does not *originate* with God. God is not the “author,” “originator,” or “increaser” of evil, and thus it is significant that “author” is used to apply to Satan in this way in *Paradise Lost*. Milton’s use of “author” to apply to Satan is highly ironic because evil by nature does not, as Augustine noted, have existence in itself: “‘No *Nature* (i.e. no positive reality) is bad and the word Bad denotes merely privation of good,’ (*De Civ. Dei*, XI, 21, 22)...What we call bad things are good things perverted (*De Civ. Dei*, XIV, 11). This perversion arises when a conscious creature becomes more interested in itself than in God (*ibid.* XIV, 11), and wishes to exist ‘on its own’ (*esse in semet ipso*, XIV, 13).”<sup>87</sup> Milton’s use of “author” in relation to Adam and Eve as “authors to themselves in all” is similarly ironic. Adam and Eve cannot create anything new, and thus they cannot be “authors” equivalent to God in that sense, but by choosing to reject the natural order in creation they also reject the natural order in themselves. Reorienting themselves away from relational life with God leads them necessarily

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<sup>86</sup> Ll. 374-376.

<sup>87</sup> See C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 66. Also see pp. 66-72, for Lewis’ summary of Church doctrine and Augustinian background relevant to these ideas.

to project onto the things of creation (and back inwardly into themselves) the essential relational “free” nature in which God made them. This is why God the Father says that they will be free “Till they enthrall themselves,” for He foresees the result of the perversion of creation (both in terms of their own nature and in terms of their relationship to the rest of creation) to devolve into a kind of slavery.

Turning now to look closely at some of Jonson’s poetry, it should not be surprising that he would also use the medieval sense of the term “author” in his poetry. In “A Hymn on the Nativity of My Saviour” for example, Jonson demonstrates the use of these same senses of “author” that commonly appear in the medieval and renaissance understanding and use of the word, but he also uses the trope of paradox to complicate the effect:

I sing the birth, was born tonight,  
The author both of life, and light;  
    The angels so did sound it,  
And like the ravished shepherds said,  
Who saw the light, and were afraid,  
    Yet searched, and true they found it. (ll. 1-6)

The “author” in this poem is Jesus, clearly, and the Nativity story is the subject of the poem. From the very outset, Jonson highlights the fundamental paradox of the “birth of God” in the world. The “author of both life, and light” was himself “born” on a particular night, and the “light” that the “author” brings forth makes the shepherds fear, though “Yet [they] searched, and true they found it.” The last three lines of the poem underscore the authorial nature of Jonson’s decision to identify God as “author:”

To see this babe, all innocence;  
A martyr born in our defence;  
    Can man forget this story? (ll. 22-34)

The poem ends with a rhetorical question that is implicitly aimed at the reader and the question brings the poem back full circle to the “author” of the “story.” Jonson’s interest in the

connection between God and life is one that he continues to explore in his poetry. As Aquinas believed, the “story” that God is “authoring” in the Nativity of Christ is significantly that God originates all things in the human story (is the *auctor* in the medieval sense). God’s own story is not one that is purely literary but rather continuously living in creation. Again, God uses things to signify whereas human *auctores* (Jonson) uses words to signify, in this case the story of God’s manifestation within creation. For this reason, namely that the story does not have a solely human author, the story is unforgettable. Further associations between Jesus as “author” do run throughout the poem, and it seems clear that Jonson’s choice to call God “author” is not an incidental choice in diction but rather a crucial aspect of God’s nature as he understood it:

He whom the whole world could not take,  
The Word, which heaven, and earth did make;  
Was now laid in a manger. (ll. 10-12)

Jesus is literally the divine “Word” of God, the second Person of the Trinity, and it is through the “Word” as Jonson says in the poem that “heaven, and earth” were made. This wordplay continues as Jonson also alludes to the relationship between the Father and the Son, that is, that relationship of their wills in unity results in the harmony and beauty of creation. It is the unity of the wills of the Father and the Son, through the Son’s “obedience,” which allows the Son to faithfully “speak” creation into existence as the Word:

The Father’s wisdom willed it so,  
The Son’s obedience knew no No,  
Both wills were in one stature. (ll. 13-15)

Although in these lines Jonson refers specifically to the Incarnation and the Nativity scene which is the subject of the poem, it is evident from the lines that immediately follow these that Jonson seeks to suggest a further parallel between creation and the Advent of Christ. This is significant because it is literally “the birth of the author” of “life and light” that Jonson aims to address in

the poem, both in the sense of creation as well as in the sense of restoration (Christ is the “martyr born in our defence”).<sup>88</sup>

### ***Original and Book***

The meaning of the word “original” is related to the word “origin,” which comes from the Latin *orīgō*. The Latin *orīgō* means “to arise” or “to be born.” Going back further, the earliest source for the word “original” is the Proto Indo-European *Er-*, meaning “to move” or “to set in motion.”<sup>89</sup> For Jonson, a poet whose English was heavily influenced by his extensive knowledge of Latin roots, the word “original” meant something close to this in the sense of “going back to the origins,” as can be seen in his use of the word “original” in *The Underwood* 83, “An Elegy: On the Lady Jane Paulet, Marchioness of Winchester:”

Let angels sing her glories, who did call  
Her spirit home to her original,  
Who saw the way was made it, and were sent  
To carry and conduct the complement  
'Twi't death and life! Where her mortality  
Became her birthday to eternity! (63-68)

At the outset of the poem the poet’s mourning strain communicates the deeply affected state (“A horror in me! All my blood is steel!”) that the death of Jane Paulet has brought about in the poet. As the poem develops however, it shifts to become a celebration of eternal life: the death turns into a journey to the “original.” This particular instance of Jonson’s use of the word “original” is

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<sup>88</sup> A further connection between the *author* and literary creation and the Author of creation can be found in Dorothy Sayers’ *The Mind of the Maker* (San Francisco: Harper, 1987). See esp. chapter three, “Idea, Energy, Power,” in which Sayers discusses literary creation as consisting of a threefold essence (substance) analogous to the Trinity: “Each of them [idea, energy, power] is the complete book separately; yet in the complete book all of them exist together” (p. 41).

<sup>89</sup> Calvert Watkins, ed., *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2011), p. 24.



telling because the poet associates the concept of the “eternal” with “books” and “language,” in short, with the very activity of writing and reading:

And now, through circumfusèd light, she looks  
On nature’s secrets, there, as her own books:  
Speaks heaven’s language and discourseth free  
To every order, every hierarchy!  
Beholds her Maker, and in him doth see  
What the beginnings of all beauties be,  
And all beatitudes that thence do flow,  
Which they that have the crown are sure to know! (69-76)

In much the same way, Dante had earlier poetically conceived of the center of the cosmos in terms of books, actually as one book, a single “volume bound” by love which the Pilgrim apprehends in the very last canto of *The Divine Comedy*:

In its depth I saw contained,  
by love into a single volume bound,  
The pages scattered through the universe  
substances, accidents, and the interplay between them,  
as though they were conflated in such ways  
that what I tell is but a simple light. (86-90)<sup>90</sup>

Jonson’s “originality” displayed in the above verses is great because he inherits medieval ideas about the cosmos and nature which he then spins into a touching elegy that yet still resonates with other poetry of the Renaissance. In both medieval and renaissance thought the image of the “book” was the premier emblem of creation, of nature, and the soul. George Herbert for example, in the poem “The Holy Scriptures II,” plays with the meaning of The Book of Nature so to contrast with The Book of Scripture in the final couplet of the poem: “Stars are poore

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<sup>90</sup> *Paradiso*, Translated by Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander (New York: Anchor, 2008), Canto XXXIII, ll. 86-90.

Paradiso Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,  
legato con amore in un volume,  
ciò che per l'universo si squaderna:  
ustanze e accidenti e lor costume  
quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo  
che ciò ch'i' dico è un semplice lume.

books, & oftentimes do misse: / This book of starres lights to eternal blisse” (ll. 13-14).<sup>91</sup>

Herbert’s entire poem is a lament upon the poet’s desire to understand how all of nature coexists in a single volume, bound to greater meaning:

Oh that I knew how all thy lights combine,  
And the configurations of their glorie!  
Seeing not onely how each verse doth shine,  
But all the constellations of the storie.

This verse marks that, and both do make a motion  
Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie:  
Then as dispersed herbs do watch a potion,  
These three make up some Christians destinie:

Such are thy secrets, which my life makes good,  
And comments on thee: for in ev’ry thing  
Thy words do finde me out, & parallels bring,  
And in another make me understood. (1-12)

Herbert’s poem on “Scripture” expresses the poet’s desire to apprehend what Jonson clearly says Jane Paulet does see as she looks on “nature’s secrets,” whose spirit had been sent “to her original.” This idea of nature as book came out of Christian tradition which sought to penetrate deeper into the nature of God and the wisdom of God in creation by reading creation as The Book of Nature. St. Albert the Great’s *Book of Secrets* exemplifies an interesting work in this tradition, very practical and biological in nature, as does St. Bonaventure’s *Journey of the Mind to God* which is much more of a mystical book.<sup>92</sup> Others too use the idea of the Book of Nature in the Renaissance; it was an idea at once mysterious and common. In *Paradise Lost* Milton demonstrates kindred familiarity with the idea of the medieval Book of Nature which he calls

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<sup>91</sup> George Herbert, *The Temple*, 1633.

<sup>92</sup> See *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus*, ed. Michael R. Best and Frank H. Brightman (London: Oxford University Press, 1974) and *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (The Mind’s Journey into God) in which St. Bonaventure says that the soul must *begin* by reading the book of nature that the Author wrote.

“the Book of knowledg fair” in Book III—the famous section of the great poem in which the poet laments his blindness:

...but not to me returns  
Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,  
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summers Rose...  
But cloud in stead, and ever-during dark  
Surrounds me, from the chearful wayes of men  
Cut off, and for the Book of knowledg fair  
Presented with a Universal blanc  
Of Natures works to mee expun'd and ras'd  
And wisdome at one entrance quite shut out. (41-43 & 45-50)

Later in the poem, in Book VIII, Raphael responds to Adam's rather theoretical query about the intricate details of the motions of the heavens both by saying it is right to look into the Book of Nature (which he calls “the Book of God”) to inquire of God's “wonderous Works,” and yet later on in his speech to Adam he concludes with admonishment to “be lowly wise:”

To ask or search I blame thee not, for Heav'n  
Is as the Book of God before thee set,  
Wherein to read his wonderous Works, and learne  
His Seasons, Hours, or Dayes, or Months, or Yeares:  
This to attain, whether Heav'n move or Earth,  
Imports not, if thou reck'n right, the rest  
From Man or Angel the great Architect  
Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge  
His secrets to be scann'd by them who ought  
Rather admire... (66-75).

In the works of other writers of the 17th century such as Donne and Traherne a similar familiarity with the idea of a book, mainly as a metaphysical image of the soul, can be observed.<sup>93</sup> The use of the metaphor of the book by renaissance writers in this way supposes the idea of an Author, a sole originator of creation.

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<sup>93</sup> The opening meditation of the *Centuries of Meditations* begins, “An empty book is like an infant's soul, in which anything may be written. It is capable of all things, but containeth nothing. I have a mind to fill this with profitable wonders. And since Love made you put it into my hands I will fill it with those Truths you love without knowing them: with those things which, if it be

*Light, Commonwealth, Life, Name, Raise, Stand, Story (History)*

The repetition of the word “light” in Jonson’s “A Hymn on the Nativity of My Saviour” requires attention because it presents a link that associates Jonson’s use of “author” in this poem (as it is used in parallel with the word “light”) to a number of Jonson’s other poems. Jonson uses the word “light” with respect to his poetic understanding of the “author” in poems such as *Epigrams* 94, 104, *Underwood* 1.1, 84.9, and in the poem of praise he wrote for his great contemporary Shakespeare. The association between “light” and “author” that is present in Jonson’s poetry is not a novel idea, but can be traced back to several possible theological sources that Jonson may have been familiar with, especially the work of Saint Bonaventure.

Many relevant medieval connections to this discussion of “author” and Jonson can be found by looking at some basic ideas found in Saint Bonaventure’s 13<sup>th</sup> century work *Itinerarium* (“Journey of the Mind to God”). Bonaventure predicates his work and thought upon the idea specifically that God is the Author of three “books” of creation—which was a common medieval idea that developed from Augustinian theology.<sup>94</sup> The three books that God authors are the Book of Nature, the Book of Scripture, and the Book of the Soul. Thus Bonaventure says, since God has authored these three books, attaining an understanding of the meaning of the

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possible, shall shew my Love; to you in communicating most enriching Truths: to Truth in exalting her beauties in such a Soul.” In “The Extacie,” Donne uses the image of the book in order to convey the idea of the sacramental, corporeal aspect of the soul through sense:

To’our bodies turn we then, that so  
Weak men on love reveal’d may look;  
Love’s mysteries in souls do grow,  
But yet the body is his book.” (ll. 69-72)

<sup>94</sup> Louis Martz, *The Paradise Within* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 18.

“books” can only become possible (due to our fallen state) through God’s revelation and “illumination.” The *Itinerarium* begins with the following sentence:

I shall begin by invoking, through His Son Our Lord Jesus Christ, the First Principle, from Whom all enlightenment descends as through the Father of Light, and from Whom all that is given is of the best and all of Whose gifts are perfect.”<sup>95</sup>

Bonaventure invokes Jesus through “Whom all enlightenment descends as through the Father of Light” at the outset of a work that will take for its subject precisely this, the lifting of the human mind to God. The lifting of the intellect to understand the true meaning of things in the world is founded upon a relational (contemplative) act. The relational act of contemplation, of lifting the mind to God, allows for true intellection to occur, for a cognitive apprehension of “clarity” (*claritas*) through the seeking into God’s creative thought. This is to say that Bonaventure not only believes that God can indeed be seen to operate in nature, Scripture, and persons, but that the illumination of God’s grace through prayer, meditation, and study, enables one to see, through the images of the physical world, into the life of God on earth:

...we are led by the hand to look upon God through His imprints...we can gather that all created things in this perceivable world lead the soul of the one contemplating and tasting wisdom into eternal God. This is because that First Principle, most powerful, most wise and best, of eternal origin, light and fullness, whose activity is efficient, exemplary and consequent, has shadows, resonances and pictures, imprints, likenesses and images, signs given divinely to us, that we might look upon God. They are, I continue, exemplary- or, rather, exemplified:

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<sup>95</sup> *Itinerarium*, Trans. Simon Wickham-Smith, Leipzig, 2005. Prolog 1.

they are proposed to minds both rough and perceptive so that, through those things which they see, these exemplars might be transferred to those things which are intellectually grasped, which they do not see, in the same way that signs are signified. (2.11)

Jonson ventures into the ideas present in the above quotation from Bonaventure in a number of poems. In particular, Jonson as “author” cooperates with God’s creation and vision so to portray an array of visual imagery to his readers in order to allow them to ascend into and share in God’s perspective upon life. As Richard Peterson has argued in *Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson*, the poet’s praise of virtuous and noble lives derives from and is closely related to his literary imitation practices. The poet’s practice of literary imitation is connected to shaping virtue, “Jonson’s poems of praise and his distinctive brand of *imitatio*, that process...whereby a good writer, and by extension a good man, shapes an original and coherent work of art or a virtuous life.”<sup>96</sup> It is, however, possible to push Peterson’s thesis of imitation and praise beyond the realms of “writing and conduct,” that is, beyond the argument that Jonson imitates classical sources and virtuous lives in poetry in order to lead readers to “imitate” those very virtues that they see portrayed artfully in the poems. Peterson’s thesis could be built upon by considering references to Jonson’s Christianity and the Christian references he often employs as a significant part of his praising the persons he chooses to poetically render for his readers. Jonson’s Christianity has not been examined in this context and its presence in the poems has been to some extent overlooked. A consideration of the Christian elements in Jonson’s poetry of praise and elegy would not take away at all from Jonson’s classicism and imitation but would instead enhance (greatly) the understanding of his artistic imitation. To put it concisely: Jonson

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<sup>96</sup> Peterson, p. xiv.

artistically portrays virtuous lives in a humanist fashion which allows the reader to not only perceive the imitable qualities of these significant figures, but also to allow readers the ability (sight) to share into their vision of God both through their illuminated perception of “images” here on earth, as well as in the afterlife.<sup>97</sup> Jonson is aware that he writes of God’s creation, and that is why his chosen mode of poetry is praise, epigram, verse epistle, and elegy. Jonson, aware of his position as an “author” in the medieval sense, writes to praise God’s (the Author’s) creation through his words which signify anything only in relation to God’s creation; the poet uses words whereas God uses “things” to signify.

Jonson’s awareness and use of this dynamic within the poetry allows for a kind of double force. He uses language in order to convey images that portray lives that are created by (and are still *being* created by) God through the active and observable virtues practiced by the people who are the subjects of a number of these poems of praise and elegy. Jonson’s authorial role as poet, I hope to make clear, is not simply to praise the virtue and lives of certain persons in order to lead the reader to contemplate these lives and to imitate them, but more. The poet seeks to share with his attentive readers the “illumination” that he receives as poet through contemplation and poetic representation of the lives, virtue, and actions of these persons which leads upward: As he raises his subjects to God he raises his readers into a “beatific” vision of sorts (or at least a contemplation of such a vision). Jonson’s poetry presents a community, a “commonwealth” he believes to “feign” for readers:

I could never think the study of wisdom confined only to the philosopher, or of piety to the divine, or of state to the politic. But that he which can feign a

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<sup>97</sup> Poems such as *Epigrams* 22, *The Underwood* 83, and 84.9 each portray images of the afterlife. It would be good to note here too that Jonson’s contemporaries such as John Donne (along with many others) would have agreed with this assessment. See below, pp. 156ff.

commonwealth (which is the poet) can govern it with counsels, strengthen it with laws, correct it with judgements, inform it with religion and morals, is all these.<sup>98</sup>

Thus Jonson sees the poet's role in terms of a grand sweeping calling, a calling that collapses into a single role that which the philosopher, the priest, and the political (or social) nature of man owe to society. And that is not all. Jonson's poetry displays sensitivity to both Christian and pagan tradition, to worldly and otherworldly reality, to real persons and ideals, to virtues and vices, and to real "commonwealths" and those "feigned" all in an effort, it would seem, to affirm both the earthly and heavenly "cities" of God. Some points from Book 19 of Saint Augustine's *City of God* are relevant to Jonson's conception of community through poetry. Firstly that "virtue" comes from religion, "For although some suppose that virtues which have a reference only to themselves, and are desired only on their own account, are yet true and genuine virtues, the fact is that even then they are inflated with pride, and are therefore to be reckoned vices rather than virtues."<sup>99</sup> I will demonstrate the applicability of this to Jonson throughout this dissertation. The other point Augustine makes is that heaven need not be something other and in opposition to the earthly social world. Instead the earthly "city" and the heavenly "city" are cotemporaneous: "But the peace which is peculiar to ourselves we enjoy now with God by faith, and shall hereafter enjoy eternally with Him by sight...it will not be necessary that reason should rule vices which no longer exist, but God shall rule the man, and the soul shall rule the body."<sup>100</sup>

As noted above, Jonson draws attention to "light" in relation to the poetic idea of the author. He begins poem 94 in his *Epigrams*, "To Lucy, Countess of Bedford, with Mr. Donne's Satires," with an address to Lucy:

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<sup>98</sup> *Discoveries*, ll. 740-743.

<sup>99</sup> *City of God*: xix.xxv.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, xix, xxvii.



Lucy, you brightness of our sphere, who are  
Life of the muses' day, their morning star!  
If works (not th' authors) their own grace should look,  
Whose poems would not wish to be your book?  
But these, desired by you, the maker's ends  
Crown with their own. Rare poems ask rare friends. (ll. 1-6)

Jonson uses “author” here in a double sense, both in a sense consistent with the above cited medieval senses of the term on the one hand, and yet also with the addition of the explicit reference to the literary author, the poet who makes books. This double sense of the term owes its complexity to the central conceit of the poem. The conceit is that if the “works” of the “authors” had the ability to apprehend the grace that made them, then Lucy, Countess of Bedford, is thus herself an author, God-like in the sense that the grace which flows from her as patron naturally becomes poetry: “Whose poems would not wish to be your book?” Jonson asks. An allusion to the Book of Nature, Book of the Soul, and Book of Scripture may also be noticed here, although the conceit does aim at practical ends too. Lucy was patron to many poets such as Jonson and Donne, and in that sense it is literally “her grace” (financial support) that has allowed books of poems to be made. If those poems (which appear to be living things in the poem) were to apprehend the grace that enabled them, Jonson says, which of them would not wish to return to their maker? The relationship between Bonaventure’s ideas in *Itinerarium* and this poem are complex, but resonate clear. Lucy is not the “maker” of the poems themselves, that is the *author’s* or *poet’s* role, but it is her grace, “you brightness of our sphere, who are / Life of the muses’ day, their morning-star!” which allows the author to bring about the poem. This is similar to the way in which it is God’s grace that allows one to, within the context of their life, receive “illumination” to enable a higher apprehension of matter.

The opening line of the poem, “Lucy, you brightness of our sphere, who are” actually occurs twice in the poem, the second time as the second to last line of the poem (l. 15). Lucy’s

role of muse (an intermediary) resounds with the placement of the last two words of the line offset by the comma, “who are.” Read alone, the line confirms the being of Lucy—she like all the living shares in the nature of the supreme Author “Who Is.” The last line of the poem, “The muses’ evening-as their morning-star,” appears subtly changed from line two, “Life of the muses’ day, their morning star!” This repetition reinforces the quality of “light” associated with Lucy who for the poet becomes an image of reality—a reality that the poet only comes to realize at the end of a companion poem “On Lucy, Countess of Bedford” (*Epigrams* 76). The radiance of Lucy that the poet apprehends finally *as reality* has connections to *claritas* which is a word that Thomas Aquinas uses in his philosophical discussion of beauty in the *Summa Theologiae*. *Claritas*, often translated as “radiance,” “clarity,” “brightness,” or simply as “light,” refers to the intelligibility of an object of contemplation.<sup>101</sup> Joseph Pieper says that an object reveals its essence, literally its “being,” when the apprehension of its “light” or “clarity” becomes intellectually grasped by the viewer specifically in terms of its nature as a part of creation “creatively thought” by God:

...it is the creative fashioning of things by God which *makes it possible* for them to be known by men...things have not only their *own* nature (‘for themselves alone’); but *as* creatively thought by God, things have also a reality ‘for us.’ Things have their intelligibility, their inner clarity and lucidity, and the power to reveal themselves because God has creatively thought them.”<sup>102</sup>

This foundational idea of the relationship between beauty and intelligibility adds a layer of meaning to the poet’s eventual apprehension of Lucy in *Epigrams* 76. Here in *Epigrams* 76

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<sup>101</sup> See the section “*Integritas, Claritas, Consonantia, Whole*” below in chapter 5, p. 137ff., for more on the idea of *claritas* as it is related to the traditional understanding of “beauty” and also the way in which “light” or “radiance” is related to “intelligibility.”

<sup>102</sup> Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas* (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1999), p. 55.

Jonson explores the etymological relationship between Lucy and “light” in the way that he uses the word “lucent,” suggesting to readers that “Lucy” and “lucent” have a common root: *lux*, *lucis*, meaning “light.” Moreover, it is here in *Epigrams* 76 that Jonson enlightens the reader to apprehend a peculiar vision of an ideal, a “creature I could most desire / to honour, serve and love, as poets use.”<sup>103</sup> In the poem, Jonson dramatizes the (painful) process by which the poet (and therefore the reader) reaches illumination. At the outset of the poem the poet knocks around the natural world, his desires, and his understanding of things for a number of lines, cataloguing Pygmalion-like the ways in which *he* had sought to “form” his ideal “creature:”

I meant to make her fair, and free, and wise,  
 Of greatest blood, and yet more good than great;  
 I meant the day-star should not brighter rise,  
 Nor lend like influence from his lucent seat.  
 I meant she should be courteous, facile, sweet,  
 Hating that solemn vice of greatness, pride;  
 I meant each softest virtue there should meet,  
 Fit in that softer bosom to reside. (ll. 5-12)

The poem eventually breaks down because the poet is stuck on his own apprehension of an ideal and attempts to create it. As the poem continues, the poet becomes liberated from his own singular vision and evidently finally “sees” (through a grace of illumination) Lucy as she really is—as a someone, outside himself and real. The repetitions of “I meant” in lines 1, 3, 5, and 7 become displaced by the end of the poem when Jonson’s muse bids him write the name “Bedford.” Reading both of these poems to Lucy together then, it seems to be the case that the illumination leads the poet into contemplation, which then in turn leads to a loftier apprehension of reality “as creation” creatively thought by God. The wordplay in the two poems is rather clever. If the poet’s creation (the poems) could speak (which they do) they, if Lucy desires them, will fulfill both Jonson’s (and God’s) ends: “desired by you, the maker’s ends / Crown with their

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<sup>103</sup> Ll. 3-4.

own.”<sup>104</sup> The poems made possible by Lucy’s patronage crown the “maker’s ends,” Jonson’s, with their own ends, which is not only to “praise” Lucy but to praise the maker (God). Jonson’s creative act of writing the poem aids poet and reader alike to be able to glimpse into the dual participatory nature of (the) creation.

In another poem in the *Epigrams* (number 104) entitled “To Susan, Countess of Montgomery,” Jonson suggests similarly that a “light” emanates from the life of Susan, the addressee of the poem:

Were they that named you, prophets? Did they see,  
Even in the dew of grace, what you would be?  
Or did our times require it, to behold  
A new Susanna, equal to that old?  
Or, because some scarce think that story true, 5  
To make those faithful, did the Fates send you?  
And to your scene lent no less dignity  
Of birth, of match, of form, of chastity?  
Or, more than born for the comparison  
Of former age, or glory of our own, 10  
Were you advanced, past those times, to be  
The light, and mark unto posterity?  
Judge they, that can: here I have raised to show  
A picture, which the world for yours must know,  
And like it too; if they look equally: 15  
If not, ‘tis fit for you, some should envy.

Jonson begins the poem by focusing on Susan’s name, a significant characteristic detail in the poetry of Jonson, for he only specifically names certain persons while leaving the addressee ambiguous in many poems.<sup>105</sup> The poet asks a rhetorical question about Susan’s name right away in the poem because he is invoking the power of it, and through it will weave together a

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<sup>104</sup> *Epigrams* 94, ll. 5-6.

<sup>105</sup> Several poems in the *Epigrams* are directed at anonymous persons, such as 99, 100, 102, 103, 106, 112, 119, and 121 to list only a few. For a discussion of Jonson’s notion of the “power” he found in names, see Ian Donaldson, “Jonson’s Poetry” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson* edited by Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 119-139, esp. pp. 124-128.

pastiche of allusion. As the poem continues, Jonson praises Susan by likening her character to the upright and chaste Susanna, a character whose story is told in the prophetic book of Daniel in the Bible, and which Donaldson glosses in a footnote as being told “in the Apocrypha.” The Apocryphal nature of the story of Susanna is much to the point in this poem, for Jonson mingles again the relationship between the story and the life, and thus in a roundabout way, the importance of the author: “Can man forget this story?” In this case of the story of Susanna in the Bible, the story had been decided upon as an uninspired part of Scripture by reformers and therefore on a par with literature rather than with the inspired Word of God. However, Jonson wittily suggests that Susan’s life and prophetic name provides a “light” and “picture” through which those that “scarce think that story true” of Susanna can find living evidence of the story’s truth in this living person of Susan. The etymology for “story,” from the Latin *historia* via the Anglo-Norman French *estorie*, adds to the significance of the story of Susan—for it is history as much as it is present. Jonson goes so far as to make the connection blatant by rhetorically asking Susan in the poem: “To make those faithful did the fates send you?” (l. 6). Jonson’s “raising” of Susan in line 13 is significant too. Peterson’s says that the word “raise” in Jonson’s poetry:

...is associated with the idea of standing and with straightness, making or shaping with turning and with roundness. But the idea of raising mediates between the two clusters of ideas, appropriate as it is both to the upward thrust of poetry’s (and history’s) immortalizing power and the erecting of the three-dimensional inner forms shaped by the poet.<sup>106</sup>

Peterson explains that the conflating of these two ideas by Jonson in the word “raise” may come from the nearly synonymous Latin words *ponere* (to place, set) and *stare* (to stand). These are

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<sup>106</sup> P. 46.

words that Horace “used interchangeably...[*stare*] to describe the setting up of a statue, *ponere* means both to make or represent and raise.”<sup>107</sup> Jonson raises Susan then, not only as a mark of praise to her character, which comes through in the poem, but also in the sense of the “upward thrust of poetry’s (and history’s) immortalizing power” to create an image, or an aesthetic living representation, the “picture” of line 14 that compresses history and the present moment into a single image.<sup>108</sup>

As a result, Jonson’s role in this poem is multi-layered. He not only (obviously) seeks to praise Susan, Countess of Montgomery, but in addition suggests through analogy with the character Susanna in the Bible that God (through the “Fates” of line 6) is presently working through Susan as evident from her immediate “graces:” “Did they see, / Even in the dew of grace, what you would be?” Susan’s life is “The light, and mark” unto “posterity” as Jonson remarks in line 12, that enlightens the eternal Word of God for those who have eyes to see, and further to “...like it too; if they look equally” (l. 15). For those who have their sight illuminated by this poem then, which itself was illuminated through the living life of a person that the poet did not create but imitated, thus have their minds lifted by the picture to the very mind of the Author of Scripture. Jonson appears to be making a point about “the Author of Scripture” in this poem by drawing attention to a central issue in the time following the immediate effects of the Reformation: authority. And he is saying here, I think, that the normal everyday appearances,

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> The medieval conception of history did not emphasize the pastness of the past, but instead understood history to be continually present in time—to be relevant due to the continuous unfolding of salvation history in time. This concept of history developed from the medieval view of Biblical history and typology. See Albert Labriola, “The Medieval View of Christian History in *Paradise Lost*, in *Milton and the Middle Ages* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1982: 115-132) for discussion of this idea, and also Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). Auerbach uses the term “omni-temporality” to refer to the idea that the past is present in terms of typology and salvation history, see esp. pp. 73-74. Also see below, p. 122ff.

the images and pictures visible in the world can, if viewed with faith, lead one to grasp God's (the Author's) working in this life, and which since the Author is eternal, points to an "omnitemporality" (past, present, and future as one). The Author is still and always "writing" the "story" as it were, and the poet in a way simply copies or imitates nature with language, using his talents as a specialized kind of worship.

Interestingly, all of these ideas can be found concisely expressed in stanza five of the first poem of Jonson's *The Underwood* entitled, "The Sinner's Sacrifice:"

Eternal Father, God, who didst create  
This all of nothing, gav'st it form, and fate,  
And breath'st into it, life, and light, with state  
To worship thee. (17-20)

God is, for Jonson, "The gladdest light, dark man can think upon"<sup>109</sup> and through apprehending the world with the "light" of God which shines from those whose lives beget praise and demonstrate virtue, the poet's eyes lift (raise) and in addition to seeing correctly the simple practical everyday actions in nature, become capable of apprehending their eternal significance.

Or, as Jonson says in another poem:

Better be dumb, than superstitious;  
Who violates the Godhead, is most vicious  
Against the nature he would worship. He  
Will honoured be in all simplicity,  
Have all his actions wondered at, and viewed  
With silence and amazement, not with rude,  
Dull and prophane, weak, and imperfect eyes,  
Have busy search made in his mysteries.<sup>110</sup>

These parallels in Jonson's poetry between "light," "life," and the "Author" of creation powerfully conjoin together again in a moving elegy found in *The Underwood* (84.9) entitled, "Elegy on My Muse, The Truly Honoured Lady, the Lady Venetia Digby; Who Living, Gave Me

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<sup>109</sup> "The Sinner's Sacrifice," l. 35.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.9, ll. 73-80.

Leave to Call her So, Being Her *Apotheosis*, or Relation to the Saints.” The poem in its entirety is a grand celebration of the Resurrection of Lady Venetia Digby, as well as the poet’s vision of the fulfillment of Lady Digby’s piety on earth. The poem also acts as a consolation for those who knew her:

And will you, worthy son, sir, knowing this,  
Put black and mourning on, and say you miss  
A wife, a friend, a lady, or a love,  
Whom her redeemer honoured hath above  
Her fellows, with the oil of gladness, bright  
In heaven’s empyrean, with a robe of light? (97-103)

Lady Venetia Digby will be seen wearing a “robe of light” in heaven because she wore one on earth, and not only because she was Jonson’s muse. The poem carefully describes both her “hope” and “faith” during her life on earth and the aftereffects of a life so lived, “Hope hath her end, and faith hath her reward” (l. 68). The poet details Venetia’s many earthly acts that had the scent of eternity about them: She had a calm mind (l. 163); was constant and “kept an even gait” (l. 165); had a keen family managerial eye (l. 167); she was a “tender mother, a descreeter wife” (l. 174); and most importantly, she was pious and had a “private holiness” which Jonson relates in some of the most beautiful lines of the poem (ll. 179-209). The poet tells those who are left behind that they “thither...hope to come,” and when they do reach heaven, that they will,

...meet her there  
Much more desired, and dearer than before,  
By all the wealth of blessings, and the store  
Accumulated on her by the Lord  
Of life and light, the Son of God, the Word! (108-112)

Here the conjunction of life, light, and the Authorial Word is present in a single line of Jonson’s poetry, and the effect appropriately subsumes all of creation back to the origin, for, the poet says,

...he can  
find all our atoms from a point to a span,  
Our closest creeks and corners, and can trace



Each line, as it were graphic, in the face. (151-154)

***Face, Glass (Mirror)***

“Face” is one of Jonson’s favorite words to use and it also names one of the most memorable characters from all of his drama. A seemingly transparent word, “face” is actually incredibly loaded in many respects. Jonson plays on the multiple meanings of the word and often uses it to create tension. At times Jonson seeks to simply suggest the common meaning of “face,” indicating the superficial surface appearance of a person or thing. In “Epistle To Katherine, Lady Aubigny” in *The Forrest* 13 for example, Jonson means something like this when he says to Katherine, “not wonder if none asks / for truth’s complexion, where they all wear masks,”<sup>111</sup> that is, that the “face” of truth (“truth’s complexion”) can be obscured where things are not what they seem, obscured through “powders, oils, and paintings.” Later in this poem Jonson metaphorically uses “face” in the poem to Katherine as an image that also reveals one’s true “complexion” or character, and he does so by poetically posing as Katherine’s “true glass,” reflecting her character: “No lady but...loves her glass. / And this shall be no false one...Look then, and see yourself.”<sup>112</sup> This is in contrast to those ladies that Jonson compares Katherine to: “Let ’em on powders, oils, and paintings spend.../...and no man know / Whether it be a face they wear or no.” The relationship between the face and the sight (“mirror” comes from *mirare* which meant both “to look” and “to wonder”) points to how an image is tied to truth. “Face,” from the Latin *facies*, can mean the “shape, form, or figure” of a thing or person,

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<sup>111</sup> Ll. 69-70.

<sup>112</sup> Ll. 26-29.

the external appearance.<sup>113</sup> Imbedded in the word “face” is this idea of an image, a revealing quality. However, *facies* also meant “character” as in the reality or nature of a thing or person (as in the formal cause, the essence). There may too be a connection between “face” and the Latin verb *facio* which means “to make,” thus seeing the “face” of a person is to see them as what they “do.” The word “fact” (from *factum*) which derives from *facio* notably means “action” in the sense of “what one has done.” In this way Jonson plays on the relationship between the two words “fact” and “face” in his famous Ode on Cary and Morrison:

For what is life, if measured by the space,  
Not by the act?  
Or maskèd man, if valued by his face  
Above his fact? (ll. 21-24)

The mirror, seeing, and reflection are each relevant to the medieval understanding of what was thought to accompany the ascent one makes to God. It is an ascent that through the reflection of external things leads back into the self:

...man, enlightened by Biblical revelation, can grasp the Vestiges, the “traces,” of God in external nature; and from this knowledge he can then turn inward to find the Image of God within himself. It is an Image defaced by sin, but with its essential powers restored by the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>114</sup>

Returning to “Elegy to Venetia Digby,” Jonson uses “face” as the image of truth (something like “the face of reality” in our modern speech). Lady Venetia Digby and her family and friends will see, or “know” each other as they truly are in heaven:

Shall meet with gladness in one theatre;  
And each shall know, there one another’s face,

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<sup>113</sup> See below p. 136f.

<sup>114</sup> Louis Martz, *The Paradise Within*, p. 18.

By beatific virtue of the place.<sup>115</sup>

The “beatific virtue of the place,” through the “light” of Christ, strips away appearances to reveal true nature and true character; all present will not only recognize each other but also have a complete sense of reality, “shall know, there one another’s face.” A little later on in this poem, Jonson tellingly uses “face” again in order to indicate that this vision of ultimate truth is in actuality the light of Christ apprehended in the “face” of God (perhaps His “making” or “doing” in the sense of *facio*). Lady Digby and her friends and family will see, the poet says, “The vision of our Saviour, face to face / In his humanity!”<sup>116</sup> This instance of the repetition of the word face as “face to face” recalls Biblical imagery such as in Revelation 22:4-5, “And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.” “Face to face” also calls to mind St. Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 13, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

### Seeing Shakespeare’s *Face*

Jonson’s two poems to Shakespeare sum up many of the ideas associated with the words that have been presented in this chapter, and the discussion of the importance of the role of the author in a literary work. Jonson names Shakespeare an author in the title of the poem prefaced

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<sup>115</sup> Ll. 114-116.

<sup>116</sup> Ll. 132-133.

to the first folio,<sup>117</sup> a significant detail since Shakespeare never sought publication on his own nor referred to himself specifically as an author. This identification of Shakespeare as author is also significant because the folio was to take the place of the other poor copies of plays that had been circulating for some time up to the time of the first folio's publication, those "stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of iniurious imposters, that expos'd them..." John Heminge and Henrie Condell called them. These poor "deformed" copies were to be "cured" by ones that his friends Heminge and Condell made whole by seeing through print Shakespeare's first folio:

...euen those, are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceiued them. Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: and what he thought he vttered with that easinesse...<sup>118</sup>

Shakespeare they say "was a happy imitator of nature," a solid description of the way that Shakespeare, like Jonson, as author works with creation to bring forth the poetry. The living quality of Shakespeare certainly comes through the passage quoted above and it is much to the point in contemporary discussions of the author. Is the author dead? Are the author's works merely socio-historical artifacts?<sup>119</sup> It is evident in the two poems that Jonson writes in praise of Shakespeare "the author" that the answer to that question would be a resounding "no." The

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<sup>117</sup> The title of the poem reads: "To the Memory of My Beloved, The Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He Hath Left Us."

<sup>118</sup> The quotations from the preface to the first folio edition of Shakespeare's plays are from *The Harvard Classics* Ed. (1909-14).

<sup>119</sup> Referring to two popular postmodern theoretical works here: Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., edited by David Lodge and Nigel Wood, 145-150 (Edinburgh Gate, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2000) and Michele Foucault, "What is an Author?" In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

relationship between the “life,” “light,” and the “originator” (author) of a work of literature can be seen to mirror the relationship of “light,” “life,” and God that has been explored above in Jonson’s poetry.

In Jonson’s shorter poem to Shakespeare, the poet plays on the relationship between Shakespeare’s “face” and his works, his “facts” or “deeds.” Jonson sets up poetic dichotomy based on the living relationship between the maker of the plays and the plays themselves:

This figure that thou here seest put,  
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;  
Wherein the graver had a strife  
With nature, to out-do the life.  
Oh, could he but have drawn his wit 5  
As well in brass as he hath hit  
His face, the print would then surpass  
All that was ever writ in brass.  
But since he cannot, reader, look  
Not on his picture but his book.<sup>120</sup> 10

Jonson addresses the sculptor who produced a bust of Shakespeare’s face. The sculptor has indeed reproduced the physical “face” of Shakespeare, but still Jonson is not satisfied with the engraver’s bust, for the sculptor could not “[draw] his wit / As well in brass as he hath hit / His face.” This speaks to a tension present in Jonson’s poetry, very similar to the two levels of meaning present in the word “face,” that I will explore in more depth in chapters three through five below. Jonson had much to say about the relationship of painting, sculpting, drawing, and picture to poetry. A picture alone cannot show Shakespeare’s “face,” his nature, his character. By directing the reader away from a simply material apprehension of the “image” made by the sculptor, and toward the “book,” Jonson as poet-artist places a particular emphasis upon the

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<sup>120</sup> *Ungathered Verse* 25, “From Mr. William Shakespeare’s Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, 1623 To the Reader.”

enduring “image” of Shakespeare’s “wit,” his character (*ingenium*).<sup>121</sup> In a way, since Shakespeare made the book, reading it is something like seeing reflections of the mind of the maker.

Jonson develops these ideas more in the other (much longer) poem of praise that Jonson writes for Shakespeare, *Ungathered Verse* 26. In the very last words of that poem, Jonson draws the reader’s attention to this “light” which emanates both from Shakespeare himself and his “volume:”

Shine forth, thou star of poets, and with rage  
Or influence chide or cheer the drooping stage;  
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourned like night,  
And despairs day, but for thy volume’s light.

Jonson, faithfully the poet, gives readers sight into Shakespeare’s true nature, the “face” of Shakespeare, and thus a glimpse into the “enlightened” way in which Jonson (as poet) contemplatively sees the great dramatist, no small accomplishment considering the two were peers competing with one another. Jonson’s authorial role in this poem is to make an authoritative pronouncement that Shakespeare is an author in the senses I have suggested Jonson understood the term. Jonson places this emphasis on Shakespeare’s role in the creation of his works by calling him “a monument without a tomb” and that “He was not of an age, but for all time!”<sup>122</sup> He then gazes upon Shakespeare in the poem (his premier rival in every sense of the term) and commands that author:

My Shakespeare, rise...  
And art alive still while thy book doth live,

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<sup>121</sup> For “wit” meaning “character,” see Lewis, *Studies in Words*, pp. 89ff.

<sup>122</sup> Ll. 22 & 43. Although these allusions have been traced to Horace (*Odes*, III. xxx. 1-2) they appear to have an added significance when viewed in the light of Christ’s Resurrection, cf. Mathew 28:6: “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

And we have wits to read, and praise to give.<sup>123</sup>

Jonson's praise raises Shakespeare for contemplation because he gives to readers an enlightened ability to apprehend Shakespeare as an author still living, and in that sense Jonson raises Shakespeare through praise that is quite rare indeed.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ll. 19-24.

<sup>124</sup> This poem is discussed in more detail in chapter six below in the section entitled "Jonson versus Digges versus Shakespeare" and in chapter eight in the section "Make Life and Manners His Book."

### CHAPTER 3: *SENSE* IN JONSON'S POETRY AND MASQUES

The word “sense” is an important word in Jonson’s poetry and masques. Jonson’s use of the word “sense” is not merely incidental, but rather has to do with three things. Firstly, as I show below, the role of the “senses” in gaining knowledge was part of a philosophical tradition that Jonson understood. One support for this idea can be found in his commonplace book where Jonson says, “Knowledge is the action of the soul and is perfect without the senses, as having the seeds of all science and virtue in itself; but not without the service of the senses. By those organs the soul works.”<sup>125</sup> Secondly, Jonson’s poetic use of the word “sense” speaks to what he understood to be the dual nature of language, that there is a distinction to be made between “the letter and spirit” of language which correspond to the “body” and “soul” of man. Jonson also discusses this idea in his prose, saying in *Discoveries* that, “In all speech, words and sense are as the body and the soul. The sense is as the life and soul of language, without which all words are dead.”<sup>126</sup> Finally, the word “sense” is important in Jonson’s poetry due to the number of poems that can only be described as poetry composed by one who worked with a developed and studied visual poetic imagination. The three issues are closely related in traditions that I will show Jonson inherited, developed, and used.

#### *Picture*

At times Jonson seems to think of himself as an artist with paints and pencil, constructing portraits of praise in his poems through the *lines* of portraiture mediated by the *lines* of poetry.

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<sup>125</sup> Ll. 586-588.

<sup>126</sup> Ll. 1335-1337.



A number of Jonson's poems contain the language of painting, words such as *paint*, *color*, *proportion*, *line*, *sense*, *face*, etc., and exhibit a use of and allusion to the visual arts and artists. Painting and the visual arts played a foundational role in Jonson's imagination and poetic practice because he actively sought to incorporate a number of concepts of the art of painting into his poetry. This idea is supported by the many references Jonson makes to the complementary nature of what he calls "picture" and poetry. "Picture" comes from the Latin *pictura* and appears to have been derived from the past participle *pictus* of the verb *pingere* which means "to paint." For Jonson and his renaissance contemporaries, "picture" would have signified concepts associated with paintings and drawings, images clearly intended to stand for corresponding objects in reality, but also images that noticeably exuded an "art" or "skill" from their construction—the picture stood for something in reality but it also communicated a particular aspect of that reality based upon the artist's vision (perspective) of it. "Picture" and "poetry" are to Jonson as "body" and "soul," and in this sense, Jonson integrated the two arts to achieve powerful effects through his understanding and consistent use of the kinship of the image to the word.

### **Overview of Issues in Jonson's Visual Poetics**

Critics have often discussed the visual nature of Jonson's masques and plays, but only a handful of articles specifically address visual issues in Jonson's poetry. For example, Alan Young's article, "The Emblematic Art of Ben Jonson" concludes that Jonson, "...was throughout his career consciously and perhaps more critically aware of the emblematic arts than many other English poets and dramatists of the time and perhaps more than many students of emblem

literature have hitherto given him credit for,” but he does not address the extent to which Jonson used such arts in the construction of his non-dramatic poetry.<sup>127</sup> A consideration of emblematic influence on Jonson’s non-dramatic poetry would likely be fruitful if only for the reason that such influence is widely traceable in his dramatic works. Young does spend a moment discussing one of Jonson’s non-dramatic poems entitled “*An Expostulation with Inigo Jones*,” but he does so primarily to provide some context for the quarrel between the two collaborators who created a number of masques together. Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones, Young states, “...essentially debate[d] over the relative significance of the visual and verbal components in the masque.”<sup>128</sup> For a majority of the article however, Young focuses upon two of Jonson’s dramas, *Every Man in His Humour* and *Poetaster*.

Robert C. Evans’ article, “Jonson and the Emblematic Tradition: Raleigh, Brant, the Poems, “The Alchemist”, and “Volpone”<sup>129</sup> builds upon Young’s thesis of Jonson’s awareness of emblematic art and does look closely at Jonson’s “notable but relatively neglected poem, ‘*The Mind of the Frontispice to a Booke*’ (Und. 24).”<sup>130</sup> One of the purposes of Evans’ article is to “suggest some ways in which Jonson’s emblematic artistry is not confined to the masques (or to such masque-like plays as *Cynthias Revels*)...[and to] suggest the emblematic nature of much of Jonson’s non-dramatic poetry... [in order to] prove useful...as a stimulus to further study.”<sup>131</sup> Evans’ close-reading of “*The Mind of the Frontispice to a Booke*” is particularly apt; and he convincingly demonstrates the way in which “Jonson’s verbal imagination could respond to

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<sup>127</sup> Alan Young, “The Emblematic Art of Ben Jonson” (*Emblematica* Vol. 6.1 (1992): 17-36), p. 36.

<sup>128</sup> P. 31.

<sup>129</sup> *Comparative Drama* 29.1 (Spring 1995): 108-132

<sup>130</sup> P. 109.

<sup>131</sup> Pp. 108-109.

visual stimuli”<sup>132</sup> by considering the picture together with the poem, both of which comprise a kind of emblem “in the strict Alciatan sense,”<sup>133</sup> or a visual-verbal whole that taken as a unit stand for something greater than each of the parts taken separately. Evans concludes his close reading of the poem by suggesting that the poem “reveals as much about the complexity of Jonson’s creativity as about the engraving it might simply seem to echo.”<sup>134</sup> This interaction between the visual and the poetic which creates a complementary whole, as well as the fundamental authorial or poetic role that Evans sees visual “stimuli” to play in Jonson’s thinking and creativity, points both to the complex nature of Jonson’s *imitation* as well as the way in which Jonson poetically aids readers to attain a truer sight of and a clearer glimpse into the meanings of the image he is in poetic dialog with.

A.W. Johnson, in his book *Ben Jonson Poetry and Architecture*, focuses an entire chapter “Centered Form and the Poetry of Praise,” exclusively upon Jonson’s poetry.<sup>135</sup> Although the book takes architecture as its subject, and not painting, architecture and painting could often be found to be closely associated in the work of Italian renaissance theorists, critics, and painters. For example, Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) wrote works that discussed both painting and architecture.<sup>136</sup> Johnson explores the influence of Ben Jonson’s reading of Philander’s edition of Vitruvius, and demonstrates that architectural ideas such as *proportion* and *center* are visibly present underlying principles that can be seen to operate as foundational principles in the

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<sup>132</sup> P. 109.

<sup>133</sup> P. 109, “...Andreas Alciatus, whose *Emblematum Liber*, first published in 1531, was often translated, reprinted, expanded, annotated, and read. Emblems in this sense consist of a picture, inscription, and explanatory poem; ideally all three coalesce, producing a complex unity.”

<sup>134</sup> P. 113.

<sup>135</sup> Oxford University Press, 1994. See chapter four, pp. 79-111.

<sup>136</sup> *De re aedificatoria* (*On the Art of Building*) was the first printed book on architecture (1485). A printed edition of the classical writer Vitruvius’ book on architecture was printed in the next year. *De pictura* (*On Painting*) first appeared in Italian as *Della pittura* in 1435-1436, and then later in Latin.

poetry.<sup>137</sup> Johnson supposes that the relationship between the poet's literary composition of a number of poems of praise is closely related to classical architectural principles and investigates this relationship in order to discover whether "they [the central lines of the poems] really act as focal points in terms of 'invention' and 'disposition'."<sup>138</sup> "Invention," in rhetorical terms, is the discovery of what is to be said, and "disposition" refers to the arrangement of the matter of a composition into a finished product. Johnson's major contribution to the study of Ben Jonson's non-dramatic poetry is his demonstrating the fundamental importance of the central lines of a number of poems as both key to the meaning and emphasis of particular poems, as well as to the creation (the organization and invention) of these poems. He finds too, similar to Richard Peterson's readings,<sup>139</sup> that the architectural principles that Jonson uses correspond to moral uprightness and virtue: "In fact an investigation of the central lines...confirms the suspicion...that the language of Palladian theory—harmony-proportion-balance-circularity—is collocated with the terms of moral 'solidity'—virtue-valor-justice—or with the inhabitants of traditional centres and circles: the soul, mind, wit, or muse."<sup>140</sup> It is of some significance that painters consciously composed their works according to nearly the same principles as medieval and renaissance writers and orators composed written works. They both used the classical

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<sup>137</sup> See Plates 1-7 for facsimile reproductions of Jonson's copy of Philander's edition of Vitruvius' *De architectura libri decem*. Jonson has inscribed marginal annotations corresponding to his underlinings in the text including words such as, "in drawing," "straight lines," "proportions," "nature ratio," etc.

<sup>138</sup> P. 79. Invention and disposition (*inventio* and *dispositio*) are two of the stages in classical rhetorical composition with which Jonson was familiar. See for example *Discoveries*, l. 1532: "In writing there is to be regarded the invention, and the fashion."

<sup>139</sup> *Imitation and Praise*, p. 47ff.

<sup>140</sup> P. 80. A.W. Johnson acknowledges his debt to Thomas M. Greene's, "Ben Jonson and the Centered Self," *SEL* 10 (1970): 325-348.

rhetorical composition model that evolved a work through each the *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elecutio* stages of composition.<sup>141</sup>

Mary L. Livingston wrote an article in the 1970's that specifically addresses Jonson's interest in the intersection between the visual and the verbal elements of poetry.<sup>142</sup> Her thesis is that Jonson "insisted that poetry is superior; but the terms through which he defends poetry acknowledge that poetry shares its grounds of intelligibility with the visual arts."<sup>143</sup> This is because, in Jonson's own words, both arts are "busie about imitation." One key idea that Livingston raises in her discussion was a commonplace in renaissance thinking about art:

...Jonson typically appeals to the traditional Renaissance arguments of the poet as a rival of the painter: visual art represents only what can be seen and must itself be seen; while poetry, made of words, instructs the mind. Because it must picture something, visual art is tied to the particular, but poetry's meanings are universal. Therefore poetry, it is argued, best satisfies the ultimate criterion of art, didactic usefulness.

"Poetry...best satisfies the ultimate criterion of art, didactic usefulness" because of the ability of poetry to both "picture" or "image" as well as to appeal to the universal—that which painting cannot really do (at least as readily) because a pictorial representation must image a particular moment, person, and use specific colors, perspective, and proportion. As will be made evident later in this chapter, Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* makes this exact claim through association with

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<sup>141</sup> See Appendix 2, "*Inventio, Dispositio, Elecutio*," in Rensselaer W. Lee's *Ut Pictura Poesis*. Also see below p. 122ff. where I discuss this relationship in order to demonstrate the influence of painting and picture upon Jonson's composition of *Underwood* 84.

<sup>142</sup> "Ben Jonson: The Poet to the Painter" (*Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 18.3. (Fall 1976): 381-392).

<sup>143</sup> P. 381.

Aristotle's idea of the "universal" (essence, nature) or *katholou* (*καθολου*).<sup>144</sup> Livingston also aligns this superiority of the word<sup>145</sup> to the image to "Biblical heritage," and refers to the way that, "In the language of St. Paul, 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God' (Rom. 11:17). The Word, of which Christ is the archetype, is in its various manifestations a sign of mediation, a bond."<sup>146</sup> A paradox therefore is inherent in the language of "image" and "picture," in the effect of "sight" because, "although vision provides the chief metaphor of intellectual perception, it also describes the deceptive world of becoming—appearance, shadow, imitation."<sup>147</sup> Livingston then proceeds to provide a reading of certain poems of Jonson from this perspective on the debate between the universal and the particular, the didactic quality, and also the idea of representation of reality of things unseen, particularly in Jonson's poem in *The Underwood* 84.4 "*The Mind*." In this poem, Livingston argues, the poem demonstrates Jonson's use of image and words, and "the development of that poem implies, poetry exists because pure knowledge, the soul itself, is unavailable."<sup>148</sup> Livingston also points to a crucial idea in Jonson's own explanation of writing in his *Discoveries*:

Jonson's main metaphor for the working of language is drawn from the Christian allegorical tradition. He writes: "In all speech, words and sense, are as the body, and the soule. The sense is as the life of the soule of Language, without which all words are dead" (*Discoveries*, 1884-87). The body/soul metaphor...applies

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<sup>144</sup> *Kata* ("according to") + *holos* ("whole") is where the word "catholic," meaning "universal," comes from.

<sup>145</sup> Not an outright superiority per se, but rather in terms of hierarchal relationship, since poetry comprehends picture in its nature or essence.

<sup>146</sup> P. 382.

<sup>147</sup> Pp. 382-383.

<sup>148</sup> P. 387.

also to the language of poetry. On the Aristotelian and Christian model, the soul is the form of the body, giving it its being. (p. 386)

The reality is that poets and painters both share an interest in some fundamental sense “beyond” physical reality, such as in seeking to *imitate* or render for praise truth and virtue in existence, essences that may not be readily perceptible on the surface of physical reality (by ordinary means). The way in which poets and painters both seek to gain the audience of the soul is dramatic and evinced by the fact that there exists a longish dialog tradition of the *paragone*.<sup>149</sup> That both painting and poetry *imitate* is a commonplace assertion of both painters and poets, but as the first and second chapters above show, *imitation* does not need imply “aping” but a complex process of interaction with a source. Although the source may naturally vary for each the painter and poet, it need not, as both painters and poets often had similar recourse to sources when at the *inventio* stage of the composition: Painters could look to imitating or representing classical or Biblical stories and poets such as Ben Jonson, poet as well as dramatist, could be found very often to poetically depict portraits of living subjects. That Jonson’s poetry of praise

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<sup>149</sup> For background on the *paragone* tradition see, Claire J. Farago, *Leonardo Da Vinci’s Paragone: A Critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the Codex Urbinas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), pp. 8-15: “The literary term *Paragone* was not originally associated with the Renaissance writings which bear its name, but dates only from 1817...The Italian noun *paragone*, like the English word *paragon*, is thought to be compounded from the Greek preposition *para*, meaning “beside”; and *agon*, meaning “a contest,” or any kind of struggle. There is, however, no ancient Greek word “paragone.” Modern philologists believe that *paragone* is related to the ancient Greek verb *parago*, which means to lead beside or to bring and set beside, or to mislead or distort,” (pp. 8-9). Also p. 13: “The Italian noun *paragone* also means a test for the quality of gold and silver, or the lustrous black stone on which such a test is conducted, or figuratively speaking, any test for excellence.” This sense of the term could potentially be investigated further in Jonson, cross-referenced against his use of the term “prove” and “proof.” Finally, there is probably some association with the Greek *agon*, “The Ancient Greek dramatic debate or poetic contest called an *agon* (Latin *certamen*) is a prototype *Paragone*. The *agon* is associated with public festivals, such as the dramatic competitions in honor of Dionysius held at Athens. The motif of a contest between poets or seers is very old and widespread in Greek literature; the archetypal poetic contest is the *agon* between Homer and Hesiod, first recorded in a fragment from a work of the third century B.C....” (pp. 36-37).

presents his living subject's lives is made clear to anyone who reads poems from his collections, especially (but not by any means exclusively) his *Epigrams*. Jonson's use of visual techniques in his poetry leads readers to a clearer or better "sight" of his subjects (and therefore their Creator) that results because of a conscious artistic visual design.

Another critic who, like Mary Livingston, specifically addresses Ben Jonson's poetry and painting in this context is Judith Dundas.<sup>150</sup> Dundas' book, *Pencil's Rhetorique*, surveys broadly the relationship between painting and poetry in the Renaissance by looking at individual figures such as Sidney, Jonson, and Shakespeare. Her Introduction to *Pencil's Rhetorique* neatly renders a number of renaissance issues that would likely have been a part of Jonson's thinking and imagination as he chimed in on this perennial topic of the relationship of the image to the word, as well as the *paragone*, the debate as to whether poetry or painting is the superlative art. After briefly noting the number of stories, such as those recounted by rhetoricians such as Quintilian and Cicero of the famous classical painter Zeuxis, who seems to have been able to fool birds and monkeys into believing that his paintings depicted real grapes and bananas, Dundas says that both painters and poets, "desire[d] to transcend the limits of their medium, to make words or paint disappear in the evocation of a reality."<sup>151</sup> Dundas posits that the dialogue between painters and poets served to move each along in their respective craft, each seeing their art in terms of the other, "By speaking of the painter's art, poets are really speaking of their own."<sup>152</sup> Dundas also discusses the *paragone* in terms of a moral debate. Since both painters and poets "imitate nature," she says:

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<sup>150</sup> See *Pencil's Rhetorique: Renaissance Poets and the Art of Painting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993).

<sup>151</sup> P. 16.

<sup>152</sup> P. 15.



...art becomes a competitive business, to determine who is best in the field...But this excellence includes more than accuracy of representation. In the words of Castiglione, the value of painting lies in its imitation of “the truth and property that nature maketh.” Here is the ground for debating whether painting or sculpture is superior, and, equally, whether painting or poetry is superior. The *paragone* is relevant to the moral debate about art to the extent that it involves the question of which art best represents the truth of nature.<sup>153</sup>

This idea of which art best “represents the *truth of nature*” summarizes Jonson’s involvement in the *paragone* debate—at least as a starting point. It also suggests that Jonson’s poetry is contemplative in nature, and that he seeks through poetry to access and understand the reality of what lies before his gaze.

Dundas’ article “Ben Jonson and the *Paragone*,” reflects upon what she sees as these competitive arts’ arguments and evaluates the way in which they bear upon Jonson’s poetry.<sup>154</sup> Dundas focuses upon Jonson’s poetry and, “not the vituperation, because it shows the self-conscious artist in some of his most interesting reflections on his craft.”<sup>155</sup> Dundas suggests that there is a “link between Ben Jonson’s expressed rivalry with the painter and his pursuit of classical values in style.”<sup>156</sup> Since Ben Jonson is a follower of Apollo, an “Apollonian” poet was characterized as one who strove to “aspire to the stillness of a contemplative art, of which painting is the exemplar,” Jonson actively seeks to order his poetry “akin to the painter’s

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<sup>153</sup> P. 17.

<sup>154</sup> “Ben Jonson and the *Paragone*,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 9.4 (Winter 1978): 56-65. This article appears (for the most part complete) in *Pencil’s Rhetoric* (1993) as part of chapter five.

<sup>155</sup> P. 57.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

geometrical ordering of objects within a frame.”<sup>157</sup> This idea of ordering parallels A. W. Johnson’s main thesis (summarized above) of the architectural structure and order at the foundation of Jonson’s organization. One other significant idea that Dundas believes Jonson to hold about painting in the article is that painting is inferior to poetry because it appeals (or is in danger of appealing) to the senses only, and therefore “cannot so readily speak to the understanding as poetry does.”<sup>158</sup>

### *Sense and Sentence*

“Sense” is a word that Jonson uses often in his poetry and masques. This word “sense” is an important one to consider in relation to the visual context of Jonson’s poetry because of his varied use of it which bespeaks Jonson’s continuous interest in the ambiguous relationship between the physical and the intellectual: the mind and the body, the sentence or word and its meaning, and in terms of the mask, between the poetry and the “device” or “show.” The word “sense” is interesting in that Jonson uses it to speak to both the visual and the intellectual aspects of both the poem and the masque. On the one hand “sense” can refer to the physical senses, “the perception by sight, hearing, taste, smell or touch.”<sup>159</sup> On the other hand, the word can refer to the notion of “having intelligence” and “the ability to understand,” but it can also be seen to mean simply the “meaning” of a word or sentence. C. S. Lewis traces the story of the word “sense” through its philological development from the Latin *sensus*, the noun form of the verb

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<sup>157</sup> P. 58.

<sup>158</sup> P. 60. The other idea Dundas shows that Jonson exhibits in his poetry is his associating painting together with flattery. To support this Dundas quotes *Underwood* 71, a poem in which Jonson seems to make this association clear. Just a note—this poem is numbered *Underwood* 69 (not 71) in Donaldson’s and Herford and Simpson’s editions.

<sup>159</sup> Lewis, *Studies in Words*, p. 133.

*sentire*, which he takes one of its meanings as, “to experience, learn by experience, undergo, know at first hand.”<sup>160</sup> This tie between “sense” and “knowledge” in the ancient understanding of the term carried on through the Middle Ages evident in the work of Saint Thomas’ *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate (Debate Concerning Truth)* in which he says, “*nihil est in intellectu quod non sit prius in sensu*,” meaning, “nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the sense.”<sup>161</sup> Lewis distinguishes more meanings of the complex word *sentire* which had additional meanings such as “to feel,” which he says “our more analytic minds impose” upon the word.<sup>162</sup> The bifurcation of the meaning of *sentire* as both “thought” and “feeling” provides for the many meanings that can be observed in Jonson’s poetry and masques, as does also the meaning “to take a stance” or “have an opinion,” which is the basic meaning of the word “sentence.” “Sentence” comes from the Latin *sententiae*, which is another noun that corresponds to *sentire* yet with a more limited meaning. “Sentence” like *sententiae* specifically involves the idea of a “meaning,” as the expression of one’s view or opinion.<sup>163</sup>

### ***Body, Soul, Memory***

“Sense” in the Middle Ages was developed from the classical philosophy, and the theories that the medieval scholastic writers discussed in their works, particularly the interaction of St. Thomas with the philosophy of Aristotle in *De anima (Concerning the Soul)* and *De sensu et sensato (On the Senses and Sensation)* were particularly influential on Jonson and other poets in the Renaissance. Aristotle’s classical idea of the role that both the body and soul (*ανιμα*,

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<sup>160</sup> P. 134.

<sup>161</sup> Q 2. 3. 19.

<sup>162</sup> P. 136.

<sup>163</sup> Lewis, pp. 138-139.

*anima*)—literally both “senses” of man’s perception—play in the apprehension of knowledge was an idea that was proverbial in the Renaissance. Aristotle begins the *Metaphysics* with the premise that the body and soul both play a role in knowledge:

All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer seeing (one might say) to everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things. By nature animals are born with the faculty of sensation, and from sensation memory is produced in some of them... (1.980a)

Memory represents one of the five “internal wits” of the “sensitive soul,” which through Aquinas’ commentaries and study of Aristotle became the basis for medieval psychology. The five internal senses “are memory, estimation, imagination, phantasy, and common wit (or common sense).”<sup>164</sup> Medieval scholastic thought provided the fuel for the explosion of the Christian Humanism of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Milton in the Renaissance. Saint Thomas agreed with Aristotle’s idea that the body’s physical senses are the integral means through which the soul works out acquiring knowledge. As the idea became central to Christian theology it and other ideas were developed further in the light of Christian revelation, which Aquinas’ commentary upon other works of Aristotle such as *De anima (Concerning the Soul)* and *De sensu et sensato* demonstrate.

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<sup>164</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 162. See pp. 161-169 for Lewis’ discussion of the internal wits and the body and soul.

## *Image, Imagination, Phantasy, Common Sense*

The image, especially the image in the mind (what Aristotle calls “imagination,” or *phantasia φαντασια*) is central to apprehending reality and receiving knowledge because, he says, sensation leaves an “impression” upon the soul—a picture. The Latin *imago*, from where the English word “image” comes, retained the Greek sense of the term *phantasm* as it meant “image,” “representation,” “likeness,” and so forth, but it also could mean “ghost,” “apparition,” “appearance,” “shadow,” and “thought.” In the quote from the opening lines of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* above, it is clear that Aristotle supposes there to be a connection between “knowledge” and “sight,” that really “seeing” is akin to understanding. In *The Discarded Image*, Lewis explains the distinction that was made between the power of the “Phantasy” (*vis phantastica*) and the power of the “imagination” (*vis imaginativa*), noting that, “According to Albertus, Imagination merely retains what has been perceived, and Phantasy deals with this *componendo et dividendo*, separating and uniting.”<sup>165</sup> Similarly the *common sense* (*sensus communis*) that Aristotle discusses in *De anima* 3.3 is a kind of sense in the mind which works in conjunction with the physical senses and results in human perception. Aquinas comments upon this *sensus communis* and he says that Aristotle points ...“to another activity of the soul as evidence of the existence of a faculty with a common relationship to all the five senses: the activity of discriminating between various sense-objects.”<sup>166</sup> James Taylor, aligning this tradition within Saint Thomas’ philosophy of “poetic knowledge,” remarks upon the nature of the common sense:

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<sup>165</sup> P. 163.

<sup>166</sup> *Sentencia libri De anima*, paragraph 599.

It is the power of the common sense to distinguish one sensation from another—sight, touch, smell, and so on—as it ‘links up several sorts of sensations so that we get a unit-experience of things. Such an experience is called a percept, and the act by which it is achieved is a perception.’ Perhaps it is easier to think of the common sense as ‘a common receptacle for the products of the outer sense,’ with ‘all the outer senses...rooted in the common sense. From it they derive their power of consciousness.’ Without the common sense, the impact of reality on the ear would simply be sounds; on the eyes, colors, light and dark...whereas, the common sense forming whole-making percepts of these, they are now experienced as definite patterns, which intern will be formed into images of things—music or trees.<sup>167</sup>

The next internal sense most involved in “seeing” or apprehending reality is the “imagination”—what Aristotle calls *phantasia*, which “[receives] the sense impressions from the common sense...as St. Thomas says, a power or an ability to picture material things in their absence.”<sup>168</sup> “Imagination” is the internal sense that is closely tied together with thinking, judging, and estimating, and it is the faculty that receives the imprint from the common sense—the impression (image). Through interaction with the image-forming power of the mind, sense impressions become tied to image: “Even though the imagination remains a sense faculty, confined by time and space, St. Thomas says that it is these material images that help to build up our immaterial ideas. The special significance and excellence of imagination “lies in the fact that

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<sup>167</sup> James Taylor, *Poetic Knowledge: The Recovery of Education* (New York: SUNY Press, 1998), p. 43.

<sup>168</sup> Taylor, p. 45.

it can form images of things that we are not here and now looking at or hearing or smelling or tasting or touching....”<sup>169</sup>

Writing well before Aquinas, St. Augustine’s influential writings extensively address the idea of the relationship between the mind, the image, and the apprehension of an external object either directly or through the memory. “Memory” comes from the Latin *memor* which means “mindful.” Although the meaning of the term does not suggest that memory entails the use or presence of images, it is clear that Jonson thought that the “image” or *phantasm* accompanied acts of memory. This can be seen from the instances in which he uses “mind and memory” in his prose, as though they were separate things: “For the mind and memory are more sharply exercised in comprehending another man’s things, than our own.”<sup>170</sup> Later in his commonplace book, Jonson talks about the way that an “image” accompanies a memory:

For that which happens to the eyes when we behold a body, the same happens to the memory, when we contemplate an action. I look upon a monstrous giant, as Tityus, whose body covered nine acres of land, and mine eye sticks upon every part; the whole that consists of those parts, will never be taken in at one entire view. (1929-1933)

The memory, like the imagination, involves images, and Saint Augustine remarks upon this interrelationship in both *De Trinitate* and *Confessions*.<sup>171</sup> *De Trinitate* influenced the development of the medieval idea of the “mind’s eye” and in particular the complex relationship between the internal senses (memory, imaginative sense) in making possible the ability to

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ll. 1237-1238.

<sup>171</sup> See *Confessions*, book X.

perceive images that had been made known through the physical senses, or even of images that had not been seen per se:

Whence also, even in the case of the images of things corporeal which are drawn in through the bodily sense, and in some way infused into the memory, from which also those things which have not been seen are thought under a fancied image, whether otherwise than they really are, or even perchance as they are—even here too, we are proved either to accept or reject, within ourselves, by other rules which remain altogether unchangeable above our mind, when we approve or reject anything rightly. For both when I recall the walls of Carthage which I have seen, and imagine to myself the walls of Alexandria which I have not seen, and, in preferring this to that among forms which in both cases are imaginary, make that preference upon grounds of reason; the judgment of truth from above is still strong and clear, and rests firmly upon the utterly indestructible rules of its own right; and if it is covered as it were by cloudiness of corporeal images, yet is not wrapped up and confounded in them.<sup>172</sup>

In book IX, from which the quote above comes, Augustine is primarily interested in the relationship between man and God in terms of *image*: Man is in the *image* of God. In this respect then, Augustine meditates on Trinitarian resemblances between the internal and external attributes of man and God.<sup>173</sup> St. Thomas' *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* similarly

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<sup>172</sup> *De Trinitate* IX.6.

<sup>173</sup> For Augustine's treatment of the relationship of sight (an external sense) to the concept of Trinitarian unity, see *De Trinitate* XI.2: "First, the object itself which we see; whether a stone, or flame, or any other thing that can be seen by the eyes; and this certainly might exist also already before it was seen; next, vision or the act of seeing, which did not exist before we perceived the object itself which is presented to the sense; in the third place, that which keeps the sense of the eye in the object seen, so long as it is seen, viz. the attention of the mind. In these three, then, not



considers the relationship between God and man's knowing truth. Turning now to observe "sense" in Jonson's poetry in this tradition, it will be seen that Jonson grappled with these ideas in his poetry and masques.

### ***Sense in Jonson's Poetry***

Jonson's interest in the dual physical and spiritual nature of man, indeed what Jonson would have thought to be the "essence" of man, can be found in his use of the word "sense" in a poem in *The Underwood*, 84.9. This poem is written as an elegy to Venetia Digby and is the final poem of nine in a sequence that Jonson wrote commemorating her life from cradle to heaven. Critics have noticed the metaphysical characteristics of this poem,<sup>174</sup> and it is fitting that Jonson would employ the use of "sense" in a bifurcated manner here:

For as there are three natures, schoolmen call  
One corporal only; th' other spiritual,  
Like single; so there is a third, co-mixed  
Of body and spirit together, placed betwixt  
Those other two, which must be judged or crowned:  
This, as it guilty is, or guiltless found,  
Must come to take a sentence by the sense  
Of that great evidence, the conscience,  
Who will be there, against that day prepared  
T' accuse or quit all parties to be heard!<sup>175</sup>

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only is there an evident distinction, but also a diverse nature." For his discussion of the internal relationship see *De Trinitate* IX.3-5: "But in these three, when the mind knows itself and loves itself, there remains a trinity: mind, love, knowledge; and this trinity is not confounded together by any commingling: although they are each severally in themselves and mutually all in all, or each severally in each two, or each two in each. Therefore all are in all."

<sup>174</sup> See for example Marshelle Woodward's article, "Ben Jonson's Sacramental Poetics" *The Ben Jonson Journal* 22.1 (2015), pg. 46.

<sup>175</sup> *The Underwood* 84.9.51-60.

Both meanings of the term “sense” as “understanding” and “feeling” become relevant in the passage above because, as Jonson indicates, human nature would best be classified as a distinct third nature, becoming in essence a thing neither purely body nor purely spirit as human nature is comprised of a blend of both.<sup>176</sup> The “schoolmen” that Jonson is referring to in the first line above are the medieval theologians, and this idea of the nature of man as a composite of body and soul can be found in the first part of Saint Thomas’ *Summa Theologica*, Question 75, Article 4 entitled, “Whether the soul is man?” In Saint Thomas’ answer to the question, he says that man is both, and that this is because “sense” works in both body and soul in man: “But it has been shown above [in Article 3] that sensation is not the operation of the soul only. Since, then, sensation is an operation of man, but not proper to him [meaning that sensation is not a distinguishing feature of man—he shares physical sensation with other creatures], it is clear that man is not a soul only, but something composed of soul and body.”

### *Conscience*

In the lines following which read “must come to take a sentence by the sense / Of that great evidence, the conscience,” Jonson plays on the relationship between the words “sentence” and “sense,” words that both come into English from the Latin verb *sentire*. Jonson associates these terms in order to underscore the necessity and nature of the physical senses in intellectual understanding and vice versa, especially in terms of the eternal “sentence” in the afterlife, based on the “evidence” of the “sense” of the “conscience” referred to in the quote above. After all, the conscience, though immaterial, is capable of “feeling” (guilty or otherwise) as well as capable of

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<sup>176</sup> See *CWBJ* footnote for line 57 of *The Underwood* 84.9 which glosses both of these meanings. Also see Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I. lxxv for this third (human) nature.

the intellectual process of “understanding,” that is, “discerning.” In his chapter on the word “sense” in *Studies in Words*, Lewis discusses some of the background on the “common sense,” one of the interior senses of discernment.<sup>177</sup> He points out that the Jesuit Juan de Mariana (1536-1624) exemplifies a renaissance understanding of the conscience, saying that the “*common sense* ‘is, as it were, the voice of Nature whereby we may discern good from evil.’”<sup>178</sup> Milton, to take one poet from the Renaissance, would have agreed with this understanding of the conscience. When God the Father in book III of *Paradise Lost* foresees the fall of Adam and Eve, He “replies to the Son’s intercession by declaring that He will grant us the mercy of conscience:”

For I will clear their senses dark,  
What may suffice, and soften stony hearts,  
To pray, repent, and bring obedience due.  
To prayer, repentance, and obedience due,  
Though but endeavored with sincere intent,  
Mine ear shall not be slow, mine eye not shut.  
And I will place within them as a guide  
My umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear,  
Light after light well-used they shall attain,  
And to the end persisting, safe arrive. (ll. 188-197)<sup>179</sup>

“Conscience” in Milton’s understanding is God’s umpire evident from line 195 (“My”). The word “conscience” comes from the Latin prefix *con-* and root *scientia*, meaning “knowing with.” *Scientia*, from where we get the word “science,” came from the verb *scire*, “to know.” The conscience then, is a “knowing with” the “natural law,” thus naming the ability of man to perceive the underlying order within creation.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> See pp. 146-150.

<sup>178</sup> Qtd. in Lewis, p. 150.

<sup>179</sup> Qtd. in Anthony Esolen, *Angels, Barbarians, and Nincompoops...and a Lot of Other Words You Thought You Knew* (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2017), p. 19.

<sup>180</sup> In the *Summa Theologiae*, I-I, Q. 79, A. 13. co., Saint Thomas Aquinas discusses the conscience, and concludes that it is, “...not a power but an act...conscience, according to the very nature of the word, implies the relation of knowledge to something: for conscience may be resolved into “cum alio scientia,” i.e. knowledge applied to an individual case. But the

It is notable that Jonson plays upon the words “sentence” and “sense” elsewhere in the poetry. One particularly analogous instance occurs in a poem in Jonson’s second book of poetry, *The Forest*, entitled simply “Epode.”<sup>181</sup> Ian Donaldson points out that a number of the philosophical and theological details of “Epode” share similarity with a work of Thomas Wright’s entitled, *The Passions of the Mind in General*.<sup>182</sup> Thomas Wright was a Jesuit priest and there is some possibility that Jonson and he were acquainted.<sup>183</sup> It is, however, certain that Jonson read this work, *The Passions of the Mind in General*, for he wrote a poem that praised Father Wright’s effort to provide a “picture” with his “cunning hand” for readers who “require” one in order to “truly understand” ideas that are otherwise rather abstract and seemingly subjective:

In picture, they which truly understand  
 Require (besides the likeness of the thing)  
 Light, posture, heightening, shadow, colouring,  
 All which are parts commend the cunning hand;  
 And all your book (when it is throughly scanned) 5  
 Will well confess; presenting, limiting,  
 Each subtlest passion, with her source and spring,  
 So bold, as shows your art you can command.  
 But now, your work is done, if they that view  
 The several figures languish in suspense 10  
 To judge which passion’s false, and which is true,  
 Between the doubtful sway of reason and sense;  
 ’Tis not your fault, if they shall sense prefer,  
 Being told there, reason cannot, sense may, err.

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application of knowledge to something is done by some act. Therefore from this explanation of the name it is clear that conscience is an act.” This “act” Aquinas calls *synderesis*, and he states it to be a “habit” in the previous article (I-I, Q. 79, A. 12. co.), “‘Synderesis’ is not a power but a habit; though some held that it is a power higher than reason; while others...said that it is reason itself, not as reason, but as a nature...the first speculative principles bestowed on us by nature do not belong to a special power, but to a special habit, which is called “the understanding of principles,” as the Philosopher explains (Ethic. vi, 6).”

<sup>181</sup> *The Forest* 11.

<sup>182</sup> *Ben Jonson: A Life*, p. 142.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

A number of significant points here resonate with the above discussions of words related to “sense.” Jonson begins the poem with the language of painting and picture in order to make an analogy between Wright’s book, which takes for its subject the abstract matter of theological and philosophical study upon the relationship between the reason and the senses in order to applaud the way in which Wright has been able to achieve conveying a “picture” (like a painting) that provides the proper proportion and essence of each “passion” that he discourses upon:

“presenting, limiting, / Each subtlest passion, with her source and spring, / So bold, as shows your art you can command” (lines 6-8). A “picture” provides distinctions between subjects and objects, “presenting” them and “limiting” them so that they can each be comprehended in terms of their essence, in terms of their “source and spring” as Jonson says. Jonson too praises Wright’s work for telling a story through his “picture” because readers can grasp “Each subtlest passion, with her source and spring” as “figures” (line 10). Written by a Catholic priest, this work upon the relationship between the senses, both as in reason and as in sensation, pictures the way in which the internal senses work together with the external senses in order to “judge which passion’s false, and which is true.” Before the fall, in a state of what has been called “original justice” by Catholics, Adam and Eve did not have a need to exercise reason so to properly order their senses—order in Paradise was the norm. After Adam and Eve’s fall, the senses and passions immediately became, as Milton depicts in *Paradise Lost*, “enflame[d]” in terms of sensation:

I saw thee first and wedded thee, adorn’d  
With all perfections, so enflame my sense  
With ardor to enjoy thee, fairer now  
Then ever, bountie of this vertuous Tree. (Bk. IX, 1030-1034)

The “vertuous Tree” that Adam speaks of is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By having knowledge of both, as Wright’s book discusses and Jonson’s poem praises for its

immediacy to communicate, man must rely on the reason and internal senses, especially the *sensus communis* in order to distinguish one from the other. Renaissance writers often were able to dramatize the interplay between these two main ideas of “sense” in their works. Shakespeare for one wrote an entire play that essentially stages the drama of man caught in a manipulated interplay between the internal and the external senses. Othello is a character who visibly demonstrates the intimate connection between the external sense of sight and the internal “picture” throughout the play. One example is in act four scene one when Iago sets up Cassio so that he can then interpret for Othello all of Cassio’s external actions of laughter and Cassio’s possession of the handkerchief. Iago’s machinations are based entirely upon praying on Othello’s (powerful) external sense of sight. Tellingly Othello does not actually *hear* (therefore know) what Iago and Cassio speak about. He does not have the “sense” (spirit) of their conversation but only has to work with what his eyes tell him about the interaction. After Cassio leaves, Iago then moves in to pray upon Othello’s external “sense” of sight when he asks: “Did you perceive how he laugh’d at his vice?” and “...did you see the handkerchief” (ll. 171, 173), asking nothing about what Othello may have heard. To see, only, causes Othello’s imagination to picture its worst, as Iago ratchets up his control of Othello’s common sense. This critical sense, the common sense, has no data from the other senses, notably hearing, with which to work, and thus the common sense has no sense impressions to draw together and harmonize.

Jonson’s poem “Epode” resonates rather deeply with these issues. The poem begins:

Not to know vice at all, and keep true state,  
 Is virtue and not fate;  
 Next to that virtue is to know vice well,  
 And her black spite expel.  
 Which to effect (since no breast is so sure  
 Or safe but she’ll procure  
 Some way of entrance) we must plant a guard  
 Of thoughts to watch and ward

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At th'eye and ear (the ports unto the mind) 10  
 That no strange or unkind  
 Object arrive there, but the heart (our spy)  
 Give knowledge instantly  
 To wakeful reason, our affections' king:  
 Who (in th'examing)  
 Will quickly taste the treason, and commit 15  
 Close the close cause of it.  
 'Tis the securest policy we have  
 To make our sense our slave. (ll. 1-18)

Would that Othello had recourse to that advice! Jonson's language too, of the need to "plant a guard / Of thoughts to watch and ward / At th'eye and ear (the ports unto the mind)" (lines 7-9) figuratively places the relationship between the two kinds of "sense" in the context of military operations—a tense framework that Shakespeare's play is also set within. This language continues in "Epode," as the "heart" is "our spy" who will "give knowledge" (intelligence), and that "reason, our affections' king" will then "taste the treason" (lines 11-13 & 15). "Virtue" then (line 2) is rendered through this description of a militant watchfulness and the exercising of both the physical and internal senses in unison in order to "make sense our slave," which though may sound extreme, simply points to the reality that it must not be the other way around, "reason blind...usurping rank" and "blind desire" wielding the upper hand as Jonson later says in the poem (ll. 30-31 & l. 37). Eden makes an appearance in Jonson's "Epode," no doubt the poet is alluding to those struggles within man due to the "enflamed sense" which resulted from the fall. A rightly ordered man of "true love" (l. 43) is one who has "peace" (l. 55) and a body "harmoniously composed:"<sup>184</sup>

...This bears no brands nor darts  
 To murder different hearts,  
 But in a calm and god-like unity  
 Preserves community.

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<sup>184</sup> "Epode," ll. 99-101: "A body so harmoniously composed / As if nature disclosed / All her best symmetry in that one feature!"

Oh, who is he that, in this peace enjoys  
The elixir of all joys?  
A form more fresh than are the Eden bowers,  
And lasting as her flowers;  
Richer than time, and as time's virtue rare;  
Sober as saddest care... (ll. 51-60)

The language of war and peace, community and hostility, “murther” and “love” makes for a complex association of the multiple meanings of “sense” that Jonson figures for readers. The final couplet of the poem sums up the need to avoid sin by the use of both the physical and the intellectual “senses,” and in the poetry Jonson echoes the meaning of this line by choosing to use both the words “sentence” and “sense.” In the final couplet, the words “sentence” and “sense” are as “body” and “soul.” The word “sentence” refers to the physical words of the statement itself on the one hand, and the word “sense” here to the spiritual or intellectual meaning of the physical words of the “sentence:”

And to his sense object this sentence ever:  
*Man may securely sin, but safely, never.*

### **Robert Southwell and Jonson's Poetry**

Saint Robert Southwell, a Jesuit Priest, was much admired by Ben Jonson. In fact, in the candid *Informations to William Drummond the Scot* records Jonson's sentiment, “That Southwell was hanged; yet so he had written that piece of his, ‘The Burning Babe’, he would have been content to destroy many of his.<sup>185</sup> Jonson's admiration of Robert Southwell was perhaps great indeed, as Jonson seems to have subscribed to a similar understanding of the importance of the “sense” both in terms of its dual nature as both spiritual and physical, as well as understanding

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<sup>185</sup> Ll. 136-137.



the drama between the two meanings of “sense” as being played out on a physical and spiritual battlefield—fought between “virtue” and “grace” versus “sin.” In one poem, Southwell refers to “sense” as “Passion’s spie,” that like Jonson’s “Epode,” likewise presents a martial scene between “Vertue,” which “slayne doth lye” in a “bloodye feilde,” vanquished by sin:

As one that lives in shewe,  
And inwardly doth dye;  
Whose knowledge is a bloodye feilde,  
Where Vertue slayne doth lye;

Whose hart the alter is  
And hoast, a God to move;  
From whome my evell doth feare revenge,  
His good doth promise love.

My phancies are like thornes  
In which I go by nighte;  
My frighted witts are like a hoaste  
That force hath put to flighte.

My sence is Passion’s spie,  
My thoughtes like ruyns old  
Which shew how faire the building was,  
While grace did it upholde.

And still before myne eyes  
My mortall fall they laye;  
Whom Grace and Vertue once advanned  
Now synne hath cast away.<sup>186</sup>

The opening stanza quoted above asserts the tension compulsory in one who lives by the external senses alone: the “shewe” being a life of sensation which cause the internal senses to, “inwardly...die, / Whose knowledge is a bloody feilde, / Where Vertue slayne dost lye.” Moving to the third stanza quoted above, “My phancies are like thornes / In which I go by nighte; / My frighted witts are like a hoaste / That force hath put to flighte,” the lines here refer specifically to

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<sup>186</sup> “Dyer’s Phancy Turned to Complaine,” *The Complete Poems of Robert Southwell S. J.*, ed. Rev. Alexander B. Grosart (London: Robson and Sons, Printers, 1872), p. 97.

the inner senses of the “imagination,” the “memory,” and the “common sense.” The “phancies” could refer both to memories and imaginations (the line between the two is a fine one), and the “frighted wits” seems to reference the common sense. The speaker’s “thoughtes like ruyns old” are memories which present images of “how faire the building was” that has now been vanquished by sin. This complex relationship that Southwell depicts in only a few short lines represents a theme that the poet turns to develop further in other poems. As a side note, Shakespeare’s recourse to these themes, as in the example from *Othello* above, often makes for some of the most intense drama in English. In one of the most internally dramatic scenes of the play *Macbeth*, the hero stares into space and is held captive by a phantasm of his imagination:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? Or are thou but  
A dagger of the mind... (2.1.34-39)

In the comedy, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Shakespeare’s Theseus discourses about the ways in which the “imagination” works in “The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,” and sums up his points by asserting that the senses can be deceptive and that the information they gather depends upon whether the mind apprehend “joy” or “fear:”

Such tricks hath strong imagination  
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;  
Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear! (5.1.19-22)

Robert Southwell’s poetry not only exhibits some of these issues of the internal and the external senses, but as I have suggested, does so in a manner that calls to mind the reality of the conflict between the two when assaulted by vice and sin. “Mary Magdalen’s Blushe” is another poem of Southwell’s that demonstrates these ideas. Mary Magdalen, the speaker of the poem,

meditates upon the death of Christ in relation to her past life, “Remorse doth teach my guilty thoughtes to knowe / How cheape I sould that Christ so dearly bought” (p. 59). The grave state of contrition that Mary exhibits in the poem is intensified by Southwell’s introduction of the imagery of archery:

III.

All ghostly dints that Grace at me did dart,  
Like stobbourne rock I forcèd to recoyle;  
To other flightes an ayme I made my hart  
Whose woundes, then welcome, now have wrought my foyle.  
Woe worth the bowe, woe worth the Archer’s might,  
That draue such arrows to the marke so right! (p. 59)

After lamenting upon the violent state that is opposite God’s Grace, and in particular the way in which the wounds that the arrows of sin have wrought upon her, Southwell concludes the poem imagining Mary to present a discourse on the combat involved in the “sense:”

V.

O sence! O soule! O had! O hopèd blisse!  
Yow woe, yow weane; yow draw, yow drive me backe;  
Yow crosse encountring, like their combate is,  
That never end but with some deadly wracke;  
When sense doth wyne, the soule doth loose the feilde,  
And present happ makes future hopes to yelde.

VI.

O heaven, lament! sense robbeth thee of sayntes,  
Lament, O soules! sence spoyleth yow of grace;  
Yet sence doth scarce deserve these hard complayntes,  
Love is the theefe, sense but the entringe place;  
Yet graunt I must, sence is not free from synne,  
For theefe he is that theefe admitteth in. (p. 60)

These lines echo closely some of the key ideas discussed above in Jonson’s poem “Epode:” In the dual nature of “sense” (here as “sence” and “soule” in stanza V), in the depiction of “combate” and martial imagery that is involved, and in the need to guard the “senses.” In addition, one final point to be seen is that both Jonson’s poem “Epode” and the poem “Mary

Magdalen's Blushe" come down to "love." Although Southwell does not present a vision of "true love" as Jonson figures for readers through images of the phoenix and the dove in "Epode,"<sup>187</sup> Southwell points to the negative aspect of love in the sense that Christ says that evil comes from a man's heart, not by way of the senses.<sup>188</sup> Jonson too in "Epode" points out the way in which "blind desire" (l. 37) can be mistaken for love:

Armed with bow, shafts and fire;  
Inconstant like the sea, of whence 'tis born,  
Rough swelling, like a storm;  
With whom who sails, rides on the surge of fear,  
And boils as if he were  
In a continual tempest... (ll. 38-43)

Jonson's poetry, like the poetry of his contemporaries, demonstrates a sharp awareness of the complexities of the ideas traditionally associated with the word "sense," and his use of the term shares some parallel with the spirituality generally associated with the Jesuits. Turning now to look at the word "sense" as relevant to his quarrel with his longtime collaborator Inigo Jones, it will be seen how some of the issues discussed above fueled Jonson's position in that conflict.

### ***Sense in the Masques***

Inigo Jones was the famous architect with whom Jonson collaborated to produce twenty-four masques over the period of about twenty-six years. Their professional relationship began in 1605 and lasted (off and on) through 1631. The Jonsonian masque was high profile and often only a one-time affair, mainly staged in court or at houses of the highest reputation, and thus few

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<sup>187</sup> See ll. 91ff: "But we propose a person like our dove, / Graced with a phoenix' love; / A beauty of that clear and sparkling light / Would make a day of night, / And turn the blackest sorrows to bright joys..."

<sup>188</sup> See Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

people had the opportunity to witness them in their full splendor. These masques were expensive productions; *The Masque of Queens* is recorded to have cost in excess of three thousand pounds—an incredible amount for one night’s performance. Robert Adams notes that the masque grew out of “three other courtly ceremonies, the *tournament*, the *pageant*, and the *triumph*, each of which is related to the others.”<sup>189</sup> Masques also had a relation to the *masquerade*, although not all attendees wore masks. The costumes were intricate and extravagant, and if the Jonsonian masque set the bar for the “literary” essence of the masque, the poetry jam-packed as it is with mythological and symbolic allusion, Inigo Jones equally did so for the spectacle which was meant to be a feast for the external senses. Some of Inigo Jones’ intricate drawings for the costumes and stage properties survive that attest to this. Jones also had a genius for crafting what we would call the many “special effects” of the masques which he often created by the invention of elaborate machinery.<sup>190</sup> Jonson’s description of some of the effects that his collaborator created for *The Masque of Blackness*, for example, seem difficult to imagine and truly must have been quite astounding to witness in person:

*First, for the scene, was drawn a Landtschap consisting of small woods, and here and there a void place filled with huntings; which falling, an artificial sea was seen to shoot forth, as if it flowed to the land, raised with waves which seemed to move...In front of this sea were placed six tritons in moving and sprightly actions...The masquers were placed in a great concave shell like mother of pearl, curiously made to move on those waters and rise with the billow; the top thereof was stuck with a chevron of lights which, indented to the proportion of the shell,*

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<sup>189</sup> P. xiii.

<sup>190</sup> See Robert M. Adams’ “The Staging of Jonson’s Plays and Masques,” In *Ben Jonson’s Plays and Masques*, ed. Richard Harp (New York: Norton, 2001), pp. ix-xvi.

*struck a glorious beam upon them as they were seated one above another; so that they were all seen, but in an extravagant order....On sides of the shell did swim six huge sea-monsters...*<sup>191</sup>

Inigo Jones was highly respected as an architect in England, as evident from his commission from Queen Anne to design Queen's house (built from 1616-1635) and the additions he made to St. Paul's Cathedral in 1630. In these projects Jones introduced Vitruvian architecture into England and the neo-classical style of architecture. His style was influenced by the Italian architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), whose work he translated into English. Jones also became the premier scenic painter in England. Herford and Simpson provide some essential commentary on Jonson and Jones' professional relationship over these many years,<sup>192</sup> as do Stephen Orgel and D. J. Gordon.<sup>193</sup> Each Herford and Simpson, Adams, Gordon, and Orgel suggest that Jonson and Jones were more closely allied in their intentions and conceptions of the masque than may be derived from looking exclusively at the poem "An Expostulation with Inigo Jones" and some of the prefaces that Jonson wrote for the printed editions of the masques. They also all agree that Jonson and Jones must have had much in common in terms of their artistic vision of the masque, that is, that they fundamentally agreed upon the complementary roles that the "sense" of the poetry and the external "senses" played in the overall effect of these unique works, for otherwise they would not have had such a long and successful run as collaborators. Gordon makes the additional point that the "quarrel" seems to be misbalanced and to reflect

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<sup>191</sup> Stephen Orgel ed., *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 48-49.

<sup>192</sup> See Vol. 1, pp. 96-102, Vol. 2, pp. 248-337, and Vol. 10, pp. 404ff.

<sup>193</sup> See the Introduction to Stephen Orgel's *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, pp. 1-39, and D. J. Gordon's classic essay "Poet and Architect: The Intellectual Setting of the Quarrel between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones" (*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 12 (1949): 152-178).

more harshly upon Jonson due to the reason that all of the evidence that survives from the quarrel are Jonson's remarks in the poems that he addressed to Jones, and though these poems may appear particularly quarrelsome, "We do not know what Inigo was saying about Jonson—or doing to him—through these years."<sup>194</sup>

All of the masques demonstrate the way that Jonson and Jones worked together to artistically enact the meaning of the masque together in unison, through both Jonson's poetry which appealed to the intellectual "sense" and through Jones' artistic embodiment of the poetry which appealed to the physical senses. A particularly striking example of such a masque would be *The Vision of Delight* (1617). The spectacle of the Jonsonian masque as a sensory feast comes through brilliantly in the masque *The Vision of Delight*, in which the idea of external sensing is abundantly echoed in the poetry from the very outset:

From air, from cloud, from dreams, from toys,  
To sounds, to sense, to love, to joys;  
Let your shows be new, as strange,  
Let them oft and sweetly vary. (ll. 9-12)

Some lines later, after the aesthetic experience has fused with the "internal sense" of the masque, the audience is invited to bodily take in the night "Fant'sy" through the words she speaks, for "Fant'sy" is a character who then begins to speak in poetry:

Yet let it like an odor rise  
To all the sense here,  
And fall like sleep upon their eyes,  
Or music in their ear. (ll. 44-47)

The appeal to the physical sense of smell here is at the word of the poet—and the sensual dimension of the masque is heightened by the dual nature of the "Fant'sy" as it is invoked by poetry into a kind of *phantasie*—a trance.

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<sup>194</sup> P. 153.

In Jonson's last masque, entitled *Loves Welcome at Bolsover* (1634), Jonson and Jones again stage "sense" in its many natured forms, but with a different emphasis. The mask begins with a "Song at the Banquet" and runs thus:

CHORUS: If Love be called a lifting of the sense  
To knowledge of that pure intelligence,  
Wherein the soule hath rest, and residence,

FIRST TENOR: When were the Senses in such order placed?

SECOND TENOR: The sight, the hearing, smelling, touching, taste,  
All at one banquet? (ll. 1-7)

The emphasis of "love" and its role in "lifting" the senses to "knowledge of that pure intelligence / Wherein the soul hath rest" provides for another variation on the relationship between the physical senses and the intelligence. Jonson here makes an allusion to Chapman's, "Ovid's Banquet of Sense," and in that poem Chapman yokes these same elements together while parodying Ovid's love poetry by presenting an utter feast of the senses.<sup>195</sup> Jonson also stages this same relationship of the "senses" and "love" in *Poetaster* and he likely had Chapman's poem in mind when he gave to Ovid these lines that are addressed to the emperor's daughter Julia:

No life hath love in such sweet state, as this;  
No essence is so dear to moodie sense,  
As flesh, and blood; whose quintessence is sense.  
Beauty, compos'd of blood, and flesh, moves more,  
And is more plausible to blood and flesh,  
Than spiritual beauty can be to the spirit. (4.10-36-41)

Ovid's reasoning in this scene appears desperate given the circumstances, and it is (he has been banished from the court and the banquet). However, his sentiment, though funny and allusive, is one rooted in the duality of "sense" and on the other hand the relationship of love to the

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<sup>195</sup> In Chapman's poem, Ovid discovers his beloved Julia by a fountain where she plays a flute—the sound of which poetically comprises much of the poem and is utterly too much for Ovid.



knowledge and intelligence which comes through the relationship of “love” to both the internal senses and the external senses. Bringing this idea back to Jonson’s “Epode” and Southwell’s “Mary Magdalen’s Blushe,” it appears consistent that “love” in each instance serves to temper both the internal and external senses, and to vindicate the physical sense from sinfulness in themselves—i.e. from a puritanical conception of the senses.

### ***Sense, Body, Soul in the Quarrel between Jonson and Inigo Jones***

The quarrel between Jonson and Jones was essentially over one major issue that stemmed from the parts that each collaborator played in the development of the full artistic achievement that became the finished work, the performance of the masque; it revolved around which was the more important aspect of the masque: Was it the poetry or was it the physical “show” of costume, special effects, constructed props, smoke, and lights? It appears that Jones became more favored at court, and that audiences were more struck by his stunning contributions to the masques. This is to say that the spectacle outweighed the poetry in the popular reception of the masques. Many if not most of the attendees did indeed enjoy the physical aspects of the masque most: the dancing, music, aesthetics, and so forth, and thus it may have been the case that it went a little to Jones’ head. After all, he was a popular sensation in England. Jones thus began to take more credit than was his due for the creation of the masques. Of course we do not know for absolutely certain any of these details, but from Jonson’s poem “Expostulation with Inigo Jones” it seems to have been the case. In the middle of the poem, Jonson expresses shock that Jones, “the maker of the properties” could go so far as to take credit for the entire creation of the masques, to assume the role of “Dominus Do-All in the work:”

The maker of the properties, in sum,  
The scene, the engine! But he now is come  
To be the music-master, fabler, too;  
He is, or would be, main Dominus Do-  
All in the work! (ll. 61-64)

It should be noted that Jonson did in fact give Jones ample credit for his “inventions.”

“Invention” is a technical term in rhetoric that referred to a practice that was part of the creative act of both poets and artists (painters and architects).<sup>196</sup> Jonson praises Jones for his “invention” in *The Masque of Queens* (1609) multiple times and gives him full credit for his creative contributions in this regard. In the first instance that Jonson praises Jones for his invention in *The Masque of Queens*, he draws attention to Jones’ contribution of the spectacle of the “anti-masque,” which was a foil-type device for the main argument of “Good Fame” of this masque: “*twelve women in the habit of hags or witches, sustaining the persons of Ignorance, Suspicion, Credulity, etc., the opposites to good Fame, should fill that part, not as a masque but a spectacle of strangeness, producing multiplicity of gesture...*”<sup>197</sup> All of this “spectacle of strangeness” Jonson says was Jones’ creation: “*The device of their attire was Master Jones his, with the invention and architecture of the whole scene and machine.*”<sup>198</sup> Thus Jonson gives Jones credit for coming up with this entire scene. Later on near the end of the masque, Jonson again gives Jones complete credit for the pageant of “Fama bona” (Good Fame). Jonson writes up a thoroughly detailed list to archive Jones’ creative contribution (invention) for the spectacular

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<sup>196</sup> See Gordon, p. 168: “Parallel to the ideal figure of the learned poet who draws on all human knowledge for his inventions was the figure of the learned artist who requires the same basis for his. ‘Invention’ had long ago been taken over by the theorists of the arts from rhetoric and poetics and made into a fundamental term, especially by the theorists of painting. Thus Dolce and Vasari had used this word to denote the first part of painting and of the arts in general: ‘Invention always was and always will be considered the true mother of architecture, painting and poetry, indeed of all the higher arts and of every wonderful thing accomplished by man.’”

<sup>197</sup> *The Masque of Queens*, ll. 11-13.

<sup>198</sup> Ll. 23-24.

creation of “The House of Fame” (570-640). From this it is clear that Jonson did not write this material up beforehand and then give it to Jones to then provide a corresponding (elaborate) stage property, as was the norm in their collaborations. It is a lengthy quote but serves to demonstrate the extent to which Jonson was willing to give Jones credit for his contributions:

*There rests only that we give the description we promised of the scene, which was the House of Fame. The structure and ornament of which, as is professed before, was entirely Master Jones his invention and design. First, for the lower columns, he chose the statues of the most excellent poets, as Homer, Virgil, Lucan, etc. as being the substantial supporters of Fame. For the upper, Achilles, Aeneas, Caesar, and those great heroes which these poets had celebrated. All which stood as in massy gold. Between the pillars, underneath, were figured land-battles, sea-fights, triumphs, loves, sacrifices, and all magnificent subjects of honour, in brass, and heightened with silver. In which, he professed to follow that noble description made by Chaucer of the place. Above were sited the masquers, over whose heads he devised two eminent figures of Honour and Virtue, for the arch. The friezes, both below and above, were filled with several-coloured lights, like emeralds, rubies, sapphires, carbuncles, etc., the reflex of which, with other lights placed in the concave, upon the masquers' habits, was full of glory. These habits had in them the excellency of all device and riches, and were worthily varied by his invention to the nations whereof they were queens. Nor are these alone his due, but diverse other accessions to the strangeness and beauty of the spectacle: as the hell, the going about of the chariots, the binding the witches, the turning machine with the presentation of Fame. All which I willingly acknowledge for*

*him, since it is a virtue planted in good natures that what respects they wish to obtain fruitfully from others, they will give ingenuously themselves. (ll. 572-589)*

Tongue-in-cheek as this may have appeared to Jones, Jonson seeks to set the record straight for posterity. As the last line states, Jonson was only asking that his contribution be rightly recognized by Jones. To be sure Jones' contributions were not slight in *The Masque of Queens* or any masque for that matter, but Jonson was careful to stake his claim on the "invention" of the "argument" of the masques, the "soul of the masque," as he announced earlier at the outset of *The Masque of Queens*: "...it was my first and special regard to see that the nobility of the invention should be answerable to the dignity of their persons. For which reason **I chose the argument** to be a celebration of honourable and true fame, bred out of virtue: observing that rule of the best artist, to suffer no object of delight to pass without his mixture of profit and example.<sup>199</sup> Jonson chooses and creates the "argument" of the masque and therefore deserves at least half of the credit for the "creation" of these entertainments. And Jonson is consistent on this point in other masques. In the *Masque of Blackness* he again gives Jones his due: "*To which was added an obscure and cloudy night-piece, that made the whole set off. So much for **the bodily part**, which was of Master Inigo Jones his design and act.*"<sup>200</sup>

Turning back to the poem "An Expostulation with Inigo Jones," it can be seen that Jonson draws particular attention to the distinction between the "sense" that Jones and he bring to the masque as he satirically humors Jones' "Dominus Do-All" fueled ego:

...Oh shows! Shows! Mighty shows!  
The eloquence of masques! What need of prose  
Or verse, or sense t'express immortal you?  
You are the spectacles of state! 'Tis true  
Court hieroglyphics! And all arts afford

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<sup>199</sup> *The Masque of Queens*, ll. 2-6. Boldface text is my addition.

<sup>200</sup> *The Masque of Blackness*, ll. 55-57. Boldface text again my addition.

In the mere perspective of an inch board!  
 You ask no more than certain politic eyes,  
 Eyes that can pierce into the mysteries  
 Of many colours, read them, and reveal  
 Mythology there painted on slit deal!  
 Oh, to make boards to speak! There is a task:  
 Painting and carpentry are the soul of masque. (ll. 39-50)

Jonson's understanding of the masque as comprised of "soul" and "body" can be seen in a number of the quotes above. The masque as a form had two parts, and this distinguishes the Jonsonian masque from the other forms out of which it grew, for the literary element was often lacking in Jonson's predecessors' creations.<sup>201</sup> "Prose / Or verse, or sense" in the quote above from "Expostulation with Inigo Jones" refers to Jonson's role in the masque as writer. It is he who came up with the meaning of each masque, the "sense" in line 40 above. His contribution, he thought, was to the masque as the soul is to man, or as the "soul" or meaning is to the "sentence:" "In all speech, words and sense are as the body and the soul. The sense is as the life and soul of language, without which all words are dead."<sup>202</sup> The tendency toward the idolatry of the "show" or "body" of the masque Jonson was perhaps particularly sensitive to as his aversion to the show for show's sake aspect of society and poetry is a consistent theme in nearly all of his work. For example, Jonson often repeats the sentiment that a poet must "labour...with the sense" at least as much (if not more) than with the expression of the "sense" in poetic style. He teases 'Courte Pucelle,' a laboring poet, when he asks her: "And, as lip-thirsty in each word's expense, / Doth labour with the phrase more than the sense?"<sup>203</sup> In Jonson's *Poetaster*, Virgil's advice to restore the word-vomiting Crispinus back to poetic health follows this same idea: "But let your

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<sup>201</sup> See the Preface in Stephen Orgel's *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. vii. Orgel book discusses "the changing relationship between the masque as spectacle or revel and the masque as literature." Also see chapter three, "The Masque as Literature," pp. 36-57.

<sup>202</sup> *Discoveries*, ll. 1335-1337.

<sup>203</sup> *The Underwood* 49, "An Epigram on the Court Pucelle," ll. 14-15.

matter run before your words.”<sup>204</sup> Jonson often ridiculed the idea of taking the clothes for the man and many of his plays and poems draw attention to the negative aspects of the increasingly conspicuously acquisitive society of London. In this larger context then, Jonson’s quarrel with Jones, although in the guise of intensely personal invective, is in fact the expression of deeper issues in poetry, art, and society.

From a metaphysical standpoint, Jonson’s preface to the first masque that he and Jones made resonates with these issues:

*The honour and splendour of these spectacles was such in the performance as, could those hours have lasted, this of mine now had been a most unprofitable work. But, when it is the fate even of the greatest and most absolute births to need and borrow a life of posterity, little had been done to the study of magnificence in these, if presently with the rage of the people – who, as a part of greatness, are privileged by custom to deface their carcasses – the spirits had also perished. In duty, therefore, to that Majesty who gave them their authority and grace, and no less than the most royal of predecessors deserves eminent celebration for these solemnities, I add this later hand, to redeem them as well from ignorance as envy, two common evils, the one of censure, the other of oblivion.*<sup>205</sup>

Plundering the props after a performance was custom in the Renaissance, and in this quote from the preface to the printed edition of *The Masque of Blackness* Jonson alludes to this practice when he says “by custom to deface their carcasses.” The many stage properties of the masque, the embodiments of the poetry as it were, inevitably became after the performance only empty shells, “carcasses” desired for their own sake. To Jonson this was the case because, after the

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<sup>204</sup> 5.3.506.

<sup>205</sup> *The Masque of Blackness*, ll. 1-9.

performance, the stage properties devoid of their “spirits” are only clothes, painted boards, and the like, void of their original context (the poetry): “Oh, to make boards to speak! There is a task: / Painting and carpentry are the soul of masque.” The quarrel between Jonson and Jones was one that derived from Jonson’s understanding of the “sense” in the tradition that has been sketched here.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> See too the opening of the masque *Hymenaei*: “It is a noble and just advantage that the things subjected to understanding have of those which are objected to sense that the one sort are but momentary and merely taking, the other impressing and lasting. Else the glory of all these solemnities had perished like a blaze and gone out in the beholders’ eyes. So short lived are the bodies of all things in comparison of their souls. And, though bodies oftentimes have the ill luck to be sensually preferred, they find afterwards the good fortune, when souls live, to be utterly forgotten” (ll. 1-9).

#### CHAPTER 4: *UT PICTURA POESIS: PICTURE AND POETRY*

Jonson's comments upon the relationship of "picture" to poetry can be found in *Discoveries*. He explains that:

Poetry and picture are arts of a like nature, and both are busy about imitation. It was excellently said of Plutarch, poetry was a speaking picture, and picture a mute poesy. For they both invent, feign, and devise many things, and accommodate all they invent to the use and service of nature. (ll. 1074-1077)

This passage condenses a great deal of information about Jonson's understanding of the relationship between poetry and the image. The first point to notice is the one Jonson makes about the "nature" of "picture" and poetry. They are "arts of a like nature" which "are busy about imitation." Jonson is reiterating the sententious or proverbial wisdom contained in Horace's phrase "*ut pictura poesis*," ("as is painting so is poetry" in Jonson's translation of *Ars poetica*). However, as is clear from the rest of this passage, Horace is not the only author that Jonson draws upon in his understanding of the relationship between picture and poetry. The analogous saying of Plutarch which Jonson cites, that "poetry was a speaking picture and picture a mute poesy" is also important because Jonson cites it in order to express the notion of the ineffable communication of the instantaneous apprehension of an image, which could be thought of as to result in immediate "recognition" in the Aristotelian sense.<sup>207</sup> The epithet of "mute poesy" for painting bespeaks the ability of painting to communicate the same kinds of things that poetry communicates, that is, paintings are capable of not only communicating an image but can

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<sup>207</sup> The editors of *CWBJ* point out that it was actually Simonides who is responsible for this saying, although Jonson is right that the quote can be found in Plutarch, who quotes Simonides in his *Moralia*. In any case, it is in Plutarch's *Moralia* that the sentence is found. See *CWBJ*, Vol. 7, p. 550, note 1075.



also (through the depiction of the image) communicate a moral, a story, or render the reality of a character or object that lies beneath the surface (due to the use of particular techniques of perspective, color, proportion and other aspects of a painting that “speak” through their deployment in a deliberate manner). In order to “read” what a “mute poesy” or picture is saying therefore necessitates a reader, a reader who has the critical vocabulary and the historio-literary knowledge necessary to be able to apprehend what the artist seeks to portray through a composition.

### ***Ecphrasis and Enargeia***

Two words from the ancient world should be recognized in this regard. One is the Greek word *ecphrasis* that comes from *ekphrazein*, meaning “to speak out,” “to tell in full.” *Ecphrasis*, somewhat of a specialized term for those who discuss *ut pictura poesis* in literature, tends to refer to the “story” of a picture: What does it “say?” It is the pictorial counterpart to the same question in a literary context: What does the poem or story “say?” It is what Jonson is referring to in the quote on the previous page. *Enargeia*, the other term, refers to the “vividness” of an image, its “alive” quality. The word comes from ancient rhetoric and was used to describe the “vividness” of a description in words: How vividly (colorfully, distinct, alive) can the description be pictured? The word in Greek came from *en-*, meaning “in, within” and *ergon* meaning “work.” Thus it can be thought of as the “work within” a painting or word picture, its energy (the English word comes from *enargeia*). It is the work that a picture performs. In its ancient sense, *ecphrasis* referred specifically to this idea of a mute picture that speaks, or even more to the point, to that which achieves *enargeia*. Plutarch’s contributions to the popularity of *ut pictura*

*poesis* was due to his saying (that Jonson cites in the above quotation) which became “one of the most widespread conceptions of late Greek and of Roman antiquity.”<sup>208</sup> Plutarch’s influence upon the continuous reception of the ancient comparisons between painting and poetry should not be underestimated:

...Plutarch is important...because he makes overt what must have been implicit in much ancient thought. For him the term ‘imitation’ links art and reality. It is, in fact, the close relationship of art and reality that validates art; and that relationship is more prominently embodied in painting than in any other form of aesthetic expression. Painting therefore becomes exemplar and guide, possessing a moral force that other arts often lack. In discussing a young man’s study of poetry, Plutarch invokes the parallel with painting in his definition of the ends of poetic art: ‘We shall steady the young man still more if, at his first entrance into poetry, we give a general description of the poetic art as an imitative art and faculty analogous to painting.’<sup>209</sup>

Plutarch here asserts that painting and poetry are “analogous” in “faculty,” that is, in their practice of imitating reality. In Plutarch’s comments on historical writings, which was his own specialty, he praised writers for their *enargeia*; he said that history “must achieve, through lifelike imitation of character, emotion, and the natural scene, the vividness of painting itself,” and he praised the ancient historian Thucydides’ rendering of a scene in his history as “characterized by pictorial vividness both in its arrangement and in its power of description.”<sup>210</sup> Many writers, especially writers of rhetoric such as Quintilian and Cicero, addressed *enargeia* in

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<sup>208</sup> Hagstrum, p. 10.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

their treatises—it was a major idea in the ancient world and the effects of this can be observed in nearly every great work of the period. Some examples of *enargeia* in ancient literature would be Homer’s description of Demodocus telling of the fall of Troy (which brings Odysseus to tears) or Virgil’s Aeneas reciting to Queen Dido the same story—both of which have been remarked upon for their use of varied and vivid pictorial images. The premier ancient example for *ecphrasis* would be (as Hagstrum points out) the shield of Achilles in book XVIII of Homer’s *Illiad*, speaking as it were and bursting with image and of story: the two cities, the war, the townspeople and slaughter, the plowman, the sacrifice, and the dance.

It can be seen too that Plutarch himself adapted the method he preached when he composed histories, notably in his most famous work the *Parallel Lives*, from techniques that painters used. In the opening to his *Alexander*, Plutarch says that he will not tediously recount battles and strategies, but rather like a painter who can communicate the character of a man through a portrait, thus organize his history of Alexander the Great:

Accordingly, just as painters get the likenesses in their portraits from the face and the expression of the eyes, wherein the character shows itself, but make very little account of the other parts of the body, so I must be permitted to devote myself rather to the signs of the soul in men, and by means of these to portray the life of each, leaving to others the description of their great contests.<sup>211</sup>

In fact, the ancient concepts of *enargeia* and *ecphrasis* are based on the link between language and painting at the most fundamental level, of color, gesture, and sound. Plato’s *Cratylus*, although perhaps unknown to Jonson, is a dialogue on the nature of language which strongly supports the idea that language and painting were commonly conceived in antiquity, and

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<sup>211</sup> Trans. Bernadotte Perrin, *Loeb Classical Library*, Vol. VII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 225.

not only incidentally so. The analogy to painting provides for much of the force of Plato's response to Hermogenes' inability to conceive of a non-arbitrary relationship of words to the things that they name in nature. Plato says that, ultimately, painting and language are linked to nature in the sense that they communicate the realities of nature through variation, one of color the other of sound and syllable, because "imitation" is, as Plutarch states in the quote above, that "faculty" that is common to both arts.<sup>212</sup>

### ***Imitation (mimesis)***

Horace and Aristotle though were perhaps most successful in the Renaissance for transmitting ideas of "imitation," "painting," and "poetry." Jonson praises Horace in *Discoveries* on two separate occasions. In the first instance, he is discussing the nature of a poet's study and the relationship between art and nature. It is significant that Jonson brings Aristotle into his praise of Horace in this passage in *Discoveries*, because he thought that the *Ars poetica* derived from, or at the very least was in dialog with, Aristotle's *Poetics*:

He [the poet] must read many, but ever the best and choicest...among whom Horace, and he that taught him, Aristotle, deserved to be the first in estimation. Aristotle was the first accurate critic and truest judge, nay, the greatest philosopher, the world ever had, for he noted the vices of all knowledges in all creatures, and out of many men's perfections in a science he formed still one art. So he taught us two offices together, how we ought to judge rightly of others, and what we ought to imitate specially in ourselves. (ll. 1778-1788)

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<sup>212</sup> See chapter one above, pp. 10-12.

That Jonson thought Horace and Aristotle to be the two greatest writers for a poet to study is I think clear from this excerpt, but more important is the explicit connection Jonson makes between Horace and Aristotle. The distinction that Aristotle makes between painting and poetry in the *Poetics* is in reference to the nature of the “imitation” (*mimesis*) that is integral to each art. Right from the outset of the *Poetics* Aristotle lists the essential similarities and differences between different forms of imitation. Painting imitates reality by appealing to the physical sense of sight through use of “color and shape” while poetry imitates through “rhythm, language and melody,” and for this reason Aristotle suggests that poetry shares more in common with music and dance than with painting.<sup>213</sup> Once this has been established, Aristotle explains that though the “mode” of imitation between the two arts may be different, poetry using words, rhythm, and language, and painting using form in space, both share fundamental parallel due to the nature of the “object” of imitation, that is, they are incredibly similar when they imitate or represent characters (people). Aristotle discusses the “object” of an imitation in the section immediately following (2.2) the opening section in which he outlined the basic formal similarities of different kinds of imitation:

Those who imitate, imitate agents; and these must be either admirable or inferior. (Character almost always corresponds to just these two categories, since everyone is differentiated in character by defect or excellence.) Alternatively they must be better people than we are, or worse, or of the same sort (compare painters: Polygnotus portrayed better people, Pauson worse people, Dionysius people similar to us)...The very same difference distinguishes tragedy and comedy from

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<sup>213</sup> Aristotle *Poetics*, Malcolm Heath Ed. and Trans. (New York: Penguin, 1996), pp. 3-4.

each other; the latter aims to imitate people worse than our contemporaries, the former better.”<sup>214</sup>

This comparison between painting and poetry is interesting firstly because it points to a similar effect that the two arts can achieve when imitating or representing an object for a viewer or reader. Secondly, the analogy implies that a similar motive exists for the practitioner of either art, which though aimed to imitate a particular object for a particular effect, also involves a fundamental feature of art: to attract or repel. Comedy and caricature seek to cause the viewer to avoid certain behavior, whereas a tragic mode seeks to imitate people or characters that are better than our “contemporaries.” Jonson most certainly exhibits these several kinds of imitation in his *Epigrams*, *The Forest*, and *The Underwood*, many of which are (precisely drawn) portraits of particular individuals composed to these corresponding differing ends.

The most interesting of all parallels between painting and poetry with respect to the “object” or “character” that Aristotle points to represents possibly the most influential idea in the critical theory of both painting and poetry. The idea comes about in section 8 when Aristotle revisits speaking about character. After naming the four attributes of a character,<sup>215</sup> he states:

Since tragedy is an imitation of people better than we are, one should imitate good portrait-painters. In rendering the individual form, they paint people as they are, but make them better-looking. In the same way the poet who is imitating people who are irascible or lazy or who have other traits of character of that sort should portray them as having these characteristics, but also as decent people. For

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<sup>214</sup> *Poetics*, p. 5.

<sup>215</sup> The four attributes are *goodness, appropriateness, likeness, and consistency.*

example, Homer portrayed Achilles as both a good man and a paradigm of obstinacy.”<sup>216</sup>

This idea was later developed into painting theory by theorists of the Italian Renaissance such as Lodovico Dolce (ca. 1508-1569) who, “discusses two ways whereby the painter may, to repeat Aristotle’s phrase, represent life not as it is, but as it ought to be...he may go direct to nature, and selecting the fairest parts from a number of individuals, produce a composite figure more perfect than commonly exists.”<sup>217</sup> Observable in many examples, such as in Sir Philip Sidney’s *Defense of Poesie*, this idea is one that maintained a kind of primacy over the literary ideas of the Renaissance. Buried inside this idea is another foundational relationship iterated by Aristotle and then again and again in the Middle Ages: The relationship between an image and the recognition of reality:

Imitation comes naturally to human beings from childhood) and in this they differ from other animals, i.e. in having a strong propensity to imitation and in learning their earliest lessons through imitation); so does the universal pleasure in imitations. What happens in practice is evidence of this: we take delight in viewing the most accurate possible images of objects which in themselves cause distress when we see them (e.g. the shapes of the lowest species of animal, and corpses). The reason for this is that understanding is extremely pleasant, not just for philosophers but for others too in the same way, despite their limited capacity for it. This is the reason why people take delight in seeing images; what happens

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<sup>216</sup> P. 25.

<sup>217</sup> Rensselaer Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967), p. 11.

is that as they view them they come to understand and work out what each thing is (e.g. ‘This is so-and-so’).<sup>218</sup>

As noted in the previous chapter on the word “sense,” for Aristotle the connection of the image to reality at its most basic level is central to his understanding of the way in which human beings attain knowledge of the things and of truth.<sup>219</sup> Quite simply, as Aristotle often repeats, without a *phantasm* (an image or picture in the mind) there is no possibility for thought.<sup>220</sup>

### ***Painting and Poetry***

Horace’s *Ars poetica*, it has been thought, initiated the dialog between painting and poetry, between the image and the word. The *Ars poetica* does indeed wrap together the issues of imitation, image, and knowledge surveyed thus far. In Horace’s poem, the analogy between painting and poetry begins right from line one:

If to a woman’s head a painter would  
Set a horse-neck, and diverse feathers fold  
On every limb, ta’en from a several creature,  
Presenting upwards a fair female feature,  
Which in some swarthy fish uncomely ends:  
Admitted to the sight, although his friends,  
Could you contain your laughter?...

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<sup>218</sup> *Poetics*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>219</sup> See also *De anima* 3.3: “As sight is the most highly developed sense, the name *Phantasia* (imagination) has been formed from Phaos (light) because it is not possible to see without light.”

<sup>220</sup> See David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 186. In *De Anima* (432a) Aristotle states that, “it is in the sensible forms that the intelligible forms exist, both the abstractions of mathematics, as they are called, and all the qualities and attributes of sensible things...as without sensation a man would not learn or understand anything, so at the very time when he is actually thinking he must have an image before him. Aristotle observed that phantasms, which are ‘like present sensations, except that they are immaterial’ are neither affirmations nor negations until they become part of a combination of words that implies truth or falsehood.”



But equal power to painter and to poet  
Of daring all hath still been given: we know it...<sup>221</sup>

There is much to note here. The central line, “But equal power [hath been given] to painter and poet” bespeaks the intertwined nature of the two seemingly distinct arts. Horace chooses the comparison between painting and poetry not to make a statement about painting, but rather to make a statement about the nature of poetry: that poetry (like painting) imitates nature, and in doing so, must do so according to principles that can be observed in nature. The technique of addressing the art of painting in a poem about poetry is ingenious (he literally demonstrates what he is saying about poetry while saying it). Horace decides to use this analogy in order to put a picture into the reader’s mind, which in turn effects laughter at the farce, which itself is clearly directed to instruct readers to a fundamental point about the poet and the craft of poetry.<sup>222</sup>

A core philosophical context of the relationship between images, sense, and reality is indispensable to keep in mind when considering Horace’s *Ars poetica* (and Jonson’s translation of it) with respect to what Horace (and Jonson) believed to be the nature of and end of poetry. Horace’s major influence in the Renaissance, which Jonson exhibits in his poetry, is that poetry should be entertaining and enjoyable while also presenting the reader with the possibility to gain valuable knowledge about the foremost timeless realities of life:

Let what thou feign’st for pleasure’s sake be near  
The truth; nor let thy fable think whate’er  
It would must be...  
The poems void of profit our grave men  
Cast out by voices; want they pleasure, then  
Our gallants give them none, but pass them by;  
But he hath every suffrage can apply  
Sweet mixed with sour to his reader, so  
As doctrine and delight together go.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Ll. 1-7 & 11-12.

<sup>222</sup> In fact, Horace wrote this poem as a letter with the explicit intention of teaching two sons of the Piso family about the craft of poetic composition.

That Jonson was deeply influenced by the above sentiment of “doctrine and delight together go” can be gleaned at a glance from the moral nature of his poetry and drama. It is true that Jonson was not the only poet to embrace and follow this “doctrine,” nor was he the only Renaissance writer to establish a connection to Aristotle. To delight and instruct was a commonplace idea in the Renaissance. Sir Philip Sidney, for example, asserts the same idea in *Defence of Poesy*, an idea that he likewise associates with Aristotle:

But I speak to this purpose, that all the end of the comical part be not upon such scornful matters as stir laughter only, but, mixed with it that delightful teaching which is the end of poesy. And the great fault even in that point of laughter, and forbidden plainly by Aristotle, is that they stir laughter in sinful things, which are rather execrable than ridiculous...<sup>224</sup>

The moral nature of poetry, exhibited by Horace, is ultimately founded upon the Greek philosopher Aristotle’s ideas of virtue and his “vices of all knowledges in all creatures,” as Jonson states in *Discoveries* (quoted in text above, pg. 106). That poetry *imitates* nature in order to present likenesses is similar and yet unique, Aristotle states in *Poetics*, to the way in which painting *imitates* (μίμησις) nature, that is, that both arts represent nature toward the end of depicting a kind of metaphysical truth or reality. The image is also the fundamental component of understanding, thinking, memory, and perception according to Aristotle’s understanding of the role that the external senses play together with the internal senses. Sidney too, makes an explicit reference to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, in order to say that poetry is “more philosophical” than history:

His [Aristotle’s] reason is, because poesey dealeth with *Katholou*, that is to say, with the universal consideration; and the history with *Kath’ hekaston*, the

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<sup>223</sup> Horace, *Of the Art of Poetry*, ll. 507-509 & 511-516.

<sup>224</sup> P. 48.

particular....For indeed if the question were whether it were better to have a particular act truly or falsely set down, there is no doubt which is to be chosen, no more than whether you had rather have Vespasian's picture rights as he was or at the painter's pleasure, nothing resembling.<sup>225</sup>

The debate between history and poetry that Sidney articulates in *Defense of Poesy* is in many ways similar to the debate of the *paragone*, that debate between painting and poetry that flourished in the Renaissance. The *paragone* is a debate that does involve all of the issues involved in the relationship between the image, reality, and knowledge that have been surveyed thus far. The painter's argument, a good one, is that painting, or more to the point, that the image alone is superior to poetry is founded upon the idea that sight is predominantly (if not exclusively, due to the image in the mind, or *phantasm*) the avenue through which knowledge is received. However, the poet would respond that poetry involves both the image *and* the word—that is, that poetry *comprehends* painting philosophically speaking because poetry uses words to render mental pictures that the poet arranges in a pattern in order to make meaning. Sir Philip Sidney, an avid reader of Horace as well as Aristotle, demonstrates the reception of many of the commonplace assertions of the kindred relationship between picture and language. It is the case, Sidney reasons, that the image made vivid by words is what distinguishes poetry and history from philosophy—philosophy he says only appeals to the reason and not the senses, especially sight:

...the peerless poet perform[s] both, [that is, provides both “picture” and “logos”] for whatsoever the philosopher saith should be done, he giveth a perfect picture of it in someone by whom he presupposeth it was done, so as he couplet the general

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<sup>225</sup> Pp. 18-19.

notion with the particular example. A perfect picture I say, for he yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description, which doth neither strike, pierce nor possess the sight of the soul so much as that other doth.<sup>226</sup>

Sidney here echoes the sentiments of many ancient writers, but particularly Aristotle, Horace, and Cicero. In *Ars poetica*, Horace makes a nearly identical point about the power of the ‘image’ to “strike, pierce...the soul:”

But, ever, things that run  
In at the ear do stir the mind more slow  
Than those the faithful eyes take in by show,  
And the beholder to himself doth render.<sup>227</sup>

### ***Strike***

In *De Oratore*, Cicero’s great work *Concerning the Orator*, he says that a speaker who uses images can best “strike” his hearers, much like the way a bullet or javelin would pierce the breast. Cicero’s concept here is based on the use of metaphor and symbol (*Meta* meaning “across” + *pherein* meaning “to bear” or “to carry,” and *symbolon* has imbedded in it the idea of “throwing—of a missile, javelin, etc.”). Cicero says:

Sometimes, also, brevity is the object attained by metaphor as *Si telum manu fugit*, ‘If from his hand the javelin fled.’ The throwing of a missile weapon unawares could not be described with more brevity in the proper words than it is signified by one used metaphorically...This happens, I imagine, either because it

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<sup>226</sup> P. 16.

<sup>227</sup> Jonson’s translation in *CWBJ*, ll. 166-169 (ll. 180-183 in Horace’s Latin text).

is some manifestation of wit to jump over such expressions as lie before you, and catch at others from a greater distance; or because he who listens is led another way in thought, and yet does not wander from the subject, which is a very great pleasure; or because a subject, and entire comparison, is dispatched in a single word; or because every metaphor that is adopted with judgment is directed immediately to our senses, and principally to the sense of sight, which is the keenest of them all. For such expressions as the odour of urbanity, the softness of humanity, the murmur of the sea, and sweetness of language, are derived from the other senses; but those which relate to the sight are much more striking, for they place almost in the eye of the mind such objects as we cannot see and discern by the natural eyes.<sup>228</sup>

Jonson uses “strike” this way in one of his own poems that also interestingly showcases his interest in using visual and plastic arts in his poetry. Jonson draws a distinction between different kinds of “art” in the poem through his use of a curiously strong artistic language that is full of visual allusion to exotic sights such as “curious plate / Of Nuremburg, or Turkey...[and] the Persian looms,” as well as to famous artists. Jonson seeks to make the distinction between a “carved” or “painted” still “art” that images an action, and the “art” that provides the ability to act for the good:

I would, if price or prayer could them get,  
Send in what or Romano, Tintoret,  
Titian, or Raphael, Michelangelo,  
Have left in fame to equal, or outgo  
The old Greek hands in picture, or in stone.  
This I would do, could I think Weston one  
Caught with these arts, wherein the judge is wise

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<sup>228</sup> 3.40.158 & 160-161. Translated by J. S. Watson, accessed online at: [http://ages.pomona.edu/~cmc24747/sources/cic\\_web/de\\_or\\_3.htm](http://ages.pomona.edu/~cmc24747/sources/cic_web/de_or_3.htm)

As far as sense, and only by the eyes.  
But you I know, my lord, and know you can  
Discern between a statue and a man  
Can do the things that statues do deserve,  
And act the business which they paint, or carve.  
What you have studied are the arts of life...  
These I look up at with a reverent eye,  
And strike religion in the standers-by...<sup>229</sup>

The allusions in this poem are vast, and potentially posit an array of images that one familiar with painting and sculpture would have difficulty not to conjure while reading the poem. Jonson says that Weston is not “one catched with these [visual] arts, wherein the judge is wise / As far as sense, and only by the eyes.” These arts cannot in a sense capture the essence of Weston.

Although there is a palpable tension between the plastic and poetic arts in the poem, Jonson is clearly not saying that painting or sculpture are in any way inadequate arts. But he is saying, however, that for those viewers whose judgment only goes as far as visual stimulation, a painting or sculpture would misrepresent the man whose life itself is “art” because Weston has studied the “arts of life.”

In the final lines of the poem, the poet says that Weston would “strike religion in the standers-by.” The word “strike” here could be taken to mean a variety of complementary things, but seems to echo the idea in the quote from Sidney above, i.e. that Jonson’s image of Weston “strikes” into the reader’s soul.<sup>230</sup> Interestingly, the *OED* gives senses of the word “strike” that mean “to mold;” the verb here could mean “to mold (wax, taper, candle, etc.)” or it could mean “to mold (a brick or tile).”<sup>231</sup> Another meaning provided for “strike” is associated specifically

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<sup>229</sup> Underwood 77, “*To the Right Honourable, the Lord Treasurer of England an Epigram*,” ll. 5-24.

<sup>230</sup> A word that comes down from OE, *strīcan*, meaning “to stroke or rub.” Possibly related to the Proto Indo European *streig-*”

<sup>231</sup> *OED*, entries 6 & 7 for “strike” (v).

with bricklaying: “to level up a joint with mortar; to spread (mortar) along a joint.”<sup>232</sup> Jonson’s former job as a bricklayer adds an interesting level to this meaning of “strike.” Jonson “strike[s] religion in the standers-by” through rendering Weston’s practice of the “arts of life,” meaning that he *moulds* religion in them, making them as candles to burn bright as Weston, or constructs them to be living art, monuments that Jonson ironically says he cannot physically construct in the last few lines of the poem: “Which, though I cannot as an architect / In glorious piles or pyramids erect / Unto your honour: I can tune in song/ Aloud; and (haply) it may last as long.” Another curious meaning of “strike” is “Of a feeling, etc.: To pierce a person *to* the heart, *to* the quick.”<sup>233</sup> This meaning, a common one at the time and the one Sidney uses, could be supported by Jonson’s knowledge of rhetoric. In ancient and renaissance rhetoric it was often said that a well composed sentence was as an arrow piercing through the target.<sup>234</sup> Weston’s practice of the “arts of life” then, could be thought of as piercing religion into the hearts of the “standers-by.”<sup>235</sup> They are effects of “sight” and “light,” for Jonson renders Weston in such a way that a sculpture cannot, as he hopes to lead those who have seen Weston’s practice of the “arts of life” to contemplate.

### ***Truth***<sup>236</sup>

Painting, however, does not represent an *image alone*, nor does painting “speak” only to the sight. That Jonson knew this becomes clear from the following paragraph in *Discoveries*:

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<sup>232</sup> *OED*, 8.

<sup>233</sup> *OED*, 31, b.

<sup>234</sup> *Kairos*, the “occasion or opportunity” for a composition or speech, arose out of an archery context.

<sup>235</sup> “Standers-by” may have the additional meaning of “‘under’ standers-by.”

<sup>236</sup> See below, pp. 132ff., “The tongue is the interpreter of those pictures,” and also p. 177f.

Whosoever loves not picture is injurious to truth, and all the wisdom of poetry. Picture is the invention of heaven: the most ancient and most akin to nature. It is itself a silent work, and always of one and the same habit; yet it doth so enter and penetrate the inmost affection—being done by an excellent artificer—as sometimes it o’ercomes the power of speech and oratory....There are divers graces in it...Some have diligence and comeliness, but they want majesty. They can express a human form in all the graces, sweetness and elegancy, but they miss the authority. They can hit nothing but smooth cheeks, they cannot express roughness or gravity. Others aspire to truth so much as they are rather lovers of likeness than beauty.<sup>237</sup>

It is the poor painter who paints a picture only to “miss the authority,” faithfully representing the “smooth cheeks” and other physical features but not “gravity,” that is, reality, the truth. On the other hand, Jonson says, some painters are so philosophical in their aims, seeking to depict “truth so much,” that they do not actually imitate nature but instead paint only “likeness[es],” mere images that have little to no connection to reality. Jonson of course elsewhere says the same kinds of things about poets.<sup>238</sup> “Picture is the invention of heaven: the most ancient and most akin to nature,” Jonson says, because it is only through picture that poetry and oratory achieve a life-like quality, vividness, or *enargeia*. A “silent work,” or “picture” has the ability to “so enter and penetrate the inmost affection” that in his *Institutio Oratoria* Quintilian says the following about the power of “picture:”

Nor is it wonderful that gesture which depends on various forms of movement should have such power, when pictures, which are silent and motionless, penetrate

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<sup>237</sup> Ll. 1083-1093.

<sup>238</sup> See for example *Epigrams* 56, “*On Poet Ape*.”



into our innermost feelings with such power that at times they seem more eloquent than language itself. On the other hand, if gesture and the expression of the face are out of harmony with the speech, if we look cheerful when our words are sad, or shake our heads when making a positive assertion, our words will not only lack weight, but will fail to carry conviction.<sup>239</sup>

Here Quintilian links together picture and word through the way in which an orator delivers his speech. The orator must produce fitting gestures that are in “harmony” with the speech. This could be thought of as another instance of *enargeia*, a vividness that can be grasped through both the gesture and the delivery of the words of a speech. It also could perhaps suggest that picture works its best when employed *together* with words.

The Elder Philostratus, the first art critic as it were, also understood there to be a close relationship between picture and poetry. The opening passage of his *Imagines* is actually Jonson’s source for the lines “Whosoever loves not picture is injurious to truth, and all the wisdom of poetry. Picture is the invention of heaven: the most ancient and most akin to nature.” Flipping through the opening pages of the *Imagines* one finds the following very telling lines which Jonson did not reproduce in *Discoveries*, “for poets and painters make equal contribution to our knowledge of the deeds and the looks of heroes...”<sup>240</sup> The *Imagines* is a unique work, and could be summarized thus: The speaker, an expert at reading and expressing the “mute poetry” of some apparently famous paintings in antiquity, goes from place to place and makes the paintings speak (*ecphrasis*). The first painting that the Elder Philostratus makes to speak is entitled “Scamander.” He is apparently explicating (reading) the picture and is in dialog with a boy. In

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<sup>239</sup> 11.3.67.

<sup>240</sup> *Philostratus Imagines; Callistratus Descriptions* (Trans. Arthur Fairbanks. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1931), p. 3.

order to demonstrate *ecphrasis* of the painting he turns to reminisce upon a passage from Homer's *Illiad* and in so doing, demonstrates the close connection between painting and poetry:

Have you noticed...that the painting here is based on Homer...Surely you are familiar with the passage...where Homer makes Achilles rise up to avenge Patroclus, and the gods are moved to make battle with each other. Now of this battle of the gods the painting ignores all the rest, but it tells how Hephaestus fell upon Scamander with might and main. Now look again at the painting; it is all from Homer. Here is the lofty citadel, and here is a great plain...<sup>241</sup>

This brief account from the *Imagines* corresponds with Jonson's observation that "picture took her feigning from poetry," which as we noted above originated with Aristotle's *Poetics*, and sums up well the ancient understanding of the kinship between the two arts.

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<sup>241</sup> Pp. 7 & 9.

**CHAPTER 5: PAINTING AND BEAUTY IN JONSON'S POETRY AND MASQUES**

*Story, Paint, Claritas, Consonantia, Integritas, Wisdom, Cloud, Mind, Prudence, Whole,*

*Figure, Form*



**Figure 1:** Venetia, Lady Digby by Sir Anthony van Dyck. Oil on canvas, ca. 1633-1634. 39 3/4 in. x 31 1/2 in.

## Painters and Poets: *Istoria, Color*

Painters and poets in the Renaissance followed a similar method of composition which was derived from ancient rhetoric. Both kinds of artists had recourse to three stages in composition: *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elecutio*. *Inventio* referred to the discovery or invention of what raw material (story) was to be used.<sup>242</sup> The next stage, *dispositio*, entailed the arranging of the material raw that had been gathered in the previous stage into a new order or pattern (into a new creation). The last stage that both kinds of artists practiced in composing, *elecutio*, referred to the “clothing” of the material into the colors of paints or into the “colors” of words.<sup>243</sup> For the painter and the poet alike, inspiration for a story was commonly sought from the Bible and among Classical literature. In *De pictura*, perhaps the foremost of all (the Italian) renaissance painting treatises, Alberti says unequivocally that *historia* is “the greatest work of the painter.”<sup>244</sup>

Rensselaer Lee provides an example of a ubiquitous Baroque technique in the chapter “Unity of Action” in his book *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic theory of Painting*. He discusses the way in which Poussin’s painting *Gathering of Manna in the Wilderness* (ca. 1638) demonstrates the challenge the painter faces when choosing a scene from a story to work with in

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<sup>242</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the sister arts of painting and poetry (and music) in relation to classical rhetoric, see Timothy Erwin, “Ut Rhetorica Artes: The Rhetorical Theory of the Sister Arts,” in *Haydn and the Performance of Rhetoric*, edited by Tom Beghin and Sander M. Goldberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 61-79.

<sup>243</sup> Lee, pp. 70-71. Also notable is that the “liberal arts” education of the Middle Ages and Renaissance consisted of subjects that both would have studied: the *Trivium* (literally “three roads crossing”) of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, and the *Quadrivium* (“four roads crossing”) of geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and music.

<sup>244</sup> Anthony Grafton, *Leon Batista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), p. 127. Grafton points out that Cicero had said that history was “the supreme work of the orator” and that Alberti had this idea in mind when saying multiple times that history was the greatest work of the painter. “History” comes from the Latin *historia* which itself came in from the Greek *historein* meaning “to inquire” and was derived from the Greek *histōr* which meant “learned man.” Ultimately connected to the Indo European root *weid-* meaning “to see.”

the *inventio* stage. Due to the obvious limitations, a painter must decide upon a specific moment to portray, a moment that allows for the story to be recognized, but also a moment that communicates the conflict and resolution in an Aristotelian sense.<sup>245</sup> Poussin chose to depict the Israelites reacting in a multitude of ways to the manna which had miraculously appeared to them in the desert wilderness (“in attitudes of wonder or thanksgiving, or are gathering it up from the ground”).<sup>246</sup> Choosing to use this precise moment has the effect of bringing the painting to life through action in addition to leading the viewer to reflect on the position of this story within the scope of the larger Biblical narrative. An example of Baroque art in a different form that demonstrates this kind of dramatic action would be the sculpture *David* (1624) by Bernini. Although many notable artists such as Donatello and Michelangelo had produced sculptures of the Biblical David, Bernini’s sculpture is different because it dramatically depicts David in a climactic moment, winding up his sling just before he deals the final blow to Goliath. Baroque art uniquely exhibits drama, and the *enargeia* perceivable in a work of art is tied closely with the selection the artist makes of the specific moment to portray as a scene.<sup>247</sup> If the painter chooses a moment that depicts the conflict and/or resolution to a story, then more “vivid” or “alive” the painting will appear to be.<sup>248</sup>

Perhaps the best example of this Baroque technique would be Caravaggio’s *Calling of St. Matthew* (ca. 1599-1600). The suspense and energy in this painting is unmistakable—the image clearly works *with* a story, and the details can be seen in every gesture and every limb of every character in the painting from those tax collectors sitting at the table with Matthew, to Jesus and

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<sup>245</sup> Lee, p. 63, “For to represent his [Poussin’s] picture perfectly he needed those parts that are necessary to a poem in order to pass from ill to good fortune.”

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>247</sup> For discussion of artist “design” (*dispositio*) in relation to this idea, see Timothy Erwin, *Textual Vision* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2015), pp. 6-11, 39-41, & 49-51.

<sup>248</sup> The common word for this in today’s contemporary language of painting is “energy.”

the Apostle who stand opposite and gesture in Mathew's direction. The colors are a contrast between bright and dark, and there is a curious light source that illuminates the men at the table. Similarly the poet is faced with making similar decisions that the painter must make, and notably also has "colors" available for use in a composition. Through a kind of stylistic ornamentation (*elecutio*) a poet can significantly alter the way in which a composition comes across, in terms of the diction he employs, in terms of the way in which an argument is presented, and in the way in which tropes, symbol, and metaphor are used. In speaking of ancient rhetoric, Cicero and Quintilian both addressed *elecutio* through terms that signify *color*.<sup>249</sup> This was familiar to Jonson, as can be seen in his praise of John Selden in *Underwood* 14:

I wondered at the richness, but am lost  
To see the workmanship so exceed the cost;  
To mark the excellent seasoning of your style,  
And manly elocution, not one while

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<sup>249</sup> See Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age* (Trans. Emily McVarish. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p. 99: "True eloquence means knowing how to paint with words, to color with metaphors, to draw with comparisons, and for this, there is no need to borrow from painting's means: the natural resources of language suffice. To explain the indisputable superiority of Cicero's speeches, listeners often say that they possess to the point of perfection the art of painting with words, thanks to which the orator seems to show a thing rather than say it...Quintilian says that, 'the orator reveals the qualities of his mind by the way in which he "colors" his argument'...one should not only make his colors appropriate to the different parts of his appeal...but also remember that 'there are some cases which do not admit any form of gloss [meaning color].'" For more on this, see *Institutio Oratoria*, Books 8 & 10. See also Donald Lemen Clark's summary of ancient rhetoric, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 89: "They [ancient writers] cultivated their flowers of rhetoric, they laid on their gayest colors, they brightened their language with dazzling lights. *Flores* [flowers], *colores*, *lumina* [light] in rhetorical contexts are synonyms of *exornatio*, which Thomas Wilson, in his *Arte of Rhetorique* (1560), correctly defined as 'a gorgeous beautifying of the tongue.' The flowers, colors, and lights are the embellishments which distinguish the art...of letters from the plain prose of everyday life." Also see p. 88: Quintilian, who Jonson often quotes, thought that these ornaments should be used, but with some restraint: "...Quintilian praises a style whose embellishment is manly, noble, and chaste, free from effeminate smoothness or a complexion counterfeited by paint. He likes flowering fruit trees and praises an orchard or olive grove, carefully pruned and planted in orderly rows, which seems to him to be an appropriate symbol for tastefully embellished prose."

With horror rough, then rioting with wit:  
But to the subject still the colours fit  
In sharpness of all search, wisdom of choice,  
Newness of sense, antiquity of voice!<sup>250</sup>

Jonson remarks that Selden has succeeded in matching the colors to the subject, and this is great praise to receive from Jonson indeed. Jonson himself consciously strove to accomplish this in his own verse, and he is recorded by William Drummond to have said that he wrote all his poetry out in prose first: “He [Jonson] wrote all his verses first in prose, as his Master Camden taught him, and said, that verses stood by sense, without either colours or accent.”<sup>251</sup> In *Discoveries*, Jonson echoes this sentiment in a slightly different way by saying that some poets, “...labour only to ostentation, and are ever more busy about the colours and surface of a work than in the matter and foundation: for that is hid, the other is seen.”<sup>252</sup> That the “sense” or “matter” of the poem is most important for Jonson is clear from these passages, and perhaps this is the better explanation for why in his poetry Jonson occasionally takes issue with painters who use “color” in order to deceive or flatter, in order to obscure the *sense*:

Oh, had I now your manner, mastery, might,  
Your power of handling shadow, air, and sprite,  
How I would draw, and take hold and delight.

But you are he can paint; I can but write:  
A poet hath no more but black and white,  
Ne knows he flattering colours, or false light.<sup>253</sup>

The etymology for “color” in this context is interesting; it appears to be related to the Proto-Indo-European root *kel-* (1) which meant “to cover, conceal, save” and came to English from the Old

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<sup>250</sup> Ll. 53-60.

<sup>251</sup> Ll. 293-295.

<sup>252</sup> Ll. 499-501.

<sup>253</sup> *Underwood* 52.16-21.

Latin *colos* which was a “covering” (akin to *celare* “to hide, conceal”).<sup>254</sup> Of course poets can flatter too, and Jonson’s clever use of the “black and white” of the poet versus the “colours” of the painter is meant here as a device intended to understate the poet’s ability to imitate nature for effect. Jonson certainly had knowledge of ancient rhetorical and poetic *elecutio*.

### ***Body and Mind: Anthony van Dyck’s Portrait of Venetia Digby and Jonson’s Poetry***

Jonson wrote a particularly lengthy sequence of poems to Venetia Digby, nine poems in all. In two of those poems, “The Picture of Her Body” and “The Mind,” the speaker of the poem addresses a painter who may have been Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641). Van Dyck painted two portraits of Venetia Digby. One of them in particular, the painting of Venetia Digby as an allegory of prudence, Jonson not only seems to have known but appears to be responding to in his poetry. Strangely, critics have yet to examine Jonson’s poetic sequence in relation to this painting which is now housed at the National Portrait Gallery in London.<sup>255</sup> Looking at Jonson’s poetry and van Dyck’s painting side by side one notices a curious connection between the two, so much so that it suggests that the poem and the painting may be complementary parts of a greater whole, like an emblem.<sup>256</sup> Alan R. Young showed that Jonson was familiar with

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<sup>254</sup> Douglas Harper, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <http://www.etymonline.com>

<sup>255</sup> The description from the National Portrait Gallery of the painting reads: “This allegorical portrait by van Dyck is thought to have been painted as a posthumous tribute to Lady Digby, who is shown as Prudence, trampling on profane Love and spurning two-faced Deceit. Her doves and the snake she holds allude to St Matthew: ‘Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.’”

<sup>256</sup> This concept of a complementary view of van Dyck’s painting and Jonson’s poetry has the virtue of affording a consistency with Jonson’s views on the whole between picture and poetry as well as a consistency with his views on the roles that Jonson understood the visual and poetic elements played together to achieve the full artistic effect of the masque.



emblem writers and their “fashion” but that little attention has been paid to this fact.<sup>257</sup> Did Jonson seek to create an emblematic effect between his two poems “Picture of Her Body” and “The Mind” and van Dyck’s painting? Juxtaposing Jonson’s poetry and van Dyck’s painting creates an effect similar in nature to that of the emblems of Alciato—emblems composed to communicate a meaning through the cooperative effect of a title, an image, and poetry used as a whole.

As noted in chapter three above, Robert C. Evans’ article on Jonson’s emblematic thinking led to the conclusion that Jonson not only often thought visually in his poetry, and that he consciously responded to visual stimuli, but also that the interaction between the visual and the poetic in the poem “The Mind of the Frontispiece to a Book” and the frontispiece to Sir Walter Raleigh’s *History of the World* (1614) contributed to a complementary unity that is greater than each of the parts in themselves. Evans found similarity between the emblematic art of Andreas Alciatus in which a title, verse, and picture all work together to create a whole that is greater in effect than each of the parts alone.<sup>258</sup> In fact, emblem writers used the same language of “body” and “soul” to refer to the picture and the verse of an emblem that Jonson used when he referred to the complimentary parts of the masque. In addition to this, while Jonson was a Catholic he likely encountered Jesuit “Ignatian” meditation techniques in some fashion. These were powerful methods designed to aid the actualization of intense mental visual images in prayer. The Jesuits had quite an interest in the power of verse and image as a unit. A Jesuit priest named Possevino wrote a tract on painting and poetry entitled *Tractatio de poësi & pictura ethica, humana, & fabulosa* (in Lyons, 1595) and appears to have been a popular work around

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<sup>257</sup> See pp. 18-19 in Alan R. Young’s “The Emblematic Art of Ben Jonson,” *Emblematica: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Emblem Studies* Vol. 6 no. 1 (Summer 1992): 17-36.

<sup>258</sup> Evans, p. 109.

the time Jonson became a Catholic. In his tract on painting and poetry, Possevino discusses the interplay between the picture and the verse in an emblem, saying, "...that the rationale of the emblem lay in its uniting poetry and painting in a form that maintained the values of each art, permitting one to be the interpreter of the other."<sup>259</sup>

Some other works that explore the influence of these traditions on Ben Jonson's poetry would be Anne R. Sweeney's *Robert Southwell, Snow in Arcadia: Redrawing the English Lyric Landscape, 1586-95* and Louis Martz' classic book *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*.<sup>260</sup> Sweeney observes that Jesuit meditation practices may have made an impression on Jonson, particularly since he wished that he had written Southwell's "The Burning Babe," for "Jonson," Sweeney says, "knew the power of the picture, and no doubt recognized its potency in Southwell's little poem."<sup>261</sup> Martz's book surveys the extent to which Catholic meditation techniques from Bonaventure to Ignatius and Southwell had a significant impact on English poetry in Jonson's day.

### **"The Picture of Her Body"**

In "The Picture of Her Body" a conversation seems to be occurring; the poem suggests that a painter and the poet are intricately connected in the poem. The painter and the poet appear to be in dialog with each other on the subject of the picture of Venetia's body. Jonson's poem begins:

Sitting, and ready to be drawn,

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>260</sup> New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954.

<sup>261</sup> Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, p. 280. Also see chapter 1, "Ben Jonson's admiration for Southwell's 'Burning Babe,'" pp. 1-37.

What make these velvets, silks, and lawn,  
Embroideries, feathers, fringes, lace,  
Where every limb takes like a face?

Send these suspected helps to aid 5  
Some form defective, or decayed;  
This beauty without falsehood fair  
Needs nought to clothe it but the air.

Yet something, to the painter's view,  
Were fitly interposed; so new, 10  
He shall, if he can understand,  
Work with my fancy his own hand.

Draw first a cloud, all save her neck,  
And out of that make day to break;  
Till, like her face it do appear, 15  
And men may think all light rose there.<sup>262</sup>

Looking at van Dyck's portrait of Venetia Digby alongside Jonson's poem "The Picture of the Body," it is difficult to ignore the interplay that comes about between the two when viewed in a complementary, emblematic fashion. One important detail to keep in mind is that van Dyck sought to present his subject as a personification of prudence.

### ***Prudence***

Prudence was often translated by the ancients (such as Cicero) and early Christian writers (such as Ambrose) as "wisdom," (*sapientia*) for prudence was the cardinal virtue that Aquinas said was involved in the exercise of all of the other virtues: *Omnis virtus moralis debet esse prudens*.<sup>263</sup> The painter thought to portray Lady Digby as a personification of "prudence" or

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<sup>262</sup> *The Underwood* 84.3, ll. 1-16.

<sup>263</sup> *Quaestio disputata de virtutibus in communi*, 12 ad 23 (qtd. in Joseph Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), p. 5. In chapters one and two, Pieper demonstrates that prudence results in good action, and that a good

“wisdom” notably by the way in which she, like Athena the pagan goddess of wisdom, holds a serpent in her hand. Lady Digby’s other hand rests upon a dove, which is the primary image used to signify the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. This could also be an allusion to Christ’s statement: “be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”<sup>264</sup> In the Old Testament, “wisdom” is often personified as feminine.<sup>265</sup> This Christian humanist portrayal of Lady Digby’s character as the personification of prudence visually depicts what humanist poets such as Jonson grappled with too—as evident from the very next poem in the sequence entitled “The Mind.”<sup>266</sup> Consequently a balance through contrast is achieved throughout the composition not only between left and right side of the painting (as each of her hands hold these different symbolic animals) but also from top to bottom. The upper half of the painting is dominated by the image of the sky, clouds, and highly radiant portrayal of Venetia Digby’s face. Her face and neck appear to issue forth from the clouds, and the radiance that issues from her face and neck corresponds to the contrast of the left and right side of the painting—the direction in which she gazes (to the left) is illuminated, yet behind her head and upper body the sky is dark.

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action comes about from a coordinated employment of the memory, foresight, and the ability to apprehend concrete reality. Cf. Proverbs 8:12, “I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.” See also Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 280.

<sup>264</sup> Mat 10:16.

<sup>265</sup> See for example Wisdom 6:12ff: “Wisdom is brilliant, she never fades. By those who love her, she is readily seen, by those who seek her, she is readily found...”

<sup>266</sup> *The Underwood* 84.4. Below I suggest that Jonson composes a poem upon the subject of Venetia Digby’s mind because Anthony van Dyck can only paint her body, literally, he cannot paint her mind which is where prudence dwells (wisdom)—he can only paint things “like a mind, not it.” Note too that the virtue of prudence relies on the cooperative exercise of both the external and internal senses in that the ability to assess reality for what it is integral to prudence. Josef Pieper describes this as both act and “cognition.” Cognition, the ability to assess reality for what it is, requires use of both the internal and external senses in that the sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste are qualified by the internal senses of the memory, especially what Pieper calls “true-to-being memory” which “‘contains’ in itself real things and events as they really are and were.” See *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, pp. 3-22, esp. pp. 13-15.

Jonson's poem in many ways mirrors van Dyck's painting, and thus it could be the case that he is responding to, interacting with, and building upon the painting's portrayal of Lady Digby in order to poetically paint his own "picture" of her "body."<sup>267</sup> In some ways the poem follows the painting too closely to be coincidental. The lady in the painting is, as Jonson says in the poem, "Sitting, and ready to be drawn," and also in the painting she appears to be clothed in the "...velvets, silks, and lawn, / Embroideries, feathers, fringes, lace," imagery Jonson lists in the poem. Thus it makes sense that Jonson would ask in the poem "What make these...[things]...Where every limb takes like a face?"<sup>268</sup> The poet asks the painter what the end is of his painstaking detail in the re-creation (or imitation) of Lady Digby's clothing in all of its different parts and materials in order to make the point that these things *are not* "her body," which he says, "needs nought to clothe it but the air" because it in itself is beautiful, "beauty without falsehood fair." Jonson is here taking issue with the painter's craft, yes, in the sense that painting can lead to a "false" portrayal, a dressing up in the crudest sense: "Send these suspected helps to aid / Some form defective, or decayed," the poet says, Lady Digby does not need them.

But Jonson does not entirely abandon van Dyck's portrayal of Lady Digby. As in the emblems of Alciato the verse, picture, and title work together. If Jonson's poem and van Dyck's painting are understood to work in this way, the poet can be seen to simultaneously address the painter, the reader of the poem, and the viewer of the painting. That Jonson understood the picture and the word to work together was discussed in the previous chapter, but there is another

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<sup>267</sup> It is unclear whether Jonson's poem or van Dyck's painting came first. Jonson obviously knew of van Dyck's commission and is either simply responding to the difficulty that he will have "painting" his subject, or he could, as I'm arguing here, be in dialog with the painting itself, and thus with the painter who composed it.

<sup>268</sup> "Where every limb takes a face" could also refer to the fact that nearly each of Lady Digby's limbs are associated to a face in the painting: Her foot is upon the face of malice or anger, one hand holds a snake, the other rests on a dove.

comment that Jonson makes in his prose that provides some depth into how picture and words work to “apprehend the consequence of things in their truth:”

The conceits of the mind are pictures of things, and the tongue is the interpreter of those pictures. The order of God’s creatures in themselves is not only admirable and glorious, but eloquent; then he who could apprehend the consequence of things in their truth, and utter his apprehensions as truly, were the best writer or speaker.<sup>269</sup>

The poet’s task in this instance is to aid the reader of the poem and the viewer of the painting to “apprehend the consequence of things in their truth,” while he strives to “utter his apprehensions as truly” as he “draws” for readers a complimentary picture through a poem which *ecphrastically* interacts with van Dyck’s portrait. Jonson makes van Dyck’s painting “speak,” thus enabling it to say more than it could signify as an image standing alone. Both the poet and the painter are involved in the process of producing an image, and are ultimately interested in assisting their viewer or reader to “see” their subject. Looking at both the painting and the poem in this way enhances readings of both of them, and Jonson seems to be hinting at this when he turns to *address the reader* in the third stanza: “Yet something, to the painter’s view, / Were fitly interposed; so new, / He shall, if he can understand, / Work with my fancy his own hand.” The poet seeks to “interpose” his “fancy,” that is his own image, between the reader of the poem and the painting, using the “conceit” of the painter in the *paragone* tradition to aid the reception of painting and poem into the “mind’s eye,” or perception. Literally “interpose” means to “place between,” *inter-* meaning “between” and *pos* meaning “to place” or “stand.”

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<sup>269</sup> *Discoveries*, ll. 1508-1512.

In the next stanza Jonson the poet-artist says: “Draw first a cloud, all save her neck, / And out of that make day to break; / Till, like her face it do appear, / And men may think all light rose there.” Jonson’s “interposition” in this stanza is not so much a “redrawing” of van Dyck’s portrait as much as it is a clever instance of *ecphrasis*. Van Dyck’s portrait does depict Lady Digby as heavenly in the sense that her head and neck are literally in the clouds, and as noted, her face and upper body do appear to be the source of radiance in the picture—gleaming the whitest and brightest of any other part of the portrait. It suggests one think that “all light rose there” as though day is breaking (notably, her face and neck are positioned on the horizon in the painting—exactly where the sun would be rising) simply due to the fact that Lady Digby thus gives light to the scene. On the other hand, it is possible to go the other direction and use van Dyck’s portrait to inform Jonson’s poem: Although Digby is the source of light in this scene, from the perspective of the painting it appears to be that she *reflects* God’s light, at least as much as it could be the case that all of the light in the scene originates from her face.

### ***Beauty, Cloud, Harmony, Splendor in Jonson’s Masque***

Beauty had a rich emblematic heritage before Jonson or van Dyck set to task on this project. In Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia* (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1603) the emblem of *Bellezza* (Beauty) is one that complements both Jonson’s poem and van Dyck’s painting. There are no words to accompany the image, but it depicts a woman “who has her head hidden in the clouds, and the rest of her body barely visible for the splendor that surrounds her, and she extends one hand out

of the splendor.”<sup>270</sup> I should also note that the woman is nude. Gordon says that the image ultimately came from Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499):

Beauty is represented with her head hidden in the clouds because there is nothing more difficult to talk about with mortal tongue, and which can less be known by the human intellect, than beauty, which alone of all created things is nothing else, metaphysically speaking, than a splendour deriving from the light of the face of God.<sup>271</sup>

Jonson’s statement about the painter’s attention to Venetia’s clothes then seems to resound rather loudly when considering Ripa’s emblem of beauty as nude, as does too van Dyck’s choice to depict Venetia’s head in the clouds.

In addition to emblematic tradition there would have been a number of other relevant metaphysical associations of beauty that Ficino and other mythographers knew such as such as Natale Conti (1520-1582) and Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) whom Jonson draws upon. In the *Phaedrus*, for example, Plato said that beauty, the image, and wisdom are related:

But Beauty, as I said before, shone in brilliance among those visions; and since we came to earth we have found it shining most clearly through the clearest of our senses; for sight is the sharpest of the physical senses, though wisdom is not seen by it, for wisdom would arouse terrible love, if such a clear image of it were granted as would come through sight, and the same is true of the other lovely

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<sup>270</sup> Stephen Orgel Ed., *The Renaissance Imagination: Essays and Lectures by D. J. Gordon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 146. Also see footnote 150 for *The Masque of Beauty* in *CWBJ*, “SPLENDOR The Latin means both “brightness” and “magnificence.” The myth of Jonson’s masque, as D. J. Gordon notes, reflects the neoplatonic philosophy of love and beauty which was elaborated in Ficino’s *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love* (usually referred to as *De amore*)...”

<sup>271</sup> Ficino, Or. 5, Cap. 4, p. 1336. Qtd. in Orgel ed., *The Renaissance Imagination*, p. 146.



realities; but beauty alone has this privilege, and therefore it is most clearly seen and loveliest.<sup>272</sup>

Jonson's masque, *The Masque of Beauty* (1608) picks up on this imagery of light, for this masque of beauty was a sequel to the earlier *Masque of Blackness*, and it is the radiance or splendor of the light of beauty that sends the night (blackness) away:

Yield, night, then, to the light  
As blackness hath to beauty;  
Which is but the same duty.  
It was for beauty that the world was made,  
And where she reigns Love's lights admit no shade.<sup>273</sup>

Jonson's masque of beauty presents nine figures turning in motion who are supposed to image particular aspects of beauty. In addition to Splendor (brightness)<sup>274</sup> there are: Serenitas (brightness of air), Germinatio (budding), Laetitia (joy), Venustas (loveliness, gracefulness), Dignitas (majesty), Perfectio (perfection), and Harmonia (harmony). Harmonia is the ninth figure who is placed above the other eight figures, who might represent the eight revolving spheres of the heavens. Harmonia's placement above all the other figures of beauty "suggests that harmony is the divine principle governing the movement of the rest."<sup>275</sup> The engine for the masque was a throne that was divided into eight parts, each figure turning in its part. Harmonia's placement above the other figures suggests that beauty is relative to harmony, order, perhaps similar to the way in which *memoria* is involved in the actions of all the muses.

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<sup>272</sup> Trans. Harold N. Fowler, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 250c-e.

<sup>273</sup> Ll. 223-227.

<sup>274</sup> "Splendor" was another common emblem.

<sup>275</sup> CWBJ, *The Masque of Beauty*, footnote 181.

## *Figure, Form, Beauty*

The various “figures” that Jonson continually uses in all of his masques to image intellectual ideas have a relationship to both the traditional understanding of “beauty” and to rhetoric. The “figure” in rhetoric was a scheme—the Latin *figūra* translated the Greek *skhema*, which meant “lines forming a shape.” By Jonson’s time “figure” meant the “human body represented by art” or simply the “human form.” “Figures” in rhetoric could refer to either the metaphor and symbol, speaking *through* an image, or to the artful means of *elecutio* in composition such as the schemes of *antithesis* or *polyptoton*. Interestingly, in Latin *forma* meant beauty, as well as “form, outward appearance.”<sup>276</sup>

The depiction of beauty in Jonson’s *The Masque of Beauty*, with all of the associations of splendor, light, harmony, perfection, etc. has much in common with Jonson’s poem “The Picture of Her Body” and van Dyck’s painting of Venetia Digby. In addition, these concepts of beauty share much in common with Saint Thomas Aquinas’ aesthetics and with the work of early neo-platonic theologians such as Denys the Aeropagite, whose work focuses on “light.” The first major idea traditionally associated with beauty is that beauty “is essentially an object of the intelligence,” or as Aquinas says *pulchrum est id quod visum placet*.<sup>277</sup> Beauty strikes one instantly because it is pleasing, one knows what they are looking at and does not need to ask: Is it beautiful? It is clearly intelligible. Deeply influenced by Aquinas, Jacques Maritain stated in *Art and Scholasticism* that the “delight” is “not just any delight, but delight in knowing; not the delight peculiar to the act of knowing, but a delight which superabounds and overflows from this

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<sup>276</sup> Both etymologies are from the entries for “form” and “figure” on Harper’s *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

<sup>277</sup> John G. Trapani Jr., *Poetry, Beauty, & Contemplation: The Complete Aesthetics of Jacques Maritain* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), p. 122.

act because of the object known.” Integral to this idea of beauty is the understanding of the relationship between the intellect and the senses.

### ***Integritas, Claritas, Consonantia, Whole***

There are three particular qualities that Aquinas identified that beautiful things possess, and they are related to the intellect: *integritas*, *consonantia*, and *claritas*. *Integritas* “refers to completeness and perfection—nothing essential is lacking, nothing extraneous is present.”<sup>278</sup> This crucial component of beauty in the traditional understanding can be observed in Horace’s advice to poets in *Ars poetica*, advice that he brings about by way of analogy to sculpting:

So shunning faults to greater fault doth lead,  
When in a wrong and artless way we tread.  
The worst of statuaries, hereabout  
Th’ Aemilian school, in brass can fashion out  
The nails, and every curled hair disclose;  
But in the main work hapless, since he knows  
Not to design the whole.”<sup>279</sup>

This idea of “design[ing] the whole” was an important one for Jonson. His thoughts on thinking about the “whole” work when composing can be found in his commonplace book:

The fable is called the imitation of one entire and perfect action, whose parts are so joined and knit together as nothing in the structure can be changed or taken away without impairing or troubling the whole, of which there is a proportionable magnitude in the members....Now that it should be one and entire. One is considerable two ways: either, as it is only separate, and by itself, or as being

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<sup>278</sup> P. 25. Randy L. Stice, “Living Stone: The Beauty of the Liturgical Altar,” *The Institute for Sacred Architecture* Vol. 21 (2012): 25-27.

<sup>279</sup> Ll. 43-49.

composed of many parts, it begins to be one as those parts grow or are wrought together.<sup>280</sup>

Jonson associates with wholeness and completeness, *integritas*, another idea of “proportionable magnitude in members” which brings out another aspect of beauty: *consonantia*. *Consonantia* “is the quality of proportionality in relation to an end, ‘the goal that God had in mind for it.’”<sup>281</sup> These ideas too resonate with the Latin *forma* which meant beauty. In the quote above from his commonplace book as well as in the figures he uses to image beauty in his masque, Jonson echoes these ideas of proportion and unity of purpose. The third quality of beauty is *claritas*, and this quality is one that corresponds to “splendor” in the masque and to the light which both van Dyck and Jonson portray to emanate from Venetia Digby’s face. *Claritas* “is the power of an object to reveal its ontological reality... ‘the fundamental communicability of form, which is made actual in relation to someone’s looking at or seeing of the object. The rationality that belongs to every form is the ‘light’ which manifests itself to aesthetic seeing.’”<sup>282</sup>

These three qualities of beauty, especially *claritas*, literally “light,” can be seen as Jonson’s poem “The Picture of Her Body” progresses:

Then let the beams of that disperse  
The cloud, and show the universe;  
But at such distance as the eye  
May rather yet adore than spy.

The heaven designed, draw next a spring,  
With all that youth or it can bring:  
Four rivers branching forth like seas,  
And Paradise confining these.

Last, draw the circles of this globe,

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<sup>280</sup> Ll. 1903-1906 and 1952-1960.

<sup>281</sup> Stice, p. 25. He is quoting from Umberto Eco’s *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* (Harvard University Press, 1988) and the italics are Eco’s original.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

And let there be a starry robe  
Of constellations 'bout her hurled;  
And thou has painted beauty's world.<sup>283</sup>

As the poem continues, the poet commands “Then let the beams of that disperse / The cloud, and show the universe.” Earlier in the poem Jonson had asked the painter to “Draw first a cloud,” which he then directs the painter to paint “the beams of that [her face to] disperse the cloud.” Jonson’s poem mirrors the effect of movement of the dispersion of clouds that van Dyck achieves in his portrait. It is notable too that the cloud often symbolizes the presence of God in the Bible.<sup>284</sup> The cloud is a strong image in both the poem and the painting, and clouds can symbolize confusion, disorientation, impenetrability, and darkness. The “beams” of Lady Digby’s “face and neck,” which could be both the light of wisdom or beauty (*claritas*), is what the poet says disperses the cloud which in the painting can then be seen, through Jonson’s interposition, to have been broken up and receded to now occupy the space behind her.

A. W. Johnson’s insights are helpful here. He argued that Jonson’s poems and masques were constructed according to architectural principles, that the poems are built like physical structures. Thus the central lines are of importance and “act as focal points in terms of ‘invention’ and ‘disposition.’”<sup>285</sup> In “The Picture of Her Body” lines 16 and 17 are the central lines of the poem (and of the picture too): “And men may think all light rose there. / Then let the

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<sup>283</sup> Ll. 17-28.

<sup>284</sup> See Exodus 33: 9-11, “And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” Clouds often symbolize the presence of God in the Bible. See Exodus 34:5, “And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there...” and 13:21, “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way...” In the New Testament, see Mathew 17:5, “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”

<sup>285</sup> P. 79.

beams of that disperse.” In the painting, it is Venetia Digby that acts both as literal center of the dramatic scene van Dyck depicts as well as the allegorical center because she provides (either through reflection or her own divinized radiance) the source of *light* for the scene. Her central position in the painting thus works to draw together of all the elements in the painting, or as Jonson says in the poem, the “universe,” all turning as one.

### “The Mind”

Van Dyck and Ben Jonson’s portrayal of Venetia Digby share many parallels, and if viewed together in a kind of emblematic fashion, can produce a number of insights into each composition. The reader of the poem is led to reflect upon the painting and the viewer of the painting sees more by reflecting upon the poem. The concept of *ut pictura poesis* in Jonson’s sequence to Venetia Digby allows the poet to metadramatize the reality of the intersection of the two arts. The dialog between the poet and painter in “*The Picture of the Body*” continues on in the next poem “The Mind.” Interestingly it is here in “The Mind” that Jonson tells the painter that he has no more need of him. Jonson seems here to be continuing the dialog in the sense of “prudence” for that is what van Dyck was commissioned to paint by Venetia’s husband, Sir Kenelm Digby. “Prudence,” wisdom, is an intellectual act although it does not exclude the use of the external senses:

Painter, your’re come, but may be gone;  
Now I have better thought thereon,  
This work I can perform alone;  
And give you reasons more than one.

Not that your art I do refuse;  
But here I may no colours use.  
Beside, your hand will never hit

To draw a thing that cannot sit.

You could make shift to paint an eye,  
An eagle towering in the sky,  
The sun, a sea, or soundless pit,  
But these are like a mind, not it.

No, to express a mind to sense  
Would ask a heaven's intelligence;  
Since nothing can report that flame  
But what's of kin to whence it came. (ll. 1-16)

The poet says that he does not need the painter's help in representing the mind, "This work I can perform alone," because the "mind" cannot be pictured like physical objects can be pictured, cannot be *imitated* through corporeal means, but can only be imitated through what is "like" a mind—language, poetry! Painting and picture imitate corporeal nature, but the mind is the immaterial part of the human being, the "soul," versus the material "body" of Venetia Digby that has just been "pictured" in the previous poem. Where Jonson worked together with the painter in the previous poem, "interposing" his view between the reader's and viewer's, Jonson says at the outset of "The Mind" that this will not be the case here.

Yet it is important to notice that Jonson here does not abandon the painter's craft entirely. He uses picture and imagery in the poem by alluding to a number of popular emblems of the mind, such as the picture of "an eye" from Ripa's *Iconologia*. The medieval idea of the "mind's eye" is related to the *image* through the *imagination*. "The eagle towering in the sky" was another emblem that was used to picture "noble thought." "The sun" also represents *light* and an association with the god of poetry and music, Apollo, and is a powerful image associated with wisdom, truth, and *contemplation*. Here in a poem where Jonson has said he has no need of the painter he has already invoked a number of images common to both arts, but yet only to say that these "are like a mind, not it." This process of calling images to mind is itself an *imitation* of

how the mind thinks through the *image*. Jonson's goal in the poem seems to be that he wants to *imitate* a mind, to show it: "I call you muse, now make it true: / Henceforth may every line be you; / That all may say that see the frame, / This is no picture, but the same."<sup>286</sup> The choice of diction of "line" in line 22 "Henceforth may every line be you" suggests that Jonson is, despite his rejection of the painter's craft, still appealing to the language of painting. Jonson wants to draw with lines an *imitation* of the mind that is not a "picture," yet will still be recognizable to "all that see the frame." The "frame" must be the poem. It is the *form*, the *figure*, the *beauty*, of the mind. The poem itself is a picture of a mind since throughout the poem Jonson dramatizes the act of thinking, "Sweet mind, then speak yourself, and say / As you go on, by what way / Our sense you do with knowledge fill / And yet remain our wonder still."<sup>287</sup>

An important word to notice in this poem is the word "sense," because the way Jonson uses the word is ambivalent, much like the way in which he uses painting in the poem in order to dismiss it. In line 13, Jonson uses "sense" to mean the physical, external senses, "No, to express a mind to sense / Would ask a heaven's intelligence; / Since nothing can report that flame / But what's of kin to whence it came."<sup>288</sup> Whereas in line 40 Jonson uses "sense" in a more equivocal way, "The voice so sweet, the words so fair, / As some soft chime had stroked the air; / And though the sound were parted thence, / Still left an echo in the sense."<sup>289</sup> Here "sense" could mean the physical sense of hearing, but more likely is referring to the internal sense of the memory, the hearing of the sound through *recollection* of it. This tension between the physical and the corporeal in the way that Jonson uses the word "sense" is the same tension that the poet

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<sup>286</sup> Ll. 21-24.

<sup>287</sup> Ll. 17-20.

<sup>288</sup> Ll. 13-16.

<sup>289</sup> Ll. 37-40.



sets up between himself and the painter, which speaks to the relationship between the picture and immaterial reality.

## CHAPTER 6: LABOR IN JONSON'S RECEPTION

### *Labor, Test, Care, Secure*

Ben Jonson's conception of writing as a laborious process became almost proverbial among his contemporaries. Lord Falkland, for example, said of Jonson that:

His *Learning* such, no *Author* old or new,  
Escapt his reading that deserv'd his view,  
And such his *Judgement*, so exact his *Test*,  
Of what was best in *Bookes*, as what *books* best,  
That had he joyn'd those notes his Labours tooke,  
From each most prais'd and praise-deserving *Booke*,  
And could the world of that choise *Treasure* boast,  
It need not care though all the rest were lost:  
And such his Wit, He writ past what he quotes,  
And his *Productions* farre exceed his *Notes*.<sup>290</sup>

This witness by Falkland (Lucius Cary) of Jonson's prodigious learning appeared in *Jonsonus Virbius* (1638) as one of a number of poems written by Jonson's friends and contemporaries meant to commemorate the poet's literary achievements and life. Lord Falkland was a friend of Jonson's, and like many of the other poems written by his friends and "Sons" as elegies or in praise of his works during his lifetime, he mentions the "Labours" that Jonson exerted in the use of his reading, "judgement," and what Falkland calls "*Test*." Jonson's reading to "try" (essay) or "test" works as if by fire (to "prove" them) was an idea which he discussed or alluded to often and can be found related to "judgement" nearly everywhere in his work.<sup>291</sup> Lord Falkland's pairing of these two terms together in a single line verifies a close familiarity with Jonson's

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<sup>290</sup> Quoted in *Ben Jonson* Vol. 2, edited by C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), pp. 439-440.

<sup>291</sup> See *U.V.* 20, ll. 1-4, "It fits not only him that makes a book / To see his work be good, but that he look / Who are his test, and what their judgment is, / Lest a false praise do make their dotage his." See also *Und.* 14, ll. 25-28, "And vex it many days / Before men get a verse, much less a praise; / So that my reader is assured I now / Mean what I speak, and still will keep that vow." "Vex" here means "test" or "try."

verse. “Proving” or “testing” in reading is the corresponding practice to the “labour” Jonson understood to be the foundational principle in poetic composition as he conceived it.<sup>292</sup>

Referring to this idea in his poetry as well as practicing it, Jonson primarily followed Horace in this regard and the advice he presents for aspiring poets in *The Art of Poetry*.<sup>293</sup> For example, in lines 53-56 of Jonson’s translation of Horace’s *The Art of Poetry*, he introduces the idea of “proving” what one’s own (metaphorical) shoulders can bear in terms of chosen (*lecta*) matter and chosen theme of a composition. In instances such as this passage, Jonson can be seen to push the literal meaning of Horace’s lines a bit further than their surface meaning. To be sure, Jonson is accurate in his understanding that Horace is speaking about poetic “labour” in this passage, and his translation is excellent, so it is especially curious that he introduces the idea of “proving” in this particular passage in which Horace does not exactly include this idea (although it is certainly intimated).<sup>294</sup> Jonson’s interpretive translations seem to have been a natural effect from a close familiarity with Horace’s poetry on the whole, as well as his own understanding (and use of) Horace’s poetic practice. “Labour” (and these associated concepts in reading and composition) was such a central word for Jonson that on the title page of his famous 1616 folio, he included a Latin epigraph in the space beneath the quite famous title of the folio, “*The Works of Benjamin Jonson*” in which “*laboro*” (meaning “I labor”) is given its own line. The whole epigraph reads:

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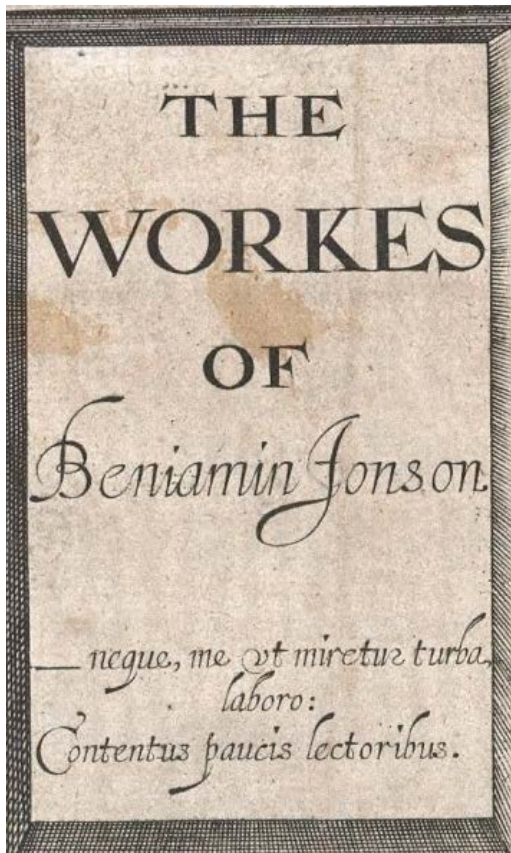
<sup>292</sup> Laurie Ellinghausen in *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567-1667* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), p. 91 finds that Jonson’s conception of his own “poetic labor” can be understood in his paradoxical representations of Vulcan the mythological blacksmith, as well as Jonson’s own paradox “struggle[ing] to both detach from [base labor such as bricklaying] and embrace labor [as]...an author who writes for pay.”

<sup>293</sup> See Ellinghausen, p. 13 and pp. 64-65. I will be discussing this more in depth in chapter seven on Horace below, and though I do not disagree with Ellinghausen’s assessment of Horace’s impact on Jonson’s ideas on composition, my emphasis is slightly different (as will be seen).

<sup>294</sup> See below, pp. 183ff.

*neque, me ut miretur turba,  
laboro:  
Contentus paucis lectoribus.*

(I do not labor to be admired by the crowd: I labor content with a few readers.)<sup>295</sup> “*Laboro*,” due to Jonson’s placing of it in this central position, should probably be construed with both the clause above it and the clause below it.



**Figure 2:** Excerpt from the frontispiece of Ben Jonson’s 1616 Folio.

Due to the abundant presence of the concept of “labor” in his work, the epithet of “laborious” had become attached to Jonson early in his literary career. The poet’s attention to

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<sup>295</sup> My translation.

detail in composition had been remarked upon by the anonymous writer of a pamphlet entitled *Sir Thomas Smithes Voiage and Entertainment in Rushia* (1605):

...the elaborate English *Horace* [Ben Jonson] that gives number, waight, and measure to every word, to teach the reader by his industries, even our Lawreat worthy *Benjamin*, whose Muze approves him with (our mother) the *Ebrew* signification to bee, *The elder Sonne*, and happily to have been the Childe of *Sorrow*: It were worthy so excellent rare Witt: for myself I am neither *Apollo* nor *Appelles*, no nor any heire to the *Muses*: yet happily a younger brother, though I have as little bequeathed me, as many elder Brothers, and right borne Heires gaine by them: but *Hic labor, Hoc opus est.*<sup>296</sup>

The association of Jonson as a “laborious” poet persisted in his own time. He was known primarily as a poet who carefully composed his lines, laboring to give, as the anonymous writer above says, “number, waight, and measure to each word.” The nature of Jonson’s poetry therefore presents some difficulty for readers not accustomed to reading with “labor.”<sup>297</sup> A work which demanded “labor” in order to be properly understood by a reader was, especially for Jonson, *the* mark of poetry that endured to live on beyond the age in which it was produced.<sup>298</sup> Jonson’s self-publication of his 1616 folio radically asserted that his “*Works*” would continue to be read in times beyond his own age. The first poem that Jonson placed in his large book is only two lines long and speaks to readers of his own or any time: “Pray thee take care, that tak’st my book in hand, / To read it well; that is, to understand,” meaning, “please exert an effort (‘care,’

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<sup>296</sup> “‘This is the toil, this the task’: Virgil, Aeneid, 6.129,” in D. H. Craig, *The Critical Heritage Series: Ben Jonson* (Florence, US: Routledge, 2012), p. 81.

<sup>297</sup> See below, pp. 177ff., for a discussion of what “laborious” reading entailed for Jonson.

<sup>298</sup> See *Discoveries* 1751, “Indeed, things wrote with labour deserve to be so read, and will last their age.” “Last their age” is footnoted (fn. 1751) in the *CWBJ* as “last beyond their.”

thus read ‘carefully’ or ‘laboriously’) for the sense or meaning.”<sup>299</sup> It is notable that Jonson thought of “labor” in a positive sense, almost an elemental sense, for the exercise and cultivation of virtue, as well as the cultivation and maintenance of the powers of the mind. In one of Jonson’s most famous poems, he laments his own inactivity or his “carelessness” as responsible for a “death” of his “knowledge” and a destruction of his “wits and arts.” Jonson also carefully develops a semantic relationship between the words “security” and “careless,” words that share a common ancestor in the Latin:

Where dost thou careless lie,  
 Buried in ease and sloth?  
 Knowledge that sleeps doth die;  
 And this security,  
     It is the common moth 5  
 That eats on wits and arts, and oft destroys them both.<sup>300</sup>

Jonson uses the word “security” here with the full force of the Latin, which comes from the prefix *se* and the root *cura*, meaning together, “apart from/of care,” or even “careless.” In this insightful poem in which Jonson addresses his own creative powers, “security...is the common moth / That eats on wits and arts” because when Jonson is not *using* the “wits and arts” and they fall into disuse, the “wits and arts” deteriorate. Jonson develops the relationship between “care” and “labor” further in *Discoveries* where he states that labor to the mind is every bit as essential as the absolutely necessary labours that “serve the body...[such as]...tillage, spinning, weaving, building, etc., without which we could scarce sustain life a day...The mind of man is still fed

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<sup>299</sup> Jonson’s use of the words “labor” and “care” seem to be interchangeable at times, and in the instance of Horace’s *Art of Poetry*, Jonson translates (ll. 289-290) “*si non offenderet unum / quemque poetarum limae labor et mora*,” as (ll. 413-414) “if the stay and care t’have mended / Had not our every poet like offended.” “Stay” almost certainly is meant to translate “*mora*” and “care” Jonson’s English equivalent for “*labor*” in this context.

<sup>300</sup> *The Underwood* 23, “*An Ode. To Himself*,” ll. 1-6.

with labour: *opera pascitur*.”<sup>301</sup> Robert C. Evans’ book *Habits of Mind: Evidence and Effects of Ben Jonson’s Reading* (1995) provides a wealth of supplementary material on this topic that supports the idea that for Jonson “reading was not a distraction, but central to his inspiration and artistic development.”<sup>302</sup> Also, as I hope to show below, Jonson’s theory of composition was heavily based on “study” and “exercise,” two labor intensive activities.<sup>303</sup>

It appears that all of Jonson’s friends and contemporaries marveled about his literary toil, his “labor.” John Donne, for example, in his Latin poem *Amicissimo & meritissimo* (Greatest friend & most deserving, 1605) says of Jonson “*Priscis, ingenium facit, laborque / Te parem; hos superes, ut & futuros, / Ex nostra vitiositate sumas, / Qua priscos superamus, & futuros*”<sup>304</sup> (Genius and toil put you on a level with the ancients; excel them, so that you may raise a new race from our wickedness, in which we surpass both past and future ages).<sup>305</sup> This praise of Jonson by Donne is great indeed--remarkable because Donne’s praise of Jonson is based on his “labor.” Jonson’s labor (according to his literary acquaintance and friend Donne) is not a *vain* effort, that is, reflected back primarily at himself as some critics have argued.<sup>306</sup> Donne (nor any

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<sup>301</sup> “It is fed with work.” Ll. 114-118. This passage comes from Juan Luis Vives’ *De causis corruptibus artium*.

<sup>302</sup> Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses Inc., 1995. Quote is from front cover of dust jacket. Also see Chapter 1, pp. 21-56, esp. pp. 23-31.

<sup>303</sup> My rhetorical analysis is deeply indebted to an essay by D. L. Clark entitled “The Requirements of a Poet: A Note on the Sources of Ben Jonson’s “Timber,” Paragraph 130,” in *Modern Philology*, Vol. 16, No. 8 (December 1918): 413-429. The five parts of Jonson’s theory of composition are: *Ingenium, exercitatio, imitatio, lectio, and ars*. See Clark, pg. 414.

<sup>304</sup> Herford and Simpson, Vol. 11, ll. 13-16. This poem was first published in the 1606 quarto of *Volpone*.

<sup>305</sup> The translation is from Brian Parker (Ed.), *The Revels Plays: Volpone, Or The Fox* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1983), p. 72. I address this poem and translation in more detail below, p. 149ff.

<sup>306</sup> For my discussion of this sort of criticism of Jonson’s labor see the section “Labor and the Critics” in chapter 8 below, pp. 163ff. Also see Joseph Loewenstein’s article “The Script in the Marketplace” in *Representations* 12 (Autumn, 1985): 101-114. Loewenstein argues that

of Jonson's contemporaries for that matter) does not understand Jonson's labor as an economic activity as critics who follow Loewenstein do,<sup>307</sup> but rather understand poetic labor as an exertion directed towards the reader, which then demands a corresponding exertion from the reader, not only to understand and read the text, but also to put into practice the morality and virtue which Jonson seeks his readers to contemplate.<sup>308</sup>

A similar sentiment to John Donne's is expressed by another of Jonson's contemporaries, Francis Beaumont, when he wrote about *Epicoene* in a poem entitled "Upon the Silent Woman:" "Where he [Jonson] that strongly writes, although he meane / To scourge but vices in a labour'd scene."<sup>309</sup> In this poem Beaumont compares Jonson's satire to the satire of "bad writers" who, "Prouide the most malicious thoughts you can, / And bend them all against some priuate man, / To bring him, not his vices, on the stage." That is to say that bad writers do not "work" or "strive to" dramatize the vice itself on the stage, but due to "enuie" put the faults of an actual person upon the stage.<sup>310</sup> Jonson's ideas on satire corroborate Beaumont's observations above, "Wilst I name no persons, but deride follies; why should any man confesse, or betray himself?...The Person offended hath no reason to bee offended with the writer, but with him self."<sup>311</sup> John Fletcher, who collaborated with Francis Beaumont on a number of plays, said of Jonson in 1611 that, "Thy labours shall outlive thee; and, like gold / Stamp for continuance,

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Jonson's "bibliographic ego" is tied to Jonson's concept of labor in a (proto) capitalistic sense, and that Jonson seeks to "own" his "literary work."

<sup>307</sup> See Bruce Thomas Boehrer, "The Poet of Labor: Authorship and Property in the Work of Ben Jonson," in *Philological Quarterly* (Summer 1993): 289-311.

<sup>308</sup> See pg. 2 in *Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson*. This in a nutshell is one of Richard Peterson's main arguments for Jonson's deployment of *imitatio* as a "personal doctrine of great force." The poet seeks his readers to imitate the virtues presented in the poetry.

<sup>309</sup> Herford and Simpson, Vol. 11, ll. 9-10.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 1-5.

<sup>311</sup> Quoted in Herford and Simpson, Vol. 2. p. 442 (*Discoveries* ll. 1634-5 & ll.1656-7).



shall be current, where / There is a Sunne, a People, or a Yeare.”<sup>312</sup> Here Jonson’s *Works* to be published in five years’ time are curiously forecasted, for the poet’s poems are called his “labours.” Again, it is notable that another of Jonson’s contemporary acquaintances presents a positive association of Jonson and his labor, for later critics who did not know Jonson would not interpret these allusions to the poet’s labor in the same light.

### **Jonson versus Digges versus Shakespeare**

A more critical example of Jonson’s laboriousness can be found in a curious poem written by Leonard Digges, likely composed for Shakespeare’s second folio in 1632,<sup>313</sup> entitled “Upon Master William Shakespeare, the *Deceased Authour, and his Poems*.” In this poem Digges draws a comparison between Jonson and Shakespeare based on the idea of an ideal role for “nature” and “art” to play in literary composition. The opening line of Digges’ poem is a direct allusion to Jonson’s own poem of praise of Shakespeare which appeared as part of the prologue to Shakespeare’s first folio. Jonson’s well-known lines in praise of Shakespeare state that a “good poet” is one who has both nature (natural talent) as well as well as art, skill; he has to some degree been “made:”

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<sup>312</sup> “*To his worthy friend Mr. Ben. Ionson,*” Herford and Simpson, Vol. 11, ll. 18-20.

<sup>313</sup> See Craig, p. 155 for a brief discussion of criticism of Leonard Digges’ poem. Critics tend to believe that the poem was composed for Shakespeare’s second folio (1632), and also that the poem was not printed as a prefatory verse to this second folio due to Digges’ disparaging view of Jonson (whose own poem of praise to Shakespeare was included in second folio as it was in the first folio). Digges did have a another eulogy addressed to Shakespeare entitled “*To the Memorie of the Deceased Authour Maister W. Shakespeare,*” which was printed in the first folio and was much different (does not even mention Jonson) from this later poem printed in the 1640 folio of Shakespeare’s *Poems* (which was a collection of the sonnets--contains no dramatic verse). This 1640 edition of Shakespeare’s *Poems* was published by John Benson (d. 1667) and is seen as corrupt by scholars due to Benson’s interpolations (adding titles to the sonnets instead of numbering them, rearranging the poems, and even changing the text of poems.).

...a good poet's made, as well as born;  
 And such wert thou. Look how thy father's face 65  
 Lives in his issue: even so, the race  
 Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines  
 In his well-turned and true-filed lines:  
 In each of which he seems to shake a lance,  
 As brandished at the eyes of ignorance.<sup>314</sup> 70

Digges' response to Jonson is direct and confrontational, and may be one of the first instances of the commonplace contrast critics have often made between Jonson's "art" and Shakespeare's "nature," his natural talent and genius. Digges quarrels with Jonson's judgment of Shakespeare by opening his own poem saying that, "Poets are borne not made, when I would prove / this truth, the glad rememberance I must love / Of never dying *Shakespeare*, who alone, / Is argument enough to make that one."<sup>315</sup> Throughout this poem (which is comparable in length to Jonson's) the author continues to emphasize that Shakespeare's poetry was absolutely free of "art," that is, artificial rhetorical techniques of composition, and also that Shakespeare's poetry was the exclusive product of "nature:"

Art without Art unparleld as yet. 10  
 Next Nature onely helpt him, for to looke thorow  
 This whole Booke, thou shall find he doth not borrow,  
 One phrase from Greekes, nor Latines imitate,  
 Nor once from vulgar Languages Translate,  
 Nor Plagiari-like from others gleane, 15  
 Nor begges he from each witty friend a Scene  
 To peece his Acts with, all that he doth write,  
 Is pure his owne, plot, language exquisite...<sup>316</sup>

The implication that Shakespeare did not "borrow" from the ancients is (of course) absurd, he did, but Digges' main point seems to seek to highlight the (curious) way in which Shakespeare's

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<sup>314</sup> U.V. 26, "To the Memory of My Beloved, The Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He Hath Left Us, 64-70.

<sup>315</sup> Herford and Simpson, Vol. 11, ll. 1-4.

<sup>316</sup> Herford and Simpson's text has some omissions. This and the following quotations from the poem are from a facsimile of 1640 folio from the British Library: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/shakespeares-collected-poems-1640> (ll. 10-18).

poetry does not draw attention to borrowings, and how this stands in contrast to Jonson’s much higher profile borrowings, imitations, and translations. Digges’ major sense of the difference between Shakespeare and Jonson is the feeling of the poetry, the sound of the poetry: Jonson’s is labored and dense while Shakespeare’s seems “natural.” Continuing on through the poem, Digges places Jonson in a head to head comparison with Shakespeare:

I doe not wonder when you [Jonson] offer at  
 Blacke-Friers, that you suffer: tis the fate  
 Of richer veines, prime judgements that have far’d  
 The worse, with this deceased man compar’d. 40  
 So have I seene, when Cesar would appeare,  
 And on the Stage at halfe-sword parley were,  
*Brutus* and *Cassius*: oh how the Audience,  
 Were ravish’d, with what wonder they went thence,  
 When some new day they would not brooke a line, 45  
 Of tedious (though well labored) *Catilines*;  
*Sejanus* too was irksome, they priz’d more  
 Honest *Iago*, or the jealous Moore.<sup>317</sup>

Here “well labored” appears to be a jab at Jonson’s reflections on poetry as a craft that requires “labor” or simply “work.” Jonson’s praise of Shakespeare’s poetry drew attention to precisely this, that “Shakespeare’s [the family name] mind and manners” could be seen in his “well-turned and true-filed lines.” In fact, Jonson’s poem of praise to Shakespeare itself exhibits a good example of what Jonson meant as “laborious poetry,” as well as the positive sense of “labour” that his contemporaries identified, since in the poem Jonson is praising Shakespeare by using turns of phrase that *he had turned and filed out* of his close reading and translating of Horace, lines he then in turn used to elevate his contemporary. For example, Jonson’s lines such as “well-turned and true-filed lines” and “mind and manners” echoes his own translation and close

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<sup>317</sup> Ll. 37-48.

reading of Horace's *Ars poetica*.<sup>318</sup> As Digges' poem makes plain, Jonson was a laborious poet, and consciously so.

The association of Jonson with "labor" persisted through the eighteenth century and into the twentieth. Richard Steele, who wrote extensively for and founded the journal *The Tatler*, wrote a review of a staging of *Volpone* on May 27, 1709. He compares the dramatists of his own age to those of Jonson's, saying plainly that Jonson's use of dialect to convey social class and character (rather than dress), "...makes a Man for a Month after over-run with Criticism...[to find out] who was bred after such a Manner, to speak so like a man conversant among a different People? These Questions rob us of all our Pleasure."<sup>319</sup> Steele then goes on to refer to Jonson's plays as "Laborious *Ben's Works*" and ends the piece by tacitly suggesting that though Jonson's influence on early 18<sup>th</sup> century drama was palpable, Jonson clearly stands apart, substantive, and established: "Laborious *Ben's Works* will bear this Sort of Inquisition, but if the present writers were thus examin'd, and the Offences against this Rule cut out, few Plays would be long enough for the whole Evening's Entertainment."<sup>320</sup> Samuel Johnson also refers to Jonson's "laboriousness" in a poem that like Digges' poem discussed above takes for its subject both Shakespeare and Jonson. Samuel Johnson found Ben to have a "laborious Art," for after Shakespeare:

Then Jonson came, instructed from the school,

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<sup>318</sup> For a parallel to the expression "mind and manners" in Jonson's translation of Horace, see ll. 453-455: "And I still bid the learnèd maker look / On life and manners, and make those his book, / Thence draw forth true expressions." A parallel for "true filed" can be found in Horace 291: "*Quemque poetarum limae labor et mora.*" Here Jonson chooses not to translate the word "*limae*" which means "file" possibly because the implicit meaning of "filing" of lines is still present some lines down in l. 418: "Not ten times o'er corrected to the nail," implying a fine smoothness (the result of filing). It is, however, notable that it is explicitly present in the Latin. See pp. 175ff. below.

<sup>319</sup> *The Tatler*, no. 21, p. 27. Qtd. in Craig, pp. 359-60.

<sup>320</sup> *The Tatler*, no. 21, p. 28. Qtd. in Craig, p. 360

To please in method, and invent by rule;  
His studious patience, and laborious art,  
By regular approach assay'd the heart;  
Cold approbation gave the lingering bays;  
For those who durst not censure, scarce could praise.<sup>321</sup>

“Laborious Art” according to Dr. Johnson would seem to refer to “studious Patience,” “rules” and “instruction” as well as “method,” and through these techniques seeking to try the reader or viewer’s “heart.” Samuel Johnson also suggests that there is a relationship between “praise” and “censure,” which speaks to Jonson’s double role as literary critic and literary artist.<sup>322</sup> It is notable too that Johnson equates Shakespeare with a “flame” and Jonson with “art,” bespeaking his assessment of Jonson’s poetry as contrived and “worked at” in relation to Shakespeare’s seemingly more natural poetry.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Eliot’s assessment of Jonson’s work also curiously draws attention to Jonson’s laboriousness. No doubt Eliot was familiar with the tradition of Jonson’s reception and association with “laboriousness” sketched here:

The immediate appeal of Jonson is to the mind; his emotional tone is not in the single verse, but in the design of the whole. But not many people are capable of discovering for themselves the beauty which is only found after labour; and Jonson’s industrious readers have been those whose interest was historical and curious, and those who have thought that in discovering the historical and curious interest they had discovered the artistic value as well. When we say that Jonson requires study, we do not mean study of his classical scholarship or of seventeenth-century manners. We mean intelligent saturation in his work as a

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<sup>321</sup> “Prologue Spoken by Mr. Garrick at the Opening of the Theatre-Royal,” qtd. in Craig, p. 419.

<sup>322</sup> See below pp. 179-180. Jonson, like Horace, was both literary critic and poet and the practice of each was instrumental to informing the other.

whole; we mean that to enjoy him at all, we must get to the centre of his work and his temperament...<sup>323</sup>

Eliot identifies a number of crucial elements of Jonson's "laboriousness," issues which Jonson's contemporaries spoke about and that in one way or another continued to persist through to modern times. Particularly, Eliot's identification of the ideas of "study" and "industry" demonstrate his own "saturation in" Jonson's "work as a whole." As will be seen, Jonson also read Horace (and other authors) in this way, and "study" along with "reading" are two crucial steps in his composition theory. This "laborious" composition process can be grasped by seeing the extent to which Jonson's own act of writing was a continuous interaction with Horace and other authors.

### **John Donne's "Amicissimo & Meritissimo:" Labor and the Christian Classicist** *(Sapor, Salvo, Ingenium)*

John Donne's poem, "Amicissimo & meritissimo Ben: Jonson" (To the Most Friendly and Deserving Ben Jonson) heaps praise upon the author of *Volpone* in a unique and thoughtful manner.<sup>324</sup> The poem evidently presents Donne's close knowledge of Jonson's poetry both in the way in which it exhibits an apt perception of the play *Volpone* as well demonstrating a keen knowledge of the deepest poetic sentiments Jonson held on imitation, his characteristic notion of "labor," as well as his thoughts on the aims of poetry. Donne's poem of praise of Jonson details elements of poetic theory that can be found in both Jonson's translation of Horace's *Art of Poetry* as well as in his commonplace book *Discoveries*. This is interesting because Donne's poem was

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<sup>323</sup> *Elizabethan Essays* (New York: Haskell House, 1964), p. 67.

<sup>324</sup> The poem can be found in Herford and Simpson's *Ben Jonson*, Vol. 11, p. 318.



*Fac tamen quod agis; tuíque primâ*  
*Libri canitie induantur horâ:*  
*Nam cartis pueritia est neganda,* 10  
*Nascantúrque senes, oportet, illi*  
*Libri, ques dare vis perennitatem.*  
*Priscis, ingenium facit, labórque*  
*Te parem; hos superes, ut & futuros,*  
*Ex nostrâ vitiositate sumas,* 15  
*Quâ priscos superamus, & futuros.*

(If counselors in the law[s] of men and God would dare follow and emulate what you have dared here in your art, Poet, O, we all should have the wisdom needed for salvation. But to these [men] the ancients are cobwebby; for no one is a follower of the ancients like you [who] harken as an innovator after those whom you will follow. Go on then as you are; and let your books seem ancient from their birth, for boyhood is incompatible with literature, and it is proper that books to which eternal life is given be born old. Genius and toil put you on a level with the ancients; excel them, so that you may raise a new race from our wickedness, in which we surpass both past and future ages.)<sup>326</sup>

In the opening four lines of the poem, Donne has already identified the singular element of Jonson's art that will become the subject of the rest of the poem, namely "to follow" in "emulation." "If counselors in the law[s] of men and God would dare follow and emulate," Jonson the poet, (*Si auderent hominum Deiq; iuris / Consulti, [veteres] sequi æmularierq*) "we all should have the wisdom needed for salvation" (*O omnes saperemus ad salutem*). These lines present a particular twist on imitating the ancients because Donne introduces the idea that Jonson as poet provides readers with the "wisdom" (*saperemus*) for "salvation" (*salutem*) in line four.<sup>327</sup>

<sup>326</sup> Translation is from Brian Parker (Ed.), *The Revels Plays: Volpone, Or The Fox* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1983), p. 72. I will address a couple of issues with this translation, particularly of "labor" for which I believe Donne intended a different meaning.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. Jonson's Epistle to the Sisters Oxford and Cambridge that was published in the quarto version of *Volpone*. There Jonson, stating his view of the poet's role in society, says, "...wherein I have laboured for their instruction and amendment, to reduce not only the ancient forms, but manners of the scene, the easiness, the propriety, the innocence, and last, the doctrine, which is the principal end of *poesie*, to inform men in the best reason of living."



Although critics have been industrious in cataloging the many sources of Jonson's imitations,<sup>328</sup> one area that has been rather less emphasized is Jonson's assimilation of pagan material into Christian terms. One might even suggest that Jonson *changes* material in his imitations precisely in order to recapitulate it with the truths revealed by Christianity. As Horace sought to lead readers to essentially a temporal life of virtue Jonson does too, but with the added implications of the afterlife made known by Christian revelation. A couple of good examples of this can be seen in Jonson's translation of *Ars poetica*. For example, Jonson translates lines 11-13 which read "*Scimus, et hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim; / Sed non ut placidis coeant immitia, non ut / Serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agni*" (We know it: this license we poets claim and in our turn we grant the like; but not so far that savage should mate with tame, or serpents couple with birds, lambs with tigers.)<sup>329</sup> as "we know it; / And both do crave, and give again, this leave, / Yet not as therefore wild and tame should cleave / Together, not that we should serpents see / With doves, or lambs with tigers coupled be" (ll. 12-16). This is a rather small example of a change that Jonson makes to the text, but for such a small change it instantly brings the poem into a Christian symbolic universe. Birds were sacred in pagan traditions and acted as omens, making the unseen intelligible, and the dove is a particularly significant kind of bird in Christian tradition. Jonson's decision to translate *avibus* which means "bird" specifically as "dove," in the context of lines which address also "serpents" and "lambs" has obvious Christian associations, topical though they may be.

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<sup>328</sup> See for example Victoria Moul's *Jonson, Horace, and the Classical Tradition* and Richard Peterson's *Imitation and Praise in the Poetry of Ben Jonson*.

<sup>329</sup> All translations from Horace are from Rushton Fairclough's Loeb Classical Library edition.

An answer to why Jonson freely does this in a *translation* can be found later in his translation of Horace, lines 189-194. Line 189, “For being a poet, thou mayst feign, create,” is purely Jonson’s addition and does not occur in the Latin:<sup>330</sup>

For being a poet, thou mayst feign, create;  
Not care, as thou wouldst faithfully translate, 190  
To render word for word; nor with thy sleight  
Of imitation leap into a strait  
From whence thy modesty, or poem’s law,  
Forbids thee forth again thy foot to draw. (ll. 189-194)

The editors of *CWBJ* indicate the irony that Jonson’s translation *following* line 189 exhibits an extremely literal rendering of Horace’s Latin into English—for it represents a *sententiae* that Jonson took close to heart. Jonson’s addition of the sentiment that the “poet...mayst feign, create” is not out of place here given the context, to be sure, but it demonstrates an addition of Jonson’s to the literal meaning of the text which articulates a distinctly *renaissance* idea of imitation.

Donne praises Jonson’s art’s aim to elevate readers (and viewers) to salvation—that is, that Jonson excels the aim of the ancients’ poetry who he imitates: “*Tam nemo veterum est sequutor, ut tu/ Illos quos sequeris nouator audis*” (no one is a follower of the ancients like you [who] harken as an innovator after those whom you will follow). Jonson, as I discussed in a previous chapter on “author,” is a poet who consciously interacts with source material as a way to “invention,” that is, the poet constructs an entirely new work out of the material he engages with through reading and study during the process of composition. Donne’s poem specifically addresses this and even takes it a step further:

*Fact amen quod agis; tuique primâ*

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<sup>330</sup> The editors of the *CWBJ* indicate this in the footnote for line 189 (Vol. 7, p. 26). Horace’s Latin reads: “*Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus / Interpres; nec desilies imitator in artum, / Unde pedem proferre pudor vetet aut operis lex*” (ll. 133-135).

*Libri canitie induantur horâ:  
Nam cartis pueritia est neganda,  
Nascantúrque sense, oportet, illi  
Libri, ques dare vis perennitatem.*

(Go on then as you are; and let your books seem ancient from their birth, for boyhood is incompatible with literature, and it is proper that books to which eternal life is given be born old.) The paradox of the birth of a book being “old” is an idea that Donne and his contemporaries would understand to be Christ, whose birth Jonson refers to in one of his poems as “The Author both of life and light.”<sup>331</sup> The role of God in creation, in the economy of salvation, Jonson understood to be a continuous presence, and this is evident from his extensive knowledge and particular use of ancient material to, as Donne says, “provide the necessary wisdom for salvation.” Admittedly, Parker’s translation of Donne’s lines may be a bit strong here, for “*illi libri, ques dare vis perennitatem*” does not need refer specifically to “books to which eternal life be given” but could be translated as “those books to which has been given the power of continuity,” that is, the ability or strength to endure beyond their age.<sup>332</sup> But it is also clear that Donne’s comments in the poem point to a reality that is beyond Jonson’s *Volpone* or any of Jonson’s work for that matter.

Turning to the last lines of the poem, Donne explicitly uses the Latin word *labor* in what appears to be an informed allusion to Jonson’s main principle for literary productions that will endure as well as direct their readers to salvation:

*Priscis, ingenium facit, labórque  
Te parem; hos superes, ut & futuros,  
Ex nostrâ vitiositate sumas,  
Quâ priscos superamus, & futuros.*

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<sup>331</sup> *The Underwood* I.iii.2.

<sup>332</sup> This resonates with one of Jonson’s own sentiments on “laborious” works, see *Discoveries* 1751, “Indeed, things wrote with labour deserve to be so read, and will last [beyond] their age.”

(Genius and toil put you on a level with the ancients; excel them, so that you may raise a new race from our wickedness, in which we surpass both past and future ages.) Parker's translation may here again be slightly ambitious (he introduces the idea of "raise[ing] a new race" which is not in the Latin) yet at the same time falls short of Donne's likely meaning in his use of the word *labor*, a significant term for Jonson. "*Labor*" does not exclusively refer to "toil" in Jonson's lexicon, and many examples of the depth and layered texture of the word's meaning will be given when turning to examine the way in which Jonson's translates Horace's use of "*labor*" (and vice versa: Jonson's use of the English word "labor" to translate Horace's Latin words such as "*cupit*," "*currente*," "*opera*" and "*cura*") in the *Ars poetica*. For now it could be said that the Latin "*labor*" for Jonson ranges from meaning "care," "striving," and "aspiring," to meaning "study" and "work." Jonson's use of "labor" in his own English poetry exhibits equally nuanced intentional variance, and can mean anything from "desire" and "effort," to "exertion" and "worth." Leaving "labor" as is in the translation of Donne's line allows for these many associations to be present in his sentiment: "Labor and natural talent make you equal to the ancients; may you exceed them, so that you may seize future generations out of our viciousness, in which we exceed the ancients and future people." It is also crucial to note that the subjunctive of "*sumas*" and "*superes*" is clearly intentional on Donne's part, and in this sense, the poem itself is a kind of a prayer: "May you," Jonson, "exceed the ancients so that you may (will be able to) seize (a meaning of *sum*) future generations out of viciousness."

Donne's Latin word "*laborque*" (meaning "and labor") creates another translation issue. If Donne intended "*laborque*" as a noun, then the verb "*facit*" (to make) should be conjugated as a third person plural ("*faciunt*"). This is because "*laborque*" would be construed with "*ingenium*" and therefore would constitute a plural subject. But "*facit*" is conjugated as third

person singular which means that it is referring to a singular subject. This could mean that Donne meant “*laborque*” (in albeit uncharacteristic fashion) to be used as a verb or adverb to be construed with “*facit*.” Understanding “*laborque*” as a verb to be construed with *facit* (“making”) could be supported in this context because in *Discoveries* Jonson specifically refers to a poem as “the *work* of the Poet; the end, and fruit of his labour, and study,”<sup>333</sup> and notes that the Greeks referred to a poet as a “maker.”<sup>334</sup> Donne would have been familiar with these ideas. Either way the line is translated, Donne is making an allusion to a core poetic idea that Jonson used in multiple places in his work, such as in his poem of praise to Shakespeare in the first folio<sup>335</sup> as well as in his statements on poetry *Discoveries*.<sup>336</sup> This depth of the word “labor” and various associations of “labor” are ideas that Jonson received (and also *developed*) from his study and translation of Horace’s *Ars poetica*.

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<sup>333</sup>Ll. 1687 and 1688. Italics are mine.

<sup>334</sup>L. 1665.

<sup>335</sup> “...he / Who casts to write a living line must sweat, / (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat / Upon the muses’ anvil” (ll. 58-61).

<sup>336</sup> See ll. 1298 ff., ll. 1689, l. 1734, l. 1751, and l. 1795.

## CHAPTER 7: LABOR IN ARS POETICA AND IN JONSON'S TRANSLATION

### *HORATIUS DE ARTE POETICA*

Jonson derived and developed his idea of “labor” from Horace’s *Ars poetica* over the span of many years. He made at least two translations of the poem during his lifetime, one early and one later in his career. Jonson found much rich poetic material, such as the *sententiae* “as doctrine and delight together go” and the proverbial idea of *ut pictura poesis*<sup>337</sup> in the *Ars poetica* which he then further developed in his poetry and prose. The same is true for Jonson’s use of the word “labor,” and he in fact begins to do so in his translation of Horace’s poem. One interesting detail in Jonson’s use of “labor” in his translation is that it is sometimes at odds with the “laborious” quality that his contemporaries praised him for, and with the ideas found in *Discoveries* that discuss “labor.” Simply put, there are negative aspects to labor, and Jonson stamps his mark upon a couple of negative senses of the word in his translation of Horace in order to create a tension against the positive associations of “labour” he espoused. For example, Jonson frames his translation of Horace’s poem with two uses of “labor” that have undoubtedly negative connotations. What is most interesting (and perhaps ambiguous) about this is *why* Jonson uses the English term “labor” in these two places (l. 30 and l. 661) since Horace does not actually himself use the Latin “*labor*.”<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> On this point of the relationship between painting and poetry, it can be seen that Horace summarizes Da Vinci’s argument for the supremacy of painting to poetry, well preceding the medieval and early modern so called “*paragone*” debate. A visual image strikes one instantly, but poetry takes more time to experience: “But, ever, things that run / In at the ear do stir the mind more slow / Than those the faithful eyes take in by show, / And the beholder to himself doth render” (ll. 256-259).

<sup>338</sup> This detail, among many others in the text, help to posit the question of why most critics of Jonson’s translation call it “extremely literal” (as the *CWBJ* do) or “wooden” as Herford and

### *Force, Run, Cupō*

Early on in the poem, Horace compares poetry to painting (and sculpting) and for effect he rhetorically addresses an imagined painter: “*amphora coepit/ Institui; currente rota, cur urceus exit?*”<sup>339</sup> Jonson translates these lines as: “Why, forcing still about/ Thy labouring wheel, comes scarce a pitcher out?”<sup>340</sup> (Fairclough’s translation: “That was a wine-jar, when the moulding began: why, as the wheel runs round, does it turn out a pitcher?”) The corresponding words for “forcing” or “labouring” are not present in the Latin, and these additions represent Jonson’s interpretive translation. In this case it likely that Jonson assimilates his own reading (interpretation) together with the literal (and perhaps slightly ambiguous) meaning of the Latin, a reading based on his comparative reading of a number of passages in the *Ars poetica* and overall sense of Horace’s poetic theory. “Laboring” and “forcing” both suggest a kind of base laborious toil in this statement, and Jonson here targets the artist (visual and poetic) who does not have a sense of the “whole” as is made clear by the lines which immediately follow: “In short, I bid ‘Let what thou work’st upon / Be simple quite throughout, and wholly one.’”<sup>341</sup> In other words, the sort of art made by the artist without an end in mind of the whole work as a unity *is* mere forced toil. It is important to note that although “toil” has clear associations with “labour” and plays an important part in poetic construction, as will be seen later, “labour” in Jonson’s mind is not *only* toil, that is, work without an end in mind.

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Simpson do. Jonson has an incredibly lively and fluid interaction with Horace’s Latin text as will be demonstrated.

<sup>339</sup> Ll. 21-22.

<sup>340</sup> Ll. 29-30.

<sup>341</sup> Ll. 31-32. See above pp. 137ff.

Near the end of the poem, line 661, Jonson again chooses the English equivalent of “labour” where Horace does not use the Latin word. Here too Jonson does so in order to suggest a negative meaning of “labour,” but one that is distinct from his use of it in translation in l. 30. Jonson here translates the verb meaning “desired” (*cupit*) as “laboured:” “*dicam Siculique poetae / Narrabo interitum. Deus immortalis haberi / Dum cupit Epedocles, ardentem frigidus Aetnam / Insiluit.*”<sup>342</sup> (Fairclough’s translation: “and I’ll tell the tale of the Sicilian poet’s end. Empedocles, eager to be thought a god immortal, coolly leapt into burning Aetna.”) Jonson’s translation of these lines read:

I’ll tell you but the death and the disease  
Of the Sicilian poet Empedocles:  
He, while he laboured to be thought a god  
Immortal, took a melancholic, odd  
Conceit, and into burning Etna leaped. (ll. 659-663)

The decision to translate “*cupit*” as “labor” demonstrates some of the depth of meaning that “labor” held for Jonson, for in this instance the word becomes a synonym for desire, and thus the physical expression of the will. He could just as well have translated the word “*cupit*” as “desired” in order to reserve the word “labour” for occasions that were purely consistent with his positive understanding of the term but he does not. The negative sense of “laboured” in Jonson’s translation is suggested by the overall context of the lines: The Poet Empedocles “labours” for himself, “to be thought a god / Immortal,” out of a kind of perverse pride. He exists in a disordered state in which the desire “to be thought a god” overrules all else. Jonson’s telling translation of “desire” as “labour” in this instance posits forth the idea that “desire” is not merely wishful thinking, but that true desire is action. Donne’s lines in praise of Jonson would be helpful to remember here because he, like some of Jonson’s other friends and contemporaries,

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<sup>342</sup> Ll. 463-466.



praises the poet's ability to bring others to God, through his laboring to make visible "the wisdom needed for salvation" in a Christian context. If "labour" is closely associated with "desire" in this context of immortality, then Jonson's own labor could be perhaps best described by the proverbial motto of the Benedictine monks, *ora est labora* (work is prayer). Jonson's poetic labor is prayer, looking simultaneously backward and forward; Empedocles in contrast, in a melancholy inward disposition, jumps into the fiery inferno Mt. Etna.

Looking back at Jonson's use of "labour" in *Discoveries*, it is notable that in one instance he uses the term in a context similar to how he does in his translation of Horace's lines that speak about Empedocles: "Many might go to heaven with half the labour they go to hell, if they would venture their industry the right way; but 'The devil take all!' quoth he that was choked i'the mill dam, with his four last words in his mouth" (ll. 131-133). The multiple proverbs that Jonson had used to construct this quote from *Discoveries* strengthen the parallel to the lines under examination from his translation of Horace. One of the imbedded *sententiae* in this passage is a proverbial statement from Virgil, "*facilis descensus Averno*" ("To the lost, easy is the descent into hell," *Aeneid*, Bk. 6.126) which can be found in Tilley's *Dictionary of English proverbs* (D205).<sup>343</sup> The obvious parallel with Empedocles is made clear when looking at the lines that immediately precede those quoted above from *Ars poetica*, in which Horace describes the general character type that Empedocles is meant to represent:

But then the boys  
They vex and follow him with shouts and noise,  
The while he belcheth lofty verses out,  
And stalketh like a fowler round about, 650  
Busy to catch a black-bird; if he fall  
Into a pit or hole, although he call  
And cry aloud' Help, gentle countrymen!

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<sup>343</sup> This and the following information on the proverbial content of Jonson's passage I gathered from footnote 131 in Volume 7 of *CWBJ*.

There's none will take the care to help him out then;  
For if one should, and with a rope make haste  
To let it down, who knows if he did cast  
Himself there purposely or no, and would  
Not thence be saved, although indeed he could? (ll. 647-658) 655

This type of poet may not want to be saved “although indeed he could,” and in this sense may be hopelessly lost. And the descent was all too easy and unexpected. Two other proverbs that can be associated with the rest of the passage from *Discoveries* (““The devil take all!’ quoth he that was choked i’the mill dam, with his four last words in his mouth”) only enhance the parallel. “The devil take all” can be found in Dent’s proverb index (Dent 266.1); “the devil take the hindmost” in Tilley (D267); “Every man for himself and the devil for all” (Tilley, M114). This last proverb especially “evokes the idea that it is damnable to look out only for oneself.”<sup>344</sup> Add to this list another proverb associated with the mill, “To draw water to one’s own mill” (Tilley, M952) that explicitly links “desire” to “labour” through an iconic image of labor (the repetitious mill). All of this complex association and semantic weight suggests that Jonson was continually shaping his idea of “labour” in many different contexts over time.

### ***Labor and the Critics***

Much of the recent critical work that has focused upon Jonson and labor, however, represents a contrast to the ideas sketched above. Be this as it may, critics should be willing consider that Jonson’s own use of the word “labour” is derived from antiquity and yet closely personal. In addition, Jonson’s poetry exhibits a wide and complex variety of distinct notions of “labour,” and Jonson’s friends and contemporaries share his understanding of the term and praise

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<sup>344</sup> *CWBJ*, Vol. 7, footnote 132-3.

him for his “labour.” These ideas should temper considerably the force of such critical arguments claiming that Jonson’s primary idea of labor and authorship is “possessive” in nature.<sup>345</sup> Such arguments share the idea that Jonson’s idea of “labor” is to be primarily associated with the modern sense of “labor” as a means to production, which is to say that Jonson’s mental “labor” is the intellectual equivalent of the “physical exertion directed to the supply of the material wants of the community; the specific service rendered to production by the labourer and artisan.”<sup>346</sup> However, many of the numerous examples of Jonson’s use of the word “labor” in his own work as well as the use of the term “labor” in the poems addressed to Jonson by his contemporaries and admirers are not (at all) acknowledged. The modern sense of “labour” (the definition quoted above) does not become recorded in the *OED* until 1776, much later than Jonson’s age. It is true that Jonson was a writer well ahead of his time, and that he to some extent took advantage of a nascent capitalistic economic book market, but it is pushing it too far to say as Joseph Loewenstein does, that Jonson’s poetic and authorial “labor” (the “labor” involved in making books) is “even determined, by the ways in which quasi-proprietary claims were asserted by the possessors of manuscript copies, by printers, by publishers, and by authors.”<sup>347</sup> This economic interplay, Loewenstein argues, led to “The transformation in the way authors understood themselves—as producers and...as owners—conditioned the political struggles that lead to the legal institution of intellectual property.”<sup>348</sup> Jonson’s authorship therefore becomes an exemplar of a “bibliographic ego” that Loewenstein traces to have

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<sup>345</sup> See Bruce Thomas Boehrer, “The Poet of Labor: Authorship and Property in the Work of Ben Jonson” (*Philological Quarterly* 72 (Summer 1993): 289-312 ); Joseph Loewenstein *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), Chapters 1 (pp. 1-14) and Chapter 5 (pp. 133-210); Laurie Ellinghausen *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567-1667* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), Introduction (pp. 1-16) and Chapter 3 (pp. 63-92).

<sup>346</sup> *OED* sense 2 of “labour” (*spec.* in modern use).

<sup>347</sup> Loewenstein, p. 2.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

developed during this crucial moment in history of the book and print, “an ego shaped by prevailing proprietary practices and shaping those that would come after.” Loewenstein even places the quarrel between Jonson and Inigo Jones about the relative importance of the stage machinery and the poetry of the masque (the body and soul) into this economic context, and suggests that Jonson’s argument for poetry as the “soul” is made in order to assert ownership.<sup>349</sup>

In the article, “The Poet of Labor: Authorship and Property in the Work of Ben Jonson,” Bruce Boehrer begins by drawing attention to the familiar comparison made by critics between Jonson’s “labor” and Shakespeare’s “art,” and demonstrates that Jonson’s regularizing of the spelling of his name is connected to his “labor” in the modern sense of the term:

...names become first and foremost something one *works* with: a product of labor, and of individual labor at that. As such, moreover, they begin to acquire the legal character of other such products; they become personal property. And as product and property indeed, as that unique property that serves to denominate its own owner—one’s name also comprises a primary and crucial marker of personal identity. For Jonson, thus, one’s linguistic work and possessions define one’s nature in a fundamental way.<sup>350</sup>

This kind of reasoning leads Boehrer to go so far as to claim that Jonson’s imitation practices are *parasitical*, that Jonson is a “literary tapeworm” because ultimately he is a “jealous” writer who must possess *everything*: His own texts as well as the texts of others.<sup>351</sup> This is precisely the kind of egotistical “labor” that Jonson scoffs at in a number of poems, such as “*On Poet Ape*” in *Epigrams* 56:

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid., p. 177, qtd. in Ellinghausen, p. 66. Loewenstein is probably following Bruce Boehrer on this point, see Boehrer, p. 297.

<sup>350</sup> P. 291.

<sup>351</sup> Pp. 295-296.

...Tut, such crimes  
The sluggish gaping auditor devours;  
He marks not whose 'twas first; and after-times  
May judge it to be his as well as ours. (10-12)

“The sluggish gaping auditor,” who engages in the sort of thoughtless consumption that Boehrer sees Jonson to participate in is the clear opposite of the kind of laborious imitation John Donne draws attention to in Jonson’s work in *Amicissimo et meritissimo*. It is instead rash and gluttonous. Jonson’s translation of Horace on the other hand, when closely attended to, supports the thesis that Jonson is a poet who thoughtfully responds to texts and faithfully interprets them so to render their actual sentiment, as well as making adjustments to reflect the influence of Christian revelation. In fact Jonson’s imitation and labor would be most accurately assessed through an examination of the many uses of the term in his poetry (together with their accompanying thematic contexts) as well as by taking into account the Christian context of his poetry (that I discuss here, in the next, and in previous chapters) which is often depreciated in critical accounts of his art and work.

To return to the discussion of “labor” and Jonson’s translation of *Ars poetica*, it is clear that the kind of poet exemplified by Empedocles (who would be, *ironically*, the premier exemplar of Jonson’s poetic labor for a number of modern critics) is a kind of poet that both Horace and Jonson detest. Horace and Jonson stand in opposition to the poet who wishes “to be thought a god,” the type of poet Horace had begun to barrage some twenty lines earlier, “*Ut mala quam scabies, aut morbus regius urget/ Aut fanaticus error, et iracunda Diana,/ Vesanum tetigisse timent fugiuntque poetam.*”<sup>352</sup> (Fairclough’s translation: “As when the accursed itch plagues a man, or the disease of kings, or a fit of frenzy and Diana’s wrath, so men of sense fear to touch a crazy poet and run away...”) Jonson’s translation: “Wise, sober folk a frantic poet

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<sup>352</sup> Ll. 453-455.

fear, / And shun to touch him as a man that were / Infected with leprosy...”<sup>353</sup> The “frantic” or “crazy poet,” is one whom all “wise, sober folk” should beware. Comparing Jonson’s translation of these lines with the lines discussed above (which come twenty lines later in the *Ars poetica*) about Empedocles yields a possible reason for why Jonson may introduce the word “disease” into his translation when Horace does not signify it in the later passage (l. 659: “I’ll tell you of the death *and disease*”). There is no word for “disease” in Horace’s Latin text in lines 463-466. Jonson’s choice for introducing the word “disease” in the latter passage perhaps results from his translation of Horace’s Latin word *scabies* as “leprosy” in l. 645 (had Horace specifically meant “leprosy,” he would have used *lepra*. As is, *scabies* is less specific. Jonson may here be, like in the earlier instance of rendering *avibus* as “dove” (l. 16 above), choosing diction that subtly Christianizes the poem).<sup>354</sup> The “frantic poet” is a poet who produces “artless verse” (l. 634) for poetry Horace believed to be a blend of both “art and nature:”

‘Tis now enquired which makes the nobler verse,  
Nature or art? My judgement will not pierce  
Into the profits, what a mere rude brain  
Can, or all toil without a wealthy vein;  
So doth the one the other’s help require,  
And friendly should unto one end conspire. (ll. 581-586)<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Ll. 643-645.

<sup>354</sup> Also “*mortus regius*,” meaning “king’s disease” (l. 453) could have led Jonson’s addition, which Jonson curiously renders as “yellow jaundice” (l. 646).

<sup>355</sup> Horace’s Latin (ll. 408-411) reads:

*Natura fieret laudabile carmen, an arte,  
Quaesitum est. Ego nec studium sine divite vena  
Nec rude quid prosit video ingenium: alterius sic  
Altera poscit opem res, et coniurat amice.*

*Toil, Art, Nature, Sharpening, Hammer, File, Opus, Opera, Study, Exercise, Turn*

It is important to note that Jonson's use of "labour" in the two cases looked at above (where Horace does not use the word) is warranted by the fact that Horace uses "labor" in a similar way to the first instance (l. 30) in line 246: "*sudet multum frustra que laboret*" which Jonson translates as "sweat much, / And toil in vain."<sup>356</sup> "Toil" is the most usual connotation of "labor" when the meaning is not restricted or urged by poetic context, but this meaning does not alone accurately assess the curious quality which Jonson and Horace believed to be the necessary requirement for creating lasting poetry. In the passage quoted above, which refers to the respective roles of "art and nature" (ll. 581-586), "art" has a meaning related to "labor" in the sense of *techne* (a practiced skill). In multiple places Horace refers to "art" as an absolute requirement for the creation of poetry, such as line 44, "When in a wrong and artless way we tread" (*In vitium ducit culpae fuga, si caret arte*), line 386, "Or a worse crime, the ignorance of art" (*Aut ignoratae premit artis crimine turpi*), line 633-634, "A wise and honest man will cry out 'Shame' / On artless verse" (*Vir bonus et prudens, versus reprehendit inertis*). This last instance is incredibly telling, for Jonson translates Horace's *inertis* as "artless," (*inertis* means "without skill," "unskillful," or "incompetent"). After all, Jonson titles his translation *Horace, Of the Art of Poetry*, and the ubiquity of references in Jonson's translation of the poem to "art" underscore his own valuing of the necessity of "art" in poetry.

"Art" and "labor" fundamentally go together, and in this sense, the composing of poetry is work and requires exertions: "*Melius te posse negares / Bis terque expertum frustra: delere iubebat / Et male tornatos incudi reddere versus*" (ll. 439-441). (Fairclough's translation: "If,

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<sup>356</sup> Ll. 351-2. Fairclough's translation mirrors Jonson's.

after two or three vain trials, you said you could not do better, he [Quintilian] would bid you blot it out, and return the ill-shaped verses to the anvil.”) Jonson’s translation of these lines add to the Latin: “If you denied you had no better strain, / And twice or thrice had ‘ssayed it, still in vain, / He’d [Quintilian] bid blot all, and to the anvil bring / Those ill-turned verses, to new hammering” (ll. 625-628). Jonson adds the word “hammering” into his translation for emphasis (which is only understood by *incudi*, anvil). This repetitious act of “laborious” exertion, of forge-like shaping, is an important component of literary production for Jonson as can be seen from a passage in which he himself (emulating Horace in *Discoveries*) gives nearly identical advice to a would-be poet:

If his wit not arrive suddenly at the dignity of the ancients, let him not yet fall out with it, quarrel, or be over-hastily angry, offer to turn it away from study in a humour; but come to it again upon better cogitation, try another time with labour. If then it succeed not, cast not away the quills yet, nor scratch the wainscot, beat not the poor desk, but bring all to the forge and file again, turn it anew. (ll. 1731-1736)

The ability to use “art” in composition is only gained with “labor,” that is, a bodily repetitious exertion, or what Jonson calls “exercise.” Horace makes this clear in *Ars poetica* at several points in the poem. Natural raw talent (or “genius”) is certainly needed, for talent and art are friends who Horace believes must “unto one end conspire,” and in *Discoveries* Jonson does give credence to the natural ability of the Platonic “poetical rapture” as a necessary counterpart to the actual “labor” in the making of a poem:

First, we require in our poet or maker—for that title our language affords him elegantly with the Greek—a goodness of natural wit. For whereas all other arts



consist of doctrine and precepts, the poet must be able by *nature* [italics mine] and instinct to pour out the treasure of his mind, and as Seneca saith...by which he understands, the poetical rapture. (ll. 1711-1715)

This “nature,” though, needs “perfection”<sup>357</sup> and Jonson understood this from how Horace foregrounds “art” in *Ars poetica*. Natural talent is what the poet needs to improve and cultivate. To illustrate this, at one point in *Ars poetica* Horace likens himself to play the dull and base role of a sharpener, that is, one who sharpens others by informing prospective poets on what “forms” (*formetque*, l. 307) a poet in terms of how a whetstone (*cotis*) sharpens steel: “I’d rather I / Be like a whetstone, that an edge can put on steel, though ’tself be dull and cannot cut” (“*ergo fungar vice cotis, acutum / Reddere quae ferrum valet exsors ipsa secandi*” ll. 304-5).

“Sharpening,” “hammering” and “filing,” all ideas that Horace associates with the “labor” of poetic construction, convey the artisan-like process of making a polished and skillfully-crafted product. But more importantly for Jonson is the association with virtue as a habitual exercise of both the body and mind in unison, and is similar in nature to what Aquinas refers to as *synderesis*.<sup>358</sup> This habitual and repetitive action is necessary in the cultivation of virtue, and in terms of Jonson’s development of Horace’s ideas of “labour” into the Christian context in which he lived and wrote, becomes a crucial component of the role of the Christian poet. It is precisely that which Donne praises Jonson for in his poem. Jonson’s own advice to the would-be poet in *Discoveries* underscores this repetitive going back, of “turning it anew” (l. 1736) when working to produce poetry that replicates the “dignity of the ancients” if one falls

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<sup>357</sup> See ll. 1730-1: “To this perfection of nature in our poet we require exercise of those parts, and frequent.” See also ll. 1775-9: “without art, nature can ne’er be perfect; and without nature, art can claim no being’.” Here Jonson is quoting a snippet from Stobaeus out of Jacobus Pontanus’ *Simyli apud Stobaeum*. Pontanus’ influence on Jonson is discussed below, pp. 169-170.

<sup>358</sup> *ST I*, Q79, A12, co., “Synderesis” is not a power but a habit; though some held that it is a power higher than reason; while others said that it is reason itself, not as reason, but as nature.”

short. The practice of “turning” material over has obvious similarities with the “forge” and the “file” as both Jonson and Horace say, but also shares much in common with medieval practices of reading, such as *meditatio*, in which the reader would recite aloud in a chant-like repetition (in Latin) the words which were being memorized, examined, or ruminated upon (*ruminatio*). This kind of labor is best understood as prayer, as desire, and aspiration. The relationship between prayer and work, desire and work, for Jonson seem to be closely linked.

Although Horace’s conception of the *labor* involved in poetic construction deeply influenced Jonson, the full idea behind Jonson’s usages of the word “labour” does not exclusively derive from Horace. Jonson developed the meaning of the term further in his own poetry by refining its meaning through dialogue with the poetic ideas which arose from the Christian Humanism in his own contemporary context. One contemporary author (and scholar) that influenced Jonson’s views on poetry was Jacobus Pontanus (1542-1589). Pontanus continued the Christian Humanist scholarship of Erasmus and More by producing texts in this tradition. Pontanus, a Jesuit, wrote a number of works including a *Progymnasmata* that was “aimed at correcting and replacing Erasmus’s method.”<sup>359</sup> The Jesuit scholar represents another influence on Jonson’s poetical associations of “labor” because Jonson translates a passage from chapter seven of the first book of Pontanus’ *Poeticarum institutionum libri tres* (1594) which he chooses to reproduce nearly exactly in *Discoveries*. The passage is interesting, not only because Pontanus highlights a key aspect of Jonson’s concept of “labor” in poetic construction, but also because Jonson’s close translation of the passage appears to communicate succinctly his own views on what poetry is:

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<sup>359</sup> Cristiano Casalini and Claude Pavur, S.J., Eds., *Jesuit Pedagogy: 1540-1616, A Reader* (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources Boston College, 2016), p. 255.

A poem, as I have told you, is the work of the poet, and the end and fruit of his labour and study. Poesy is his skill or craft of making; the very fiction itself, the reason, or form of the work. And these three voices differ, as the thing done, the doing, and the doer; the thing feigned, the feigning, and the feigner; so the poem, the poesy, and the poet.<sup>360</sup>

This passage is crucial to understanding Jonson's own view of poetry because it includes "study," part of the "laborious" reading process that I have been demonstrating that Jonson performed when reading and translating Horace. It is notable here that Jonson translates Pontanus' word "*opus*" as "labour." The two words are certainly close enough semantically; "*opus*" means "work." The relationship between "*opus*" and "labour" may elucidate why Jonson chose to title his 1616 folio his "*Works*." Clearly a connection to manual production is intended in so naming the great book, but it also points at the tradition of the *Opera Omnia* of Erasmus and the "works" of divines such as Augustine. In any event, Jonson read Horace "actively," that is to say in a continuous dialogue with what he understood to be true in his own time period, in dialogue with a variety of other authors that he studied, as well as in an overall critical dialogue between himself and the author in a sort of a conversation. Jonson's statements upon reading shows that he read for the "truth" rather than slavishly or obsequiously:

Nothing is more ridiculous, then to make an Author a *Dictator*, as the schools have done *Aristotle*. The damage is infinite, knowledge receives by it. For to many things a man should owe but a temporary believe, and a suspension of his

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<sup>360</sup> Pontanus' Latin text of these lines reads: *poema esse opus ipsum poetae . . . finem et fructum opera atque studii, quod impendit poeta: poesin autem fictionem ipsam, rationemue ac formam poematis, sive industriam atque operam facientis: ut poema, poesis, poeta haec tria differant, quomodo tres personae verbi, a quibus oriuntur, πεποιήμα, πεποίησαι, πεποιήται. A prima existit poema, ab altera poesis, a tertia poeta: quasi dicas factum, factio, factor: aut fictum, fictio, ficator.*

owne Judgement, not an absolute resignation of himself, or a perpetuall captivity. Let *Aristotle*, and others have their dues; but if we can make farther Discoveries of truth and fitnessse then they, why are we envied? Let us beware, while wee strive to adde, wee doe not diminish, or deface; wee may improve, but not augment. By discrediting falsehood, Truth growes in request. (H&S 8: 627)<sup>361</sup>

“Active reading,” reading in a continuous dialogue as it were, is what Jonson expects of his own readers, and entails what he refers to as reading with “care” or “labour.” As Evans discusses in *Habits of Mind*, “The ideal reader is active; he reads not merely to absorb but as a preparation to create. He must be independent but not egotistical; he must critically examine everything, including his own motives.”<sup>362</sup> “Study,” that is to say a particular kind of laborious reading, was for Jonson one of the five components he thought were necessary for a poet to continually practice:

But, that which we especially require in him is an exactness of study, and multiplicity of reading, which maketh a full man....There goes more to his making than so. For to nature, exercise, imitation and study, art must be added, to make all these perfect. And, though these challenge to themselves much, in the making up of our maker, it is art only can lead him to perfection. (ll. 1763-1772)<sup>363</sup>

“Exercise” is an activity that is closely related to “art,” leading naturally to the perfection of the skill (*techne*) through repetitious attempts at venting one’s “style.” Even one’s style, Jonson says, should be “laborious:”

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<sup>361</sup> Qtd. in Evans, p. 31.

<sup>362</sup> P. 31.

<sup>363</sup> Qtd. in Clark, p. 414.

In style to consider what ought to be written, and after what manner, he must first think and excogitate his matter; then choose words and examine the weight of either. Then take care in placing and ranking both matter and words, that the composition be comely; and to do this with diligence and often. No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be labored and accurate; seek the best...<sup>364</sup>

What this all adds up to is a continuous *turning*—from reading back to writing and all the while engaging in a kind of critical dialogue with the stores of the memory, another important aspect of poetic composition that Jonson discusses in his commonplace book.

Besides the contemporary influence of Jacobus Pontanus' on Jonson's poetic theory, the Spanish philosopher Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) appears to have made an impact on Jonson's ideas about "study" and "labor." Jonson thought that "The mind of man is still fed with labour: *Opere pascitur*," and this is a sentiment that he found and quoted from Vives.<sup>365</sup> This kind of "feeding the mind" in the context of the whole passage Jonson quotes suggests that a "power" results from the act of reading, in much the same way that virtue (from the Latin *vis* meaning "power") is likewise fed with activity.

### ***Virtue, Labyrinth, Activity: Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue***

In the masque, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, Jonson makes the relationship between "labor" and "virtue" explicit. He also adds "pleasure" to this association of labor and virtue and this could be an intentional allusion to the *Nicomachaen Ethics* in which Aristotle says, "For moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasure that we

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<sup>364</sup> *Discoveries*, ll. 1206-11.

<sup>365</sup> See above, p. 148 and also footnote 301.

do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from noble ones.”<sup>366</sup> In the masque, Jonson contends that virtue is hard and laborious, yes, but also that outright “pleasure” is vicious. When Hercules, the penultimate heroic laborer, makes his speech in response to Comus and the Bowl-Bearer’s vicious subservience to the belly, he makes it clear that vice cannot actually lead to pleasure:

For yet you never lived, but in the sty  
Of vice have wallowed, and in that swine’s strife  
Been buried under the offense of life.  
Go, reel and fall under the load you make,  
Till your swoll’n bowels burst with what you take. 95  
Can this be pleasure, to extinguish man...  
With no delight but what’s a punishment? (ll. 91-99)

The anti-masque of the dancing bottles that immediately precedes Hercules’ speech adds more meaning to his question of “can this be pleasure?” He says that “you never lived, but in the sty” to the Bowl-Bearer and Comus because they have not experienced “life” but are buried “under the offence of life,” that is, are oppressed by that which is against “life.” If the mind and life are fed with “labor” and Hercules represents man at the zenith, Comus and the Bowl-Bearer represent man at the nadir. It is important to realize that Jonson’s account of virtue does not exactly mirror Aristotle’s own understanding of it in much the same way that Jonson’s idea of “labor” differs from Horace’s idea of it. Jonson “labors” in a Christian frame of mind of prayer, and his idea of “virtue” in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* demonstrates this same idea in another way. The mythical Hercules is brought to life in Jonson’s masque in a Christian context, although virtue in any context, be it reading, writing, playing the lyre, or bricklaying is “activity” (labor) as Aristotle says:

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<sup>366</sup> Bk. II.iii.

...but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.”<sup>367</sup>

Hercules, the “*active* friend of virtue,”<sup>368</sup> is led first to rest from his labors together with the figures of Virtue and Pleasure. He sits at the foot of the mountain and Pleasure and Virtue sit above. He is given a crown of “choicest herbage” and instructed to “from thy mighty labor cease” and to “lie down.” The mountain is a symbol of the labor, the climbing of the toil of virtue. Comus’ “sty” is situated at the very base of the mountain, and virtue sits above at the top. Later Hercules is led by the “wise” Daedalus (in his first song) into a labyrinthian kind of dance through pleasure and virtue, and is instructed to tie the two together into knots so to make them indistinguishable:

First, Figure out the doubtful way  
At which awhile all youth should stay,  
Where she [Pleasure] and Virtue did contend  
Which should have Hercules to friend.

Then, as all actions of mankind  
Are but a labyrinth or maze,  
So let your dances be entwined,  
Yet not perplex men to gaze.<sup>369</sup>

The masque concludes with a final song that sums up the idea of the relationship between virtue, labor, and pleasure. Hercules, it is important to realize, is the only mortal in Greek mythology who became a god (did not go to Hades). The “power” or “virtue” that resulted from Hercules’

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<sup>367</sup> Bk. II.i.

<sup>368</sup> L. 151. Italics mine.

<sup>369</sup> Ll. 230-237.

“work” or “labor” is great indeed, and when understood in the Christian context in which Jonson wrote, sounds with Donne’s sentiments about Jonson’s reading of the old books of the ancients and conceiving them anew in order to lead men to salvation.<sup>370</sup> Hercules is instructed at the end of the masque to “walk with Pleasure, not to dwell,” for Jonson does agree with Aristotle that pleasure pursued in itself is deadly, whereas “virtue” is its own reward:

These, these are hours by Virtue spared  
 Herself, she being her own reward,  
 But she will have you know  
                   That though 300  
 Her sports be soft, her life is hard.

You must return unto the hill,  
                   And there advance  
 With labor, and inhabit still  
                   That height and crown 305  
 From whence you ever may look down  
                   Upon triumphed Chance.

She, she it is, in darkness shines.  
       ‘Tis she that still herself refines  
                   By her own light, to every eye 310  
 More seen, more known when Vice stands by.  
       And though a stranger here on earth  
       In heaven she hath her right of birth.  
                   There, there is Virtue’s seat...” (ll. 297-314)

Virtue dwells in heaven where she was born, where she “hath her right of birth.” Like Jonson’s understanding of the Christianized version of the virtue of Prudence and the allegorical painting of Lady Digby discussed in the previous chapter, there is also in this passage an important connection between “virtue” and “light.” “Light” is an incredibly significant and powerful word that has been discussed at length in terms of its importance in Jonson’s imagery and thought. The light that the masque sheds on the labyrinth of actions of life results ultimately from the levity of the entertainment, particularly the music and dance:

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<sup>370</sup> See above, pp. 149f. & 156ff.



Then, as all actions of mankind  
Are but a labyrinth or maze,  
So let your dances be entwined,  
Yet not perplex men unto gaze;

But measured, and so numerous too,  
As men may read each act you do,  
And when they see the graces meet,  
Admire the wisdom of your feet. (ll. 234-241)

Read with Jonson's rich associations of "labor" in mind, this masque demonstrates a tangible allusiveness to both pagan and Christian tradition, as well as a providing an entertaining treatise on the "active" life of virtue. The haunting image of the labyrinth can also be connected to Jonson's notion of "labor" and "study" too, for Jonson was famous for saying that, "Very few men are wise by their own counsel, or learned by their own teaching. For he that was only taught by himself had a fool to his master."<sup>371</sup> The maze of authors and ideas that one encounters when first embarking upon deep study can indeed "perplex one unto a gaze," and good guidance as Jonson knew is crucial. There was also a supposed etymological connection between "labyrinth" and "labor" as in "laborinth," which appears to have suggested a challenging endeavor. The Latin *laborinthus* came from the Greek *λαβύρινθος* meaning "maze," or "large building with intricate passages."

### *Aspire, Prove, Examine, Try*

Turning back now to the *Ars poetica*, another shade of meaning of "labor" that Jonson can be found to use results from the relationship between "care" and "labour" that Jonson develops from his interpretive and associative translation of the poem. Jonson also uses the word

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<sup>371</sup> *Discoveries*, Ll. 15-16.

“care” in his own work in a manner that is connected to “labor.”<sup>372</sup> As noted above, when Empedocles falls into a hole (pp. 22 & 23), “There’s none will take the care to help him out,” with “care” meaning here a sense related to “labour:” no one would “desire” or “strive” to help him out. Much earlier in the *Ars poetica* (ll. 40-61), Jonson introduces two words associated with the artisan aspect of “labour,” and these choices of diction add something to the literal meaning of Horace’s poem (not explicitly stated in the Latin). The overall context of these lines is that of the artisan-like “labour” of composing, like the filing and hammering discussed above. Here Jonson uses the English “aspire” to translate “curem:”

*Hunc ego me, si quid componere curem,* 35  
*Non magis esse velim quam pravo vivere naso,*  
*Spectandum nigris oculis, nigroque capillo.*  
*Sumite materiam vestris, qui scibitis, aequam*  
*Virbus, et versate diu, quid ferre recusent,*  
*Quid valeant umeri. Cui lecta potenter erit res,* 40  
*Nec facundia deserit hunc nec lucidus ordo.* (ll. 35-41)

(Fairclough’s translation: “Now if I wanted to write something, I should no more wish to be like him, than to live with my nose turned askew, though admired for my black eyes and black hair. Take a subject, ye writers, equal to your strength; and ponder long what your shoulders refuse, and what they are able to bear. Whoever shall choose a theme within his range, neither speech will fail him, nor clearness of order.”) Jonson’s translation:

Should I aspire  
 To form a work, I would no more desire 50  
 To be that smith...  
 Take, therefore, you that write, still, matter fit 53  
 Unto your strength, and long examine it  
 Upon your shoulders. Prove what they will bear, 55  
 And what they will not. Him whose choice doth rear

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<sup>372</sup> *Epigrams* 1, Jonson’s first poem in the folio, uses “care” as “labor:” “Pray thee take care, that tak’st my book in hand, / To read it well; that is, to understand.” Reading a “laboriously” written work for “understanding” entails “laborious” reading, see *Discoveries* 1751, “Indeed things wrote with labour deserve to be so read, and will last their age.”

His matter to his power, in all he makes,  
Nor language, nor clear order e'er forsakes--" (ll. 49-51 & 53-58)

Jonson introduces the words "smith" and "prove" into his translation, ideas that are not explicitly stated in Horace's Latin passage. "Smith" has obvious associations with "labour," and the translating of *curem* in l. 35 ("care") as "aspire" is a telling one that thus links "labor" with "care" in Jonson's usage.<sup>373</sup> Some have speculated that Jonson is following Benson's version (an English translation of Horace; Benson uses the word "fellow") for his use of "smith."<sup>374</sup> But "smith" is a particularly labor-charged choice of diction, and it is possible that in order to strengthen this association with labor, Jonson introduces "prove" in line 55. Horace uses "*versate*" in line 39 (from *verso* meaning "turn") in the Latin, and Jonson translates this as "examine" in line 54. There is no corresponding Latin word for Jonson's "prove," although it should be noted that "prove" and "examine" (meaning "test") are related words in Jonson's lexicon. Thus Jonson does not *change* (at all) the meaning of the passage, but rather places an extra emphasis upon the idea of "labour" in poetic construction, an idea that Horace already emphasizes with the metaphor of placing "matter" upon one's "shoulders."

In this passage, Jonson's translates *versate* both as "prove," as well as "examine" ("...and long examine it / Upon your shoulders. Prove what they [the shoulders? the lines? both?] will bear..."). Jonson may simply be at a loss for translating the idea of "turning" (*verso*) into English, but this is unlikely since he himself uses the idea of "turn" in a composition context in *Discoveries* ll. 1735-6: "but bring all to the forge and file again; turn it anew." In fact, lines 1735-36 *Discoveries* were closely derived from this passage in the *Ars poetica*. Fairclough

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<sup>373</sup> See above, pp. 146-148 & p. 165. Jonson translates "*cupit*" as "labour." See also l. 275 in Jonson's *Horatius* where he translates Horace's "*laboret*" (l. 192) as "aspire," and l. 343 in which Jonson translates Horace's verb "*enitar*" (*enitor*) in l. 242 as "labor." *Enitor* (inf. *ēnītī*) means "to strive," "to struggle," "to climb" or "to ascend."

<sup>374</sup> See *CWBJ*, Vol. 7, footnote 51.

translates more literally Horace's word choice as "ponder," such as the idea of "turning the matter over in the mind." "Consider" would be another suitable word to express this idea. Jonson's inverting of Horace's two clauses (the negative clause of what the shoulders will not bear, l. 39, "*quid ferre recusant*" should technically appear first) leads him to add the idea of "examining" the "matter" of the composition: "Take, therefore, you that write, still, matter fit / Unto your strength, and long examine it." Jonson's idea of "proving" seems to refer specifically to what the "shoulders" can bear, that is, what matter a poet can handle. Richard Peterson (1982) discusses the connection between the word "turn" and Jonson's practice of imitation in which Jonson converts the riches of an author's literary substance into a new creation.<sup>375</sup> Also, "verse" (meaning poetry) has an obvious connection to *verso*.

Jonson develops further this notion of "proving," "testing," and "trying" as related to "labour" in *Ars poetica* in a later passage. "Proving" is a thread that runs both through Horace's poem and much of Jonson's poetry because it is an essential aspect in the acts of both reading and writing. Horace, it should be noted, is both poet and critic, and this in turn influenced both these acts:

The valuable thing about the *Ars* is the presence of a mind immensely accomplished in the practice of literature, and with a just appreciation of the point it occupied among the performances of the time. Horace's mind was not only equally but—a much rarer thing—simultaneously critical and creative... It is from a very ripe and wary mind that we have the *Ars Poetica*.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> See Peterson, *Imitation and Praise*, chapter 1, esp. pp. 6-11.

<sup>376</sup> C. H. Sisson, *In Two Minds: Guesses at Other Writers* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1990), p. 15. Qtd. in Moul, p. 176.

As Victoria Moul notes, Jonson himself is a writer who is also “simultaneously critical and creative.”<sup>377</sup> The “laborious” manner in which one creates poetry actually goes beyond the physical crafting of a poem, and Horace includes a section suggesting the importance for a poet to get critical feedback from someone who has good judgment and who will be able to accurately (truthfully) assess the poetry. Interestingly, Horace likens this to the way that rich men “try” or prove their friends with cups of wine to see if they are honest:

*Reges dicuntur multis urgere culullis  
Et torquere mero, quem perspexisse laborent,  
An sit amicitia dignus; si carmina condes,  
Numquam te fallant animi sub vulpe latentes.* (ll. 434-437)

(Fairclough’s translation: “Kings, we are told, ply with many a bumper and test with wine the man they are anxious to see through, whether he be worthy of their friendship. If you mean to fashion verses, never let the intent that lurks beneath the fox ensnare you.”) In Jonson’s translation of these lines, he translates *laborent* (they labor) as “try,” that is, a rich man “labours” his friends, tests them in order to find out whether they are merely interested in gaining his graces for the purpose of wealth (or any other reason such as fame, power, etc.):

Rich men are said with many cups to ply  
And rack with wine the man whom they would try  
If of their friendship he be worthy or no;  
When you write verses, with your judge do so:  
Look through him, and be sure you take not mocks  
For praises, where the mind conceals a fox. (ll. 517-622)

The overall context here is much larger than this quote, and can be found in the lines (ll. 419-434) that precede these, lines in which Horace presents lengthy advice for how to get honest criticism (judgment) from a reader (an important step in composition). Horace speaks specifically of distinguishing between those who may be dishonest friends (*mendacem* in l. 425)

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<sup>377</sup> Moul, p. 176.

who do not tell the truth from those who are true friends (*verumque beatus*, l. 425). It is notable too that Horace also calls attention to *assentatores* (l. 420) “yes men” or flatterers in this passage, and hence advises to “look through” the “judge.” Jonson’s interpretive translation of this passage and others seems to have led to his development in his own poetry of a number of ideas related to labor and friendship in the context of “books.” The association between labor, friends, and books can often be found to recur in his poetry, further developing the parallel that Horace makes in a renaissance context. Horace associates ideas of *labor* in terms writing poetry and friendship, but Jonson elaborates on this theme considerably by adding the idea of “books,” a word that will be demonstrated Jonson deliberately introduces in his translation of Horace’s poem.

## CHAPTER 8: “I LABOR TO BE FREE”

As Jonson developed the idea from Horace, true friendship and lasting poetry both require “labor” in a particular sense. Jonson points to this idea in his poem “*An Epistle to a Friend*” which begins with the couplet, ““Censure not sharply then, but me advise, / Before I write more verse, to be more wise.”” Jonson presumably quotes this couplet from the verse epistle written by the unnamed addressee to whom he is responding. Jonson responds to his “friend” and aspiring poet by saying that he has “proved,” “tried,” and “examined” (tested) the poetry in question:

So ended your epistle; mine begins:  
He that so censureth or adviseth, sins;  
The empty carper scorn, not credit, wins. 5

I have, with strict advantage of free time,  
O’er-read, examined, tried, and proved your rhyme  
As clear and distant as yourself from crime. (ll. 3-8)

The poem seems to draw a what appears to be a strange parallel as it continues, for the subject of the poem is just as much about the “labour” required in creating poetry (the examining, trying, and proving listed in line eight above) as it is about the “labour” required in creating and maintaining a friendship:

It is an act of tyranny, not love,  
In course of friendship wholly to reprove,  
And flattery, with friends’ humours still to move. 20

From each of which I labour to be free;  
Yet if with either’s vice I tainted be,  
Forgive it as my frailty, and not me. (ll. 18-23)

Jonson says he “labour[s] to be free” from “tyranny” and that which is “not love,” and he says that he labors against using “flattery” to move the “humours” of his friend. This parallel

between “testing” or “proving” poetry and friends, which is explicitly made by Horace in *Ars poetica*, is in fact quite visible in Jonson’s work. Although Jonson initially takes this idea from Horace through an attentive reading and translation of the *Ars poetica*, it can be observed that he develops the idea further when translating the poem and when composing his own poetry.

### **Shakespeare: Make Life and Manners His Book**

An example of this development can be found in his poem of praise to Shakespeare, *U. V.* 26, a poem that illustrates Jonson’s use of many of the ideas of “labour” discussed above:

Yet must I not give nature all: thy art,	55
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.	
For though the poet’s matter nature be,	
His art doth give the fashion. And that he	
Who casts to write a living line must sweat	
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat	60
Upon the muses’ anvil: turn the same	
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame;	
Or for the laurel he may gain a scorn:	
For a good poet’s made, as well as born;	
And such wert thou. Look how the father’s face	65
Lives in his issue: even so, the race	
Of Shakespeare’s mind and manners brightly shines	
In his well-turned and true filed lines...” (55-68)	

In this excerpt Jonson notably draws attention to the relationship between art and nature in the poet (l. 55-58), the toilsome labor involved in a composition (ll. 61-62), the physical acts of hammering and turning are specified (l. 60-61), and the particular idea of filing is too (l. 68). There are other significant parallels, such as the “casting” and “framing” in lines 59 and 62, as well as the idea of “turning oneself” together with the composition, which refers to the kind of *imitatio* that Jonson’s own works exhibit through his use of the classics—as well as Shakespeare’s. All of these ideas are present in Horace’s poem, however, the most interesting



parallel between the *Ars poetica* and this poem comes in lines 65-67. These lines exhibit Jonson's interactive dialogue with Horace's lines in the *Ars poetica* via his own translation. The corresponding lines in the *Ars* are: "*Respicere exemplar vitae morumque iubebo, / Doctum imitatore, et versa hinc ducere voces*" (ll. 317-318). Fairclough translates these lines as: "I would advise one who has learned the imitative art to look to life and manners for a model, and draw from thence living words." Jonson's translation is indeed close, but he makes two subtle additions in his translation by introducing the ideas (and words) of the "book" and the "maker:" "And I still bid the learned maker look / On life and manners, and make those his book, / Thence draw forth true expressions" (ll. 453-455).<sup>378</sup> Horace does not say to "make those his book," but again, as in other slight additions and changes that Jonson makes, he may have warranted this change based on a close study and familiarity with Horace's poem as a whole. For example, lines 517 ff. in the *Ars* (discussed above) which render the metaphor of the rich men who "test" their friends in order to avoid flatterers as an analogy for finding trustworthy critics for one's poetry, voice a similar sentiment to Jonson's meaning in translation: there is a clear relationship between lives, manners, and books. In other words, the "idea" is already there in Horace's poem as a whole: poetry *imitates* life (as does painting), and therefore look on life and manners, and make these what you produce (the "living words" cf. Jonson's "living line" in line 59 of his poem to Shakespeare)—*and make these what you read*. Jonson subtly adds only another shade of meaning here, but it represents a significant development, especially since Jonson is the first to publish his own "book" in which he "labours."<sup>379</sup> Of course Jonson's poem to Shakespeare is a poem to a friend that takes for its subject Shakespeare's own "book" and "living lines."

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<sup>378</sup> "Life," "maker," and "book" all taken together in these lines are changes that in addition to the shift of emphasis in the text of the lines noted above, also allude to the Bible.

<sup>379</sup> See above, pp. 145-147.

Jonson, eager to associate himself with the great dramatist, said of Shakespeare in *Discoveries*: “I loved the man, and do honour his memory (on this side idolatry) as much as any.”<sup>380</sup> That Horace does not speak of “books” per se and equate them with “makers” is literally the case in his poem, Jonson adds these meanings based on his own renaissance context. Sidney’s *Defense of Poesy* significantly impacted the way in which renaissance poets understood themselves to be participating in the nature of the Divine Author through creation:

Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man’s wit with the efficacy of nature, but rather give right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who, having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature; which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when, with the force of a divine breath, he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings with no small arguments to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it. (pp. 9-10).

***Books and Friends: Truth, Flatter, Astutus, Craft, Character, Portrait, Mirror, Guest, Eating, Freedom, Liberty***

Jonson’s interaction with Horace’s sentiment of the parallel between “books” and “friends” on the one hand, and “labour” in the sense of “reading” or “judgement,” as “proving,” on the other hand, can be found in many of Jonson’s poems. “Friends” and “books” after all

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<sup>380</sup> Ll. 473-4.

must be chosen, and wise judgment in both cases is necessary in order to choose good ones.

Jonson says as much to Sir Henry Goodyere in *Epigrams* 86:

When I would know thee, Goodyere, my thought looks  
Upon thy well-made choice of friends and books;  
Then I do love thee, and behold thy ends  
In making thy friends books, and thy books friends.  
Now I must give thy life and deed the voice 5  
Attending such a study, such a choice:  
Where, though it be love that to thy praise doth move,  
It was a knowledge that begat that love.

In this poem, making “books” to be one’s “friends” adds yet another layer of depth to the idea of “labor” that has been explored. Jonson uses “friends” and “books” in parallel in line two in order to equate books and friends in one sense, but he also qualifies each of them in another sense since “books” as “friends” implies a relational interaction. The best criticism (and praise) comes from one’s true friend, one who wishes the other’s true good.<sup>381</sup> One must “know” their friend, as Jonson says in the first line of the poem, and “knowing” requires in some sense the “labor” of “reading,” of understanding, and “caring,” all words related to “labor” and “books” in Jonson’s lexicon. This “knowledge” Jonson says in the lines quoted above, leads to “love:” “*Then I love thee.*”<sup>382</sup> The passage also demonstrates a further development of the idea that Jonson inherited from Horace’s *Ars poetica* because the “ends” of “making thy friends books, and thy books friends” (ll. 3-4) is much to the point for Jonson himself as poet, his ends being similar yet subtly distinct from the “ends” of poetry for Horace (and the Pisos). Horace could be thought of as Jonson’s closest friend, and he became so through Jonson’s own *labors* with the book—Jonson spent much time hearing, listening (through reading and study) what Horace had to say, not so

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<sup>381</sup> See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 23, A. 1, co., “...love which is together with benevolence, when, to wit, we love someone so as to wish good to him.” Friendship in this sense is a virtue.

<sup>382</sup> L. 3 (italics are mine).

much being a “critic” in the modern sense of the term as much as being a believer. Jonson’s reading, study and imitation of Horace’s poetry, as well as his thoughtful and careful responses to it (translating, imitating, developing) demonstrates a relational kind of reading and study that could perhaps only be described as “friendship.”<sup>383</sup> Jonson’s praise of actual friends always involves an aspect of ancient sentiment, for this lasting virtue is what stands. Also it is important to realize that, for Jonson, this “friendship” does not end with Jonson himself, but is a “labor” toward an end outside and beyond himself, extended graciously toward his “laborious” readers who are capable of reading and study in the manner he describes. In the words of Donne: “*Tam nemo veterum est sequutor, ut tu / Illos quos sequeris nouator audis,*” (no one is a no one is a follower of the ancients like you [who] harken as an innovator after those whom you will follow) because Jonson’s Christianity tempers his vision of virtue, praise, and the acts of literary creation and “reading.”

Jonson’s criticism exhibits the same characteristics as his understanding of friendship as found in “*Epistle to a Friend*” above. The poet’s relationship to the books, authors, and poems he read shared many similarities to way to the way in which he understood “labour” to be a necessary component in friendship. If one does not “labour” so as to avoid “tyranny,” “labour” against “wholly...reprove[ing]” a friend,<sup>384</sup> he risks *the ability* to understand the text or the person, and therefore “friendship” in a relational sense (in either case) becomes impossible. The

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<sup>383</sup> In *The Underwood* 50, Jonson praises Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland for her ability to study both her books and her friends, in much the way Jonson himself does:

For you admit no company but good,  
 And when you want those friends, or near in blood,  
 Or your allies, you make your books your friends,  
 And study them unto the noblest ends,  
 Searching for knowledge, and to keep your mind  
 The same it was inspired, rich and refined. (ll. 25-30)

<sup>384</sup> See p. 189f. above.

same goes if one were to give in to “flattery,” which Jonson explores most often by setting it directly in opposition to “friendship.”<sup>385</sup> Flattery, like its etymology suggests, *flattens*, rather than cares or shares emotion.<sup>386</sup> These ideas of the “labour” involved in maintaining a true friendship seem to have been important especially to Jonson as reader and literary critic. A clue to tracing why this is so may lie in the “liberty,” “freedom,” “truth,” and “virtue” that Jonson often associates with “friendship” in his poetry, crucial ideas that can be observed in his own laborious practice of reading and composition.

The poem “*Epigram to a Friend, and Son (The Underwood 69)*” brings all of these important words to interact in the context of “labor:”

Son, and my friend, I had not called you so  
To me, or been the same to you, if show,  
Profit, or chance had made us; but I know  
What by that name we each to other owe—  
Freedom and truth, with love from those begot:  
Wise crafts, on which the flatterer ventures not.  
His is more safe commodity, or none;  
Nor dares he come in the comparison...  
...the flatterer with fair cunning strike  
At a friend’s freedom, proves all circling means (ll. 1-15)

Most notably here is that “freedom,” “truth,” and “love” are not realities that become achieved by “chance” or “show,” and, significantly, they are not the outcome of “profit” (the flatterer’s goal) but are themselves “the profit.” The flatterer uses friendship as a means through which to profit from rather than with or through—for friendship itself, *relationship*, is the way to “freedom,” “truth,” and “love,” what Jonson calls “wise crafts” in the poem. Interestingly, the

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<sup>385</sup> In addition to “*An Epistle to a Friend*,” see poems “*An Epistle to a Friend, to Persuade Him to the Wars*” (*The Underwood 15*) and “*Epigram to a Friend, and Son*” (*The Underwood 69*). For a discussion of the classical and contemporary ideas of friendship and “flattery” (especially in relation to Plutarch’s essay “How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend”) in Jonson’s poetry see Chapter 6, “Poems on Friends and Friendship” in Robert Evans, *Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989), pp. 192-221.

<sup>386</sup> From the Proto Indo European *plat-* meaning “flat” or “to spread.”

language of “craft” and “commodity” apply to both the flatterer and the friend, making a pun on the “labor” involved in both of kinds of connections. That the “cunning strike / At a friend’s freedom, proves all circling means,” follows this punning on “labor,” for the flatterer (the astute man—from *astus* meaning “craft,” “cunning,” or “guile”) “strikes” or *hammers* away at an individual’s freedom (including his own) “proving” nothing except his own “circling means.” The metaphor of the “wretched painter” and painting in the poem adds texture to this meaning, for painting is a craft. Jonson’s simile of the flatterer as a bad painter reinforces the ideas of labor in the poem, caricaturing the flatterer’s inability to draw a straight line (to mean what he says) though at the same time saying that the flatterer *can* indeed draw a vivid picture (though a false one). Bringing to bear on this Jonson’s parallel between books and friends, or books and men is relevant here, for books do not flatter readers as Jonson observes in *Discoveries*, “And how can he be counselled that cannot see to read the best counsellors, which are books: for they neither flatter us nor hide from us?”<sup>387</sup>

And yet, books and men are in Jonson’s view “but one,” and suit their readers just as friends do:

Who tracks this Authors, or Translators Pen,  
 Shall finde, that either hath read Bookes, and Men:  
 To say but one, were single. Then it chimes,  
 When the old words doe strike on the new times,  
 But in one tongue, was form’d with the worlds wit:  
 And hath the noblest marke of a good Booke,  
 That an ill man dares not securely looke  
 Vpon it, but will loath, or let it passe,  
 As a deformed face doth a true glasse.  
 Such Bookes deserue Translators, of like coate  
 As was the *Genius* wherewith they were wrote...<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> *Discoveries*, ll. 885-887.

<sup>388</sup> *U.V.* 24, ll. 1-12.

Jonson praises James Mabbes' translation of Matheo Aleman's *The Rogue*, a romance, from Spanish into English because he says the *genius* of the reader matched that of the writer. Quite simply, Mabbes sees what is there as a friend is able to "understand." The metaphor of the book as a mirror is an interesting detail here too, for it relates to the friend/flattery theme because a "good book" shows man to himself as a "true glass." The book works in two ways: the straightforward direction of reader toward book, but also the lesser thought of direction, that of the book toward the reader, in that the reader's own self becomes revealed in the "reading."

Jonson's poem of praise of Shakespeare follows this idea of "books" and "men" being "the same." In fact, Jonson's praise throughout the poem is founded upon this concept of the nature of the similarity between a "book" and a "life." It is Shakespeare's "book" that allows him to live for readers:

Thou art a monument without a tomb,  
And art alive still while thy book doth live,  
And we have wits to read, and praise to give. (ll. 21-24)

Jonson tellingly includes the idea of that readers require "wits" to read. We would all be wise critics if we remembered this line. The equation of "book" and "life" also can be observed in the poem titled "To the Reader," that Jonson wrote for Shakespeare's first folio. This poem takes for its subject the famous frontispiece engraving of Shakespeare. In the poem Jonson says that had the engraver been able to draw Shakespeare's "wit," then the engraving would be without compare:

But since he cannot, reader, look  
Not on his picture but his book. (ll. 9-10)

To meet the book is to meet the living man. To look at his picture is to see an unchanging frozen image without "wit," the crucial ingredient of reading and living.

Another example of the kinds of ideas Jonson associates with the relationship between books and friends can be found in “*An Epistle Answering to One that Asked to be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben*” which opens with the following sentiment:

Men that are safe and sure in all they do  
Care not what trials they are put unto;  
They meet the fire, the test, as martyrs would,  
And though opinion stamp them not, are gold...  
Let those that merely talk, and never think,  
That live in quarrel only, or else such  
As make it their proficiency how much  
They have glutted in and lechered out that week,  
That never did friend or friendship seek  
But for a sealing...  
I study other friendships, and more one  
Than these can ever be; or else wish none. (ll. 1-4, 9-15, & 29-30)

The opening 30 lines of the poem begin with language Jonson applies to both friendship and to reading and composing: “test,” “trials,” “care,” and “fire.” This is not merely incidental, but points to the idea that friendship, reading, and writing share a similar relational kind of life. Here Jonson is specifically addressing “men” he says, “that are safe and sure in all they do.” These men “Care not what trials they are put unto” because “They meet the fire, the test, as martyrs would.” This language of “fire,” “test,” “trials,” and “martyrs” taken together with the sealing of the Tribe of Benjamin, one of the twelve tribes of Israel, is an allusion to *Revelation 7: 8*, “Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand,” adds a deeper layer of religious significance to the poem—a poem that has been referred to as autobiographical.<sup>389</sup> The allusion is to the four angels in the apocalyptic book who “seal” the followers of God on the forehead. Men who are “safe and sure in all they do,” the poet says, are in a sense “sealed,” for when they meet the “fire” and “test” they then display their true nature: gold. In addition to this there is also the

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<sup>389</sup> Sarah van den Berg calls it “the great autobiographical poem of 1624” in *The Action of Ben Jonson’s Poetry*, p. 160.



added play on the word “safe” as theologically “saved” due to the awkward meaning of the first two lines (they appear to contradict each other).<sup>390</sup> Men that are “safe,” one would think, would indeed “*care* what trials they are put unto,” as they would naturally seek to avoid unnecessary risk or danger for fear of mishap. The precious metal gold speaks to this both in terms of alchemical (l. 3, the “test” was a pot used in alchemical machinery) and the economic (l. 4, “stamping” the gold to press a coin) levels in which the language of the poem works, as well as the notion of “other friendships” which Jonson professes to “study.” The idea of “sealing” compresses all of these ideas into a single emblem of revelation, and may also have a sacramental significance in terms of Confirmation: “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit,” the priest says during of the rite of Confirmation. Theologically speaking, Confirmation leads the faithful to become “stronger with the strength of a new power, and thus begins to be a perfect soldier of Christ,” as well as having “the effect of impressing a character.”<sup>391</sup>

As the poem continues, Jonson sketches a kind of portrait of himself for the unnamed friend who has asked to be sealed of the Tribe of Ben. The poet addresses the reader through appropriation of the ideas of alchemical and economic language to contrast against the Christian spiritual act of faith—essential for the kind of friendship Jonson “studies” to exist:

Live to that point I will, for which I am man  
And dwell as in my center as I can,  
Still looking to, and ever loving heaven;  
With reverence using all the gifts thence given.  
'Mongst which, if I have any friendships sent,  
Such as are square, well-tagged, and permanent,  
Not built with canvas, paper, and false lights,  
As are the glorious scenes at the great sights,  
And that there be no fevery heats, nor colds,  
Oily expansions, or shrunk dirty folds,

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<sup>390</sup> *OED* def. 4 suggests “mentally or morally sound or sane” and *OED* 3 suggests the theological sense of “saved.”

<sup>391</sup> *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 1566 (Maredsous edition of 1902), pp. 132 & 137.

But all so clear and led by reason's flame,  
 As but to stumble in her sight were shame;  
 These I will honour, love, embrace, and serve,  
 And free it from all question to preserve.  
 So short you read my character, and theirs  
 I would call mine, to which not many stairs  
 Are asked to climb. First give me faith, who know  
 Myself a little. I will take you so,  
 As you have writ yourself. Now stand, and then,  
 Sir, you are sealed of the tribe of Ben. (59-78)

In a sense, Jonson's "character" is his poem, the lines of which compose a portrait for the reader. He is conscious to articulate the "other friendships" of his "study" rather than "speak himself out too ambitiously" (l. 6) and this comes through in the poem in lines 65-66, "Not built with canvas, paper, and false lights, / As are the glorious scenes at the great sights." Here Jonson is referring to his collaborator Inigo Jones who he recognized had the ability to become the more popular and more demanded figure at court.<sup>392</sup> Although many see the poem as a diatribe upon the collaborative relationship he had with Inigo Jones, a reading for which there exists much in the poem as support, Jonson turns from this to focus upon "faith," "First give me faith, who know / Myself a little. I will take you so, / As you have writ yourself" (74-76). The conclusion of the poem rests upon the earlier lines in which Jonson says that he will "dwell as in my center as I can, / Still looking to, and ever loving, heaven; / With reverence using all the gifts thence given" (60-62) as Jonson says, rather than seek the friendship built with "canvas, paper, and false lights" (l. 65). Jonson uses the contrast here, I think, more to contrast the spiritual or unseen faith and love in friendship to the colorfully constructed appearance of friendship which is flattery for gain.

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<sup>392</sup> *The Action of Ben Jonson's Poetry*, p. 161. Also see my discussions of Jonson and Jones in chapter three, pp. 90ff.

Perhaps the best example of the development of the ideas that have been discussed regarding Jonson's idea of friendship, labor, books, and life can be found in "Inviting a Friend to Supper." This poem epitomizes the "freedom" and "liberty" that Jonson associates with the "labor" required for friendship. Jonson, as narrator of the poem, makes a laborious effort at an invitation to the unnamed "friend" which makes this poem both rare and memorable.<sup>393</sup> The reason for the laborious invitation, bursting with detailed lists and activities, is necessary for the "liberty" that Jonson says, "we'll enjoy tonight" in the last line of the poem. This idea is first made apparent at the outset of the poem:

It is the fair acceptance, sir, creates  
The entertainment perfect, not the cates. (ll. 7-8)

The unnamed friend's "acceptance" is crucial to the activity of "liberty" in terms of freedom, as the poet says, "Of this we will sup free" (l. 35). Although Jonson's elaborate act of invitation may seem to be excessively contrived, following as the poem does the many literary precedents of Homer, Martial, and Erasmus, as well as containing hyperbolic descriptions and lists of foods, it may be that Jonson's aim in this poem is less to entice an unnamed guest's acceptance to an actual dinner as much as it is meant to illustrate his complex of ideas that he *developed* from the pagan authors into a Christian context, and one idea in particular that he develops in this poem is the Roman *convivium* and the Greek *symposium*.

In *Discoveries*, Jonson addresses the nature of the use of a book, and the way in which material gleaned from books needs time before ripe for composition. He likens the process to a

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<sup>393</sup> This is not to say that the poem does not have precedents. Jonson had Horace's invitation of Torquatus (*Epist.* 1.5) and Maecenas (*Odes* 3.8) to supper as well as Martial's poems of invitation as inspiration for this poem. Van den Berg suggests in her book, *The Action of Ben Jonson's Poetry*, that Jonson is in close conversation with (at least) three works in Erasmus' *Colloquies: Godly Feast, The Profane Feast, and The Poets' Feast*. See pp. 50-62 for van den Berg's discussion of "Inviting a Friend to Supper."

bodily function that takes time—digestion: “These [foolish writers] in all they write, confess still what books they have read last - and therein their own folly - so much, that they bring it to the stake raw and undigested; not that the place did need it neither, but that they thought themselves furnished, and would vent it.”<sup>394</sup> This sense of eating, digesting, and the need to savor books as it were, Jonson also invokes in “Inviting a Friend to Supper.” The friend who the speaker invites to a supper during which the speaker says he will have his “man” read to them out loud, “Howsoe’er, my man / Shall read a piece of Virgil, Tacitus, / Livy, or of some better book to us, / Of which we’ll speak our minds amidst our meat.”<sup>395</sup> Reading during meals was common, and has ties to the Roman *convivium* or banquet, and the Greek *symposium*.<sup>396</sup> This association between eating, liberty, and books in “Inviting a Friend to Supper” gathers weight when considering the etymological connection between books and freedom in the Roman word *liber*, as Isidore of Seville says in the *Etymologies*, “Liber is the inner membrane of bark, which clings to the wood.”<sup>397</sup> Jonson ends this poem with a sporting pun that seems to play on the etymology of book and its identical Latin word for liberty, *liber*: “No simple word / That shall be uttered at our mirthful board / Shall make us sad next morning, or affright / The liberty that we’ll enjoy tonight.”<sup>398</sup> Indeed, the “mirthful board” and “liberty” go hand in hand throughout the poem.

“Leges Convivales,” Jonson’s Latin poem, too has associations to the Roman *convivium*.

The poem is essentially a jocular list of rules to be observed by Jonson’s literary companions

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<sup>394</sup> Ll. 524-5.

<sup>395</sup> Ll. 21-3.

<sup>396</sup> Connections to St. Benedict’s *Rule* (Ch. 38) too. Reading during meals was required, although a strict rule of silence was to be observed. This idea of a common meal during which a book is read out loud underscores both the idea of internalization and digestion.

<sup>397</sup> *Etymologies* VI.xiii.3. A parallel for “bark” exists in the etymology for the OE *bōc*, the ancestor of our “book,” derives from the Indo-European *bhāgo-* meaning “beech.”

<sup>398</sup> Ll. 39-42

who met at the Apollo Room and Jonson's association of eating with reading as a kind of feast can be observed, "*In apparatu, quod convivis corruget nares, nil esto. / Epulae delectu potiùs, quam sumptu, parantor. / Opsonator et coquus, convivarum gulae periti sunt*" (Let nothing in the treat offend the guests; / More for delight than cost prepare the feasts; / The cook and purveyor must our palates know).<sup>399</sup> The ideas of friendship, liberty, books, and eating in these two poems, but especially in "Inviting a Friend to Supper" has a Christian symbolic significance in the association with eating and reading (Eucharist) and the wine in lines 28-34 which Jonson says would have given the Roman Horace and the Greek drinking-poet Anacreon everlasting life. Jonson also contrasts the wine, as well as some ancient aids to poetic inspiration, to what he "sings" about in the poem—saying they are "but Luther's beer":

But that which most doth take my muse and me  
Is a pure cup of rich Canary wine,  
Which is the Mermaid's now, but shall be mine;  
Of which had Horace or Anacreon tasted,  
Their lives, as do their lines, till now had lasted.  
Tobacco, nectar, or the Thespian spring  
Are all but Luther's beer to this I sing.  
Of this we will sup free, but moderately...

The banquet in the poem rings of the heavenly banquet, a banquet that is full of excess, "free," yet paradoxically also "moderate." The speaker's man "Shall read a piece of Virgil, Tacitus, / Livy, or of some better book to us," the "better book" being the Bible. The speaker of the poem exalts the guest, so much so at the outset of the poem that it sounds like the prayer in the liturgy recited by the faithful before the Eucharistic feast: "*Domine, non sum dignus ut intres / subtectum meum: / sed tantum dic verbo, / et sanabitur ánima mea*" (Lord, I am not worthy / that you should enter under my roof / but only say the word / and my soul shall be healed"). The poem begins:

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<sup>399</sup> From Alexander Brome's translation.

Tonight, grave sir, both my poor house and I  
Do equally desire your company;  
Not that we think us worthy such a guest,  
But that your worth will dignify our feast  
With those that come; whose grace may make that seem  
Something, which else could hope for no esteem. (1-6)

The etymological relationship between “guest” and “ghost” further highlights the parallel between the physical banquet Jonson describes and a heavenly one that bursts from the poem: “guest” comes from *gaest* or *gest* which is related to the root *ghos-ti-* and suggests the hospitality bonds essential in pagan bonds of friendship and the guest/host relationship and simultaneously the Holy Ghost.

### ***Labor and Contemplation: Mystery, Manners, Dwell, Lent, Happy***

Jonson’s widely anthologized poem and masterpiece “To Penshurst” demonstrates many of the ideas introduced above. Through a vivid portrait of the Sidney estate Penshurst Place, the poet aims to lead the reader through a store of visual and contemplative wonder due in large part to the nature of the addressee of the verse epistle, which is not a person but a house. Yet Penshurst is not *only* a house, not only a constructed building like the other estates it is compared to in the opening lines of the poem:

Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show  
Of touch or marble, nor canst boast a row  
Of polished pillars, or a roof of gold;  
Thou hast no lantern whereof tales are told,  
Or stair, or courts; but stand’st an ancient pile  
And these grudged at, art revered the while. (ll. 1-6)

Rather, Penshurst is a place that bursts with the fullness of life which the poet expresses through a number of details. The poet strives to make clear that the house is a “dwelling,” a place where

life is lived, and thus more than the sum of its architectural features. Some of the abundant life at Penshurst “betrays” itself for the Lord of the estate, Sidney, such as “The painted partridge... / ...for thy mess is willing to be killed” found in lines 29-30, and the “Fat, agèd carps, that run into thy net, / And pikes, now weary their own kind to eat / As loath the second draught or cast to stay, Officiously, at first, themselves to betray; / Bright eels, that emulate them, and leap on land, / Before the fisher, or into his hand” (ll. 33-38). There is much more life at Penshurst which the poet describes, but the most striking of all these colorful descriptions are those rustic folk who enter into the poem at line 48:

But all come in, the farmer and the clown,  
 And no-one empty-handed, to salute  
 Thy lord and lady, though they have no suit. 50  
 Some bring a capon, some a rural cake,  
 Some nuts, some apples...  
 But what can this (more than express their love) 57  
 Add to thy free provisions, far above  
 The need of such? Whose liberal board doth flow  
 With all that hospitality doth know! 60  
 Where comes no guest but is allowed to eat,  
 Without his fear, and of thy lord’s own meat:  
 Where the same beer and bread, and self-same wine,  
 That is His Lordship’s, shall be also mine. (ll. 48-64)

These commoners bring gifts even though the gifts are not *needed* per se since the “lord and lady” are “far above the need of such” (ll. 58-59). When these folk enter, they are invited to enjoy the “free provisions” (l. 58) and “liberal board” (l. 59), in short, a curious “hospitality” (l. 60) in which everyone “is allowed to eat” (l. 61). This most fundamental communal activity represents the actual physical center of the poem (lines 48-64 out of 102 total lines) as well as the basis for the poet’s conclusion in the final line of the poem. In the final line of the poem, a line that has drawn much critical attention, the poet says to Penshurst that it is a place where “thy lord dwells” order to emphasize the ultimate final contrast with the other buildings that Penshurst has

invited comparison against: “Now, Penshurst, they that will proportion thee / With other edifices, when they see / Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else, / May say, their lords have built, but thy lord dwells” (ll. 99-102). The wordplay present in the expression “thy lord dwells” has been crucial for a number of critics who understand Jonson to be referring simultaneously to the Robert Sidney, the Lord of Penshurst as well as to refer to a “sacramental dwelling” of the Christian Diety, The Lord. William Rogers, for example, has built a substantial reading of “To Penshurst” upon the resonating utterance of this last line in relation to Jonson’s vivid depiction of the life lived at Penshurst.<sup>400</sup>

In “Sacramental Dwelling with Nature,” Rogers’ focus on the word “dwell” leads to a consideration of the existential issues in the poem. The word “dwell” also serves a concrete point of comparison for these existential issues to similar ones discussed in Martin Heidegger’s essay “Building Dwelling Thinking.” Comparing some of the details of Jonson’s “To Penshurst” with Heidegger’s essay, Rogers concludes that both Jonson and Heidegger share similar notions of “building” and “dwelling,” due to the etymological relationship (that Heidegger discusses) between the German word for “to build,” *bauen*, and the Old High German *buan*, meaning “to dwell, to remain, to stay in a place.”<sup>401</sup> “Building” and “dwelling” are closely related terms that come from the same root. These connections are interesting to consider alongside Jonson’s poem because the poet suggests a nearly identical idea. Rogers, however, concludes in his article that Jonson and Heidegger ultimately must part company when it comes to “thinking,” the third term in Heidegger’s essay title “Building Dwelling Thinking” and that though similar issues are present in both works, Jonson’s existential vision is different. This is due to the fact that in the

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<sup>400</sup> See William Rogers, “Sacramental Dwelling with Nature: Jonson’s ‘To Penshurst’ and Heidegger’s ‘Building Dwelling Thinking,’” *Publication of the Philological Association of the Carolinas* 14:1 (1997): 43-55.

<sup>401</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 348.



poem Jonson associates “eating”<sup>402</sup> with “building” and “dwelling” rather than with “thinking” (as Heidegger does) as evident from the lengthy scene in “To Penshurst” that renders the communal eating and offering of gifts (quoted above, ll. 48-64). The second half of “To Penshurst” continues for the most part to be built around the table: King James stops in while he is in the neighborhood and Lady Lisle’s valiant (unplanned) reception of the King and his train recalls the description of the valiant wife described in the concluding chapter of the book of Proverbs (31: 10-31). This emphasis on communal eating, along with the “dwelling” and existential material of the poem suggests that Jonson is drawing attention to Eucharistic symbolism.<sup>403</sup>

Rogers’ article does much to suggest that Jonson’s great poem contains philosophical and theological elements that to some extent may be lost on readers. This may be in part due to Jonson’s use of the plain style in the poem, a style which has the effect of inviting nearly anyone, “all come in,” who is willing to read it. The poet continually highlights ordinary everyday objects and events in the poem like fishing, the grounds, and eating, albeit with a supernatural twist. The juxtaposition between the physical visual imagery with the supernatural creates a tension that never becomes fully resolved in the poem, it is left ambiguous, but this tension does

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<sup>402</sup> See pp. 51-2. Roger’s conclusion is that, “what the house symbolizes is actually accomplished in the sacrament [Holy Eucharist]. This is a sacrament of Real Presence, where eating does not *merely* symbolize the gathering of the fourfold in a thing, but actually cultivates and constructs the body as a thing. And here is the crucial difference between Heidegger and Jonson, between thinking and eating.”

<sup>403</sup> Others too have seen Eucharistic symbolism in “To Penshurst.” See Richard Harp, “Jonson’s House of Wisdom,” *The Ben Jonson Journal* 1.1 (1994): p. 2; also Harp’s “Jonson’s ‘To Penshurst’: The Country House as Church,” *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 7.1 (1988), pp. 82-83; Alaister Fowler, “The Locality of Jonson’s ‘To Penshurst,’” in *Conceitful Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), p. 133; and Gayle Wilson, “Jonson’s Use of the Bible and the Great Chain of Being in ‘To Penshurst,’” *Sel* 8 (1968), p. 85.

crescendo in some of the poem's final lines in which a deeper level of Penshurst Place comes into focus:

These, Penshurst, are thy praise, and yet not all.  
Thy lady's noble, fruitful, chaste withal;  
His children thy great lord may call his own,  
A fortune in this age but rarely known.  
They are and have been taught religion; thence  
Their gentler spirits have sucked innocence.  
Each morn and even they are taught to pray  
With the whole household, and may every day  
Read in their virtuous parents' noble parts  
The mysteries of manners, arms and arts. (ll. 89-98)

Jonson's description of Lady Lisle and her children suggests that religion leads to the contemplation of "The mysteries of manners, arms and arts," (another line of the poem that has been of interest to critics). The passage suggests that there exists a "mystery" in the everyday things that the children see at Penshurst, in the "manners, arms and arts."<sup>404</sup> This is not to say that there exists an occult or hidden meaning, or a "mysterious" symbolic meaning, to every word and image in the poem which must be deciphered, but the opposite, that everyday things in creation can be seen to point to their creator—a reality that prayer and religion make available to those contemplating such mysteries. "To Penshurst" is in many ways Jonson's iconic contemplative poem and the act of contemplation can be seen to operate in the poem in multiple ways: Through the characters in the poem who through contemplation apprehend "mystery," through the poet's poetic contemplation of his subject, and lastly, through the invitation of the reader to enter into the house and into the act of contemplation.

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<sup>404</sup> For another take on the significance of this line in Jonson's poetry, see Michael Schoenfeldt's "The Mysteries of Manners, Armes, and Arts': 'Inviting a Friend to Supper' and 'To Penshurst,'" in *The Muses Commonweale; Poetry and Politics in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Claude Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988).

That “To Penshurst” exhibits a number of “contemplative” characteristics even though “Jonson is not considered a contemplative poet” has been identified by Richard Harp some time ago: “What Jonson proposes to his readers for contemplation...is the creatures of nature as proceeding from divine wisdom and as having a providential order in themselves.<sup>405</sup> This idea is expressed often in the Renaissance by writers such as Cardinal Bellarmine and John Donne, Catholic and Protestant, who Harp notes to be in agreement concerning the nature of contemplation. Donne for example said in a sermon:

The whole frame of the world is the Theatre, and every creature the stage, the medium, the glasse in which we may see God...The Cedar is no better a glasse to see God in, then the Hyssope upon the wall; all things that are, are equally removed from being nothing; and whatsoever hath any beeing, is by that very beeing, a glasse in which we see God, who is the roote, and the fountaine of all beeing.<sup>406</sup>

Donne’s idea that creation is the “glasse in which we see God” is a common one in Christian tradition that can be traced to St. Bonaventure’s *Itenerarium* and as far back as St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” The apprehension in creation of some aspect of the nature of God, wisdom, beauty, proportion, and so forth, belongs properly to this contemplative tradition and also can be found expressed in much of Jonson’s poetry of praise. A number of Jonson’s poems of praise exhibit Christian contemplative characteristics that are

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<sup>405</sup> “Jonson’s House of Wisdom,” *The Ben Jonson Journal* 1.1 (1994): 1-13. P. 9.

<sup>406</sup> *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. Evelyn S. Simpson and George R. Potter (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 8:224. Qtd. in Harp, pp. 5-6.

unique to each poem and therefore rich and varied, but “To Sir Robert Wroth” has been understood as closely related to the contemplative “To Penshurst.”

“To Sir Robert Wroth” follows “To Penshurst” in Jonson’s collection *The Forest*, and the two poems have much in common as one critic observes: “Reading ‘To Penshurst’ in light of ‘To Sir Robert Wroth’ (and vice versa) may help shed new light on the political dimensions of each work, and doing so may also help resolve some difficulties that arise when attention is focused too exclusively on ‘To Penshurst’ in isolation.”<sup>407</sup> Robert Evans proposes to read the two poems as a “linked pair” because “Jonson seems almost to invite us to read the poems together: they are...of roughly equal length; they share obvious thematic concerns; they were both addressed to members of the same extended family; and they were first printed side by side in the 1616 first Folio.”<sup>408</sup> In addition to this, Evans points to many linguistic echoes in “Wroth” that seem to be allusions to concepts established in “To Penshurst.”<sup>409</sup> All of this aside, “To Sir Robert Wroth” is interesting because of its depiction of the life that the addressee of the poem is “blest” to live. The opening of “To Sir Robert Wroth” begins:

How blest art thou canst love the country,  
Whether by choice, or fate, or both;  
And, though so near the city and the court,

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<sup>407</sup> Robert C. Evans, “The Politics (and pairing) of Jonson’s Country House Poems” in *Ben Jonson and the Politics of Genre*, eds. A. D. Cousins and Alison V. Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 79.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79.

<sup>409</sup> See p. 79: “...the references in ‘[To Sir Robert] Wroth’ to ‘proud porches’ and ‘gilded roofes’ (line 15) instantly remind us of the references in ‘Penshurst’ to ‘polished pillars, or a rooffe of gold’ (line 3). Likewise, when Jonson uses such words as ‘exercise’ (line 30) or ‘thy friends’ (line 25) in ‘Wroth’, we can’t help but be reminded of his use of the very same words in ‘Penshurst’ (line 21). The ‘cop’ces’ in ‘Wroth’ (line 38) remind us of the ‘copp’s’ (lines 19, 26) in ‘Penshurst’; the references to ‘PAN’ and ‘SYLVANE’ in ‘Wroth’ (line 47) cannot help but recall the use of the same words in ‘Penshurst’ (lines 11, 16); meanwhile, the allusion to ‘COMUS’ in ‘Wroth’ (line 48) inevitably resembles the allusion to ‘BACCHVS’ in ‘Penshurst’ (line 11). Even the concluding advice, in ‘Wroth’, that the lord of the manor should learn to ‘dwell’ at his estate recalls the famous final words of ‘Penshurst’: ‘thy lord dwells’ (line 102).”

Art ta'en with neither's vice nor sport;  
 That at great times art no ambitious guest 5  
 Of sheriff's dinner, or mayor's feast.  
 Nor com'st to view the better cloth of state,  
 The richer hangings, or crown-plate;  
 Nor thron'g'st (when masquing is) to have a sight  
 Of the short bravery of the night; 10  
 To view the jewels, stuffs, the pains, the wit  
 There wasted, some not paid for yet!  
 But canst, at home, in thy securer rest,  
 Live, with unbought provision blest,  
 Free from proud porches or their gilded roofs...(ll. 1-15) 15

Sir Robert Wroth is praised for his life of contemplation, that is, for living a life remarkably distinct from the life that Jonson continually compares it to and satirizes throughout the poem: The life of “the city and the court.” In fact, the very first line of the poem opens with a direct allusion to a core contemplative idea. Notably, the poet does not begin the poem (line 1) by saying: “How blest art thou canst *live* in the country” but instead with, “How blest art thou canst *love* the country.” “Loving” is the absolutely necessary step toward reaching a contemplative vision, the step toward the act of “seeing” in contemplative terms.<sup>410</sup> For “loving” makes possible a kind of “true possession” unlike the kinds of purely material possessions Jonson lists, the “cloth,” “rich hangings,” crown plate,” “jewels,” “gilded roofs,” and so forth, but Wroth “Live[s], with unbought provision blest” (l. 14). “Living” and “dwelling” in this context would be synonyms, and the link to contemplative tradition in the opening lines of this poem is quite striking. It is a link that becomes strengthened by the idea of “rest” in line 13, for Jonson seems to be suggesting in this opening passage addressed to Wroth that he has achieved the contemplative vision which is “intuition,” that is, “a knowledge of what is actually present.”<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> See Josef Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1998), pp. 58-59.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

The validity of thinking...rests upon what we perceive by direct intuition; but the necessity for thinking is due to a failure of intuition. Reason is an imperfect form of *intellectus*. Contemplation, then, is intuition; that is to say, it is a type of knowing which does not merely move toward its object, but already rests in it. The object is present—as a face or a landscape is present to the eye when the gaze “rests upon it.” In intuition there is no ‘future tension,’ no desire directed toward the future, which desire corresponds with the nature of thinking. The person who knows by intuition has already found what the thinker is seeking; what he knows is present ‘before his eyes.’<sup>412</sup>

The “unbought provision” that Wroth can “live” with “blest” speaks to the kind of knowledge that Wroth has attained through a love of the country, a knowledge of the presence of the infinite intimacy of possession of the vision that is before his eyes.

Crucial here too is the word “securer” in line 13, a word that in Jonson’s Latinate lexicon means “free from care” (*se + cura*). Wroth lives a life “free from care” as well as “Free from proud porches or their gilded roofs” (l. 15), an idea which is amplified by the previous attention the poet has drawn to the “short bravery of the night” (l. 10) which is to say the courtly masque, and the “jewels, stuffs, the pains, the wit / There wasted, some not paid for yet,” which often accompanied such elaborately contrived entertainments. “Freedom” is a continual theme throughout the poem, most notably when the poet turns to describe the “rout of rural folk” that “come thronging in / (Their rudeness then is thought no sin) / Thy noblest spouse affords them welcome grace...Freedom doth with degree dispense” (ll. 53-58). In the following lines, the poet describes the way in which “cares” are dispensed with: “The jolly wassail walks the often

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

round, / And in their cups their cares are drowned: / They think not then which side the cause shall leese, / Nor how to get the lawyer fees” (ll. 59-62). The complementary communal “drinking” present in “To Sir Robert Wroth” to the communal “eating” present in “To Penshurst” in virtually the same place in both poems (around lines 50-60) is interesting, and suggests that the same communal movement occurs in a complementary manner when reading the two poems together. It also suggests that this central communal drinking in “To Sir Robert Wroth” drowns “cares” not because of inebriation, but because of a deeper religious fraternity that is enabled through a “welcome grace” (l. 55) that “fills thy open hall with mirth and cheer” (l. 49).

The final 13 lines of the poem (beginning with line 93) reinforce the contemplative aspect of the copious description of life at the Wroth estate which precede these lines by grounding the descriptions in the poem in a religious context. In much the same manner as in “To Penshurst,” Jonson provides readers with a glimpse into a religious dimension that permeates the ordinary everyday activity in the poem, and this is as explicit in “To Sir Robert Wroth” as it is at the end of “To Penshurst.” The poet’s narrative strategy in “To Sir Robert Wroth” is almost identical to the movement of “To Penshurst:” The poems both begin with an opening that describes the grounds and the estate; the next section describes the action of true communal gathering, of gentry mingling together with “rural folk,” and then both poems conclude with a religious contextualizing that serves as a lens through which readers are to go back through the poem—to see or understand the previous description and action in the poem through a contemplation of how the ordinary events have supernatural (Christian) significance. The reader is invited into contemplation because, quite simply, there is more than meets the eye in the poem—a feature of what has been called Jonson’s “plain style.” It is easy to grasp the imagery and action of the poem (it is plainly communicated) but it requires a kind of mental exertion to access the vision

that Jonson invites readers to see, for it is only available through a sort of “dwelling.” The reader of “To Sir Robert Wroth,” as the reader of “To Penshurst” is first led to enter into “wonder” at the curious poetic portraits painted in the poem, full of life and detail, and the result of this “wonder” (which is the initial state of contemplation) is to nudge readers to enter into a kind of contemplation of a life lived “well,” sound in body, “happy” in mind, and conscious of a shared life of dwelling:

Thy peace is made; and when man’s state is well, ‘Tis better, if he there can dwell.	
God wisheth none should wreck on a strange shelf:	95
To him man’s dearer than t’himself.	
And, howsoever we may think things sweet, He always gives what he knows meet;	
Which who can use is happy: such be thou.	
Thy morning’s and thy evening’s vow	100
Be thanks to him, and earnest prayer, to find A body sound with sounder mind;	
To do thy country service, thyself right; That neither want do thee affright,	
Nor death; but when thy latest sand is spent	105
Thou mayst think life a thing but lent. <sup>413</sup>	

“Contemplation” means literally “with time” (*co + tempus*) and throughout the poem this is precisely the strategy that the poet uses to lead the reader through the imagery and action of life on to these last few concluding lines of the poem, which articulate life from morning till night: “Thy morning’s and thy evening’s vow / Be thanks to him, and earnest prayer, to find / A body sound with sounder mind” (ll. 100-102). Prayerful physical living is what allows the addressee of the poem to achieve, as Jonson says, a state of being “happy,” a state that becomes possible through “dwelling” in and with God in nature. The etymology of “happy” is interesting in this regard; “happy” is from *hap* meaning “happening” or “fortune,” not an idleness. Josef Pieper, a modern scholar of St. Thomas Aquinas, expresses the relationship between happiness and

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<sup>413</sup> Ll. 93-106.



contemplation relative to material reality in a manner that closely parallels both the subject matter and overall sentiment of Jonson's "To Sir Robert Wroth:"

Surely the 'attainment of a created good' can frequently be brought about by purposeful activity. By cleverness, energy, and diligence one can acquire a good many of the goods which are generally considered adjuncts of the happy life: food and drink, house, garden, books, a rich and beautiful wife (perhaps). But we cannot make all these acquisitions, or even a single one of them, quench that thirst so mysterious to ourselves for what we call 'happiness,' 'reflected beatitude.' No one can obtain felicity by pursuit. This explains why one of the elements of being happy is the feeling that a debt of gratitude is owed, a debt impossible to pay. Now, we do not owe gratitude to ourselves. To be conscious of gratitude is to acknowledge a gift.<sup>414</sup>

In the quote above, Pieper's main points and thought process to get to his concluding statement about "gratitude" almost perfectly mirrors Jonson's own movement through the poem "Wroth" and his conclusion in the final line of the poem which states that Wroth's contemplation (his "loving" and "dwelling" in the country and in himself—both of which are God's creation) leads to the cognitive realization that life is a gift: "think[ing] life a thing but lent." The further connection to "happiness" in the recognizing of the gift comes through in Jonson's poem in line 96: "To him [God] man's dearer than t'himself." The happiness that the poet ascribes to Wroth is different in kind from that attainable in the city or in court, not because contemplation is impossible there, but because it is much more difficult to enter into a contemplative relationship with creation amidst the kinds of things that Jonson points out to be present in urban and courtly

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<sup>414</sup> Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, pp. 25-26.

environments, the abundance of “vice and sport” (l. 4). As Pieper suggests in the above quote, happiness is not to be gained by “pursuit,” and “pursuit” is the dominant mode of existence in urban life whether it be the pursuit of social distinction, material possession or endowment, employment, etc. Happiness is the end of contemplation because it is a cognitive apprehension of just those things that God gives man, “He always gives what he knows meet; / Which who can use is happy” (ll. 98-99). Thomas Merton, a twentieth-century mystic, described contemplation as “...finding that place in you where you are here and now being created by God, discovering, in a word, the core of your being and thus the point of contact with everything else in the universe.”<sup>415</sup>

Happiness and contemplation as linked in Jonson’s poem shares with Occidental tradition the core idea that both are not attained through utter passivity; happiness is not a mere “feeling.” This kind of stereotyping of country life, a life free from the care and worry of the city, is common in pastoral poetry as well as in the popular imagination. Rather, as Jonson’s poems show, there is lots of activity, and happiness could be defined as a particular sort of activity, a kind of state. Pieper, again following Aquinas who in many ways represents a pinnacle of thought in this tradition, states that happiness and joy are not something that we take into ourselves, “for [God] ... is so immeasurable that it cannot be seized and ‘assimilated’ by us...we do not take into ourselves the ‘joy of the Lord,’ but conversely are destined to ‘enter into’ it (Matt. 25:21).”<sup>416</sup> This apprehension of an external other, outside of oneself, is precisely what Jonson is pointing to in the concluding lines of the poem “To Sir Robert Wroth.” In addition to this, the “use” that Jonson praises Wroth for in lines 98-99: “He always gives what he knows

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<sup>415</sup> Qtd. in Robert Barron, *Bridging the Great Divide: Musings of a Post-Liberal, Post-Conservative Evangelical Catholic* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p. 206.

<sup>416</sup> *Happiness and Contemplation*, p. 52.

meet; / Which who can *use* is happy: such be thou,”<sup>417</sup> represents the sort of activity in question: participation in the creation and thus nature of God:

Namely, this: what does indeed make us happy is the infinite and uncreated richness of God; but participation in this, happiness itself, is entirely a ‘creatural’ reality governed from within by our humanity; it is *not* something that descends overwhelmingly upon us from outside. That is, it is not only something that happens to us; we ourselves are intensely active participants in our own happiness.<sup>418</sup>

This idea of participation in many ways is contained in Jonson’s incredibly loaded term “dwell” which is present in both in the last line of “To Penshurst” as well as present in one of the final concluding lines (line 94) of “To Sir Robert Wroth.” “To dwell,” it is interesting to note, has an additional etymological link to the Latin *colere*, “to till.”<sup>419</sup> This positive association between labor and life cuts right to the heart of the nature of contemplation and its relationship to Jonson’s poetic vision. It also radically affirms Jonson’s positive views on labor as well as the idea that labor is not an idea at odds with contemplation.

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<sup>417</sup> The italics are my addition.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>419</sup> See Harp, “Jonson’s House of Wisdom,” p. 4.

## EPILOGUE

Ben Jonson's poetry is deeply personal, moral, and perhaps more than anything, the work of a poet who spent time with both his subjects and his teachers, be they books, friends, or his Master Camden. The laborious nature of his composition and reading, as this dissertation shows, is not a one-way street. Appreciation of Jonson's poetry requires "care" and time, although of course his poetry need not be thought of *only* in this way. Poems like "To Celia," "To Penshurst," and "Inviting a Friend to Supper" show multiple sides of Jonson, for although they can be read merely for aesthetic pleasure, the poems also contain depth of construction and meaning that bleeds from the words right off of the page. Jonson's words are Jonson's words. He encountered them in authors he read, in the society in which he lived, but he turned them thoroughly into his own. One example is the word "beauty" which Jonson has in mind when he writes of Venetia Digby. In the poem, "The Picture of the Body," Jonson associates nothing short of the whole of cosmic order with beauty, such as the "universe" complete with "constellations," and closer to home, "Paradise," "the cloud," and "the tree." Beauty is all of creation in harmony, as "the cloud" becomes dispersed by light beams to "show the universe:"

Last, draw the circles of this globe,  
And let there be a starry robe  
Of constellations 'bout her hurled;  
And thou has painted beauty's world. (ll. 25-28)

But it is not impersonal. Jonson knew the Digbys personally; Sir Kenelm inherited Jonson's papers when he died. The painter in the poem is not a vacuous rhetorical exemplar of the *paragone* tradition for the sake of *tradition* (like so many poets used) but a real painter, Anthony van Dyck who painted a portrait that Jonson knew and responded to in his poem.

Jonson's poetry exhibits his personal touch between his subjects and his poems and his words throughout the corpus of his work. The associations he makes with beauty in one poem are not merely incidental, to be left behind in favor of ideas and words that will be more expedient to use for praise in another poem. His words hold ideas, like houses for thoughts, lasting ones that he inherited and continually shaped. For example, in a short poem printed in the "Songs and Poems" section of Donaldson's edition of Jonson's *Poems*, "A Vision of Beauty," one can observe that Jonson's ideas about beauty are connected to the same ideas of painting/drawing, the universe, the form (*forma* in Latin meant "beauty"), the figure (which is an incredibly deep word related to "face"), the frame, perfection, purity, in short all of those things that Jonson had included in his sequence of poems to Venetia Digby:

It was a beauty that I saw  
So pure, so perfect, as the frame  
Of all the universe was lame;  
To that one figure, could I draw  
Or give least line of it a law!

A skein of silk without a knot!  
A fair march made without a halt!  
A curious form without a fault!  
A printed book without a blot!  
All beauty, and without a spot!

So far from being incidental, this feature of Jonson's poetry more than anything else explains why he thought of his poems as "studies." I have shown throughout this dissertation how the richness of Jonson's poems can be happily excavated by studying the strange words that the poet uses over and over in multiple poems. Add to this that Jonson is not alone in doing this; as I discuss above, many renaissance writers understood there to be a similar depth and historical force to the words that they used. Etymology was a part of rhetorical education, and philology

was the natural a product of heavy schooling in Latin (and somewhat less Greek) that was common during this time.

If I could go back and revise now at leisure, I would have spent more time investigating the word “face” and the related words “figure” and “form.” Just the other day I stumbled across an essay that Erich Auerbach wrote entitled “Figure” and it would have been good to include in my text the history of the word that he provides in that essay. In any event, the word “face” for Jonson is a favorite because like a sword it cuts right to the heart of reality, or more accurately, to the heart between reality and appearance in which he understood human life to exist. “Sense” is a related word to “face” because it likewise encompassed the idea of the essential nature of things in creation together with the external appearance of reality (not always superficial, but at times purely so). This tension, as I discussed in chapter 3 above, enabled poetry to reach into both physical and spiritual realms in the work of writers ranging as widely as Saint Robert Southwell and William Shakespeare. The ideas present in the words “face” and “sense” also compress very well the complications that Jonson encountered in the relationship with his longtime collaborator Inigo Jones. That Jonson detested show for show’s sake is no secret, but that Jonson did not do so out of purely egotistical motivation perhaps is not.

One point that I should make is that it was not my intention at any point in this dissertation to discount or undermine the very good and plentiful work done by critics and scholars of Jonson’s poetry, authorship, and labor. Instead I only mean to add to it. Jonson clearly did sell his book in a market fraught with implications on his work and he did clearly think of such matters a great deal (the first three poems of the *Epigrams* testify to this). But I do not think that this was his sole motivation for writing and that a more accurate picture of Jonson’s authorship could be grasped if this idea were considered (John Donne, for one, asks us

to). The ideas that have come about from this study of words were a surprise to me and they will probably be a surprise to many.

Going forward and preparing a manuscript for publication, I think that the last section on “labor” could be trimmed down significantly in order to make room for considering a few more words. Having now a good sense of the depth of Jonson’s poetic lexicon, observable in his use of “beauty” in the two poems discussed above in the epilogue here, the next step would be to begin to tackle Jonson’s drama. I believe that a reading of Jonson’s drama through the lens of his own poetic diction would bring many interesting new issues for future critics and scholars to investigate, as well as assist general readers to gain a deeper appreciation of Jonson’s poetry.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### **Education**

Ph.D., English Literature, UNLV 2017.  
Fields of Specialization: Renaissance Poetry, Philology

M.A., English Literature, UNR 2010.  
Fields of Specialization: Medieval Literature, Old English, Renaissance

B.A., English, UNLV 2004

### **Papers Presented**

“Ben Jonson’s Poetry of Contemplation,” Sixteenth Century Society and Conference, October 28, 2017.

“Prince Hal and Falstaff: Friendship, Play, and the Education of a Christian Prince,” Wooden O Symposium, August 9, 2017.

“Milton and the Middle Ages: Poetic Analogues and Visual Representations of *The War in Heaven, Expulsion of the Rebel Angels, and Michael and the Dragon*,” Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Conference, June 24, 2017.

"Prudence and Memory in Hamlet," Sixteenth Century Society and Conference, October 23, 2015.

"Fathers and Sons in the Henry V Plays and Shakespeare's Sources," Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Conference, August 4, 2015.

“Ben Jonson’s Dramatic Experimentation in *Bartholomew Fair*,” Northern California Renaissance Conference, May 5, 2007.

### **Languages**

Latin (reading), Old English (reading), German (reading)

### **Teaching Experience**

Graduate Teaching Assistant in UNLV English Department spring 2013 to present and have taught a number of composition and literature courses.

## **Other Experience**

Appointed as Assistant to the English Graduate Coordinator for the English Department in Fall 2013. Currently still holding this administrative position as a Graduate Assistant.

Appointed Department Research Assistant for the 2013/2014 academic year and assisted faculty research projects for Charles Whitney, Julia Lee, and Richard Harp.

## **Awards**

2017

Alan D. Breck Award for best paper by a junior scholar at the RMMRA conference held in Grand Junction, CO (\$300 plus publication in the conference journal).

2016

Liberal Arts Ph.D. Student Faculty Summer Research Award (\$3,000)

2015

Brooks Hudgins Award for seminar paper "Prudence and Memory in Hamlet" (runner-up, \$250)

2014

Liberal Arts Ph.D. Student Faculty Summer Research Award (\$3,000)

## **Publications**

Harp, Richard and Steven Hrdlicka. "The Critical Backstory." In *Othello: A Critical Reader*, ed. Robert C. Evans. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 15-49.

"The Role of Rumor and the Prodigal Son: Shakespeare's Sources and Fathers and Sons in the Second Henriad." *Quidditas* 36 (2015): 73-83.

"Ben Jonson's Literary Appetites." *Gale Researcher*, edited by Kirilka Stavreva. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2017.

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"Milton and the Middle Ages: Poetic Analogues and Visual Representations of *The War in Heaven*, *Expulsion of the Rebel Angels*, and *Michael and the Dragon*." *Quidditas* 38 (2017): 6-36.