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BEN JONSON AND THE MIRROR: FOLLY KNOWS NO GENDER

by

Sherry Broadwell Niewoonder

A Dissertation
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Faculty of The Graduate College
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BEN JONSON AND THE MIRROR: FOLLY KNOWS NO GENDER

Sherry Broadwell Niewoonder, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2001

Ben Jonson, Renaissance poet and playwright, has been the subject of renewed evaluation in recent scholarship, particularly new historicism and cultural materialism. The consensus among some current scholars is that Jonson overtly practices and advocates misogyny in his dramas. Such theorists suggest that Jonson both embodies and promulgates the anti-woman rhetoric of his time, basing their position on contemporary cultural material, religious tracts, and the writings of King James I. However, the external evidence cited by late twentieth-century writers as to the nature of women's position in seventeenth-century England is contradictory and speculative. A more productive method of determining misogyny in Jonson's dramaturgy is to look into the plays themselves.

The approach taken in this dissertation is to focus on the question of misogyny, not from a position outside the text, but from a standpoint within the various dramatic worlds of Jonson's plays through three periods of his writing. *Every Man in his Humour* (1598), *Volpone* (1609), *Epicoene* (1609), and *The Alchemist* (1610) represent the early period. *Bartholomew*

Fair (1614) and *The Devil is an Ass* (1616) reflect the middle period, and *The Staple of News* (1625), *The New Inn* (1629), and *The Magnetic Lady* (1632) represent the final period of Jonson's dramatic works. More specifically, the strategy is to focus on Jonson's satiric comedies through three periods of his writing in order to evaluate his attitude toward women, thereby to develop a hierarchy of wit among his female characters.

Jonson, I find rejects the romance genre so capably practiced by his contemporary Shakespeare, preferring that drama reflect real life. In satire, Jonson discovers the perfect vehicle to practice Horace's dictum that poetry should instruct and delight; for, by definition, satire ridicules human folly for the purpose of correction. Since folly is the characteristic Jonson censures, then wit, in contrast, becomes the admired trait. "Wit," in the context of this discussion, is defined as an innate astuteness or ability to think on one's feet. The conclusions reached include (1) that Jonson creates proactive female characters in every phase of his dramatic work and (2) that women, at every level of astuteness, serve to highlight a male who is even more foolish. Jonson's net catches ineptitude in males and females alike.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
CHAPTER	
I. THE PAST IS PROLOGUE	1
Introducing Ben Jonson	1
Notes to The Past Is Prologue	6
II. RECONSIDERING JONSON'S POSITION ON WOMEN	8
Conditions that Formed Jonson's Character	8
Re-evaluating Jonson's Work	19
Jonson's Relationships with Women	39
Notes to Reconsidering Jonson's Position on Women	42
III. WOMEN AND WIT	51
Jonson's Hierarchy of Female Wit	51
Proactive Representatives: Dol, Ursula, and Polish	56
Jonson's Active Representations: Bridget and Grace	79
Reactive Representatives: Dame Pliant and Lady Lodestone	99
Notes to Women and Wit	109
IV. UNIQUE REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN AND WIT	112
<i>Epicoene</i> : Male Construct of the Female Gender	112
Pru: Nobody's Long Lost Daughter	124
Notes to Unique Representations of Women and Wit	138

Table of Contents—continued

V. CELIA, HELPLESS OR INSIPID?: EVEN SHARPBEEK HAD A CHOICE	143
Celia's Hermetically Sealed World	143
Notes to Celia, Helpless or Insipid? Even Sharpbek Had a Choice	160
VI. FRANCES FITZDOTTREL: THE ULTIMATE HEROINE	163
Frances Overcomes the Circumstances of a Patriarchal System	163
Notes to Frances Fitzdottrel: The Ultimate Heroine	184
VII. BEN JONSON IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY	186
Jonson's Legacy	186
Notes to Ben Jonson in the Twenty-First Century ..	196
APPENDICES	
A. Ben Jonson: His Life, Plays, and Masques	197
B. Correlation of Women and Wit in Jonson's Three Dramatic Periods	200
BIBLIOGRAPHY	202

CHAPTER I

THE PAST IS PROLOGUE

Introducing Ben Jonson

At the time of his death in 1637, Ben Jonson was the foremost man of letters in England. Largely self-taught, the dramatist developed a style that united his love for the classics with an innate bent for satire. Much of restoration dramatic comedy—especially evidenced in Wycherley and Congreve's comedy of manners--finds its roots in Jonson's ground-breaking work. Tastes change, and Jonson's realistic satire took a back seat to the more popular, inimitable romance comedy of Shakespeare. Paralytic strokes, loss of court preferment, and plays that on occasion failed to outlive their initial performance—*The New Inn*, for example--combined to distance Jonson from his previous position of authority. However, the last quarter of the twentieth century, largely the result of the emergence of feminism as a literary critical strategy, has produced a welcome resurgence in the scholarly study of Jonsonian drama, including the less- popular later works. Feminists, allied with new historicists and cultural materialists, united in their desire to demonstrate that politics and literature form a hermeneutic circle, have

eagerly pointed to Jonson's work as reflecting the political and social mores of his day.

In an effort to determine that Jonson endorsed the misogyny of his time, scholars have brought forth for analysis plays that have not seen the light of day for centuries, notably *The Devil is an Ass* (1515), *The New Inn* (1629), and *The Magnetic Lady* (1632).¹

The purpose of the following work is not to refute the scholarship of the later-day critics; rather, the intention is to bring balance to the new arguments. Certainly new perspectives add a richness to the dramatist's work, but this richness should not come at the cost of the text. Evidence of misogyny in a distant past is just as good as its sources, and these are, at best, conflicting. In the final analysis, Jonson's dramatic world is all that is important. Therefore, in this inquiry, when external evidence conflicts with the text, the text must reign supreme.

The following analysis will examine Jonson's work in order to advance the position that Jonson treats his women characters no better nor worse than the men. By definition, the purpose of satire is to ridicule human folly for the purpose of instruction. Jonson's dramatic vision prizes wit over foolishness, yet Jonson does not ascribe gender to this binary. Men are not always clever nor women always silly in Jonson's dramatic world. Necessarily, examples in the study have been carefully chosen for the purpose of best

illustrating Jonson's dramatic view of women and wit.² This is not to assert that Jonson is always kind to his female characters, for certainly he is not. But many male representations feel the keenness of their creator's knife as well. Although the two tragedies *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603) and *Catiline, His Conspiracy* (1611) feature extremely able women, notably the murderous Livia, a focus on the satiric element of Jonson's drama dictates that the scope be limited to comedy. Certainly Jonson's earlier work—such as *Every Man in His Humour* (1598)—is short on female characters, but the seeds are planted that develop into the stronger, more-fully developed females of his later work. Viewed in this light Bridget in *Every Man in His Humour* is important because she incarnates into Grace in *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), and finally develops into the sensible Pru in *The New Inn* and the dynamic Frances in *The Devil Is an Ass* (1616).

If Jonson's handling of female characters appears uneven, so is his depiction of males. That is because, unlike Shakespeare, he does not develop character through the course of his drama. Hidden motives do not interest Jonson; rather, his characters are envisioned on a spectrum of mental acuity, a measure that in Jonsonian drama is fixed. Dim-witted characters do not become enlightened, and clever characters are only displaced by those with more savvy. The plot develops as a result of interaction between the cheaters and the cheated. Viewed in this way, Celia, the afflicted wife in

Volpone (1606), is an innocent victim in a vicious game between Volpone and Corvino. Arguably the most helpless female in Jonson's canon of female characters, Celia is not overly-endowed with coping strategies. In spite of her limited mental resources, Jonson never suggests that she deserves her fate, and in the conclusion Celia is treated kindly by the playwright, for she is allowed an escape from her difficult circumstances. Other female representations might be seen as targets of Jonson's misogyny, notably the Collegiates in *Epicoene*. On closer inspection, it is evident that Jonson has an entirely different strategy in mind, for the foppish male characters, in that comedy, receive the same or worse, caustic delineation. It may be said that the purpose of such a negative portrayal of the Collegiates is to foreground the more detestable character of the males. Moreover, Morose the alleged misogynist is actually a misanthrope, a fact that suggests a different reading of Jonson's dramatic purpose. Inversion of gender qualities is a secondary device for the purpose of emphasizing Morose's desire to avoid any kind of human interaction.

Although Jonson foregrounds his often outrageous characters for the purpose of ridicule, his drama does have another purpose. Besides castigating individuals, he also derides manifestations of society--particularly, London society--that he deems corrupt: sham alchemy, inventive news

staple, idealistic Platonic love, and early capitalistic speculators are all objects of his satiric pen. Characters appear even more ludicrous against such an ugly background of self interest within a city that is increasingly corrupt.

In summary, the focus of this study encompasses the following Jonsonian comedic dramas: *Every Man In His Humour* (1598), *Epicoene* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), *Volpone* (1606), *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), *The Devil is an Ass* (1616), *The New Inn* (1629), and *The Magnetic Lady* (1632). Such a sampling affords the necessary coordinates for viewing an overall trajectory of development in Jonson's female characters over the course of three dramatic phases: early, middle and late Jonson. Although the early female representation of Awdrey Turfe in *Tale of a Tub* is nothing more than a remnant of a Plautine plot, a year later Jonson dramatically creates Bridget, the prototype of the positive, active female character. The selection of plays from the three developmental phases provides grounding for developing a major hypothesis: Although Jonson's later plays portray more resourceful, proactive females, his oeuvre is never without such a representation. Dol Common in *The Alchemist* is Jonson's first dynamic female character (early stage), followed by Ursula in *Bartholomew Fair* and Frances Fitzdottrel in *The Devil is an Ass* (middle stage), and concluding with Pru in *The New Inn* and Polish in *The Magnetic Lady* (late stage). Over the span of 34 years, Jonson is never without a strong female character. In

order to reveal the dynamic nature of Jonson's characterization of women, a variety of female characters will be evaluated in terms of Jonson's most prized characteristic, wit, in order to determine whether gender bias in its extreme form, misogyny, truly exists. External evidence will be considered when indicated, but the ultimate authority will always be the text.

Notes to The Past Is Prologue

¹According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "misogyny," meaning "hostility to women," was not coined until 1656. Clearly, what the feminists refer to is a codified system, patriarchy, that holds men to be superior to women. In *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, Lawrence Stone writes:

The growth of patriarchy was deliberately encouraged by the new Renaissance state on the traditional grounds that the subordination of the family to the head is analogous to, and also a direct contributory cause of, subordination of subjects to the sovereign. (152)

Stone explains that even this codified system was challenged later in the seventeenth century by the rise of the "companionate marriage," a relationship that "demanded a reassessment of power relations between the sexes since it depended on a greater sense of equality and sharing" (336).

²The Oxford English Dictionary dates this meaning of "wit" as used in this dissertation to the late thirteenth

century. A full definition includes the following qualities:
Good or great mental capacity; intellectual ability; genius,
talent, cleverness, mental quickness or sharpness, acumen.

CHAPTER II

RECONSIDERING JONSON'S POSITION ON WOMEN

Conditions that Formed Jonson's Character

Ben Jonson (1572-1637) still remains an enigma nearly four hundred years after his death, for his character was complex and conflicted. A determination based on contemporary records and correspondence could conclude that the dramatist was a drunken scoundrel who routinely attacked his friends behind their backs. On the other hand, by the time of his death and burial in Westminster Abbey, "rare" Ben Jonson had become the most celebrated poet of his day outshining even Shakespeare and Donne in the eyes of their contemporaries. W. David Kay in his study *Ben Jonson* avers that Jonson, at his death, was considered the "pre-eminent English poet and playwright" (viii). Whatever the truth about Jonson, it is clear that he generated no neutral feelings. David Riggs in his biography *Ben Jonson* suggests that even the evidence of his own mouth is irreconcilable. The autobiographical passages in his published work, mainly the lyrical poetry and *Discoveries*, suggest a scholarly man who treasured the company of his intimate companions, whereas in his extended private conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden Jonson speaks

easily about his drinking bouts, petty disagreements, killings, womanizing, and criminal record (1). The obvious answer to this conundrum is that Jonson was both the scholar who enjoyed his "sons of Ben" and the swaggering braggart determined to be the foremost man of letters in Jacobean England.¹

The reason for his divided character is possibly due to the fact that Jonson possessed an exceptional talent yet was born without the means to develop such talent. Born after the death of his clergyman father, Jonson was reared in Westminster by his mother Rebecca and stepfather Robert Brett a respected bricklayer of his day.² Brett served as both Warden and Master of the Tylers and Bricklayers Company and eventually apprenticed young Ben as a bricklayer. Jonson's mother may have envisioned a loftier future for the son of her first marriage, for his Scots-clergyman father must have possessed a gentleman's education. Although born in Westminster, Jonson was proud of his Scot's gentry ancestry. Kay proposes that much of the motivating power behind Jonson's ambitious literary career was the desire to regain the social position that he considered his birthright (1). Jonson told William Drummond that

His grandfather came from Carlisle, and he thought from Annandale to it, he served Henry VIII, and was a gentleman. His father lost all his estate under Queen Mary, having been cast in prison and forfeited, and at last turned minister: so he was a minister's son. (HS 1.139)

As a day student, Jonson first attended a private school in St. Martin's church and then the College of St. Peter at Westminster. The classical education Jonson received there and his contact with William Camden were to make a life-long impact on his art. Young Jonson responded eagerly as Camden, the Second Master, encouraged him in achieving the goals of Westminster: the development of a pious and moral character as well as the mastery of both oral and written Latin and Greek. Kay suggests that Jonson would have followed a rigorous course of study. In the first and second form, he would have studied the moral distichs of Cato and the colloquies about schoolboy life by Vives and Corderius. In addition, he would have read selections from Aesops's *Fables* and from the Roman dramatist Terence, the *Sacred Dialogues* of Sebastian Castalio, and the *Familiar Colloquies* of Erasmus. In the third and fourth form it is likely that Jonson would have added the works of the Roman historian Sallust to the continued reading the works of Terence. Other requirements would have included the epistles of Cicero as edited by Johannes Sturm, Cicero's *On Moral Duty*, Ovid's *Laments*, and selections from Martial, Catullus, and Erasmus. In the fourth form Jonson would have learned Greek grammar and begun reading the *Dialogues* of Lucian. In the fifth form he would have read in Latin, for instance, the universal history of Justin, Cicero's *On Friendship*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*—and in Greek, selections from Plutarch and the orations of Socrates. In the sixth and seventh form

he would also have studied Virgil and Caesar's *Commentaries* in Latin, as well as Homer and the Psalms in Greek. In the seventh form, Jonson would have studied Hebrew. It is not certain exactly how long Jonson stayed at the Westminster School, but Jonson's *English Grammar* does indicate a familiarity with Hebrew, a seventh-form subject at Westminster.³

The early years were a constant struggle for a classical education, for recognition of his talent, and for patronage so that he could write without being concerned about his daily needs and those of his rapidly growing family. Mark Eccles in "Jonson's Marriage" verifies much of the information gathered by Herford and Simpson. The registry of St. Magus, which Eccles personally examined, contains an entry stating that Ben Jonson married Anne Lewis on November 14, 1594. Two children are known to have been born to this union: Benjamin, born in 1596 and died in 1603 of the plague, and Mary who died at six months. The lives of these children are verified in the moving elegies by their father describing the son as "Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry" (*Epigram XVI* "On My First Son") while young Mary is memorialized as "Mary, the daughter of her parent's youth" (*Epigram XXII*). In addition, Eccles insists that Jonson fathered at least three other children: Joseph in 1599, Benjamin in 1607, and Elizabeth and another Benjamin in 1610.⁴ Herford and Simpson describe at least one marital

separation that occurred between the dramatist and his wife who was, according to Drummond, "a shrew yet honest" (139). Jonson's portrait of his wife tells as much about himself. His youth given to venery very likely put a strain on the marriage (140). "From his home he remained absent for five years," writes Herford. Eccles explains that during this time Jonson first lived with Sir Robert Townsend and later Esme Stuart, Lord Aubigny. That he eventually reconciled with Anne is suggested by the mention of a Blackfriar's address in the epistle to *Volpone* coupled with Eccles finding a record of a son named Ben, born to Ben Jonson of Blackfriars in 1607 (267).

At the end of the sixteenth century, Jonson kept extraordinary company. No doubt this was partly due to continuing friendships with his old schoolmaster William Camden and his Westminster schoolfellows. Although never a member of the Society of Antiquaries which Camden and his former pupil Sir Robert Cotton founded in 1587, Jonson was on close terms with Cotton. Other influential friends included Richard Martin, the lawyer, to whom Jonson dedicated *Poetaster*, and Hugh Holland, a former Westminster boy for whose poem *Pancharis* Jonson contributed commendatory verses in 1603. Other literary friends included fellow dramatist Michael Drayton and John Davies the epigrammist. Even though he had achieved a certain amount of esteem, Jonson's abrasive personality and superior attitude brought him into conflict

with fellow dramatists, notably Dekker and Marston, who did not share Jonson's lofty, classical ambitions for drama. Rather than serving as an exponent of moral values, Dekker and Marston believed that drama chiefly should entertain. This difference in opinion led to the *poetomachia* or Poet's Quarrel that occurred at the turn of the seventeenth century.⁵ Jonson's unstable and often violent temperament worked against him at every turn as he sought patronage in Elizabeth's court. In 1597 along with other actors, Jonson went to prison for seditious material in *The Isle of Dogs*. Barely a year later he was in prison again, this time for murder; he killed fellow actor Gabriel Spencer, in a duel. Although the crime was a capital offence, Jonson pleaded benefit of clergy, was branded with a "T" on his thumb (for Tyburn), and was eventually released.⁶ During his second imprisonment, Jonson was converted to Catholicism which did not improve his standing in Elizabeth's religiously repressive state. It was not until after the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 when James denied recusants access to his court that Jonson returned to the Church of England.⁷ With such flagrant contempt for authority, Jonson found favor difficult to curry. Court society considered Jonson's work *Cynthia's Revels* as an attempt to gain Elizabeth's favor through outrageous flattery. Still, to be fair, temperament and religion were only two reasons Jonson was denied favor in Elizabeth's court. Riggs explains that Jonson's impoverished background allowed him no quarter in a

court made up of wealthy, self-serving aristocrats (70).

Yet it is just this combination of circumstances, his criminal record and his religion, that allows the angry young satirist to focus his dramatic wit. His dramatic world, with few exceptions, is a murky place without heroes or heroines. In order to express his satiric themes, Jonson returned to his classical models—Aristophanes, Terence, and Plautus—infused old themes with the distinctive character of London. In this way, Jonson developed a type of satiric comedy new to his times. As an indication of a new sense of self, Jonson, around 1603, changed the spelling of his surname by dropping out the “h.” Perhaps the young playwright wished to sever ties with his Elizabethan past by uniquely spelling his name. Riggs suggests that “Johnson” was an inherited name (son of John) connoting familial attachments while “Jonson” was an invented name that implied autonomy (115). For whatever reason, Jonson was prepared for the change of fortune that accompanied the arrival of fellow Scot James Stuart who claimed England’s crown in 1603. Riggs states:

Jonson’s services were especially suited to James because Jonson recognized that the new king . . . prized earthy humor and broad repartee. The Scottist court of James VI was far more casual and unkempt than its English counterpart and James persisted in his unmannerly ways when he came south in 1603. . . . He liked to engage in coarse raillery with members of his entourage, and he expected them to respond in kind. (112)

Raillery in James's view was a disguised compliment, and Jonson was the only aspiring court poet who realized that James, called "the wisest fool in Christendom" by Henry IV of France, was more likely to reward a poet with whom he could privately banter. Paradoxically both men also shared a love of learning. Kay portrays the king as a man of letters, fluent in Latin, Greek, French, and Italian. He had earlier evidenced an interest in poetry, publishing *The Essays of a Prentice in the Divine Art of Poesy* in 1584 and *His Majesty's Poetical Exercises at Vacant Hours* in 1591. In addition, James wrote two books on kingship, *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598) which sets out his doctrine of divine right opposing the Presbyterian doctrine of Two Kingdoms, and *Basilikon Doron* (1603), a study in practical advice for his son and heir, Prince Henry, who died of typhoid fever, at the age of 18, in 1612 (65). Best known of James's work, however, remains *Daemonology* (1597).⁸ The period of James I's reign, 1603-1625, was equally productive for Jonson who under the king's aegis wrote plays, masques, poetry, and epigrams. An acknowledged master in such diverse literary forms, Jonson was to become the foremost man of letters in the seventeenth century. His best known plays--*Volpone* (1606), *Epicoene* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614)--were written during this period.

Jonson and his sovereign shared the trait of a divided psyche. Both men were proponents of classical restraint and

moderation, yet both were given to unusual excess in practice. Leah Marcus in *The Politics of Mirth* explains that James's court was characterized by ungovernable appetites: both gluttony and drunkenness were common. James was excessive in his love of hunting; he would hunt for days at a time, ignoring pleas of matters of state. Then, of course, there was James's sexual preference for other men: Buckingham and Somerset were only two courtiers whom James favored (11). Although Jonson did not share James's sexual proclivities, similarities did exist between subject and sovereign. As James was jealous of his power and prerogative, so was Jonson sensitive concerning challenges to his rule in the realm of English poetry. Jonson's high regard for James is evident in his frequent duplication of James's accomplishments. Jonson published his *Works* in 1616 to coincide with the publication of the *Works* of James I, and the dramatist trekked to Scotland in 1618 in imitation of the royal progress of 1617 (Marcus 12).

Jonson also enjoyed lengthy service to James's Queen, Anne of Denmark. James's bride came from a court more sophisticated than that of the Scots. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski in "Enacting Opposition: Queen Anne" describes Anne's background.⁹ Her father Frederick II was the patron of Tycho Brache and built the observatory at Hveen for him. Her mother Sophie studied the sciences and supported scholars and authors (16-17). As life in James's patriarchal and homosexual court

became too difficult for Anne, she removed her court to Denmark house where she developed her own fashionable circle. Yet James viewed himself as an indulgent husband; for example, he magnanimously forgave Anne for shooting his favorite hound by mistake during a hunting trip. As proof of his forgiveness, the king gave Anne a diamond and put Greenwich into her jointure (26). It is with this queen that Jonson and Inigo Jones formed an association for the creation and development of the court masque. Lewalski describes Anne's role:

She commissioned, produced and performed with her ladies in the first masques. Contemporary references crediting the Queen with a designing hand in several of the masques are generally dismissed as conventional puffery, and of course she was not in any usual sense a third partner with Jonson and Inigo Jones. But Jonson's own comments indicate that she often proposed the governing concept for a masque—the idea of black-faced Africans in the *Masque of Blackness*, or the idea for an antimasque in *Queenes*. The queen and her masquing ladies may also have offered other suggestions as the masques took shape. (28)

The dramatic form of the masque usually celebrated an occasion such as a wedding or coronation and took place in a private arena attended by court society who performed as actors. Jonson's scholarly bent made him the ideal collaborator with Jones whose Italian studies had taught him stage devices such as the dramatic effects of lighting and scenic transformation. Again, Jonson's strong opinions placed him in disagreement with his partner, for Jonson maintained that the masque should be based on significant action while Jones believed that the spectacle or the dramatic means was

more important. Examples of masques produced by Jonson, Jones, and Queen Anne include: *Masque of Blackness* (1605), *Masque of Beauty* (1608), and *Masque of Queens* (1609) which extols, in Lewalski's words, "the virtues of the twelve greatest Queens of history, whose virtue, martial prowess and wise governance are now epitomized in Bel-Anna" (36).

The watershed year for Jonson was 1616 when King James expressed appreciation for the poet, "our well-beloved servant Benjamin Jonson," in the form of a yearly pension of 100 marks (66 pounds). Jonson, who had always been meticulous with marginal notes in his writings, determined to see his works into print; the 1616 Folio was, according to Kay, Jonson's "most audacious piece of literary self-presentation, one that claimed classic status for his plays, masques and poems and presented them as parts of a unified corpus inspired by his high conception of the poet's calling" (141). The recognition as court poet and the publication of his complete work, taken with his honorary Masters of Arts degrees from both Oxford and Cambridge provided the elements that established Jonson's reputation, for many, as the foremost man of letters of the seventeenth century.¹⁰

Unfortunately, with the death of James and the ascension of his son Charles, Jonson's fortunes again suffered. Kay suggests that by the late 1620s Jonson was a court poet without function or pay.¹¹ As neither Charles nor his French queen Henrietta Maria favored the masque, Jonson once again

turned to the public playhouse with plays rudely characterized by Dryden as "dotages." *The Staple of News* (1626), *The New Inn* (1629), and *The Magnetic Lady* (1632) were viewed by some as less brilliant than Jonson's earlier work. Felled by a paralytic stroke, Jonson spent the last seven years of his life confined to his bed where he died in penury. He is buried—upright—in Westminster Abbey in the north aisle of the nave where his grave is marked by a simple stone, engraved "O Rare Ben Jonson."¹²

Re-evaluating Jonson's Work

After centuries of being eclipsed by his contemporary Shakespeare, Ben Jonson has been, in effect, rediscovered. Late twentieth-century critics have actively re-evaluated not only the so-called major plays—*Volpone* (1606), *The Alchemist* (1609), *Epicoene* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614)—but also the alleged "dotages:" *The Devil Is An Ass* (1616), *The Staple of News* (1626), *The New Inn* (1629), and *The Magnetic Lady* (1632). Previously considered inferior to his better known works, these plays are emerging as cornerstones in understanding shaded nuances in Jonson's overall dramatic purpose: to ridicule the folly of mankind. His distinctive mode of satiric comedy, Kay explains, depends on sharpening "normative judgments and satiric detail while down-playing romantic sentiment" (22). These judgments bear Jonson's unmistakable voice as he censures both personal and socio-

political folly. For Jonson's keen eye, objects of satire existed everywhere. Gulls provide behavior ripe for ridicule as they ape exaggerated mannerisms codified in the social arts, such as smoking, bowing, and walking. Through imitation the fops aspire to a higher social class. Socio-political butts range from the rascality of alchemy and economic monopolies to the scurrilous manufacture of news for the burgeoning staple.

It is precisely in these objects of satire--both personal and socio-political--that late-twentieth-century critics perceive misogyny. New historicist critics Helen Ostovich , Karen Newman, Peter Stallybrass, Leah S. Marcus, and Stephen Greenblatt unite with material feminist Jean E. Howard in viewing texts as political, exploitative tools that shape the ideology of gender construction.¹³ The idea of patriarchy, in these critical paradigms, is crucial not only to the female's gendered position within the Jacobean world but also to the definition of her very being. Through the scrutiny of contemporary documents relating to patriarchy and gender (sermons, bride books, and conduct books), cultural feminists and new historicists posit an alternative reading of Renaissance texts. For these critical writers, patriarchy is equated with misogyny, and this male-superior attitude led to the marginalization of women. Greenblatt in *Shakespearean Negotiations* asserts that such negativity was carried to the extent that allowed for one sex: male. Greenblatt's position

is based on medical discourses of the time that saw only male genitalia in both men and women. Since the female genitalia was smaller, it was determined that women were imperfectly formed men (88).

Jean Howard, on the other hand, in "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," asserts that the Renaissance "needed the idea of two genders, one subordinate to the other, to provide a key element of its hierarchical view of the social order and to buttress its gendered division of labor" (423). Howard insists, in response to Greenblatt, that if women were not depicted as anatomically different from men, they were still seen as different in terms of characteristics—softer and weaker—and therefore subordinate. Pointing to *Epicoene* as an example of her position, Howard states:

This is a play saturated with the fear of women who have moved or might move from their proper place of subordination, and it points to some of the changing social conditions that made such movement a possibility and a threat. Specifically, the play, set in contemporary London and produced in 1608 for the boy company at Whitefriars, shows how the emerging metropolis offers new opportunities for women to be other than chaste, silent, and obedient. . . . The play's misogyny finds its most complex expression in the figure of Morose who hating everything about the bustling world of London (upon which, ironically, he depends for his wealth), especially hates the thought of marrying a bossy, noisy London wife. (429-30)

Howard views Morose as wanting to exploit women's power of reproduction without having to deal with a wife's needs as a person. She believes that Jonson's solution, by revealing

Epicoene to be a boy, demonstrates his support of the prevailing misogynistic view of women. According to such an approach, not only does the substitution usurp woman's place, it also acts out a degrading masculine construction of her. Neither Dauphine nor Morose marry, and so the property "conveniently passes from one generation to another without the disruptive agency of woman having anywhere to be openly acknowledged" (430). Howard's premise virtually exiles Jonson's plays to a circumscribed reality of thick-headed inflexibility—a pejorative assessment not found in the works by most observers.

Karen Newman shares Howard's interpretation of *Epicoene*. In "City Talk: Women and Commodification in Jonson's *Epicoene*" she focuses on the theme of silence/ loquacity by insisting that Jonson degrades his verbose female characters who "[are] everywhere equated with a voracious sexuality" (134). The open mouth, claims Newman, is a synecdochic representation of feminine desire—sexual or acquisitive. She continues, Jonson's "talking women are not merely the butts of satire but are represented as monstrously unnatural because they threaten masculine authority" (135). Newman suggests that Morose exemplifies the paradigm: his mania concerning noise that is generalized in the beginning of the play, becomes increasingly oriented toward women. Having found a bride who fits his requirements, Morose believes that Epicoene's silence is dowry enough (1.2.21-23). In support of Newman's position,

Stallybrass, in "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," cites Barbaro's treatise *On Wifely Duties*: "It is proper. . . that not only arms but indeed also the speech of women never be made public; for the speech of a noble woman can be no less dangerous than the nakedness of her limbs" (127). Silence or the closed mouth is made to be a sign of chastity, and silence and chastity, in turn, are equivalent to a woman's enclosure within the home (127). So runs Newman's logic. Therefore, a woman who does not enclose herself within her home, or keep her tongue within her mouth, is viewed as a harlot. As with Howard's commentaries, Newman's views are too hyper-speculative and theoretical. Such an absolute position ignores Jonson's satiric purpose: to ridicule human folly. Jonson himself comments on the corruption within his dramatic world by painting characters—male and female—in the worst possible light. Characters who attempt to get something for nothing, get their come-uppance. But to move into the speculative arena of equating, for example, loquacious women with harlots is unfair to Jonson.

Such fallacious logic continues to the point of absurdity. Gail Kern Paster and Erin Roland-Leone, two material feminists who share Newman's and Stallybrass's position on enclosure and loquacity, move far beyond the basic premise. Paster in "Leaky Vessels: The Incontinent Women of City Comedy" states that scientists of the Renaissance (apparently the same scientists who saw only one sex) believed

that women's bodily fluids were all essentially the same fluid, adapting in appearance to serve different purposes. A young woman was literally bursting with liquid that manifested itself in weeping fits, sexual incontinence, and bladder incontinence (50).¹⁴ Roland-Leone pursues Paster's position to a startling conclusion: bodily fluids escaping was a sure sign that a woman could not hold herself in check, and men who associated with such women might as well wear a sign reading "cuckold" (13). According to Paster and Roland-Leone, Ursula, Win Littlewit, and Dame Overdo in *Bartholomew Fair* are all representations of females who doubly transgress enclosure, first, by disporting themselves at the fair and, second, by their physical (bladder) incontinence. Ursula, a known bawd, is expected to exhibit incontinence, "I do water the ground in knots as I go, like a great garden-pot; you may follow me by the S's I make" (2.2.47-49). But Win and Dame Overdo are wives as the average man might marry, and they, according to Paster, are also depicted in terms of incontinence. In Act Four Dame Overdo and Win both manifest embarrassment over the need to use Ursula's toilet, and the bawd uses this sense of shame to persuade them into a life of prostitution. Roland-Leone suggests that Ursula justifies her proselytizing on the assumption that women who cannot control their bladder also cannot control their sexuality (13). It is not easy for all readers or playgoers to concur with these audacious theorems.

Grace Tiffany in *Erotic Beasts and Social Monsters* also

views Jonson as an patriarchal agent of misogynistic ideology, especially in his view of the male sex as normative. She echoes Greenblatt one-sex theory, insisting "Jonson describes a moral universe in which men are men and women are not and in which the attempts of members of either sex to play opposite-sex roles are thus merely imitative" (106). Tiffany bases the definition of misogyny on a two-pronged concept of Renaissance dramatic androgyny: mythic androgyny and satiric androgyny. Mythic androgyny, exemplified in Shakespeare by cross-dressers, watery imagery, and stable individual identity, is positive: it is gender transcendence or union. Satiric androgyny, exemplified in Jonson by feminized male figures and unfixed, unstable gender identities, is essentially negative: it is gender transgression or perversion. Tiffany argues that Jonson locks female characters into one-dimensional representations, presenting them as either aggressive interlopers in male territory or passive repositories of "soft virtues." Conflating satire and misogyny, Tiffany asserts that Jonson "exercises the satirical anti-androgynous principle," which not only precludes a relational zone in which genders can merge, but which misogynistically genders the qualities of ingenuity, choice, and self-mastery as male (161).

The character of Ursula, says Tiffany, is a most intriguing, ambivalent representation "who merges the characteristics of Falstaff, the mythic and satiric androgyne, and even Jonson himself in a confusing welter of valences"

(137-38). Ursula, Tiffany acknowledges, is unusual among Jonsonian heroines: "her authentic creative ability, manifested in her dialogically inspired wit, makes her partially reminiscent of Shakespeare's androgynous heroines. . . . But even Ursula is radically compromised as a female figure by her obvious unattractiveness to the male wit-heroes" (112). In this line of thinking, Jonson displays a fear of self-loss in Quarlous's sexual comment that "he would venture for't . . . he might sink into her, and be drowned a week, ere any friend he had, could find where he were" (2.5.95-97). Doll Common, who is attractive, acts like a man, in Tiffany's view, and threatens the stability of established gender roles. It is only when Face repudiates Doll that he is finally masculinized (119).

Tiffany is accurate to assert that Jonson "threatens the stability of established gender roles." Gender is treated dramatically as any other social variable: as an object of ridicule. Nowhere is the dramatic proof more evident than in *Epicoene* where the very concept of gender is stood on its head. In *Bartholomew Fair*, Ursula may be the object of Quarlous's malice, but Jonson makes it clear that Quarlous, because of his snobbish, condescending attitude is even less attractive than Ursula. Tiffany suggests that Ursula is a version of Jonson and that the character is partially autobiographical; she even asserts "Ursula demonstrates Jonson's occasional capacity to imagine himself female. . . ."

(161). Surely Jonson, the supreme egotist, if he were to imagine himself female, would expect such a figure to be undeniably complex, yet heroic. In *The Alchemist*, Dol Common participates on an equal basis with Surly and Face: she also serves willingly as the sexual prize for both. She does not threaten Face—it is the return of Lovewit that threatens Face as well as the lucrative alchemic operation. Face may repudiate Dol, but he is not masculinized as a result. It is by throwing himself at the mercy of Lovewit that Face has yielded masculinity, or in new historicist terminology, is feminized.

This brief sampling obviously does not do justice to the great body of work devoted to the concept of patriarchalism as perceived in literature. For this model to work, one must assume that literature reflects the values and attitudes of contemporary readers. In her persuasive work *The Patriarch's Wife* Margaret Ezell questions whether the women of the seventeenth century were, in fact, "submissive, deferential, opinionless females whose quietude was ensured by their ignorance and a hostile legal system" (8). Key to Ezell's argument are the concepts of *de jure* and *de facto*. In its basic sense, patriarchalism refers to the powers of the Old Testament father over his family, to chastise, to sell, and even to kill his wife and children without challenge. Execution was not a seventeenth-century father's prerogative, but the impression of absolute unquestioned authority over

life's most important features—education, marriage, and property—remains. The wife's role in this form of family structure is envisioned as that of the loyal and silent supporter. Patriarchalism, as it is used in both the twentieth-century literary and historical studies to depict family life in the seventeenth century, suggests authoritarianism rather than a sharing of responsibilities. In theory, Ezell contends, the husband was the head of the house. In practice, when death removed him before his spouse, as often occurred, or in a marriage where the wife possessed the stronger will of the two, the women often fulfilled patriarchal duties. Therefore, the authority invoked in seventeenth-century writings is as parental in nature as it is patriarchal, and within this parental government, women played a major part (161).¹⁵

Ezell's position provides necessary balance to the new historicist position concerning the role of women in early modern times. Even though the power structure of patriarchy placed the male on a higher rung on the ladder of power, the female had her own locus of power. Often the two rungs—male and female—were very close together. Such is the case in Jonsonian drama. While Jonson upholds society's definition of male and female, he plays with inversions and admixes for dramatic purposes as will be shown later, particularly in the discussion of *Epicoene*. The notion of dressing in the clothing of the other sex provides even more comic

opportunities. Whereas Shakespeare often dressed his young ladies in men's clothing so that they could travel unmolested, Jonson dressed men as women so that men could invade the female world. Consider Wittipol in his role as the Spanish lady. His female disguise does not diminish his masculinity; rather women's clothing allows him free access to Frances Fitzdottrell for the purpose of seduction. Within Jonsonian drama, male and female are merely variables to be dramatically exploited.

Other features come into play when examining patriarchalism as a practice-- demographics, for example. One consideration is the number of women who would have escaped parental control because they were left fatherless. In her work "Single Women in the London Marriage Market," Vivian Brodsky Elliot argues for the position of patriarchal strength, yet her own figures weaken her position. Forty-seven percent of the cases Elliot studied of women from all social classes in London in the early seventeenth century had lost their fathers by age twenty. Of those who migrated to London, sixty-four percent had no fathers when they married (qtd. Ezell 19). In his study *Court of Orphans*, Charles Carleton suggests that at least one child in three in Tudor and Stuart England lost his or her father before reaching maturity (66).

In a fatherless family, who arranged the daughters' marriages? In a truly patriarchal culture, one would expect the nearest male relative to assume responsibility. Studies of

two contemporary families, the Filmers and the Sidneys, suggest otherwise. Sir Robert Filmer (1588-1653), a wealthy royalist sympathizer imprisoned during the Commonwealth, left 2,500 pounds in his will to his daughter when "she accomplisheth the age of Eighteen or sooner if shee marry with the consent of her mother" (qtd Ezell 18). Filmer did not leave this control of his daughter to his brothers or his sons, but to his wife Anne whom he named executor of his estates. This is the same Sir Robert Filmer who authored several essays, on both political and domestic subjects, pertinent to the patriarchal versus parental discussion.¹⁶

A second example, one that involves Jonson more intimately and relates precisely to Jonson's possible values, illustrates the point that women were trusted parental helpmates rather than patriarchal servants. Jonson's poem *To Penshurst* praises the country-seat of his patron and friend Sir Robert Sidney as an idealized microcosm of the larger society. Yet Lady Barbara Sidney, wife to Sir Robert, is given credit for the management of the estate:

What praise was heap'd
On thy good lady, then! Who, therein, reap'd
The just reward of her high huswifery;
To have her linnen, plate, and all things nigh,
When she was farre: and not a roome, but drest,
As if it had expected such a guest!
These, Pensurst, are thy praise, and yet not all.

Thy lady's noble. Fruitfull. Chaste withall[.]

(2.83-90)

Admittedly, Jonson's poem raises Lady Sidney to mythic status by suggesting that she embodies the estate's ideal fusion of nature and culture. However, Barbara Lewalski in "Revising Genres and Claiming the Woman's Part: Mart Wroth" points to the more than 300 extant letters between Sir Robert and his wife that voice great affection and tenderness. Other issues discussed in writing were complaints about their separations, worries about their children (one of whom was Mary Wroth), and constant anxieties about money. Often absent either on the Continent or at court, Sidney left the management of his family, household and estates to his wife (236).¹⁷

It must be noted that the term 'housewife' takes on a different connotation in the seventeenth century. With husbands away from home for lengthy amounts of time, it fell to the wife to oversee the actual running of the often far-flung estates as well as keep meticulous records of their activities. In order to do so, these women had to have received an education that allowed them to function in this capacity. The reason that documentary proof supporting this claim is scant, is that publication was discouraged at this time. Rather than publish their work—it simply was not *done*--early writers only circulated their works within an exclusive circle of friends—a coterie. The slow acceptance of publication as a respectable activity is well documented among

male writers at the beginning of the century. According to Ezell, John Donne saw no need to publish his secular verse and Ben Jonson was ridiculed for doing so (64).

Granted, Anne Filmer and Barbara Sidney are only two examples, but the purpose is to point to a gap between theory and practice in the ongoing debate of women's role and rights in the seventeenth century when women's status was viewed as both a political and theological issue. Central to seventeenth-century writings, Jonson's included, is the theme of usurpation of power. In the domestic sphere, its misuse is held by both sides to lead to discord and unhappy marriages. Tyranny by the cruel shrew or by the foolish husband is equally disruptive in the family and equally condemned. In theory and by law, women were subject to men; in practice, Ezell states that controversy raged over exactly what "to be subject to" encompassed (162). This controversy exists today, and because the seventeenth-century world cannot be known with total certainty, the only world that exists as contexts for his plots is that which Jonson creates in his dramas.

Feminists also portray Jonson as misogynistic by comparing him to his contemporary Shakespeare. While the two playwrights drew loosely and varyingly on the same literary tradition--New Comedy-- they envisioned different purposes that they projected through entirely different dramatic strategies. Madeleine Doran in *Endeavors of Art* explains that both dramatists had available the same elemental models, "the

mechanism of the intrigue plot, the social element of character types, manners, and moral attitudes, the romantic element of love and adventurous background, and the rhetorical element of wit, sententiousness, and lyricism" (150). Each man's dramatic purpose led him in his own direction. Doran continues:

What Jonson and Shakespeare borrow from this [New Comedy] is partly different, and what they make of it completely different, not only from each other, but from the common source. . . . Jonson borrows the method of the intriguer to manipulate his plot, Shakespeare the mistaken identities and fortuitous conclusion. But Jonson's satiric result is as unlike the mood of Roman comedy as is Shakespeare's tender and merry one. Nevertheless, both dramatists learned something essential about play-making from that comedy. (151)

Shakespeare's fondness for mistaken identities and fortuitous conclusions veers his Latin derivative towards romantic comedy. Jonson, on the other hand, moves in a different direction; he much prefers the rhetorical element of wit thereby shifting English comedy, through a masterful use of satire, towards realism. In the words of Kay, Jonson "substitutes a grainier realism for the green world of Elizabethan romance" (144). Indeed, Jonson in all his Prologues makes his didactic purpose clear; the prologue to *Every Man in His Humour* is typical:

He [Jonson] rather prays you will be pleased to see
One such, today, as other plays should be.
Where neither Chorus wafts you o'er the seas;
Nor creaking throne comes down, the boys to please;

Nor nimble squib is seen, to make afeared
The gentlewomen; nor rolled bullet heard
To say it thunders; nor tempestuous drum
Rumbles, to tell you when the storm doth come;
But deeds, and language, such as men do use;
And persons, such as Comedy would choose
When she should show an image of the times,
And sport with human follies, not with crimes.
(Prologue 12-24)

Jonson accomplishes several purposes in this prologue. First, he has described clearly what his drama will do: it will reflect the real world and the actors will speak in real language. Second, he good-humoredly swipes both at Shakespeare's use of theatrical devices "the boys to please" and his misuse of the "unities" by taking his action "o'er the seas." Finally, in the Prologue's last line, "And sport with human follies not with crime," Jonson has given an excellent definition of his dramatic purpose. It must be noted that this rivalry between Jonson and Shakespeare was only in conception of dramatic style; the men were friends. They acted in each other's plays and socialized as well. In fact, it is said, the two spent an evening of conviviality shortly before Shakespeare's death, and Jonson wrote the prefatory verse for the 1623 *First Folio* of Shakespeares's work. Best remembered is Jonson's brilliant epitaph to his friend and fellow dramatist that has stuck over the centuries. "To the Memory of

My Beloved, the Author Mr. William Shakespeare; and What He
Hath Left Us" proclaims:

Soul of the Age!

The applause! Delight! The wonder of our Stage!

Mr Shakespeare, rise; I will not lodge thee by

Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye

A little further, to make thee a roome:

Thou art a Moniment, without a tombe,

And art alive still, while Booke doth live,

And we have wits to read, and praise to give. (17-
24)

Although Jonson acknowledges that Shakespeare "had small
Latine, and lesse Greeke," he insists that Shakespeare
surpassed even Chaucer. The epitaph concludes by elevating
Shakespeare to mythic status, a "Constellation" in the
hemisphere:

Shine forth, thou Starre of Poets, and with rage,

Or influence, chide, or cheere the drooping
Stage;

Which since thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd
like night,

And despaire day, but thy Volumes light. (77-80)

Even though the work of both dramatists sprang in its
beginnings from New Comedy, Jonson sought to imitate the
classical structure but update characterization and manners.
Doran explains that Jonson needed to contemporize his drama in
order to "fulfill the accepted social function of comedy: by

mirroring the customs and manners of civil life to teach us which to follow and which to avoid" (157). Therefore, Jonson depicts a different world, a darkly realistic place that has little to do with the world of Shakespeare's romance. Doran believes that Jonson's Horatian dramatic purpose—to instruct and delight—puts him at odds with romantic comedy with its "lack of corrective purpose" (366). Through his inimitably brilliant satiric voice he ridicules and corrects his characters. Even though some feminist criticism suggests that satire is by definition misogynous, Jonson's attack is not gender specific: his target is hypocrites and fools and some of them happen to be women. Bawds, cutpurses, religious hypocrites, and all kind of con-men people Jonson's dramatic world and are in need of correction. The confusion over Jonson's dramatic motive lies in the lack of a clear understanding of what constitutes satire. Satire has a moral purpose, and its effectiveness comes from the fact that it concentrates on types and mirrors contemporary life. T. S. Eliot, in his study of Jonson in *Sacred Wood*, claims that Jonson's masterful satire is based on his ability to simplify characters. Eliot states "simplification consists largely of reduction of detail. . . . This stripping is essential to the art, to which is also essential a flat distortion in the drawing; it is an art of caricature, of great caricature [.]" (120). Doran supports Eliot's view of character distortion. She states, "Satire begins in realism but may go beyond it to

the point of distortion" even, she adds, "towards caricature" (171).

In the process of observing dramatic justice, the audience has had the benefit of a mirror held up to reflect the evils of its real world. The Prologue to the *Alchemist* contains just such a message:

Thou this pen
Did never aim to grieve, but better men,
Howe'er the age he lives in doth endure
The vices that she breeds, above their cure.
But when the wholesome remedies are sweet,
And, in their working, gain and profit meet,
He hopes to find no spirit so much diseased,
But will with such fair correctives be pleased.
(11-18)

The redeeming grace in Jonson's dramatic vision is the quality of wit or mental acuity that brings about a particular course of action. Axiomatic to Jonsonian drama is that everyone has an agenda. Clever characters achieve their goals--not always by playing fair--and always because a less intelligent character overrates his abilities. Much can be forgiven if the character possesses wit, and the author makes sure the audience knows who these characters are by their names: Lovewit, Truewit, and Wittipol. Yet not all savvy characters are men. Many females are able to achieve their agenda as well as the men. As early as *The Alchemist* Jonson presents in

Dol Common a woman who has set goals and knows how to achieve them. Nor is her enterprising character daunted by the fact that she must keep her masculine cohorts in line. Such success in the face of adversity is typical of Jonson's women of wit.

Nevertheless, much contemporary feminist criticism believes that Jonson displays outright misogyny in both his dramatic work and his personal life. Dramatically, it is argued, he systematically degrades his female characters by reducing them to one undesirable trait, which he paints as a female vice. Newman, in the earlier mentioned "City Talk, Women and Commodification in Jonson's *Epicoene*," holds up the Collegiates as examples of female characters whose loose morality is equated with the female quality of volubility, ignoring the same loquacious quality in Morose and Truewit. Marchette Chute says in *Ben Jonson of Westminster*, "Jonson had a tendency to see his fellow man in sharp, flat, vigorous outline and to overlook the subtleties of shading" (66). Even within *Epicoene* Jonson's vision and shading does not single out one gender as more ridiculous than another. However, if Jonson's drama numbers no heroines, it also is short on heroes. Instead, the overriding concern is whether the character possess the ability to think on his or her feet. In fact, many women in Jonson's world--whether it be Dol Common of Lovewit's house, Ursula, the Pig-woman at Bartholomew Fair, or Polish, Lady Loadstone's friend--are conceived as proactive characters, women who rise to the top of their game no matter

what the obstacles. Women of wit exist throughout Jonson's canon but have not previously been given the respect they are due. Possibly the oversight is inherent to the nature of satire—a focus on the correction of negative qualities rather than on the acknowledgement of positive qualities. By evaluating selected female characters from Jonson's three periods, this study will show that Jonson regarded women's ingenuity as highly as men's.

Jonson's Relationships with Women

It is impossible to know with certainty whether Jonson was misogynistic in his personal relationships, because primary material concerning Jonson is scarce. For this reason gaps and ambiguities exist in the biographies. Even the words of his own mouth are unreliable. Jonson's statement to Drummond that "he married a wife who was a shrew yet honest" speaks as much to Jonson's character as to his wife's (HS 1.139). The rest of the entry expands on the relationship: "5 years he had not bedded with her but remained with my Lord Aulbanie (sic)." Apart from Drummond's record, nothing is known of Anne Jonson. Other women played an important role in Jonson's life, however, for the playwright spent many years in James's court in close proximity to Queen Anne, Princess Elizabeth, and other aristocratic ladies. He was especially admiring of the Sidney women as is evident in his many dedications, masques, and poems.¹⁸ Mary, Countess of Pembroke,

or her cousin by marriage, Susan, Countess of Montgomery, receive their rationings of conventional praise for their beauty and virtue. But Jonson goes beyond physical attributes when he describes Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland, "nothing inferior to her father s[ir] P. Sidney, in poesy" (HS 1.138) and praises her in *Epigram #79* as nature's way of recompensing her father's lack of a male heir. Mary Sidney Wroth, Sir Philip's niece, was even a special case to Jonson. His admiration is evident in both *Epigram CV* where he praises her as a composite of all the goddesses and in the 1612 dedication to *The Alchemist* where he calls her "The Lady, most deserving of her name" (The name was probably pronounced "Worth"). Kay goes so far as to suggest that Wroth might be the inspiration for "A Celebration of Charis in Ten Lyric Pieces" (134). Barbara Kiefer Lewalski in "Exercising Power: The Countess of Bedford" discusses Jonson's distressing attack on Celia Bulstrode in "Epigram on a Court Pucelle," an assault that is considered proof of Jonson's misogyny (108-09). In all fairness, it must be admitted that *The Poetaster* was written to embarrass John Marston during the Poet's Quarrel. Professional jealousy was the basis of both attacks, not misogyny. In both cases, Jonson attempted to make up for his offending behavior. In Marston's case, Jonson later collaborated with Chapman and Marston on *Eastward Ho* (1605), and when the play was censored, Jonson and Chapman voluntarily imprisoned themselves for the offending part written by

Marston. With the threat of having their ears cut and noses slit, Jonson appealed to his great network of patrons and eventually secured every man's release (Kay 75). In the case of Cecilia Bulstrode, the young lady died before Jonson could make amends. His contrition is evident in the epitaph he wrote praising her as the embodiment of wisdom and modesty rarely found at court.

To sum up, in Chute's words "satire has a moral purpose and its effectiveness comes from the fact that it concentrates on types and mirrors contemporary life" (67). Jonson's characters--male and female--are, by definition, more emblematic than flesh and blood. Yet, Eliot refutes the notion that "Jonson's characters lack the third dimension" (117). Continuing, Eliot maintains that such an evaluation "implies that the characters are lifeless." To the contrary, he asserts that "there is discovered a kind of power" animating Jonson's characters even though they are types. Part of this power is found in wit over stupidity, active planning over inaction. While Jonson does work within a gendered world order, Jonson's female characters are treated with the same respect and disrespect as men. Therefore, it will prove invaluable to scrutinize the female characters of Jonson's major comedies, both in relation to the males in the piece and also to their dramatic world, in order to demonstrate that folly knows no gender. In fact, at least one female character--Frances Fitzdottrel--emerges as a woman possessing a heroic character

that surpasses most of Jonson's male characters.

Notes to Reconsidering Jonson's Position on Women

¹A problem for the serious student of Jonson's work is the current lack of a readily accessible, reasonably priced edition of the complete works. The standard text is *Ben Jonson* edited by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford 1925-52), an eleven-volume work. All dramatic citations are based on this text. However, the quotes reflect a normalized spelling. In addition to the text, an amazing number of documents pertaining to Jonson's life, stage and publication history, and contemporary allusions can be found. The problem is that this work is out of print and not always available in libraries. David Riggs's *Ben Jonson: A Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) is a biography that includes recent historical and critical scholarship from a psychoanalytical perspective, while W. David Kay's work *Ben Jonson*, New York: St. Martin's, 1995 offers the best current evaluation in a balanced manner. Other biographies include: J. B. Bamforth, *Ben Jonson*, London: Hutchinson, 1970; Marchette Chute, *Ben Jonson of Westminster*, New York: Dutton, 1953; Katherine Eisaman Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984; John Palmer, *Ben Jonson*, New York: Viking Press, 1934; John Palmer, *Ben Jonson*, New York: Viking Press, 1934; George Parfitt, *Ben Jonson: Public Poet and Private Man*, New York: Barnes and

Noble, 1977; Alexander Leggatt, *Ben Jonson: His Vision and his Art*, New York: Methuen, 1981; Robert Wiltenburg, *Ben Jonson and Self-Love: The Subtlest Maze of All*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990. Other helpful biographical information can be found in Mark Eccles, "Ben Jonson, Citizen and Bricklayer" in *Notes and Queries*, (1988):445-46, and Mark Eccles, "Jonson's Marriage" in the *Review of English Studies*, (1936):257-72.

A sampling of modern criticism can be found in Jonas A. Barish, ed., *Ben Jonson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1963; Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson: Dramatist*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984; Ian Donaldson, *World Upside Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970; T. S. Eliot, "Ben Jonson" in *Sacred Wood*, London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1948, John Jacob Enck, *Jonson and the Comic Truth*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1957; Robert Gale Noyes, *Ben Jonson and the English Stage 1660-1676*, New York: B. Bloom, 1966; Edward Bellamy Partridge, *The Broken Compass: A Study of the Major Comedies of Ben Jonson*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1958; and C. G. Thayer, *Ben Jonson: Studies in the Plays*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963.

The citations from Ben Jonson's *Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden* are from Herford and Simpson 1.128-178.

²Herford and Simpson state that Jonson was born in or near London (1.1). Marchette Chute in *Ben Jonson of Westminster* insists that Jonson was not born in Westminster. She states that Westminster had only two parishes at the time of Jonson's birth and his baptism is not recorded in either parish (17).

³Herford and Simpson (1.1-5) offer information of what Jonson's course of study would have encompassed at the Westminster School. See also Kay, *Ben Jonson*, 2-6.

⁴See Eccles, especially pp. 266-68. His investigation suggests the second Benjamin Jonson was christened February 20, 1607/8. That he is the son of the dramatist is inferred by Jonson's dating of *Volpone* "from my house in the Black-Friars this 11 of February, 1607." Joseph Jonson was christened at St. Giles, Cripplegate on December 9, 1599. Riggs suggests that Joseph as a young child would have succumbed to the plague as did his brother Benjamin. (See Riggs 97) In addition Eccles cites a "Beniamen Johnsn fil. Ben" christened at St. Martin in the Fields on April 6, 1610, as well as "Elisib. Daughter of Ben Jonson" in the register of St. Mary Matfellow, Whitechapel. Eccles believes that the dramatist, a known womanizer, fathered some of these children of women other than his wife.

⁵The theatrical quarrel between Jonson, John Marston, and Thomas Dekker is also known as "The War of the Theatres." Begun as a debate between Jonson's work *Cynthia's Revels*

(1600) and Marston 's drama *What You Will* (1599), the purpose of the quarrel was to determine whose dramatic vision most addressed the private theatre audience. This debate broadened with Dekker's *Satiromastix or The Untrussing of the Humourous Poet* (1600) aimed at Jonson who then wrote *Poetaster* (1600) in response to Dekker. Harbage includes Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* in the quarrel. Main studies focusing on the War of the Theatres include: Roscoe Small, *The Stage Quarrel Between Ben Jonson and the So-Called Poetasters*, New York: AMS Press, 1966; Josiah H. Penniman, *The War of the Theatres*, Boston: Ginn, 1897; and Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*, Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1970, 90-119.

⁶Jonson killed fellow actor Gabriel Spencer in a duel. Jonson told Drummond that Spencer's sword was ten inches longer than his own (HS1.139). [See Kay 27.] Jonson was found guilty but escaped hanging by "benefit of clergy." That is, he could escape capital punishment by showing he could read and translate a verse from the Latin Bible. However, Jonson's goods were confiscated, and he was branded on the thumb.

⁷Jonson's divided nature extends to religion. His clergyman father, according to Herford and Simpson, enjoyed favor under Henry VIII, but lost his estate during the reign of Mary, a Catholic monarch (1.2). Jonson converted to the Catholic faith while he was imprisoned for the murder of

Spencer, and from 1597-1605 remained an adherent. As Herford and Simpson point out, "A prisoner awaiting trial for his life, and only recently released on another count, who voluntarily assumed a form of religion always regarded askance by the authorities, was only rendered the more liable to sinister suspicion by the very absence of obvious motives which commends it to modern sympathies" (1.19). Yet such an action is entirely consistent with Jonson's character. Riggs states that the dramatist began to pull away from Catholicism after the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 (174). Kay adds that both Jonson and his wife Anne were cited for recusancy in London Consistory Court, a charge Jonson denied on behalf of his wife. Jonson himself was again reconciled to Anglicanism and resumed communion in 1610.

⁸See Marcus 280n42. Marcus asserts that even though James's treatise appears "credulous" to the modern reader, the work was actually written to impose order and method in the courts in Scotland where witch-hunting had become a mania. Even after James published *Daemonology* witch-hunting was carried out illegally. Therefore, the same year this work was published, 1691, James revoked all the Scottish commissions for witchcraft.

⁹Biographies of Queen Anne include Ethel Carlton Williams, *Anne of Denmark: Wife of James VI of Scotland, James I of England*. London: Longman, 1970; and David M. Bergeron, *Royal Family, Royal Lovers*. Columbia: University of Missouri

Press, 1991.

¹⁰The 1616 Folio works includes re-workings of the two *Every Man* plays, *Cynthia's Revels*, *Poetaster*, *Epicoene*, as well as reprints of *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*. and the two Roman tragedies, *Sejanus, His Fall* and *Catiline, His Conspiracy*. Kay believes that Jonson omitted collaborations in order to make it appear his dramatic purpose was dedicated to the classical unities and "realistic" treatment of contemporary matters (142).

Oxford awarded Jonson an honorary Masters of Arts degree in 1619. The only basis for the Cambridge degree is cited by Drummond that "he was Masters of Arts in both the universities by their favour, not his study" (HS 1.139).

¹¹Kay relates that Jonson was in the habit of borrowing money against his pension so that he was regularly in debt. In 1628 his financial position improved with his appointment as London City Chronologer on the death of his old rival Thomas Middleton (168). The appointment was fortuitous because Jonson was out of favor in Charles's court. The escalating artistic debate between Jonson and Inigo Jones—between story and spectacle—led to Jonson's ultimate dismissal. (See Kay 178).

¹²Helen Ostovich in her introduction to *Ben Jonson Four Comedies* describes the marker as a blue marble square:

engraved O RARE BEN JONSON. The inscription happily puns on the Latin orare (pray for) and simple English praise that would have gratified

Jonson, the master of the plain style. (6)

Marchette Chute sheds light on the reason for Jonson's upright burial. She claims that Jonson joked one day with the Dean of Westminster that he could not afford the honor of being buried with the other poets. Since he could not bear the price of a six by two grave, he suggested a grave two by two—an upright burial. The story was regarded as apocryphal, but when Lady Wilson was buried early in the nineteenth century in the adjoining space, the workmen discovered that Jonson's cheap coffin had in fact been set in upright instead of lengthwise (347).

¹³Jean E. Howard in "The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies" (1986) explains that new historicism is characterized by "a return of history in literary studies." New historicist critics are drawn to Renaissance literature where "the modern idea of an essential 'man' was initially discovered" (19). In her later work "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," Howard states that materialist or socialist feminism "assumes the gender differences are culturally constructed and historically specific, rather than innate, and that the hierarchical gender systems based on these differences can be changed" (419n4).

¹⁴For reasons not entirely clear, both Paster and Roland-Leone misinterpret the passage describing Ursula. Helen Ostovich, in her Introduction to *Bartholomew Fair* has the right of it; she correctly identifies the bodily fluid as

perspiration, writing, "Ursula . . . waters the earth with her sweat 'like a great garden pot'" (44).

¹⁵Suggestions for further reading on the subject of patriarchy include: Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Women's Lot in Seventeenth-century England*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1984; Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satire on Women, 1660-1750*, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1984; Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: Three Hundred Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It*, Pluto Press, 1973; Katherine Rogers, ed., *Before Their Times: Six Women Writers of the Eighteenth Century*, New York: Frederick Ungar, 1979; Megan Machinski, *Writing, Gender, and State in Early Modern England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; and Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womanhood, 1540-1620*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

¹⁶Filmer's work highlights the conflict between his ostensibly patriarchal theory against his actual overt behavior. Certain despotic overtones can be detected in Filmer's best-known political work *Patriarcha* that is constructed on an analogy between political and domestic sovereignty. Little attention has been given to Filmer's writings, such as "In Praise of the Vertuous Wife." Relying mainly on the Old Testament, Filmer extols the quality of courage, specifically in the characters of Deborah, Jael, and the wise women of Tekoa and Abel (2 Samuel). Even the

perceived misogyny in Genesis is softened in Filmer's view:
"The woman did deceive out of error, the devil out of
knowledge; the man did eat: so that she is to be pitied not
hated" (qtd. Ezell 133-35). Possibly, Filmer's temperate view
represents the attitude of many men of his period.

¹⁷For an enlightening consideration of the Sidney family,
see Barbara Lewalski's discussion of Mary Wroth, "Revising
Genres and Claiming the Woman's Part" in *Writing Women in
Jacobean England*, 243-307.

¹⁸For an excellent discussion of Jonson's conflicted
relationship with women, see Kay's chapter 8, "The Poet and
his Patrons," 114-35.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN AND WIT

"Thou has done or assisted to nothing, in my judgment, but deserves to be pardoned for the wit o' the offence. . . ."

(*Every Man in his Humour*.5.3.97-98)

Jonson's Hierarchy of Female Wit

With the advent of new historicist criticism, recent scholars approach Jonson's dramaturgy with a predetermined view that male characters are active and strong while female characters are passive and silly. The assertion continues that Jonson's overt misogyny is evident in the creation of ridiculous female characters. The quality of wit, in such a view, is an exclusively masculine trait that is heightened in the face of so much female folly. This conclusion is patently false, for Jonson portrays many foolish males from Kiteley in *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) to Sir Diaphanous Kilkworm in *The Magnetic Lady* (1632), characters who are out-manuevered by smarter representations. Yet, wit is not necessarily intelligence; rather, it is common sense coupled with ingenuity or cunning: the ability to "think on one's feet." Nor is such mental acuity gender specific as the following

discussion will make clear. In "Identifying Ethical Values in *Volpone*" C. J. Gianakaris proposes a taxonomy that neatly describes degrees of wit to form a hierarchy in *Volpone*. The first level, the witless, is made up of creatures who lack the capacity for independent action; Celia and Bonario are two such characters. The middle level is distinguished by figures of intelligence who, to an extent, control their own behavior. These characters range from the simpleminded Sir Pol to the versatile Voltore. Unfortunately, their mental acuity is superficial, and they are victimized by still shrewder characters. The top echelon is composed of near-brilliant figures who direct the actions of all the other characters; *Volpone* and Mosca fit into this category (46).

Careful consideration will reveal that the theme centering on a hierarchy of wit is not just confined to *Volpone* but exists within the dramatic world of all Jonson's plays, for the cheater/cheated thematic device rests solely on such a hierarchy of mental prowess. In the posthumously published *Discoveries*, Jonson notes that the quality of wit is variable. Delineating the characteristic, Jonson employs the Latin term *ingenium* (genius) in order to denote the inborn nature of the trait (HS 8.637). Jonson, like Gianakaris, proposes a three-tiered hierarchy: good, mediocre, and *imos*—the downright bad—and insists that good wit is "thin and rare among us." He sums up the exegesis on the infrequency of such a trait by citing Justice Clement's speech at the conclusion

of *Every Man in His Humour*: "It is only a king or a poet that is not born every year" (8.637). Jonson's satiric intent is openly didactic; he portrays situations in which characters overestimate their abilities and therefore suffer from pretension, and, at the other end of the wit-spectrum, he shows characters who, lacking common sense, are born victims. The gulls are types who display varying degrees of what Jonson calls *ingenium*. For example, Sir John Daw, Sir Amorous La Foole, and Sir Politic-Would-Be embody pompous intellectual pretensions. Dapper and Drugger are mental light-weights who ask alchemy to cope with problems only common sense can resolve. Epicure Mammon, Corbaccio, and Fitzdottrel are victims of their uncontrollable avarice, while Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome, Dame Purecraft, and Zeal-of-the-Land Busy condemn others but are unable to live in accordance with their Puritanical code. Each gull deserves his fate as he is ironically caught in the net of his own making.

Within Jonson's three-tiered framework, female characters can be evaluated on the basis of wit as well as men. Dol Common, a coney-catcher in *The Alchemist*, is one character who embodies the ability to effect a given course of action. For most of the play Dol not only adeptly performs in her various roles, but she also serves as peacekeeper between the bickering males. Ursula in *Bartholomew Fair* and Polish in *The Magnetic Lady* are also active planners whose manipulation

directs the behavior of lesser characters. In other words, women of superior wit control not only their own behavior, they control the actions of others; however, they come across as sympathetic figures. Ursula, like Dol, is the only woman in a cadre of male tricksters, yet she enjoys the affection and respect of her male cohorts. Polish, on the other hand, directs a group of women as she brazenly attempts to switch her own daughter with another for the sake of an inheritance. All three of these superior female wits—Dol, Ursula, and Polish—are treated sympathetically by Jonson who refuses to punish them unduly for any crimes they might commit in their leadership capacities.

Female characters of mediocre wit possess the necessary intelligence but lack single-minded directional ability. Bridget in *Every Man in His Humour* (1616 Folio edition) and Grace of *Bartholomew Fair* are examples of women who may not be able to direct the behavior of others but can control their own lives. Reason or prudence in Jonsonian drama is the basis of a good marriage, and both of these young women make life-mate choices on the basis of this quality. Finally, there are the witless women who cannot face up to life's crises. In order to survive, these women adjust their agenda to agree with that of a cleverer character. Lady Lodestone in *The Magnetic Lady* takes to her room rather than confront the crisis of a pregnant niece (3.2), and Dame Pliant meekly agrees to her brother's choice of husband (4.4). Neither

figure can control aspects of her own life, let alone the lives of others.

In addition to this gradation of female wit, other characters merit discussion as holding other positions across the spectrum of Jonson's *ingenium*. Dame Pliant in *Volpone* represents the nadir in female wit, for every aspect of her life is controlled by her abusive brother. Celia, Corvino's wife in *Volpone*, is not without coping strategies, but, in her case, it is irrelevant. The mood of her dramatic world is so palpably evil that her remonstrations are wholly ignored, rendering her helpless. On the other hand, Frances in *The Devil is an Ass* goes beyond any other female in Jonson's oeuvre: she assesses her options and chooses to remain honorable. Pru in *The New Inn* represents another special circumstance. Once her mistress casts her in the role of Queen of Misrule, Pru's natural wisdom shines forth. In the process, she improves her own social standing by attracting the eligible Lord Latimer who is willing to marry her without a dowry (5.5). The title character in *Epicoene* is yet another special case, for "she" represents the male construction of female wit in Jonson's parody on gender. All of these characters will be discussed in a later section. The fact that so many of Jonson's female representations cannot be neatly locked into rigid categories refutes the often-voiced assertion that Jonson's females are consistently drawn as objects of ridicule. Indeed, the opposite is true, for the

existence of so many special cases proves that Jonson does not consider gender and wit to be mutually exclusive characteristics.

Proactive Representatives: Dol, Ursula, and Polish

The 1610 comedic masterpiece *The Alchemist* foregrounds the versatile Dol Common. Although her name marks her as a whore, she escapes the limitations of the name. A brilliant actress, she is able to impersonate a great lady--both sane and mad--as well as the Queen of Fairy. Despite her sexual promiscuity, Dol is too much of an individual to be defined as "Common." The quick-paced drama commences *in media res* with Face and Subtle, two con-men, involved in a bitter dispute over who is more important to the success of their operation. More to the point, they argue over the division of anticipated spoils. It is Dol who possesses the greater mental clarity; she realizes that the severity of the dispute and the resulting noise could bring their operation to the notice of the neighbors. She warns the shysters, "you [will] be / Your own destruction, gentlemen" (1.1.103-04). Disarming Face of his sword and breaking Subtle's beaker, Dol assumes command. She reminds her cohorts of their bargain:

And the work

Were not begun out of equality?

The venture tripartite? All things in common?

Without priority? 'Sdeath, you perpetual curs,

Fall to your couples again, and cozen kindly
And heartily, and lovingly, as you should,
And lose not the beginning of a term,
Or, by this hand, I shall grow factious too,
And take my part, and quit you. (1.1.134-41)

Dol's superior ability to direct events is fully evident as she reminds Face and Subtle that the three of them are to share and share alike, and she insists that the tricksters make up and work together as a team, for the "beginning of a term" is at hand. Helen Ostovich in her work, *Ben Jonson: Four Comedies*, explains that Blackfriars, the setting of *The Alchemist*, is the area between St. Paul's and the Thames that enjoyed the ancient right of sanctuary. For this reason, thieves there mixed easily with artists (like Jonson), Puritans, and aristocrats (381 n17). Moreover, the opening of the Inns of Court corresponded to the London season; therefore, gulls would be plentiful. Dol, a female with wit enough to counterbalance two able cons, insists that, if the two men are unwilling to pull together, she will take her percentage and leave them to fend for themselves. In order to reinforce her meaning, Dol knocks down Face's sword and breaks Subtle's glass, admonishing them: "And you sir, with your menstrue, gather it up. 'Sdeath, you abominable pair of stinkards,/ Leave off your barking and grow one again/ Or, by the light that shines, I'll cut your throats" (1.1.116-19). Combining a shrewd business sense with the ability for

physical action, Dol forces the men to settle their differences and work for the common good.

The Alchemist is a comedy that satirically turns the base metal of the dupes into gold for the rogues. People of all classes and temperaments come to Subtle hoping that their lives in some way will be enriched, only to be victimized by the sharpsters. Two such gulls are Dapper and Sir Epicure Mammon whose desires escalate when Dol is envisioned as the goal rather than the means. Initially, Dapper desires "a familiar/ To rifle with at horses and win cups" (1.1.191-92) but with the suggestion by Face and Subtle that he is related to the Queen of Fairy who "kissed him in the cradle" (1.2.150), he imagines himself as her fortunate heir. Mammon needs less nudging than Dapper to expand his desire. He begins by talking of himself to Surly as a universal social benefactor, a man who can "confer honour, love, respect, long life/ Give safety, valour: yea, and victory,/ To whom he will" (2.1.50-52). But after meeting Dol, he drops the humanitarian sham for a "taste of her-wit" (2.3.260). For both men, Dol epitomizes the golden future. She is Dapper's Queen of Fairy who will bestow financial gifts on her heir; she is also Mammon's mad lady intellectual. In the elaborate alchemical con-game, Dol is the true philosopher's stone.

Dapper's hopes of favor from the Queen of Fairy are based on the actual case of Thomas Rogers, who was cozened out of ten pounds in gold with the promise of marriage to the Fairy

Queen.¹ Just as credulous as Rogers, Dapper accepts the scenario that Face spins:

Her Grace is a lone woman,
And very rich, and if she takes a fancy,
She will do strange things. See her, at any hand.
'Slid, she may hap to leave you all she has!
(1.2.155-58)

This inheritance can be Dapper's only if he gives up all his worldly goods—to the tricksters, of course. Just when the rogues have acquired all that Dapper has, Sir Epicure appears. Fearing that the two gulls might have seen each other, Dol's commanding audacity saves the situation: Dapper's mouth is stuffed with gingerbread, and she orders him hidden "in the privy" (3.5.77). Subtle leads Dapper away with a pun on their destination, "Come along, sir,/ I must show you Fortune's privy lodgings" (3.5.78-79). Dapper's humiliation is not complete. Eventually overcome by nausea because of the privy's fumes, he later in the play eats through his gingerbread gag. In spite of this impertinence, Dapper is allowed an audience with the Queen. Admonished by Subtle to "wriggle" before his "most gracious aunt," Dapper literally grovels in her presence (5.4.22,24). Dol is magnanimous in her forgiveness; regally, she speaks to him through Subtle:

But come and see me often. I may chance
To leave him three or four hundred chests of
treasure
And some twelve thousand acres of Fairyland,

If he game well and comely with good gamesters.
(5.4.53-56)

Although separating Dapper from his money is the principal goal of the tricksters, the final act strips Dapper's dignity as well. Subtle requires Dapper to "kiss [the Queen's] departing part" (5.3.57), an equivocation that bawdily suggests that Dapper kiss Dol's "arse."

If Dol's part in the cozening of Dapper shows a daring, inventive nature, her role in seducing Mammon reveals a far deeper intellect than expected of a street walker. Sir Epicure lives up to his name by assuming that riches can buy anything. He pays lip service to philanthropy because he wants the cynical Subtle to believe that his motives are altruistic. Initially, Mammon claims he desires the philosopher's stone in order to help his fellow man:

'Tis the secret
Of nature, naturized 'gainst all infections!
Cures all diseases coming of all causes;
And of what age soever in a month—
Past all the doses of your drugging doctors.
I'll undertake withal to fright the plague
Out o'the kingdom in three months. (2.1.63-70)

But very soon he reveals himself to be a sybarite who means "To have a list of wives and concubines/ Equal with Solomon, who had the stone/ Alike with me." (The double entendre use of "stone" would have delighted Jonson's audiences.) Mammon

shares his sensual fantasy with Face in erotically charged images:

I will have all my beds, blown up, not stuffed.
Down is too hard. And then, mine oval room
Filled with such pictures as Tiberius took
From Elephantis, and dull Aretine
But coldly imitated. Then, my glasses
Cut in more subtle angles to disperse
And multiply the figures as I walk
Naked between my *succubae*. My mists
I'll have of perfume, vapoured 'bout the room
To lose ourselves in, and my bath like pits
To fall into, from which we will come forth
And roll us dry in gossamer and roses. (2.2.42-52)

Mammon's obsession is to create a sexual fantasy that features a quantity of sexual acts, partners, beds, pictures, mirrors, perfumes, and baths. Hypocritically, he cloaks his vision in respectability. Subtle will be gelded before becoming master of his harem (2.2.36); his toadies will be clergymen, and his fools "burgesses" or members of Parliament (2.2.62). "No bawds/ but fathers and mothers will provide the 'succubae' that service his desires" (2.2.57-58). Dol is, as described for Mammon, a heroine of romance and 'a most rare scholar' whose learned discourse in religion, politics, and mathematics drives men mad. Enamored by the very idea of her, Mammon pleads with Lungs, "Is she in no way accessible? No

means,/ No trick to give a man a taste of her-wit--/Or so?"
(2.3.258-60). Once he meets Doll his utopian fantasy is
replaced with one more personal: a platform for self-display,
as Ostovich sees it (37).

For her part, Dol gives a superlative performance as the
rabbinic scholar whose madness is triggered by Mammon's talk
of a fifth monarchy. In brilliant pseudo-learning, she spouts
near-poetical gibberish:

And so we may arrive by Talmud skill
And profane Greek to raise the building up
Of Helen's house against the Ismaelite,
King of Thogarma and his Habergons
Brimstony, blue and fiery, and the force
Of King Abaddon and the beast of cittim,
Which Rabbi David Kimchi, Onkelos,

And Aben-Ezra do interpret Rome. (4.5.25-35)

Dol's 'fit' out of Broughton is backgrounded by an argument
between Mammon and Face.² Because of his lust for Dol, Mammon
forgets the injunction concerning religion as a topic of
discussion. The chemical explosion that follows is timed by
the tricksters to match the polyphony of the verbal outbursts,
and the defeat of the experiment is laid at Mammon's door. The
sensualist retreats once again into sanctimonious cant as he
regrets his "error." Subtle piously corrects the gull;
"Guilt, guilt, my son. Give it the right name. No marvel/ If I
found check in our great work within,/ When such affairs as

these were managing!" (4.5.39-41).

In *Dol Common*, for the first time dramatically, Jonson has created a full-blown positive representation of female wit. Dol is active, intelligent, and attractive. Through the sheer force of personality, Dol, at the play's outset, coerces the men to abandon their bickering for the good of their tripartite venture. Even though Dol displays the perceived "masculine" gender characteristic of managing her cohorts, she is also touted for her sensuousness. Dol not only arouses the lust of Sir Epicure Mammon, she serves as the sexual prize for her companions who paradoxically consider her to be the queen and the queen of their operation. Face punningly sums up Dol's position:

For which, at supper, thou shalt sit in triumph
And be not styled Dol Common, but Dol Proper,
Dol Singular. The longest cut at night

Shall draw thee for his Dol Particular. (1.1.176-79)

Within the plot of *The Alchemist*, Dol is the true philosopher's stone. Without her mercurial temperament—the qualities of eloquence and ingenuity—coupled with the quicksilver ability to transform herself into every gull's desire, Face and Subtle's nefarious plots could never succeed. Herford and Simpson agree that "Dol is an indispensable member of the house" whose presence "complicates and enriches" the plot. She is "indispensable above all to the satire" and stands in the front ranks of Jonson's women, and may be

counted one of the best "Dol Commons" in our literature (2.102).

Dol Common is not an unusual type in Jonsonian drama. The trademark element of ingeniousness exhibited by Dol in *The Alchemist* is replicated throughout Jonson's canon. For an alleged misogynist, Jonson has created, in this early work, a prototype who reappears in his middle and late periods: Ursula in *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) and Polish in *The Magnetic Lady* (1632). Ursula takes center stage as Subtle's alchemy lab is replaced with the panorama of the August fair at Smithfield. The earlier venture tripartite now rests in the characters of Knockem, Edgeworth, and Ursula the pig-woman, all tricksters who prey on the "quality" folk attending the Fair. Through the cleverness of Ursula, Jonson exposes the authority figures who denounce the fair's activities--the Puritan elder Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, Justice Adam Overdo, the fair's magistrate, and Humphrey Wasp, Cokes's governor--as self-righteous hypocrites. The world of the fair exposes injustice in Justice Overdo, incompetence in Wasp, and bigotry in Zeal-of-the-Land Busy. Once again, because they lack common sense, Jonson's "victims" deserve their fate.

The center of dramatic action is Ursula's tent, called by Overdo "the very womb and bed of enormity" (2.2.96). There, all the rogues and gulls converge at her booth before they tour the fair. By extension Ursula is the vital center of the play; she is the female character who provides the smarts and

managerial genius that helps to make the fair a success. An older version of Dol, Ursula has traded the attractiveness of youth for achieved power in middle age. That Jonson means her to be a central character is evidenced in the number of subplots she dominates. Ursula interacts with virtually every character in the play, and like Dol, she serves a variety of purposes. Within her own group of comrades, she embodies the authority necessary for a successful operation, and though her sharp tongue invites ridicule on the part of the fairgoers, they buy her wares. She is a force to be reckoned with. Overdo recognizes her as an old adversary: "This pig-woman do I know [.]. . . She hath been before me, punk, pinnacle, and bawd, any time these two-and-twenty years, upon record i' the Pie-Powders" (2.2.64-66). On the other hand, Knockem, echoing Face's tribute to Dol Common, acknowledges Ursula's superior status while at the same time poking fun at her physical size:

Thou are such another mad merry Urs still! Troth, I do make conscience of vexing thee now i' the dog-days, this hot weather, for fear of found'ring thee i' the body and melting down a pillar of the Fair. Pray thee take thy chair again and keep state, and let's have a fresh bottle of ale and a pipe of tobacco, and no vapours. (2.3.44-48).

Bartholomew Fair is doubly an occasion play. The dramatic theme of one holiday occasion—St. Bartholomew's Day—is reinforced by its two 1614 performance dates: Halloween (at the Hope Theatre) and All Saints' Day, a performance at James's court. Skillfully, Jonson manipulates the occasion of celebration into a mood of Saturnalia. Within the dramatic

world, all standards invert as the realism of Littlewit's house yields to the surreal carnivalesque atmosphere of the fair.³ The sheer expansiveness of this misrule is embodied in the Falstaffian figure, necessarily large, of Ursula whose huge body "preserves the first rib" and waters the ground with her sweat "like a great garden-pot" (2.2.48-49). That Ursula and Falstaff are cut out of the same dramatic cloth is evident in their shared qualities—liar, glutton, lecher, and cheat—but most of all they are both superbly funny.⁴ Ursula's amazing booth, in addition to its functional front, houses a "backside" large enough to contain a kitchen, a warehouse for stolen goods, a wardrobe of whore's gowns, a privy, and a brothel. The concept of misrule is reinforced by the use of in-group raillery—sarcasm, slurs, threats, and name-calling—that passes for mutual affection. In the world of the fair, Knockem's tribute to Ursula as a pillar of the fair is a compliment, for hostile wit is a marker of solidarity just as much as Ursula's tent.

When used against "outsiders," the jovial tone of the cony-catchers's invective turns serious as Winwife and Quarlous find out when baiting Ursula about her size:

Quarlous: Is she your quagmire, Dan Knockem? Is this your bog?

Nightingale: We shall have a quarrel presently.

Knockem: How? Bog? Quagmire? Foul vapours! Hum'h!

Quarlous: Yes, he that would venture for't, I assure him, might sink into her and be drowned a

week ere any friend he had could find where he were.

Winwife: And then he would be a fortnight weighing up again.

Quarlous: 'Twere like falling into a whole shire of butter. They had need be a team of Dutchmen should draw him out.

Knockem: Answer 'em, Urs. Where's thy Bartholomew-wit, now? Urs, thy Bartholomew-wit?

Ursula: Hang 'em, rotten roguy cheaters! I hope to see 'em plagued one day--poxed they already are, I am sure--with lean playhouse poultry that has the bony rump sticking out like the ace of spades, or the point of a partizan, that every rib of 'em is like the tooth of a saw, and will so grate 'em with their hips and shoulders as--take 'em altogether--they were as good lie with a hurdle.(2.5.79-95)

Just as Dol Common displays a mental agility uncommon to a street walker, Ursula holds her own in this biting verbal joust; however, when she runs for a pan of scalding water to roust the adversary, tragedy occurs. Ursula falls with the pan meant for Quarlous and Winwife, scalding herself on the legs. Stage directions vividly illustrate the we/ they mentality: Winwife and Quarlous exit while Mooncalf and Leatherhead enter to return to the comradeship found in their raillery:

Ursula (to Mooncalf): Are you underpeering, you baboon?

Mooncalf: Run you for some cream, good Mother Joan. I'll look to your basket.

Leatherhead: Best sit up i' your chair, Ursula. Help, gentlemen.

Knockem: Be of good cheer, Urs. Thou hast hindered me the currying of a couple of stallions here that abused the good race-bawd of Smithfield. 'Twas time for 'em to go. . . . I'll tend thy booth and look

to thy affairs the while. Thou shalt sit I' thy
chair and give directions, and shine Ursa Major.
(2.5.153-60,175-77)

Bartholomew Fair is a play about holiday license that is permeated with paradoxical legal jargon, for license means both proof of legitimacy and freedom from authority. "Words like liberty, law, license, and judgment," says Marcus, "seen forever to be sliding out of meaning in the chaos of Smithfield, so that our sense of what is lawful is seriously impaired" (45). By punishing the authority figures Jonson endorses theatrically James's position on legal zealousness on the part of his magistrates. Ian Donaldson in *The World Upside Down* states "in designing this play, partly for a royal occasion, it seems not improbable that Jonson may have remembered what James himself has written on the subject" (74). Donaldson continues by citing from James's work *Basilikon Doron* where James stresses the need for what rulers are to cultivate:

Temperance, Queen of all the rest [of virtues]
within you. I mean not by the vulgar interpretation
of Temperance which consists in *gustu* and *tactu*, by
the moderation of these two senses; but I mean of
that wise moderation, that first commanding
yourself, shall as Queen, command all the
affections and passions of your mind. (*James* 37)

It is not surprising that the legal zealots—the overdoers—end up in the stocks, while the sympathy of the audience is with Ursula's tricksters. These rascals may prey on their customers, but they are not hypocrites. Fairgoers know from the outset that Ursula's tent serves more than pig

and ale; it also houses a brothel where women's sexual favors can be had for a price. Nor is the lower-class Ursula the only character who prostitutes other women. "Respectable" Dame Purecraft's livelihood resembles Ursula's, but she panders in the name of religion; she admits to being "a special maker of marriages for our decayed brethren with our rich widows for a third part of their wealth" (5.2.51-52). Ursula may literalize the male prejudice that independent women are monsters, but Dame Purecraft's "pious shape-shifting makes her a far more insidious and inscrutable figure" (Ostovich 53). Sympathy remains with Ursula, for her agenda is obvious. When Mistress Overdo and Win Littlewit enter her booth to use a privy, they exit wearing clothing that marks them as whores. Jonson infers that the witless nature of these women is responsible for their embarrassing position, not Ursula's machinations. Repeatedly, Jonson prefers a character of wit over a dullard, and majestic Ursula is certainly no dullard.

Ursula, the pig woman, and Dol Common are only two females Jonson endows with great commanding ingenuity; Polish, Lady Lodestone's "gossip" in the much later *The Magnetic Lady*, is a third example indicating that women and wit are not mutually exclusive terms, nor are clever women anomalies in Jonson's canon. While Dol embodies controlling ability through the judicious use of beauty and good sense and Ursula's wit is the result of years of experience, Polish is an odd mixture of volubility, religious cant, and downright fraud. Of an age

with Ursula, Polish more resembles Lady Pol in *Volpone* with her malapropisms as she pretends to an intellect that she does not possess. Unlike Lady Pol, Polish's stupidity is consciously assumed, for it masks a shrewdly malevolent character who violates a position of trust. In the character of Polish, Jonson narratively breaks new ground by concealing Polish's true qualities until Act 4 when her plot begins to unravel. In addition, Polish represents a controlling figure who manipulates the innocent as well as the culpable.

The last of Jonson's public dramas, *The Magnetic Lady* (1632) was written four years after Jonson's paralytic stroke. Herford and Simpson reveal that one commentator, a news purveyor named Pory, announced the new play with "*The Magnetic Lady* by Ben Jonson who I thought had been dead" (1.92). This final drama is a woman's play in that an equal number of the active characters are female and the so-called plot revolves around women's issues: marriage, pregnancy, and birth, but not necessarily in that order. The dramatic action begins at the home of Lady Loadstone, the Magnetic Lady. She is "the center attractive" whose function it is to "draw thither a diversity of Guests" to her table in order to find a husband for her niece, the orphaned Placentia, who is "ripe for a man and marriageable" (Ind. 105-09). This basic Jonsonian trickster/dupe motif begins in ridiculing the various effetes who are attracted by Placentia's 15,000 pound dowry and ends in

revealing sinister treatment to newborns, such as cradle-switching and attempted infanticide. Polish is connected to the Steele family through her late husband, apparently a minister, who catechized Placentia's now-dead mother. Polish exclaims, "Mist'ris Steele! She was his pupil!" (1.5.16). Because she has cleverly overlaid her greedy nature with garrulous guile, Polish enjoys respect and goodwill as Lady Lodestone's companion or "good gossip" (1.4.44). The deceived Lady describes Polish as

A good woman!

But when she is impertinent, grows earnest,

A little troublesome, and out of season:

Her love, and zeal transport her! (5.44-47)

Lady Lodestone is not the only character disarmed by Polish's ingenuous and voluble speech. The male dinner guests--Parson Palate, Doctor Rut, Compass, and Ironside--all consider her a witless creature:

Rut: Death, she cannot speake reason.

Com: Nor sense, if we be Masters of our senses!

Iro: What mad woman ha' they got, here, to bate?
(1.5.26-28)

Even as she discusses with the nursemaid Keepe the need for finding Placentia a suitable husband, Polish maintains the persona of mindless garrulity as she flits from one topic to another:

She shall have a man, good Nurse, and must have a man:

A man, and a halfe, if we can choose him out:
We are all in Counsell within, and sit about it:
The doctors, and the Schollers, and my Lady;
Who's wiser then all us---Where's Mr. Needle?
Her Ladiship so lacks him to prick out
The man? How does my sweet young mistress?
You look not well, methinks! How does you dear
charge?
You must have a husband, and you shall have a
husband. (2.2.5-13)

Polish is so called because she is engaged "To polish,
and bring up" Placentia (1.4.40). Instead, she heads a cabal
made up of downstairs staff who really run Lady Loadstone's
household. It is Polish who has conceived and carried out the
long-term plan of switching her daughter Pleasance with the
orphaned heiress Placentia while the babies were still in
their cradles, and for fourteen years she has single-mindedly
focused on obtaining the Steele family fortune for her own
daughter. This below-stairs clique resembles the
hermaphroditic Collegiates in *Epicoene*, in that both groups
deal with women's issues. The Collegiates are masculinized
because they flaunt both gender and societal norms: they find
ways of preventing pregnancy and childbirth. The tripartite
group in *The Magnetic Lady* works within an approved societal
framework--"smock secrets"--but stand gender expectation on its
head because they deal in exploitation. In "The Appropriation
of Pleasure in *The Magnetic Lady*," Ostovich sums up the

situation:

Birthing and childcare become powerful weapons in the hands of a cabal of middle-aged women who reinterpret female sexual pleasure and fecundity for the perpetuation, biological and financial, of the matriarchal line. These independent women are engaged in activities that violate expectations for their gender. (426)

It is not until the marriageable "false" Placentia goes into labor at the end of Act 3 that the plot development begins, for the female confederacy must eradicate all signs of childbirth and preserve the reputation of the false Placentia. It is in this process that members of this tripartite bicker as did Dol and her confederates. Polish is justified in her outburst, for it is due to the laxity of Keep's watch that Placentia becomes pregnant. Compass overhears the argument and uses the information for his own benefit by secretly marrying the "real" Placentia. In the meantime, the women pull together and determine on a course of action as Polish takes responsibility by apologizing for her outburst, "Good Gentle Keepe, I pray thee Mistris Nurse,/ Pardon my passion, I was misadvis'd" (4.7.15-16). Just as the tricksters in *The Alchemist* improvise when their scam spins out of control, Polish and her cohorts agree on a course of action. They shamelessly deny the birth and convince Lady Loadstone that her niece has merely suffered "a fit o' the mother" (4.7.29)—that is, hysteria. Together they prepare an herbal remedy designed to put Placentia back on her feet, order the bed linen bleached, and are guided by Mother Chair's advice,

"Come, come, be friends: and keep these women-matters,/ Smock-secrets to our selves" (4.7.40-41). Convinced by the evidence of clean linen, Lady Loadstone is reconciled with her niece, and the rogues have brazened out the danger.

Brazen is indeed the word to describe Polish, because even when Compass exposes her duplicity, she maintains her innocence. When Doctor Rut accuses Polish of plotting to hide the fact of childbirth, her customary volubility focuses razor sharp in her attack:

You are a foule-mouth'd, purging, absurd doctor;
I tell you true, and I did long to tell it you.
You ha' spread a scandall I' my Ladies house here,
On her sweet niece, you never can take off
With all your purges, or your plaister of oathes;
Though you distill your dam-me, drop by drop,
I' your defence. That she hath had a child,
Here she doth spit upon thee, and defie thee;
Or I do't for her. (5.4.27-35)

It is only when the charge of infanticide is leveled that she shifts mental gears with agility; she admits to her scheme but defends her actions as being motivated by love for her child:

I plotted the deceit and I will owne it.
Love to my child, and lucre of the portion
Provoked me; wherein though th'event hath fail'd
In part, I will make use of the best side.
(5.10.85-88)

Undaunted and still in possession of her manipulating faculties, Polish attempts to "make use of the best side": that is, to hold Interest to the contract promising ten thousand pounds to Bias and her daughter.

In *The Magnetic Lady*, Jonson for the first time explores the dramatic possibilities of female intrigue. Just as the gulls in *Volpone* hope to receive an inheritance, the suitors who surround Lady Lodestone's table hope to receive a dowry by marrying Placentia. Inheritances and dowries are means of transferring money and property from one male to another within a patriarchal society. Polish, too, is motivated by greed, and finds a way of circumventing the dowry system. Realizing that women are generic--they no more than bait the hook, or serve as the prize--Polish substitutes the prize. Within Jonson's dramatic world, Pleasance and Placentia are interchangeable tokens. Essentially, Polish, arguably one of Jonson's most fascinating female character, beats the men at their own game. Concealing shrewdness under a veneer of mindless amiability, Polish nearly succeeds with her self-serving plan. Only briefly is she deflected from her goal when she allows anger to cloud her vision. Brazen to the very end, she displays sheer effrontery as she demands Interest honor his contract. Therefore, Polish is an advocate for using--and using better--men's typical underhanded methods where money is concerned.

Dol Common, Ursula, and Polish are three female

representations conceived by Jonson, as his writing evolved, who embody that prized quality, wit. Although they bear certain resemblances, these women cannot be considered carbon copies, and each is memorable in her own right. Dol Common combines beauty, youth, and intelligence to make her an equal partner with Face and Subtle; Ursula's lack of youthful beauty has been compensated for in increased mental facility as she manages the roguery of Bartholomew Fair. Polish is a very different representation, for she does not operate within a "public sphere" where gulls seek out sharpsters. Polish functions within a private area, namely, an intimate, family setting. Ostovich argues that Jonson knew women held a position of power within the domestic scene in the seventeenth century, as also noted by Ezell, for he portrays Grace Welborne in *Bartholomew Fair* with a "sense of dignity." Yet, he purposely demeans Placentia and Pleasance by making them "empty and malleable ciphers" ("Pleasure" 428). Furthermore, she insists that Jonson places Polish in a double-bind situation. Her professed reason for the substitution and masquerade is no different than that of the men who compete for Placentia's hand, that is, both are after financial gain. When she is unmasked, the men hypocritically condemn her ("Pleasure" 435). It is true that Jonson treats Placentia and Pleasance as allegorical representations, but he does not demean them nor suggest that these figures are interchangeable. Rather, through *Compass* the playwright

asserts just the opposite. Even though Pleasance and Placentia are seen as boring, inconsequential characters, the point is that they are unique beings whose identities and social status have been stolen through Polish's machinations. In order that her child should inherit great wealth, Polish gives her Placentia's life while condemning the real heiress to a life as a maid. Compass reveals Polish's crime and motive:

For sordid gain, betray'd the trust committed

Unto thee by the dead, as from the living:

Chang'd the poor innocents Infants in their
cradles:

Defrauded them o' their parents, chang'd their
names,

Calling Placentia, Pleasance; Pleasance, Placentia.
. . .

Abus'd the neighborhood;

But most this Lady. Did'st enforce an oath,

To this poore woman, on a pious book,

To keep close thy impiety. (5.9.7-10,13-15)

By switching the infants in their cradles, Polish, not the paternal order, treats Placentia and Pleasance as tokens and robs them of their birthright: the security of knowing their own identity. Her crime is that she has called "Placentia, Pleasance; Pleasance, Placentia." Tricksters such as Doll and Ursula connive against victims who have willingly placed themselves in the rogue's clutches, hoping to outwit them,

only to be themselves outwitted. Comments Doran, "The gullibility and greed of the characters are the traps they unwittingly set for their own undoing" (364). Polish operates differently; she has meddled in the lives of two innocent girls, not for the sake of Pleasance and Placentia, but for personal "sordid gain."

Rigg goes so far as to suggest that *The Magnetic Lady* is a partially biographical drama. He asserts that Compass serves as Jonson's alter ego, a character who searches out the truth of lost children's identities in order to atone for the deaths and abandonments of Jonson's own children. It is true that both *The Magnetic Lady* and *The New Inn*, written in Jonson's declining and possibly reflective years, both deal with loss of children and their subsequent happy restoration. Specifically, Rigg suggests, "Compass, his alter ego of 1633, vicariously fulfills Jonson's wish to be a discoverer of lost children, the savior of a child threatened with infanticide" (333). Also implicit is Jonson's own life-long search for identity based on the death of his natural father before his birth. Kay adds weight to this assertion by suggesting that, "To Jonson, . . . his family history was primarily a tale of gentility denied. . . . Much of the motivating power behind his ambitious literary career was the desire to regain the social position which he believed to be his birthright" (1). To someone as concerned with the reality of birthright as Jonson, Placentia and Pleasance are not tokens; rather, they,

like Jonson himself, are victims of a system that puts values on artificial boundaries such as gender and social position.

Jonson's Active Representations: Bridget and Grace

Jonson highly regards his capable women. Dol Common, Ursula, and Polish are just three unforgettable representations who possess maternal or sexual qualities admixed with a healthy dose of shrewdness. All of these characters are unmarried (although Polish apparently is a widow), and Jonson realizes the full potential of each personality independent of a marital relationship. In other words, the women of superior wit defy the stereotype of female suppression in Jacobean England. Nor do they need help from stronger, smarter men: Dol, Ursula, and Polish not only function very well on their own, they hold positions of power. Other admirable women reveal desired capabilities in Jonsonian comedy, for the dramatist also portrays women of prudence such as Bridget in *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) and Grace Welbourne in *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). These representations are not as lively as their wittier sisters, yet they possess a modicum of wisdom that allows them a certain freedom. Even though Bridget and Grace are not able to influence the actions of cleverer characters, both are able to control their own lives, no mean achievement. In an era of often-arranged marriages, these two women wed husbands of their own choosing. A closer look at Bridget and Grace reveals Jonson's dramatic

intent to portray both women as active, even if not proactive, characters.

Ben Jonson in *Every Man in His Humour*, his first so-called humours play, lays the ground work for his subsequent dramas: the characters are all prototypes that will reappear, in various incarnations, in his subsequent works.⁵ Ned Knowell and Wellbred, the wits who first appear in *Every Man in His Humour*, might be seen to develop into Dauphine and Truewit in *Epicoene*, then incarnate into Quarlous and Winwife in *Bartholomew Fair*, and ultimately cap their dramatic life as Compass and Ironside in *The Magnetic Lady*. In every drama, these men finish at the top of the game. Bridget, the prototype for Grace and even Frank/Laetitia in *The New Inn* (1629), is an early example of a woman who makes an active choice in the matter that most affects her life. She marries the husband of her choice.

Herford and Simpson comment that "Jonson from first to last never succeeded in drawing a woman at once fascinating, young, and modest" (2.143). The reason for such an unfinished representation is that moderation or prudence does not translate well in characterization. It can only be shown in opposition to a livelier characteristic. This is precisely what Jonson does in the representations of reasonable women. He places Bridget in juxtaposition to the jealous relationships of the Kitelys and of Tib and Cob in order to heighten her rational behavior. Grace, too, is foregrounded

against flawed marital relationships since both the Littlewits and the Overdos represent marital imprudence at its most ridiculous.

Folly abounds in *Every Man in His Humour* as two friends, Ned Knowell, the country gallant, and Wellbred, the town blade, collect dolts merely for the sake of provoking and observing them. The group includes two poetasters, the rural Stephen and his town counterpart Mathew; two jealous husbands, Cob and Kitely; one braggart soldier, Bobadil; and one choleric squire, Downright. Each gull manifests a "humour" that begs for ridicule. The Elizabethan doctrine of humours has broad and complex roots. The term "humour" takes its root in medieval physiology where four essential fluids were believed to compose the human temperament.⁶ By the late sixteenth century it had come to "denote whatever element of character, through unequal mixture of fluids, dominated the rest" (HS 1.340). As a ready formula for human infirmities, the humours' system easily lent itself to Jonson's turn for satire. In his capable hands, the platitude that every man has a dominant trait receives a more cynical, ground-breaking application: every man has a characteristic folly. Perhaps the best description of the Jonsonian quality of humour occurs in the conversation between Cash and Cob. Cash remarks, "it is a gentleman-like monster, bred,/ in the special gallantrie of our time,/ by affectation; and fed by folly" (3.4.20-22). In Kitely, the humour manifests itself as an intrinsic character

flaw—jealousy—but in Stephen it is affectation, including the art of cursing. Repeatedly in Jonsonian comedy, genuine adroitness or wisdom triumph over humour's folly.

Bridget, Kitley's sister, is a nominal character who does not appear until act 4. She does not possess the quick wit of the worldly Tib nor the inanity of young Mrs. Kitley; rather, her prudent character represents a foil to such follies.

Bridget is the first in a line of Jonson's female characters who are presented with a clear-cut choice of a mate: a fop whom they can control or a man of character. In Bridget's case the choice is between infantile Matthew and the more-mature Ned. Matthew woos her with plagiarized bits of *Hero and Leander*:

Rare creature, let me speak without offence,
Would God my rude words had the influence,
To rule thy thoughts, as thy fair looks do mine,
Then shouldst be his prisoner, who is thine.
(4.2.35-38)

Bridget rules her own thoughts, however, and suggests ironically that Matthew retain what little mental ability he possesses: "Servant (in troth), you are too prodigal/ Of your wit's treasure, thus to pour it forth/ Upon so mean a subject as my worth" (4.2.1-4). Although she is kind to Matthew, Bridget cannot take his suit seriously. When her brother Downright attacks the character of "lewd rake-hells, that care neither for God, nor the devil" who "come to read ballads, and

roguery, and trash," it is not Matthew that Bridget defends, it is Ned. Bridget admits that she is attracted to "one civil gentleman,/ And very worthily demeaned himself!" (4.3.25-26).

This "civil gentleman" is also attracted to Bridget. Yet, his courtship is the very antithesis of Matthew's, for he woos her, almost anonymously, through Wellbred. Wellbred, for his part, is in the happy position of facilitating a marriage between his dear sister, "a maid of good ornament and much modesty" (4.5.18-19), and his best friend. That Wellbred thinks highly of them both is implicit in his conversation with Ned: "except I conceived very worthily of her, thou shouldest not have her" (4.5.19-20). In stark contrast to Matthew's fulsome manner, Ned is the soul of honor and respectability. In contrast to his cousin Stephen's affectation of oaths, Ned underscores his sincerity by refusing to seal the arrangement with any sort of oath. The conversation with Wellbred where Bridget's future is discussed indicates the character differences in the two men. Wellbred is determined to bring about the match; he believes it is a matter between Ned and himself--to all appearances an arranged match. When Ned voices his fear whether "I shall have her or no" Wellbred responds, "By this hand, thou shall have her" (4.5.21,25). Ned allows for Bridget's ability to choose when he tells Wellbred, "I am satisfied: and do believe thou wilt omit no offered occasion, to make my desires complete" (4.5.30-31). Wellbred and Ned are speaking at cross purposes.

Wellbred believes that he will be the means of delivering Bridget to Ned, while Ned understands that Wellbred will do his best: the choice is Bridget's.

To his credit, Wellbred adopts Ned's attitude. Rather than force her into a marriage of his making, he pleads Ned's case to a predisposed Bridget:

Well, there's a dear and respected friend of mine, sister, stands very strongly, and worthily affected toward you, and hath vowed to inflame whole bonfires of zeal, at his heart, in honour of your perfections. I have already engaged my promise to bring you where shall hear him confirm much more. Ned Knowell is the man, sister. There's no exception against the party. You are ripe for a husband; and a minute's loss to such an occasion is a great trespass in a wise beauty. What say you, sister? On my soul he loves you. Will you give him the meeting? (4.8.103-11)

Bridget accuses Wellbred of pandering her to his friend, for "this motion of yours savours of an old knight-adventure's servant, a little too much, methinks" (4.8.114-15). Yet, Bridget has enough "confidence in [her] own constancy" to believe that she should meet Ned rather than reject him out of hand. Bridget does not return until the conclusion of the drama when she is wife of Ned Knowell. Brainworm has the last word as he points out the inescapable logic of the union: "Faith sir, they are both as sure as love, a priest, and three thousand pounds (which is her portion) can make 'em" (5.3.80-81). By mentioning money in the same breath as love, Brainworm mitigates the romantic element of love so common in Shakespeare's work and replaces it with the realistic view of

Jonson.

In Brainworm's speech, Jonson gives his recipe for a good marriage. Romantic love gives way to affection based on reason and financial considerations. Moderation or prudence best describes the entire courtship of Bridget and Ned and signifies the prospect of a happy marriage. In order to display the merits of this moderate marriage, Jonson places Ned and Bridget's relationship in contrast to the marriage of the Kiteleys; Wellbred makes it clear that Bridget must be released from a house "so stored with jealousy, there is no room for love to stand upright in" (4.8.57-58). Married couples do not come off well in Jonsonian drama. In addition to the jealousy manifest in the Kiteley's relationship, the marriage of Tib and Cob evidences the same flaw. The Otters in *Epicoene* are open to ridicule because Otter willingly allows his wife to rule him; he constantly defers to his Princess. Another married couple, the Littlewits in *Bartholomew Fair*, both manage to live up (or down) to their name. While Kiteley's paranoid jealousy threatens to destroy his marriage, Littlewit's uxoriousness puts his wife in sexual jeopardy. Jonson's masterful satire pokes fun at the marital state through exploring extremes in temperament.

Kiteley, a merchant of the city who has recently married a younger wife, is obsessed with the unsupported notion that she is unfaithful to him. The plot of *Every Man in His Humour*, revolves around incidents of character type or humour, and

Kitely's is jealousy. The merchant examines every speech of his wife in order to confirm his suspicion. When she suggests that young Knowell has "excellent good parts" (4.3.31), Kitely exclaims, " Good parts? How should she know his parts?/ His parts? Well, well. Well, well, well" (4.3.35-36). Wellbred, contriving a private discussion with Bridget, causes both Kitelys to hurry to Cob's house. To Mrs. Kitely, Downright insinuates "Cob's wife is an excellent bawd, sister, and, oftentimes, your husband haunts her house, marry, to what end, I cannot altogether accuse him, imagine you what you think convenient" (4.8.85-88). Next, Wellbred informs Kitely that his wife has gone to Cob's house to meet Thomas. Kitely reacts with typical suspicion: "She's gone a' purpose now to cuckold me,/ with that lewd rascal" (4.8.131-33). In Kitely's excessively fertile mind, cuckoldry yields to murder, as Kitely convinces himself that his wife has poisoned him. Even though his error is proved, Kitely is unbelieving, for he still maintains, "Am I not sick? How am I, then, not poisoned? Am I not poisoned? How am I, then, so sick?" (4.8.34-35) It is, in fact, Kitely's ridiculous suspicions of his wife that make *Every Man In His Humour* so enjoyably comic, yet the Kitelys' relationship, based as it is on jealousy, is not the valued type of marriage.

In order to clinch his position on the dangerous effects of jealousy, Jonson offers another couple as evidence: Tib and Cob. Tib is nominally introduced in Act 1 when Cob mentions

that his wife has lent Bobadil forty shillings. In spite of the fact that she has been gulled by Bobadil, Tib more than holds her own in a verbal exchange with Cob that comprises the entire fourth scene in Act 4. Her careless use of the term "cuckold" unleashes a hilarious stichomythic verbal display between husband and wife that is heavily weighted with sexual innuendo:

Cob: (knocks) What, Tib, Tib, I say.

Tib: (Inside) How now, what cuckold is that knocks so hard? Oh, husband, is't you? What's the news?

Cob: Nay, you have stunned me, i' faith! You ha' given me a knock o' the forehead, will stick by me! Cuckold? Slid, cuckold?

Tib: Away, you fool, did I know it was you that knocked? Come You may call me as bad, when you list.

Cob: May I? Tib you are a whore.

Tib: You lie in your throat, husband.

Cob: How, the lie? And in my throat, too? Do you long to be stabbed, ha?

Tib: Why you are no soldier, I hope?

Cob: O, must you be stabbed by a soldier? Mass, that's true!

When was Bobdil here? Your captain? That rogue, that foist, that fencing Burgullian? (4.4.1-15)

By uttering the term "stabbed," Cob expresses what has been in his mind from the beginning: that Tib has given Bobadil sexual favors as well as money. Having himself been beaten by Bobadil earlier, Cob insists that Tib "keep the door shut, upon all comers" 4.4.27-28), to which Tib quibbles, "there shall nobody

enter here, without my consent." Punning on the term "enter," Cob strives for the last word and finds it: "Nor with your consent" (4.4.29,31).

Such hilarious banter sets the stage for the false conclusion when several characters have been gulled into believing that Tib is running a brothel and that she herself is a bawd. Old Knowell appears on the scene looking for his son only to be accused of lechery; both Kitelys accuse each other of consorting with a bawd; Cash who has accompanied Mrs. Kitely is also accused of impropriety. Cob appears and, believing the worst, beats Tib who welcomes a visit to the magistrate where she can clear her name: "I'll see an' you may be allowed to make a bundle o' hemp o' your right and lawful wife thus, at every cuckoldly knaves's pleasure" (4.4.79-81).

Justice Clement, the *raisonneur* who metes out justice in Act 5, vindicates Tib and then entreats that the couple be reconciled. Cob handsomely apologizes: "Why now I see thou art honest, Tib, I receive thee as my dear, and mortal wife, again." Yet, this time Tib has the last word: "And I you, as my loving, and obedient husband" (5.56-57,59) Although Clement speaks to the Kitelys in his summing up, he surely includes Tib and Cob when emphasizing in the conclusion that jealousy must be overcome: "For I must tell you both, while that is fed,/ Horns o' the mind are worse than o' the head" (5.5.65-66).

The comedic force of *Every Man In His Humour* comes from

the absurdities inherent in the jealous relationships, and Jonson is clearly contemptuous of such behavior. Yet, it is in such situations that Jonson delivers his most biting satire. Compared to the Kitelys and Cob and Tib, Bridget and Ned are poor shadows, for there is little dramatic fire attached to their courtship. Unlike the other couples, they need not heed Clement's dictum to "put off all discontent" (5.5.62), for their marriage is solidly based on reasonableness.

While the character of Bridget lacks force and depth, Jonson means her to be a positive female representation. Although she cannot entirely control the more clever character of her brother Wellbred, she can determine her own marital destiny. Nor is Bridget the only female in Jonson's canon who can exert control over her own fate. Grace Wellborn's circumstances in *Bartholomew Fair* are similar to, yet worse than, Bridget's. Like Bridget, Grace is a ward, but unlike Bridget, who lives with her jealous brother, Grace lacks a family; she has been sold to the highest bidder, Justice Overdo, as her guardian.⁷ In turn, Overdo affiances Grace to his imbecilic brother-in-law, Bartholomew Cokes. Grace embodies the lot of a woman reduced to property as she, for a price, is handed from one male authority figure to another. Herford and Simpson characterize Grace thus:

A purchased ward, sold to a foolish suitor, she is about to become his possession when a marriage license is abstracted by a pickpocket and transferred to one rival, who for a consideration resigns it to another. (2.143).

Grace first appears at the end of Act 1 at the Littlewit's home where she attracts the attention of Winwife, a gentleman, and Quarlous, a gamester. Both men's courtship of Dame Purecraft, Win Littlewit's wealthy mother, is momentarily deflected. For her part, Grace is obliged to marry the child-like Bartholomew Cokes that very day, and she is not happy about it. Forgetting that he already has a bride, Cokes admires the already-married Win: "A pretty little soul, . . . Would that I might marry her" (1.5.74-75). Contemptuously, Grace murmurs her agreement: "So would I, or anybody else, so I might scape you" (1.5.76). Quarlous and Winwife deplore the need for Grace to marry "such a cokes" because "she seems to be as discreet, and sober as she is handsome" (1.5.47). Grace confirms this opinion when she balks at attending the fair, lamenting, "Truly, I have no such fancy to the Fair nor ambition to see it. There is none goes thither of any quality of fashion" (1.5.113-14). If Grace's will is ignored in such a grave matter as marriage, it is certain that her wishes will not prevail in regard to the fair. Because she has no choice, Grace accompanies her fiancé, Wasp, and Dame Overdo to the Fair. Winwife and Quarlous also determine to attend the Fair in order to observe the "excellent creeping sport" (1.5.122), yet both men are really interested in the betrothed Grace.

The inverted morality within *Bartholomew Fair* mirrors and emphasizes Grace's position while paradoxically offering her the circumstances to take charge of her life and determine its

course. Even though Grace's prospects seem dim, Jonson allows her a certain amount of flexibility in overcoming her obstacles. Like Bridget, Grace prudently makes the most of the opportunities offered by the confusion of the Fair. Separated from her fiance's party by the crush of the crowd, Grace meets Quarlous and Winwife who invite her to accompany them with promises that their behavior "will give no cause" to doubt that "they are gentlemen" (3.6.276). Responding to Winwife's sympathy concerning her undesirable bethrothal, Grace seems to be reconciled: "Sir, they that cannot work their fetters off must wear 'em" (3.6.270). Yet, in the company of these two men, Grace astutely discovers a way to "work off the fetters." As the conversation continues, Grace expresses contempt for Cokes and insists that, because she cannot love him, she and her fiance are not suited to each other:

Subtlety would say to me, (I know) he is a fool,
and has an estate, and I might govern him, and
enjoy a friend, beside. But these are not my aims,
I must have a husband I must love, or I cannot live
with him. (4.3.11-14).

Grace has the acumen to realize that marriage to Cokes is not without its advantages. She could live a life of wealth and ease and entertain herself with various "friends." However, she could not respect such a husband because she could not love him, and love, in her practical view, cannot exist in marriage to a fool. Through her conversation with Winwife and Quarlous, Grace intimates that love is a condition that

develops if the couple build on the common ground of moderation. With Cokes, such a relationship would be impossible. As if on cue, both Quarlous and Winwife profess their love for her, and Grace, influenced by the carnival atmosphere, devises a scheme whereby one man will, by lottery, win her hand. Compared to Cokes, either Quarlous or Winwife, both perceived by Grace to be fair-minded men, would serve as a good match, for "You are both, equal and alike to me. . . . You are reasonable creatures, you have understanding, and discourse" (4.3.29-30). Grace also possesses the quality of moderation, for Winwife bestows the quality of "reasonableness" on Grace (38) while Quarlous endows her with "fitness" (39). Because she shares the common quality of rationality with both men, love with either would be possible.

Winwife and Quarlous earn Jonson's approval, for they are both rational and clever; they are able to turn circumstances to their own advantage. On the surface, either man would fit Grace's requirements in a husband, for she believes that she has the ability to convert a rational man into a good husband: "I have no fear at all, but mine own manners shall make him a good one" (4.3.32-34). Entering into the carnival spirit, Grace decides to let "Destiny" determine the outcome. Chance, in the form of Trouble-all, chooses Palamon over Arcite. Fate therefore favors Winwife's suit.

Grace is wrong in assuming that Quarlous and Winwife are equal in character. Quarlous is, after all, a gamester who is

determined to strengthen his standing as the victorious bridegroom. First, he blackmails Edgworth into stealing the marriage license with the hopes of substituting his name for Cokes's. When Grace unwittingly checkmates this plan with her matrimonial lottery, Quarlous disguises himself as Trouble-all and tricks Grace into revealing the names on the slate. When Grace awards herself to Winwife, saying, "I am yours, sir, by the benefit of your fortune" (5.2.29), Quarlous counters with the results of his chicanery: he has somehow transferred Grace's wardship from Justice Overdo to himself, and Grace must pay him value in order to marry Winwife. Quarlous, for is part, decides that it is money that he really wants; therefore, he accepts Dame Purecraft and her six thousand pounds:

Why should not I marry this six thousand pound, not I think on't? And a good trade, too, that she has beside, ha? The t'other wench Winwife is sure of; there's no expectation for me there! Here I may make myself some saver yet. . . . It is money that I want. Why should I not marry the money when 'tis offered me? (5.2.67-73)

It is ironic that the strategy of the matrimonial lottery, a device that commoditizes Grace even more than Overdo's guardianship, should be the means of her deliverance. The concrete choice on the tablet thwarts Quarlous's plot to forge a marriage license. Grace's instinctive action reduced her suitors from three to one: Winwife is the reasonable choice. To his credit, Winwife's response augers well for their married future: " And you have him, mistress, believe it, that

shall never give you cause to repent her benefit, but make you rather to think that in this choice she had both her eyes" (5.2.30-32). Thus it is that Grace leaves the Fair with a better matrimonial choice than when she entered.

Kay believes that *Bartholomew Fair* stands as Jonson's most comprehensive treatment of human nature, and Grace and her suitors are just part of the reason (144).

In vivid contrast to wit demonstrated as reason, Jonson offers thoughtlessness as the basis of the Littlewit's marriage. Unlike Kitemare whose love for his wife is poisoned by jealousy, the Puritan Winwife naively panders his pregnant wife Win to friends and strangers alike. Littlewit's thoughtlessness occurs both in his home and at the Fair where he leaves Win in the keeping of bawds and pimps. At the outset Quarrelous kisses the outraged Win who receives no help from her husband who advises, ". . . Be womanly, Win; make an outcry to our mother Win?" (1.3.35-36). Encouraged, the opportunistic Quarrelous kisses her again with the astute aside, "She may call you apple-John if you use this" (1.3.48). The harassment is so obvious that even Winwife, Quarrelous's cohort, is moved to complain, "Pray thee, forbear for my respect somewhat" (1.3.49). Ostovich maintains that Littlewit's casual bestowal of his wife's kisses along with his dismissal of her opposition does, indeed, mark his behavior as an "apple-John" or pander. The phrase "use this" is likewise sexually charged adding to Win's confusion as to whether she is wife or whore.

Her later conduct at the Fair reflects this confusion (*Ben Jonson* 51).

Finding Win fashionably dressed and unchaperoned, Knockem is able to procure her by telling her that "it is the vapour of spirit in the wife, to cuckold, nowadays; as it is the vapour of fashion, in the husband, not to suspect" (5.4.44-45). It is for this reason that Win enters Ursula's tent to use a privy, and exits transformed, along with Dame Overdo, in the trappings of a whore. Faced with the contradictory roles he has forced on his wife, Littlewit cannot moralize; he merely expresses his shock, "Oh my wife, my wife, my wife" (5.6.43) as if he is belatedly attempting to affirm her true position: wife, not whore.

Mistress Overdo is perhaps even sillier than Win; after all she is sister to Bartholomew Cokes. As the wife of Justice Overdo, she accepts her husband at his own inflated estimation and dresses in a manner that reflects this exalted status. Apparently possessing no mind of her own, Mistress Overdo constantly quotes her husband as an authority in any given situation. Defending her imbecilic brother to his tutor, Mistress Overdo finds a way to bring her husband into the conversation; she urges that Wasp "show discretion" with young Cokes even though he "be exorbitant (as Master Overdo says)" (1.5.9-10). Unimpressed, Wasp attacks her pretensions as he retorts, "Marry gip, Goody She-Justice, Mistress French-hood.

. . . Must you quote your Adam to me!" (1.5.12-14). Resenting Mistress Overdo's intervention in his charge's life, Wasp ungraciously agrees to escort the group--Cokes, Grace, and Mistress Overdo--to the Fair. The party lacks the presence of Justice Overdo because, unknown to his family, he has taken on the identity of a madman for the purpose of detecting "enormities" at the Fair. In her husband's absence, Mistress Overdo appoints herself as his deputy in keeping the peace. Ironically, her righteous intervention is cause for the good Justice's humiliation. In his madman's disguise, he is first beaten, then put in the stocks on evidence of Mistress Overdo: "He is a lewd and pernicious enormity, as Master Overdo calls him" (3.5.204). Later Mistress Overdo interrupts a game of vapours that masks Edgeworth's theft of the marriage license. When the men scuffle, the lady imperiously commands:

Why gentlemen, why gentlemen, I charge you upon my
husband's authority. Conserve the peace! In the
King's name and my husband's, put up your weapons.
I shall be driven to commit you myself else.
(4.4.92-95)

Although by "commit" Mistress Overdo means "send to prison," Quarlous laughs at the bawdy implication, "to commit adultery." This verbal exchange--innocent on Mistress Overdo's part, lewd on Quarlous's--foreshadows Mistress Overdo's ultimate fate: a whore in Ursula's brothel. Like Win Littlewit, Mistress Overdo enters Ursula's tent for relief and exits in the dress of a whore.

Masked and dressed in the livery of a prostitute, green

and scarlet, an obviously ill Mistress Overdo is seated by Whit in a chair in order to view the puppet show. Whit unctuously explains the lady's plight: "Ursula's ale and aqua vitae ish to blame for't" (5.4.28-29). When the puppet show seques into Justice Overdo's self-righteous exposition of "enormities," Mistress Overdo causes his judgement to recoil on himself. Although the Justice has cast off his madman garments, Mistress Overdo still wears her "disguise": that of the prostitute. When she speaks, she simultaneously reveals her true identity and silences her husband:

O lend me a basin—I am sick, I am sick!

Where's Master Overdo?" (5.6.59-60)

Because Justice Overdo is shocked out of speech, Quarlous steps in to deliver the moral of the piece. Addressing his remarks to Overdo, this surprising *raisonneur* compares the events of *Bartholomew Fair* to Everyman's journey through life:

Sir, why do you not go with the enormity? Are you oppressed with it? I'll help you. . . . Remember you are but Adam, flesh and blood! You have your frailty; forget your other name of Overdo, and invite us all to supper. (5.6.65-66, 85-86)

Quarlous's final speech transforms the inverted carnivalesque nature of *Bartholomew Fair* into sound Christian doctrine: *tu quoque* or you, too.⁸ Justice Overdo's mistakes in judgment epitomize the wayward condition of man who, on his own, cannot be reconciled to his creator. God reaches down to man, an action that explains the purpose of Grace Wellborne. In a drama replete with characters who embody their names,

Grace is meant to signify intervention. Surely, Jonas Barish in *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy* misses the point when he censures Grace. Acknowledging that Jonson intends Grace as a compliment to her sex, Barish complains that, in reality, Grace is "a kill-joy" (222). Winwife and Quarlous are nearer the mark when they recognize that Grace's superior qualities elevate her above the "unfortunate foolish tribe" who accompany her to the Fair (3.5.268). It must be remembered that Grace, personified as divine intervention, thwarts Quarlous's mercenary scheme and accepts the more favorable suit of Winwife.

Moderation is the quality Jonson proposes for a good marriage, but he also dramatically displays most marriages as lacking this attribute. Most married couples have lessons to learn since their relationships abandon reason. The Kiteleys and Tib and Cob represent the extreme of focusing too strongly on their relationship; the result is obsessive jealousy. To their ears, innocent phrases are loaded with sexual implications. The Littlewits and Overdos represent behavior totally opposed to the earlier couples; rather than looking within their relationship, they turn their sights outward, leaving their mates vulnerable. John Littlewit must answer for his casual inattention to his pregnant wife, while Mister Overdo, as a Justice, is rendered ineffective by the wrong-headed social behavior of himself and his wife. It must be noted that in all four cases, Jonson paints the wife more

sympathetically than the husband; for the male, the dramatist reserves the utmost contempt. It is, after all, Justice Overdo who spends time in the stocks. Yet, Jonson holds out hope for the institution of marriage when the relationship is based on reason. As a counterweight to these capricious couples, Jonson offers the stable matches of Bridget-Ned and Grace-Winwife.

Reactive Representatives: Dame Pliant and Lady Lodestone

Dol, Ursula, and Polish represent women of great wit, women who can plan and execute a course of action equal to a man while, at the same time, retaining the veneer of their femininity. None of these characters is shallow; all are drawn with a depth that marks them as realistic representations. Bridget and Grace are not as proactive as the earlier trio, for they cannot bend duller characters to their will. Yet they are clever enough to control their own lives. Both women muster enough mettle to attract suitable husbands. Unfortunately, there are women in Jonson's canon who epitomize the lack of wit: completely helpless women who cannot chart their own destiny. Rather than attempt a true representation as female characters, Jonson paints Dame Pliant in *The Alchemist* and Lady Loadstone in *The Magnetic Lady* as mere devices upon which he hands the plot. Dame Pliant specifically serves as a commodity, or a prize, to be offered to the male who possesses the most cleverness. Herford and Simpson state:

In his desire to make her character expressive of her name, Jonson has really made her of no character at all. . . . She is little more than a passive and serviceable abstraction--A ball whose various movements serve to exhibit the quality of the players and mark the progress of the game. (2.106)

It is Dame Pliant's condition of widowhood that puts her in indirect competition with Dol, for Face and Subtle originally compete with each other for the widow's hand. However, it is not Dame Pliant's hand that incites comment; it is the perceived availability of her sexual condition. "We'll e'en draw lots and he that fails shall have/ The more in goods, the other has in tail" (2.6.86-87). As a widow, Dame Pliant surely is no virgin, a condition that furthers the bawdy observations of Face and Subtle as they determine to pander her with the Spanish Count, Face arguing, "There is no maidenhead to be feared or lost" (4.3.68). Such jokes at Dame Pliant's expense continue as the tricksters suggest that Kastril will become "brother/ To a great count" (4.4.86-87) when his sister is made "a Countess" the term "count" sounding suggestively like bawdy terminology for female pudenda. Reduced to her physical essence, Dame Pliant becomes the tantalizing prize successively for Face, Surly, and Lovewit.

In the same progressive manner, Pliant moves from a speaking female with a certain degree of spirit to one rendered entirely voiceless, as her brother Kastril serves as ventriloquist. In her quest to become a countess, Pliant, an English woman, shows some discriminating qualities, insisting,

"Truly, I shall never brook a Spaniard" (4.2.27). Naivete replaces her seeming discrimination when she adds, "Never sin' eighty-eight could I abide 'em,/ And that was some three year afore I was born, in truth" (4.4.28-29). With Kastril's threatening her with bodily harm ("You shall love him, or I'll kick you" [4.2.37]), the widow yields to her brother's will: "I'll do as you will ha' me" (4.2.39). When the spoilsport Surly reveals himself as the Spanish Count, he also exposes the peril of her situation:

Lady, you see into what hands you are fall'n;
'Mongst what a nest of villains! And how near
Your honour was t'have caught a certain clap,
Through your credulity, had I but been
So punctually forward, as place, time,
And other circumstances would ha'made a man;
For y'are a handsome woman: would you were wise,
too!

(4.4.1-7)

With sexually suggestive puns such as "clap" to mean venereal disease, Surly forces Dame Pliant to see that her "credulity" is responsible for her situation, and it is only a fortunate circumstance that allows him, a "gentleman," to come to her aid rather than to "wrong her honour" (4.4.10).⁹ Possessed with his own brand of opportunism, Surly proposes a reasonable conclusion to their relationship: "You are/ They say, a widow, rich; and I'm a bachelor/ worth not. Your

fortunes may make me a man, /As mine ha' preserved you a woman" (4.4.12-16). One cannot imagine Bridget or Grace yielding to such specious reasoning, yet, true to her name, the malleable Pliant agrees, "I will, sir" (4.4.16).

For the rest of the drama, Dame Pliant is voiceless. When Surly is bested by Face, Kastril chides her, "Away, you talk like a foolish mauther" (4.2.24). Surly responds, "Sir, all is truth she says" (4.4.25). Although the men indicate that Dame Pliant is involved in the conversation, in reality she has said nothing. The widow like the "ball," suggested by Herford and Simpson, bounces once again when Face prostitutes her as a means of remaining in Lovewit's good graces: "I'll help you to a widow,/ In recompense, that you shall gi' me thanks for,/ Will make you seven years younger, and a rich one" (5.1.80-84).

Lovewit, in his capacity of *deux ex machina*, replaces Face as the dominant figure, turns away the gulls, and accepts Dame Pliant as his natural right. Somehow, in spite of every attempt by the tricksters to abuse her honor, the widow, like Grace Wellborne in *Bartholomew Fair*, providentially manages to avoid all pitfalls. Indeed, she receives a reward of sorts herself: Lovewit is a gentleman living in the fashionable Blackfriars district with the financial means to leave the city during the plague. Lovewit is more than a match for Kastril who accuses his sister of being "tupped/ But by a dubbed boy" and made "a lady tom" (5.2.27-28). Lovewit exudes

authority:" Come will you quarrel/ I will seize you, sirrah"
(5.3.131). Dame Pliant moves through a series of "protectors":
but one understands that, in the end, Jonson is kind to her.
Unable to exercise any keenness of mind that would allow her
to determine her own fate, she has fallen into the best, not
to say perfect, situation.

Lady Lodestone is another such widow whose dim-wittedness
renders her a representation of the helpless female.
Ostensibly, she appears to be an important character; after
all, she is the magnetic lady. Yet, the dramatic reality does
not support Jonson's promise of the essential qualities of
this magnetic mistress:

A Lady, a brave bountiful Housekeeper; and a
vertuous Widow: and who having a young Niece, ripe
for a man amd marriageable, he makes that his
Center attractive, to draw thither a diversity of
guests; all persons of different humours to make up
his Perimeter. (Inductus 106-10)

As a woman who is supposed to generate the magnetic
current that attracts proper suitors for her marriageable
niece, Lady Lodestone is a cipher. Rather than exercising an
acute sensibility that achieves the most favorable suit for
her niece, the magnetic lady falters at every crisis:

The Magnetic Mistress looks on somewhat helplessly
at the movements and counter movements; induced by
the "magnetism" which she exercises but cannot be
said to possess. (2.208)

The authoritative voice of Herford and Simpson is
supported by other scholarship. Knoll in *Ben Jonson's Plays:
An Introduction* insists that Lady Lodestone is "incompletely

realized" and instead of "passionate intensity" she is "shallow" (190). Ostovich suggests that the real ruling power in Lady Lodestone's establishment comes from below stairs with Polish and her cohorts who are actually in charge ("Magnetic Lady" 427). Even though Lady Lodestone is nominally the head of her household, she is unable to use her power efficiently, for she cannot trust herself to find a suitable husband for Placentia without masculine advisors, all of whom hold vested interests. Sir Moth Interest stands at the head of this list. As Lady Lodestone's brother-in-law and Placentia's financial advisor, Sir Moth is determined to keep control of the money—16,000 pounds represents a considerable sum. When Captain Ironside disrupts Placentia's party by drawing his sword on "the halfe man" Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, whom he insists is "a perfum'd braggart who drinks his wine/ with three parts water" (3.2.4-6), the action of the play truly begins. Placentia goes into labor and is quickly carried away while "Lady Lodestone is so unnerved by the display of potent masculinity that she retires to her room in a near-suicidal swoon" where she remains until the end of Act 4 ("Pleasure" 427-28). To her credit, Lady Lodestone does denounce Ironside's behavior: "He has discredited my house, and boord/ with his rude swaggering manners and endanger'd? My niece's health (by drawing his weapon)/ God knows how farre; for Mr. Doctor does not" (3.3.13-16). Unfortunately, Ironstone's chastisement is completely undercut by Lady Lodestone's behavior: she insists

that Keepe "Help me to my chamber" (3.3.31). One can almost see Lady Lodestone wring her hands in despair.

Such helplessness of character begs consequences. In Lady Lodestone's case cleverer minds take charge of the situation; Polish, Keepe, and Mother Chair unite to remove the evidence of childbirth, thereby convincing Lady Lodestone of her niece's purity. Moreover, Compass, promising that he has knowledge that will "render. . . /Your niece a virgin, and unvitiated" (4.8.53-54), provides the male authority that Lady Lodestone needs to accept Polish's story. The ersatz magnetic mistress yields what authority she has possessed to Compass who provides the summing up of the plot. First, he reveals the machination of Polish and her cadre; next, he reveals that he has married the true Placentia and insists that she be restored to her rightful place—as heiress. Magnanimously, he allows his hostess to conclude the final events. Lady Lodestone's last act is to commoditize herself in an effort to reconcile with Ironside. Recognizing that his behavior has set in motion the chain of events that led to the truth, she offers herself as his reward:

And I, if this good Captaine will accept me,
Give him my self, endow him with my estate,
And make him lord of me, and all my fortunes.
He that hath sav'd my honour, though by chance,
Ile really study his, and how to thank him.
(5.10.137-41)

Like Dame Pliant, Lady Lodestone is not clever enough to direct the course of her life. Both women allow themselves to be buffeted along by the current of the present situation. Dame Pliant agrees with the male who shows the most strength, and in the process loses her identity. Kastril physically abuses her, and Surly expects recompense for his help. In a *quid pro quo* arrangement, he offers to restore her honor if she settles her wealth on him through marriage. It comes as no surprise that Lovewit's long-expected appearance at the conclusion brings about the denouement that awards him the pliant widow. Lovewit completely out-maneuvers Face in subtle manipulation; he dispatches all the aggrieved parties with a mere wave of his hand. Lady Lodestone, unlike Pliant, ostensibly, is a woman of strength; she is the "magnetic lady." But as Herford and Simpson shrewdly point out, Lady Lodestone cannot control the current. The real power in her household for a long time has been usurped by Polish and, as the drama continues, by Compass. Whereas Dame Pliant agreeably serves as the reward for each contest of wit, Lady Lodestone removes herself from the action until the conclusion. There, she reappears and, like Lady Bountiful, awards herself as the prize to Ironstone. It should come as no surprise that Lady Lodestone confuses Ironstone's act of aggression with wit: as if his instinctive reaction to Silkworm's behavior required cleverness.

Of all Jonson's female characters these low functioning

women, Dame Pliant and Lady Lodestone, are most at the mercy of the men who manipulate them. By comparison Bridget and Grace possess sufficient mental agility to improve their lot by making a good marriage. Bridget accepts the "reasonable" proposal of Ned Knowell and leaves the hate-poisoned Kitley house, Grace allows herself to be the prize in the contest between Quarlous and Winwife on the assumption that either would be an improvement over Bartholomew Cokes. However, it is the women of great mental resourcefulness who achieve their goals independent of--on equal terms with--the men in their lives. Dol Common, Ursula, the Pig-woman, and Polish are single women of different ages and backgrounds, but they share an ability to take charge of their lives. They can plan and execute a course of action that is beneficial to themselves. The trickery of Face and Subtle could not function without the brilliant acting of Dol, for she transforms herself into the desire of each man: for the naïve Dapper she is his aunt, the Queen of Fairy, and for Sir Epicure, she is the embodiment of his every lustful desire. Ursula is highly regarded among her fellow tricksters at Smithfield; she, in fact runs Bartholomew Fair. It is only the hypocrites--the people of quality and the Puritains-- who ridicule Ursula. Because of the sanctimonious behavior of the "betters," the audience quickly aligns itself with the thieves, believing, like Ursula and her cohorts, that the "betters" deserve their fate. It is solely in the character of Polish that Jonson

portrays conflicting messages. She is arguably his most engaging female character in *The Magnetic Lady*, yet Jonson punishes Polish more harshly than Ursula or Dol. In spite of her censure, Polish remains unrepentant, even bragging of her cleverness: "I scorn to be prevented of my glories./ I plotted the deceit, and I shall own it" (5.10.84).

It must be noted that while Jonson portrays female characters like their male counterparts, in varying degrees of mental acuity, he does not use a pen dipped in venom. Rather, superior characters such as Dol and Ursula are endowed with positive and admirable qualities. Moderate intellects such as Grace and Bridget may not be as fully delineated representations, causing scholars to consider them shallow, yet Jonson does not belittle them. Even the helpless females are treated sympathetically, although they are humorously drawn. Jonson allows a respectable, if conventional, conclusion to both Dame Pliant's and Lady Lodestone's fates. Generally speaking, throughout Jonson's canon, as we have seen, females are treated with more sympathy than males. Dame Pliant, although she is the object of misogynistic treatment by every male in her life, is not ridiculed as severely as Kately is for his jealousy. Likewise, Lady Lodestone, for all her inability to take charge of her own household, is not held as responsible for her foolishness as Justice Overdo; Lady Lodestone does not spend time in the stocks. The notable exception to this rule occurs in the characterization of the

Lady Collegiates in *Epicoene*, a dramatic world to be discussed separately because of its special circumstances. Of the female representations discussed so far, Jonson, while suggesting that their behavior is ludicrous, never paints them in a mean-spirited manner.

Notes to Women and Wit

¹Kay states that Rogers was related to Donne's father-in-law, Sir George More (213n55). Therefore, Jonson would have access to the story.

²Ostovich explains that Dol's performance comes from Hugh Broughton's *A Concoct of Scripture* (1590). The work is "an eccentric puritan millerarianist treatise which demonstrates God's scheme of predestination by rationalizing the historical chronology of the Bible" (491n1).

³Much current work is being done in the area of the carnivalesque and Jacobean literature. C. L. Barber in *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* first articulated the idea. Although he does not use the term, Ian Donaldson in *The World Upside Down* describes *Bartholomew Fair* as an occasional play, one that celebrates holiday occasions (48-49). Rigg in *Ben Jonson* states that "Jonson's endorsement of carnival also reinforced an important tenet of Jacobean ideology," for James maintained his subjects had the right to "disport themselves at wakes, fairs, and carnivals" (209). Leah Marcus develops

the concept to its fullest application in *The Politics of Mirth*. She maintains that James purposely encouraged the practice of old pastime customs in a kind of "paradox of state": a condition of "happy ambiguity in which the license and lawlessness associated with the customs could be interpreted as submission to authority" (3). Such occasions of sport became political devices; James would rather sanction controlled carnival behavior than deal with uncontrolled revelry that might lead to rebellion.

⁴The comparison between Ursula and Falstaff is evident in young Prince Hal's description of Falstaff: "Falstaff sweats to death,/ And lards the lean earth as he walks along" (*I Henry IV* 2.2.108).

⁵*Every Man in His Humour* has a long and complicated stage history, because it was first written in 1598 with an Italian setting. However, for the 1616 Folio, Jonson made major revisions; notably, he relocated the setting to London and renamed the characters. Also he mitigated the punishment of Bobadil and Matthew. Instead of sentencing them to jail and the stocks, he orders Bobadil to wear motley and Matthew, the ashes of poems on his head. All references in this study are based on the Folio edition where the English character names are used. For a complete explanation and comparison of the two versions, see Herford and Simpson 1.358-70.

⁶Jonson's source for his condition of humour is Galen's

medical theory. See chapter two (36-48) in David Rigg's study *Ben Jonson* for a good explanation of how Jonson adapted Galen's taxonomy. Galen and his followers believed that perfect health depended on the balance of four humours—bile, phlegm, choler, and blood. When a humour exceeded its proper boundary, it generated systemic disruptions: for example, a ruddy complexion accompanied by a burning fever meant that choleric humour had gained ascendancy. Jonson adopted a simpler, bipolar scheme based on psychological disorders associated with choler and blood. In Jonson's taxonomy, choler manifests itself in excessive anger and is the foundation of the irascible and concupiscent temperament. Captain Bobadil and Matthew are personifications of such a humour.

⁷See Ostovich's edition of *Bartholomew Fair* 622n259. The Court of Wards administered estates of all wards of the crown—minors and lunatics—inheriting from the king's tenants. This Court had the right to sell control over a ward, including the right to force a marriage. The Court of Wards was abolished in 1646 due to abuse.

⁸See Marcus chapter two (36-63). The concept of *tu quoque*—let him without sin cast the first stone—is developed as an overriding theme on 40-41.

⁹The Oxford English Dictionary cites the first usage of the term "clap" for venereal disease in *The Mirror for Magistrates* in 1567.

CHAPTER IV

UNIQUE REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN AND WIT

Epicoene: Male Construct of the Female Gender

The observation was made earlier that Jonson's work is formulaic: characters who differ only in the degree of mental acuity move methodically through a familiar scenario. Yet often Jonson changes his pace and offers shrewd fresh enterprises in unusual dramatic circumstances. Two examples ridicule certain of society's divisions: gender and class. *Epicoene* (1609) parodies stereotypical male/ female characteristics to the point of distortion in an effort to foreground and thematize the need for harmony in all societal relationships. *The New Inn* (1629), on the other hand, paints a more romanticized world where a maid servant, in any other setting, would be called a superior wit: Pru not only takes charge of her own life, she also is the catalyst for change in her mistress's life as well. However, this romantic world is not what it seems; Jonson is really mocking the romance genre so popular on stage at the time. The action of *The New Inn* moves inward from realism to a pseudo-romance. In the real world of the drama Pru is a chambermaid, but in the contrived

world—the court of Love—she is sovereign. Although in both dramatic spheres, Pru is shrewder than her mistress, in the end, the real world—where Pru is limited by her social rank—is all that matters. Pru, if she were not limited by her position as chambermaid, would rank equally with Dol, Ursula, and Polish in terms of mental acuity.

A second, more accurate observation concerning Jonson's dramatic work is that the poet relies on the strategy of surface disguise so that certain characters can function incognito. Jonson, throughout his canon, suggests that one's very being is intimately connected to clothing. If a character puts on a uniform, his true identity is unrecognizable, and he becomes what the uniform signifies. Brainworm in *Every Man in His Humour*, employed by Knowell senior but loyal to Ned, is not recognized by either man because he has changed his livery for a soldier's uniform. More to the point, the three shysters in *The Alchemist* rely on clothing to give authority to their various persona. Face appears in the beginning in flashy uniform of a captain and advises Subtle to "Get you/ Your robes on" (1.1.195) so that Subtle can become the alchemist. In addition to robes, the alchemist wore a conical hat indicating his profession. Moreover, the stage directions (4.1) inform us that Dol enters "richly dressed" in just one of her personas, as the mad lord's sister. As the queen of faery, Dol would necessarily wear apparel of gauze, indicating the ephemeral quality of her

character. The title character in an earlier play, *Volpone*, disguises himself first as a mountebank (2.2) and later as a commandadore (5.12) so that he can roam Venice freely. In order to stop the machinations of Mosca, Volpone says, "The fox shall here uncase" (5.12.85), revealing his true identity. Win Littlewit and Mistress Overdo in *Bartholomew Fair* enter Ursula's tent urged on by the need to relieve themselves. Because they emerge wearing green gowns, they are marked as prostitutes. Wittipol in *The Devil is an Ass* cross-dresses as the Spanish lady in order to access Frances Fitzdottrel with her husband's blessing (Act 4).

The purpose of disguise is two-fold.¹ First, a character can achieve his agenda: Brainworm can protect Ned, Volpone can observe Celia, Dol can trick Sir Epicure Mammon, and Wittipol can make love to Frances. The second reason for the strategy is dramatic: the visual machinations—casing and uncasing—represent outrageous farce, especially with the ultra-masculine Wittipol transforming himself into an attractive lady. Both purposes—agenda and farce—exist in Jonson's highly entertaining work *Epicoene*. Not only does Jonson rely on his usual casings—Cutbeard as a doctor and Otter as a parson—for the dramatic purpose of impugning *Epicoene*'s character, but in this drama, Jonson breaks new ground. In the previous plays, Jonson included the audience in the joke. Even though certain characters in the plot do not recognize those disguised, the audience does. In the present work, the revelation of

Epicoene's gender comes as a surprise to all. Not that Jonson does not plant clues: the Oxford English Dictionary defines "epicene" as an adjective denoting characteristics of both genders. Nevertheless, the uncasing of Epicoene as a boy moves the plot to its conclusion as well as shocks the other characters and the audience. The ploy worked so well that Jonson used it again in *The New Inn* with yet another twist. Frank, the stable boy, is transformed onstage into Laetitia, Lady Frampul's long-lost sister; however, unbeknownst to the other characters (and the audience), Frank has already been transformed. He really is Laetitia. The complicated uncasing situation is as follows: a girl (mock Laetitia) uncased as a boy (Frank) who is a disguised girl (true Laetitia)—and for good measure, played by a boy actor. Surely, Jonson envisioned the dramatic possibilities of these uncasings when he contrived such a bizarre plot.

It is possible that Jonson's manipulation of identity through clothing is a response to the Tudor sumptuary laws. Such regulations specified, on moral grounds, suitable clothing—color and fabric—for each class of society. Howard states:

the state regulated dress in early modern England, especially in urban settings, precisely to keep people in the social 'places' to which they were born. Elizabethan sumptuary proclamations list those who could wear certain colors (such as purple), certain fabrics (such as silk), and certain adornments (such as spurs, daggers, jewelry). In a myriad ways clothing distinguished one social group from those both above and below;

they were precise indicators of status and degree. To transgress the codes governing dress was to disrupt an official view of the social order in which one's identity was largely determined by one's station or degree--and where that station was, in theory, providentially determined and immutable. (421)

The dramatic intent of *Epicoene* is certainly open to debate, and the drama is sometimes criticized as an overtly misogynistic drama that reduces the female characters to stereotypical stupidity. Newman, among others, bases her case on the paradigm that loquacity equals voracious sexuality. This position holds that *Epicoene* and the Collegiate women, because of their unwillingness to conform to the dictum of feminine silence, pose a threat to masculine authority. Therefore, what could be positive evidence of superior wit is conceived in entirely negative, unnatural tones. Newman asserts:

Talk in women, then, is dangerous because it is perceived as an usurpation of multiple forms of authority, a threat to order and male sovereignty, to masculine control of commodity exchange, to a desired hegemonic male sexuality. The extent of this perceived threat may be gauged by the strict delegation of the talking women to the carefully defined and delimited spheres of private and domestic life in which the husband was exhorted to rule. (506-07)

The problem with this view is that, within the world of the play, there is no fixed normative gender behavior, because not much masculine authority exists. In terms of loquacity as a determiner of feminine gender, Truewit, in fact, would reign supreme. A closer look at *Epicoene* reveals that misogyny is

not the issue: Morose is not a misogynist; he is a *misanthrope* who does not enjoy social interaction and who prefers solitary silence to the noise of community. The overarching dramatic strategy plays on the binary of private versus public arenas, as Newman suggests, but the focus is not gender; rather the focus is on harmony/ disharmony. Gender appears as a sub-motif where Jonson manipulates stereotypical sexual traits to the point of distortion.

The drama begins with Morose disinheriting Dauphine, his "next of blood, his sister's son," because he believes that his nephew and Dauphine's cohorts "are authors of all the ridiculous acts and monuments . . . told of him" (1.2.16,9-10).² Clearly, Morose's anger is directed at his nephew—a male—and his anger is not without justification. Dauphine's friends, especially Clerimont and his inglen, ³ have engaged in behavior that ridicules Morose's solitary habits. The boy enumerates some of the escapades:

I entreated a bearward one day to come down with the dogs of some four parishes that way, and I thank him he did, and cried his games under Master Morose's window till he was sent crying away with his head made a most bleeding spectacle to the multitude. And another time a fencer, marching to his prize, had his drum most tragically run through for taking that street in his way, at my request. (1.3.165-73)

Truewit enters into the spirit of the jest with suggestions for further humiliation:

I would be the author of more to vex him; that purpose deserves it: I would make a false almanac, get it printed, and then ha' him drawn out on a

coronation day to the Tower-wharf, and kill him
with the noise of the ordinance. (1.2.11-16)

As a means of spiting Dauphine and his friends, Morose compounds the issue by determining to marry a woman who "is able to bear children" so that Dauphine will lose all prospect of inheritance. Despite Newman's belief that Morose's view of noise is "gender-specific," such is patently not the case. Morose himself encourages Epicoene to speak during their short courtship: "Nay, lady, you may speak, though Cutbeard and my man may not: for of all sounds only the sweet voice of a fair lady has the just length of my ears" (2.5.23-26). What Morose really objects to is what his wife says, for Epicoene does not just speak, she speaks out. She desires Morose to treat her as "competent to the estate and dignity" of being his wife (3.4.42-43). Epicoene firmly believes in the community of noise over silence. She vows to end "this coacted, unnatural dumbness in my house, in a family where I govern" (3.4.48-50).

The real riot begins when Jonson combines La Foole's quarter day feast with Morose and Epicoene's wedding banquet, thereby creating the ultimate in disharmony: "charivari." The Oxford English Dictionary defines "charivari" as a serenade of rough music with kettle, pans, tea-trays, and the like used . . . in mockery and derision of incongruous or unpopular marriages, and unpopular persons generally." Ian Donaldson in *The World Turned Upside Down* claims that the wider purpose of the ceremony appears to have been to punish certain

anti-social manifestations such as miserliness and
misanthropy.⁴ However, another characteristic of the rite
ridiculed sexual reversals. For this reason, the "charivari,"
along with its discordant music, is central to Jonson's
dramatic purpose. Not only does Morose epitomize miserliness
and misanthropy, but the other revelers, male and female, are
censured for disrupting the harmony of social community.

Ridicule in the form of the "charivari" extends to that
of ambiguous gender through the characters' names, especially
the Collegiates: Haughty, Centaure, and Mavis, women who,
according to Truewit,

Live from their husbands and give entertainment to
all the Wits

And braveries o' the time, as they call 'em. Cry
down or up

What they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion
with most

Masculine or rather hermaphroditical authority, and
every day

Gain to their college some new probationer.
(1.1.73-78)

The epicene character of the Collegiates is seen in
Truewit's qualifying description: the term "masculine" yields
to "hermaphroditical" authority. Further evidence of sexual
ambiguity is seen in Centaure's name. Female centaurs do not
exist (the -e form denotes the feminine) and the male centaur
mates by raping women.⁵ The Collegiates are further singled out
for their use of cosmetics. Jonas Barish in "The Double Plot

in *Volpone*" says that "face physic symbolizes the painted surface hiding the rotten inside; the cosmetic care of the face signifies the neglect of the soul" (408). Clerimont represents this view, for he condemns Haughty: "A pox on her autumnal face, her pieced beauty! There's no man can be admitted till she be ready nowadays, till she has painted and perfumed and washed and scoured" (1.2.81-83). Truewit, however, disagrees: "And I am clearly o' the other side: . . . If she have good ears, show 'em; good hair, lay it out; good legs, wear short clothes; a good hand, discover it often; practice any art to mend breath, cleanse teeth, repair eyebrows, paint, and profess it" (1.2.99,103-05). Because Clerimond and Truewit represent opposed views, it is impossible to say with any certainty that in *Epicoene* Jonson opposes the use of cosmetics. Rather, the dramatist is more concerned with highlighting the epicene nature of the characters.

If the reader believes that Jonson is solely attacking masculine females, a quick look at the names of the male characters reveals the same inversion. Amorous La Foole is the most obvious, for the feminine ending marks his effeminate character, while John Daw surely suggests the jackdaw, a bird noted for its senseless chatter. Even the hero Dauphine Eugenie is flawed, for his name (also spelled with the feminine ending) suggests that his sexuality is questionable.

In spite of his superior wit, Dauphine just another example of inversion in this topsy-turvy dramatic world. The Otters also exhibit ambivalent sexuality as well as an inverted power dynamic within the marriage. Mrs. Otter, the "Princess," is determined to rule her husband, and because the money is hers, she succeeds. The very name "Otter" conjures up sexual concern, for historically the creature challenges classification as a beast or fish because it lives both on land and in the water. According to Knoll, it was also believed in the late sixteenth century that both sexes of the otter conceived and produced the young, a characteristic that would, if true, erase all sexual difference (116).

Homosexuality is alluded to in the character of the Clerimont's boy, the ingle, who describes himself as "the welcom'st thing under an man that comes there" (1.1.9). Every male, with the notable exception of Truewit, embodies sexual ambiguity in order to emphasize disharmony in nature. Only Truewit appears to escape censure. Yet in the catastrophe, he is stunned when Epicoene is revealed to be a boy. In Jonson's world where survival is based solely on wit, Truewit has been out-maneuvered by Dauphine.

Discordance, in nature, and as dramatic motif in *Epicoene* is reinforced through the cacophony of music. Truewit, replete with cheek, sets the revels in motion by chiding the groom's desire to leave the banquet:

Would you go to bed so presently, sir, afore noon?

A man of your head and hair should owe more to the reverend ceremony, and not mount the marriage-bed like a town bull or a mountain goat but stay the due season, and ascend it then with religion and fear. These delights are to be steeped in the humour and silence of the night; and give the day to other open pleasures and jollities of feast, of music, of revels, of discourse; we'll have all, sir, that may make your hymen high and happy. (3.5.40-50)

On cue, Clerimont enters with musicians who produce "a variety of noises" (3.7.2) that Morose considers "worse than the noise of a saw" (3.7.5). Otter adds to the confusion when he announces, "yonder are the trumpets without, and the drum, gentlemen" (3.7.41).

Jonson's brilliant ending, the unmasking of Epicoene, is criticized by Herford and Simpson who believe that the dramatist withholds necessary information—that he "cheats":

Half the humour of Truewit's pretensions is lost by the tardiness of the discovery. . . . And the confession by Daw and La Foole of their relations with Epicoene (5.1) similarly fails of the effect which comes to it when the plot is known. (80)

However, Jonson has not left his audience in the dark; clues throughout point to such a conclusion, for behavior based on gender reversal characterizes nearly all the other characters. The audience can rightly suspect that Morose's comeuppance will involve some sort of sexual double-entendre.

The motif of private versus public arena resurfaces in the conclusion as Dauphine, reinstated as his uncle's heir, informs Morose, "Now you may go in and rest, be as private as you will, sir./ I'll not trouble you till you trouble me with

your funeral, which I care not how soon it comes" (5,4,99-100). The drama ends where it begins, with concern over the inheritance. The secondary gender theme similarly makes a circuit that recoils on itself, to the chagrin of the males.

Says Rigg:

The male hidden in the falsely female body completes a closed circle of men who project their fantasies about women onto other men. To close the circle, as Jonson does at the end of *Epicoene*, is to expose the self-referential character of the sexist stereotype that pervades the play. (156)

Rigg's position is made clear in Truewit's final speech wherein he chides Daw and La Foole for their role in questioning *Epicoene*'s sexual honor: "Nay Sir Daw and Sir La Foole, you see the gentlewoman that has done you the favors! We are all thankful to you and so should the womankind here, specially for lying on her, though not with her!" (5.4.212-16). Rather than serving as an exercise in misogyny, *Epicoene* is an example of the distortion of character found in satire. The overall motif of private versus public arenas as connected to the theme of harmony/disharmony is intensified by a parody on gender characteristics. The clue to Jonson's intent lies in the ambiguous definition of epicene: that is, having the characteristics of the other sex, or paradoxically, having the characteristics of neither sex. In such case, the ending is crucial in determining gender, and Jonson baffles his audience with his apparent misplacements. The indictment of Morose goes beyond gender, for he rejects all forms of community. His May-

December wedding embodies the concept of disharmony that is reinforced in the "charivari." That he and Dauphine both get what they want in the conclusion bodes better for Dauphine than for Morose.

Pru: Nobody's Long Lost Daughter

Epicoene is not the only example of Jonson's ability to derive satire from an up-ended social order. A second model occurs in his second Caroline comedy, *The New Inn* (1629). (His first was *The Staple of News* in 1626). Once again--as in *Bartholomew Fair* and *Epicoene*--Jonson makes use of a holiday motif to dramatically present a world within a world wherein neither is what it seems to be. While in the earlier *Epicoene* Jonson plays on the binaries of community and harmony by distorting stereotypical views of gender, *The New Inn* moves to the same purpose through destabilizing not only the distinction of gender but also the societal marker of class. Pru, Lady Frampul's chambermaid, is a female whose wisdom enables her to change not only her own social situation but also that of her mistress. She is, in fact, a heroine. However, Pru's dramatic world is circumscribed by her relationship to Lady Frampul. Initially, Pru is hampered by her socially inferior position; her fate is determined by her mistress. Yet, when Lady Frampul elevates Pru to a position equivalent to herself, Pru's homey, practical common sense merits the admiration of all her "subjects" and, ultimately,

brings about fine marriages for both of them.

Jonson specifically bestows the quality of wit on the chambermaid in his Second Epilogue as he defends changing her name from Cis to Pru: "We think it would have served our scene as true,/ If as it was at first we had called her Pru, . . . She only meant was for a girl of wit,/ To whom her lady did a province fit" (9-10,13-14). Julie Sanders in "The Day's Sports Devised in the Inn: Jonson's *New Inn* and Theatrical Politics" succinctly describes Pru's unusual position:

Prudence, Lady Frampul's chambermaid, is elected "Governor of the Sports" for the day's shenanigans in the Light Heart. She is a mock-sovereign in the carnivalesque tradition. Her name denotes from the outset that she possesses one of the essential qualities for good government, if not the blood and breeding that usually determines such a position[.] (546)

The terms "mock-sovereign" and "carnivalesque" call to mind the theme of "misrule" evident in *Bartholomew Fair* and *Epicoene*. As previously noted, Ursula bears more than a passing resemblance to a misrule figure, while the cheeky Truewit, who presides over Morose's discomfort, serves the same function. The difference between the earlier works and *The New Inn* is that the festive/licence theme is incidental to the main plot. In *The New Inn*, it is the plot. C. L. Barber, in *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, explains that misrule was a feature that accompanied church holidays: Candlemas, Shrove Tuesday, May Day, Whitsuntide, Midsummer Eve, Harvest-home, Halloween, and the twelve days of Christmas (17). Elizabeth

and later James believed that misrule served the purpose of a "safety valve." If the lower classes could express a controlled license on specified occasions, law and order would be easier kept the rest of the time. ⁶ In this way, the celebration resembles the modern-day Mardi Gras, that licentious holiday preceding Easter. However, this basic pattern of a mock king was adaptable to a variety of occasions less formal than seasonal feasts. Barber explains that "mock majesty was often improvised in taverns" (27) as well. Jonson seems to have such a scenario in mind. In the Argument to *The New Inn*, he describes Lady Frampul as "a brave, bountiful lady" who "hath an ambitious disposition to be esteemed the mistress of many servants" while determining on her part to "love none" (26-28). On a whim, Lady Frampul takes her coterie group to

A famous new inn, that is kept by a merry host,
call'd Goodstock, in Barnet. . . . It happens,
there is a melancholy gentleman, one master Lovel,
hath been lodg'd there some days before in the inn,
who (unwilling to be seen) is surprised by the Lady
and invited by Prudence, the lady's chambermaid,
who is elected governess of the sports, in the inn,
for that day, and instal'd their sovereign.
(Argument 29-39)

Lovel's melancholic disposition is the result of unrequited love. He cannot declare his love for the willful Lady Frampul because his ward, Lord Beaufort, also loves the lady, and chivalry prevents Lovel taking any action on his own behalf. As soon as Lovel describes his situation to his host Goodstock, the lady in question appears with two suitors—

Beaufort and Sir Glorious Tiptoe—and her chambermaid Pru. Having declared the day a holiday, Lady Frampul dresses Pru in her own gown, as if clothing alone gives credence to an elevated social position. Pru furthers the holiday spirit by dressing Frank, the host's son, as a girl. As a consequence of the relaxed mood offered by the day of misrule, Sir Glorious, with strong overtones of the *miles gloriosus* character (also reminiscent of Bobadil in *Every Man in his Humour*), seeks out the servants' quarters where he can lord it over the inferiors and indulge his bent for bawdy humor and drink. Lady Frampul's other suitor, Lord Beaufort, is immediately smitten with Laetitia, formerly Frank. Within one act, Jonson has destabilized the societal notion of class as well as gender. Each character has two sides: appearance and reality. The difference between this device and the irregular one used in *Epicoene* is that ambiguity in gender is inherent to the plot while unfixed social status is inherent in the mood of misrule.

Pru determines to use her position as "queen of Misrule" to bring the undeclared courtship of the tyrannical Lady Frampul and melancholic Lovel to a satisfactory conclusion. When Lovel complains that "She being the lady that professteth still/ To love no soul or body but for ends;/ Which are her sports" (1.6.54-56), Pru responds: "Oh Master Lovel, you must not give credit/ To all that ladies publicly profess/ Or talk, o' the volley unto their servants:/ Their tongues and

thoughts, oftentimes lie far asunder" (1.6.60-63). Indeed, Pru continues, she will "be so bold to hold the glass up to her,/ To show her ladyship where she hath erred,/ And how to tender satisfaction" (1.5.78-80). The vehicle Pru creates wherein Lovel can woo Lady Frampul is a court wherein Pru reigns supreme: a Court of Love.⁷ Her first act is to demand that Lady Frampul kiss Lovel, a ploy that forces her mistress to experience capricious behavior, rather than employ it. Lady Frampul complains, "I have woven a net/ To snare myself in! Sir, I am enjoined/ To tender you a kiss" (2.6.152-54). Because her rude behavior gives Lovel grounds for complaint, Pru tells him that he is awarded "a pair of hours" (2.6.211) wherein Lady Frampul must

Not to give ear, or admit conference
With any person but yourself. Nor there
Of any other argument but love,
And the companion of it, gentle courtship.
For which your two hours service, you shall take
Two kisses. (2.6.220-25)

Lovel's defence of love, a heartfelt oration aimed at winning the love of Lady Frampul, is culled from Plato's *Symposium*.⁸ He asks, "what else is Love but the most noble, pure affection/ Of what is truly beautiful and fair?" (33.2.73-75). Warming to his discourse, Lovel continues to extol the spiritual nature of love:

It is a flame and ardor of the mind,

Dead in the proper corpse, quick in another's:

Transfers the lover into the loved.

Love is a spiritual coupling of two souls. (3.2.99-101, 109)

Lovel's speech is reminiscent of that of Socrates who describes ideal love as that in which the lover "must believe beauty in souls to be more precious than beauty in the body: so that if anyone is decent in soul, even if it has little bloom, it should be enough for him to love and care for" (104). Indeed, Lovel concludes, "True love hath no unworthy thought, no light,/ Loose, unbecoming appetite or strain,/ But fixed, constant, pure, immutable" (3.2.126-29). The view of love as "pure, immutable" is entirely consistent with the idealistic tenets underlying the philosophy of the Court of Love.

In this static, dramatic climax, Lovel's high-minded view of love appears to be endorsed by the author. For this reason, critics, beginning with Herford and Simpson, believe that Jonson has traded satire for romance. They charge:

Here, too, much of the invention is extravagant, even monstrous. But some of it is noble and beautiful; and when it fails, it is by pushing to an outrageous extreme the characteristic motives of romance. Families broken up and finally restored, children separated from parents, brought up under strange disguises and at last transformed and recovered, were the staple of romantic story. . . . Not the least audacious feature of the design is that all the members of this Protean family--father, mother, and two daughters--are found living, unknown to each other, in the same inn. This was indeed to take the kingdom of romance by storm[.] (2.194)⁹

The authoritative authors' observations are correct, but their conclusions are faulty. Rather, Jonson uses this "audacious feature" to ridicule romance. Late in the first act, Goodstock asks Lovel, "But is your name Love-ill or Love-well?" (1.6.98). Lovel is not different from the other characters, for the appearance/ reality motif describes him as well. Lovel, in spite of his appeal for a love that transcends emotion, engages in intemperate outbursts at every dramatic turn. From the beginning, Lovel's feelings for Lady Frampul are anything but platonic:

Oh love, what passion art thou!
So tyrannous! And treacherous! First to enslave
And then to betray all that in truth do serve thee!
That not the wisest, nor the wariest creature
Can more dissemble thee than he can bear
Hot burning coals in his bare palm or bosom!
(1.4.1-6)

Even though he loves the lady with a fiery intensity, he will not declare himself out of chivalric duty to his patron. Lovel vows he would rather allow that "passion/ Burn me to cinders" (1.6.166). C. G. Thayer, in his study *Ben Jonson*, correctly deciphers Lovel's character: "There is something absurd in Lovel's situation. . . . He delivers a highly Platonic discourse on disinterested and perfect love while he himself is consumed with passion" (206). Nevertheless, Lovel does defend the Platonic ideals of love and valor in hopes of

winning the quixotic lady's love. Convinced that Lady Frampul still sports with him after he has laid bare his soul, Lovel vents his temper as he determines to seek his bed:

Farewell, the craft of crocodiles, women's piety,
And practice of it, in this art of flattering
And fooling men. I ha' not lost my reason,
Though I have lent myself out for two hours
Thus to be baffled by a chambermaid
And the good actor, her lady, afore mine host,
Of the Light Heart, here, that hath laughed at all-
. (4.3.290-97)

This view of Lovel, that emphasizes his emotional extremes, points to a major characteristic of Jonson's Caroline drama: moderation in all things. The earlier Caroline drama, *The Staple of News* (1626), employs a similar strategy to emphasize the message of the Golden Mean. In his late dramatic works, Jonson abandons the didacticism apparent in the early dramas; he rather favors satire without the sting of correction. Whether the reason was Jonson's palsied state or merely a general acceptance of human nature as he aged, Jonson's later treatment of humanity is more indulgent. Sometimes characters change although never in the Shakespearean sense. Shakespeare depicts change as the process of a spiritual journey. In Jonson development is intellectual, the improvement of moral fiber of characters he chooses to redeem. For example, Wittipol, the rake in *The*

Devil is an Ass, is ennobled through his love for Frances. In the prodigal story *The Staple of News*, Pennyboy Canter has faked his death in order to teach his son, Penniboy Junior, the judicious use of wealth. Money, allegorized in the character of Pecunia, is neither to be wasted nor hoarded: a fine balance is necessary. The same message is implicit in *The New Inn*, but the subject has changed from money to love. In the present drama, Jonson's message is that rarefied Platonism--a view of love that is not attached to reality--is as extreme as a position that focuses only on the sensual.

Love based on carnality is presented both in the character of Beaufort and the unusual marriage of Nick and Pinnacia Stuff. Beaufort, for his part, prefers Ovid to Plato. In a speech reminiscent of Sir Epicure Mammon's, he explains:

I relish not these philosophical feasts;
Give me a banquet o'sense, like that of Ovid:
A form to take the eye; a voice mine ear;
Pure aromatics to my scent; a soft,
Smooth, dainty hand to touch; and for my taste,
Ambrosiac kisses to melt down the palate. (3.2.179-84)

In the midst of Lovel's rhapsodizing on spiritual love-- "we must understand this love/ Along still as a name of dignity; not pleasure" (3.2.122-23)--Beaufort has the effrontery to passionately kiss Laetitia, an action that prompts mocking

censure from the nurse: "Be quiet man, thou shalt not leap her here" (3.2.119). Beaufort's sexually driven nature hurries him into a marriage with Laetitia, based solely on sensual pleasures. To the host's mind, Beaufort should have spent more time getting to know his bride. He informs the eagerly disrobing young lord:

But I must make it bad, my young lord.

Gi' him his doublet again, the air is piercing;

You may take cold, my lord. See whom you
ha'married.

Your host's son and a boy. (5.4.197-200)

Ultimately, the joke is on Goodstock, for the nurse rushes in with the information that Frank/Laetitia is actually her daughter. In this device, Jonson outdoes his *Epicoene* strategy, for Laetitia changes gender twice merely by changing her mode of dress. More is to come, however, for Beaufort, incensed that he has married first a boy, then a servant, threatens to go to the Star Chamber, the Royal Court that "Will scatter all these mists, disperse these vapours,/ And clear the truth. Let beggars match with beggars." (5.5.258-60). Beaufort changes his tune upon learning that Laetitia is, in fact, Lord Frampul's (Goodstock's) daughter. In a lightning about face, Beaufort demands, "Give me my wife. I own her now, and I will have her" (5.5.293).

Manner of dress is also a variable of the appearance/reality theme in *The New Inn*. Pru, the chambermaid,

by borrowing her mistress's dress has somehow elevated her social status to sovereign; Laetitia/Frank, on the other hand, has transcended both class and gender. A third linkage of dress and class that highlights the sensuous aspect of love so apparent in Beaufort occurs at the conclusion of Lovel's speech on love. The courtyard is agog with the arrival of newcomers Nick and Pinnacia Stuff. Lady Frampul does not recognize Pinnacia, but she does recognize the dress. It is the dress ordered for Pru in her role as sovereign. Pinnacia explains that the dress transforms her from the wife of Nick the tailor to the position of countess:

It is a foolish trick, madam, he has;
For though he be your tailor, he is my beast.
I may be bold with him and tell his story.
When he makes any fine garment will fit me,
Or any rich thing that he thinks of price,
Then must I put it on and be his countess,
Before he carry it home unto the owners;
A coach is hired and four horse, he runs
In his velvet jacket thus to Rumsford, Croydon,
Hounslow, or Barnet, the next bawdy road:
And takes me out, carries me up, and throws me
Upon a bed. (4.3.185-96)

The Stuff's version of appearance/ reality is predicated on the assumption that it is more gratifying to sleep with a countess than with a tailor's wife. Lady Frampul's dress is

the vehicle through which Nick and Pinnacia symbolically transcend the social order. Unfortunately, neither Nick nor Pinnacia's view is flattering to the morals of the aristocracy: Nick, as a footman (Pinnacia's servant), sleeps with a countess, while Pinnacia imagines that such improper behavior is implicit in the character of a countess. Lady Frampul is outraged at this parody of her relationship with her servant-suitors and finds herself responding to Lovel's declaration of love.

The final act develops rapidly as all the characters uncase in some manner, either by revealing a previously disguised identity or a newly developed depth of character. The improbable resolution of a plot called "monstrous" by Herford and Simpson is generally misunderstood. Even Northrop Frye in *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* maintains *The New Inn* features a plot too complicated and absurd even for comedy to sustain (15-16). However, Jonson is making the same criticisms of romantic comedy as Frye was making of Jonson whose calculated absurdities include not only the reuniting of a long-separated family, but a rich lord marrying a chambermaid. Rather than undergo a profound character change, the Irish nurse merely removes her eye patch and becomes lady Frampul again. Jonson is not endorsing romantic comedy: he intends the denouement to be "monstrous" and the plot to be "absurd." Such a tactic evidences Jonson's contempt for

romance. The master dramatist continues "to sport with follies of mankind" as they exist in the world of the romance genre. In the process, extremes in temperament or character are moderated. Lovel and Lady Frampul adjust their opposed views of love and marry. Beaufort, the rake, admits his "trespass" (5.5.326) as, punning on Laetitia's name, he vows to marry "the sweetest lettuce / Was ever tasted" (5.5.329-30). Goodstock uncases as Lord Frampul while the wild Irish nurse reveals herself to be his long lost wife. Pru, the chambermaid, called by the host as "best deserving/ Of all that are I' the house, or I' the heart" (5.5.49-50), captures the heart of Latimer. This lord, a former suitor of Lady Frampul throughout the Court of Love sequence, has become increasingly enamored of Pru because of her calm, unhesitating reason. By the conclusion of the action, Latimer is so swayed by Pru's good qualities that he refuses Lord Frampul's dowry offer of four thousand pounds as a dowry. In words reminiscent of the King of France who takes to wife Lear's disinherited daughter Cordelia, Latimer insists¹¹:

Spare your promised portions, she is a dowry
 So all-sufficient in her virtue and manners,
 That fortune cannot add to her. (5.5.66-68)

Yet Cordelia is of royal blood; Pru is not. Nor is Pru the long lost daughter of some aristocrat (as is Laetitia). Rather, in a drama that constantly reinforces the theme of class appropriateness, Jonson is mocking the fairy tale ending

where lords marry chambermaids. Pru's acceptance of Latimer's proposal is imbued with class consciousness, "Your praises are instructions to mine ear,/ whence you have made your wife to live your servant" (5.5.71). By conflating the extremes of "servant" and "wife," Jonson reaffirms his contempt for the romantic comedy. Only in that genre would a gentleman marry a chambermaid without a dowry, even one of wit such as Pru. Surely this is Lovel's meaning when he says, "Is this a dream now, after my first sleep?/ Or are these fantasies made i' the Light Heart?" (5.5.438-39). Fantastic is the word that describes Jonson's treatment of romantic comedy in *The New Inn*.

The New Inn is an unusual drama in that it showcases a fully-realized heroine. Unlike Pecunia, the abstraction for money in *The Staple of News*, Pru rules over the Court of Love as a flesh-and-blood woman characterized by unusually fine common sense. It is her singular abilities that set in motion the action that leads to the multiple uncasings. Contrary to the harshly misanthropic world of *Epicoene*, *The New Inn* avoids negative gender attributes and focuses on the binaries of appearance/ reality as they exist within all species of the social order. It cannot be denied that *The New Inn* lacks the dramatic force of Jonson's previous works. The static catastasis—Lovel's defense of Platonic love—was not well received by an audience expecting the deft, comedic timing inherent in *The Alchemist* and *Epicoene*, and *The New Inn* did

not survive the opening night.¹⁰ The theatre-going public believed that Jonson's stroke had affected his brain and that his Caroline work was inferior to that of his previous plays. It has been the good fortune of late twentieth-century scholars to reclaim and re-examine Jonson's penultimate drama. Both *The New Inn* and *Epicoene* devolve unique representations of women, and both dramas have been misunderstood. *Epicoene* has been attacked as Jonson's most misogynistic work because scholars fail to see that the character of Epicoene is a man-made creation. "She" is coached by a man and portrayed by a man. If "she" is an ugly representation, it is because "her" character is conceived by men. *The New Inn*, on the other hand, with its hidden identities and fairy-tale plot, replicates, for the purpose of mockery, the unrealistic world of the romance genre. Pru's superior qualities only carry weight during the time of license—the Court of Love—and only in a fairy-tale setting could she cross class boundaries and marry Lord Latimer. Common sense as a female trait is well and good, but without the proper bloodline, the trait is not enough to ensure an aristocratic marriage. Rather than harboring hostility to women, Jonson is painting a realistic world where gender and class are genuine impediments for women of wit.

Notes to Unique Representations of Women and Wit

¹The two-fold purpose once again reflects Jonson's

Horatian aim which he makes explicit in the second prologue:

The ends of all who for the scene do write
Are, or should be, to profit and delight. (1-2)

²The reference to "acts and moniments" plays on the original title of John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563), that is *Acts and Monuments*. Moniments is derived from the Latin "monimentum." Obviously, Dauphine is suffering from a martyr's complex.

³An ingle is a boy kept for homosexual purposes. Truewit describes Clerimond as the man that can melt away his time, and never feels it. What between his mistress broad and his ingle at home, high fare, soft lodging, fine clothes, and his fiddle, he thinks the hours ha' no wings or the day no post-horse" (1.1.22-25).

⁴For a full evaluation of the custom of "charavari" as it relates to *Epicoene*, see Ian Donaldson. "A Martyr's Resolution: *Epicoene*" in *The World Turned Upside Down* 24-45.

⁵The source for the discussion of gender and chracter names in *Epicoene* is from R.V. Holdsworth's editorial notes in the New Mermaid edition of *Epicoene*, specifically 2-4.

⁶Leah Marcus in her introduction to *The Politics of Mirth* suggests that both Elizabeth I and James I sanctioned temporary license as a means of social control. Elizabeth liked to see her people "merry" and was well aware of "the potential link between public ceremony and maintenance of order" (4). Likewise, James tended to regard "traditional

English customs as an integral branch of his power" (4). C. L. Barber in *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* maintains that "the release of one day was understood to be a temporary license, a 'misrule' which implied rule" (10).

⁷Herford and Simpson note that the "Sport" proposed by Lady Frampul is based on the theme of Platonic love, a behavioral code that since the accession of Charles and the advent of Henrietta Maria had become a courtly fashion. Herford and Simpson state:

The brutal license of the Jacobean Court yielded, under Charles, to a refined but artificial gallantry, which found in the ideal language of Plato about love a seemly vesture, or a specious disguise. Jonson has chosen to associate this Platonic speech with the pleadings of a 'Court or Love'—a blend of antique and medieval matter which in a more natural setting than that of this play would appear strangely incongruous, but which matches its artificial context well enough. (2.197).

George F. Sensabaugh in "John Ford and Platonic Love in the Court" postulates that Jonson's dramatic tactic in *The New Inn* is to mock Henrietta Maria's version of neoplatonism. The position of Sensabaugh is that the overriding tenet of the cult—the position that true love justifies infidelity—was articulated before 1629. Therefore, Jonson, already sensitive to having lost court preferment, avenges himself by mocking Queen Henrietta Maria's court. Robert Knoll reiterates Sensabaugh's thesis in "The New Inn: Abortive Court Satire" in his study *Ben Jonson's Plays: An Introduction*. Erica Veevers, in her study of Queen Henrietta Maria's court entertainments,

Images of Love and Religion, maintains essentially the same position. However, Veevers believes that while Jonson mocks the cult, he was so out of touch with the behavior of court circles that he completely misunderstood the tenets of the queen's cult.

⁹The source for the discussion of Plato's *Symposium* is *Great Dialogues of Plato*, edited by W.H.D. Rouse, Mentor Books: New York, 1956.

⁹Jonson's dramatic purpose—romance or satire—in *The New Inn* is debated to this day. Herford and Simpson's position that the drama is a failed romance is supported by Anne Barton in "The New Inn and the Problem of Jonson's Late Style" who maintains "this is no satire on romantic comedy. The verse does not read like that. The ending of *The New Inn* is curiously poignant, in the manner we associate with Shakespeare's last plays" (415). Writers who hold to the satiric reading follow E. B. Partridge, in *The Broken Compass*. They include Larry Champion in *Ben Jonson's 'Dotages,'* Robert E. Knoll in *Ben Jonson's Plays: An Introduction*, and C. G. Thayer in *Ben Jonson: Studies in the Plays*. The ironic reading is maintained by the more recent biographies: W. David Kay in *Ben Jonson*, and David Rigg in his study also called *Ben Jonson*.

¹⁰The stage history of *The New Inn* was brief and bitter. Performed on 19 January 1629, it was disastrously received and

the court performance planned for the following night was cancelled. Jonson paralyzed by a stroke, was not present, but the report of friends caused him to exempt only two actors from the charge that the play was "never acted, but most negligently play'd" (HS 2.189).

¹¹When Burgandy refuses Cordelia without a dowry, the King of France takes her insisting, "She is herself a dowry" (*Lear* 1.1.241). He continues, addressing Lear:

Thy dow'rless daughter, King, thrown to my chance,
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France,
Not all the dukes of war'ish Burgundy,
Can buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me. (256-59)

CHAPTER V

CELIA, HELPLESS OR INSIPID?: EVEN SHARPBEEK HAD A CHOICE

Celia's Hermetically Sealed World

Celia, the would-be pandered wife in *Volpone* (1606), represents a frightening portrayal of a woman reduced to one aspect of her being, her sexuality, for the purpose of exploitation by the males in her life. She is treated as an article of commerce throughout the play, and, unlike the English Lady Lodestone who is essentially her own mistress, Celia is unable to control any aspect of her life. She is completely dominated by her vicious and greedy husband Corvino. Whereas the so-called Magnetic Mistress chooses to avoid difficult situations in her dramatic world, Celia is denied such a choice. Ostovich in "Celia, Lady Would-be and Domestic Disorder" claims that despite her chastity men see only Celia's sex appeal (16). Her commodification is dramatically inherent in the exposition. Mosca tempts Volpone with Celia's attributes by employing terminology Volpone can appreciate: "Bright as your gold! And lovely as your gold!" (1.5.114). Her husband, Mosca continues, "keeps her as warily as you your gold" (118), yet Corvino offers her body to Volpone in the hopes of gaining an inheritance (2.6). Volpone,

in turn, views her as fantasy fulfillment by casting her in several roles in his sexual play (3.7).¹ Finally, the avocatori who are supposed to administer justice initially punish her as the stereotypical embodiment of female license (4.5). Many critics share Herford and Simpson's view that Celia, for all her attractiveness, is "insipid" to the point of passivity (2.64). Cave shifts the focus from Celia to the controlling men in her life. He charges, for example, that the grandee Volpone reduces Celia to "utter helplessness" (59). Knoll, like Herford and Simpson, fails to understand Celia's confining circumstances and sees a "simpering fool" (90). He adds insult to injury by suggesting that Celia is a "cloying" and "silly" woman who deserves her fate. However, a closer examination of the dramatic world of *Volpone* reveals a different strategy.

Celia life is a hermetically sealed universe where Jonson has deliberately stacked the deck. The rapacious nature of Celia's world is emphasized by the names of the characters preying on Volpone, the wily fox who pretends to be dying: Voltore, the vulture, Corbaccio, the raven, and Corvino, a crow, are all carrion eaters, birds known to feed off the dead. The character of Mosca the fly is slightly different: he is a parasite who lives off the fox. Celia, the "heavenly" character, is more an emblem, a means to throw into strong relief the animal nature of the other characters. Through use of the cheater/cheated theme, Jonson again creates a world

where the gulls are revealed as baser than the trickster, and Celia is caught in the middle between trickster and dupe. The aging voluptuary Volpone desires Celia, and Corvino, through use of his wife, shrewdly envisions a means of strengthening his position as possible inheritor. When Mosca informs Corvino that the doctor is willing to offer his daughter as "medicine" to save Volpone, Corvino sees all his plans for Volpone's wealth frustrated. In a shocking about face, Corvino changes tactics in regards to Celia. He shifts from an obsessively controlling husband afraid of being cuckolded to one who would pander his wife: "Wherefore should not I/ As well command my blood and my affections/ As this dull doctor? In the point of honour/ The cases are all one, of wife, and daughter" (2.6.70-73). Bonario ("good" or "incorrupt"), the only other good character, also becomes a pawn in Volpone's and Mosca's plot. Bonario's father Corbaccio, in an effort to clinch his position as Volpone's heir, disinherits his sole son in favor of Volpone. Corbaccio has convinced himself (aided by gentle nudging from Mosca) that he will survive Volpone, and Bonario will ultimately benefit. He rationalizes his treatment of Bonario by believing that he had not only provided for his own future but also "Multiplied it on (his) son" (1.4.117).

Volpone is a shyster of the first order. He dangles the prospect of great wealth to men who bring gifts in order to strengthen their position. He tells the eager legacy hunters "I have no wife, no parent, child, ally,/ To give my substance

to; but whom I make,/ Must be my heir" (1.1.73-75). Corvino and Corbaccio, with only the hope of a legacy, exhibit behavior that rips at the very fabric of family; they sacrifice personal relationships for the hope of money. Viewed in this light, Celia and Bonario are not "real" characters, but symbolize the victims of crimes committed against nature. Certainly, to prostitute a wife and to disinherit a son constitute the very essence of depravity.

The Celia plot, in Kay's view, pits the morally steadfast Celia against two men who would dishonor her (91). Like Dame Pliant, Celia is pandered by a controlling male, but Celia's betrayal is even worse because it is her husband who offers her. Unlike Pliant, Celia struggles to preserve her honor in the face of Corvino's baffling behavior. When Celia throws her handkerchief to Volpone disguised as the mountebank--presumably to buy a potion to cure her husband's jealousy--Corvino, enraged, exclaims, "Spite o' the devil, and my shame!" (2.3.1). He wrongly believes (as does Volpone) that Celia is encouraging the attentions of the mountebank for the purpose of cuckolding him: "Heart! Ere tomorrow I shall be new christened,/ And called the Pantolone di Bestogniosi (cuckold) / About the town" (2.3.6-8). Celia is at the mercy of Corvino's venomous attack for the next thirty lines as, ironically, he impugns Celia's honor in sexually repulsive terms:

You shall have him, yes.

He shall come home and minister unto you
The fricase, for the mother. O, let me see,
I think, you had rather mount? Would you not mount?
Why, if you'll mount, you may; yes truly, you may:
And so, you may be seen, down to the foot. (2.5.15-20)

Corvino suggests that Celia would "have" the mountebank sexually but only if she could "mount," that is, take the upper position so that her entire body would be displayed during the sex act. Corvino makes clear his revenge for this supposed blot to his honor: he will keep her dowry and demand justice through "the murder/ Of father, mother, brother, all thy race" (2.5.26-28). Determining to circumscribe her life even more than it already is, Corvino informs Celia that "thy restraint, before, was liberty" compared to her future imprisonment.

However, one hundred lines later, after a visit from Mosca, Corvino is ready to offer Celia to Volpone. Mosca tells Corvino that the grandee's doctor has offered his own daughter as medicine to revive Volpone. Corvino, although agonized, is unwilling to lose his opportunity as inheritor. His greed seals Celia's fate. He determines, "The cases are one, of wife and daughter She shall d'it" (2.6.72-74). Understandably, the unsuspecting Celia is amazed at the rapid reversal in Corvino's attitude. In a colossal about face, he insists that his previous invective was only a test:

Come, dry those tears, I think that thou thoughtst
me in earnest?

Ha? By this light, I talked so but to try thee.

Methinks the lightness of the occasion

Should ha' confirmed thee. Come, I am not jealous.
(2.7.1-5)

When Corvino explains what is expected of her, that she is to please Volpone sexually, Celia believes Corvino is again testing her and vehemently protests, "Sir, let me beseech you,/ Affect not these strange trials; if you doubt/ My chastity, why lock me up, for ever" (3.7.24-26). Once convinced that Corvino is in earnest, Celia appeals to his honor, only to find that her husband has forsaken his earlier position in favor of one that may bring him a monetary windfall: "Honour" for Corvino has become, in his terms, "a breath;/ Invented to awe fools" (3.7.38-39). As for Celia, Corvino is abrupt: "And for your fame,/ That's such a jig; as if I would go tell it,/ Cry it on the Piazza! Who shall know it?" (3.7.48-50). Corvino has shifted his position from the fear of cuckoldry based on irrational jealousy to the assertion that an action is not a sin unless it be publicly known. In spite of her intense pleading against this fallacious reasoning, Celia matters only as a means of achieving Corvino's intended goal: Volpone's wealth.

Volpone's motives and methods are different from Corvino's: Volpone seeks sexual pleasure, not money. Unlike Corvino's dire threats, Volpone's blandishments come in the

form of overly-ripe seduction, embellished in both verse and song. In the spirit of *carpe diem*, Volpone sings to Celia:

Why should we defer our joys?
Fame and rumour are but toys.
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poor household-spies?
Or his easier ears beguile,
Thus removed by our wile?
'Tis no sin love's fruits to steal;
But the sweet thefts to reveal:
To be taken, to be seen,
To be taken, to be seen,
These have crimes accounted been. (3.7.173-82)

Like Corvino, Volpone attempts to convince Celia that reputation is a trifle compared to the joy of illicit lovemaking. The only sin is "to be taken," that is, to be caught. Volpone treats Celia as one who would share equally in his wealth, for he compares her to powerful and sensuous women of antiquity, Cleopatra and Caligula's bride, Lollia Paulina. He offers "a rope of pearl, . . . more orient / Than that the brave Egyptian queen . . . ,/ Dissolve[d] and [drank]" and "a diamond [that] would have bought Lollia Paulina/ When she came in like starlight, hid with jewels." Volpone's ardent courtship offers all manner of aphrodisiacal delicacies, "The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales,/ The brains of peacocks, and of ostriches/ shall be our food:

and could we get the phoenix, (Though nature lost her kind)
she were our dish" (3.7.201-04). Horrified, Celia parries
Volpone lavish offer of gifts with the desire to keep her
virtue:

Good sir, these things might move a mind affected
With such delights; but I, whose innocence
Is all I can think wealthy, or worth the enjoying,
And which once lost, I have naught to lose beyond
it,

Cannot be taken with these sensual baits;
If you have conscience—(3.7.205-10)

Volpone remains insistent that conscience is "the
beggar's virtue" as he attempts to seduce Celia with opulently
erotic visions of lovemaking. Highly reminiscent of Sir
Epicure's attempt to seduce Dol in her role as the lord's
sister, Volpone paints a picture just as highly charged in
sensuous imagery:

Whilst, we in changed shapes, act Ovid's tales,
Thou, like Europa now, and I like Jove,
Then I like Mars, and thou like Erycine,
So, of the rest, till we have quite run through
And wearied all the fables of the gods. (3.7.220-
25)

Volpone lustfully envisions Celia as his partner in re-
enacting Ovid's tales. He also has some inventions of his
own, for he hopes to cast Celia as a "Brave Tuscan lady" or
"proud Spanish lady" and even "some quick Negro." For his

part, Volpone will match Celia in every role in "as many shapes" (3.7.227,231,232).

Defiantly, Celia holds her ground insisting that she prefers death or disfigurement over dishonor. Her protests characterize her as willingness to try to take charge of her life in the face of great odds; certainly she is helpless but not inert or silly. First, she appeals to Volpone's sense of humanity pleading that he allow her to escape: "If not, be bountiful, and kill me" (3.7.244). If death cannot be an escape, Celia suggests disfigurement; she begs Volpone to mar the "unhappy crime of nature/ Which you miscall my beauty":

flay my face,

Or poison it with ointments for seducing

Your blood to this rebellion. Rub these hands

With what may cause an eating leprosy,

E'en to my bones and marrow: anything,

That may disfavor me, save in my honor. (3.7. 251-56)

Ignoring Celia's impassioned plea for mercy, Volpone determines to take by force what he cannot obtain through guile, threatening, "Yield or I'll force thee" (3.7.263).

Jonson has dramatically placed Celia in a terrible position—a locked room with a man determined to have her sexually. Even the wit of Dol Common would be severely tested in this situation, and it is doubtful that she would be able to diffuse the situation. Yet, Knoll wrongfully insists that

"Celia is so simple, so silly in her reliance on a benevolent Deity, that she forfeits much of our sympathy, and that to a degree, at least we feel she deserves something of what she gets" (90). To the contrary, Celia has reasonably appealed to both Corvino's and Volpone's sense of honor, to no avail. Celia uses the only option she had left, her religious faith; she cries, "O just God" (3.7.266), and her prayer is answered but not by providence. Jonson has carefully prepared for Bonario's presence. Mosca has previously hidden Bonario in an alcove so that Bonario might hear his father Corbaccio proclaim his bastardy. Mosca informs Bonario "Your ear shall be a witness of the deed;/ Hear yourself written bastard: and professed/ The common issue of the earth" (3.2.53-54). Corvino's avarice brings him and Celia untimely to Volpone's house thereby upsetting Mosca's timing (Act 3. Scene 7). Bonario, who expects to witness his father's perverse behavior, instead observes Volpone's attempt to rape Celia. From his hiding place, Bonario appears to save Celia from Volpone's lust and removes her from the clutches of men who would dishonor her.

Celia's honor is saved by the appearance of Bonario, but her ordeal is not over. In order to protect their nefarious scheme, Volpone and Mosca determine to discredit Celia and Bonario. Corvino and Corbaccio, still in hopes of gaining the inheritance, join Mosca and Volpone in retaliation. Named a common whore by her husband, Celia, along with Bonario, has

been arrested for defamation of Volpone's character, just the opposite of what really happened. Appearing before the Scrutineo (the court of law located in the Doge's Palace), Celia is denounced by both Corvino and Mosca's dupe, the English Lady Would-be. Corvino even names himself cuckold in his attempt to discredit Celia and acquit Volpone of any wrongdoing: "This woman (please your fatherhoods) is a whore,/ Of most hot exercise, more than a partridge,/ Upon record--" (4.5.14-16). Manipulated by Mosca to believe that Celia had seduced her husband, Lady Pol adds to Celia's calumny:

Aye, this same is she,
Out, thou chameleon harlot: now thine eyes
Vie tears with the hyena: dar'st thou look
Upon my wronged face? (4.6.2-5)

It is not her innocence that redeems Celia but Volpone's eventual need to bring down Mosca. Because of his newly inherited wealth, Mosca has become, in the eyes of several of the avvocatori, a suitable marriage partner for their daughters. First, Volpone offers Mosca half of his wealth, only to be refused by Mosca who explains "I cannot now/ Afford it you so cheap" (5.12.70-71). Left with no options, Volpone uncases, vowing that "My substance shall not glue you [Mosca]/ Nor screw you into a family" (5,12.86-7). The Grandee's denunciation of the dupes as "a chimera of wittol, fool and knave" (92) brings about the instantaneous response that "the knot is now undone by miracle!" (95). Acknowledging Celia and

Bonario, the avocatori ironically decree "Nothing can be more clear./ Or can more prove/ These innocent./ Give them their liberty" 96-98). Corvino is ordered "rowed/ Round about Venice. . . /Wearing a cap with fair long ass's ears/ Instead of horns" to the pillory (5.12.136-39). Furthermore, the avocatore order Corvino "to expiate/ The wrongs done to thy wife, thou art to send her,/ Home to her father with her dowry trebled" (142-44). Although she is still commoditized--treated as a bad bargain to be sent home to her father--Celia is removed from a malignant situation. The dramatist has not allowed any physical harm to come to her in spite of her ineffectuality, and he does allow her prayer to go unanswered. Thus, Jonson rebalances the society to avoid turning Celia into an actual victim. In fact, Celia serves to exhibit the unbridled evil of men vying for money and power.

Never has Jonson portrayed humanity as so totally depraved as in *Volpone*. If the dramatic worlds of *Bartholomew Fair* and *Epicoene* are inverted, then the environment of *Volpone* is perverted. If Jonson were following his early formula of sporting with follies the action would only involve Volpone and the gulls; the dupes would be attempting to get something for nothing and would surely deserve their comeuppance. However, both men sully sacred familial relationships by prostituting a wife and disowning a son. Pushed to the limit, both Corvino and Corbaccio will sacrifice without compunction the very ones they should be protecting.

In this manner their follies have translated to crimes; innocent people have been harmed. The only breath of fresh air is in the characters of Bonario and Celia, and neither is effective against so much evil. However, Celia cannot be viewed as silly or giddy but steadfast in the face of so much corruption. Her "goodness" ultimately shows up how "bad" the men characters are. Ironically, in order to achieve a drama of such compelling force, Jonson violates previous dicta. Herford and Simpson sum up the situation:

If *Volpone* marks a wide departure from the realism he had earlier enjoined upon the comic dramatist, it violates still more strikingly his second demand, that comedy should 'sport with human follies,' not with 'crimes.' . . . There is folly enough, to be sure; but it is the formidable and menacing folly of men who have capacity and resource and absolutely no scruples, and whether such men commit follies or crimes is merely a question of occasion and circumstance. All the principal persons are capable of any crime[.] (2.55)

With so much menace in this drama, Jonson walks a fine line between tragedy and sardonic comedy. Still operating under the effects of his grandiose tragedy of two years earlier, *Sejanus, His Fall*, Jonson once again utilizes the device of a pair of consummately bad men in league against society, which they mercilessly exploit. *Volpone* and *Mosca* can equate with the earlier *Tiberius* and *Sejanus*, and both master-servant duos enter into a struggle for supremacy that brings about the fall of all involved. Working with the records of imperial Rome, Jonson was impressed by material still

unexplored by his dramatic contemporaries. One Roman institution that appealed to Jonson's sense of grim comedy was that of the legacy hunter or *captator*. Such a character was especially evidenced in *Satiricon* by the Roman satirist Petronius (HS 2.51). Brilliantly, Jonson gives life to the *captator* frame story by devising characters from the beast fable, notably, *The History of Reynard the Fox* as translated by William Caxton in 1481.³ Volpone the fox is courted by Corbaccio the raven, Corvino the crow, and Voltore the vulture who all want to be named his heir.

How Corbant the Rook Complained on the Fox for the Death of His Wife is especially applicable to the fate of Celia at the hands of Volpone (108-10). The rook tells how Sharpbek, his wife, and he were going out "for to play upon the heath" where they found Reynard the fox apparently dead: "His eyes stared and his tongue hung long out of his mouth like a hound had no life." After they had felt his belly to see if he breathed, Sharpbek laid her head close to the fox's mouth "for to wit if he drew his breath, which misfell her evil." Reynard quickly devours Sharpbek just as Volpone attempts to snap up Celia, the wife of Corvino, the crow. Jonson modifies the Sharpbek story as the basis of Volpone's attempted seduction of Celia. Volpone resembles the wily Reynard who initially plays dead but suddenly comes to life and devours Sharpbek, but Volpone's revival (from apparently near death) is actually sexual. Also, Sharpbek, unlike Celia, approaches Reynard of

her own free will. Sharpbek is responsible for her fate; Celia has no choice in the matter. Her position is dictated by Corvino the crow.

Jonson allows Celia to be saved from Sharpbek's fate by rebalancing the dramatic world. The evil of Corvino (with Celia) and Corbaccio (with Bonario) cancel each other by bringing in Bonario. Nevertheless, Celia's situation remains grim. Certainly, Jonson is not endorsing the Corvino's marriage, for he severely punishes the husband at the conclusion. The extreme nature of Celia's position is all the more pronounced through Jonson's strategy of contrasting her imprisonment to the freedom that the English Lady Would-be enjoys in her marriage to Sir Politic. The Would-bes character is embedded in their name, for both thoughtlessly mimic the scheming ways of Venice. The nickname Sir Pol identifies him with the pol parrot, a creature that apes rather than thinks. Chute maintains:

Jonson's interest in realistic comedy found a place for itself even in the glory of Venice with the deft introduction of two of his fellow countrymen, a pair of visiting tourists named Sir Politic Would-Be and his lady. Sir Politic was so successful a characterization that he became a kind of byword for the English political amateur who traveled in Europe seeing secret documents concealed in every baggage and triumphantly detecting a code in the special handling of a toothpick. His lady is one of the earliest and most horrifying examples of a special species of tourist. She talks so steadily that even Volpone cannot stand it and she is obliged to recommend a cordial so that he can get his strength back. (144-45)

Chute reasons that Jonson must have seen the sisters of Lady Would-be many times at Whitehall (146). Dramatically speaking, the introduction of Sir Pol and his wife offers Jonson's audience a bridge to the corrupt world of Volpone's Venice.⁵ Even though the audience realizes that Venice is no different than their England, the device of Sir Pol allows the opportunity of distance. Sir Pol is the antithesis of Corvino in his treatment of his wife, for he indulges his lady. He admits that the trip to Venice is "a peculiar humour of [his] wife's/ . . . to observe,/ To quote to learn the language, and so forth--" (2.1.11-13). The forward English woman shocks even Volpone who "wonder[s] at the desperate valour/ Of bold English, that they dare let loose/ Their wives to all encounters" (1.5.101-02). Lady Would-be's visit to Volpone foreshadows the seduction of Celia, but--significantly--the earlier scene portrays Lady Would-be as the instigator. Barish explains that Lady Would-be, in the first instance, is the aggressor who "apes the local style in dress and cosmetics, reads the Italian poets, and tries to rival the lascivious Venetians in their own game of seduction" (403). Cave, in his study *Ben Jonson*, describes a performance of *Volpone* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1952) wherein Lady Would-be's bold advances foreshadow the brutality covered by lyrical speech. Dismissing her waiting women, Lady Would-be promptly jumps on Volpone's bed, takes his hand, and strokes his thigh while urging him to "laugh and be lusty" (59). Cave continues:

The bold licentiousness of Lady Would-be was not only hilarious in itself, her movements anticipated many of Volpone's own in his seduction of Celia, thereby enhancing an audience's awareness of the brutal intent that lies behind his dulcet rhetoric long before frustration makes him openly aggressive. (59)

Lady Would-be continues to wreak havoc as she attempts to adopt Venetian vices as her own. She earns her name of a pol parrot by repeating as truth Mosca's insinuations against Celia before the Scrutineo, and she stupidly takes Peregrine as a courtesan who is cross-dressed to protect his identity. Moreover, Volpone is so repulsed by her that he "will take her absence, upon any price,/ With any loss" (3.5.13-14).

Ultimately, Mosca silences her through blackmail:

Remember what your ladyship offered me,
To put you in, as heir; go to, think on't.
And what you said, e'en your best madams did
For maintenance, and why not you? Enough.
Go home, and use the poor Sir Pol, your knight,
well;
For fear I tell some riddles: go, be melancholic.
(5.3.40-45)

Celia's natural beauty and innocence are sharply contrasted with Lady Pol's vanity in the scene where Lady Pol prepares for her visit to Volpone's bedside. Barish in "The Double Plot of *Volpone*" suggests that Lady Pol provides an "object lesson in falsity" as she fusses over her toilet and snaps at her serving women (408). Barish goes on to say, "Here, as so often in Jonson, face physic symbolizes the

painted surface hiding the rotten inside; the cosmetic care of the face signifies the neglect of the soul" (408). It must be remembered that Celia, in order to deflect Volpone's ardor, offers to debeautify her face. She begs Volpone "Flay my face/ Or poison it with ointments /. . . Anything/ That may disfavour me" (3.7.251-52,55-56). By placing the attempted seduction of Celia's just after Lady Pol's flirtation with Volpone, Jonson highlights Celia's "unearthly purity" with Lady Pol's "lecherousness" (409). Celia's steadfastness is rewarded by her return to her father with her dowry trebled. Lady Politic Would-be, on the other hand, quits Venice with her husband under a cloud: she takes "straight to sea for physic" (5.4.86).

Notes to Celia, Helpless or Insipid? Even Sharpbek Had a Choice

¹The device of disguise so basic in Jonson's dramaturgy extends to role-playing. Not only does Volpone take on the apparel of the mountebank, he woos Celia through a series of suggested impersonations much as Sir Epicure seduces Dol Common through role-playing and sensual imagery.

²The satirist Petronius (55-117), called by Tacitus the *arbiter elegantiae*—the judge of good taste--of Nero's court, depicted the seamy side of the first century just as the sixteenth-century Jonson portrayed the evils of his era.

³Donald Sands' introduction to *The History of Reynard the*

Fox, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960, states that William Caxton has the distinction of being the first English printer. Having learned the trade in Flanders, Caxton returned to his native England, translating into English many popular works and publishing them. The popular beast fable was published in 1481.

⁴The most convenient version of Caxton's work is *The History of Reynard the Fox*, Donald B. Sands, editor, 109.

⁵The importance of the Would-bes to the overall structure of the play has been debated. Michael Jamieson in his introduction to *Ben Jonson: Three comedies* says, "throughout the comedy *Sir Politic Would-be* and his fine *Madame* play a secondary, never an essential, part. They remain English visitors in a world of Italianate machinations which they never understand. . . . The Would-be pair are expendable; but to cut them from a performance of the comedy leaves the Italian dupes and manipulators relatively unfocussed. They earn their part in the play" (20). On the other hand, Barish in "The Double Plot of *Volpone*" contends that previous critics have ignored or dismissed the significance of the secondary plot centering on *Sir Pol* and his lady. Barish insists that *Sir Pol* and *Lady Would-be* serve a purpose other than mere "comic relief." Just as *Celia's* goodness intensifies the evil that surrounds her, the bumbling nature of the Would-bes emphasizes *Volpone*, "the successful enterpriser, whose every

stratagem succeeds almost beyond expectation" (404). Sir Pol and Lady Would-be caricature the actors of the main plot. Sir Pol figures as a comic distortion of Volpone while Lady Pol figures in an inversion of the seduction of Celia. In view of the depth of corruption that exists in the dramatic world of *Volpone*, it is reasonable to believe that the characterization of the Would-bes is all that keeps *Volpone* from veering into tragedy.

CHAPTER VI

FRANCES FITZDOTTREL: THE ULTIMATE HEROINE

Frances Overcomes the Circumstances of a Patriarchal System

The world of *The Devil is an Ass* (1616) is not unlike that of *Volpone*; the corrupt nature of Venice translates to sixteenth-century London. In the final analysis, Jonson acknowledges that the dramatic world, like the London world it mirrors, is irremediably corrupt. Topical allusions to the Overbury murder trial and King James's intervention in a witch hunt in Leicester (both to be discussed below) add to seamy character of the milieu. Such realism is further depicted in the similar treatment the female characters (Celia and Frances Fitzdottrel) receive. Both women are prostituted by their husbands for their own gain, and both women are punished by the patriarchal legal system that favors the testimony of self-interested men over real evidence. The difference between the two worlds lies in the nature of the seducer. Wittipol is every bit as determined to entice Frances as Volpone is to have Celia. Yet while Volpone is determined to take what is not willingly offered, Wittipol is learns to treat Frances with respect. Both women face a legal inquiry, and both women are exonerated, not by their own chaste behavior, but by

outside forces. Celia is vindicated when Volpone—in order to bring down Mosca—confesses his crimes. Frances is likewise exculpated when Satan causes an explosion tearing apart the prison so that Pug can escape back to the underworld.

Although he prided himself on his originality, Jonson in *The Devil is an Ass* recapitulates plot formulas that he had already used in *Epicoene*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*. The dramatist, in the spring of 1616, had revised and edited his earlier plays in preparation for his *Works*, and the results of this prolonged self-scrutiny are everywhere apparent in *The Devil is an Ass*: the two gallants, the confidence man, the shaming of the cuckold, and the quarrel that escalates out of control. Yet, as Rigg asserts, "the reminiscences of his earlier comedies that crop up in *The Devil is an Ass* recall specific moments in individual plays rather than a generalized nexus of stock characters and plot formulas" (241). First and foremost, *The Devil is an Ass* presents the ever-familiar cheater/cheated motif as the axis of its dramatic world. Characters, too, are reminiscent of earlier Jonsonian representations. Face and Subtle, the tricksters so hilariously drawn in *The Alchemist*, can be imagined as rejoining forces in the characters of Meercraft, the projector and Averill his assistant. Anne Barton in her study *Ben Jonson: Dramatist* notes that the play could have been called "the Further Adventures of Face and Subtle" (220). Wittipol could have been schooled by Epicoene in his portrayal

of the Spanish lady, and Lady Tailbush and Eitherside, in their self-centered vanity, greatly resemble the Collegiates in *Epicoene*. More to the point, Fabian Fitzdottrel and his wife Frances are English versions of Corvino and Celia from *Volpone*. Fitzdottrel shares Corvino's fear of cuckoldry. Still, for a price he, too, will prostitute his wife. Frances is portrayed less emblematically than Celia, for Frances struggles with her moral choices. In addition, Jonson offers Pug, one of Satan's lesser devils, who is no match for the tricksters of the city. Summoned by Fitzdottrel to do his bidding, Pug is quickly displaced from center stage by the more adept human Meercraft, and it is the wily projector who is able to gain possession of Fitzdottrel. *The Devil is an Ass* takes such disparate representations and reassembles them, according to Cave, into a work of "wit, energy and clarity of line" (120). The end result is a drama that curiously weaves the verisimilitude of the dramatic world with contemporaneous Jacobean incidents in order to present, for the first time, a female of heroic order.

Jonson's London life rests on on two types of adultery. The first, obvious kind is epitomized in Wittipol's attempts to seduce Frances. The second, more subtle sort is metaphoric: the rise of capitalism with accompanying evils, monopolies, and the shift in population from country to city. The new economic policy pits the ruthless speculators of the city against the naïve landowners of the country. Through

Meercraft, Jonson portrays Londoners as "philanderers seducing the country into a destructive process that will lay England to waste," insists Helen Ostovich in "Hell for Lovers: Shades of Adultery in *The Devil is an Ass*" (175). While James I believed that the new economic system with its accompanying grants of monopolies would protect England's economy, Jonson satirically shows that in the hands of a Meercraft or Averill the common good quickly yields to self-interest. Marcus posits that James denied the first cause—capitalism—and blamed the second: the shift in population. His Proclamation of 1615 condemned the movement from country to city: those who had country estates should remain there, for the population shift provided an unbalancing of the ancient, healthy harmony of the whole body politic. The Proclamation states in part, "like the Spleene in the body, which in measure as it outgrows, the body wastes. For is it possible but the Countrey must diminish if London doe so increase, and all sorts of people doe come to London?" (*James* 343).¹ James forestalled opposition to his policies by calling for a moratorium on building in London, imprisoning those who would disobey: "And for the decrease of new Building heere, I would have builders restrained, and committed to prison; and if the builders cannot be found, then the workemen to be imprisoned, and not this onely, but likewise the buildings to bee cast downe" (*James* 344).

Blaming the overweening arrogance of the upper classes who moved to the city for London's "disease," James especially

singled out the wives for censure. He charges: "One of the greatest causes of all Gentlemens desire, that have no calling or errand, to dwell in London, is apparently the pride of the women: For if they bee wives, then their husbands; and if they be maydes, then their fathers must bring them up to London; because the new fashion is to bee had no where but in London" (*James* 344). Within this view, Jonson serves as the poster boy for James's position, and *The Devil is an Ass*, is the manifesto: Fitzdottrel epitomizes corruptness because he left his country home for the city. Jonson in 1616 was the "king's poet" and as such had learned how through theatre to support the king's policies. Yet, *The Devil is an Ass* is kinder to women than James's speech. For an alleged misogynist Jonson shows a gentle concern for Frances, the abused wife of Fitzdottrel. Certainly the shift James abhors intensifies the corruptness of London, but the rise of capitalism must be the prime cause. For this reason, Ostovich's position with its double emphasis on adultery seems reasonable.

In a major plot, Frances must choose between her foolish, tyrannical husband who treats her as a possession for barter and Wittipol whose sensitive wooing takes into consideration her needs as a human being. Frances has ample reason for choosing Wittipol, as Jonson makes evident in his sympathetic portrayal, yet she exhibits a stoical strength and dignity as she determines the more difficult course of remaining faithful to her marriage vows. Ostovich states in "Hell for Lovers"

that "Frances Fitzdottrel claims . . . female agency by exerting tautly rational control over her desires, placing a premium on peace of mind over transient pleasures of the flesh" (157). Frances is the only married woman in Jonson's canon who possesses the mental acuity to exercise control over her own life. Because of her keenness of mind, Frances is able to achieve an individualized identity in the two areas traditionally controlled by husbands: real property and sexuality. Although seriously tempted to yield to Wittipol's blandishments, Frances instead enlists him in her effort to recover the financial security marriage to Fitzdottrel has destroyed. Heroically, Wittipol moves from seducer to confidant to champion in response to Frances's desire for friendship instead of romance. Frances becomes a fully realized character as she proves Jonson's point: choosing virtue is quite different from having virtue imposed on one as a husband's possession.

The Fitzdotterl marriage is reminiscent of the Corvinos in *Volpone* but without the malignant edge, for the mood of *The Devil is an Ass* lacks the overwhelming evil--in spite of the physical presence of Pug--of the earlier play. Just as Corvino keeps Celia cloistered, Fitzdottrel keeps Frances "mured up in a back room," allowing her "ne'er a casement to the street" (2.2.91,93-95). Her liberty is so limited that she is forbidden "paper, pen and ink," and her husband is so jealous that he would search "a half-pint of muscatel lest a

letter /Be sunk in the pot" (2.2.96-97). Like Corvino Fitzdottrel fears being cuckolded, yet, ludicrously, he will pimp Frances for the sake of Wittipol's handsome cloak. The cloak is essential to Fitzdottrel's plan for the day. Wittipol tells Manly that Fitzdottrel has already rented a wardrobe, "a hired suit he now has on,/ To see *The Devil is an Ass* to day in" (1.4.20-21). Fitzdottrel misses the theatre performance, and since he cannot be an observer, he becomes an actor: he becomes the "ass" in the title. Because he has circumscribed Wittipol's actions, Fitzdottrel believes he has prevented a sexual liaison. Forbidding "all lip-work" and "All melting joints and fingers," Fitzdottrel allows Wittipol fifteen minutes to woo Frances (1.4.89,98). Having bartered his one priceless possession, Fitzdottrel can only appreciate the cost of the cloak: "The plush cost three pounds, ten shillings a yard/ and then the lace and velvet" (1.4.40-41). He can only see the matter from his own perspective as the fine figure who will attend the play richly dressed. Not only does Fitzdottrel ignore his wife's feelings; he does not seem cognizant that she has feelings. He dismisses Frances completely: "Why shouldst thou envy my delight? Or cross it?/ By being solicitous when it not concerns thee?" (1.6.13-14).

If Fitzdottrel is a paler version of Corvino, Frances is a richer representation of Celia. Possessing a finer sense of self-preservation, Frances speaks her mind as she accuses her husband of foolish behavior: "Are you not enough,/ The talk of

feasts and meetings, but you'll still/ Make argument for fresh?" (1.6.7-9). However, it is not through her interaction with her husband that Frances shines, but in her relationship with Wittipol. Because she and Wittipol must deal with the temptation of their mutual attraction, Frances transcends the character of Celia. Unlike Celia who stands in terror of Volpone's seductive blandishments, Frances is sorely tempted by Wittipol's *carpe diem* speech. As the abused wife of Fitzdottrel, Frances is understandably attracted to Wittipol and "the way/ He took, which though 'twere strange, yet 'twas handsome/ And had a grace withal beynd the newness" (2.2.25-27). Like Volpone's initial treatment of Celia, Wittipol stresses the mutuality of a sexual encounter, but unlike Volpone, Wittipol is deflected from his amorous course by Frances's greater need for friendship than for romance. Bonario saves Celia from Volpone's designs when she calls on "God and his good angels" (3.7.132). For her part, Frances shares Celia's innocence but is more outspoken. Although initially embarrassed by her part in her husband's scheme for the cloak (her first action on stage is to blush), Frances is obviously touched by Wittipol's overtures. The romance develops through three dramatic actions: the initial "cloak scene," the "window scene," and the "Spanish lady scene."

Although his goal is seduction, Wittipol is not totally self-serving; he genuinely cares for Frances. He tells Manly, "I saw her once; but so as she hath stuck/ Still I'my view, no

object hath removed her" (1.4.12-13). Knowing Fitzdottrel's character, Wittipol exchanges his own luxurious cloak for fifteen minutes of conversation with Frances. In his lyrical courtship, Wittipol describes Frances as a "simple woman" who, as "the wife/ To so much blasted flesh as scarce has soul," is consigned to "cold/ Sheets." Abandoning his wife's warm bed, the foolish husband prefers his nights "in the walks of Lincoln's Inn" where he seeks "the fiend in vain" (1.5.86,87-88,91-92,96-97). Wittipol alludes to Fitzdottrel's obsession with raising the devil. It is to this end that the husband wanders the streets at night, leaving his wife to "cold sheets." Realizing that Frances's muteness is enforced by her husband, Wittipol uses the opportunity to speak for her. In Ostovich's words, he "metaphorically puts his tongue in her mouth" ("Lovers" 168). Standing Manly in his own place, Wittipol assumes the role of Frances, accurately verbalizing her every thought:

But sir, you seem a gentleman of virtue
No less than blood; and one that every way
Looks as he were of too good quality,
To entrap a credulous woman, or betray her;
Since you have paid thus dear, sir, for the visit,
And made such venture on your wit and charge
Merely to see me, or at most to speak to me,
I were too stupid, or-what's worse-ingrate
To not return your venture. (1.6.167-75)

Wittipol knows her "unequal, and so sordid match," her "bondage" to a "moonling" who has "let his wife out to be courted,/ And at a price, proclaims his asinine nature" (1.6.155-65 *passim*). He offers himself as a rescuer from such a humiliating life. His final words entice more than any embrace because he has fired Frances's imagination with an alternative to her life imposed by Fitzdottrel:

Do you not think yet lady,
But I can kiss, and touch, and laugh, and whisper,
And do those crowing courtships too, for which
Day and the public have allowed no name? (1.6.199-202)

With his offer of love "in equality" (1.6.126) by a perceptive and caring lover, Wittipol makes a deep impression on Frances. For her part, she "cannot get this venture of the cloak" out of her mind nor "the gentleman's way." Overall she is concerned as to her impression on him: "Sure he will think" her a "dull stupid creature" if she "can yield him no return" (2.2.24-33). When Wittipol contacts her, Frances sends a coded message, through Pug, that he "forbear his acting to me/ At the gentleman's chamber window in Lincoln's Inn there,/ That opens to my gallery; else, I swear,/ T' acquaint my husband with his folly, and leave him / To the just rage of his offended jealousy" (2.2.52-56). Correctly interpreting Frances's message, Wittipol appears precisely in the window opposite her own as described, and from separated embrasures

these two characters conduct the most erotically charged love scene in Jonson's canon. Frances, unlike Celia, is a sexual being who yearns to return Wittipol's expressions of love. Yet for most of the exchange the two speak at cross-purposes.

Even as she meets with Wittipol, Frances fears that her appearance at the window will create the impression of "easiness" (2.6.56) that is not justified by her unhappy marriage. She explains to Wittipol that she has arranged a meeting, not an assignation:

You may with justice say I am a woman,
And a strange woman. But when you shall please
To bring but that concurrence of my fortune
To memory, which today yourself did urge,
It may beget some favour like excuse,
Though none like reason. (2.6.52-57)

Frances is referring to the earlier exchange where Wittipol refers to her "fortune," that is the condition of her marriage to Fitzdottrel. Frances means to do something about her situation, but Wittipol does not give her the chance to explain herself. He assumes she looks upon his proposition with favor and begins to make ardent love to her. Momentarily deflected from her course, Frances wordlessly responds. The stage directions read as disturbingly vulgar--"he grows more familiar in his courtship, plays with her paps, kisseth her hands, etc" (SD 70)--yet Wittipol's ironic speech contrasts with his actions. His words are gems of beauty as he describes

the essence of purity:

Have you seen but a bright lily grow,

Before rude hands have touched it?

Have you marked but the fall of the snow,

Before the soil hath smutched it? (2.6.104-07)

Frances is brought back to reality by the appearance of Fitzdottrel who blusters at Wittipol with talk of cutting his throat, yet takes the coward's route of striking Frances. This beating and the subsequent, not-impossible threat to "make another lady Duchess" by deposing Frances (2.7.40-42) restores her to her earlier position of requiring Wittipol's help. Unfortunately, the two are still working at cross-purposes. While Wittipol sees her "fortune" as her unnatural marriage to Fitzdottrel which justifies an adulterous liaison, Frances' view is more altruistic. She needs help in saving what fortune or property her husband has not squandered; because of Fitzdottrel's improvidence, her monetary worth is "standing in this precipice" (4.6.24).

The third scene between the two lovers resolves all misunderstanding. Wittipol appears in the guise of the Spanish lady entrusted by Fitzdottrel to tutor Frances in the ways of polite society. Accepting Fitzdottrel's ironic charge, "I give her up here absolutely to you,/ She is your own. Do with her what you will!" (4.4.252-53), Wittipol, whose "will" is seduction, removes Frances to a private room for that purpose. This meeting, however, is controlled by Frances.

She admits that his "manner/ Of attempting" her earlier in the day sidetracked her from her intended requital. Perceiving Wittipol as a man "of noble parts" (4.6.16), she appeals to his finer feelings:

I am a woman
That cannot speak more wretchedness of myself
Than you can read; matched to a mass of folly,
That every day makes haste to his own ruin,
The wealthy portion that I brought him, spent;
And, through my friend's neglect, no jointure was
made me,
My fortunes standing in this precipice,
'Tis counsel that I want, and honest aids:
And in this name, I need you for a friend. (4.6.18-
26)

In this speech Frances seeks legal support for her right to protect herself. Although English common law deemed a wife's property as belonging to her husband, the court of chancery allowed for the device of a trust administered by a third person as a protection for a wife's property. Amy Erickson, in *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, insists that the legal concept of separate estates existed from Elizabethan times forward as means of removing marital property from liability for the husband's debt. Such an action would protect the wife's family from the husband's "unthrift" (107).² Although not a sign of independence in any modern sense, this financial trust appears to be Frances's

object.

Such a lofty ethical stance is not supported by Herford and Simpson who are offended by Frances's earlier acquiescence at the window (2.165). Continuing, they aver: "In Mrs. Fitzdottrel Jonson appears to have intended to draw an honest wife who, in just resentment to the outrage done her by her foolish husband, is willing to go some length in indulging the passion of her admirer" (2.184). What Herford and Simpson fail to see is that Frances has an emotional investment as well. She is not just "indulging the passion" of Wittipol; her feelings are also engaged. Yet she determines to take the moral high road in spite of her attraction. She is not disappointed because her sacrifice brings about a noble response in Wittipol. In his role as the Spanish lady, Wittipol has all of Jonson's bag of tricks at his disposal. Like Surly and Lovewit, he wears a Spanish cloak as he spirits his mistress off to the bedchamber, and like Quarlous, he obtains a deed of feoffment (which he turns over to Manly) that gives him control over the lady's estate. Manly is more honorable than Quarlous in *Bartholomew Fair* whose machinations with a similar deed enable him to sell Grace Welborne to Winwife.³

In Frances Fitzdottrel Jonson has created a true heroine. The dramatist emphasizes that even though Frances has every justification for engaging in adultery, she prefers chastity. As a means of highlighting the admirable nature of Frances's

choice, Jonson offers the contrasting characters of Lady Eitherside, wife to the justice, and Lady Tailbush, the female projector. These Collegiate-like females appear when Fitzdottrel, in an about face similar to Corvino, determines that Frances learn the ways of ladies of fashion, namely Eitherside and Tailbush. Because he aspires to the aristocracy as the Duke of Drowned Land, his elevated status requires fashionable manners. Wittipol, disguised as the Spanish lady, serves as instructor to the group. In Spain, the disguised Wittipol insists, a woman's life is so restricted that a duenna is "the only person allowed to touch/ A lady there: and he but by his finger" (4.4.84-85). Both Eitherside and Tailbush lament such strictness. Says Eitherside, "We must have our dozen of visitors, at once/ Make love to us" (4.4.92-93). She continues, ironically, "As I am honest, Tailbush, I do think/ If nobody should love me but my poor husband,/ I should e'en hang myself" (4.4.96-98).

Within this group, the focus is on vanity and promiscuity, not love and honesty. Fashionable behavior begins with coach traveling, dancing, wanting to "Hear talk and bawdy," and finally to "do[ing] anything" provided a woman has young company who are "brave or lords" (4.4.158-68). Fitzdottrel, newly converted to the fashionable ways, tells Frances that "bawdy" talk is merely "civil discourse" (4.4.176-77). Like Corvino who considers honor a "breath/ Invented to awe fools" (3.7.38-39) when it serves his agenda,

Fitzdottrel is willing to ignore conventional morality when it serves his purpose. Confiding in the Spanish lady, Fitzdottrel despairs of Frances's ability to take to the new ways; he moans:

But she will ne'er be capable, she is not
So much as coming, madam, I know now how,
She loses all her opportunities
With hoping to be forced. I've entertained,
A gentleman, a younger brother, here
Whom I would fain breed up her escudero
Against some expectations that I have
And she'll not countenance him. (4.4.179-86)

With sexually charged puns, Fitzdottrel berates his wife for not being aggressive, suggesting that she prefers being "forced." The young man in question is Pug who indeed wishes an encounter with Frances but has been foiled by Wittipol. Eitherside and Tailbush immediately welcome Pug; however, they rechristen him "Devile" because the name sounds much more aristocratic than "devil." In the midst of such nonsense Manly, who had had thoughts of courting Tailbush, indignantly walks out. Pug succinctly sums up the situation: "All my days in Hell were holy-days to this" (4.4.223).

Fitzdottrel's desire to attend *The Devil is an Ass* suggests that the dramatic world is merely an extension of Jacobean London in 1616 and gives credence to Pug's view that "Hell is a grammar school to this" (4.4.170-71). In the

introductory conversation Satan warns Pug that Londoners "have their Vices there most like to Virtues;/ You cannot know 'em apart by any difference" (1.1.121-22). As Satan foresees, Pug cannot possibly hope to compete with the sharp operators whom he will encounter there. The conclusion also reinforces the position that the ways of London life would shame the devil, for Fitzdottrel, like Corvino, accuses his wife of infidelity and fakes demoniac possession (5.8). In the final act Jonson raises the question of whether or not virtue can survive in a society so fundamentally corrupt. When Meercraft learns that he has been outmaneuvered, he goes before the magistrate and accuses Wittipol, Manly, and Frances of bewitching the hapless Fitzdottrel. Pug views this as an opportunity to teach the rogues the tricks of his trade, but Meercraft's methods have already been tested in *Volpone* and the projector has no need for a real devil. Indeed, the future augers grim for the innocent, especially Frances who faces charges of witchcraft as well as adultery.

In addition to the textual bugbears—Tailbush and Eitherside—Jonson's connection of dramatic action with topical allusions allows a bogey from real life: Lady Frances Howard. London in 1616 had been scandalized by a series of trials that brought to light a side of Jacobean life as seamy as any portrayed by Jonson. Briefly, Lady Frances, the wife of the Earl of Essex is reputed to have sought the services of Anne Turner and Dr. Forman to destroy the Earl's sexual powers

through witchcraft so that she could win an annulment from the Earl based on his impotency. In addition, Lady Frances was implicated in the murder of Thomas Overbury in the Tower, a man she felt possessed information contrary to her case. Both men needed to be removed so that Lady Frances could marry the Earl of Somerset, her true love.⁴ The inveterate letter writer, John Chamberlain gives an eye-witness account of Lady Frances's arraignment in a letter dated 25 May, 1616:⁵

I was there at sixe a clocke in the morning and for ten shillings had a reasonable place but the weather is so hot and I grew so faint with tasting that I could hold out no longer. . . . [Somerset's] Lady was arraigned yesterday and made shorter worke by confessing the indictment so that all was done and we at home before noone. She won pitie by her sober demeanure, which in my opinion was more curious and confident then was fit for a Lady in such distress yet she shed or made shew of some few teares divers times. (2.5)

Chamberlain is writing to Sir Dudley Carlton, an intimate friend, so his observations carry weight. Clearly, he feels that Lady Frances is putting on a performance, for he doubts the sincerity of her weeping: "she shed or made shew of some few tears." Chamberlain is just as frank in a previous letter when he describes the state of Overbury's corpse. He tells Carlton 14 October, 1613:

Sir Thomas Overburie died and is buried in the Towre. The manner of his death is not knowne for that there was no body with him not so much as his keper, but the fowlenes of his corpse gave suspicion and leaves aspersion that he shold die of the poxe or somewhat worse: he was a very unfortunate man, for nobody almost pities him, and his very frends speake but indifferently of him. (1.478)

The "somewhat worse" was determined to be a poisoned enema, solicited by Lady Frances from Forman and Turner, the latter who murdered Overbury in the tower according to Marcus (89). Both Forman and Turner were executed while Somerset and Frances were confined to the Tower and eventually pardoned.³ It can be no coincidence that Fitzdottrel's first and last stage actions invoke these contemporary names that his audience recognize as players in the Overbury murder trial. Fitzdottrel's opening speech sets the tone:

Ay they do now name Bretnor, as before
They talked of Gresham, and of Doctor Forman,
Franklin, Fiske, and Savoy—he was in too—
But there's not one of these that ever could
Yet show a man the Devil in true sort. (1.2.1-5)

In this first speech, Fitzdottrel expresses a longing to deal with the devil. He is of the opinion that the shamans of his day are inferior, for none of them "show a man the Devil in true sort." Ironically, when the devil Pug appears to Fitzdottrel, he is no more perceptive, for he disbelieves the imp. The dramatic action builds on a London more corrupt than Pug could ever dream, so he becomes a secondary theme until his dramatic exit. Only then is Fitzdottrel convinced of Pug's genuineness. As late as Act 5, Fitzdottrel denies satanic evil by manipulating feigned possession. Much as Voltore who in *Volpone* "vomits crooked pins" (5.12.25), Fitzdottrel dramatically fakes demoniac possession to

discredit Frances. First, he foams at the mouth with soap provided by Averill; then, Fitzdottrel chants, "Yellow, yellow, yellow" (5.8.74). On cue Eitherside cries, "That's Starch!/ The Devil's idol of that color" (5.8.75). Any member of the audience would connect the incident to Turner who favored the use of yellow starch in her clothing. Marcus relates that in sentencing her to death, Chief Justice Coke insisted that she wear yellow starch at her hanging (90).

Another reference to Frances Howard's odious crimes also occurs during Fitzdottrel's raving in Act Five. When Frances moves to comfort her husband, he forestalls her by babbling:

She comes with a needle, and thrusts it in,
She pulls out that, and she puts in a in,
And now, and now, I do not know how, nor where,
But she pricks me here, and she pricks me there:
O, O—. (5.8.49-52)

Eitherside is completely taken in, for he insists, "A practice foul/ For one so fair" (5.8.51-52). Continuing, he avers to the dubious Wittipol and Manly, "Gentlemen, I'll discharge/ My conscience. Tis a clear conspiracy!/ A dark and devilish practice! I detest it" (5.8.55-57).

Such implicit references to Lady Frances allow Jonson the opening he needs to use the witchcraft vehicle to compliment his king. G.L. Kittredge in "King James and *The Devil is an Ass*" (1915) was the first scholar to make this connection. Meercraft encourages Fitzdottrel to fake demoniac possession

with the remark, "Sir, be confident,/ Tis no hard thing t' outdo the devil in:/ A boy o'thirteen year old made him an ass/ But t'other day" (5.5.48-51). Kittredge believes that Meercraft cites the case of a thirteen-year-old boy named Smith in Leicestershire whose testimony sealed the fate of nine old women accused as witches. A month later when James visited Leicestershire while on a royal progress, he examined young Smith while he was in a "fit." Kittredge insists that James had "long been skeptical about such matters, and he prided himself on exposing sham demoniacs and imposters " (201). Detecting fraud, James sent the boy to Archbishop Abbot at Lambeth where he made full confession of his tricks. As a result, the five remaining accused witches were released without a trial--the sixth had died in the meantime (201).

The Devil is an Ass voices from Jonson's earlier cheater/cheated formula in that the number of dupes is limited: Fitzdottrel is the only gull of importance. Variety is manifested in the many motifs Jonson uses to clarify his position that London is corrupt. In the Wittipol-Frances plot, Jonson employs the technique he will use again in *The New Inn*; he lulls the audience into the belief that he is writing romance comedy. But, true to his oft-stated intent, he changes course to bring about a conclusion based on realism. Frances in the end achieves a measure of contentment in a difficult situation. Her self-respect demands that she repudiate the adulterous attitude as personified in Mistress

Eitherside as well as the real-life Frances. In the groundbreaking character of Frances Fitzdottrel, Jonson portrays a woman of uncommon sense who is able to transcend her proscribed situation and achieve a fair degree of control over her life and fortune. At the play's end, Fitzdottrel has been discredited and, like Morose at the end of *Epicoene*, has lost status as a functioning male. His wife controls the property through the intervention of Wittipol and Manly. Frances is not sent back to her father like Celia; she remains with her husband, and in the words of Ostovich, lives a life of "pseudo- widowhood " ("Adultery" 177). No lover at all is better than an association with such a depraved trio.

Notes to Frances Fitzdottrel: The Ultimate Heroine

¹The source of James's writings is *The Political Works of James I*, ed. C. H. McIlwain, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1965, herein designated as *James*.

²Jonson seems to have an understanding of chancery law. In *Epicoene* Truewit tells Morose: "One more thing, which I had almost forgot. This too, with whom you are to marry may have made a conveyance of her virginity aforehand, as your wise widows do of their states, before they marry, in trust to some friend, sir. Who can tell?" 2.2.135-38).

³Not all scholars find Wittipol's noble actions credible. Knoll caustically comments that "Wittipol's change of heart is unconvincing, inconsistent, and altogether English" (169). On

the other hand Simon Trussler considers Wittipol's change of heart an example of the tolerance in late Jonson where "circumstances change, with suspicious suddenness, and drag the characters in their wake" (xix).

⁴For an insightful discussion of Frances Howard see David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard*, New York: Routledge, 1993. Also see Leah Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth*, 89-103 where she discusses Lady Frances's connection to Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*.

⁵See *Letters of John Chamberlain*, Vols. #1 and #2, Norman McClure, ed. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939. Chamberlain, an acute observer of London life, carried on a twenty-year exchange of letters with Sir Dudley Carlton, ambassador to The Hague. Chamberlain also tells of "Lord and Lady Somerset's release out of the Towre" in a letter to Carlton dated 19 January 1622.

CHAPTER VII

BEN JONSON IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Jonson's Legacy

Ben Jonson's death, as with his life, embodied conflicting elements: although he left only a nominal fiscal estate—eight pounds, eight shillings, ten pence—in reputation he died a wealthy man (HS 1.249). Confined to his bed for the last nine years of his life because of a stroke, the great man eventually weakened and died on 16 August 1637. Wayne H. Phelps, in *The Date of Ben Jonson's Death*, assembles the obsequies observed at Jonson's passing. Herald Edward Walker (later Sir Edward Walker, 1612-1677) is cited as confiding in his diary:

Thursday 17 August. Died at Westminster, Mr. Benjamin Jonson, the most famous, accurate, and learned poet of our age, especially in the English tongue, having left behind him many rare pieces which have sufficiently demonstrated to the world his worth. He was buried the next day following, being accompanied to his grave with all of the greatest part of the nobility and gentry then in the town. (148)¹

Such an outpouring of respect acknowledged Jonson's many literary contributions not only to England but also to the world. Jonson's gifts were many. First, and foremost, Jonson believed that poetry served a moral purpose; in Horace's words

poetry should "instruct and delight." The function of the poet, it follows, is to dramatically hold up the mirror to man's folly so that he may recognize and correct his behavior. In the Dedication of *Volpone*—"To the most noble and most equall sisters the two famous universities"—Jonson presents the most sustained argument for his position concerning the role of the poetry in society: "to inform men in the best reason of living" (HS 5.20). Jonson maintains that the play *Volpone* embodies the function of the Poet:

But my special aim being to put the snaffle in their mouths, that cry out, we never punish vice in our interludes, etc. I took the more liberty; though not without some lines of example, drawn even in the ancients themselves, the goings-out of whose comedies are not always joyful, but oft times the bawds, the servants, the rivals, yea, and the masters are mulceted: and fitly, it being the office of the comic Poet, to imitate justice, and instruct to life, as well as purity of language, or stir up gentle affections. (20)

That Jonson felt alone in such a moral purpose is evident in his life-long quarrels with other dramatists who, Jonson maintained, have "nothing remaining with them of the dignity of Poet, but the abused name which every scribe usurpts" (19). Such writers portray "nothing but ribaldry, profanation, blasphemy, all license of offence to God and man is practiced" (19). Surely such divergent views on the nature of poetry (and Jonson fervently believed that the dramatist was a poet) formed the basis for the *Poetomachia*, the stage quarrel between Jonson, John Marston, and Thomas Dekker. Yet Jonson, with the fervor of a religious zealot, determined that he

alone would

raise the despised head of Poetry again, and
striping her out of those rotten and base rags,
wherewith the times have adulterated her form,
restore her to her primitive habit, feature, and
majesty, and render her worthy to be embraced and
kissed of all the great and master-spirits of our
world. (20)

In order to restore poetry to her former majesty, Jonson determined to "imitate justice and instruct to life." In order to achieve these aims, Jonson rejected the romantic comedy that Shakespeare developed into an art form. Such a genre did not serve his purpose, for romance with its fairy tale plot did not offer room for any kind of moral correction. Instead, realism proved to be the form through which Jonson could set forth his dramatic message, for realism best supported Jonson's greatest gift: the use of biting satire. Through melding these two strategies—realism and satire—Jonson, in solidly constructed works that evidenced his early life as a bricklayer, could hold up the mirror to mankind and administer the much-needed dose of correction. Whereas comic drama merely elicits laughter, satiric comedy focuses laughter as a weapon against a particular target. In Jonsonian satiric drama the target is the witless character, painted in bold outline against a background of the cheater/cheated theme. All of Jonson's comedies, from *Every Man in His Humour* to *The Magnetic Lady* follow the same formula: fools are held up to ridicule while the quality of wit—the ability to think and act decisively—is highly prized.

In his development of satire, Jonson was original. Working with classical sources Jonson blended and refined the older works until they re-emerged, new and exciting—and distinctly English. Restoration comedy, with one foot in Jonsonian satire, developed into the comedy of manners represented in the plays of Wycherly, Congreve, and Dryden. In the strictest sense of the term, the comedy of manners concerned the conventions of an artificial, highly sophisticated society. Jonson's influence is seen in the reliance on satire over plot and typical characters over individuals. Jonson died several years before England's Civil War, but his trailblazing satiric mode re-emerged during the Restoration in the hands of these capable grandsons, Wycherly, Congreve, and Dryden. The comedy of manners lapsed in the early nineteenth century, but was revived a century later by many skillful dramatists from A. W. Pinero and Oscar Wilde (*The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895), through George Bernard Shaw and Noel Coward, to Neil Simon in the present time.

Satire, in recent critical writings, has lost its traditional meaning in favor of a current reading suggesting that derogation is synonymous to misogyny—that Jonson exclusively targets female characters for derision. New historicists and cultural materialists have taken a term weighted with twentieth-century connotations and assume a similar understanding within Jacobean England. The Oxford

English Dictionary cites the earliest use of "misogyny" as appearing in 1656, long after both Jonson and James were dead. It is true that patriarchal Jacobean society rated women as of a secondary nature to men, but "secondary" like "satire" does not equate with misogyny. The placement of women below men pertains to the Elizabethan concept of the Great Chain of Being, a doctrine that justified the king's position as God's instrument on earth. Of course, this position is outdated by twentieth-century standards, but the purpose was to fit every creation of God into a grand cosmic scheme. Negative interpretations come only through hindsight.

With the advent of the women's movement, Jonson's canon has been scrutinized with an eye to Jonson's dramatic treatment of women. By examining Jonson's work against the backdrop of his times rather than within the context of his text, late twentieth-century writers have determined that Jonson denigrated women throughout his oeuvre. The means of proving such allegations is to remove Jonson's characters from his specially created dramatic world and place them in their specially constructed sixteenth century. From such an external vantage point, female representations can appear unattractive, conniving, vain, and even silly. However, Jonson did not mean for characters--male or female--to be removed from their world; he meant them to be viewed in comparison to each other, and in such a light, the females come off considerably better than their male counterparts. Some women--notably Dame

Pliant and Lady Lodestone—are passive and silly. However, Jonson more often portrays women of strength. In fact, throughout his long stage history, he confers on many of his female characters that most prized quality: wit.

This study has examined selected satiric dramas with an eye to how Jonson depicts women and has, on the whole, urged that Jonson derogates male characters with as much, or more frequency as women: for every Mrs. Overdo there is a Justice Overdo and Bartholomew Cokes. Commencing with Dol Common, the savvy prostitute in *The Alchemist*, continuing with Ursula, the Pig Woman in *Bartholomew Fair*, and concluding with Polish in *The Magnetic Lady*, Jonson presents proactive females. Within her world, the versatile Dol serves many functions. She provides the brains that keep Face and Subtle on task, the bait that reels in Sir Epicure Mammon and Dapper, and the willing body that rewards her partners-in-crime. Ursula, an older version of Dol, has traded her sex appeal for street smarts. Her tent is the literal focus of the fair, and from her favored position, Ursula, along with her two sidekicks, Knockem and Edgeworth, runs the activities of the fair. Just as Dol and her male partners represent the seamy underworld of conmen, so do Ursula and her male cohorts. Yet, in both dramatic worlds, Jonson makes clear that, in spite of their nefarious dealing with the shysters, it is the high-class rascals—the so called respectable Justice Overdo and Tribulation Wholesome whose lives are dictated by greed—who

are in need of correction. Chastisement is reserved for the group that attempts to get the better of the rascals: those who try to get something for nothing. Sir Epicure Mammon hypocritically approaches the alchemist posing as a man with philanthropic ideals, a man who would use his future wealth for the betterment of society. Tribulation Wholesome shows the same ability to double deal. He condemns the Fair as idolatry and at the same time finds ingenious ways of circumventing his Puritan religious beliefs. Jonson uses dynamic women characters--Dol and Ursula--to expose the hypocrisy of such men.

Another proactive female occurs at the end of Jonson's canon: Polish in *The Magnetic Lady*. Gossip to Lady Lodestone, Polish has perpetrated a fraud that strikes at the heart of patriarchal society. She has switched her daughter Pleasance with Placentia, the niece of Lady Lodestone for the sake of an inheritance. Although her scheme is eventually exposed, Polish is not the most reprehensible, greedy character in this dramatic world: such a privilege goes to Sir Moath Interest who falls into a well looking for hidden treasure. Fast behind this usurious fool follow Sir Diaphanous Silkworm (called "that half-man" by Captain Ironside) and Bias, the money-grubbing underling who, for cash in hand, would sell out Placentia's rights to her uncle. Exposed by Compass, Polish remains unrepentant, insisting that she carried out her plot for the sake of her daughter. Even as Compass denounces

her, Polish, her wit intact, attempts to extract the money Sir Moath promised Pleasance when he thought she was Placentia.

Even female characters proscribed by circumstances—Dame Pliant and Celia—Jonson handles with great care. Perhaps their ultimate fate is not the choice of twentieth-century scholars, but Jonson does not sugar coat his dramatic world with fairy-tale happy endings. The truth of the matter is that Dame Pliant, the sexual prize in *The Alchemist*, could have been compromised by Face or bartered by Surly. Jonson allows such intent to exist. That she ends up married to Lovewit is, by Jonsonian standards, a coup. Celia, the nearly pandered wife in *Volpone*, stands on the edge of losing her most valued possession, her virtue, when Jonson provides a means of escape. Although Bonario's appearance is not providential, it is the result of Corvino's rush to offer Celia to Volpone. In an iniquitous dramatic world as exists in *Volpone*, such intervention is nothing short of miraculous. Although Jonson portrays Celia and Dame Pliant as women who lack the ability to control their destinies, he also protects them. Dramatic life puts them in situations not of their own choosing, but Jonson allows them a respectable conclusion.

Re-evaluation of Jonson's female representations, characters like Dol, Ursula, and Polish, owe their new life to the rise of the women's movement and the desire of the more recent critics to foreground issues pertaining to female dramatic characters. Any new viewpoint offers exciting

opportunities for reassessment. If, in the process of interpreting a work, the text is sacrificed on the altar of historicity, then evaluation is reduced to speculation. But if theoretical views acknowledge the basic supremacy of the text, such critical filters can only add valuable insight. Certain scholars, in their zeal to prove that the text is a political document, ignore the framework of the text, instead seeking polemical ammunition rather than aesthetic clarity. On the other hand a strict textual interpretation reduces the work to its bare bones and cheats the audience in other ways. The most useful solution is to read the text with an open mind, without applying present-day concepts to interpretation. As previously stated, the dramatic world is all that is known for sure—reports on woman's lot in the seventeenth century are conflicting--and attempting to interject cultural biases distorts the dramatist's message.

As literary criticism enters the twenty-first century, the field would be well served by adopting Jonson's desire for balance, a characteristic that eventually supplanted Jonson's need for humiliating punishment, as displayed in the little-read *Staple of News* (1625). The hero, young Pennyboy Junior, is a prodigal who travels Everyman's road of temptation and good advice before he is ultimately saved. One group of characters, the gulls, are drawn as humours characters and treated satirically in a realistic frame. Another group is composed of complete abstractions—Mortgage, Statute, and

Pecunia, the woman to be won. The central point Jonson makes is this: Pennyboy Richer, the miserly uncle, would have Pecunia, or Money, locked up, the jeerers would exploit her for their own ends, and the prodigal would waste her on riot. Pennyboy Senior, the father, teaches his son both to enjoy and to keep her by judicious usage, that is, through moderation. *The Staple of News* spells out a major humanistic concept especially inherent in Jonson's satiric comedy of humours. Working within the Galenic paradigm that good health requires a perfect balance of bodily humours, Jonson creates a new genre ridiculing those characters that embody tempermental extremes. From the early *Every Man in his Humour* (1598) to the "shutting up of his circle" (Ind. 105) in *The Magnetic Lady*, the dramatic authority figure like Justice Clement admonishes the gulls "to put off all discontent" and practice moderation (5.5.62).

Critical theorists commit the same fault they find in Jonson. Jonson, they believe, overtly practices misogyny in the treatment of his female characters. To prove their case, theorists focus on Jonson's treatment of women and ignore his biting portrayal of men. In other words, such critics only focus on one aspect of Jonson's dramatic work, the very criticism they hurl at Jonson who they insist distorts only the position of women. Such a myopic situation can only be remedied by standing back in order to view the total effect of Jonson's drama. Such a position will add insight to the

earlier viewpoint and make it clear that folly knows no gender.

Notes to Ben Jonson in the Twenty-First Century

¹Phelps posits a date later than the traditional 6 August 1537. Walker is just one contemporary source whose writing offer proof for the later date.

²See Richard Dutton, "The Lone Wolf: Jonson's Epistle to *Volpone*," in *Refashioning Ben Jonson*, 114-133. Dutton explains that Restoration drama was "overwhelmingly one of royalism and critical conservatism" (129).

Appendix A

Ben Jonson: His Life, Plays, and Masques

Ben Jonson: His Life, Plays, and Masques*
 (*Masques not within the focus of this study)

Date	Event	Play	Masque
1572	Born near Westminster		
1594	Married to Anne Lewes		
1597	Acted for Philip Henslowe's Company	<i>Tale of a Tub</i>	
1598	Kills Gabriel Spencer in a duel; jailed, branded, and converts to Roman Catholicism while in jail.	<i>Every Man in His Humour</i> <i>The Case is Altered</i>	
1599		<i>Every Man out of His Humour</i>	
1600		<i>Cynthia's Revels</i>	
1601		<i>Poetaster</i>	
1603	Death of Elizabeth; Jonson's older son dies of plague	<i>Sejanus</i>	<i>The Satyr</i>
1605	Imprisoned for <i>Eastward Ho</i>	<i>Eastward Ho</i> with Marston and Chapman	<i>Masque of Blackness</i>
1606		<i>Volpone</i>	<i>Hymenaei</i> <i>The Masque of Beauty</i>
1609		<i>Epicoene</i>	<i>The Masque of Queens</i>
1610	Returns to Church of England	<i>The Alchemist</i>	
1611		<i>Catiline</i>	<i>Oberon, The Faery Prince</i> <i>Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly</i> <i>The Irish Masque</i>
1614		<i>Bartholomew Fair</i>	
1615			<i>Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists</i>
1616	Granted a 100-mark pension by James I Published his works in folio	<i>The Devil is an Ass</i>	<i>The Golden Age Restored</i> <i>Christmas his Masque</i>
1617			<i>The Vision of Delight</i>

1618	Walking trip to Scotland Conversations with Drummond		<i>Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue</i>
1621			<i>News from the New World</i>
1622			<i>The Gypsies Metamorphosed</i>
1623			<i>Time Vindicated</i>
1624			<i>Neptune's Triumph</i>
1625		<i>The Staple of News</i>	<i>The Fortunate Isles</i>
1628	Confined to rooms by paralytic strokes		
1629		<i>The New Inn</i>	
1631			<i>Chloridia</i>
1632		<i>The Magnetic Lady A Tale of a Tub</i>	<i>King's Entertainment at Welbeck</i>
1634			<i>Love's Welcome at Bolsover</i>
1637	Dies and is buried in Westminster Abbey		
1640	Second edition of the Works	<i>The Sad Shepherd The Fall of Mortimer</i>	

Appendix B

Correlation of Women and Wit in Jonson's Three Dramatic Periods

**Correlation of Women and Wit in Jonson's
Three Dramatic Periods**

Jonson's Early Period (1598-1610)			
Play	Reactive	Active	Proactive
<i>Tale of a Tub</i> (1597)	Awdry Dame Turfe Lady Tub		
<i>Every Man in His Humour</i> (1598 Italian version; 1605 English version)	Dame Kately	Bridget Tib	
<i>The Case Is Altered</i> (1598)	Rachel Phoenixella Aurelia		
<i>Every Man out of His Humor</i> (1599)*			
<i>Cynthia's Revels</i> (1600)*			
<i>Poetaster</i> (1601)*			
<i>Volpone</i> (1606)	Celia Lady Pol		
<i>Epicoene</i> (1609)	Epicoene Collegiates Mrs. Otter		
<i>The Alchemist</i> (1610)	Dame Pliant		Dol Common
*Contributions to the Poet's Quarrel and not relevant to this study			
Jonson's Middle Period (1610-1616)			
<i>Bartholomew Fair</i> (1614)	Win Littlewit Mistress Overdo	Dame Purecraft Grace Welborn	Ursula
<i>The Devil is an Ass</i> (1616)	Tailbush Eitherside		Frances
Jonson's Energies Focused on Court Masques (1616-1625)			
Jonson's Final Period (1625-1632)			
<i>The Staple of News</i> (1625)	Pecunia Attendants		
<i>The New Inn</i> (1629)	Laetitia Nurse	Lady Frampul Pru	
<i>The Magnetic Lady</i> (1632)	Lady Lodestone Pleasance Placentia	Keepe Chair	Polish

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