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Jonson And Women; Or How One Man's Insistence On His Own Artistic Theory Challenges Dramatic Practices And Views Of His Own Gender Representations On The Elizabethan Stage

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**JONSON AND WOMEN;
OR, HOW ONE MAN'S INSISTENCE ON HIS OWN ARTISTIC THEORY
CHALLENGES DRAMATIC PRACTICES AND VIEWS OF HIS OWN GENDER
REPRESENTATIONS ON THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE**

by

TARA J. HAYES

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2010

MAJOR: ENGLISH

Approved by:

Advisor

Date

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2010

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DEDICATION

To me

Quod me nutrit me destruit

Non omnia possumus omnes

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ac·knowl·edge *vb* **1** : to recognize the rights and authority of **2** : to admit as true **3** : to express thanks for **4** : to recognize as valid

I would like to thank my committee, my friends, and my family for all of their support – intellectual, emotional, spiritual – over the epically quest-like course of this adventure. I would not be here today, the hero of this quixotic tale, without their aid. Thanks to each of them I have not only met my challenges and trials along the way, but I have also gained both the stated object of the journey and, most importantly, the self-knowledge that is always the *real* reason heroes go on quests.

Arthur Marotti, Ken Jackson, Michael Scrivener and Elizabeth Faue have been a stellar committee. Their combined faith in my abilities exhibited first by their approval of my windmill-like ambition to write “the first comprehensive genealogy of all Jonson’s women” and their grace not to laugh in my face kept me alternately motivated and able to see the hilarity, the ludicrousness, of my enterprise as I struggled to live up to their expectations and reach the destination. Arthur Marotti knew me in an instant when at our first meeting at the English Department Telethon in Fall 2000 he observed, “you’re jittery,” and over the past decade he has been my paragon of an academic: passionate about his ideas and work, consistent in his approach and presence, generous with himself and his time. I have never lost my awe of him. Ken Jackson befriended me, pushed me, encouraged me, criticized me, fed me, kicked me, recommended me, and destroyed me when he thought I needed it. Fewer obstacles would have been surmounted and wounds would have taken longer to heal without him and his guidance. Michael Scrivener shepherded me through the Graduate Program. From Intro to Grad Studies to his observations of my classroom instruction to his direction of

my Master Thesis and through this dissertation, he always dispensed wisdom with sublimity and good humor. Liz Faue reminded me to stay the course, maintaining an easy-going and supportive attitude throughout. From the roots of Feminist History to the tangling of the supposed feminine and masculine in our every day, lived experiences, she inspired me to be me and to become me by being and becoming herself.

Beyond my committee, the richly diverse environment of the English Department as a whole nurtured my development and progress. In particular, Gwen Gorzelsky encouraged me to find my own voice, to trust it and to follow it. She listened when I spoke, shared in return, and celebrated every step of my journey. Her unfailing support sustained me through the darker moments of writing this dissertation. Anca Vlasopolos offered direction, redirection and a vision of an alternate route; I will always remember the paths untaken and the cuisine of sacrifice. Gerald MacLean and Donna Landry provided early and priceless insight on the profession. David Magidson in the Theatre Department helped me materialize Jonson's artistic theory as dramatic practice, generously offering his 8000-level seminar and the Hilberry stage as venues for experimentation. Our *Every Man*, our *Sly Fox* never looked so good! I would be remiss if I did not also mention Margaret Maday, Myrtle Hamilton, Carole Barduca, Cindy Sokol and Kay Stone, each invaluable to me on this journey.

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The four definitions of "acknowledge" say it all. I acknowledge the role and gifts of each person, named and unnamed, I have encountered along this journey. Thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

Jonson and Women, Women and Jonson

...one is not born,
but rather becomes a woman
Simone de Beauvoir

Ben Jonson hated women – or so goes the critical understanding of the man and his work.¹ Surprisingly, despite the frequency with which this assessment is affixed to Jonson and the remarkable number of feminist treatments afforded his dramatic contemporaries – especially Shakespeare, there has been little examination of Jonson’s female characters, patrons and performers and, to date, no comprehensive study.² The tacit (if not tautological) acceptance that Jonson’s portrayals of women are both uninspired and misogynistic accounts for the paucity of feminist and gender criticism of Jonson, and the too-exclusive focus on Shakespeare has produced a distorted understanding of women’s roles in early modern England, in general, and of Jonson and women in particular. Looking, then, at all of Jonson’s dramatic representations, interactions and collaborations with women recovers a varied, complicated and largely unexplored archive that deserves serious analysis. While a wholesale rereading of Jonson and women is necessary, within the scope of this dissertation I intervene in the conversation by focusing on the crucial foundation of the Jonsonian canon: the beginnings of Jonson’s dramatic career, his Elizabethan phase and plays.

My re-examination of Jonson’s early dramatic work, the first general discussion of this author’s dramatic representations of women and of the intersection between these characters and Jonson’s artistic theories and dramatic practices, aims to recontextualize approaches to Jonson and his plays. Throughout the chapters which follow, I demonstrate how Jonson’s theoretical and practical approaches to drama generate representations of

gender which reveal a variety of roles available to women in life and in play, roles that have too often gone unnoticed in feminist criticism of Jonson and the early modern period. Jonson's awareness and use of social performance in his dramaturgy leads to a depth of character beyond external attributes, which in turn informs his characterization of women, in particular, and his dramatization of gender, in general, throughout his career. As he begins to assert that to represent character accurately and completely playwrights need also to stage the roles or the social performances people play in both public and private/non-public spaces,³ he experiments with and ultimately destabilizes identity and social construction by crafting character through complex layering of performance, imitation, age, class, nationality, race and sex. In doing so, he revises the method of representing gender, introducing female characters as concrete embodiments of human beings with unique and idiosyncratic personalities and experiences. As I examine the women in Jonson's work according to his artistic theories and the specific situations of his plays and career, I counter the critical assumptions about Jonson and gender produced by the limited examination of his plays, and I offer interpretative possibilities for a revitalized feminist inquiry of Jonson.⁴

The centuries-old tradition in which Jonson's work and life earn the discrediting assertion "misogynistic" seems to begin with Margaret Cavendish. In a 1664 letter, Cavendish rejected the "learned Jonson" in favor of the Shakespeare she described as surely "Metamorphosed from a Man to a Woman."⁵ Cavendish's reaction to Jonson and Shakespeare not only recurs in feminist scholarship; it gains in intensity. It seems that when scholars are not making efforts to disregard Jonson and his relations with and representations of women, they argue the negativity of his portrayals. Katharine Eisamann Maus, examining *Volpone* and *Morose* as characters utilizing expectations of virility to escape the law,

casually adds that *Epicoene* stages its own, singular, “variety of misogyny” (151). For Mary Beth Rose, who reads satirical views of sexuality in dramatic form as the struggle for female independence and equality between the sexes, “In all Jacobean drama, no misogyny is so detailed and unmitigated, so utterly triumphant, as Ben Jonson’s in *Epicoene*” (57). Karen Newman considers Jonson’s treatment of his female characters “invidious” and misogynistically designed to position the audience to generate additional negativity toward women (139). Grace Tiffany’s *Erotic Beast and Social Monsters* juxtaposes Shakespeare’s “mythic” and thus positive model of androgyny with Jonson’s “satiric” and negative one, seeing in this paradigm an explanation of Jonson’s masculinist resistance to gender fluidity. Valerie Traub, in her analysis of the dialectic of desire and anxiety and its impact on the search for *The Renaissance of Lesbianism*, finds time specifically to discount Jonson. In her presentation of the pair, Jonson is implicitly masculinist, humanist, elitist and exclusionary with regard to the feminine while Shakespeare makes room for female intimacies in his work. Most recently, Phyllis Rackin in a chapter of her *Shakespeare and Women*, a text set on upending critical assumptions about women in the Renaissance, offhandedly reinstates the misunderstanding of the man and his work by introducing Jonson into her text with the apposition “whom it would be difficult to accuse of excessive deference to women” (24).⁶

Even with the shifts in feminist approaches to early modern texts from Juliet Dusinberre’s attempts to locate the origins of modern feminism in the Renaissance to an essentializing “images of women” trend inspired by Joan Kelly’s query “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” to arguments about the sympathetic or antagonistic Renaissance portrayals of women to the current approach – now gender studies – which examines masculinity and femininity as mutually defining constructs, female absence and negative presence have

remained a principal concern. The feminist discussion of presence in Renaissance texts, however, continues to focus almost exclusively on the works of Shakespeare. In *Shakespeare Without Women*, Dympna Callaghan discusses the politics of representation, absence, presence and “authentic” identity, and explicitly challenges “the fetishistic insistence on presence in Shakespeare” (9).⁷ While Callaghan herself also concentrates on Shakespeare, implicit here is the suggestion that in our focus on Shakespeare, early modern feminist scholarship often inadvertently replicates the same trends, narrows the field of inquiry, and precludes differentiated approaches to presence.⁸

While the “presence” of Shakespeare at the center of the English Renaissance and of early modern scholarship also influences this study, I focus primarily on the intersection and mutually influential relationships between Ben Jonson’s artistic and dramatic theories and practice and his representations of and interactions with women. Throughout I analyze how Jonson’s assertions about poetic authority, his demands for theatrical mimesis, and his attentiveness to social performance influenced his own work and, more generally, that of his playwriting contemporaries. Further, I demonstrate how his engagement with artistic theory created more positive representations of women in his work than has been critically recognized in our field. While Jonson in his role as the other pillar of the English Renaissance theater is a familiar figure and the scholarship surrounding the Shakespeare/Jonson relationship is well-documented and well-established, the titles of the majority of Jonson’s dramatic works and the female characters in them are not.⁹ Simply put, it is time to reconsider all of Ben Jonson’s dramatic texts, his representations of women within them and the influence of his collaborations with women on them. More pointedly, it is necessary to examine the way women figure in all Jonson’s dramatic texts rather than to

continue the misleading understanding the almost exclusive focus on the great comedies – *Volpone* (1606), *Epicoe* (1609) and *The Alchemist* (1610) and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) – perpetuates.¹⁰ The plays and the moments within them that we offer in our critical analyses reveal more about our scholarly beliefs and assumptions about Jonson than about the way gender functions in his work.¹¹ I contend that the limited – and limits of – available surveys of Jonson’s dramatic work explain the misconception about his treatment and representations of women. Focusing on the complete spectrum of Jonson’s representations and interactions with women from his first play *The Case Is Altered* (1598) during Elizabeth’s reign to the Caroline fragments on which he was working when he died discovered in 1640 not only corrects distortions about this major author but also provides groundwork to reevaluate and, hopefully, to reinvigorate feminist Shakespearean and Renaissance commentary.

Shakespeare, of course, figures in any study of English Renaissance drama, and his proximity to Jonson throughout literary history, a proximity introduced by Jonson himself and then solidified by the centuries of literary criticism which have followed, offers an additional explanation for why Jonson’s theatrical representations of women and his relationships with historical women have been ignored. Literary scholars consider Shakespeare’s treatment of women prescient, often arguing that his female characters are complex, multi-layered, even, “proto-feminist.” This orthodoxy, however, depends largely on contrasting Shakespeare’s dramatic production and its representations of women to those of his chief dramatic rival, Ben Jonson.¹² In this prevailing approach, Jonson’s women suffer by comparison and, unlike Shakespeare’s admired female characters such as Portia, Rosalind and Viola, Jonson’s female characters are seen as two-dimensional products of his misogyny. The scholars’ Jonson emerges as a masculinist writer and apologist for patriarchy who is

resistant to gender fluidity and the feminine, who is misogynistic and even homophobic. The much more positive version of Shakespeare and his women has been shaped, in part, by the unexamined, negative view of Jonson. Reconsidering Jonson, then, requires a reassessment of how the sometimes false opposition between Jonson and Shakespeare has enabled modern scholarship to shape the understanding of Shakespearean and Jonsonian women in particular and Shakespearean and Renaissance dramatic art more generally.¹³

The labels “proto-feminist” and “misogynist” for Shakespeare and Jonson are, of course, misleading and anachronistic. They do, however, reveal a great deal about current scholarly positions and objectives. The labels “proto-feminist” for Shakespeare and “misogynist” for Jonson indicate that scholarship’s negative (and negatively consistent) view of Jonson and women, Jonson and gender creates a blind spot in approaches to his work and blocks considerations of the gender flexibility so easily, and often, applied to Shakespeare.¹⁴ As a result, both of the anachronistic labeling and of the repetition of the Jonson-Shakespeare comparison,¹⁵ scholarship misses what is actually going on in Jonson’s work: his individuated and layered characterizations of women, his playful use of gender and, by extension, creations of playful gender, his explicit destabilization of gender as an identity category, and his ability to hold and to reconcile two seemingly mutually exclusive ideas – namely that woman is either biologically determined or socially constructed.¹⁶ In my analysis, Jonson’s female characters emerge as complex combinations of both positions while at the same time troubling and even transcending their limits. To maintain the standard consensus on Jonson and women risks restrictive generalizations about gender, women and Jonson himself which not only removes a fertile field for feminist inquiry but also imprudently separates theory from practice, our own and that of the dramatists we study.

For the working playwrights of the early English Renaissance and in the drama they crafted, theory and practice were intricately connected. The stage offered a venue for propounding theoretical perspectives and modeling dramatic practices in both the implicit arguments of the plays themselves and explicitly as the dramatists used dramaturgical elements such as prologues, epilogues, character speeches and even choruses to detail and to elucidate their theoretical and dramatic positions.¹⁷ Thus the dramaturgical differences between playwrights that we observe stem primarily from differing approaches to such theoretical issues as verisimilitude, theatrical mimesis and poetic authority. To understand how women and gender representation participate in the work of English Renaissance playwrights, then, requires concentration on each playwright's engagement with Renaissance artistic theory rather than on the delimiting effects of posthumous reputations. More important and valuable still is a return to the texts and contexts of the drama itself. This dissertation advocates and models such a return by focusing on the plays of Jonson's Elizabethan phase, 1598-1603.

In the beginning of his career, Jonson followed the precedent of his fellow playwrights, imitating the form of festive comedy popularized by Shakespeare.¹⁸ As a form, festive comedy presents characters as types and relies on such fantastical events as madness and dreams to find its resolutions or happy endings. Jonson's use for the form, however, lasted only one play or lasted only long enough for him to get a play produced at the Globe. Jonson's first Globe production, *Every Man In His Humour* (1598) also appropriates elements of festive comedy as well as the humour plays with which George Chapman had found his own theatrical success and, most importantly, stages the first explicit statements of his artistic theory and dramatic practice, reveals his dissatisfaction with festive comedy as a

genre, and offers a female character in Dame Kately who embodies his own social values, social performance at once in service to and at remove above the social game. Jonson's Dame Kately is a successful social actor because, as Jonson characterizes her, she knows how to balance the various roles and performances social interaction requires and she can see through, can read the performances of others.¹⁹

In the prologue to *Every Man In*, Jonson establishes the differences between his own dramaturgy and Shakespeare's.²⁰ To begin, his prologue juxtaposes such dramatic practices as showing the advance of age, war and time with the stage's practical structure of enactment, various poets' lack of art in these situations, and comedy's demand for realism that could "show an image of the times" (*EMI* Pro.24). Jonson's resulting critique offers a direct comparison between Shakespeare's artistic decisions and his own. According to Jonson, Shakespeare willingly strains the bounds of observation with his decisions "To make a child, now swaddled, to proceed/ Man, and then shoot up in one beard and weed,/ Past threescore years" (Pro.7-9), to let a "chorus waft" an audience "o'er the seas" (Pro.15), to use a "creaking throne" (Pro.16) as a *deus ex machina* device, to frighten the "gentlewomen" (Pro.18) with a "nimble squib" (Pro.17) and to substitute "roll'd bullet" and "tempestuous drum" for "thunder" and "storm" (Pro.18-20). Jonson's own method – to stage "deeds and language such as men do use" (Pro.21) – appears in stark contrast. With the sheer volume of his examples, Jonson makes "monsters" (Pro.30) of Shakespeare's devices and, certain that even Shakespeare "himself must justly hate" (Pro.6) the unrealistic dramatic practices Jonson has used his prologue to describe, he ends his argument with a clear distinction between the wild conjurings and imaginings required to follow festive comedy and his "hope" (Pro.29) for the appreciation of his own dramatic practice: the streamlined simplicity of staging

people – female and male – as they can be observed to be, to act and interact, in their own time.

As *Every Man In* introduces Jonson's theories, his discontent with the available comedic forms, and a complete female character exemplifying both, his next play joins his critique to innovation and shows Jonson putting his artistic theory fully into dramatic practice when he begins overtly to challenge existing dramatic forms and practices.²¹ In his next play, *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599) – a sequel to *Every Man In* in name only, Jonson delivers an artistic manifesto that moves beyond a stated preference for a dramatization of the "times" (*EMI* Pro.24) to a demand for theatrical verisimilitude. At once criticizing "the *Thespian* spring" (*EMO* Ind.70) of his fellow playwrights and challenging them "to illustrate and heighten our [their] invention" (Ind.267-68) to match "the times, wherein they wrote" (Ind.265-66),²² Jonson specifically rejects the fantastical social harmony and unification of Shakespeare's festive comedy in favor of his own invention.²³ Jonson detests and rejects the festive comic form because in his opinion it glosses over the difficulties and challenges of quotidian existence while doing nothing to improve the world. For Jonson, the role of the poet demands responsibility to the Greek understanding of the poet as the maker, the teacher.²⁴ Insisting on an artistic theory of verisimilitude, he designs a form – comical satire – to present, to purge and to correct observable, everyday problems and, by extension, initiates a turn toward what is currently considered "stage realism."²⁵ Expanding on his demand for a dramatization of the observable or theatrical verisimilitude, Jonson argues that "language" should "neuer [be] ground into such oyly colours/ To flatter vice and daube iniquitie" (Ind.13-15) but should represent all "Naked, as at their birth" (Ind.18). He then promises to provide an example with his own play for his contemporaries to follow. With

Every Man Out, Jonson creates “a mirroure/ As large as is the stage, whereon we act:/ where they [the audience and his fellow playwrights] shall see the times deformitie/ Anatomiz’d in euery nerue, and sinnew” (Ind.118-21).²⁶ In form, Jonson’s comical satire advocates a Ciceronian definition of comedy as “*Imitatio vitæ, Speculum consuetudinus, Imago veritatis*; a thing throughout pleasant, and ridiculous, and accommodated to the correction of manners” (Ind.206-9)²⁷ In application, the form supplies a satirical model which challenges his contemporaries’ standards of characterization and plotting, exploding the genre which to Jonson’s mind creates insupportably perfected persons and falsely harmonious situations.

Jonson’s new form and its critique of existing comedic genres and the “poetasters” who wrote using them launches the Poets’ War, a three year debate spanning the years from Jonson’s *Every Man Out* in 1599 to his amended “apologeticall Dialogue” to *Poetaster* in 1601. The “war,” diminished by critics as a “stage quarrel” and elevated by Dekker during the engagement as the “poetmachia,” creates a crisis of authorial legitimation that initiates the kind of critical theorizing required to revolutionize the comedic genres. For me, the Poets’ War offers a point of transition in the representation of women on the Renaissance stage, a transition from the stock types of festive comedy to the layered and individuated characters comical satire’s attention to verisimilitude helped to create.²⁸ The plays which followed *Every Man Out*, Jonson’s own (*Cynthia’s Revels* [1600] and *Poetaster* [1601]) as well as those of his contemporaries (Marston’s *Histriomastix* [1599]; *Jack Drum’s Entertainment* and *What You Will* in 1600; Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* in 1600 and *Troilus & Cressida* [1601]; Dekker’s *Satiromastix* [1601]) wage a debate over dramatic praxis and poetic authority while simultaneously utilizing and adapting their dramaturgy to the current arguments.²⁹ Jonson’s plays stage his insistence on dramatic

verisimilitude and the didacticism underscoring it and offer unromanticized characters modeled on socially observable women and men. As with the action of his plays Jonson then censures these characters rather than mitigating their flaws, he challenges his contemporaries' artistic visions and theories and asserts himself as the most credible poetic authority.

Not surprisingly, Jonson's rivals accept his challenge. Their theoretical responses to Jonson, their own dramatic manifestos in the form of plays following one another onto the stage, intentionally and inadvertently appropriate one another's dramaturgy as they imitate individual styles in mockery and refutation.³⁰ The inevitable, albeit unexpected, result of such recreations demonstrates the influence of Jonson's theories and arguments on his contemporaries: Their dramatic practice of imitation modified each playwright's original style. Stock characterization relying on type gives way to individuated personality, and the reliance on dreams, magic and wild imaginings to affect harmony at a play's end yields to the abuses and exclusions of some characters which audiences might observe for themselves in the streets and congregations of social London. Ultimately, in their defense of festive comedy, the playwrights responding to Jonson actually contribute to the form's demise.³¹

With each new phase of the debate, Jonson defends and expands his artistic and dramatic theories, explicitly stating that a playwright's dramatic obligation requires "the imitation of life, the glass of custom, the image of truth" (*EMO* 3.6.206-7).³² Simultaneously, in his own dramatic practice, Jonson increasingly concentrates on characterization, emphasizing individual personality traits and bringing to the stage female and male characters based on characteristics, mannerisms, speech patterns, gestures and actions observable in denizens of London.³³ With the interaction of his theoretical and

dramaturgical objectives, Jonson discovers a depth of character beyond external attributes, and he begins to assert that to represent character accurately and completely playwrights need also to stage the roles or the social performances people play in both public and private/non-public spaces.

Social performance describes the conscious and unconscious decision and desire to create a persona for oneself by imitating the manners, behaviors, dress, speech, and gestures of others and, because social performance seems to enable upward mobility, imitators usually emulate more socially and economically successful people.³⁴ The performed imitations – what Jonson calls “affect[ing] a humor” (*EMO* Ind.113) and “aping” (Ind.116) others – begin externally, first with the application and then with the replication of increasingly sophisticated behaviors. Through repetition and then subsequently more precise performances, performers internalize their performances.³⁵ The theory of social performance provides a sociological explanation for the acceptance of external behaviors as interiority, claiming that the internalizations become so natural that performers accept their behaviors not as representations of themselves but as expressions of who they actually *are*, of their “true” selves.

Significantly, social performance is corporeal, material.³⁶ Actions, the acting itself – performed and repeated, constructed and interpreted, rewarded and punished – determine who and what performers are or believe they are. The result, explained first by Norbert Elias as *The Civilizing Process*, reveals human evolution as the calculated refinement of non-dramatic social performances, “the moderation of spontaneous emotions, the tempering of affects, the extension of mental space beyond the moment into the past and present, the habit of connecting events in terms of cause and effect” (236). The acceptance of socially subdued

emotions and reactions as “internal” and “natural” habits generates a recognized and socially acceptable sense of self and identity. Individual performers and society at large now move and act in concert. The personal shifts from instinct to affect then to increasingly specialized behavior modifications and self-monitoring systems follow economic and social pressures and progresses. The more intensified the social competition and its attendant pressures, the more constrained, dictated and precise the individual performances. Jonson’s pursuit of verisimilitude, his goal of bringing “an image of the times” (*EMI Pro.23*) to the stage, leads him to a representational strategy that dramatizes these intricate social performances. In his characterizations, he stages the competitive pressures, the first performances of external behavior, the results of the public and non-public performances, and the often inadvertently repetitive cycles of the performances. Jonson’s decision to depict social performance as a part of character is a conscious artistic choice based on his dramatic theories of representation.

Jonson’s artistic theory evolves as his experiments with character merge social performance and theatrical mimesis. Not content to test his theories in the abstract, Jonson populates his comical satires with fictionalized Londoners, using them literally to play with ideas of internal and external verisimilitude. In the resulting characterizations, Jonson relies on observable others – none more so than himself – as models. His self-examinations bring stand-in characters like Asper/Macilente in *Every Man Out*, Crites and Arete in *Cynthia’s Revels* and Horace in *Poetaster* to the stage. These second selves at once “perform” Jonson and reveal Jonson’s perceived self-performances. The intricately crafted imitations of his actions and reactions, thoughts and beliefs create an understanding as well as a projection of Jonson’s sense of himself – an attempt at internal verisimilitude – and provide an example of

his desired public, his externally visible persona: the Poet of his age.³⁷ Both an expansion of Jonson's artistic theory and an expression of his artistic egotism, these fictionalized, but at the same time parallel approximations of an external, an internal and an internalized "Jonson" establish character as a layered creation: socially observable, interactive, performed and constructed. Further, by constructing his own identity – "The Poet" – and linking it to staged performance, Jonson demonstrates his awareness that identity is a complicated balance of constructed, imitative and reactionary social performances and that realistic characterization requires a staging of the layers involved in these complicated interactions.

As a result, Jonson's characters are diligent social performers caught up in endless games of imitation. They exhibit, even flaunt, the current fashion in language, manner, costume, custom and thought, and they do so to compete, to advance, to win the social game. The self-conscious theatricality Jonson's verisimilitude brings to character reveals the complex imbrication of layers which constitute self and emphasizes the illusory and constructed nature of identity. These layers – performances of gender, class, economic and social position, race, religion, nationality and age rooted in expectations based on what has been in the past and desires for what could be in the future – present early modern England as a world where to stop acting is to stop being, and Jonson's aggressive deployment and censure of social performance as staged by the detailed exactitude of his characterizations indicates recognition that social performance lies at, if not *is*, the core of human understandings of self.³⁸ In the *Discoveries*, Jonson specifically acknowledges his awareness of social performance and its eradicating effect on identity:

I have considered, our whole life is like a Play: wherein every man, forgetfull of himselfe, is in travaile with expression of another. Nay, wee so insist in imitating others, as we cannot (when it is necessary) returne to ourselves: like Children, that imitate the vices of Stammerers so long, till at last they become such; and make the habit to another nature, as it is never forgotten.

(*Disc.*1093-99)

The imitation, the external application of identity, is all that remains. The desire to seem a certain way, to seem like “another” yields to a habit of being that seeming – “they become such” – and the external replaces the internal. In his 1606 comedy *Volpone*, Jonson again stages the external replacing the internal when his titular character’s feigned illness results in actual illness in the play’s conclusion.³⁹ Throughout his career, Jonson underscores the point that the desire for progress, the insistence on imitation makes everyone an actor in a constant performance.

While the *Discoveries*’ position also suggests that Jonson at one point believed (arguably like all good humanists of his time) that we once had an internal essence, that undeniable something within us, I posit that Jonson’s idea of “returne to ourselves” is at once an expression of lived experience interacting with the world in mutual construction and a desire for a less open-ended relationship between self and the world.⁴⁰ The negation of “cannot” propels the sense of identity outward to those “others” whom, according to Jonson, we insist on imitating. The imitation, the external application of identity intended to achieve upward mobility and a desired public person as well as to go along with socially acceptable modes and norms of behavior, replaces or substitutes for a previous understandings of self

and ultimately becomes natural. Jonson's own inclination to promulgate his artistic theory and to purge and to correct the world by holding a "mirroure" (*EMO* Ind.118) up to it leads him to grapple with the contradictions of the internal and external, the self-aware and the unconscious, the performance and the construction as he tries to "show the image of the times" (*EMI* Pro.23) by representing every day, observable people on the stage. In his characterizations, the mutually influential push and pull between elegant performances accomplished with *sprezzatura* and observable, because badly performed, imitations transform each text into a theoretical treatise and a critique of the complexities of social construction, the balance of social performances.

Jonson's awareness and use of social performance in his dramaturgy complicates his demand for verisimilitude and informs his characterization of women, in particular, and his dramatization of gender, in general, throughout his career. As Jonathan Haynes has described, Jonson uses his plays "to observ[e] th[e] process of the diffusion of manners" and "systematically covers a very wide field, often focusing precisely on the nodes of generation and distribution" (57). This very wide field includes the generation and distribution of gender. Jonson's attention to the development of social behaviors – speech, dress, action, manners – and to the subsequent layers of performance required to imitate these behaviors shapes his characterizations of both women and men, suggestively revealing both the performance and the situatedness of identity. As a result, Jonson demonstrates the process of "becoming" as a necessary part of character, as another expression of how being in the world, of using how one interacts with that world creates character.⁴¹ In each of his plays and through his dramatization of social performance, Jonson experiments with and ultimately destabilizes identity and social construction. Crafting characters through complex layering of

performance, imitation, age, class, nationality, race and sex, Jonson reconceptualizes the method of representing gender, introducing characters who are concrete embodiments of human beings with unique and idiosyncratic personalities and experiences rather than interchangeable types.

Jonson's demand for verisimilitude emerges in the way his female characters act, speak, *are*. He simultaneously represents the social performance of gender itself – something the material bodies of the young boys playing the “woman's part” further emphasize⁴² – and stages historical specificities of his London setting. In short, Jonson's distinctly individuated characters and their equally individuated social performances stage wholly individuated personal experiences and the fictions of gender and identity. His balance of the social performances tied to acting like a woman and the historical specificities of being a woman in London illuminates a mutually influential relationship, a productive back and forth between the two positions, whereby social construction and the concreteness of lived experience are not exclusive but constitutively necessary. They merge in Jonson's awareness and use of social performance and emerge in Jonson's characterizations, most specifically, of women. Jonson's female characters, then, demonstrate that the “meaning of a woman's body is bound up in the way she uses her freedom”⁴³ or, said another way, depends on the social performances enacted, evaluated, recalibrated and repeated.

Reconsidering Jonson's female characters within the frame of his artistic and dramatic theories challenges and even undermines critical responses which argue that the specificity of Jonson's dramatic representations of women instantiate the misogyny and hierarchical relationship between the sexes. On the contrary, examinations of the specific texts and characters themselves reveal the playfulness of Jonson's representations. His

adherence to verisimilitude, to the crafting of imitations observable in the social and political realities he perceived in his cultural interactions in the streets of London, generates characterizations of women in all shapes, sizes, classes and attitudes.⁴⁴ While some of his characterizations can be shown to correspond to set types, his dramatic decision to layers those types with individuated identity markers makes each type a uniquely concrete and embodied character, female and male.

Throughout his dramatic career, Jonson actively revises his method of characterization to differ from that of his contemporaries. His critiques of their characterizations, most notably of Sir Philip Sidney and his *Arcadia*, point out that their characters lack distinction one from another.⁴⁵ They all speak in the same tone, inflection, and vocabulary regardless of their age, nationality, race, class or gender. Jonson's own characterizations do not make this mistake.⁴⁶ Complicated by his attention to the development of social behaviors and the subsequent layers of performance required to imitate these behaviors, Jonson's characterizations are nuanced representations of women and men, representations noticeably informed by relationships and interactions with, in particular, actual women.

Jonson's observable application of his dramatic theory to his theatrical practice makes attention to his representations of women not only relevant but long overdue. The texts themselves reward that attention: in description and in detail, with the idiosyncratic speech and behavior patterns, the dramatic women differ recognizably from one another and from the idealizing or disparaging stereotypes traditionally populating Elizabethan plays.⁴⁷ Jonson's theatrical verisimilitude crafts character dependent on layers of identity created in performance which include those to whom characters speak, the content of those speeches,

and even the particularities of the situations in which they find themselves. For Jonson, then, characterization must include observable, lived experience. This lived experience, in the Beauvoirian sense is an open-ended and ongoing interaction between the individual, the person, and/or the character, and the world in which each half of the interaction continuously constructs the other; it is a “becom[ing].” Jonson’s theatricalized social performances, then, construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct the various socially manufactured and artificial norms determining gender identity. The interactions between verisimilitude and social performance in Jonson’s work and career demonstrate how it is that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman.”⁴⁸

Jonson was a playwright of divergent and contradictory opinions, none of which have been more misunderstood, misrepresented or mistaken than his position on women. That Jonson’s characterizations of women differ from those of his contemporaries makes his women the more worthy of our consideration. That Jonson’s collaborations with historical women have been well documented reveals that Jonson’s characterizations have an aspect of verifiability that makes his verisimilitude all the more meaningful. Importantly for feminist inquiry into the early modern period, Jonson’s career (1597-1637), unlike those of his contemporaries, includes work written during the monarchical regimes of three distinct rulers – Elizabeth I (1558-1603), James I (1603-25), and Charles I (1625-49) – and thus provides an unique opportunity to consider how cultural and political influence might impact variances in theatrical representations of gender. During his career Jonson, singular amongst his contemporaries, wrote plays during the rule of a female monarch, in collaboration with her successor’s queen, and with the patronage of various well-placed court ladies. Further, for a playwright committed to the role of social performance in verisimilitude, Jonson

tellingly began his career as an actor and ultimately would spend thirty-seven of his sixty-five years in the theater.

The first historical documentation of Jonson in the theater places him on the stage with Philip Henslowe's company in 1597. His extant writings and the infamy accorded the destroyed *Isle of Dogs* (ca.1597) suggest Jonson wrote twenty plays, twenty-two masques and, on his death in 1637, left behind two play fragments. Seven of these plays were written and six were staged during Elizabeth's reign. Another eight plays and eighteen masques, on several of which Jonson collaborated with Queen Anne, were performed while James was king. Jonson's final four plays and four masques during Charles's reign are generally accepted as representing the twilight of his career. My call for an examination of Jonson's complete dramatic canon provides an opportunity not only to add to and even to revise our understanding of women in the English Renaissance but also to consider the development of Renaissance dramatic art from a new angle.

Because the scope of what I describe here offers material for as many as three books, I limit the focus in this dissertation to Jonson's Elizabethan period. In the chapters that follow, I examine each dramatic work individually, offering each play as a case study through which to demonstrate how Jonson's artistic theories, particularly his attentiveness to social performance, influence his representations of women. My analysis takes a first step, and there is still much work to do.⁴⁹ I begin in the first chapter with "Jonson's Festive Beginnings," illustrating through Jonson's first play *The Case Is Altered* (1598) his debts to festive comedy and those moments in which he begins to transition away from its generic conventions. *Case* includes Jonson's initial attempts to create individuated women with idiosyncratic personal experiences and characteristics and specifically situated identities. As

he modifies the stock types populating the festive comedy genre – festive heroine/love interest, coy maiden and virtuous celibate – by layering particular social performances onto those same types, Jonson presents Rachel, Aurelia and Phoenixella as situated characters complicated by the social situations in which he shows them acting and interacting.

In Chapter Two, “A Marriage of Convenience,” I examine *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) in the context of Jonson’s first explicit statements against festive comedy and for his own artistic theory and show how his theoretical positions impact his dramatization of his central female character Dame Kitely and her marriage. Jonson’s investment in social performance as the basis of character underscores his social reformer’s contempt for inept actors, false imitators and obsequious social climbers and in Dame Kitely, Jonson creates a model of his own social values. She, like Jonson himself and as Jonson instructs his audiences to practice, recognizes social interaction for the game it is; Jonson’s dramatization of her successful social negotiations introduces the necessary balance of individual social performances with simultaneous participation in and distance from the social game.

In Chapter Three, “Pointing Out a Savvy Fallacy,” I focus on the intersections between the artistic manifesto Jonson’s use of extra-dramatic devices in *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599) creates and the methods of characterization Jonson employs to individuate and differentiate the play’s primary female characters: Lady Puntarvolo, Fallace and Saviolina. As the catalyst for the Poets’ War’s theoretical debates over artistic theory and dramatic practice, *Every Man Out* provides a definitive and pivotal moment not only in Jonson’s career but also in the development of Renaissance dramatic art. By demonstrating how Jonson provides Lady Puntarvolo as an instruction in how to read social performance and character, stages Fallace to exemplify the complexities and contradictions of identity

claims, personal desires and social confines, and offers Saviolina as at once an unique personality, an alternative social perspective, and a test of what his audiences have learned about recognizing and evaluating social performance, in this chapter I show the impact of Jonson's aggressive introduction of his artistic theory of verisimilitude and his dramatic practice of staging social performance on his characterizations of women and on his fellow playwrights.

Throughout "Boys Will Be Girls and Girls Will Be Boys, but Does Cynthia Revel at the Blackfriars?", the fourth chapter in this dissertation, I analyze how the pivotal comical satire of Jonson's Elizabethan production, *Cynthia's Revels, or the Fountain of Self-Love* (1600) models at the dramatic level with such play text layers as language, plot, allegory, private all-boy playhouse actors, and a monarchical bid for patronage the complicated layering Jonson's artistic theory argues characterization demands. This play is the apotheosis of Jonson's theories in dramatic practice. *Cynthia's Revels* itself demonstrates: the connection between actor and audience; the authority, office and duty of the poet; the societal constancy of social performances and role-playing; and absent presence in social and theatrical performance and character. Through absent presence Jonson introduces and connects to women as allies and representatives, and his characterizations of the court ladies, Gelaia and Arete with the reality of the boy players beneath them, reveal not only limits and assumptions about social performance but also Jonson and women. Jonson's dramatization of a full spectrum of womanhood, diversified and particularized by age, class, sexuality and idiosyncratic personal experience, specified by varying and evolving viewpoints, disallows a single vision of "woman" and questions the possibility of fully unified, integrated gender identity.

In the fifth chapter, “When Chloe Met Julia,” I examine *Poetaster* (1601) as the culmination of the Poets’ War debates and a continuation of Jonson’s character development with regard to individuated, situated and particularized women layered with awareness of social performance. Jonson’s characterizations and interactions of Chloe, the self-proclaimed gentlewoman become citizen’s wife by her own choice, and Julia, the courtly daughter of Emperor Augustus in love with and pursuing the lowly younger son and poet Ovid, extend his depictions of feminine multiplicity, dramatize the vivaciousness available from characterization layered with social performance and social interaction, and continues to challenge the rigidity of normative gender types. The conclusion, both of the play and this chapter, introduces Jonson’s full embrace of the feminine and his generic turn toward tragedy.

In the sixth and final chapter, “Falling Forward, Flirting with the Feminine: Jonson’s Tragic Turn,” I demonstrate how *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603) reveals Jonson explicitly layering his female characters with his fragmented authorial performance and Poets’ War experiences. Although *Sejanus* is traditionally characterized a Jacobean play because it was first performed by the King’s Men in 1603 at the court of James I, I include it in this dissertation on Jonson’s Elizabethan phase because Jonson announced *Sejanus* and his retirement at the conclusion of *Poetaster*, because Jonson wrote the play in the final two years of Elizabeth’s reign, and because *Sejanus* bears the marks of and provides a culmination to Jonson’s Poets’ War experience. In the specifically political environment of *Sejanus*’s Rome, Jonson offers yet another situation in which to demonstrate the fluctuations, constancies and challenges of maintaining and perfecting performances in both public and private/non-public places and again positions himself alongside the female characters through which his artistic and

dramatic arguments emerge. In his characterizations of Agrippina and Livia, Jonson dramatizes his own social performance, expressing his own marginality and ineffectiveness, his lack of faith in his audiences, and his inability to change the world or his contemporaries' ideas about theater and dramaturgy. Throughout *Sejanus*, his female characters exemplify his perception of the phases of social interaction and offer coping mechanisms against an indicted society.

Hopefully I have indicated that Jonson's artistic theories and the relationship between his theories and practice provide a new way to read Jonson's women particularly and those of Shakespeare and his contemporaries more generally. I by no means exhaust the ways these texts, the representations of women within them or the historical situations standing behind them can reenergize considerations of Jonson's dramatic work and the artistic theory that shaped it. I do believe, however, that my first step toward a complete analysis of Jonson's dramatic work begins to look at Jonson in a way that reopens his texts and, more specifically, encourages feminist commentary on the cultural work being done by these texts and by those whom Jonson influenced. Jonson's demand for verisimilitude and the resulting focus on social performance reveals that all theatrical identity – whether staged in the playhouse, in the street or in the seeming “privacy” of home – is interconnected, dependent by nature as well as by socialization on education, on economic and social competition, and on reciprocal needs. Identity, then, gender and other(s), is at once historically situated, individually specific, and culturally plural. The female characters of Jonson's drama, like Jonson himself, are contradictory – at once complex and fluid. My goal here is not to generalize another view of Renaissance femininity; I think we can all agree that any such generalization produces an unforgivingly static and clichéd view of women. I do hope, however, that my

call for examinations of Jonson and women – fictional and historical – in *all* of his work encourages an openness to and in Jonson's dramatic canon at which all of us can and, quite frankly, should take another look.

NOTES to INTRODUCTION

¹ I begin with the critical assumption that the category “woman” remains a viable tool for analysis despite the problematical nature of relying on a constructed fiction to reconsider dramatic fictions. As Karen Newman explains in her introduction to *Fashioning Femininity* (1991), a “focus on women” runs numerous risks. These include “reinscribing traditional notions of sexual difference grounded in essentialist epistemologies,” disempowering women, and overlooking and/or avoiding the necessary confrontation with the difficulties of “language, reference and truth” (xix) attendant on readings using “woman” as its organizing strategy. Yet a focus on women “has almost single-handedly constructed gender as a category of analysis in critical discourse and thereby enables different meanings and questions to be asked not only about gender, but also about power, subjectivity and discourse itself” (xix). Coupling the constructed fiction of “woman” with historical evidence about social, racial, economical, geographical, and class-based depictions of women in the early modern period and considering how these issues inform and shape one another, I maintain a balanced approach to my analysis of the connections between Jonson’s portrayals of women, his relationships with and the influences of historical women, and his dramatic theory and practice. While I assert a “both/and” position with regard to the construction of gender and the essential aspects of biology, lived experienced, and the body both *as* “a situation” and *in* situations (Beauvoir 33), I am careful throughout to refute and to resist biological determinism. John Caputo’s extension of Jacques Derrida’s *Spurs* is helpful here: “Nothing in itself, standing by itself, is sexist or non-sexist, or anti-sexist, for or against women. Everything said of the name of women, or in the name of women, or like a woman, belongs to a context, has a local purpose, serves a certain strategy and can be turned against itself, can be made to work for or against women” (143; cf. “Spurs” 101-3).

² Studies of Jonson, if they raise the topics of women and Jonson, Jonson and gender or Jonson and feminism at all, discuss the female characters, patrons or performers in terms of Jonson’s dramaturgy (albeit in limited form) and biography. Sanders’s *Refashioning Ben Jonson: Gender, Politics and the Jonsonian Canon* focuses on Jonson as a man of “popular culture” rather than the “Jacobean court writer.” The nine essays in the collection identify and respond to a trend in New Historicism which emphasizes the latter with little, if any, emphasis on Jonson and gender. Various Jonson biographers do mention his relationships with women. Rosalind Miles’s *Ben Jonson: His Life and Work* details Jonson’s relations with his wife but includes only a cursory mention of his female patrons. David Riggs’ *Ben Jonson: A Life* supplies a psychoanalytical reading of Jonson which depends on a hypothesis of the playwright’s lifelong retaliations against a mother who, however “brave and courageous,” replaced him in her affections with a lowly bricklayer. Riggs, basing his conjecture on the Drummond comments, postulates an aggression against women which he admits is “frankly speculative” (2), but doesn’t connect this to Jonson’s portrayals of women on the stage or his relationship with his female patrons and performers. See Miles *Ben Jonson*, Riggs and Sanders et al.

³ The move in word choice from “private” to “non-public” responds to Ernesto Balibar’s revision of Jürgen Habermas. For Habermas, the private, domestic sphere was a place separate from the public sphere, a private domain where private people with private

interests could disengage from public affairs. Balibar contends that, since this so-called private space is also inhabited by and requires contact with other people, a “private” realm is a misnomer. Balibar proposes “non-public” a more accurate descriptor. Because I suggest social performance includes role-playing at all times, role-playing that has become an internalized way of being in the world and role-playing that requires a constant awareness of even vigilance for a potential audience to observe the role, “non-public” provides the more apt descriptor here.

⁴ In the introduction to *Shakespeare, Feminism and Gender*, Kate Chedgzoy reissues Frances Dolan’s call for “a reconfiguration of the landscape, so that Shakespeare is no longer so much a lonely landmark” (15). A return to and reexamination of Jonson’s dramatic canon from feminist perspectives offers a fertile and largely uncultivated field in which to do exactly that.

⁵ For a collection of the Margaret Cavendish letters, see Fitzmaurice.

⁶ In particular, note Traub’s echo of Cavendish and Honigmann and the location of Rackin’s comment in a paragraph discussing Jonson’s relationship with Lady Mary Wroth. For Jonson’s awareness that women’s interests differ from those of men, see his prologue to *Epicoene*, the play he dedicated to Lady Mary Wroth.

⁷ The category “woman,” both as the constructed fiction created for the stage and as the historical women of this period, has long been an object of inquiry and representation in Renaissance scholarship, but this account has and continues to focus almost exclusively on Shakespeare and his idealized and typically aristocratic women despite the radical transformations occurring in the lives of historical women under Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I. See Fletcher *Gender*. The population movement to London, the rise of the merchant class, the legislation and court cases about fashion and behavior symbolize the numerous attempts to control and to mold the category “woman,” and these efforts also manifest themselves in the drama. Callaghan’s own edition the *Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, which she also published in 2000, further demonstrates the dominance of Shakespeare’s place in projects connecting feminist and gender studies to the English Renaissance. See also Callaghan’s Introduction, “Cleopatra had a Way with Her” in her *Shakespeare Without Women*.

⁸ Arguably this is a field specific situation. Feminist scholars like Drucilla Cornell, Judith Butler and Toril Moi are continuing the conversation in broadening ways, ways that have moved the conversation from literary studies to new areas such as public rights discourse, legal rights and queer theory. Part of my move here is to reopen literary studies – specifically Renaissance drama – to these larger contexts by bringing these feminist views back to our perpetually narrowing conversation.

⁹ For a spectrum of English Renaissance playwrights placing Jonson and Shakespeare at the poles, see Ornstein. See also Shapiro *Rival* for Jonson and Shakespeare as the heirs of Marlowe and Kyd. The position which sets Jonson and Shakespeare at the poles begins with seventeenth-century criticism, specifically with John Dryden, who began to

define Shakespeare and Jonson by comparing them to each other. This “odious tandem” (Barish *Ben Jonson* 1) is, however, one Jonson instigated himself. Jonson’s decision to establish himself as different from – even better than – Shakespeare made him one of the “twin pillars” of the English Renaissance theater, but it has also determined that he would always stand in Shakespeare’s shadow. Subsequent comment on Jonson’s work solidified rather than questioned the Jonson-Shakespeare dyad (really a binary death grip designed to elevate Shakespeare) and deepened the dependency on oppositional criticism to discuss each playwrights’ work.

¹⁰ The plays themselves have received considerable attention. A September 2010 search of the MLA Bibliography with the date range “Earliest to 2011” yields 12 published works (articles, books, chapters and essays) for *The Case is Altered* (1598); 45 each for *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) and *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599); 36 for *Cynthia’s Revels* (1600); 46 for *Poetaster* (1601); 83 for *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603); 32 for *Eastward Ho* (1605) Jonson’s collaboration with John Marston and George Chapman; 251 for *Volpone* (1606); 93 for *Epicoene, or the Silent Women* (1609); 153 for *The Alchemist* (1610); 40 for *Catiline* (1611); 131 for *Bartholomew Fair* (1614); 23 for *The Devil is an Ass* (1616); 27 for *The Staple of News* (1625); 33 for *The New Inn* (1629); 8 for *The Magnetic Lady* (1632); and 6 for the fragment *The Sad Shepherd*. There are no published works listed in the MLA Bibliography for Jonson’s *Tale of the Tub* (1632) or his fragment *The Fall of Mortimer*.

¹¹ In *Shakespeare and Women*, Phyllis Rackin makes a similar point about how our critical selections from Shakespeare’s plays “tell us more about our own assumptions regarding women than about the beliefs that informed the responses of Shakespeare’s first audiences” (3).

¹² I would also like to note that the ongoing scholarly debates about Jonson, including his attempts to control audience interpretation of his work, his ambivalent attitude toward the public theater, his desire to see his plays in print as more permanent artifacts, his insistence on the ear’s superiority to the eye for understanding what he had written, his assertion of authorship and bid for laureate status, also depend at various points on the perpetuation of his differences from Shakespeare.

¹³ See Grace, Miller “Writing,” Silver, DiGangi, and Smith. In Jonson scholarship, this perception begins with the Drummond conversations in which Jonson confesses his “venery” and its active manifestation in his pursuit and successful conquest of married women. Barish’s *Ben Jonson* traces the development of the oppositional tradition of Jonson-Shakespeare from its inception with Jonson to Dryden’s suggestion in the seventeenth century that they were “two giants of the English theater” to the realization by eighteenth-century critics that deprecation of Jonson earned more praise for Shakespeare. Some effort, however, is made in the essays of this collection to champion Jonson’s genius both with and without comparison to Shakespeare. Gabrielle Bernhard Jackson’s *Vision and Judgment in Ben Jonson’s Drama* separates Jonson from Shakespeare by mentioning Shakespeare only twice in the entire work while George Parfitt’s *Ben Jonson: Public Poet and Private Man*

strives to distance Jonson by analyzing how his dramatic methods differ from Shakespeare's. Ian Donaldson's collection of essays by various authors, *Jonson and Shakespeare*, examines the relationship of the two playwrights by discussing them individually and comparatively. E.A.J. Honigmann's distinctions between Jonson and Shakespeare in *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries* solidify the separation and assure Shakespeare's superiority. Honigmann contrasts Jonson's rigidity and pedanticism to Shakespeare's adaptability and flexibility. Jonson's assertions of poetic authority and focus on neoclassicism, judgment and intellect provide evidence of his authoritarianism, absolutism and elitism. Shakespeare, by contrast, becomes self-effacing, popular, emotional, indeterminate, skeptical and inclusive – descriptions which solidify his iconic status within early modern scholarship.

Several Jonson scholars have also attempted to bridge the distance between the two playwrights. Anne Barton's *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* is the first study to analyze the artistic relationship between Jonson and Shakespeare. According to Barton, Dryden drove the wedge that separates Jonson and Shakespeare. In an attempt to remove the wedge, she traces the overlap between and mutual influence of the two playwrights but emphasizes Shakespeare's influence on Jonson over his on Shakespeare. Further, she argues that Jonson "finds peace" with his aggression toward Shakespeare, a peace that translates in his later years to return interest in Shakespeare. Russ McDonald in *Shakespeare and Jonson/Jonson and Shakespeare* extends Barton's discussion, working to define more precisely the relationship between Shakespearean and Jonsonian drama and to balance the treatment of each playwright's influence on the other. Ian Donaldson's *Jonson's Magic Houses* suggests the differences between the two men have been exaggerated. These essays respond to the exaggeration by examining how Jonson represented himself, how he has been represented by others in subsequent historical periods, and how his work is far more diverse than generally acknowledged. James Bednarz's reframing of the Poets' War in *Shakespeare and the Poets' War* is the most recent and most successful study of the cross-pollination between these two playwrights, although Bednarz also focuses more on Shakespeare and the transformation in his dramatic practice instigated by Jonson. His excellent analysis of what he calls "the most famous case of poetic rivalry in English literature" (1) transforms the Poets' War from a petty squabble between companies to an important – for all future considerations of Renaissance drama – "theoretical debate on the social function of drama and the standard of poetic authority" (7).

¹⁴ To summarize, characterizations of Jonson include: a masculinist writer, an apologist for patriarchy, a playwright resistant to gender fluidity and effeminization, a misogynist, a homophobe. See Grace, Miller, Silver, DiGangi, and Smith for specific arguments.

¹⁵ E.A.J. Honigmann's distinctions between Jonson and Shakespeare formalize the pairings that begin with Dryden, solidifying the separation between the two playwrights and assuring Shakespeare's superiority. Honigmann contrasts Jonson's rigidity and pedanticism to Shakespeare's adaptability and flexibility. Jonson's assertions of poetic authority and focus on neoclassicism, judgment and intellect provide evidence of his authoritarianism, absolutism and elitism. Shakespeare, by contrast, becomes self-effacing, popular, emotional, indeterminate, skeptical and inclusive – descriptions which solidify his iconic status within early modern scholarship. A number of oppositions surround the hierarchical dyad

Shakespeare/Jonson. Others not mentioned in this paragraph are: ease/labor, genius/craft, sublimity/decorum, wit/judgment, Homer/Virgil, invention/disposition, nature/art, virtues/defects.

¹⁶ Throughout this study I use the word “gender” to encapsulate woman, female and feminine as well as man, male and masculine. I choose this terminology because theology, not biology and anatomy, was the foundation of the man/woman binary in the early modern period. As Thomas Laquer convincingly argues in *Making Sex*, sex as we know it was not invented until the eighteenth-century and so gender precedes sex as a classification: “in these pre-enlightenment texts, and even some later ones, *sex*, or the body, must be understood as epiphenomenon, while *gender*, what we would take to be a cultural category, was primary or ‘real’” (8). See also Fletcher *Gender*. Further, like Toril Moi in her persuasive *Sex, Gender and the Body: What is a Woman?*, I think distinctions between sex (biology) and gender (social construction) do not aid our historical understanding of what it means to be men and women in a given society. The sex/gender binary has enabled much useful work. The focus in my analysis, however, will be on the situation of women (and men): who is speaking to whom, the content of such communication, and the context in which that communication occurs. See Moi *Sex* 3-120.

¹⁷ See Bruster *Prologues*.

¹⁸ I have chosen the critical term “festive comedy” over “romantic comedy” both because it is the more recent and because it implicitly suggests a shift in interest from the purely literary genre to the cultural, historical, political, social, and economic influences on literature. I am grateful to Ken Jackson for pointing me toward Richard Wheeler’s *The Whole Journey*. See also Barber.

¹⁹ For the detailed analysis of the Dame Kately character in the context of Jonson’s play, *Every Man Out*, and career, see Chapter Two “A Marriage of Convenience.”

²⁰ For an extension of the position on the oft-cited prologue to *Every Man In*, see Hutson. It is a critical commonplace to read the prologue as an introduction of greater verisimilitude to Renaissance Drama, but Hutson argues that this doesn’t give Jonson as much credit as he deserves. In her brilliant reading, Jonson “both created a completely new and exceptionally durable style of urban fiction and, simultaneously, found a no less culturally influential style of masculine intimacy” (1065).

²¹ Jonson is, of course, also interested in establishing a name for himself as a playwright, as a poetic authority and ultimately as The Poet. For a thorough treatment of Jonson’s literary and civic aspirations, see Helgerson. For my part, I am interested in the impact of Jonson’s artistic theory on dramatic practice, particularly with regard to the representation of women, and on dramatic genres more generally.

²² This is a repetition of Jonson’s theoretical position of the purpose, the function of drama. In his previous play, *Every Man In* (1598), Jonson also explicitly told his audience in

the prologue that the specific aim of “Comedy,” personified throughout Jonson’s work as “she,” would be to “show an image of the times” (Pro.23-24).

²³ For examples of the unrealistic social harmony and unification of Shakespeare’s festive comedy, consider the rape of Sylvia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* ignored and then erased by the magical love of Valentine for Proteus, the fairy magic that unites the lovers despite Athenian law in *Midsummer*, and the increasingly fantastic events that reconstruct the family of Egeus in *The Comedy of Errors*.

²⁴ See Horace’s *Ars Poetica* and Plato’s *Republic*.

²⁵ While I label Jonson’s new form, the comical satire, his own “invention,” I recognize that Jonson’s investment in the classics introduced him to the comical and satirical strains of various Latin authors, particularly Juvenal. At the same time Jonson introduces comical satire to the English stage, his Italian contemporaries are writing *le comedia per perchendo*. I am grateful to Gabriella Baika at the 2005 Newberry Library Conference in Renaissance Studies for this Italian parallel.

²⁶ Jonson’s theory is indebted to the rhetoric of neoclassicism found in Cicero, Aristotle, and Sidney. Jonson provides an explicit assertion of the theory in *Every Man Out of His Humour*.

²⁷ The Latin translates as “The imitation of life, the glass of custom, the image of truth” and is spoken by Cordatus in *Every Man Out of His Humour* (III.vi.206, 207-9).

²⁸ The term “poetmachie” appears in Dekker’s *Satiromastix* (1601): “To the World” (Pro.7). I am indebted to Bednarz’s reframing of the Poets’ War as just such a crisis of authorial legitimation for the following discussion of the Poets’ War and for the new evidence on dates for the plays involved in the debate. For Bednarz, the Poets’ War is “an intense and often acrimonious debate concerning the practice of dramatic representation” (2), a “theoretical debate on the social function of drama and the standard of poetic authority that informed” it (7), “the first great dramatic criticism in England” (2), and “a series of literary transactions between writers of topically charged fictions who used their plays to master each other’s language and drama” (8).

²⁹ By stressing the authenticity or more realistic nature of Jonson’s portrayals, however, I do not intend to tread on the ground of A.C. Bradley’s criticism; rather, I focus on the addition to Jonson’s characterizations of physical and behavior details and quirks observable in social performances unfolding in the various venues of London society.

³⁰ The metaphor “paper bullets” belongs to Bednarz: “The Poets’ War converted three Bankside theaters—the Globe, Blackfriars, and Paul’s—into military camps firing paper bullets at one another” (2). See Bednarz *Shakespeare*.

³¹ This is Bednarz's argument, and with it he demonstrates how Shakespeare's participation in the Poets' War modified his drama. While Jonson is the starting point for his focus on Shakespeare, he does not discuss how Jonson was affected. The impact of the Poets' War on Jonson is the subject of my second, third and fourth chapters. For a discussion of Malvolio as the abused and excluded result of the Poets' War changes to dramaturgy, see Bednarz *Shakespeare* 175-200. For Malvolio's more realistic as opposed to "midsummer" madness, see Jackson *Separate* 46-78.

³² This is the translation of the play's Latin phrase: "*Imitatio vitae, Speculum consuetudinis, Imago veritatis*; a thing throughout pleasant, and ridiculous, and accommodated to the correction of manners" (Ind.206-9).

³³ These early plays of Jonson's are often dismissed by critics because of the common misunderstanding that they are structurally disastrous, all character and no plot. Jonson's peers credited him – as an insult, course – as a "plagiarist" who reproduced all that he observed, all those with whom he interacted on the stage. See the 1599-1601 plays of Marston and Dekker.

³⁴ For the definition and comprehensive elucidation of social performance from which my own understanding of the concept develops, see Elias.

³⁵ An early modern correlation can be found in Castiglione's early modern self-help book, *The Courtier*; throughout his text he describes and supports *sprezzatura*. Contemporary twenty-first century self-help would likely resort to "practice makes perfect."

³⁶ See Greenblatt *Self-fashioning* 1-9. While social performance approaches Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning, it is not another explanation for it. Both theories, however, do agree on the Renaissance belief in the ability to shape oneself. Self-fashioning, by distinction, is a literary theory "always in language," always dependent on the collective construction of words.

³⁷ For specific readings of Asper/Macilente, Crites and Horace as representatives of Jonson's artistic aspirations, see Helgerson.

³⁸ Jonson's views of the self – at once fixed (you are what you do), changing (you can do something else) and performed (social performance, its enactment and repetition, provide the method of at once "fixing"/creating and changing yourself) – match contemporary Renaissance notions of self-hood. In *Men in Women's Clothing*, Laura Levine brilliantly situates Renaissance beliefs and contradictions about the self within the pamphlet war against the stage. In her formulation, two entangled views of the self emerge in the anti-theatricalists' debates. These views, on the one side a belief in the self as an "absolute identity" and on the other anxiety about the seemingly arbitrary changeability of the self, also find their way into critical commentary on Renaissance notions of self. Two camps emerge, those arguing Renaissance views of a fixed and stable identity – see, for example, Barish *Anti-theatrical* – and those challengers who go so far as to claim "no inherent identity" – see, for example, Greenblatt *Self-Fashioning*. These two sides of the debate continue to inform

critical commentary. For her part, Levine argues that on the stage plays presented the contradictory ideas about self and ultimately revealed that identity – and of masculinity in particular – must be enacted, acted out, and actually performed to exist.

³⁹ I am grateful to Arthur Marotti for this connection.

⁴⁰ For arguments about the “centripetal” or fixed self as opposed to the “centrifugal” self constantly seeking change present in Jonson’s work, see Greene “Ben Jonson.” Greene sees Jonson’s *Volpone* as an example of a “protean man, man without core and...substance.” For a discussion of Jonson’s preoccupation with “questions concerning the relationship between inner and outer, between the self and the appearance which is too often confused with the self” (18), see Hyland.

⁴¹ See de Beauvoir: “Woman is not a fixed reality, but rather a becoming, and it is in her becoming that she should be compared to a man; that is to say her possibilities should be defined...the body is not a thing, it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and a sketch of our projects” (34).

⁴² For an examination of the effect of boys in woman roles on an audience, see Jardine. For the anti-theatricalists’ anxieties about the effeminizing effects of the theatre and the fear that plays and costumes might “magically” transform a man into a women, see Levine. For a discussion of how boys in women’s roles provides an opportunity to focus on the implication of absence and exclusion and to what such absences mean both in their historical context and for us today, see Callaghan *Shakespeare*. “The woman’s part” is itself from Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* 2.5.22.

⁴³ As Moi articulates de Beauvoir’s perspectives on what it means to be a woman, she clarifies de Beauvoir’s understanding of freedom as I use it here. “For Beauvoir, our [meaning women’s] freedom is not absolute, but situated. Other situations as well as our particular lived experience will influence our projects, which in turn will shape our experience of the body. In this way, each woman’s experience of her body is bound up with her projects in the world. There are innumerable different ways of living with one’s specific bodily potential as a woman” (65-6). See Moi *Sex* 59-83.

As Jonson characterizes women based on his theory of verisimilitude, his observations lead him to the kind of female character who “defines herself through the way she lives her embodied situation in the world, through the way in which she makes something of what the world makes of her” (Moi *Sex* 72). This is the foundation of Jonson’s reconceptualization of representing gender on the stage.

⁴⁴ All discussions of gender, family and society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries must be qualified by considerations of such shaping factors as race, religion, economics, geography, class.

⁴⁵ For the specific Sidney critique in which Jonson points out the lack of differentiation between characters and classes because Sidney was prone to “making everyone speak as well as himself,” see Herford and Simpson I:132

⁴⁶ For discussion of the realism of Jonson’s characters and their social relations, see Haynes. For Jonson’s use of language to craft character idiosyncracies, see Barish *Ben Jonson*.

⁴⁷ Jonson’s dramatic theory of verisimilitude imbues his female characters with the same level of idiosyncratic speech and behavior for which Jonson is lauded in his male characters. The result is a move from stock types to distinctly individuated characters. For a complete analysis of character idiosyncrasies worked out in the language of Jonson’s male characters, see Barish *Ben Jonson*.

⁴⁸ This same interplay energizes my analysis of Jonson’s theatrical and historical women. The interplay between verisimilitude and construction also invokes the directions of feminist and gender theory: its beginnings in essentialism, the move to gender as a fiction, and the current discussion about the impact of citationality and performativity on our understandings of gender. Jonson’s career supplies numerous case studies with which to discuss the viability, efficacy, applicability of such theories.

⁴⁹ When I let go of my “Prospectus” ambition to create “the first comprehensive genealogy of all Jonson’s women,” I re-envisioned the initial project as three pieces: this dissertation and two subsequent projects, *Jonson and Women in Early Modern Jacobean Drama* and *Jonson and Women in Early Modern Caroline Drama*, for my future research. In the next project, I propose to introduce Jonson’s relationships with historical women such as Queen Anne, Lady Bedford, Lady Rutland and Lady Mary Wroth to discuss the impact of female creativity and authorial collaboration on Jonson’s artistic theory and dramaturgy. In his masques Jonson worked to create stage identities for his female patrons and performers which balanced his dramatic characterization and their social identities. In doing so, he discovered the significance of performance in both social and gender identity, and the effects of his effort emerge in the middle comedies. In addition to demonstrating Jonson’s delicate balance of socially constructed identity, situationally-specific identity, social performance, and the actual women on whom and for whom he created characters, I also discuss the mutually constitutive interaction between Jonson’s dramatic work, state and cultural power and authority. I argue that throughout his Jacobean period his inversions of the gender expectations challenge and critique those same expectations. Ultimately, I see Jonson’s Jacobean plays culminating in portrayals of women which are explicitly sympathetic and in which he not only envisions but actually projects himself.

In the third project, I propose to trace the shift from a Jacobean to a Caroline court and the impact of the new milieu on Jonson. The Caroline masques suggest another transition in Jonson’s representations of women and, at surface, seem to correlate directly to the new court tastes. Perhaps the changing tastes also explain Jonson’s return to the public stage after a nine year hiatus. The late plays – *Staple of News* (1625), *The New Inn* (1629), *The Magnetic Lady* (1632) and *Tale of the Tub* (1632), however, also offer an archive in

which the situation of social performance moves more prominently to the foreground. Examining the connection between the end of Jonson's life and the devolution of the Stuart monarch under Charles I as well as another generic shift, I suggest that Jonson experiments with allegory and the romantic impulse that characterize these dramatic texts offer examples of some of Jonson's most playful handlings of gender. My analysis accepts the contradictory nature of his characterizations, revealing Jonson's determination to maintain his dramatic theory and the importance to it of verisimilitude in the face of a Caroline culture focused on entertainment.

CHAPTER ONE

Jonson's Festive Beginning: *The Case is Altered* (1598)

...if I did put on this sadnesse
 Onely abroad, and in Society,
 And were in priuate merry; and quick humor'd;
 Then might it seeme affected and abhord:
 But as my lookes appeare, such is my spirit
 (*Case* 1.9.44-48)¹

Rachel de Prie, the love interest/ingénue of Jonson's earliest extant play, *The Case is Altered* (1598), places Jonson firmly within the festive comedy tradition, a tradition based on a dramatic form or structure in which an opening family tension, usually a love intrigue, exacerbated by obstacles throughout the play ultimately resolves in a marriage or group celebration that unifies the couple, the family and the community in social harmony. As Shakespeare critic Leo Salingar explains, "writers of comedy since Aristophanes have exalted high spirits and a primitive desire for life-renewal, instead of seeking merely to reflect life as it stands" (1-2).² Rachel de Prie is young, beautiful, putatively poor and, for the most part, silent. She obeys her supposed father in all his commands and is admired for her honesty and neatness. She has the ability to attract every man who sees her, and yet she waits patiently, Griselda-like, for the man she loves.³ Rachel de Prie forms half of festive comedy's central situation: a couple drawn together by irrational attraction, kept apart by various obstacles to the fulfillment of their desire and yet ultimately, through their wedding ceremony and feast, fulfilling the promise of communal unification or social harmony.⁴

On the surface, Rachel de Prie seems like any other festive comedy heroine and, for the most part, she is. Like Rachel, on its surface, *The Case is Altered* also seems like any other festive comedy and, in turn, this surface understanding explains the lack of critical attention the play has received over the years. The past decade has seen only one new

publication on *The Case is Altered*, and no single edition of the play is currently in print.⁵ The critical focus on *Case*'s generic trappings has discounted the play itself and left behind a sparse critical history debating whether or not Jonson even wrote it. In concession to this debate, Herford and Simpson qualify their own decision to include the play in their definitive 1927 *Ben Jonson* collection.⁶

Of course, genre and authorship battles stay with the surface, obfuscating what is most important about *The Case is Altered*: the beginnings of Jonson's expressions of and experiments with his independent artistic theory and gender flexibility. To find these beginnings, we must look beyond the festive markers of the play in general and of the Rachel de Prie and her fellow female characters in particular. As John Jacob Enck, the first to recognize the need to abandon preconceived notions about the play based on genre, offers *Case* as "an amusing and not untalented effort in construction with a satiric *base*" (197) and as Robert L. Mack, following Enck, demonstrates how the play "draws our attention to an *underlying* unity in Jonson's work that is too frequently ignored, or worse, completely unacknowledged" (61),⁷ we too must dig more deeply into the play. Only then will we see that while in order to break into the London theater circle of playwrights Jonson does employ the generic, even Shakespearean, form of festive comedy and its stock types already entertaining London audiences that he also, and more importantly, tweaks the form. Already and from his very first play, Jonson begins to individuate his style, to introduce his artistic sensibilities, and even to reshape theatrical practices of representation and characterization.⁸

The Elizabethan comic conventions of the 1590s – beginning with John Lyly in the late 1580s and then popularized by George Chapman and William Shakespeare – relied on a combination of Plautine comedy and Italian settings with native English morality and jokes.⁹

In accordance with form and contemporary model, Jonson creates *The Case is Altered* by conflating the *Aulularia* and *Captivi* storylines and setting his play in a Milan at war with France. In Jonson's *Case*, the beggar's daughter, Rachel de Prie, is actually the French Isabel stolen away by a miserly steward Jacques at the same time he stole his master's gold. Rachel/Isabel's love, Paulo Ferneze, leaves her and Milan as a soldier only to be captured by the French and ransomed. His general, himself in love with Paulo's oldest sister Aurelia, captures the French soldiers Chamont and Gasper and arranges an exchange. Chamont turns out to be Rachel/Isabel's brother. Gasper turns out to be Paulo's long lost brother, and the play ends as festive comedy demands: the assertion of social accord precedes "Lovers to your nuptials, Lordings to your dances" (V.xiii.66). A below-stairs subplot provides the native English humor and draws the miserly Jaques and his gold into the Ferneze household for the play's denouement.

To recap, the elements of festive comedy introduced so far in this chapter include a description of the form's dramatic structure; the attributes of the festive heroine; the conditions of the central love story whereby the lovers' attraction manifests magically, challenges arise to keep the lovers from one another until the play's end, and the drama ends with a wedding ceremony and feast unifying not only the lovers but also the community of disparate classes, ages and outlooks while fulfilling and celebrating an utopian ideal of social harmony; the use of stock character types; and the conflation of a classic, typically Roman, play and an Italian setting with native English morality and humor. Specifications of these elements, more specifically festive comedy's female stereotypes, the particular obstacles impeding the lovers, the native English tones and humor, will be described throughout the continuation of this chapter. After the details, then, of each generic feature of festive

comedy, I will make my case for how Ben Jonson begins to alter each element of festive comedy present in his first play to align with his own evolving and differentiated artistic principles. A thorough and concise explanation for how Jonson critiques festive comedy throughout the Elizabethan phase of his playwriting career can be found on pages six through nine of the introduction to this dissertation. Detailed explanations of how Jonson adapts and modifies festive comedy in each of his subsequent plays can be found in the discussions of the individual plays in the additional chapters of this dissertation.

Jonson, of course, relies on the conventions of festive comedy to propel his plot, but only when we look beneath the scaffolding of the form can we find Ben Jonson *at play*. Exploiting the peripheral position of his satellite characters, Jonson takes his first, albeit limited, steps away from the conventions and the conventional that his future artistic and theoretical battles with Shakespeare and his fellow peers will censure most. While mocking the central festive comedy love story and its principles,¹⁰ Jonson employs Rachel, the long-suffering love interest, as a screen behind which he deviates from the form's other stereotypically stock types: the coy maiden and the virtuous celibate, or L'Allegra and La Penserosa.¹¹ As even the names suggest, the sisters Aurelia and Phœnixella are among the more exotic characters in Jonson's first play. Together with his treatment of Rachel the ingénue, Jonson's dramatic decisions with regard to these three female characters hint at the directions his dramaturgical and generic innovations will take and introduce both his independent artistic theory and gender flexibility.

One French Woman in Milano

Rachel de Prie, or at least the idea of her, forms the center from which the plot strands of Jonson's *The Case is Altered* extend. She is a constant presence in the play, mentioned or

appearing in nearly every scene. Even so, Jonson's Rachel very rarely speaks. As Anne Barton has rightly suggested, Rachel's limited dialogue hardly avails the boy actor playing the role an opportunity to demonstrate how Rachel captures the imagination of the five different suitors Jonson provides her, and the scant number of lines she speaks over the course of the play creates a woefully inadequate part for a comic heroine.¹² Yet I disagree with Barton that Jonson "refused to follow Shakespeare (and most of his contemporaries) in giving his female characters...importance and appeal" (34). As his theoretical battles with his peers escalate in subsequent plays, Jonson will indeed refuse to follow Shakespeare and other, but his female characters are of great critical importance. Jonson's characterization and use of female characters are, in fact, central to his artistic vision.

With his treatment of Rachel de Prie/Isabel, Jonson's dramatic decisions indicate dually artistic and theoretical actions. On the one hand, by minimizing Rachel, Jonson departs from the festive comedy tradition which centralizes the love story. In this way, he begins his larger, theoretical critique of the genre. On the other hand, by retaining and, as I argue, even underscoring the *idea* of Rachel, Jonson introduces his perception and later artistic assertion that character depends on the observations and judgments of others. Yet Jonson also provides Rachel's character with a signal and individuating moment. My argument, then, balances Rachel's minor verbal role in the narrative with her major, albeit physically absent, presence in the conversations and actions of the play's additional characters, and foregrounds Jonson's simultaneous use of his character's marginality and conceptual centrality as a strategy for reading Jonson's application of his artistic theory to his dramatic practice.

In keeping with his theory, Jonson's characterization of Rachel begins with the descriptions of her by the various men who throughout the play try to possess her. These portrayals introduce the dynamic relationship between observation and action Jonson sees as the creative elements of character. While the suitors' descriptions suggest an initial picture of Rachel, the shallowness of their descriptions, descriptions revealed as each man begins to talk more about himself than about Rachel, also characterize each suitor. Rachel's meanest or lowest suitor, Peter Onion, a groom in Count Ferneze's service, places the "wench" (1.2.14) Rachel in his own social class when he labels her "a poore mans child indeede" (1.2.40 and 2.2.20) and himself "no Gentleman borne" (1.2.41). Onion then sexualizes Rachel, focusing on her desirability as a counter to her lack of wealth. He "hopes" she is "none of the honestest" else "she would not haue me" (2.2.20-3). Christophero, Count Ferneze's steward, also thinks Rachel "a wench" but one to "solicite for my selfe" (2.2.49) because he has often "Thought her a worthy choyce to make my wife" (2.2.53). Christophero sees Rachel as a possession to augment his steward status, and he sets about getting the permissions of his lord and her father even though he has never spoken to Rachel herself.

Count Ferneze finds himself enraptured by "her lookes" (2.6.41) and assures himself that despite Rachel's class-bound position as "the poore beggers daughter" (2.6.29) he sees signs of nobility, "Gentry and noblenesse" (2.6.39), in her. The Count's objectification of Rachel's beauty finds limit in his acknowledgement that "where loue is he think<s> his basest obiect/ Gentle and noble" (2.6.42-3), but he too cannot contain the fervor of his attraction: "I must make loue to *Rachel!*" (3.4.40). Even Rachel's supposed father Jaques, suggestively because he is not her father, sees exactly what he desires. Jaques equates his

daughter with his gold and, as he did with the Count's description of Rachel, Jonson places the literal objectification of Rachel into Jaques's language: "For their other object:/ Tis in my handsome daughter" (2.1.17-8).

According to these descriptions of Rachel, then, her character appears little more than a coveted possession: a sexualized, idealized, beautiful and valuable object. So begins the heroine of Jonson's festive comedy; so begins his critique. In the opening act of the play, Jonson literalizes Rachel, the *concept* of a comic heroine, to demonstrate that such a heroine embodies the projections of various fantasies. Jonson's theoretical point and first counterclaim to Shakespeare's social harmony emerges: as Rachel is a fantasy, not what the male characters see but what they want, so too is festive comedy a cultural fantasy, not a reflection of everyday life but a wish-fulfillment of social unification. From the opening scenes of *Case* we already find hints of the theory of verisimilitude and theatrical mimesis Jonson will work out over the course of the Poets' War, 1598-1601. Festive comedy's happily-ever-after in which an entire community harmoniously unites at the wedding of the genre's central couple is itself a projection of a communal desire not an actual, or to Jonson's mind, possible outcome in quotidian existence.

Ben Jonson works subtly. While he putatively follows the festive comic form, maximizing Rachel's metonymical potential by utilizing allusions beyond *The Case is Altered* for additional and alternative perspectives on her character, he also positions himself against his foremost rival. The strongest precursor for the situation in which Jonson places Rachel occurs with Sylvia in Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1590-1).¹³ In parallel plot points, both comic heroines have fathers who will and do reject their chosen suitors. Both have lovers whose best friends will also love them and attempt to possess them. Both

inspire their lovers to lengthy and musing speeches delivered to others as they reveal their love: *Two Gentleman's Valentine's* servant Speed spurs his consideration while *Case's* Paulo shares with his best friend Angelo that he loves Rachel. Unlike Shakespeare, however, Jonson draws attention to the genre's deficiencies. The structure of a festive comedy with its unexplained and even magical romantic attraction of a central couple suggests Rachel as the recipient of Paulo's love, but Jonson chooses to absent Rachel from the stage during Paulo's ninety-five line speech. As Paulo frets about telling his best friend Angelo about his secret love, Jonson plays with the ambiguity. Is Paulo's secret love for Rachel or for Angelo? Because Rachel does not appear in the scene, Jonson's allows a reading in which Paulo's words of love and friendship seem for his male companion not his potential wife. In this way, Jonson again destabilizes the central love relationship on which festive comedy depends, and offers another potential fissure in the communally unifying intents of the genre.

Four scenes later Jonson provides Paulo's impression of Rachel, but only after Paulo has said his goodbyes to Rachel and she has left the stage. In a single line defending his love, a defense arguably more for the concept of his love for Rachel than for Rachel herself, Jonson has Paulo explain to Angelo that he can "read" the "good" in her and that he values more her "shine in vertue than in bloud" (1.10.37-8). Again Jonson counters Shakespeare, pointing out the ridiculous in the central love match, underscoring the distance between this expression of love (for virtue) and the more realistic motives behind marriage matches (for blood: rank and status, class and wealth). Through Angelo's disparagement of Rachel to Paulo – "she is deriud too meanely to be wife/ To such a noble person, in my iudgement" (1.10.34-5), Jonson emphasizes his social awareness of more realistic pairings between social equals.

Even so, Jonson continues his parallel to Shakespeare's *Two Gentleman* plot. Like Proteus to Valentine's Silvia, Angelo develops an aggressive passion for Rachel. Despite his seeming clarity of perspective while talking with Paulo, when faced with the image of Rachel herself, Angelo, like the conventional festive lover, is overwhelmed by his senses: "Before God, she is a sweet wench" (1.10.8). Jonson, in all his cheekiness, again mocks the festive form; it is not the unrealistically magical aspect of Rachel's beauty which inflames Angelo, it is the more blatantly sensual desire to find out how she might taste.¹⁴ Note that Jonson's gives Angelo the designation "wench" for Rachel to provide a point of connection to the characterizations offered by Onion and Christophero. In this way, Jonson indicates that Angelo's interest in Rachel resembles theirs and reminds us of the cultural fantasy for which he has Rachel stand.

As in Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Angelo, like Proteus, will promise to care for Rachel while Paulo participates in the war with France and, like Proteus, will betray his friend: "He is an asse that will keepe his promise stricktly/ In any thing that checkes his priuate pleasure" (3.1.9-10).¹⁵ Here Jonson introduces a realistic motive, one completely lacking from Shakespeare's characterization of Proteus who is given no reason for his betrayal. In Jonson's representation of the world, man thinks first of himself. Jonson extends Angelo's motive, taking "priuate pleasure" (3.1.10) to personal pride and once again challenging festive comedy along the way. Significantly, Jonson stages division rather than unity: only after Angelo has been rejected by Paulo's sister Aurelia in 2.4 and then defamed to her by her father as a "lusty" rake (2.5.2) and "wild youth" (2.5.19) does Angelo find his "bloud to be enflam'd" (3.1.13) by Rachel and determine to have her, to "haue at thee *Rachel*" (3.1.19). Jonson frames Angelo's action as an equal and opposite reaction to the

way he has been treated by others; his crime of passion is one perpetrated against the Ferneze family as a whole.

But what of Jonson's actual characterization of the fantasy-Rachel he has been deploying theoretically? Having framed the character with descriptions provided by other characters and relying on the audience's recollections of *Two Gentlemen*, Jonson provides the audience with its first visual experience of Rachel at the end of Act I. In keeping with the generic conventions whereby Rachel forms half of the central couple drawn and brought together despite all obstacles, Jonson has Paulo, standing before Jaques's house with Angelo at his side, be the one to conjure Rachel to appear. She enters, as if by magic, on the cue of his wish "before" he "can demand" it (1.10.3). Against the generic conventions, however, Jonson shifts away from the romantic and toward a situational reality when he crafts Paulo's greeting to ask not after Rachel herself but after her father.¹⁶ Rachel's first scene reminds us of Jonson dual project: to depart from and to critique festive comedy and to introduce characterization as an amalgamation of observation and action. Rachel emerges a possession, first of her father – nearly half of her lines in this scene focus on Jaques – and then of Paulo, whose deepest concerns are the pragmatic ones of "purity" (1.10.10) preserved and "mutual vows" (1.10.12) kept. In addition to his recognition of a woman's socially-determined, hierarchical position with regard to men, dependent on and belonging first to the father and then to the husband, brother or son, Jonson also uses this first appearance of Rachel to humanize her.

In this scene, Paulo's good-bye situates Rachel as the lover left behind by circumstance of war and honor. In departure from the silent acceptance typical of a romantic, festive comedy's heroine, Jonson has Rachel react. For example, in Shakespeare's

Two Gentlemen, Proteus asks Julia not to cry and she exits, in silence and without response.¹⁷ By contrast, Jonson has Rachel articulate her realization of Paulo's indefinite absence: "Are you now going?" (1.10.6), she asks, as she dissolves in tears. Throughout the scene, Jonson uses these tears, the performative aspect of his characterization and the expected reaction to the imminent loss of a loved one, to augment the verbal characterizations of Rachel. Paulo responds to her query, urging "Nay doe not weepe, why starte you?" (1.10.14). It is a performance decision left open in the text whether Paulo's reassurances – "I pritthee doe not looke so heauily" (1.10.16) and "Thou shalt want nothing" (1.17) – slow or increase her tears, but the responses Jonson gives Rachel establish strength, certainty and conviction. Her tearful assertion – "Is your presence nothing?/ I shall want that, and wanting that, want all/ For that is all to me" (1.10.17-9) – simultaneously communicates love for Paulo and her resignation to his departure. When Paulo seeks to comfort her by asking that she accept Angelo's presence as his own, her reply – "Most deere Lord, adew,/ Heauen and honour crowne your deeds and you" (1.10.29-30) – ignores his request, announces her goodbye, and wishes him honor on the battlefield. Only then does Jonson have Rachel exit from the scene.

Unlike Shakespeare's dismissal of his heroine in the midst of his protagonist's speech, Jonson grants control of the scene to Rachel, turning her on her heel to exit before Paulo replies and giving her a couplet, the formal, textual signal of a scene end. Thus, despite the few lines she actually speaks in her first scene, Jonson activates Rachel to express and to command her own actions and reactions. Jonson's exit for Rachel is on her own terms, punctuation to her goodbye not to Paulo's. In a moment, then, when her character must face a change of circumstance, Jonson's theoretical propensity to keep the focus on the verisimilitude of interaction foregrounds the situation over the form. As he asks and

answers, “How would women react in this situation?”, Jonson creates an embodied heroine, one whose tears, whose voluble silence (as Paulo questions her integrity), whose refusal to acknowledge Angelo, and whose bold departure do more to characterize her than words can.

The situatedness Jonson emphasizes in Rachel’s first stage appearance also frames her subsequent appearances. Her characterization continues to depend on physical responses to the demands of the other characters. After Paulo leaves for the war, each of Rachel’s entrances corresponds to a call from either her father or one of her suitors. The majority of these calls issues from Jaques whose commands that Rachel “lock thy selfe in” (2.1.54), “come to me” (3.2.7), “let loose my dog” (4.8.7), and “lock my doore,/ Looke to my house” (5.2.12-3) demonstrate an observable father-daughter relationship in which an unmarried daughter must depend on her relatives, in this case a father, for support and as a result must defer to their control.¹⁸

In these scenes and in contradiction to the comic heroine who flouts her father and cross-dresses to follow her lover, Rachel enters the stage to accept her father’s instructions, appears at a window overhead to listen, and remains a presence offstage – repeatedly noted if often unseen. When Jonson gives Rachel dialogue, her words match her current situation and affirm the commands of her father. The blunt reality of this characterization, while indicative of the limited choices available to an unmarried woman dependent on and living in a relative’s home, ignore and refute the romanticized agency of the cross-dressed heroine and begin to explain the current negative reactions to Jonson’s female characters. Even in a post-Shakespearean world, audiences and readers alike prefer the wishful cultural fantasy.

While Rachel’s position in her father’s house determines the majority of the character’s stage business, Jonson does provide Rachel with a signal and active moment: her

rejection of Angelo. In it, Jonson not only distinguishes Rachel from the paradigm of festive comedy, he also stages his most overt challenge to Shakespeare. Again Jonson tweaks the dramatic form while expressing the independence of his artistic theory and flexibility of his representations of gender. Specifically, in this his first play, Jonson modifies and expands the rape scene found in *Two Gentlemen* to activate Rachel, to distance himself from Shakespeare's theory of social harmony and, once again, to expose the unrealistically wishful nature of festive comedy.

In Shakespeare's rape scene and the play's "resolution" of that violence, Shakespeare does not dramatize Silvia's physical reaction, choosing instead to depict her as silent and ineffectual. Her chaste, two-word protest "O heaven!", significantly the last words she will speak in the play, will not prevent Proteus's attack, and the dialogue of the play leaves no room for a physical struggle (although performance choices may and do choose to ignore the softness of "O heaven" (5.4.59):¹⁹

Proteus: If the gentle spirit of moving words

Can no way change you to a milder form

I'll woo you like a soldier, at arm's end,

And love you 'gainst the nature of love: force ye.

Silvia: O heaven!

Proteus: I'll force thee yield to my desire.

Valentine: Ruffian, let go that rude uncivil touch

Thou fiend of all ill fashion.

(5.4.55-61)

We see, as those critics who have tried to reclaim Shakespeare from this moment have emphasized, that Shakespeare does have Valentine step forward from his hidden vantage point to stop the progress of the rape.²⁰ He does not, however, have Valentine acknowledge Silvia in any way: no homage, no hailing, no concern. Instead Shakespeare's dialogue focuses entirely on Proteus's betrayal of Valentine's trust and his friendship. When Proteus requests forgiveness, Valentine not only grants it instantly he also, speaking of Silvia for the first time, relinquishes any right, claim or interest he had to her. Shakespeare literally "gives" Silvia away, a sacrifice for the sake of communal harmony: "All that was mine in Silvia I give thee" (5.4.83). Silvia, voiceless since her heavenly protest, remains silent for the rest of the play. As the play concludes and the men – Valentine, Proteus, Thurio, and her father the Duke – exchange her, she stands silently on stage: unspoken, unacknowledged, unaddressed. Shakespeare's communal harmony has been restored, but only by brushing aside both the violence and its victim.

In stark contrast, and in an act of agency outstripping any suggested by a cross-dressed heroine, Jonson has his comic heroine respond and react to the impending violence. As a result, in *Rachel* and with *Case*, Jonson alters the romantic conventions of wooing that sanction rape. The conventions rely on a specific misreading of social performance, a misreading which endorses aggression on the grounds that women's rejections are acts of shyness and humility in keeping with the socially determined script elevating chastity, silence and obedience. The misreading asserts that these socially determined acts mask women's true desires to yield. When unlike Shakespeare's two words and silence for Silvia, Jonson has Rachel repeatedly rebuff Angelo with an energy that matches each step of his pursuit, Jonson rejects this assumption. The character Rachel is not, as Allison Findlay has

described various female characters in Renaissance drama, “a passive territory for male desire to measure and conquer” (113), but rather an active agent responding, performing, and being in her own right.²¹

Jonson’s scene dramatically differs from Shakespeare’s. Jonson gives Rachel strength to resist and then protection from sexual assault; he then supports her opposition to Angelo with the backing of the man she loves.²² When Jonson stages the scene, Angelo chases and grabs at Rachel, but she strikes back and demands that he stop: “Touch not my body, with those impious hands” (5.8.3). In the face of Rachel’s attempts to reason with him by arguing the unavoidable dishonor his actions will bring to both of them, Jonson has Angelo offer a reasonable social solution: marriage (5.8.12). Jonson builds the tension by dramatizing the stages of the interaction. Angelo becomes incensed by Rachel’s refusal to consider his position, but he does not promise violence. Instead he continues to demand an answer to his repeated marriage offer. Her final refusal results in his attempts to manipulate her with socially sanctioned strategies of power negotiation: he curses her rejection, he calls her names, he reminds her of her beggarly status, and he announces that his love has turned to hate. Notably and in contradistinction to the misogyny claims critically raised against him, Jonson does not allow Angelo to resort to violence as Shakespeare’s Proteus did. Instead Jonson stages Angelo’s most aggressive move as a bluffed abandonment; Angelo pretends to leave Rachel alone to an unprotected fate in the forest only to hurry back to her again. Jonson diffuses the tension with Angelo’s honorable aside – “(This will not do, I must to her againe)” (5.8.33). When he returns, Angelo approaches Rachel’s kneeling, praying form, sinking to the ground to join her (an act that itself conventionally signaled the social contract

of betrothal) and perhaps even to touch and to hold her as he begs, “Do but heare me/ By heauen I loue you *Rachel*” (5.8.38-9). He never attempts to rape her.²³

Throughout the scene Jonson enables Rachel, unlike Shakespeare’s Silvia, successfully to resist Angelo with both her words and her actions. Jonson then stages her participation in her own protection, in her rescue, and in its aftermath; she speaks and is spoken to, and she impacts the outcome of the scene.²⁴ In both plays, the aggrieved woman’s lover watches the scene unfold. Whereas Shakespeare has Valentine step forward to stop the rape and then to forgive the rapist sixteen lines later, Jonson crafts a scene that more effectively conveys the emotional content of betrayal. In stark contrast to Shakespeare’s Valentine, when Jonson has Paulo leap into the thicket and even though Angelo has neither announced a violent intent nor acted in a physical manner toward Rachel, the stage directions instruct “<He [Paulo] flings Angelo off>” (s.d. 5.8.41). Paulo’s action effectively separates the two kneeling forms and breaks any social bond suggested by their physical position. Jonson emphasizes this physical separation or break with an emotional one, crafting a sequence in which Paulo breaks his friendship with Angelo. Paulo uses his “tongue [to] spit in thy deserued face” (5.8.45) and then, after dismissing Angelo by commanding him to “dig a graue/ ...to hide th<y> abhorred head!” (5.8.49-50), he addresses, unlike Valentine, comforting words of love to Rachel:

Sweet loue, thy wrongs haue beene too violent

Since my departure from thee, I perceiue:

But now true comfort shall againe appeare,

And like an armed angell guard thee safe

From th' assaults of couer'd villainy.

(5.8.51-4)²⁵

Jonson follows these lines of solace with additional action; Paulo socially rejects Angelo's behavior and Angelo himself. As Paulo announces that "this wretch" Angelo must be left "To his despaire" (5.8.57) and turns to leave the forest with Rachel, Angelo – as he had done to Rachel before – ignores the rejection and attempts to reason with Paulo again. Paulo is not appeased. He fulminates, he chastises, he curses. Angelo tries three times to request Paulo's forgiveness and the opportunity to "redeeme [his] lost opinion" (5.8.73), notably for an offense much less egregious than the one for which Shakespeare allows Valentine instantly to forgive Proteus, but Jonson's Paulo remains obdurate. Only under the combined persuasions of Rachel and Chamont – Rachel's last words in the play strive to placate an angry Paulo and to urge him to reconsider Angelo, "My Lord beleeeue him" (5.8.74) – does Paulo agree to give Angelo another chance to "hereafter proue more true" (5.8.78). With Paulo's acquiescence, Jonson stages forgiveness but not forgetfulness. Unlike Shakespeare, he does not silence and thereby sacrifice Rachel to friendship between men. He does not remake Angelo as he was before nor does he restore the friendship. The taint of broken trust remains and, in this way, Jonson intimates his primary critique of festive comedy's avoidance of verisimilitude and reliance on the fantastic to generate a falsely harmonious social unity. By the end of *The Case is Altered*, perfectly peaceful social accord appears the myth that all along Jonson argues it to be.

The Rachel-Angelo-Paulo scenes are not, however, the end of the play and, even as *The Case is Altered* introduces Jonson's critique of festive comedy, his artistic and theoretical concerns, and challenges acquiescence to cultural fantasy, Jonson completes his

play mostly in accordance with festive comedy's generic conventions. Of course, the very absurdity of Rachel's ability to attract every man in the play despite her limited stage time and dialogue mocks the central motif of festive comedy. So too does the absence at the play's conclusion of the staged marriages and feasting an audience would expect. Credit Jonson again with subtlety: the play's final scenes bring the community together, correct mistaken identities, restore families and arrange marriages, but they do so in a "tower of Babel!"-like (5.11.26) confusion that communicates the differences between rather than the similarities among the members of this play's social group and, by extension, in society as a whole.

During the final moments of the play, as would be expected of a comic heroine, Rachel (now the discovered/recovered Isabel) stands on stage in silent observation. As festive comedy dictates, the strength of her signal moment has been shrouded, and she is instead once more an object of discussion amongst the men.²⁶ Her newfound brother Chamont supports Paulo's desire to marry her "if your father [Count Ferneze]/ Giue his consent" (5.13.37-8). Those who had desired her throughout the play acknowledge the defeat of their suits. Note, however, that to the play's end Jonson allows Rachel to remain unpossessed, unknown. Upending the ways Rachel has been objectified by various men throughout the play, Jonson uses the closing speech to emphasize Rachel's complexity. When in Maximilian's goodbyes Jonson has the general request of Rachel, "Lady, I must be better known to you" (5.13.63-4), Jonson underscores Rachel's rise in social status, introduces a new suitor for his central character, and indicates that no one really knows Rachel...not her suitors, not her lover, not her own blood and, most significantly, not even the audience whose attention Jonson has focused on Rachel since the play's beginning.

Two Sisters: Aurelia and Phœnixella

As we have begun to see, Jonson, with his first play *The Case is Altered*, offers the basic tenets of his arguments about dramatic form, theory, and practice his battle with Shakespeare and his contemporaries will explore thoroughly. In addition to his critique of festive comedy, Jonson also introduces the development of his particular artistic theory, one based on verisimilitude and, consequently, the vagaries of social performance. Alongside Rachel, Jonson situates two other female characters, the sisters Aurelia and Phœnixella, whom he also crafts simultaneously to fulfill and to challenge festive comedy's stock types. As with Rachel, Jonson exposes the false notes in festive comedy, staging instead plausible, even observable, everyday interaction and reaction. In the characterization of the sisters, Jonson focuses on defining, socially scripted norms, suggesting the limits of such performances as well as the opportunity to modify generic, and even social, expectations. To each character, Jonson adds the particularity of situation; details, emotions, and philosophies he then layers onto the conventional types. He also gives Aurelia and Phœnixella stage time of their own: two scenes in which they figure as the only characters and, for Aurelia, command of the stage alone for two soliloquies.²⁷ Aurelia and Phœnixella, like Rachel, reveal Jonson's dissatisfaction with the festive comedy form. More importantly, they reveal Jonson's early attempts at characterizations of women whose variety, complexity and contradictions can be staged by dramatizing specifically situated identities and individuated personality traits and experiences.

Jonson begins the characterization of Aurelia and Phœnixella as expected: through the words of other characters. However, unlike the various descriptions that establish Rachel as a concept Jonson then uses to challenge festive comedy, the preview of the sisters begins

with their names. When the servants introduce them as “Maddam *Aurelia* & maddam *Phœnixella*, his daughters” (1.3.25-6), Jonson indicates their presence in the play and situates them in a specific context developed by the place, title and connection to the household revealed in the identity markers “maddam” and “daughters.” While the simplicity of this introduction articulates numerous possibilities for the sisters, before divulging any additional or secondhand information about them, Jonson adds the visual impression of their stage entrance. With their immediate entrance, Jonson opens interpretation of the women to the audience in a way he did not do with Rachel. They have different roles, in the play and for Jonson, than Rachel did.

In the first act, Aurelia and Phœnixella enter with their father Count Ferneze, the Milanese general Maximilian, and two servants. While they do not have any dialogue in this scene, they do participate in the stage business of searching for their brother, a search Jonson plays for laughs because the audience knows Paulo hides from the Count. As the hunt winds down, a well-placed stage direction provides a key to the ladies’ demeanor throughout the scene. Jonson’s specification “<Aurelia smiles>” (s.d.1.7.73) in direct response to Maximilian’s refutation of the Count’s opinion, his defense of himself, and his pontification on the essence of “a true man” (1.7.70-1) suggests her sense of humor and wit, her merriment and her flirtatiousness. The gesture is not lost on her father, who notes that her sly behavior at his expense is in keeping with her “habit”: “Go to, my merry daughter, ô these looks,/ Agree well with your habit, do thy not?” (1.7.74-5). The layers of meaning attendant on the word “habit” raise the social performance at the root of Jonson’s emerging artistic theory. Aurelia’s smile at once corresponds to the usual manner of behavior her father expects from her, repeats a pattern of action observed in her before, and alludes to the everyday

representation of self as presented for others' interpretation, first by external affects or costume.²⁸

When two scenes later her brother finally appears with his friends and her father pulls the General Maximilian aside for "a word in priuate" (1.9.22), Jonson adds voice to Aurelia's personality. She now speaks with wit and whimsy, the perfect foil for Jonson to use as he critiques the typical functions of women in the festive comedy genre. Jonson has Aurelia envy her brother's departure for the war in Maximilian's regiment and presents her "wish[ing] my selfe a man and go[ing] with you, only t'enjoy his presence" (1.9.25-6). With Aurelia, Jonson acknowledges and then dismantles the festive comedy conceit in which a woman disguises herself as a page to follow her love.²⁹ In response to Paulo's query, "do you love him so well sister?" (1.9.27), Jonson has Aurelia laugh and negate the notion: "No by my troth, but I haue such an odde prety apprehension of his humour me thinks: that I am eene tickled with the conceite of it. O he is a fine man" (1.9.28-30). As Jonson repudiates the cross-dressing convention, literally labeling it a conceit, he puts his audience on notice as early as Act One that his play critiques the popular genre. His suggestion that Aurelia cannot help but be drawn to the idea, the conceit, of disguising herself as a man undermines the power of the cross-dressing convention and emphasizes its frivolity rather than its explanation and use as a proof of deeply abiding love.³⁰

Jonson underscores the lightness of his treatment when he initiates a verbal battle of wits between Aurelia and Angelo. Angelo offers to Aurelia that he "thinks another [implicitly himself] may be as fine as he [Maximilian]" (1.9.31). Having characterized Aurelia as witty and whimsical, Jonson can have her see through Angelo's ploy and call him on it. In this way, Jonson uses Aurelia's ability correctly to interpret Angelo's offer of

himself for her consideration to skewer unconvincing social performance. Drawing attention to that performance with talk of manners and worth, Jonson has Aurelia censure false performance by rejecting Angelo. Jonson's riposte-laden dialogue highlights the performance game and unveils the false center in the love matches on which festive comedy depends. With the uses of double negatives – "beleue me, if I had not some hope of your abiding with vs, I should neuer desire to go out of black whilst I liued: but learne to speake i' the nose, and turne puritan presently" (1.9.34-7), Jonson emphasizes the roles and performances being constantly staged in daily human interactions.

Jonson then takes this staging of the gamesmanship of social performance one step further; he has Angelo suspect Aurelia of trying intentionally to "flout" (1.9.38) him, and he explicitly names the game. Flouting, rhetorically configured scorn expressed in satirical, witty writing and banter, was a wit game popular at court; Castiglione's model of witty female language was introduced to England with the translation of his *Courtier*.³¹ By using flouting in his play, Jonson at once demonstrates an understanding of contemporary, popular culture which supports his artistic theory whereby the theater should "show an image of the times" (*EMO* Pro.24) and also stages social performance and its role-playing gamesmanship in action. In this scene, the social performance is attempted, observed, acknowledged, applauded and rejected. With the enactment of the game, Jonson also establishes the complexity of Aurelia's character and personality. With her responses to Angelo and her coquettish refutation of Angelo's flouting, Jonson explicitly offers the variety of roles Aurelia can play successfully: page, mourner, puritan, reveler. The language itself exhibits the different qualities she can bring to her own performance: her confessional manner with her brother; her self-awareness of her personal desires; her communal status and intentional

social performance; her sexuality, flirtatiousness and wit. Jonson's characterization of Aurelia moves beyond type and stages an observable social phenomenon in which one successful "actor" adapts her performance to the situation in which she finds herself.

In the same scene, Jonson also uses a specific focus on performance to deepen his characterization of Phœnixella. Jonson begins with the stock character on which she is based. With Francisco's lecture to Phœnixella on the appearance of authenticity in performance as a frame, Jonson presents her as little more than a fulfillment of the La Penserosa-type:

Francisco: I, but Maddame,

Thus to declaime in all the affects of pleasure,

May make your sadnesse seeme too much affected,

And then the proper grace of it is lost.

(1.9.41-3)

With her response, Jonson moves beyond the type, indicating an understanding of grief as an act and of the potentiality of the presentation of one's own emotional constitution to be misinterpreted:

Phœnixella: Indeed sir, if I did put on this sadnesse

Onley abroad, and in Society,

And were in priuate merry; and quick humor'd;

Then might it seeme affected and abhord:

But as my lookes appeare, such is my spirit....

(1.9.44-8)

In simple and elegant language, Jonson offers a counter example of enactment, one which not only humanizes Phœnixella's heretofore stock character type by communicating that her behavior, unlike Aurelia's, is not an act but one which also argues that not all enactments are suspect or false performances. With his characterization of Phœnixella, Jonson demonstrates that public and non-public performances can match and that for some "as my lookes appeare, such is my spirit" (1.9.48). The initial observed performance, her enactment of the rituals of grief become, through repetition, the reality of her person.

Jonson portrays Phœnixella's outward show of grief as correspondent to an internal emotional landscape and, with the representation of her self-denial, her rejection of Francisco's invitation to pleasure and her certainty of self-expression, Jonson indicates a much greater depth of character – one based on the circumstances of specifically personal experiences – than that of the stock type with which he began. Aurelia and Phœnixella are, of course, still the coy maiden and the virtuous celibate, but they are also examples of social roles available for and enacted in such situations. Both women belong to an affluent house of mourning, and Jonson uses the situation to dramatize their choice of social performance and the effect of that choice on each of them. While Jonson plays with and to type, Phœnixella emerges the serious, mournful, melancholic celibate in direct contrast to Aurelia's dramatic, frivolous, and joyful flirt, and the audience apprehends the characters' complexities beyond festive comedy's types because Jonson stages interactions which enable the audience to trace the sisters' development.

The exchange between Francisco and Phœnixella also offers a distillation of the treatment of performativity that forms the foundation of Jonson's approach to characterization, one he will more fully develop in each of his subsequent plays. Characters

choose or “disclaime” various “affects” (1.9.41). Too much affect in either direction – the “all” (1.9.41) in this scene – exposes performance as “affected” rather than the effortless *sprezzatura* demanded of the ideal self-presentation. When the performance can be detected by observers positioned to judge the success or failure of such performance, “the proper grace of it is lost” (1.9.43). The judges then subject the performer to censure and ridicule designed and expected to mock a performer toward or back into the socially normalized performance. Francisco’s comment to Phœnixella enacts this censure to save her from the embarrassment of a marred performance and to instruct her how to fix it. The earlier interchange between Aurelia and Angelo also detects and labels aspects of performance. The censure of their exchange privileges ridicule as the impetus for improvement but does so without offering concrete guidelines for such change. In the interaction between Phœnixella and Francisco, Jonson exercises the punitive aspect of mockery as an influencing pressure shaping performance, personal action and presentation.

With Francisco’s statements, Jonson also provides a small-scale example – the roots – of what he will structure his comical satires to accomplish in their entirety; beginning with *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), Jonson’s plays will stage the social performances “of the times” (Pro.120), divulge the gaps in the performances, and then ridicule and censure in an effort to influence change. With Phœnixella’s response, Jonson explicates the social power of social performance. His distinction between inner “spirit” (*Case* 1.9.48) and outer affectation or appearance, between public – “onely abroad, and in Society” (1.9.45) – and non-public performances, unveils the performative aspect or the role-played act of the observer too. In *The Case is Altered*, Jonson begins to reveal the stakes and complexities of social performance. Watching and listening to Francisco and Phœnixella, we see Jonson’s

suggestion that successful social performance requires more than effortless grace because performance relies on its believability to observers who may have established themselves as judges. Unfortunately, those same judges, here represented by Francisco, may not be equipped to judge effectively because they too are caught up in affectation. With *Phœnixella*, Jonson stages, if not argues for, the possibility that matching inner and outer expression, public and private/non-public performance, is the most successful self-presentation.

Jonson also uses the recent death of Aurelia and *Phœnixella*'s mother and the socially prescribed duration of mourning, a situation with a socially dictated expectation of performance, to supply background detail for and complexity to his dramatization of the sisters. First mentioned by the servants (1.3.33ff), then the visitors to the Count's home (1.9.6ff), and then focused on by the family itself (1.9.81ff), the deceased Lady Ferneze, despite her complete physical absence from the play, remains a palpable presence, haunting the play like the specter of the mother in Jacques Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy." In Derrida's formulation, "if one looks hard enough as in those pictures in which a second picture faintly can be made out, one might be able to discern her [the absent mother's] unstable form, drawn upside-down in the foliage, at the back of the garden" (143). Jonson uses the absent-present shade of the deceased matriarch with its spirit of creativity, fertility, fecundity to serve his dramaturgical purposes. Her death provides the visual detail which dresses all the members of the Ferneze family in black and separates them from the other characters. Her death, the explanation of which continues in 1.9.6-13 with the arrival of other Milanese gentlemen, at once explains and deepens the emotional attitudes of the characters in mourning by balancing and exploiting the audience's understanding of death-related traditions, expectations with the

observable behaviors Jonson dramatizes. Her death and physically absent person factors into the plot as influence on the various characters³² and, when they discuss their mother and her death in detail in 2.3 and again in 4.2, as influence on the sisters specifically.

With the mourning situation developed, Jonson then stages the sisters' self- and social-awareness. Aurelia chafes under her "matrons colour'd blacke" (2.3.1), lamenting that it has changed them both: "How motherly my mothers death hath made vs" (2.3.2). Phœnixella chastises Aurelia, arguing that the three months since Lady Ferneze's death is "so little time" (2.3.12) for the "deep effects of sorrow" (2.3.11) to "be worne out" (2.3.12). When Jonson has Aurelia admit that she knows Phœnixella's interior and exterior match and then beg her sister to "be of a sleighter worke" (2.3.16), he demonstrates the effort required to maintain an affected performance.

Within the situated performances and dialogue, Jonson's particularizations of Aurelia and Phœnixella identify and acknowledge the plight of many women in early modern England. In Jonson's society, single women were dependents with limited choices; they could marry, live with relatives, or work as servants.³³ Jonson creates and reminds the audience of this additional situation when he has Aurelia lament that despite personal grief and the veracity of performance – her own, her sister's or any woman's – "of my word/ You shall be sold as deere, or rather deerer" (2.3.16-7). As the scene advances, Jonson dramatizes the precarious position of single women in early modern England while also providing the sisters the agency of choice. To Phœnixella, Jonson adds the desire to be a nun, to be "bound to *customes* and to *rites*" (2.3.18), and so stages one path a single woman of the time could choose. With Aurelia, Jonson presents other alternatives. Aurelia's self-analysis asserts she is "enclyned" (2.3.20) to resist the pressures of social influence on how she should act, to

cross the boundaries of social opinion, and to follow her own course of action: “Giue me the reines and spare not, as I do,/ In this my pleasurable appetite” (2.3.24-5).

Characterizing Aurelia as desiring and giving into a “pleasurable appetite” opens Jonson to attacks of misogyny from those who have not attended to the progress of the play. In this scene too, Jonson’s characterization goes beyond the two-dimensions of festive comedy’s chauvinistic type; he adds to his character’s developing layers of complexity with a speech that at once indicates the depth behind her mask and reveals her struggle between the required performance of a mourner and her “*nature*” (2.3.37).

I wept you saw too, when my mother dyed:
 For then I found it easier to do so,
 And fitter with my moode, then not to weepe.
 But now tis otherwise, another time
 Perhaps I shall haue such deepe thoughts of her,
 That I shall weepe a fresh, some tweluemonth hence,
 And I will weepe, if I be so dispos’d
 And put on blacke, as grimly then, as now;
 Let the minde go still with the bodies stature;
Iudgement is fit for Iudges, giue me nature.

(2.3.28-37)³⁴

As he does with Phœnixella in her earlier speech on the differences between affectation and spirit, public and non-public, in Aurelia’s speech Jonson conveys discomfort with an expected social performance and a desire to act as “*nature*” urges. Jonson suggests that the role of the mourner, like any other assumed role, will not be convincing – and will then need

to be censured – if it does not currently fit with one’s actual internal landscape. In his portrayal of emotion, Jonson expresses the pendulum swings of grief: sometimes tears – “fit” rather than faked – do offer relief; sometimes “tis otherwise.”

In this first play, Jonson also articulates the trap of social performance. In the demand to be what one is not, one risks becoming, through repetition that matches the internal reality to its external affect, the inauthentic act that one is not. As Jonson uses the Francisco-Phoenixella exchange to reveal the fallibility of judges, so too does he distinguish between judgment and nature in Aurelia’s speech. As Jonson’s words express her desire to align the body’s presentation with the workings of her mind rather than to follow the dictates of society or to strive to affect an external reality not her own, Jonson indicates his awareness of the positives and negatives of social performance. In these dramatizations of the contradictions of social performance and of the character’s awareness and reactions to them, Jonson begins to practice his evolving artistic theory, begins to “oppose a mirroure/ As large as is the stage, whereon we act” (*EMO* Pro.118-9) to his world.

Jonson’s exploration of social performance continues throughout his characterizations of Aurelia and Phoenixella. In Act Two, Jonson experiments with the full stage of revolving actors he will use to showcase-effect in the St. Paul’s scene of *Every Man Out*. As scene four of *Case* progresses, Jonson sets his characters in motion, bringing each to the front of the stage at various moments. Jonson’s crosscutting effect dramatizes the variety of social performances enacted for potential suitors, Aurelia with Angelo, Phoenixella with Francisco (2.4). Jonson deploys Aurelia’s wit and fiery nature to mock and to reduce Angelo in short, quick quips as she turns his words back on him, questions his sincerity, challenges his sexual stamina, and rejects his suit. The scene ends with a series of Jonsonian couplets (2.4.55-64)

in which Aurelia masterfully softens her rejection by emulating Angelo's own language games.

Aurelia: Masse then I feare me youle do strange things:

I pray you blame me not, if I suspect you,

Your owne confession simply doth detect you.

Nay and you be so great in *Cupids* bookes,

'Twill make me Iealous: you can with your lookes

(I warrant you) enflame a womans heart,

And at you pleasure take loues golden dart,

And wound the brest of any vertuous maide.

Would I were hence: good faith I am affraid,

You can constraine one ere they be aware,

To run mad for your loue!

Angelo:

O this is rare.

(2.4.54-64)

As Jonson stages Aurelia asking forgiveness of her suspicions, claiming her own jealousy and fear of his prowess, and stroking Angelo's male vanity by hyperbolizing his effect on women, he offers another dazzling array of roles for her performance. By providing such a short span for the various role changes, Jonson again focuses on the act itself. Performance – social and otherwise – takes on the energy of gamesmanship.

In Phœnixella's rejection of her suitor, Jonson offers something different: directness and awareness of the social performances at work. When Francisco tries to shame her into replacing her grief with pleasure, she claims the appropriateness of her behavior and disdains

his suggestion. When he regroups to equate grief and pleasure, she instructs him to avoid “the excesse of either” (2.4.30) and states her desire to live the life of a nun in “Deuine and sacred contemplation” (2.4.36). Maintaining his consistency of character between scenes, Jonson repeats Phœnixella’s previous interaction with Francisco, having her re-engage him with a serious and contemplative attitude. Jonson pierces the social performance completely when he has Phœnixella tell Francisco she sees through his performance and encourage him to embrace his inner spirit rather than this external affectation: “Those cerimonies are too common signior *Francis*,/ For your vncommon grauite, and iudgement,/ And fits them onely, that are nought but cerimony” (2.4.44-46).

As *The Case is Altered* draws to a close, Jonson’s particularities of character and challenges to social performance with regard to Aurelia and Phœnixella come into focus against the backdrop of the festive comedy form. Despite having rejected their Milanese suitors, new suitors in the guise of French captives appear. As he has done throughout the play, Jonson differentiates the sisters’ responses. In their second scene alone on stage, Jonson rotates their discussion around captives, love, death and duty. When Phœnixella, in seeming refutation of her previous characterization as a virtuous celibate, explains that she finds herself drawn to “this young Lord *Chamont*” (4.2.47), Jonson creates another opportunity for character growth beyond type. Jonson faces Phœnixella with a moment in which personal philosophy meets the challenge of desire inspired by the daily interactions of living. When Jonson shows Phœnixella rationalizing her attraction, “this young Lord *Chamont*/ Favours my mother, sister” (4.2.47-8), he dramatizes the vitality of human inconsistency and folds into his theatrical practice the complexity of our humanity.

As Jonson focuses Aurelia and Phoenixella's discussion on their materially and emotionally modified situation, Jonson emphasizes the action and reaction implicit in shaping character. Over ten lines, Jonson shows Aurelia taking great pleasure in teasing her sister about the contradiction between her newfound interest and her vows of chastity. Unable to convince Aurelia with the rationale she has been using on herself, the heretofore unflappable Phoenixella vents her frustration – "Go, go, you foole. Adiew." (4.2.62) – and quits the stage. Jonson's use of "foole" here is unclear. He seems to suggest multiple meanings contingent on a level of self-awareness ascribed to Phoenixella. The utterance offers an expression of the character's interiority. It indicates feelings of foolishness for feeling interest at all, for exposing said interest, for creating vulnerability by disclosing truthful emotion rather than maintaining the heretofore present social performance, for losing effortless affect and reacting to the taunting. It demonstrates a protective self-righteousness based on the character's myopic perspective in which Aurelia becomes the fool for not seeing Phoenixella's rationalized reason. By staging the particularities of such a seemingly inconsequential moment, Jonson articulates the ephemeral qualities and incomplete public and non-public performances which, when read together, create an entire character and, by extension, an entire person.

Jonson underscores this aspect of his artistic theory by leaving Aurelia to stand alone onstage to deliver her first soliloquy. Even though he prepares to couple his characters as festive comedy demands, he maintains Aurelia's self-awareness and focus on social performance. She acknowledges that her merciless treatment of Phoenixella masks her own realized contradiction – "Well I may iest, or so: but *Cupid* knowes/ My taking is as bad, or worse then hers" (4.2.63-4) – and then she recognizes that she has finally been ensnared by

love: “for I swear/ Till thou [Chamont] arriud’st, nere came affection here” (4.2.67-8). Of course, the suddenness and certainty of her love utilizes the festive comedy convention to propel the plot to its conclusion but, with its placement in Act Four only after the presentation of various other suitors, Jonson also mocks the genre’s repeated dependence on love at first sight. More importantly, he does not allow generic conventions to undermine the nuances of character he has crafted for Aurelia: this is no lovesick fool. Instead, even as Jonson describes her feelings for Chamont in a second soliloquy (4.11.74-81), an apostrophe to Venus and Fortune in which Aurelia begs divine intervention to “let him affect me/ Though father, friends, and all the world reiect me” (4.11.80-1), he also maintains the pragmatic reality of her unmarried situation on which he focused attention in Act Two. Despite her preference for Chamont, Jonson keeps Aurelia’s options open by continuing her flirtation with Maximilian.

Jonson’s various story lines converge in the house of Ferneze where he resolves them, for the most part, in traditional, festive comedy fashion.³⁵ When Aurelia and Phoenixella enter the final scene, the stage is already crowded with characters and their vociferous requests for the fulfillment of their desires. Everyone has been united in place if not yet in purpose. Jonson has now leveled the situation for the entire cast, and the sisters, like the rest of the characters, await the outcome. Jonson deviates only slightly from the comic form when the sisters speak to their father, to one another and in asides; ultimately and in acquiescence to convention, Jonson silences them 126 lines from the end of the play, and the trafficking in women that forges the alliances on which social harmony in festive comedy depends begins.³⁶ Predictably, the Count blesses the union of Rachel/Isabel to his son Paulo and gives Aurelia to Chamont: “in exchange of her,/ (If with your faire acceptance it may

stand)/ I tender my *Aurelia* to your loue” (5.13.41-2). In this, Jonson’s play replicates the ending of a festive comedy but, as he has throughout *The Case is Altered*, he also tweaks the form. The marriages are arranged, but not a single one is staged. There is no celebration of social harmony or cross-class equanimity. Instead, Jonson presents social unity as absent, deferred, and unlikely.

With the character Phœnixella, Jonson purposefully breaks the chain of marital pairings on which the form relies. Jonson removes the seeming contradiction to Phœnixella’s choice to remain unmarried when he validates – in a twist of festive comedy’s penchant for restored identities – her earlier rationalization for her attraction to the young Lord Chamont. He does, indeed, “favour [her] mother” (4.2.48) because he is her brother, the long lost Camillo now restored. With this creative decision, Jonson invalidates the expected marriage pairing. He then positions Phœnixella’s relief to be the last words spoken by any woman in this play.

With the end of his play, Jonson once again recognizes Phœnixella’s personal preference of celibacy and then takes another innovative step by supporting that choice. With Camillo no longer a possible suitor, convention would turn to Maximilian as the proper and available mate for the unattached Phœnixella. Instead Jonson deviates from the form, giving Maximilian words to convey his support of personal choice. Maximilian declares that he respects Phœnixella’s decision to be “a profest virgin” and resolves “I will be silent” (5.13.57) rather than push a suit. By leaving Maximilian and Phœnixella single and uncoupled, Jonson also denies the traffic in women he has just staged. *The Case is Altered* ends as Jonson’s dramatic career begins – challenging the very form he needed to master in order to break into the circle of playwrights working successfully in London. Looking back

on this beginning, Jonson decided to omit it from his 1616 *Works*, an omission which has been read repeatedly as a signal that he did not feel the play fit his impression of himself as dramatist and poet. Approaching the play through his nuanced characterizations of the play's women, however, reveals that the seeds of Jonson's artistic and theoretical innovations and challenges as well as his more flexible than acknowledged treatment of gender were already visible in this early drama. Re-examining *The Case is Altered* not only alters the case for when the innovative Jonson emerges but also demonstrates that the case for Jonson's supposed misogyny has altered too.

NOTES to CHAPTER ONE

¹ All quotations from *The Case is Altered*, unless specifically noted, can be found in Herford and Simpson 3: 93-190.

² Scholarly responses to *The Case is Altered* vary. Most discount the play as Jonson himself seems to have done when he made the decision to leave it out of his *Works* (1616). Jonson repeatedly expressed displeasure with his early comedies, as many as eight of which, as he told Drummond in 1618, were not in print. *Case* survives because of an unauthorized quarto publication in 1609. R.V. Young, for example, justifies his decision to dismiss *Case* by labeling it “a play that Jonson never attempted to acknowledge or preserve” (46). David Riggs describes the play as one that promises more than it delivers (29). In “True relation: the life and career of Ben Jonson,” Sara Van Den Berg says the play “begins in lack and explodes in excess: plot is piled on plot, words on words” (8). Russ McDonald notes that in *Case* Jonson attempted the kind of normative comedy in which Shakespeare specialized (*Shakespeare* 17-24). For Anne Barton, despite her assertion that “Jonson’s art was always both more untidy and larger than he consciously knew” (28), *The Case is Altered* “courts irrelevance” (32.)

The most recent scholarly approach to the play returns to John Jacob Enck’s position that *The Case is Altered* is a promising early work (“*The Case*”). In particular Enck saw in *Case* roots of Jonson’s later artistic developments, especially satire, and continued to discuss the play’s focus on identity and the deceptiveness of appearances (*Jonson* 21-34). Taking up Enck, Robert L. Mack champions attention to *Case* as an introduction to Jonson’s mature comedy (47-64). I agree with Enck and Mack. Perhaps the closeness with which Jonson replicated the conventions of festive comedy despite the glimpses of his own developing artistic theory explains his decision to omit *The Case is Altered* from the canon he tried to create for himself.

³ For the literary history of the Patient Griselda figure – the faithful, subservient, obedient woman – traced from oral tradition to the English Renaissance, see Hull 82-3, 119, 143, 230.

⁴ According to Bednarz, “in Jonson’s purge of festive comedy, the promise of the wedding feast that concludes *Every Man In* degenerates into a violent tavern scene in *Every Man Out*” (63). Coupling becomes disintegration of marriage; irrational attraction of unmarrieds complicated by misalliances ending happily becomes the husband’s discovery of a wife’s infidelity. “By revising this pivotal motif, he [Jonson] challenged Shakespeare’s concession to desire at the expense of judgment” (63). For a complete discussion of Jonson’s specific challenges to Shakespeare’s concessions to desire at the expense of judgment, see Bednarz 55-81.

⁵ For a summary of the criticism about *The Case is Altered*, see Brooks 126 and Evans 279. Two single editions of the play have been released recently: a General Books LLC Optical Character-read edition complete with “typos and missing text” in December 2009 and a Nabu Press edition in February of 2010. Neither are critical editions.

The single article on *Case* in the past decade is John Mulryan's focus on classical sources and the literary lessons Jonson learned from them. Mack's 1997 article is the second most recent examination of *Case*.

⁶ For their explanation for inclusion, see Herford and Simpson: "Was *The Case is Altered* written as a whole by Jonson? Neither external nor internal evidence allows of a quite cogent reply. But we seem to be justified in laying down, first, that he almost certainly wrote considerable sections of it, especially those founded on the *Aulularia*, and exhibiting the 'humours' of the miser; secondly, that there is not party which he might not have written, and that the play as a whole is such as we should expect from a man of his temperament, proclivities, and training, adapting himself, at the outset of his career, to a vogue only partially congenial to him" (1:325-6). Scholars and editors follow Herford and Simpson, including *Case* in Jonson's complete works.

⁷ My italics. The work of Enck and Mack are critical heights in the critical history of *Case*. Enck made his suggestion in 1953. No one listened. Enck presented his position again in 1966. It was not picked up by another scholar until Mack in 1997.

⁸ While Mack's argument for the value of beginning with *Case* as a "possible and suitable introduction" (61) to Jonson's work parallels my own, I follow Enck rather than Mack because Mack's focus is on the connection between *Case* and Jonson's "mature comedy" (61), specifically *Volpone*, *Bartholomew Fair* and *The Alchemist*. While my argument also asserts beginning with *Case*, I focus on the development of Jonson's artistic theory and its specific impact on Jonson's dramatizations of gender in his subsequent plays.

⁹ For a discussion of Jonson's use of festive comedy, his life experience and see of humor see Van Den Berg 8-9 and 12.

¹⁰ Principles here mean both the precepts of the love story and the major players in it.

¹¹ I am grateful to Anne Barton for the parallels between Aurelia, Phoenixella and the stock characters of Latin drama. For the beginning of her discussion of Jonson's "a little more individuality" for the sisters, see Barton 34. Barton's *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* considers the whole of Jonson's dramatic output in an attempt to get at some of the reasons for Jonson's greatness (ix-xii). While throughout she touches briefly on Jonson's female characters, her focus reclaims his later comedies, jettisoning the derogatory notion of his "dotages" in favor of an explanation of the plays that argues Jonson's nostalgia for "a long vanished Elizabethan world" (44).

Despite Mulryan's claim to "focus on a major and a minor feature of New Comedy, (a) Women as Stock Characters and (b) Props" (119), he rehearses tired misconceptions about Jonson and gender, discounting all the women of the play in a two short paragraphs and then perpetuating the same critical commonplace which demonstrates lack of attention to the actual work: in this case *Case* itself.

¹² See Barton 31-44. Barton designates the number of lines for Rachel as thirty-seven, but by my count she has forty-seven: eight in 1.10, two in 2.1, 10 in 4.6, 3 in 4.7, 5 in 5.3, and 19 in 5.8. Because Rachel is mentioned or appears in nearly every scene, she is a constant presence in the play. By contrast, Silvia, Rachel's parallel in Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, appears in six scenes and speaks 134 of the play's 2199 lines. Not Silvia but Julia with her four soliloquies, her active pageboy disguise (she will end the play still dressed as a man) and the third most lines (after Proteus and Valentine) of any character in the play is the heroine of Shakespeare's play. For the number of lines spoken by characters in each of Shakespeare's play see Harbage 77-78.

¹³ Silvia and Rachel are both pursued by friends of their preferred lover: Valentine's Proteus and Paulo's Angelo. The similarities, however, end here. The women seem to be from different social classes, and Rachel is a more active figure. Angelo and Paulo also differ significantly. Unlike Proteus, Angelo does not abandon another lover to pursue his friend's choice. He is characterized as a lothario by the Count and the sisters but, despite lusting after and attempting to steal Rachel, Angelo willingly offers to marry her. See also Barton 35. For parallels to *The Merchant of Venice*, see Mack 53-4. For parallels to Shakespeare's early comedies, see McDonald 26-7.

¹⁴ Barton argues that "Jonson provided the boy playing the part with very little opportunity to demonstrate just why the beggar's supposed daughter should be so irresistible" (34), but it is Jonson's mockery of the form that creates her attractiveness. There is no exotic or magical secret to Rachel's desirability as the conventions of festive comedy dictate (cf. all of the prince's men to the ladies in *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Shrew's* Lucentio to Bianca, *Comedy's* Antipholus to Lucianna); rather, for Jonson, Rachel's role supplies an opportunity to demonstrate that for any potential lover the enticement to love rests on the way said lover sees him or herself revealed against his or her desired conquest.

¹⁵ Cf. Shakespeare's line – Proteus: "In love/ Who respects friend?" (*TGV* 5.4.53-4). All quotations from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* can be found in Greenblatt et al. 103-58. Jonson moves the concept behind Proteus's question to the middle of his play, 3.1, in the soliloquy in which Angelo reveals his premeditated action against Paulo's faith and Rachel's chastity. Jonson's modification provides a motivation and thus a realistic foundation for Angelo's action whereas Proteus's betrayal remains unexplainable.

¹⁶ The similarity between the father-daughter pairings of Jaques and Rachel, Shylock and Jessica are unmistakable. Illuminating his consideration of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (1596-8) while writing *Case*, Jonson alludes to Shylock's "Hath a Jew eyes?" speech. Jonson's reference appears in Angelo's speech on his lust for Rachel: "S'blood am not I a man?/ Have I not eyes that are free to look?/ And blood to be enflamed..." (3.1.11-13). As Jonson borrowed from Shakespeare, Shakespeare borrowed from Jonson. Paulo's query, "Where is your father?" (3.1.5), appears in *Hamlet* (3.1.130) when Hamlet's questioning of Ophelia's honesty reveal his recognition of her father's influence. In each of the plays, the questions shift the focus away from the lovers to the network of social connections in which they are situated. After Jonson's Poets' War attacks, Shakespeare's dramatic responses were

shaded with darker and more realistic elements ultimately more conducive to his tragedies. See Bednarz *Shakespeare*.

¹⁷ In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Proteus commands Julia not to cry and she exits, in silence, without response: “The tide is now. Nay, not thy tide of tears,/ That tide will stay me longer than I should./ Julia, farewell. What, gone without a word” (2.2.14-6). In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia and Bassanio’s goodbye is equally abrupt and devoid of personal reaction. After Bassanio reads Antonio’s letter aloud, Portia encourages: “O, love! Dispatch all business and be gone;” Bassanio replies: “Since I have your leave to go away/ I will make haste” (3.2.320-2), and the scene ends.

¹⁸ For factual evidence of the dependence of an unmarried woman in Renaissance English on her relatives, see Crawford and Gowing, Gordon 49-62 and Prior 93-117. Cf. Jonson’s characterization of the Jaques/Rachel relationship to the Shylock/Jessica relationship in *Merchant*.

¹⁹ Throughout *Case*’s “rape” scene, Jonson transforms Silvia’s “O heaven” for his own purposes, mocking the unrealistic and ineffective response given to Silvia in a very dire situation. The allusive “heaven” reverberates throughout the attack scene, most pointedly in Rachel’s rejection of Angelo’s marriage proposal: “To marry me? O heaven” (5.8.14). Jonson also has Rachel thank “you heavenly powers” (5.8.31) when Angelo abandons her in the woods and Angelo swear his love “by heaven I love you Rachel” (5.8.39) when he returns.

²⁰ For the critical history, commentary and performance solutions attempting to resolve the issue of the final scene, see Bowden 18-32, Carroll 49-65, Howard 77-83, Mack 54, Schlueter, Intro et al. 141-52 and Small 23-32.

²¹ For her complete discussion of the mutual influential relationship between female agency and female self-determination, see Findlay 87-126.

²² Mack mistakenly asserts that “Characteristically, Jonson appears to have little or no concern for reassuring the audience with regard to Rachel’s ultimate safety, whereas Shakespeare, of course, goes out of his way to reveal Valentine hiding among the nearby trees” (54). Jonson’s text clearly offers Paulo’s presence and participation in the scene, immediately demonstrating Paulo’s direct action as opposed to Valentine’s ineffectual observance:

Rachel: “Pray forbear,/ O that my Lord Ferneze were but here.

Angelo: “Sblood and he were, what would he do?”

Paulo: “This would he do base villain: <He flings Angelo off.>...

Thou monster, even the soul of treachery!”

(5.8.39-43)

²³ While it is a critical commonplace to characterize Jonson’s dramatic representations of women as misogynistic and while occasionally Jonson does stage the

exchange of women amongst men, in his plays – unlike those of his contemporaries – Jonson does not traffic in violence against women. In this scene, Rachel raises Paulo’s memory, Angelo discounts him, and Paulo himself arrives to break rather than to participate in the transaction between his friend and his love. Similarly, in the examples repeatedly cited by critics as proofs against Jonson – Celia’s attack in *Volpone* (1606) and both the revelation that the Silent Woman is actually a man and the power of the Ladies Collegiate in *Epicoene* (1609), Jonson repudiates the purported violence. Bonario – not unlike Paulo – leaps from hiding to rescue Celia before anything can happen to her, and the scene itself is Jonson’s indictment of false acts and social climbing on the parts of Volpone and Corvino. In *Epicoene*, the crossdressing twist at the play’s center provides a theoretical exposé of the permeable and affected nature of gender the Ladies Collegiate subplot stages in practice. Jonson provides more explicit refutations in his later plays, see, for example, *The Devil is an Ass* (1616). In this play, Jonson stages the violence sanctioned by marriage when he has Wittipol champion rather than further exploit Lady Frances against the verbal and physical abuses of her husband.

By contrast, Shakespeare not only stages but relies on violence to women in a significant number of his plays. In addition to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, rape appears in *Titus Andronicus*, *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*. Sex as unequal conquest and control appears in *Taming of the Shrew*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Measure for Measure*, *All’s Well that Ends Well*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Richard III*, *Othello*, and *Pericles*. Physical violence and death wounds and kills women in *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Winter’s Tale*.

²⁴ Mulryan claims that “Aside from some high-flown rhetoric when Angelo attempts to seduce her (5.8.2-5), Rachel plays almost no part in her own future” (124), yet it is clear from the first staged interaction between the lovers that Paulo not only is Rachel’s choice but also that she will both assert and act on that choice. What Mulryan dismisses without analysis as “high-flown rhetoric” provides Jonson’s character with an agency its Shakespearean counterpart, Silvia, does not have, and in the aftermath of the attack Jonson has Rachel use her influence to resolve the conflict between the friends rather than being the exchanged property which solidifies the male bond.

²⁵ While these lines reassure Rachel and the audience, they also counter Mack’s assertion that “Jonson appears to have little or not concern for reassuring the audience with regard to Rachel’s ultimate safety, whereas Shakespeare...” (54).

²⁶ It is unfortunate that this play has but the seeds of Jonson’s gender playfulness. In accordance with the genre demands, Jonson silences Rachel as soon as she and Paulo become an affianced love match rather than *after* she becomes the noble Isabel. *Case* provides a rare example in the Jonson oeuvre of a woman silently circumscribed by marriage. Over the course of his dramatic career, Jonson stages marriage as a quotidian social element of existence rather than a dramatic end designed to create social harmony. In his subsequent plays, he undermines the unrealistic silence Act 5 marriages impose on women, critiques and

challenges the goals of wooing and winning, and stages the challenges of male-female interactions post-marriage. See also n. 23.

²⁷ The only other character in *Case* with two soliloquies (Aurelia's soliloquies appear in 4.2.64-68 and 4.11.74-81) is Jaques (2.1.1-50 and 3.5.1-28). Jonson writes three additional soliloquies, one each for the Count (2.6.35-44), Angelo (3.1.1-23) and Chamont (4.4.17-31).

²⁸ The two readings of "habit" – at once (1) any garb one wears as well as particular dress/clothes designating a specific rank, profession or religious order and also (2) a disposition or tendency; a practice, custom or usage; bearing, conduct, or mental make-up; a usual manner of behavior; and such a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition – symbolize and literalize the social performance whereby what is at first put on or affected is repeated until internalized and seemingly natural.

²⁹ Three plays later, in *Cynthia's Revels or the Fountain of Self-Love* (1600), Jonson will again mock the pageboy disguise convention. See Chapter Four discussion of Gelaia.

³⁰ This moment continues Jonson's allusions to the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. See all of *TGV*'s 2.7 in which Julia, unable to bear being without her love Proteus, decides to follow him – "with love's wings to fly" (2.7.11) – in the disguise of a "well-reputed pageboy" (2.7.43).

³¹ For more information on flouting, see Clarke 37-53 and Castiglione. Note that 108 editions of *The Courtier* were published in England between 1528-1616 alone.

³² Lady Ferneze's absent presence influences the servants, the sisters, and the Count. For example, the Count's love and concern for Lady Ferneze is given as both the reason he lost his first son Camillo (because he loved his wife too much (1.9.81)) and his second son (because he loved his wife too little (3.4.29-54)).

³³ For discussion of the limited choices available to single women in Renaissance England, see Gordon 49-62, Prior 93-117 and Crawford and Gowing 73-104.

³⁴ Ben Jonson has not yet written the poem "On My First Daughter" in response to the loss of his first daughter Mary in 1601 or "On My First Son" after the death of his namesake in 1603, but already he communicates a depth of understanding about grief, love and loss. For father-son relationships in *Case*, see Barton 36-43. For an analysis of the poems in discussion with Jonson's personal history, see Riggs 86 and 315 and Miles *Life* 26.

³⁵ This is the moment in which Van Den Berg's description of the play as one which "begins in lack and explodes in excess" (8) seems most apt.

³⁶ The generic feature of festive comedy genre whereby heroines stand on stage after they have been gifted in marriage renders disingenuous Barton's claim that "His reduction of

Rachel to a mute character at what is, after all, the most consequential moment of her life, surprises” (39). Consider, for example, Robert Greene’s Margaret in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589) standing silent for the last 43 lines of the play and Helena and Hermia in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1595) entering for the final two scenes or 378 lines to stand in silent observance. It is worth remembering, for the women in *Case* and, more importantly, for those yet to come in Jonson’s career, that “[i]t is a characteristic Jonsonian technique that a silent character (whom it is easy to forget in reading the text of the play) is not necessarily one to be ignored in a staging or reduced to being merely a player who makes up the overall scenic picture” (Cave 289).

CHAPTER TWO

A Marriage of Convenience:

Theory, Practice, and *Every Man [and woman] In His [and her] Humour* (1598)

Kno'well: Wrong not the quality of your desert with looking downward, coz; but hold up your head, so; and let the idea of what you are be portray'd i' your face, that men may read i' your physnomy: "Here, within this place, is to be seen the true, rare and accomplish'd monster, or miracle of nature"—which is all one.

(*EMI* 1.2.104-9)¹

In the same year Ben Jonson wrote *The Case Is Altered* (1598), he finished *Every Man In His Humour* (1598). Whether attributable to the theatrical success of *Case*, to the capitalization in the play's title on the currently fashionable concept of humours, to Shakespeare's championing of his new play, or to a combination thereof, *Every Man In His Humour* became Jonson's first play mounted for the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the Globe theater.² Like *Case* before it, *Every Man In*'s critical history discusses its festive comedy roots. Unlike *Case*, however, *Every Man In*'s more overt and caustic critiques make its differences from festive comedy more pronounced than its similarities.³ In *The Case Is Altered*, Jonson challenges festive comedy's dramatic form and experiments with staged representations of social performance; in *Every Man In His Humour*, Jonson pushes the medium and his dramatic practice further still, sharpening his mockery to satire, shifting the focus from plot to character, and situating social pretense and performance as the foundation of characterization.

Marrying Off Festive Conventions

Every Man In His Humour retains traditional genre elements of character: the cunning servant, the challenging son, the anxious and obsessing father, the domestic cuckold, the

eloping couple. However, by dramatizing characters' social interactions in the course of a single day rather than concentrating on a central love relationship, Jonson creates a completely original plot focused on every day, observable human behavior.⁴ In *Every Man In*, the middle- and working-class characters with which Jonson populates the stage congregate not to woo or to couple but to compete, to undermine, and to one-up one another. Jonson's plot revolves around the house of the jealous merchant Kitley. His wife Dame Kitley and his sister Bridget maintain the domestic space and entertain (or are entertained by) the companions of Dame Kitley's brother Wellbred while Kitley works outside the home. The group of riotous if harmless gallants turns Kitley's house into a "common mart,/ A theater, a public receptacle/ For giddy humour and diseases riot" (2.1.57-9), and through this situation Jonson develops and stages not only the evolution of Kitley's jealous humour and the subsequent resulting actions but the idiosyncrasies, humours, and resulting actions of each character in the play. Dame Kitley emerges as the character through whom Jonson exemplifies mastery of the layers of social performance and gamesmanship.

In addition to changing the temporal (one day) and spatial (one city) conventions in his new play, Jonson alters the situation of the female characters. In keeping with the generic features of festive comedy, Jonson makes his three, *Case is Altered* female characters available, single women whose dependence on their fathers produces the expectation (albeit one ultimately undermined by Jonson) that their sanctioned marriages will result in a celebration of social harmony at play's end. For *Every Man In*, Jonson transforms the dynamics of the family situation. Only Kitley's sister Bridget, residing in the home of and relying on her brother and his new wife, has marriage prospects. Significantly, Jonson characterizes Dame Kitley and Tib, the play's remaining female characters, as already

married. These changes amplify the potential for division and disunity rather than social harmony, another of Jonson's challenges to festive comedy, and they indicate his continued move toward comical satire.

The addition of marital status as a character detail marks a crucial shift in Jonson's treatment of gender for the stage.⁵ Married women, of course, undermine the central tenet of festive comedy: the attraction, wooing, winning and ultimate marriage of a central couple. When Jonson trades the traditional female role which commodifies women for exchange between men for roles in which women function as participating members of a bustling social scene – Dame Kitely runs the household, Tib works alongside her husband the water bearer, Jonson revises the parameters of his dramatic practice. His creative decision to characterize women and men as equally flawed and inconsistent in themselves and in their complicated relationships to community unifies his approach to characterization. Jonson's dramatic practice now offers an artistic theory balanced between observable details, social expectations, and situational experiences, reactions, and performances in characterization.

Such an artistic theory, of course, explodes festive comedy and its formal and unrealistic demands. Marriage now no longer functions as the play's end in either the literal or figurative sense. Because his comedy no longer requires marriage for its dramatic resolution, Jonson circumvents festive comedy's traditional end point for female characters who, once circumscribed by marriage, continue to stand on stage without anything to do or to say.⁶ Jonson's characterization of married women breaks that silence. In *Every Man In*'s exploration of women as social participants equally invested as men in the daily machinations of existence, striving and competition, Jonson advances an artistic theory based on observation. His need to dramatize

...deeds and language such as men do use,
 And persons such as Comedy would choose
 When she would show an image of the times,
 And sport with human follies not with crimes

(*EMI* Pro. 21-4)

brings the variety of the roles women play in life to their roles on his stage.⁷

The Characters of Time and Place

The two versions of *Every Man In His Humour*, the First Quarto (Q, 1601) and the First Folio (F, 1616), emphasize Jonson's investment in and focus on his contemporary England.⁸ Significant critical work explores the differences between the two: namely the change of Q's Italianate setting and character names to F's English locale and nomenclature, several cuts designed to streamline the action of the play especially in the culminating scene, the removal of religious oaths and references, and the tightening of characterization.⁹ In his parallel-text edition, J.W. Lever suggests that Jonson's revisions add "fresh insights" to the characterization of the play's various male characters, but he fails to include considerations of the play's three women.¹⁰ This absence indicates both the overall lack of critical attention generally paid to Jonson's female characters and the consistency between the characterizations of the women in Q to F. By explicitly shifting the play's setting to England in the Folio edition, Jonson emphasizes the English particularities already present in the quarto play and recovers the very Englishness on which his developing artistic theory depends. The clarification of the quarto's implicit details deepens Jonson's characterizations. For this reason, I use the specifically English, Folio-version of *Every Man In* throughout this chapter.

The consistency between the female characters in Q and F must not, however, be mistaken for an example of what Feminist and Shakespearean scholar Phyllis Rackin has called the “anachronistic location” (116) of women in Renaissance dramatic texts.¹¹ According to Rackin, despite settings which evoke a past history or which place the scene in such removed locations as Italy or France, playwrights, while creating their female characters, used anachronistic details of speech and dress that evoked their contemporary England. Fixing a contemporary identity immediately recognizable to the women in the audience regardless of time or place, she argues, suggests that women are everywhere and always the same (Rackin 116-7).¹²

We see examples of Rackin’s anachronistic location in Jonson’s first play: Rachel, Aurelia, and Phœnixella could be of any time. While critics could argue that the English markers in the quarto/Italian-setting version of *Every Man In* act the same way, the detailed specificity of the play’s 1598 time period situates the play and its characters in Jonson’s present.¹³ The revision that localizes place as well as time to contemporary London recovers the quarto’s specificity and counters the universalizing power of type. Jonson’s individuated female characters with all their quirks and particularities demonstrate that Jonson does not base his characterization solely on gender but rather on interaction and performance appropriate to the situations in which he places his characters.¹⁴ The masterstroke of Jonson’s dramatic craftsmanship is his specificity and unity of character and dramaturgy, his attention to the smallest detail. The entire action of *Every Man In* occurs on a single day within the walking area of a single city; the play’s interactions and dialogue explicitly mark the passage of the day’s twelve hours from early rising, morning business, and the breakfast

bell to the opening of the Exchange, afternoon meetings at Kately's and Clement's, and the departure for supper.

A thorough examination of how the revisions which "Englished" *Every Man In* change his female characters evidences how Jonson treatment of gender challenges Rackin's description of the anachronistic and stereotypical characterization in the work of other Renaissance playwrights and their female characters. A signal revision, Jonson renames his characters. Q's Bianca, the play's most prominent female character remains a beautiful and recently married woman with a rabidly jealous husband, but Jonson no longer calls her Bianca, reintroducing her instead in F as Dame Kately. This revision distances Jonson from festive comedy and eliminates the allusions to whiteness, goodness and purity which, present in the name Bianca, suggest objectification and idealization that dehumanize rather than individuate female characters. By contrast, the allusiveness of the "Kately" name strengthens the character, offering the majesty of graceful flight whether the suggested kite be artistic creation or hunter hawk. The hawk also symbolizes power, vision and protection.

With the name Dame Kately, Jonson adds age and gravitas to the character and connects her more closely to her family network. Standing alone as only a first name, "Bianca" reads as single woman with that status's implied availability. "Bianca" is, then, a free-floating signification that the addition of the paterfamilias "Kately" refocuses. The revised character name "Dame Kately" also concentrates attention on the character's marital status, her position as a wife and as a member of the Kately family. At the same time, the addition of title "Dame" conveys rank, station and authority not possible in the simple name Bianca. Placing the play's most prominent female character into the hierarchy of status and rank – a hierarchy sanctioned by law and religion and reinforced by social interaction and

custom, Jonson specifically expands her characterization beyond the hierarchical limitations of gender only. The unique set of experiences on which Jonson draws to develop the Dame Kately character is now explicitly influenced by social and economic class. Jonson reveals Dame Kately's awareness and successful negotiation of the social performances, the roles demanded by these situations throughout his characterization of her.

Jonson also renames the other female member of the Kately household. Dame Kately's sister-in-law, the Q's unmarried and exotically named Hesperida, becomes Mistress Bridget. This revision replaces a fantastical Greek allusion with a typically English name. The name Hesperida refers to the daughters of Atlas, the Hesperides, nymphs who guarded the trees with the golden branches, golden leaves and coveted golden apples.¹⁵ The original name, then, suggests a young woman who, while available, must be difficult to approach and to procure. She seems a prize to be coveted and protected and, like a Bianca, an object rather than a person. Jonson maintains Bridget's role in the play as the only woman of marriageable status and recasts the "Hesperian" (*EMI* 1.1.184) allusion as an early reference in the play to Old Kno'well's too careful guard on the son Edward Kno'well who will ultimately relieve Mistress Bridget of her single status. Having replaced the exotic allure of Hesperida with the solid English moniker Bridget, Jonson now relies on the situation of the play and Bridget's interactions with prospective suitors rather than the allusiveness of a name to convey her character.

The revision which transforms Hesperida to Bridget emphasizes an English identity.¹⁶ The title "Mistress" undermines the formalized powerlessness of the available female in festive comedy. The titular mistress maintains power, control and authority over others in her service (the servants of the Kately household, the gallants), over artists (loosely the gallants

turning Kitley's home into a "theater") and, with influence, over her brother.¹⁷ Jonson's name change specifies Bridget's place within a social class and a power structure and eschews the last vestiges of festive comedy's objectification. Jonson unfolds Bridget's character not with nominal allusions, stock character assumptions, festive comedy magic but with social interactions and reaction.

While the names Bianca and Hesperida match the Italian setting of the quarto even as their other character details and dialogue suggest early modern England, Jonson did not make a similar attempt to code his portrayal of *Every Man In*'s working class couple Cob and Tib. Misplaced and discordant in the Italianate version, Cob and Tib sound, act and look like "undisguised Cockneys."¹⁸ They, like all the other characters in Jonson's play, are decent householders, working and middle class people bonded by social situation, interaction and aspiration. As with his other characters, Jonson's decision to change the setting of his play to London recovers the particularity of his characterization of the water-bearer and his wife. Tib remains Tib, and the simplicity of her name suggests the working class position Jonson specifies for her in society and creates for her in the play.¹⁹ The additional layers Jonson crafts for the Tib character focus on her social class, her employment, and her interactions with others in her community. In this way, Jonson extends audience identification with her character, like those of Dame Kitley and Mistress Bridget, beyond a fixed identity based on a hierarchy of gender. Jonson's decision to craft his characters through their interactions with one another evolves each from a universalized and conventional stereotype to the particular, personal and individuated character.²⁰ As a character, then, Tib, like Bianca/Dame Kitley and Hesperida/Bridget, develops in the details and through the situatedness of the

experiences Jonson creates for her, and all three of his female characters, in turn, demonstrate the continued development of Jonson's artistic theory.

And so, even as the very contemporaneity of the London context Jonson employs to situate and to localize his women in their contemporary historical, social, economic and familial networks belies anachronism and challenges stereotype, it may have also made it more difficult for modern readers and audiences to appropriate his characters for our own contemporary uses. This last point – the specificity of Jonson's characterization with its reliance on his own historical and geographical context – provides an answer to the question of why Jonson's plays are rarely read or revived for the contemporary stage. Despite Rackin's criticisms of character uniformity beyond time and place, then, Jonson's lack of an easily accessible universalism may explain why his female characters are not, like Shakespeare's, embraced by feminists, critics, readers and students.

That said, the three female characters in *Every Man In His Humour* mark another step in Jonson's transition from stock types to individualized women who differ one from another. Each character develops greater detail within the tight structural configuration of the single day. Jonson's choice of dramatic structure enables him to situate Dame Kitely, Bridget and Tib within a very particular set of social circumstances and interactions, and his decision to relocate the action of the play to a day in social London emphasizes the multiplicity of identity rather than fixing it in a single frame. As we watch the female characters interact with different social groups in different social settings, "what we are invited," as Richard Allen Cave argues about *Every Man In*'s entire cast of characters, "to contemplate at length is people's social behaviour, how this relates to their private conceptions of themselves and how such potential disjunctions within individuals can lead to disturbing the sense of

community amongst a social group” (288). Jonson’s artistic theory, his demand for verisimilitude, forces his challenge to festive comedy, and his female characters exemplify the challenge and the innovation.

What’s in a Dame?

Of the three women in *Every Man In*, Dame Kately is Jonson’s most layered achievement. Following the dramatic pattern he established with his first extant play, *The Case is Altered*, Jonson once again introduces his female characters through advance descriptions provided by other characters in the play. In this way, Jonson leads his audience to discover, position, and even begin to determine his characters before it actually observes them. With Dame Kately, Jonson uses this dramatic practice to situate the character in a network of familial, economic and social ties *before* he begins to challenge her seemingly fixed identity with the various layers of characterization Dame Kately’s stage performance, and most specifically her knowingly enacted social performances, will reveal. In this play, a calculated second step away from the conventions of festive comedy, Jonson creates and elevates a female lead who can read and understand the social performances around her while effortlessly participating in the social game herself. In *The Case is Altered* with the sisters Aurelia and Phoenixella, Jonson introduces and tests awareness of and successful participation in social performance as a method of individuating character. In *Every Man in His Humour* Jonson presents Dame Kately, a woman who personifies the grounded self-possession and self-awareness that can resist the absurdities of social pretension while performing as necessary in a variety of social circumstances.

According to the other characters in the play, Dame Kately is the sister of “Master Wellbred? A young gentleman is he not?” (1.1.137) and the cantankerous Master Downright,

the daughter of a squire, and the wife of “Master Kitely...the rich merchant i’ the Old Jewry” (1.1.138-9). She is also the hostess and overseer of her husband’s household, entertaining those who “useth every day to a merchant’s house” (1.3.65) and chaperoning her sister-in-law in their presence. As she enjoys the entertainment the friends of her brother Wellbred and, consequently, potential suitors to Bridget supply, Dame Kitely is also a “jeer[ing] and tee-hee[ing]” (1.3.73) audience to those who perform in her home.²¹ Notice that from the first act of the play, Jonson establishes that Dame Kitely recognizes and appropriately responds to false social performances and ambitions.

Bringing together the public and the private, Jonson focuses our attention on the various roles each character/person enacts, asking us to consider how those roles inform, even determine, character and identity. In her capacity as sister, Dame Kitely binds the various men of the play together as a family, enabling their mutual reliance and the calls for aid that will propel the plot of the play. As a rich merchant’s wife, she conveys a level of productivity and capability that commands deference. As a hostess, chaperone and audience, she provides a social center around which others may perform and interact. Her reactions to the entertainments align her with and provide a stage representative for Jonson’s own audience of jeering censors and their laughing plaudits.²² With its openness to visitors, a sister-in-law available for marriage, and a hostess ready to grant or to deny approval, the Kitely home functions dramatically to provide a center for the play and a link to the audience. Although Dame Kitely is at the center of this center, in Jonson’s characterization she is more than an extension of her household. Throughout *Every Man In*, Jonson presents Dame Kitely as an active participant in the social life of the play, one who acts with an

awareness of the social scene and the players in it and who moves freely about London as she needs, desires and chooses.

Having used other characters in the play to locate Dame Kately within a particular community and to introduce layers of characterization which include social and economic class and a vast network of relationships, Jonson adds to her advance characterization by providing the audience with her physical description.²³ The combination of viewpoints expressed about the Dame Kately character enables Jonson to teach his audience how to read the boy actor who will appear in the role. “She” can be understood only as a combination of particularities: a householder, a merchant, a sister, a wife, an audience, and a beauty (2.1.108 and 180). The order in which Jonson presents her roles is important as it offers a counterpoint to the critical assumptions of Jonson’s misogynistic treatment of women. Notably, only *after* he has crafted the social complexity of Dame Kately and underscored her ability to see through social performance does he draw attention to her physical body.

Jonson’s ongoing development and articulation of his artistic theory emerges in the details. His creative decision to emphasize the socioeconomic, familial, and physical aspects of Dame Kately forms a specific approach to characterization. In turn, the multiplicity of character factors dramaturgically; with Dame Kately, Jonson plays upon each layer of character to guide scene-by-scene action and uses the entirety of her character-package to propel the action and interaction of the play as a whole. Her social position, her youth, her charm and her good looks – the very same characteristics Jonson describes as attracting Kately – fire the jealous imagination of her husband:

Why, ’t cannot be, where there is such resort

Of wanton gallants and young revelers,

That any woman should be honest long.
 Is't like that factious beauty will preserve
 The public weal of chastity unshaken.

(2.1.177-81)

As Jonson stages Kately's conviction that his wife cannot help but be unfaithful – "all the world/ Should not persuade me but I were a cuckold" (2.1.189-90), he adds a new particularity to the Dame Kately character, complicates her situation, provides the audience with a way to read the subsequent social interactions, and explodes the last vestige of the festive comedy structure. The central love match unravels when one half of the pair "should not [be] persuade[d]" to give up social scripts, expectations, and performance or, as Jonson himself indicates in the Prologue to the play, to see and "to be seen [as] the true, [the] rare...miracle of nature" (1.2.107-9).

Of course, the cuckoldry fears of the Kately character depend on a series of inferences and coincidence that Jonson portrays as erroneous humour and character flaw, an overly active imagination too keen to read all social performances in affirmation of expectation. Crucial to the characterization of Dame Kately, Jonson reveals her husband's jealousy *before* he reveals her physical person. If the audience chooses to take the shortcut Jonson presents and to identify with Kately rather than to assess the layers of character he has already introduced (Kately's jealous suspicions are the last piece of information the audience receives before the Dame Kately character graces the stage),²⁴ they will suspect Dame Kately just as Kately himself does and fall prey to the same "human follies" and "popular errors" (Pro.24, 26) Jonson's play seeks to identify and to correct. As the play progresses Jonson reveals the levels and folly of Kately's self-deception. The jealousy is not the product of the play's

reality. As Richard Allen Cave, one of the few critics to engage with the female characters in this play, rightly points out, “This is complete fantasy on his [Kitely’s] part [made] evident by her [Dame Kitely’s] cheerful self-possession in her position as wife” (291). Throughout *Every Man In*, Jonson carefully presents the lack of deceit on the part of Dame Kitely in particular but also of Kitely’s sister, servant, friends and freeloaders. Jonson directs his audience to judge and to censure Kitely not his Dame.

The disjuncture between Kitely’s fantasy and Dame Kitely’s self-possession emerge in the way Jonson stages the Kitelys’ interactions throughout the play. Jonson’s depiction of their marriage – their performances for one other, their observations and interpretations of those performances, the assessments of those performances by others – explores the intricacies of marriage and the social performances people give in private as well as in public. This exploration of and glimpse into a marriage again brings to the stage Jonson’s London and forges the link to his audience through the mirror-image of life his characterizations afford. As the jealous husband, Kitely stands as an early version of a character Jonson will exploit for corrective purposes again and again throughout his playwriting career; in Dame Kitely, Jonson crafts a woman of integrity despite circumstance. To each of Kitely’s jealous ravings, Jonson has Dame Kitely respond with patience and good humor: “For love’s sake, sweetheart” (2.1.212-3). While Jonson’s characterizations benefit from the way male and female playgoers in London see themselves in his characters, adding to them their own perspectives, Jonson’s portrait of the Kitelys also already responds to the various perspectives and expectations of his audience: privileged and plebian, female and male.²⁵ Because his portrait of the Kitely marriage mocks misogynistic assumptions rather

than reinforcing them, Jonson's portrayal of the Kitelys and their marriage provides concrete examples of a positive, gender-sensitive Jonson.

Again, the mockery of Kitely and positive portrayal of Dame Kitely begin only *after* Jonson situates her within familial, economic, social and sexual connections; only then does he play upon audience expectations about these characters. Immediately before Dame Kitely's first entrance, Jonson stages Kitely's rant about his jealousy, fear and status as a cuckold and about his plan to observe his wife closely. In this way, Jonson issues an invitation to the audience to do the same. When Jonson finally brings Dame Kitely to the stage (s.d. 2.1.200) and introduces her via her own stage performance to the audience, he reverses audience expectations and directly counters Kitely's thirty-nine line soliloquy (2.1.171-99). What the audience observes is not the cuckolding woman Kitely's speech describes but rather a loving wife, and the subsequent interaction of the pair is filled with love, solicitude and concern.

Jonson anchors the scene with the particularities of domesticity: the request that her husband join her for breakfast. Jonson characterizes her language with affection: she lovingly addresses her husband as "sweetheart" and "good muss" (2.1.202, 204, 206, 211, 213, 217). Kitely's answering silence – she addresses him three times during which he speaks aside to the audience of his suspicions rather than in response to her – causes her concern. "Are you not well? Speak, good muss" (2.1.206-7). When he finally replies that his "head aches extremely" (2.1.208), Jonson's reminder to the audience of the horns Kitely pictures sprouting from his forehead (2.1.190), Dame Kitely's character becomes a caretaker, attentively checking for fever – "[*She puts her hand to his forehead.*"] (s.d.2.1.209), recalling the "new disease" (2.1.212) plaguing the community, and urging him in out of the air.²⁶

Despite Kately's insinuations that Dame Kately manipulates him because she is always one step ahead in this conversation – "she has me i'the wind" (2.1.219), Jonson guides the audience to observe for itself that it is the husband's desire to deceive himself – "How simple, and how subtle are her answers!" (2.1.14) – not the wife's personality or actions that hamper the Katelys' interaction. As he concludes the Kately's first stage conversation, Jonson underscores the influence external attitudes can have on a marriage, especially when one half of the couple uses public performance to frame a private situation. Only as the exchange between the spouses ends does Jonson allow Kately finally to see and to respond to his wife instead of to his imagination: "Sweetheart, I'll come in to you presently; 'twill away, I hope" (2.1.219-20). As Jonson changes Kately's tone, he dramatizes a matching change in Dame Kately too. Her answer, "Pray heaven it do" (2.1.221), indicates her understanding that "it" represents far more to her husband than a mere headache. Her answer, directly preceding her exit, also asserts her expectation; Dame Kately leaves fully expecting Kately will follow her to breakfast.

Before Kately joins his wife for breakfast, however, Jonson follows Dame Kately's departure with another Kately soliloquy. In this speech, Jonson reveals the husband's accurate recognition of his wife's love and faithfulness and examines the way a fearful imagination and, by extension, jealousy can work upon the individual: "Like a pestilence it doth infect/ The houses of the brain" (2.1.223-24), "it begins/ solely to work upon the fantasy" (2.1.225-6), and then "corrupts the judgment" (2.1.227) and "memory" (2.1.228) until "not a thought or motion in the mind/ Be free from the black poison of suspect" (2.1.234). Placing an acknowledgement of the complicity between imagination, fear and jealousy into Kately's mouth, Jonson at once advocates for Dame Kately's character, in

particular, and for wives, more generally, and also introduces the correlation between self-“corrupted judgment” and damaging, if not poor and ineffectual, social performance.

The scene also offers another counterpoint to the charge that Jonson’s female characters are misogynistic portrayals of women. Directly refuting the claim and general assertion that women are to blame for the ills and flaws of men, in his dramatization of *Kitely*, Jonson makes clear that man is the source of his own dilemmas. In Jonson’s positive characterization of Dame *Kitely*, a woman maintains her constancy and love as she interacts with her husband despite his erratic behavior.

As Jonson forges links between emotion and behavior, action and reaction, he explicates the power of the mind to determine its own reality and introduces another effect his artistic theory has on characterization. Jonson’s ideas about characterization now extend beyond the observable exterior of person to the interior level of self-awareness and subsequent action and performance based on that judgment. As he crafts the *Kitely* characters, Jonson represents the shifts between emotional and intellectual positions by employing vacillation, confusion, fear, and self-analysis. In this way, Jonson stages how people interact and react, and he refines and deepens his characterization of both the *Kitelys*. As the *Kitely* scenes (2.1, 3.2-3, 4.1, 4.6, 4.8, 5.1) unfold, they reveal a complexity of design that Jonson bases on the performances each character gives, on the observances of those performances by others, on each character’s comprehension of his or her own performances and receptions, and on the modifications to those performances influenced by external reaction and internal judgment. By staging *Kitely*’s realization that his own fears not Dame *Kitely*’s actions prompt his behavior, Jonson positions the audience to interrogate rather than blithely to accept the ways characters present themselves and are presented. When Jonson

resolves Kately to join his wife for breakfast and “in spite of this black cloud, myself to be” (2.1.238), he emphasizes the various levels of identity and social performance simultaneously in play. Jonson then urges his audience to ask which “self” Kately will “be” and just how Kately will proceed “to be” that “self.” Jonson’s desired effect relies on the audience’s ability to translate and to revise their personal experiences and expectations in accordance with what they too witness on the stage.

When, for example, Kately returns to the stage after breakfast with his wife and sister and promptly embraces the day and his business dealings, Jonson relies on the time Kately has spent with his wife offstage to explain how Kately’s contemplation of his business day can begin with a focused approach to what must be accomplished and then devolve as his overly active imagination leads him directly back to fear and jealousy. Away from the instantaneous affirmation and the easy acceptance the intimacy of the breakfast nook affords, the unskilled social “actor” – here represented by Kately – flounders. Jonson opens the new scene with Kately’s conversation with his servant about “the money [that] was brought in last night” (3.2.4) and then traces the way the mind quickly makes associative leaps.

Jonson stages Kately’s descent into paranoia and the fear that while he is away from the home “things never dream’d of yet/ May be contrived, ay, and effected too” (3.2.10). Gone is the resolution prior to breakfast “myself to be/ And shake the fever [of jealousy] off that thus shakes me” (2.1.238-9); Jonson offers his audience the actions and reactions of a man once again misapplying public social scripts to private dealings. The allusiveness of Kately’s business day and its transactions reenergize his overly active imagination. Suddenly, to leave for work means enabling others to enjoy the company of the wife he himself has just enjoyed, and he apprehends leaving home as tantamount to setting “his doors

wide open to a thief” and showing “the felon where his treasure lies” (3.2.16-17). Most importantly, Jonson has Kately set the responsibility for any ills that may befall his wife on himself not on the dishonesty of his wife: “He that lends/ his wife, if she be fair, or time or place,/ compels her to be false” (3.2.30-2).²⁷

Connecting the time Kately spends with his wife to the material, business aspects of love and marriage, Jonson provides another layer to his Dame Kately characterization and to the projection-based interpretations of social performance that both drive and undermine social interaction and reaction. Note that while Jonson transforms Kately’s interpretation of his wife, he does not transform the Dame Kately character itself. It is the Kately character that Jonson scrutinizes and censures. To Kately only, Dame Kately now appears to be a woman who attends to, cares for and appeals to her husband in such a way that he cannot help but imagine that all men will react to her as he does.

Your luster too’ll inflame at any distance,
 Draw courtship to you as a jet doth straws,
 Put motion in a stone, strike fire from ice,
 Nay, make a porter leap you with his burden!

(3.2.24-7)

Jonson exposes Kately’s, and by extension men and husbands fears, when he has Kately project that surely, just as he desires, other men too will want “to taste the fruit of beauty’s golden tree” (3.2.19) and will be “inflame[d]” by her “luster” for she can “put motion in a stone, strike fire from ice.”²⁸

Jonson uses the conflation of money and beauty throughout this speech as a contrast to the everyday domesticity indicated by the intimacy of family breakfast. Kately’s paranoid

concerns about his wife and his decision that she “be then kept up, close and well-watched” (3.2.28) – like Jaques’s treatment of Rachel in *The Case is Altered* and Shylock’s elision of “my ducats” and “my daughter” (3.1) in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* – replace the observable, unique, and concretely lived woman Jonson has staged for the audience in the Dame Kately character.²⁹ In this moment, Jonson has Kately redefine his wife as a possession. While objectification of this kind, one in which women are property to be safeguarded rather than people with whom to interact, follows normative gender treatment in Elizabethan society and on the Elizabethan stage, Jonson does not allow the objectification to stand unquestioned. Throughout the remainder of the play, Jonson demonstrates that Kately’s objectification of Dame Kately is the source of his problem not hers and, as Jonson juxtaposes male fear and paranoid reaction and observably rational female action and behavior, the play as a whole interrogates and challenges the accepted placement of women in the gender hierarchy.

Every Man In His Humour stages the argument that consideration and treatment of another person as a static object leads to incorrect assumptions, misdirection, suspicion, fear and paranoia; further, primary interactions – person to person – reveal the mind’s false constructions and lead to the communication that builds rather than diminishes relationships. Jonson’s characterization of Dame Kately, then, depends on seeing her not as the object of Kately’s jealousy but as a woman situated in a particular marriage to a particular person at a particular time. As the audience can observe, Jonson does not characterize Dame Kately only as Kately’s beautiful object and the source of his jealousy but also as a member of a family and community in which she acts and reacts according to the particularities of her situation. Jonson provides Dame Kately with the ability to communicate for herself as indicated by the

breakfast conversation between the Kitelys (2.1), by her challenges to the suitors in 4.1, and by her assertion to the Kitely character directly that “If you be sick, your own thoughts make you sick” (4.6.36).³⁰

Jonson then contrasts Dame Kitely’s direct communication with moments in which other characters, particularly her husband, choose to avoid communication in favor of seeming a certain way, in favor of a social performance designed to present a desired affect rather than an observable truth. For example, when Jonson stages Kitely’s refusal to address the suitors in his house directly because he fears that if he were to do so

They would give out, because my wife is fair,
 Myself but lately married, and my sister
 Here sojourning a virgin in my house,
 That I were jealous! Nay, as sure as death,
 That they would say

(2.1.108-12),

Jonson stages how the desire to maintain a particular, and to one’s mind positive, social appearance and to avoid another, one, even though accurate, construed as tantamount to “death,” leads social aspirants to elevate false performances and interpretations over direct and honestly revelatory portrayals of the self. Kitely fears that his direct, perhaps even reasonable, confrontation with Wellbred would be bandied about the community with a different interpretation than the one he desires. Not only would he be labeled “jealous” and insecure, but also the communal “they” would talk of

how that I had quarrel’d
 My brother purposely, thereby to find

An apt pretext to banish them my house.

(2.1.12-14)

Jonson illuminates Kately's most pressing fear to be that the confronted gallants would disclose the "truth" of Kately himself. The "truth" Jonson has already revealed to the audience in Kately's soliloquies underscores a kind of social performance based on subterfuge and seeming and begins to teach his audience to recognize and to evaluate the differences.

By contrast, Jonson distinguishes Dame Kately's dialogue and actions with directness. Jonson's artistic theories of representation emerge in the disparity between the directness with which he characterizes Dame Kately and the obfuscation of social performance he gives to those with whom she interacts. The complexity of her character and her place in the drama itself provide additional examples of Jonson's attempts to produce for the stage characters and character interactions which teach by "show[ing] an image of the times" (Pro.23) in which he lived and wrote. They also reveal Jonson's belief in social change inspired by modeling as he himself describes in *Every Man In*'s opening act: "He that's compell'd to goodness may be good,/ But 'tis but for that fit, where others drawn/ By softness and example get a habit" (1.1.212-4).³¹

Dame Kately provides the "softness and example." Following her character throughout *Every Man In* offers a lens through which to see how Jonson puts his artistic theory into dramatic practice. As he did in the Katelys' breakfast scene, in Dame Kately's scene with her brother Downright, Jonson again emphasizes the differentiated rather than objectified aspects of her character while contrasting the power of perception and observation. In this scene, Downright, acting on the request of Kately, works to remove their

brother Wellbred and his friends from the Kitley household. Kitley, fearing specifically for his wife that “where there is such resort/ of wanton gallants and young revelers/ That any woman should be honest long” (2.1.177-79), seeks to solve a personal problem without personal repercussions. Once again, Jonson juxtaposes an observable aspect of character with a character’s self-presentation or social performance. In Act Two, Jonson made it clear that Kitley used family bonds created by his marriage to Dame Kitley to get one brother to intervene with another so that he himself would not be judged by his familial equals, potentially social betters and his community as a jealous fool. Jonson emphasizes that the fear of judgment and the suspicion that the truth of his jealousy could be his social undoing continues to lead the Kitley character’s to subterfuge.

As Dame Kitley provides an example, Jonson works throughout *Every Man In* to establish Kitley as an object lesson for his audience, demonstrating how disconnection between perception and reality leads to socially inappropriate behaviors. Jonson stages the cause and effect of Kitley’s fears. The fear that if he, Kitley, were to confront the young men himself “they would give out...That I were jealous” (2.1.108-11) and that the result of such information, perhaps even because of its veracity, would be “mine own disgrace” (2.1.118) causes Kitley to hand the rule of his own house over to another. Even though the choice Kitley makes empowers his brother-in-law Downright, the choice itself literalizes the result Kitley desires to avoid: namely, enabling another man to acquire his house and his wife. In this exchange, Jonson again exposes the ineffectiveness of false performance, emphasizes the absurdities attendant on social climbing, and indicates that class conflict and the desire to move socially upward – the very competitiveness energizing social participants – leads to irrational conclusions and wrong directions.

While the scene's set-up anticipates a discussion between men (in this case brothers) about women and a further objectification of the Dame Kately character, Jonson ultimately shifts expectation: his Dame Kately character will speak for herself. The scene begins with another indirection. Instead of approaching Wellbred as Kately himself should have done and now expects Downright to do, Jonson has Downright broach the presence of the numerous young men in the Kately household with Dame Kately herself. With Downright's action, Jonson stages in order to undermine the conventional situation in which women receive blame for male fallibilities. When Dame Kately's character asks, "Alas, brother, what would you have me do? I cannot help it; you see, my brother brings 'em here; they are his friends" (4.1.2-4), and when Downright's responding advice quickly gives way to a lecture, Jonson dramatizes the expected gender hierarchy. In a speech alive with sexual innuendo – "play the devil with some of them" or "make the house too hot" (4.1.8, 10), Jonson uses Downright's suggestions and his assertion that the suitors' continued appearance at the house "'tis nobody's fault but yours" (4.1.12-3) to frame the conversation between brother and sister as an indictment of Dame Kately's, or women's, beauty and behavior rather than of Kately's jealousy, or male fear. The shift of blame from man to woman fulfills the Renaissance misconception that women are more lustful than men and, together with Kately's earlier objectification of his wife, presents the very misogyny of which Jonson has so often been accused. The interaction is clearly a hostile one. By blaming his sister for the men's presence, Downright protects the reputation of his brother-in-law at the expense of his sister's.

If the scene ended on this note, it would indeed be an indictment of not just Dame Kately but of Jonson too. As the scene begins, Jonson does replicate gender stereotypes and

audience expectations just as he did when he introduced the Dame Kately character by way of other characters' descriptions prior to her first stage appearance. And like that previous moment, when he crafts his Dame Kately character to counter expectation with action, in this scene Jonson also refuses to fix Dame Kately with a stereotypical response. The Dame Kately character is more than an object of her husband's and then her brother's determination, and Jonson enables her to separate herself from their interpretation – and the audience's too – by defending herself against the accusations of her brother and, by extension, of her husband. The immediacy with which Jonson gives Dame Kately the query, “Alas, brother, what would you have me to do?” (4.1.2) reintroduces the contradictions of the gender hierarchy in which a woman must at once represent and defer to her male counterparts. Dame Kately must not open her husband to censure of inhospitality, must welcome her brother's friends as she must welcome her brother, and must accommodate both without appearing available herself. With Downright's accusations and his assertions, Jonson points out how ludicrous a brother's, a husband's, a society's baseless assumptions about women are.

When he counters Downright's response depicting hot lust with Dame Kately's measured words and actions, Jonson demonstrates how Dame Kately sees the entirety of the social playing field and offers an alternate perspective on his female character's corporeality. Against Downright's abstract insinuations, Jonson places Dame Kately's concrete description of her physical person and the limitations of that physical body. She asks, “Could I keep out all of them, think you? I should put myself against half a dozen men, should I?” (4.1.17-8). With the juxtaposition of sexuality and vulnerability, Jonson reminds the audience that Dame Kately is a physical person in a particular set of circumstances not an abstraction or an object

created in the minds of others and asks them to envision the outnumbering results of her one body set to battle against six men.

When he gives Dame Kately the authority to define Downright's position, and by extension that of her husband in particular and of men in general, as "without any sense or reason!" (4.1.20), an authority conveyed by making these the last words of their interaction, Jonson induces the audience to see the particulars of the Dame Kately character's situation and to consider women as singular entities rather than the stereotypes presented by the men. As mistress of her husband's home, she bears an obligation to represent him as befits his status and reputation, the very reputation he seeks to safeguard by not confronting his brother Wellbred and his gallant friends directly. As chaperone and confidant to her husband's sister, she offers the protection of presence and understanding support. As sister, she owes her brother duty, time and attention and can both want and enjoy the company of family. As a woman, she fills her place in the community and requires recognition, consideration, comfort, acceptance, to be desired, loved and cared for, and even to be entertained.³²

Jonson extends this last character layer – her femininity – when he stages her reactions to and interactions with the gallants in her home (4.1). The physical female body underscored in the opening interaction with Downright provides a crucial frame. While ostensibly the group of gallants idle at the Kately residence to court Bridget, a larger entertainment, the game of gulling, drives the scene. Jonson presents Wellbred and his friend Edward Kno'well as the game masters, and he reveals Dame Kately and Bridget, who has her first scene in this act, as masterful too. The women in the scene take as much pleasure in the poetical one-upmanship and fraudulent unveilings as the men do.³³ By portraying Dame Kately's enjoyment of the game, Jonson places her in a position of critical attentiveness and

focuses attention on her role as female observer. This, in turn, highlights her onstage presence as a woman rather than as an objectified and domesticated extension of her husband and suggests her level of intelligence and perspicacity. Jonson has Dame Kately provide encouragement to the bad poet Matthew, act as an audience for both the poet and the critics, and affirm the mockery the performances earn. As can all the characters Jonson most values, Dame Kately can both play the social game in which she finds herself and, because she can recognize that it is indeed a game, stand above it too.

After the women grant permission for the poetry contest – note that Jonson grants the women the power to sanction the contest, the actual sparring takes place between the gallants while the women participate as observers and supporters. During the poetical bantering, Jonson relies on the active body of the boy actor playing the Dame Kately role to reveal through concurrent stage business her contribution to the events. Perhaps she laughs at the jests, applauds the cuts, and nods in agreement. Regardless of the form the actual performance itself takes, Jonson makes it clear that her character – still in her role as audience representative – aligns with the proper critics, with his, Jonson's, own views. In a series of puns between Dame Kately and Bridget, Jonson indicates their understanding that this buffoon is a proper “ass.”³⁴ Throughout Dame Kately exemplifies the Jonsonian ideal of successful social performance.

As the scene progresses, the Dame Kately character embodies the communal condition of the theater: at once acting to entertain and enjoying the entertainment. Just as the play teases the audience about its enjoyment of the lowbrow, so do the characters in the play tease Dame Kately. Matthew's deplorable poetry for Bridget and Dame Kately's enjoyment of the ensuing spectacle prompt Wellbred to wonder, “Sister Kately, I marvel you

get you not a servant that can rhyme and do tricks too” (4.1.95-6). The following flurry of queries about tricks flirts with the same sexual innuendo with which Downright began the scene. Jonson emphasizes Dame Kately’s innocence with her repeated queries, “What tricks?” (4.1.98, 100). Wellbred’s gentle ribbing at her expense – “Why you monkeys you, what a caterwauling do you keep! Has he not given you rhymes and verses and tricks” (4.1.103-4), gives way to the affirmation of her integrity and chastity. Wellbred knows she is a “lamp of virginity” (4.1.106), that she sees through the game afoot and won’t tolerate or give reward beyond “conscience” (4.1.109), and urges her to “Come and cherish this tame poetical fury in your ‘servant’ you’ll be begged else” (4.1.106-7).

Throughout the scene, Jonson unfixes the previously objectified Dame Kately in favor of a differentiated character whose interactions with, the various roles she plays for her network of family and friends – a logician with Downright, a supporter with Bridget, an audience to the group, a critic of Matthew, a friend, sister and teasing banterer with Wellbred – illuminate a figure determined not by her gender but by the social situation in which she interacts. Jonson’s artistic theory demands a complete character, and he crafts the sum total of Dame Kately to depend not only on her social situation but also on how she addresses her speech, to whom, about what and when and where the conversation itself occurs.

As the verisimilitude of his artistic theory requires, when Jonson modifies the situation in which Dame Kately finds herself, he also changes his characterization of her. As noted above, Jonson’s Dame Kately character reacts differently, taking on a different social role and enacting a different social performance, as the situation and its different characters require. With her brother Downright, she is strong, argumentative and logical. With her brother Wellbred, she is questioning, laughing and responsive to his teasing. When the

teasing between the siblings gives way to a brawl with swords drawn, she becomes a peace maker, in fulfillment of the scene's opening visual of her one meager body trying to hold off a half dozen men, leaping into the fray to part her brothers and calling for the household servants to help.

That Kately arrives home at this exact moment again modifies the situation. His jealously roiling brain immediately determines "My wife and sister, they are the cause of this" (4.1.146-7). Jonson does not have Dame Kately respond to his accusation. Once again with her stage business and decision to let the servant Thomas satisfy her husband's wild imaginings, Jonson indicates her character's integrity. When Dame Kately does speak again, Jonson emphasizes again her mastery of the social game. Her comment is to Bridget about the handsome Edward Kno'well, and Jonson leaves it to the audience to recognize that her comment about Kno'well is both an intentional stab at Kately's jealousy and an attempt to refocus the subject on the actual cause of all the gallant, young male presence: Bridget and her availability. Dame Kately's barb – she corroborates Bridget's attraction to the appropriate kind of suitor, Edward Kno'well, by noting his "very excellent good parts" (4.1.173) – hits its mark. Jonson gooses Kately's paranoia and, in either a precursor to or echo of Shakespeare's Ford in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*,³⁵ ends the scene by giving him the irrational inspiration to search his own house despite the household's reassurances: "I'll die, but they have hid him i'the house/ Somewhere; I'll go and search" (4.1.190-1).³⁶

Once again Jonson emphasizes that it is Kately's own wild imaginings not the behavior of his wife that creates his discomfort. In the post-brawl discussion with Wellbred about the incident, Jonson reemphasizes Dame Kately contradictory position between her husband and her brother and has her side with her husband. Significantly for Jonson's

continued destabilization of the gender hierarchy, however, she sides with him not because he is her husband but because it is logical and self-protective to do so. With her “Ay, but what harm might have come of it, brother!” (4.6.14), Jonson urges us to recall Dame Kately standing unarmed against a roomful of men with weapons drawn (s.d. 4.1.132) and compare that moment to this one in which she again stands between men. Not yet ready to concede the “battle,” Wellbred uses Dame Kately “might” as an opening to exercise his wit against Kately. He suggests other “might[s],” all of which implicate his sister in possible acts against her husband. When Jonson has Kately take these to heart rather than see through them, he leads to the critical moment in which the character Kately’s jealous ravings will finally be exposed.

As the scorpions of Kately’s imagination convince him that he is indeed sick, Jonson underscores Dame Kately’s mastery of the social game. Positioning Dame Kately once again as an audience representative on the stage, Jonson dramatizes her immediate understanding of the situation and recognition that Kately’s imagination runs away with itself: “Beshrew your heart-blood, brother Wellbred, now,/ For putting such a toy into his head” (4.6.29-30). Jonson’s choice of the word “toy” highlights Dame Kately’s acknowledgement of her husband’s absurdity and links her to the play’s other social master. Wellbred, also seeing and assessing the situation clearly, offers his own chastisement, one that emphasizes Jonson’s critique and reiterates Jonson’s message: “Is a fit simile a toy? Will he be poison’d with a simile?/ Brother Kately, what a strange and idle imagination is this!/ For shame, be wiser. O’ my soul, there’s no such matter” (4.1.32-4).

With this scene and its interactions, Jonson untangles the contradictions of the gender hierarchy. While Jonson has Dame Kately side with her husband for logic and Wellborn

press his attack for sport, he now characterizes them together in their self-possession and grace. That Jonson has Wellbred's address his sister first – "Is a fit simile a toy? Will he be poison'd with a simile? (4.1.32) – reinforces her position by showing him agreeing with her assessment of the situation. Having taken the side of his sister, Wellbred then explicates the husband's foolishness: "Brother Kately, what a strange and idle imagination is this!/ For shame, be wiser" (4.1.33-4). Jonson again authorizes Dame Kately's perspective and strengthens her agency, pressing the point as she calls Kately out on the thoughts that make him sick: "If you be sick, your own thoughts make you sick" (4.6.36). Jonson has Wellbred confirm her: "His jealousy is the poison he has taken" (4.6.37). Brother and sister stand as allies and equals, examples to Jonson's audience of players who can stand beyond and yet control the social game. Once again Jonson characterizes Dame Kately as more than an extension of a husband, more than a fulfillment of a husband's determination and perspective. Jonson's Dame Kately emerges her own person with her own social connections, connections which move her beyond the stereotypical position in marriage which too often marginalizes, circumscribes, and ultimately removes women from the social participation Jonson shows Dame Kately successfully achieving.

For Every Man, Woman and Humour

The equality of movement and social participation Jonson crafts for the Dame Kately character makes possible the resolution of his play and emphasizes the performative aspects of his artistic theory. Having absolved Dame Kately to "return him his own" (4.6.94) should she find, as her brother has insinuated, Kately's jealousy to be the projection of a guilty conscience, Jonson sets his characters in motion, each to follow the conclusion of his or her own story line. When Dame Kately and the servant Thomas Cash depart for Cob and Tib's

“suspected place” (5.1.17) to “take” (4.6.94) Kately in the act, Wellbred, who has engineered the opportunity, sweeps Bridget off to marry Kno’well.

The Wellbred-Bridget-Kno’well triangle is the part of *Every Man In* which most closely fits the festive comedy mold and with that triangle, as Lorna Hutson persuasively argues, Jonson sets a new standard for masculine intimacy.³⁷ Hutson focuses on the male bonds, but Jonson’s flow of action within the triangle – Wellbred to Kno’well, Kno’well to Bridget, Bridget to Wellbred, ad infinitum – also presents an additional way for Jonson to problematize the gender hierarchy. It also shifts and divides social power between its participants. Playing the tri-angles, Jonson positions Wellbred to master and manipulate (see his original letter (1.1), his gulling of the would-be gallants (3.1-2, 4.1), his couple creation (4.3, 4.6, 5.1)); Kno’well to outfox his father (1.1, 3.2, 5.1), enjoy the entertainments (3.1-2, 4.1) and stand in the supposedly female position alongside Dame Kately and Bridget as the other men draw swords (4.6); and Bridget, like her sister and brother-in-law Dame Kately and Wellbred, to recognize and express her knowledge of the social games underway (4.1, 4.6). In this way, the subplots replicate and combine ultimately not only to drive but to become the main plot.

The triangulated relationship also reinforces a circularity of dramaturgy that matches the circularity of thought, action, reaction Jonson seeks to represent in characterization for the stage. By dramatizing the circles and repetitions observable in human behavior, Jonson stages “deeds and language such as men do use” (Pro.21), and he stages characters’ actions of becoming. The play as a whole, then, exemplifies Jonson’s process of character and characterization. As in life, on the stage each character too must strive to present him- and herself, to act and react to the presentation’s reception, and to correct him- and herself in

accordance with group reaction. Jonson's argument for verisimilitude in dramatic practice created by staging the various layers and interactions of social performances emerges not subtly, as in *Case*, but fully formed.

Jonson's examples of characterization come full circle in the scene in which, at the instigation of Wellbred, Dame Kately and her husband meet at the water bearer's house (4.8). From start to finish the scene explodes with misreadings: every one mistakes the location, Tib and Cob the water bearer's home, for a brothel; Old Kno'well arrives expecting to find his son Edward, takes Tib to be the establishment's Madame and Dame Kately his son's "female copesmate [mistress]" (4.8.15), and believes a "disguis'd" (4.8.27) Kately to be his son; despite "*Kately in his cloak*," Dame Kately "*spies her husband come, and runs to him*" (s.d. 4.8.27) and confronts him directly about his less than "honest market" (4.8.28) and his "huswife" (4.8.32); Kately lashes out, hearing none of her speech and seeing her presence as proof she is a "strumpet" (4.8.39, 50) and a "harlot" (4.8.44) and has cuckolded him with the by standing Old Kno'well, "This hoary-headed lecher, this old goat" (4.8.42), and with his heretofore trusted servant Cash, "young apple-squire" (4.8.57); and Cob believes Kately's word that his wife Tib is a "bawd" (4.8.72-3) and, in emulation and escalation of his behavior, takes jealous anger out on his wife by beating her (s.d.4.8.73).³⁸ Jonson allows only Kately and Cob to persist in their erroneous judgments despite proofs and explanations.

Those reading corrections begin with Dame Kately's speech. Jonson imbues the speech with anger that indicates to audience and reader alike to see in her behavior an authentic and unaffected performance.

Oh, sir, have I forestall'd your honest market?

Found your close walks? You stand amaz'd now, do you?

I' faith, I am glad I have smok'd you yet at last!
 What is your jewel, trow? In: come, let's see her;
 Fetch forth your huswife, dame; if she be fairer
 In any honest judgment, than myself,
 I'll be content with it. But she is change,
 She feeds you fat, she soothes your appetite,
 And you are well? Your wife, an honest woman,
 Is meat twice sod to you sir? Oh, you traitor!

(4.8.28-37)

Here Jonson merges all of the play's descriptions and depictions, ideas and actions of the Dame Kately character to stage the actual exemplum of being. Who and what Dame Kately acts on his stage is as Jonson told us in Act One the true social performer would be: the "idea of what you are portrayed i' your face, that men may read i' your physnomy: 'Here, within this place, is to be seen the true, rare, and accomplish'd monster, or miracle of nature'— which is all one" (1.2.106-9). Jonson emphasizes the veracity of her performance and the misguided blindness of her husband through the voice of an onstage audience response. The observing Old Kno'well echoes Jonson's assertion about Dame Kately – "She cannot counterfeit thus palpably" (4.8.38) and, as the scene progresses, asks of Kately – "What lunacy is this that haunts this man?" (4.8.54)

As Dame Kately offers a positive example of the masterful social performer, Kately remains Jonson's object lesson about the repetitive corrections unskilled performers require. Demonstrating that Kately has forgotten his own shame at the hands of his wife and her brother in 4.6, Jonson dramatizes the incompleteness of Kately's previous correction with his

return to irrational and jealous error. Having woefully misread Dame Kately's actions and words, Kately mistakenly attempts to enforce his own reading with fragments of what he remembers from the scene in which his wife and her brother discovered is "toy" (4.6.30, 31) illusions to him. He urges corrective shame – "dost not thou shame" (4.8.45) – and claims, as the siblings did, that a "guilty conscience will discover thee" (4.8.53). Jonson gives no support to Kately actions, instead repeating his lesson and championing Dame Kately through the powerful language that has her emphasize Kately's errors.

Separating the wife from the husband, Jonson has Dame Kately reject and rebuke him: "Out. I defy thee, I, dissembling wretch!" (4.8.49). He also has the newly arrived Old Kno'well repeat his attempt to get Kately to listen to reason. Kately will not, charging everyone onstage – Dame Kately, Cash, Old Kno'well, Tib – with sexual licentiousness and to "answer" (4.8.59) for it "before a justice" (4.8.58). Emphasizing how one can see and modify the error of one's way, Jonson has Old Kno'well accede and offer supporting exposition: "I go willingly;/ Though I do taste this as a trick put on me/ To punish my impertinent search, and justly" (4.8.60-2). Jonson's "trick" touches everyone who has not yet mastered the social game.

At scene's end, Jonson softens the tone Kately uses with Dame Kately. Shifting from "charge" to request, Kately asks his wife if she will accompany him to Justice Clement's: "Come, will you go?" (4.8.64). Jonson maintains Dame Kately moral and performative authority by emphasizing her linguistic control. Jonson employs Dame Kately to finish both Kately's line and the scene with her reply. Placing a repetition of Kately's question into Dame Kately's response, Jonson has the Dame Kately character, his example, repudiate it and him: "Go? To thy shame, believe it" (4.8.64).³⁹ As he has throughout the play, Jonson again

elevates Dame Kately while mocking her husband, his attempts at control, his emotion and his misguided beliefs.

The balance between Dame Kately's mastery of the social game and Kately's inability to read the social situation demonstrates Jonson's larger theoretical and artistic purposes. For Jonson, the dynamic interactions between performances, interpretations, reactions and new performances provide the foundation of character. As early as *Every Man In*, Jonson's second play, Jonson challenges dramatic conventions, offers individuated and thus alternative presentations of gender, and advocates putting his artistic theory into dramatic practice. Jonson's influence extends not only to his next play and the continued progression of his playful gender and artistic theory but also to his contemporaries and, in particular, his most noted rival. While only Jonson's fingerprints mark Shakespeare's contemporaneous *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597-8),⁴⁰ the influence of *Every Man In* announces itself with authority in later plays by Shakespeare. For example, in *Hamlet* (1600-1) Shakespeare, one of the principal actors in *Every Man In*'s 1598 production, transformed Old Kno'well's positive advice about social performance (*EMI* 1.1.64-88) into the parody Polonius provides Laertes before he departs for France (*Ham* 1.3.59-80).⁴¹ In 1604 when Shakespeare recast *Every Man In*'s Kately plot to write *Othello* – Jonson gave Kately the name Thorello in the First Quarto and, significantly, neither Thorello nor its anagram Othello appear in any source material⁴² – the verisimilitude demanded by Jonson's situationally determined character interactions yielded tragedy.

But in 1598 the Poets' War had yet to begin. Jonson's play ends with the various characters converging at the home of Justice Clement and, even as in this he follows the traditional festive comedy form, he diverges from a traditionally festive ending.⁴³ Yes, all

the characters unite on stage but, no, Jonson does not celebrate their harmonious interactions. Instead, Jonson has Clement dispense justice as he pleases, separating those deserving penance (Matthew, Bobadill and Formal are sent to the courtyard) and those of lower class (Tib and Cob are sent to the buttery; their loving relationship having gone awry because they too acted as social climbers and falsely emulated others) and exposing the humorous errors (anger, care, jealousy, misdirected wit) of those who remain. Jonson leaves Clement's words for the last, words which blithely mouth the sentiments of festive comedy – “This night we'll dedicate to friendship, love and laughter” (5.1.277-8). The words, however, cannot obscure the struggles, “the adventures” (5.1.281), of the play as Jonson has staged it nor erase the modifications to gender presentation Jonson instantiates with a final playful image of Justice Clement standing with his arm slung around the neck of “my mistress—Brainworm!” (5.1.279-80), Old Kno'well clever servant. All may have been tempered, but all is not elided, harmonized or forgiven. To the last Jonson insists that drama must, that it is the social role of the theater to stage the human flaws of *Every Man in His Humour* and every woman too.

NOTES to CHAPTER TWO

¹ All quotations from *Every Man In His Humour*, unless specifically noted, can be found in Jonson-Lever, *Every Man In*.

Because Jonson's Englished version of *Every Man In His Humour* deepens his characterization by locating its characters in contemporary London and in keeping with Jonson's own decision to place the revised, rather than the Italianate play, in the chronologically first position in his 1616 *Works*, I rely on the Folio version throughout my analysis. I cite differences between Q and F in the notes as necessary.

² For description of *Every Man In* as Jonson's first play with Lord Chamberlain's Men but assertion that the play was staged at the Curtain not the Globe, see Bednarz, "Biographical Politics." For the chronology tracing the legendary claim that Shakespeare recommended *Every Man In* for performance at the Globe after it had already been rejected to Nicholas Rowe's in 1709, see McDonald "Jonson and Shakespeare" 106-7.

Note that the 1616 Folio version of the play includes the list of actors who performed the play at the Globe; Shakespeare is among them.

³ For the pioneer study establishing both *Every Man In* as a festive comedy and the subsequent tradition of approaching the play as such, see Baskervill. For readings of the play that ignore the festive comedy elements of the play to focus exclusively on its rhetorical mode of satire, one seen as persuading and teaching rather than ridiculing and scorning, see Whalen. For *Every Man In* as "a brilliant satire of greed, of hypocrisy, of affected mannerisms" (73), see Bevington. For *Every Man In* as Jonson's attempt at "the kind of normative comedy in which Shakespeare specialized" (104), see McDonald, "Jonson and Shakespeare." For the positioning of *Every Man In* (1598) stylistically between *The Case is Altered* (1598) and the three comical satires to follow, beginning with *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), see Barton 29-57. Barton proposes that the play "mediates in certain important respects" (44).

⁴ The influences on Jonson's *Every Man In* remain the classic, e.g. Plautine, drama. Jonson's attention to the Aristotelian "unities" (time, place, action) in this play introduces a major tenet of his theory of dramatic practice. For discussions of the way Jonson's *Every Man In* characters represent his contemporary, early modern London and the people populating it, see Butler, Cave and Young.

⁵ Beginning with *Every Man In* and continuing in his subsequent plays, the majority of Jonson's female characters are already married. For an alternative interpretation, see Riggs 19-20, 44, 54, 61, 154-6. Riggs sees in Jonson's biography a man who enjoyed sleeping with married women and so, for Riggs, Jonson's characterization of married women for the stage is an extension of his own desire. Riggs is helpful here in terms of the verisimilitude of Jonson's dramatic characterization as Riggs notes that these married women are those with whom Jonson has the most contact in his own life and so the obvious models for his dramatic characters.

⁶ See Chapter One of this dissertation for the female characters of Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and, despite his own modifications, Jonson's *The Case is Altered*. For the female character in festive comedy, marriage is the stopping point after which nothing else seems to exist. For the continued deployment of the confining marriage paradigm throughout the drama of the Renaissance period, see Traub.

⁷ For statistical details on women's social participation from running households to side businesses, see Amussen, Crawford and Gowing, and Prior.

⁸ The date of the revision itself remains a debated topic. E.K. Chambers champions the earliest date of revision as before the February 2, 1605 court performance; see Chambers 3:359-60 and 4:172. See Lever, with the additional comparison of Jonson's English setting in *Eastward Ho!* (1605), for support of Chambers's earlier date. Herford and Simpson suggest a 1612 revision date in preparation for inclusion in the Folio; see H&S 1:332-33 and 9:334-36. See Jackson *Vision* for the suggestion that Jonson composed the Prologue around 1612, a slightly larger composition window (1604-1614) for the Folio revision, and "probable" (239) revision dates of 1607-8 and 1612-13.

⁹ See Lever xx-xxiv, Carter 52-55, Barish 130-145, and Barton 44-57.

¹⁰ See Lever xxii-xxiv.

¹¹ See Rackin 112-137.

¹² Rackin argues that such anachronisms "depend on—and also reinforce—the assumption that women are always and everywhere the same, immune to the historical contingencies of time and place. They interpolate the women in the audience with identities that are defined solely by their gender—identities constrained by usually hostile and restrictive stereotypes" (117). Jonson does not depend on or reinforce such anachronisms.

¹³ See Lever xi-xii and xx-xxiv, Chambers 3:359-60 and 4:172, Herford and Simpson 1:332-5 and 9:334-6, and Barish 130-41 for line by line differences, revisions and emendations in Q and F.

¹⁴ See Barton 47. While his female characters are also immediately recognizable to the female playgoers in his audience, placing those characters in the everyday situation of his London does not imply that women everywhere are always the same. It is an important point with regard to Jonson's artistic theories, and one I wish to emphasize, that for the rest of his career, even when he chose to locate the action of his plays in the Italy of *Volpone* or the Rome of *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, Jonson focuses his plays on London and populates the stage with its own, his own, local and observable denizens. As emphasized by the shifts between *Every Man In's* Quarto and Folio versions, each of Jonson's plays, regardless of setting, reveals an underlying Englishness.

¹⁵ These golden apples figure in key stories of the Greek mythology. For example, in Homer's *Iliad*, a golden apple was the prize given to Paris for selecting the most beautiful of

the goddesses Aphrodite, Athena and Envy. His choice started the Trojan War. Hercules's eleventh labor required him to procure these golden apples. Melanion "won" the unwilling and unavailable Atalanta as his bride by tossing golden apples in her path as they ran a footrace to determine whether or not she had to accept his marriage proposal. See Hamilton.

¹⁶ Jonson also makes reference to the name Bridget and its English example of virginal modesty in *The Case in Altered*. When Jonson has Aurelia tease Phoenixella, who desires a life of "Deuine and sacred contemplation" (*Case* 2.4.36), about her uncharacteristic and philosophically contradictory interest in a man, the young Lord Chamont, Jonson's comparison between the two kinds of women Phoenixella may now be includes the following Bridget reference:

Aurelia: A motherly conceite, ô blind excuse,
Blinder then Loue himself. Well sister, well.
Cupid hath tane his stand in both your eyes,
The case is altered.

Phoenixella: And what of that?

Aurelia: Nay nothing. But a Saint,
Another *Bridget*, one that for a face
Would put downe *Vesta*, in whose lookes doth swim
The very sweetest creame of modesty,
You to turne tippet? fie, fie, will you giue
A packing penny to Virginitie?
I thought you'd dwell so long in *Cypres Ile*,
You'd worship *Maddam Venus* at the length;
But come, the strongest fall, and why not you?

(*Case* 4.2.48-61)

This "Saint,/ Another Bridget" references Saint Brigid of Kildare or Bridgid of Ireland, ca. 451-525. She is the pagan, Celtic goddess of healing, inspiration, craftsmanship, and poetry known also as the flame of knowledge and for her common sense and holiness.

¹⁷ The OED definition of mistress includes the following: 1. A woman having control or authority. 2b A woman who employs others in her service; a woman who has authority over servants, attendants, or slaves. 3a A female patron or inspirer of an art, religion, way of life, etc. 3b A woman, goddess, or thing personified as female, which has control over a person or is regarded as a protecting or guiding influence. June 2009. <http://dictionary.oed.com.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/cgi/entry/00312192?query_type=word&queryword=mistress&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=2&search_id=LGBn-lQkcDI-3387&hilite=00312192> (28 August 2009).

¹⁸ See Lever xxi and 9. See also Bednarz's "Biographical Politics" for a detailed reading of how Jonson's Cob character is a continuation of and alignment with Shakespeare in the most famous case of Renaissance censorship: the Old Castle/Falstaff controversy the Cobham family created with their objection to Shakespeare's character in *I Henry IV*.

¹⁹ The name Tib is noted, according to the *OED*, to be "a typical name for a woman of the lower classes" (9). See also Cave 294-5.

²⁰ For a similar argument about the male characters in *Every Man In* – “Jonson is more accurately seen as working expansively from the general to the particular” (295), see Cave.

²¹ According Lever, the poetry readings of the young men – particularly Matthew – who enter the Kitley household to visit Wellbred provide the “only indulgence” (xv).

²² For a discussion of Jonson’s constant connection between his play and audience, see Van Den Berg.

²³ I am not the first to notice Jonson’s precision with regard to identifying characters’ social origins. See Cave.

²⁴ See all of *Every Man In* 2.1.

²⁵ For an excellent treatment of the multiplicity of audience expectation and the facility with which Renaissance playwrights fulfilled audience desires with their plays, see Lopez. See also Cook, Gurr and Harbage.

²⁶ Jonson’s repeated references to the plague in this Kitley conversation exemplify the contemporaneous particularity of Jonson’s play. The 1590s were a decade of some of the worst suffering and privation for the poor, and the numbers of people migrating to London increased exponentially. The harvests in each of the years from 1594-1597 failed, resulting in famine. In 1598, the year Jonson wrote *Every Man In* there was a spike in criminal activity and death penalties. The plague ravaged England through 1603, the year in which 30,000 people died of the plague. For statistics and more detailed historicity, see Bridgen 295-310. For population figures for London, see Harding 111-28. For the plague and its consequences, see Slack.

²⁷ Kitley’s assertion in this soliloquy that “You [Beauty, namely Dame Kitley] must be then kept up, close and well-watch’d” (3.2.28) recalls the same expressions Jaques in *The Case is Altered* (1598) and in *Merchant* (1596) made about their unmarried daughters Rachel and Jessica. Jonson’s progression from these earlier examples emerges in his decision to put the responsibility and blame on the male figure, Kitley, rather than to question the woman’s chastity.

²⁸ The more specific references to Dame Kitley in Kitley’s speech are one of Jonson’s Folio revisions. In keeping with the way situating his characters in his own everyday London deepens and particularizes characterization, Jonson modifies Kitley’s speech here to eliminate the ambiguity between money, beauty and the unspecified Dame Kitley indicated by his use in the Quarto of the third person “she” to suggest all three. With the use of the second person “you” and the citations of “wife” in his Folio changes, Jonson makes clear that the character motivation throughout the speech is Kitley’s obsession with Dame Kitley in particular.

Q and F are the same through 3.2.1-20 with the exception of 3.2.14's shift from "treachery" in Q to "subtlety" in F. The continuation of the speech reads as follows:

<p>Oh, beauty is a project of some power once. Chiefly when opportunity attends her: caract She will infuse true motion in a stone, open. Put glowing fire in an icy soul, distance, Stuff peasants' bosoms with proud Caesar's spleen straws, Pour rich divine into an empty brain Bring youth to folly's gate, there train him in, burden! And, after all, extenuate his sin. well-watched,</p>	<p>I will not go. Business, go by for No, beauty, no; you are too good a To be left so, without a guard, or Your luster too'll inflame at any Draw courtship to you as a jet doth Put motion in a stone, strike fire in ice, Nay, make a porter leap you with his You must be them kept up, close and For, give you opportunity, no quicksand Devours or swallows swifter. He that lends His wife, if she be fair, or time or place, Compels her to be false. I will not go; The dangers are too many. And then the dressing Is a most main attractive; our great heads Within the city never were in safety Since our wives wore these little caps: I'll change 'em I'll change 'em straight, in mine. Mine shall no more Wear three-pil'd acorns, to make my horns ache. Nor will I go: I am resolv'd for that.</p>
<p>Well, I will not go, I am resolv'd for that (Q: 3.2.21-29)</p>	<p>(F: 3.2.21-39)</p>

²⁹ See Shakespeare, *Merchant* 3.67-103.

³⁰ See Introduction to this dissertation pages 14-17.

³¹ The full, revealing quotation reads as follows. Like the play itself, the quotation introduces Jonson's developing theories and social sensibilities. He will take a much stronger stance in his next play, *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599). In *Every Man Out*, Jonson will "warn" (*EMI* 1.1.215) his audience and try to "shame" them back to "virtue" (1.1.216), but there is much of "fear" (1.1.210) and "force" (1.1.211) at work as well.

There is a way of winning more by love
 And urging of the modesty, than by fear:
 Force works on servile natures, not the free.
 He that's compell'd to goodness may be good,
 But 'tis but for that fit, where others drawn
 By softness and example get the habit.
 Then, if they stray, but warn 'em, and the same
 They should for virtue've done, they'll do for shame.
 (*EMI* 1.1.209-16)

³² For the suggestion that the poetry Wellbred and his cohorts supply during their visits to the Kitley house is the women's only entertainment, see Lever xv.

³³ For an approach to *Every Man In* focused on the relationships between the members in a group of men, see Hutson.

³⁴ As he cut Lorenzo/Edward Kno'well's lengthy defense of poetry from Q to F, in this scene Jonson also cuts an exchange between Dame Kitley and Bridget in which the two women mock Matthew's suit, his poetry, his intellect and his person from the folio version. In both cases the cut material provides exposition for action Jonson stages with his dramaturgy. In Q, the women's lines can be found at 3.4.72-8.

³⁵ While scholarly consensus leans toward 1597-8 as the date of composition for Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the play's survival in only the First Quarto (1602) and First Folio (1623) requires acceptance of a composition date as late as 1601 or coincident with the Poets' War. I find the open-endedness of the composition date (1597-1601), the revival of the play in 1600 (Harbage, *Annals* 76-77) as well as the content of the play itself significant; all suggest that it is more likely that Jonson influenced Shakespeare than was influenced by him. Consider: *Merry Wives* diverges from the Shakespeare canon because it anomalously focuses on a) married couples, b) citizens and the middle class, c) life as it is being lived in an English town, and makes extensive use of d) references to contemporary issues or popular culture and e) prose. These are all hallmarks of Jonson's drama in general and of *Every Man In His Humour* (1598), a play performed by the Lord Chamberlain's men with Shakespeare an actor in the cast, in particular.

For the cast list, see Jonson-H&S, *Every Man In* 403.

For complete detailing of *Merry Wives* performance and publication history and scholarly arguments surrounding dating of the play, see Cohen.

³⁶ The supposed playfulness of Shakespeare's *Merry Wives* does not extend to gender. Throughout the play's narrative arc of the play, as the titular *Wives* Mistresses Page and Ford

conspire to prove that “Wives may be merry and honest too” (4.2.89), their actions undermine their potential as examples, making them as frivolous as their antics. Shakespeare’s play has been lauded for its “celebration of the wives’ freedom and autonomy” (Cohen 1259), yet the power and agency Mistresses Ford and Page exert depends on and can exist only within the bonds, bounds, and limits of marriage. In at moment that could have challenged the heterosexual matrix, Shakespeare instantiates it: “if your husbands were dead you two would marry” (3.2.11-2) is answered “Be sure of that—two other husbands” (3.2.13). The *Merry Wives* reaffirm the status quo, the heterosexual matrix and the unifying cultural fantasy of social harmony.

Each activity – the dumping of Falstaff in the Thames (3.3), the disguising of Falstaff as Mistress Brentford and his subsequent beating (4.2), the fitting of Falstaff with a headgear of horns and his punishment of burning and pinching by “fairies” (5.5) – requires the participation of their husbands and the community and functions to protect their marriages, their husbands’ money and the community as a collective. The wives do not have any humors of their own, and throughout the play, they do not change. Instead, they participate in a communal curing of humorous husbands (Ford), mercenary seducers (Falstaff), and inappropriate matches (Slender, Caius and Fenton). Their actions enable the maintenance of the perfectly (unrealistically) harmonious world of the play. Shakespeare uses the Mistresses Ford and Page to unify everyone in the play; all leads to Mistress Page’s inclusive invitation: “Let us everyone go home,/ And laugh this sport o’er by a country fire,/ Sir John and all” (5.5.218-20). Regardless of station or position, past crime or abuse, all are united at the play’s end, an end which eradicates differences and brings the characters together in a celebration of communal values, social norms and sameness.

The tricks Shakespeare’s *Merry Wives* employ to affect a harmonizing end appropriate female power for the good of the community. They serve to hide rather than to expose and change hierarchies between men and women, gentry and citizens, have and have nots. Even Anne, the Pages’ daughter who, not unlike *Every Man In*’s Bridget, manages to out-scheme both her parents to act on her own desire to marry a man of her choosing, returns to the socially regulated, hierarchical order. In her new role as “wife,” she joins together the aristocratic and middle classes and then is silenced by the husband who now speaks for her: “You do amaze her. Hear the truth of it...” (5.5.197). Fenton then delivers a short speech in which he contains “the offense she hath committed” (5.5.202), what he calls her “deceit” (5.5.203) and “disobedience” (5.5.204) with his right of “contract.” Note that in this Shakespearean language he accepts none of the responsibility with her. Instead, as the women stand silently by, the men agree to his terms, unity is restored, and Ford expansively announces: “In love the heavens themselves do guide the state,/ Money buys lands and wives are sold by fate” (5.5.209-10). A culmination of the conflation throughout of the play of women and material goods, the objectified and silenced, the wives demonstrate their proper place in the harmoniously unified community.

For all the suggestive plot overlaps between *Every Man in His Humour* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, it is the final line of *Every Man Out of His Humour* which establishes a concrete connection between Jonson and Shakespeare’s dramatic work. Speaking directly to the audience, Jonson’s stand-in Macilente/Asper requests from the audience the positive affirmation of applause: “if you (out of the bountie of your good liking) will bestow it [applause]; why, you may (in time) make leane Macilente as fat, as Sir IOHN

FAL-STAFFE” (*EMO* 5.11.84-7). The echoes of both *Every Man* plays in *Merry Wives* offers evidence of an open-ended, constantly revising composition date: perhaps the court sanctioned *Merry Wives* 1597, *Every Man In* 1598, revised *Merry Wives*, *Every Man Out* 1599, revised *Merry Wives*. It also indicates the competitive and responsive relationship between the plays in repertory on the English Renaissance stage. A sign of its time, *Merry Wives* refers to humors 19 times in the first act alone; a sign of its refutation of Jonson’s artistic direction, the play tries to coax humorous men not “out of their humor” but back into the communal fold. Most importantly, read together these plays clearly distinguish the artistic differences of their playwrights. And so while Jonson’s endings will stage fissure and division, Shakespeare, like his *Merry Wives*, will provide a socially sanctioned happy ending.

³⁷ See Hutson.

³⁸ Throughout the play, Jonson characterizes the marriage of the water bearer Cob and his wife Tib as a loving (3.1) relationship occasionally laden with sexual innuendo (4.2). Jonson dramatizes complications for their relationship when they act beyond themselves, and thus falsely, by emulating their social superiors.

³⁹ These are Dame Kitley’s last meaningful words of the play. In the folio edition, Act Five becomes a single scene of exposition. Each of the characters – including Dame Kitley – speak in an interchange with Justice Clement in which Jonson provides to each character a defense for actions during the play and to the audience the tools with which to read the behavior.

⁴⁰ See n.33 above.

⁴¹ Polonius and the father-son relationship he has with Laertes plays like an inversion of *Every Man In*’s Old and Young Kno’well. Cf., for example, *Every Man In* 1.1.63-88 and *Hamlet* 1.3.57-81.

What would I have you do? I’ll tell you,
kinsman.

Learn to be wise, and practice how to thrive;
That would I have you do; and not to spend
Your coin on every bauble that you fancy,
Or every foolish brain that humours you.
I would not have you invade each place,
Nor thrust yourself on all societies,
Till men’s affection or your own desert
Should worthily invite you to your rank...

(*EMI* 1.1.64-72)

...There—my blessing with thee,

And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character. Give thy thoughts no
tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar.
The friends thou hast, and their adoption
tried
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of
steel... (Ham. 1.3.57-63)

⁴²For examples of the specific *Every Man In* lines recurring in Shakespeare’s *Othello* as well as delineation of the “attitudes and turns of speech” (xxiv) Shakespeare “borrowed” (xxiv) from Jonson’s play, see Lever xxiv-vi.

⁴³ In the quarto edition of the play, Jonson follows the pattern of *The Case is Altered*; he offers his heroine a final scene of agency despite the constraints of festive comedy. In the final interaction between Dame Kately/Bianca and her husband/Thorello, Jonson clarifies the misreading of social cues, behaviors, expectations and performances. Jonson stages Dame Kately/Bianca's control of the exchange, giving her the command that returns the pair to equanimity: "Kiss me, sweet muss," (5.3. 384-5). In the aftermath of the pair's reconciliation, Jonson returns to Kately/Thorello's insecurities: his inability to put away his socially constructed fears about the inconstancy of woman, his uncertainty about his ability to read social performance for himself, his failure to trust himself, and his request for a code for future reading: "Tell me, Biancha, do not you play the woman with me?" (5.3.386). Jonson again emphasizes social performance as a fulfillment of a role, of expectations influenced by society. Only when Jonson confirms Dame Kately/Bianca's response – confusion and tears (5.3.387-94) – to stereotypical expectations of how a woman should be played is the husband mollified.

In the Folio, Jonson cuts this entire interchange, puts the words of command for a kiss in Kately's mouth, and has the kiss act as cure for his jealous humor.

CHAPTER THREE

Pointing Out a Savvy Fallacy: Comical Satire's First Phase**and the Women of *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599)**

ASP. ...But (with an armed, and resolved hand)
 Ile strip the ragged follies of the time,
 Naked, as at their birth: COR. (Be not too bold.
 ASP. You trouble me) and with a whip of steele,
 Print wounding lashes in their yron ribs.
 I feare no mood stamp in a priuate brow,
 When I am pleas'd t'vnmaske a publicke vice.
 (EMO Ind.16-22)¹

Fueled by the successes of his first plays – *The Case is Altered* (1598) and *Every Man In His Humour* (1598), plays which reveal the emergence of a critical theory of dramatic practice rooted in characterization, in 1599 an energized and emboldened Ben Jonson unveiled a radical new project: not just a new play, but an artistic manifesto. This artistic manifesto, Jonson's Globe follow-up *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), resembles its predecessor in name² and assertion that drama must stage human flaws and marks a clear and aggressive advancement in his artistic vision and in the progression of his female characters, especially with Fallace the merchant's wife. While *Every Man In* offered "By softness and example [how to] get a habit" for "be[ing] good" (EMI 1.1.214, 212), *Every Man Out*'s comical satire unleashes a lecturing Jonson who insists that his instruction be taken and that the changes he dramatizes be made by fellow playwrights and audiences alike. *Every Man Out* presents a Jonson who believes his approach to characterization and dramaturgy can intervene in social practice, particularly inappropriate social aspiration, and he structures his play to prove it.

The result is a very talky and a very long play. *Every Man Out* swings between excessive narration and scenes teeming with the chaotic machinations of social climbing. During the play's exposition, the Grex or chorus, two characters named Cordatus and Mitis

who comment on every scene in the play;³ a gulling, brawling and often drunken Prologue/Carlo Buffone; and Asper/Macilente, actor turned envious scholar standing-in for Jonson and manipulating everyone out of his and her humours, explain Jonson's decisions, purposes and teachings. The scenes stage the interactions of individuated and flawed characters as they strive after and keep their primary focus trained on their own aspirations. Jonson's characters include the uxorious merchant Deliro who sees a wifely ideal not his wife's physical and emotional person, Fallace who desires to be a courtly lady rather than only a merchant's wife, her father Sordido who cannot satiate his greed, her uncle Sogliardo who would literally sell the farm to become a gentleman and, likewise, her brother Fungoso who emulates the pretentious courtier Fastidious Brisk himself an insufferable braggart in debt and vainly trying to win the attentions of the prideful Lady Saviolina, and Lord Puntarvolo who lives as if he were a Don Quixote-like adventurer. The plot grows from the character interactions and, as the striving individuals pair and team up to advance their own ends, many of which in some way involve Deliro's money and earn Macilente's spite, the action moves from the countryside to the lord's manor, then to the merchant's home, the business of St. Paul's, the tailor, the notary, the court, supper at the Mitre, and back again before ending at the Counter or prison.

The play's constant tension between Jonson's dramaturgical objectives, his theoretical assertions, and his attempts to recreate theatre as a social force and site of social transformation unfold against Jonson's denunciations of his contemporaries' concessions to popular fashion and unrealistic dramaturgy and his demand for a compact with his audience – both male and female. We see, then, in his third play, Jonson on the attack. Throughout *Every Man Out*, Jonson installs and defends his own artistic theories and dramaturgical

innovations, specifically that characterization must stage the social performances men and women act in public and private/non-public spaces, that by doing so playwrights create characters in which audiences see themselves, that these audiences will be changed by the characters and character interactions staged, and that it is every playwright's responsibility to shape his audiences' reactions to his message.

The controlled and expositional nature of Jonson's play explains *Every Man Out's* uneven reception history: in its own time, the play was popular, censored, and then popular again; in our own, the play has been absent from the stage except in extraordinary academic situations for over 400 years.⁴ The play's publication success additionally situates and frames it as more of a text than a play, one to be experienced repeatedly through reading and study and explains its uneven critical history: in its own time, debated, refuted, and followed; in our own, applauded for its daring, lauded as a watershed moment, and discounted as unwatchable.⁵ It is, of course, Jonson's exacting balance of the literary – the artistic manifesto – and the dramaturgical – the performance – that underscores and illuminates *Every Man Out's* theoretical reach and innovation. Jonson articulates his balance and purpose from “*After the second Sounding*” (s.d. Ind.1), placing most of the play's first lines in the mouth of Asper, his authorial stand-in and “*Furor Poeticus!*” (Ind.147). Asper's first words, “Away./ Who is so patient of this impious world/ That he can checke his spirit, or reine his tongue?” (Ind.3-5), express Jonson's authorial direction and convey the aggression beneath his play's project. Jonson will not “checke” his own “spirit” or “reine his tongue;” he will “strip the ragged follies of the time,/ Naked, as at their birth” (Ind.17-8) and, “feare[ing] no mood stamp in a priuate brow” (Ind.21), he will rebel against theatrical convention and authorize his own.

Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour* does not follow a traditional structure and neither will this chapter. I will, however, follow the model Jonson provides with *Every Man Out*, unfolding each of the play's layers: the artistic manifesto, the modeled dramatic practice, and the characterization situated in social pretense and performance. I first discuss the claims Jonson makes about himself and his artistic theory in the play's extra-dramatic devices. Then I explain how Jonson's explicit articulations of his artistic theory merge throughout the play with his dramaturgical decisions. For the remainder and majority of the chapter, I examine the three women of *Every Man Out*: Lady Puntarvolo, Fallace and Saviolina. Beginning with the Lady as Jonson's example for how to read the character interactions in his play, I detail how Jonson's demand for verisimilitude stages social performances which in turn create individuated and situated female characters as perceptively particularized in behavior and attitude as any of his celebrated male characters. Lady Puntarvolo, Fallace and Saviolina, like Rachel, Aurelia, Phoenixella and Dame Kately before them, demonstrate that as critics we have both overstated and misrepresented Jonson's supposedly misogynistic stance on women.

Every Man Out's Artistic Manifesto: From Theory to Practice

Jonson uses *Every Man Out* to announce his complete departure from the popular form of festive comedy and his elevation of a new form: comical satire. Jonson's lengthy Induction and Prologue, 373 lines of explanatory text before Act One begins, and the interjections of the Grex throughout the play, offer explicit articulations of his artistic theory, of the ways his comical satire merges theory and practice, and of how that theory works dramatically in the play. *Every Man Out* stages not only the purge of festive comedy but also the dismissal of the neo-classical law of comic construction. In turn, the play claims for modern playwrights

“the same licence, or free power, to illustrate and heighten our invention” (Ind.267-9) as the classical models employed.⁶ Armed with the authority of his Greek and Roman predecessors, the classical tradition becomes his defense for actively modifying the comic genre, Jonson simultaneously asserts the uniqueness of his play – “strange, and of a particular kind by it selfe” (Ind.231-2) – and validates his new form and theories.

Jonson also uses the classical tradition to separate himself from his dramatic rivals. In the Induction, Jonson creates a timeline to trace the evolution of comedy from a single song to the comedic forms of Aristophanes, Menander, Plautus and his own comical satire; in this way, Jonson effectively installs himself as the next Poet in a line of quality Poets (Ind.257, 261-2).⁷ His placement among the classical poets then becomes evidence of the distinctions between himself and his contemporaries. They are

...euery seruile imitating spirit,
 (Plagu’d with an itching leprosie of wit)
 [who] In a meere halting fury, striues to fling
 His vlc’rous body in the *Thespian* spring,
 And streight leap’s forth a Poet! but as lame
 As VULCAN or the founder of *Cripple-gate*.

(Ind.67-72)

They are “drie braine”s (Ind.59) who flatter imitating “apes” (Ind.117), “begge...patience” of their audience and “seruilely...fawne” for “applause” (Ind.57-8) while he is the source of serious “invention” (Ind.206) which will reward “attentive auditors” (Ind.201) and teach those who come to the theatre to “ioyne their profit with their pleasure,/ And come to feed

their vnderstanding parts” (Ind.202-3).⁸ Like his classical forebears but unlike his dramatic rivals, Jonson maintains the social role, the cathartic effect of drama.

Despite its climate of moral superiority and didacticism, Jonson’s comical satire aims to leave its audience restored, renewed and revitalized and calls on each audience member to “join” “profit” and “pleasure” in order to enact his/her own best self.⁹ For the audience’s “profit,” Jonson explains through his stand-in Asper, “My strict hand/ Was made to ceaze on vice, and with a gripe/ Squeeze out the humour of such spongie natures,/ As licke vp every idle vanitie” (Ind.143-6). The “vices” and “vanities” emerge in his characters’ interactions; and false performances are purged. For the audience’s “pleasure,” Jonson balances the play’s aggression with comedy, informing the audience that “We hope to make the circles of your eyes/ Flow with distilled laughter” (Ind.216-7). Jonson expects his corrections of the ridiculous social aspirants and their outlandish performances to urge audiences to laugh at the play and at themselves. The audience’s responsibility, Jonson’s Induction reminds and guides, is participation in his comical satire. The playwright’s responsibility is to help the audience find profit and pleasure by using the “same licence, or free power” (Ind.267) the classic poets used to show “those times, wherein they wrote” (Ind.265-6) to show the audience its own.¹⁰

The Grex’s Cordatus and Mitis – at once in the play world but interacting only with the authorial stand-ins Prologue/Carlo Buffone and Asper/Macilente and separate from the world of the play but a constant presence on the stage in their extra-dramatic function as chorus – maintains and articulates the intersection of Jonson’s artistic theory and dramatic praxis and forges a link between audience and stage.¹¹ Whether interjecting in the midst of the action as they do throughout the Induction or commenting before and after a scene from

their positions on either side or even above the stage like an early modern Waldorf and Statler, the Grex establishes and re-establishes the connection and distance, the overlap and influence of the theatrical space of the stage world on the actual space of the every day world in and beyond the playhouse, in and beyond London beyond, and vice versa.¹² The dramatic structure Jonson builds for *Every Man Out* foregrounds his discussion of artistic theory by placing the Grex closest to the audience.¹³ From their position as internal participants in the play and external commentators for the audience, the Grex invests Jonson with the poetic authority he claims, introduces and integrates literary criticism in the form of his own artistic theory into the plot, and communicates his instructive, social goals. Their reminders throughout connect the action to the theory, explicating how his play is “neere, and familiarly allied to the time” (3.6.200-1). Together the Grex’s Cordatus and Mitis label, explain, argue, synthesize and ultimately speak for Jonson.

For example, Jonson has the Grex emphasize comical satire as a genre designed to reveal and to criticize and thus to purge and to correct social ills. In their discussion, the Grex draws attention to social performance, and comical satire emerges “a thing throughout pleasant, and ridiculous, and accommodated to the correction of manners” (3.6.207-9).¹⁴ This definition of form at the halfway point of the play reinforces the Induction definition delivered by Asper; we recall that comical satire provides its audience

...a mirrour

As large as is the stage, whereon we act:

Where they shall see the times deformitie

Anatomiz’d in euery nerue, and sinnew,

With constant courage, and contempt of feare

(Ind.118-22)

and that we are to merge our profit and our pleasure, seeing and correcting as necessary the ways and roles we enact. Jonson's perception that his drama could "mirroure" his social reality authorizes his interpretations of society and, at the same time, energizes his attempts to revise his world. From his theoretical perspective, Jonson argues that "art appeares most full of lustre" when it "approcheth nearest the life: especially, when in flame, and height of their humours, they are laid flat, it fills the eye better, and with more contentment" (4.8.166-69).

Jonson follows through in practice, staging life most accurately by dramatizing the various idiosyncrasies, foibles and weaknesses of the everyday Londoners he observes.¹⁵ Jonson, then, relies on the Grex's simultaneous participation as both members of play's cast and members of the audience to facilitate the connection between quotidian and theatricalized experience, between audience and character. Jonson also employs a purely dramaturgical method to establish the connection; he modifies the stylized dramatic practice of actor entrances. Rather than "see a vast empty stage, and the actors come in (one by one) as if they were dropt downe with a feather, into the eye of the spectators" (2.3.299-301), Jonson fills the stage with multiple characters and character groupings. Mirroring various London meeting places – the country home, the city street, St. Paul's Cathedral, the court – in which *Every Man Out*'s spectators might themselves congregate, Jonson's scenes vibrate with speech, movement, observation and, by cumulative effect, life-like chaos. This is particularly apparent in the observation of the wooing scene at Puntarvolo's home in Act

Two, of the business maneuverings in Paul's Walk in Act Three, and of the interactions at the court with Saviolina in Acts Four and Five.¹⁶

Jonson populates *Every Man Out* with characters visible throughout social London and with types available in conventional drama, but he particularizes and complicates them too. In each character, Jonson combines idiosyncratic details and experiences with an identification and responsiveness to social norms and situationally specific social performances. How men and women's competitive interactions generate imitations, rehearsals, reformulations and increasingly complex performances based on observation, praise and censure shape personal detail, experience and reaction to social norms and, Jonson's attentiveness to the facets of social performance, elevates his characterization. As Jonson's *Every Man Out* stages the everyday interactions of recognizable people, his theory and practice merge, and we do see "the times deformitie/ Anatomiz'd in euery nerue, and sinew" (Ind.120-1).

Every Man Out with the Women

Jonson makes clear his expectation of female presence and participation in his play (despite the dramaturgical reality of boy actors in female roles) from the beginning of *Every Man Out*. Just as in the Induction Asper notes and welcomes the audience, Carlo – "in place of a bad prologue" (Ind.332) – welcomes and toasts the gentlewomen and men in the audience. Putting the gentlewomen "first" as he is "sworn" to do (Ind.331), Jonson specifically includes women in the project of his play, underscores his awareness of the formalized script of social niceties on which social interactions depend and emphasizes the role social performances will play.¹⁷ When later Jonson again addresses his female audience, he defends against the very misinterpretations which have plagued him to this day:

Cordatus: You'le say, perhaps, the city will not take
 it well, that the marchant is made here to dote
 so perfectly vpon his wife; and shee againe,
 to bee so *Fastidiously* affected, as shee is?

Mitis: You haue vtter'd my thought, sir, indeed.

Cordatus: Why (by that proportion) the court might
 as wel take offense at him we call the courtier.

(2.6.148-54)

Note that while Jonson stresses that his mirror-like representations are not to be read metonymically, he also explains that his characterizations are equal-opportunity portraits of characters of both sexes. Certainly some characters, courtiers and merchant wives, are like the ones Jonson depicts in *Every Man Out*.¹⁸ Those who are, Jonson argues, need to be corrected. The larger point here for Jonson criticism is not whether Jonson's women are "good" or "bad," "misogynistic" or "feminist," anachronisms to say the least, but rather that in his characterizations Jonson provides specificity and agency, performative sparks which makes his characters worth examining and performing.

Because *Every Man Out*'s female characters have too often been reduced to stock types – the merchant wife, the landed country gentleman's lady, the courtier, Jonson's use of detail to situate each character within a particular physical and social space has been missed. As he develops character, Jonson complicates each character's situation with social performance, self-awareness of the performance, and the cognizance and judgment of other characters' reactions to the performance. The resulting characterization produces a

dramaturgical style of gender representation dependent on layers of description and performance and a character breaking through the bounds of type.

And so while Jonson's women are not all women, they are women whose idiosyncrasies – quirks, desires, actions – and social performances set them apart from those of Jonson's contemporaries¹⁹ and offset the critical commonplace that Jonson crafted only misogynistic representations of women.²⁰ The female characters in *Every Man Out* propel Jonson's project, demonstrating how his departure from festive comedy resulted in a dramatic practice that develops character by creating layers of personality and identity.²¹ In addition to exemplifying Jonson artistic theories in dramatic practice, the female characters of Jonson's *Every Man Out*, as have their predecessors in *The Case is Altered* and *Every Man In*, continue to reveal the limits of the negative preconceptions about Jonson's treatment of gender and to demonstrate that Jonson was much more open to issues of gender identity, representation, and agency than has been considered, acknowledged and accepted.

Lady Puntarvolo Makes Jonson's Point

Jonson uses a love game between the Puntarvolos to dramatize the artistic theory he has elaborated in lecture form throughout the Induction. In the love game, the minor characters Puntarvolo's Lady and the Gentlewoman attending her illuminate both the role of social performance in Jonson's representation of identity and the disjuncture between an effortless performance and a poorly devised and executed one.²² The performance itself is only half of Jonson's lesson; the other half teaches the audience *how* to read performance. Creating a telescoping scene in which a primary performance – the quixotic Puntarvolo's erotic script in which as a knight errant he woos his own wife in her role as reluctant lady of the castle²³ – is viewed, refracted, and judged by five different audiences, Jonson layers the observation of

the performance just as he layers the performance itself. From the inside out, Jonson organizes the five layers of observation on the stage as follows: the primary performance dominates the center stage; in the second group, the allowed,²⁴ meaning Lord Puntarvolo knows they are there, but hidden Sordido and Fungoso stand off to one side to enjoy the performance; the third hidden and unobserved crowd, comprised of the irreverent jester Carlo Buffone, the courtly pretenders Sogliardo and Fastidious Brisk and Brisk's boy Cinedo, stands on the other side of the stage, watching and critiquing both the central performance and the performances of the second-level group of observers; the Grex's all encompassing view provides a fourth layer of scrutiny and commentary; and the Globe audience, guided in their reception by the reactions of the four audiences they observe, act as final arbiter. The result crowds the stage and the experience with performers, spectators and commentators, each – including Jonson's audience – forced to be keenly aware of its own as well as the performances of the others.

At the center, Jonson places the Lady, her Gentlewoman and Lord Puntarvolo himself to perform the roles Puntarvolo has written for them all. To the judgment of Puntarvolo's unknown but in-play audience Carlo, Sogliardo and Brisk, the role-play requires him to "accost" "his owne lady, as shee were a stranger neuer encounter'd before" (2.1.144, 138-9). Jonson indicates that the performances are specifically for Puntarvolo's pleasure, that Puntarvolo acts both as actor and as an audience of himself for himself, and that he makes the entire household complicit in the performance. As the Lady and her Gentlewoman grudgingly participate in Puntarvolo's play, Jonson demonstrates the gap between their fulfillment of social roles and expectations by performing in the love game and their own identity roles "Lady" and "Gentlewoman."

The performance begins when Puntarvolo directs his forester to announce their arrival: “giue winde to thy horne” (2.2.1).²⁵ As scripted, the sound lures the waiting Gentlewoman to the window. As she moves into position, Jonson has Puntarvolo, in a speech that works as an aside to the audiences Puntarvolo does not know he has, divulge the stage directions for the performance he is about to give: “I will step forward three pases: of the which, I will barely retire one; and (after some little flexure of the knee) with an erected grace salute her (one, two, and three)” (2.2.10-2). The minutiae of his performance – where his eye shall look, how he will walk, bow, gesture and speak – mocks the affected role “Gentleman” by revealing its fabricated nature. The layered performance seeks to elicit a favorable response, but the mechanical nature of the movements demonstrates the absurdity of putting on a performance in the privacy of one’s own home.

Jonson underscores this point with the Gentlewoman’s response to Puntarvolo. She punctures his carefully crafted repartee – “Sweet lady, God saue you” (2.2.12) – with her negation: “No, forsooth: I am but the waiting gentlewoman” (2.2.12-5). The disdain Jonson gives her, apparent in the assertion of what she actually is – “I am” – distances her, and by extension her Lady, from the embarrassment of participation in this badly written and poorly executed scene. That they knowingly, if unwillingly, act their parts for Puntarvolo’s benefit never leaves the audiences’ awareness either. Jonson crafts each of the Gentlewoman’s lines to stroke Puntarvolo’s ego with compliments and flattery while hewing so closely to his queries that they also indicate their forced and insincere quality. When Puntarvolo asks, “what yeers is the knight, faire damsell?” (2.2.41); she replies, “Faith, much about your years, sir” (2.2.42). When he asks, “What complexion, or what stature beares he?” (2.2.43); she replies, “Of your stature, and very neere vpon your complexion” (2.2.44-5). When he

asks “What are his endowments? Is he courteous?” (2.2.49), she ignores the endowments and answers, “O, the most courteous knight in Christianland, sir” (2.2.50). Jonson continues their repartee for another thirty lines after which, in exasperation or uncontrolled sarcasm, Jonson has the Gentlewoman end their exchange with an “O, Lord, sir!” (2.2.81) that also expresses the sentiment of the various audiences observing the interaction. With a stage direction that indicates the Gentlewoman turns away from the window (and, perhaps, even rolls her eyes), Jonson delivers a final judgment on the performance by having her absent herself from participation in his game.

To preclude the Globe audience from missing the self-congratulatory purpose of Puntarvolo’s play or the ineptitude of his social performance, Jonson has Carlo announce it. He begins by exposing the falsity of the performance: “it’s a proiect, a designement of his owne, a thing studied, and rehearst” (2.2.35-6). Of course, all social performances are, but a successful performance depends on the observer’s inability to see the performer’s act. Puntarvolo, Jonson emphasizes, lacks the social grace to accomplish an effortless performance. Jonson then criticizes the vanity of the project: “Slud, he takes an inuentory of his owne good parts” (2.2.55-6). Enforcing praise when one does not deserve it also transgresses the social norms which dictate that social performances must be undetectable. Puntarvolo’s vanity project trips over its own layers because the audience can recognize the performance as a performance. Finally, Jonson has Carlo critique the skill of the performance. Acknowledging the effort Puntarvolo matches to his enterprise, “Heart, can any man walke more vpright then hee does?”, Carlo qualifies and thus undermines the energy of the performance by indicating that no audience can forget they are watching a performance: “Looke, looke; as if he went in a frame, or had a sute of wanescot on: and the

dogge watching him, lest he should leap out on't" (2.2.88-91). Jonson heightens the censure when he elevates Puntarvolo's language to six lines of flowery, rhymed verse. The concealed onstage audiences erupt with laughter²⁶ and, like the Gentlewoman before, expose Puntarvolo's lack by noting his dialogue and actions as a role he elected to play rather than as an extension of persona or identity social performance can be.

With the character of the Lady, Jonson creates a parallel to Puntarvolo but also a foil. The Lady, like Puntarvolo, knowingly plays another character but, unlike with Puntarvolo, Jonson acknowledges the disconnect between the role play and her character identity. Again he employs the frame, literalizing her Dulcinea-like role by framing her at the window and by removing her from the window when she acts on her own. Jonson heightens the complexity of the character of the Lady by acknowledging her difficult position. At once her character is a wife who must fulfill her husband's desires – "Is your desire to speake with me, sir knight?" (2.3.34); a lover who might take pleasure in fulfilling the fantasy life of her husband/lover – "it be not vsuall with me (chiefly in the absence of a husband) to admit any entrance to strangers" (2.3.53-4); a woman who might accept or disdain being wooed by a chivalrous knight however false – "I am resolu'd" (2.3.56); a mistress who must care for those in and of her household – "My lady will come presently, sir" (2.3.18); and a lady whose observed behavior follows carefully constructed social norms – "Gods me, here's company; turne in againe" (2.3.88). In his characterization of Lady Puntarvolo, Jonson dramatizes character as a variety of identity layers and as the multiplicity of social selves, of various roles, people balance, juggle, enact and revise as each interaction develops, as life happens. Lady Puntarvolo is at once a Lady, a woman, a wife, a lover, a damsel in distress, an actor. Which is the real Lady is less important than the point that all of these roles

together create identity, than Jonson's demonstration that together all of these layers, the awareness of them and their required simultaneity create character and dramatize identity.

Against his elevation of Puntarvolo's foolish pride in his own heavy-handed performance, Jonson sets the Lady's independent action and reveals her oppositional placement in relation to her husband. Unbeknownst to his Lady, Puntarvolo authorizes another audience to observe them. This group of viewers includes Sordido and Fungoso, men Puntarvolo, as their lord, patron and godfather, seeks to impress with his own performance and with the performances he can induce from his household and Lady. As Jonson stages the Lady and Puntarvolo's conversation via the displaced personas of the roles they have purposefully layered onto their own identities – the interactions between the chivalrous knight errant Puntarvolo wishes to be, the wooed woman the Lady seems very much not to want to be and the characters they appear to be to their observers, he exposes the ephemeral nature of identity. Jonson emphasizes his point with the Lady's exit. In a single breath she divulges her recognition of audiences that, unlike her household, are not equal collaborators, equally implicated: "Gods me, here's company; turne in againe" (2.3.88). In a single moment, she changes direction mid stride, breaks off the game, returns to the sanctuary of the house and departs, permanently, from the play. By giving the Lady the active decision to abort her husband's desired course of action and no longer to participate in her husband's adventures (Jonson reveals later in the play (3.2.11-5) that the Lady no longer intends to travel to Constantinople with Puntarvolo), Jonson demonstrates the Lady's, and a lady's, agency and reveals the element of choice in the transient consequences of social performance.

Throughout these scenes, Jonson uses the various onstage audiences to dissect social and gender performances as well as the success and failure of the project. Through Fastidious, Jonson expresses disbelief that the “presence” of Sordido and Fungoso will not “preuaile against the current of his humor” (2.3.22-3). Through Carlo, he disclaims against Puntarvolo’s pleasure in the Lady “speaking a speech of your owne penning” and expresses “impatien[ce] of such fopperie” (2.3.62-3; 65). Through the Grex, he questions the possible existence of such persons and admits that seeing is believing: “Very easily possible, Sir, you see there is” (2.3.42). As Jonson stages characters who can and do see through affected performance, he emphasizes the construction of social and gender identity made visible in and by such performances, in interaction with such performances, and through revision of performance at all levels.

With this elaborate game of role playing and observation, Jonson literalizes social performance, arguing that people are how and what they act and suggesting that in practice, then, people can change. At the same time, he offers a glimpse behind the performance, revealing the disjuncture between motivation to play a part, rehearsal process, staging and audience reaction to the performance. Specifically, Puntarvolo’s reaction indicates that scripted Arthurian romance is his preferred *modus operandi* in the world, the side conversation of the characters who witness the game demonstrates just how absurd role playing is when others can see it is a game, and the Lady’s reaction reveals the embarrassment of being caught in the clumsy attempt to be something one is not.

Puntarvolo’s Lady is the first of the women we meet in Jonson’s comical satires. With stage business that might include peeking in and out at the window, a girlish voice to accompany her skittish damsel act, a hand to the breast in horror, the commands that spur her

household to action and response, Jonson gives us a woman situated in a particular moment and then augments that moment with personal reactions, idiosyncratic experiences, and the wholesale adoption of another's role. By giving the Lady the most exaggerated of the roles in *Every Man Out*, Jonson explains from the outset of the play and, indeed, for all the comical satires, his artistic theory of character based on the balanced layers of identity. Each layer, layers of social performance, of observation, of self-awareness, adds to or detracts from character, and each exposes social performance as an unnatural social construct yet also an absolutely essential one. Everyone to whom Jonson desires his comical satire to show a "mirror" plays such roles, and success depends on acting consistently within the approved social norms, on reading the situation and responding according. The censuring of bad acting and clumsy performance links audience and playwright, profit and pleasure and, thus, enacts a project of social reform.

Fallace and the Fallacy of the Fallen Woman

Jonson's example of Lady Puntarvolo, with its layers of acting and of audience, provides his own audience a guide for how to read performance. Jonson now expands his practice of characterization and with the play's central female character Fallace, in the Italian of the play's setting fa-la-che or three syllables ending with a long "a," tests his audience's application of his arguments. In keeping with the dramatic approach to character he employed with Rachel in *The Case is Altered* (1598) and Dame Kitely in *Every Man in His Humour* (1599), Jonson has the other characters of the play describe Fallace before her character makes its first stage appearance.

In addition to being the first female character Jonson mentions in the play, an introduction which includes her in a listing of Sogliardo's "kinred i'the city" (1.2.68), her

initial description includes “niece” (1.2.68) and “marchants wife” (1.2.69). These descriptions immediately situate Fallace within the parameters of family obligation, first to her uncle Sogliardo and then to her husband the merchant, and of class status. Jonson outlines the situation of her marriage when he has Deliro, Fallace’s husband, revel in her beauty “so passing fair” (2.4.29) and then obviate any fault of hers by explaining that “no man can be worthy of her kindness” (2.4.31). The man to whom Jonson has Deliro address his comments cannot credit such description, suggesting they say more about the husband than the wife. Jonson focuses Macilente’s observations on Deliro’s humour – “You are too amorous, too obsequious” (2.4.60) – and uses him to iterate the stereotypical gender hierarchy in which men preside over women when he lectures Deliro in the proper treatment of wives: “Husbands must...” (2.4.63).²⁷ While before the Fallace character appears on stage Jonson dramatizes each man’s attempt to define and contain her, Jonson himself does not fix the Fallace character to a single type.

From her first entrance (2.4.96), Jonson begins to grow Fallace beyond the format of the play. A layered construction from name to action, Fallace’s character and scenes repeatedly underscore Jonson’s playfulness. As a type, Fallace is the dissatisfied wife of a successful merchant who, like all the characters in the play, desires upward mobility. In a word encapsulating various phonetic and meaning possibilities, “Fallace” suggests a “fall[en] ace,” “fal[l] lace,” a “fallace”/phallus and a “fallace”/fallacy. The discursive complexity of the name moves playfully in several directions, suggestively combining and recombining multiple personas. Fallace’s wifely status indicates her primary, ace, position in her husband’s affections and Macilente’s spiteful comments foreshadow a change. Fallace’s merchant wife position links her with such commodities as lace. Fallace’s pedestal, erected

by an idolizing husband who celebrates his own superiority for attracting and winning a woman of whom no man is worthy, embodies his male ego. Fallace's interest in another man gives the lie to static perfection and conveys the human potential for untruth.²⁸ When the play and its central female character draw critical attention, the negative connotations of Fallace as fallacy, become the focus. Usually without specific analysis of the text, after all a return to the text, a return to all of Jonson's texts as I am advocating with this dissertation, would disprove the negative assessments, critics offer Fallace as proof of Jonson's misogyny.²⁹ Yet the very collision of identity possibilities, defined, constructed, revised, with which Jonson invests Fallace, reveals multiplicity and playfulness and challenges the common critical assessment.

As in the *Puntarvolo* example, Jonson gives the female character, despite a husband's static nature, the ability to react both within the confines of her marriage and according to the dictates of her own desire. In this way, Jonson indicates the husbands' not the wives' responsibility for the misdirection in their marriages. While he delineates Deliro's character and humour through interactions with and about his wife, Jonson builds Fallace's character and humour both in exchanges with Deliro, her brother and her crush, Fastidious Brisk, and with soliloquies in which Jonson reveals the inner workings of her mind. Significantly, the only other character Jonson allows to soliloquize is his authorial stand-in Macilente.

In Jonson's characterization, Fallace is at once a wife and a prized possession; a person and a symbol of her husband's manhood; a woman and an individual with wants, needs and desires; a character and an idea and an image. Throughout the play, Jonson dramatizes the uxorious Deliro's strained attempts to keep Fallace to an imposed and deluded standard of idolized perfection and demonstrates that the husband's reductive view of his

wife provides the basis for his, not her, humour. Fallace, Jonson's play argues, is a fallacy, but not as critics have imagined. She is an illusion and a delusion (from the Italian "fallacia"), no less or more so than any other dramatic character or counterpart in the social world, because her character exceeds the limits of type, "merchant wife," and offers an individuated, particularized and evolving personality. Through Fallace's speeches, Jonson suggests that personal experience as a successful merchant's wife sets her place in the world while personal desire for growth and change moves her beyond that socially constructed sphere. This is hardly misogynistic; Jonson treats Fallace no differently from any of the other – mostly male – characters in the play, "oppos[ing] a mirroure/ As large as is the stage.../Where they shall see the times" (Ind.118-20) and its complex, even messy, realities. These realities, Jonson argues, preclude the fantasy of socially harmonious happy endings offered by the drama of his contemporaries and provide the material with which to stage life as we live it.

Fallace's complexity emerges in the focused stage time Jonson devotes to her; she participates in eight scenes and has three soliloquies, three asides and a monologue.³⁰ With each entrance, Jonson deepens her individuated personality, augmenting the impressions of the characters with whom she interacts with the desires she expresses herself. The conventions of Renaissance drama, the most famous of which is Hamlet's assertion in the grave scene "I am Hamlet the Dane," suggest that character statements of "I am" indicate an interior understanding and acceptance of identity.³¹ Jonson gives Fallace an "I am" statement in her first scene of the play. Attempting to generate mutual understanding between herself and her husband, she begins:

Fallace: I, long since perhaps,

But now that sense is alter'd: you would haue me

(Like to a puddle, or a standing poole)

To haue no motion, nor no spirit within me.

(2.4.110-2)

She does not, however, accept such stasis for herself. Rejecting his image, she continues: “No, *I am* like a pure, and sprightly riuier,/ That moues for euer, and yet still the same;/ Or fire, that burnes much wood, yet still one flame” (2.4.113-5, my italics). From one perspective, albeit a narrow one, this is fickleness, the stereotypically expected prerogative of a woman to change her mind. From the vantage of Jonson’s artistic theory, his characterization of Fallace offers a self-image with a practical, even realistic, embrace of growth and with an understanding that, while one is always oneself, one is also always different. Having Fallace compare herself to “riuier” and “fire,” Jonson demonstrates – as Spenser did in the “Mutability Cantos” of his *Faerie Queene*³² – that in life as we live it change is constant. In Jonson’s observations of his world, both external factors such as environmental influences beyond one’s control and internal factors such as the attempts at varied and various social performances cause change. As he characterizes Fallace, Jonson reconciles two positions, sameness and difference, and argues that lived experience and social norms together shape and define us.

To emphasize his point, Jonson layers the above moment of self-awareness with social performance. Fallace, like all the characters in Jonson’s play, is a social competitor and, because she desires to move up the social ladder, she takes action. As the scene continues, Jonson places Fallace in the role first of the disciplining woman. She chastises her merchant husband for performances a step behind what she observes out and about London

and instructs him to match his act to the class above their own. He cannot tell the “difference/ Betwixt the sent of growing flowers, and cut ones” (2.4.122-3). He “smokes” (2.4.128) the room instead of perfuming it. Then like a Petrarchan mistress, she admonishes his claims because, while he says the words, his bodily actions reveal too much of scripted performance: “How cunningly he can conceale himselfe!/ As though he lou’d? nay, honour’d and ador’d” (2.4.141-2). Instead of acting effortlessly, he exposes another role by “asking, why? wherefore? And looking strangely” (2.4.144). The expected social performance in this instance requires the social presence to control and to conceal the physical manifestation of emotions.³³

Throughout this first Fallace scene, Jonson also begins to draw parallels between Fallace and Macilente. Like the envious Macilente who earlier in this same scene and immediately prior to her entrance instructed Deliro on how husbands should treat wives, Fallace instructs Deliro in order to remake him according to the behavioral norms she believes will serve her best socially. Both characters connect Deliro – his actions and his merits (or demerits) – to themselves. Fallace wants Deliro to raise her place in the world; Macilente resents Deliro for being above him: “I see no reason, why that dog (call’d *Chaunce*)/ Should fawne vpon this fellow, more then me.../ My parts are every way as good as his” (2.4.9-10,13). Jonson then brings the two characters together when he extends Macilente’s envy of Deliro from his material possessions to his wife. Onstage as an observing bystander throughout Fallace and Deliro’s exchange, Macilente, awed by Fallace’s beauty, asks,

...what starre rul’d his birth?

That brought him such a starre? blind *Fortune* still

Bestowes her gifts on such as cannot vse them:

How long shall I lie, ere I be so happy,

To haue a wife of this exceeding forme?

(2.4.132-6)

As the scene continues, Jonson invests Macilente's envy with desire: "O, how shee tempts my heart-strings, with her eye,/ To knit them to her beauties, or to break? What mou'd the heauens, that they could not make/ Me such a woman?" (2.4.157-60). Macilente's envy seems directed yet at Deliro for whom the "heauens" did "make...such a woman" while they "could not make...such a woman" for Macilente. With the continuation of the line, however, Jonson focuses attention again on the parallels between Fallace and Macilente. In its entirety, the sentence reads "What mou'd the heauens, that they could not make/ Me such a woman? but a man, a beast,/ That hath no blisse like to others" (2.4.159-61). Macilente, Jonson emphasizes, envies not Deliro but Fallace. He questions the heavens motivation "that they could not make/ Me such a woman," longing to be neither "a man" nor "a beast" but "such a woman" as Fallace is. Macilente, Jonson reveals, does not want to have Fallace; he wants to *be* Fallace.

To emphasize the point that Macilente desires to be Fallace, that Macilente desires to be a woman, that Macilente desires a complete transformation, Jonson ends Macilente's speech with an alternate wish – "Would to heauen/...I were turn'd/ To some faire water-Nymph" (2.4.161-3), and he ends the scene with the Grex commentary – "COR. Behold, behold, the translated gallant./ MIT. O, he is welcome" (2.4.167-8). In the move from wanting *to have* to wanting *to be* Fallace, Jonson links Macilente and Fallace not only to each other but also to himself. Throughout *Every Man Out*, Macilente, the character Jonson's

stand-in Asper assumes in the play, also represents Jonson. This moment, then, is a suggestive one. As Jonson has the Macilente character confess his desire to be Fallace, Jonson reveals that he sees himself in Fallace. The dramatic structure of the play corroborates the connection; not only does Jonson create parallels between Macilente and Fallace throughout the play but, as mentioned before, they are also the only two characters to whom Jonson gives soliloquies. The Macilente-Fallace-Jonson triangle demonstrates another of Jonson's inherent self contradictions. He critiques vice and folly and yet is himself an element of vice and folly. He considers himself intellectually and aesthetically superior to his audience and yet works to capture the tastes and traditions of his audience. He seeks private patronage and respect amongst the elite and yet masters the public marketplace.³⁴ In Macilente, Jonson envies and punishes the world; in Fallace, Jonson celebrates the active pursuit of desire. Like Jonson, Fallace seems rebellious, working against social norms even as she exploits them for her own purposes, countering the social project of the play even as she moves others and is herself moved from her humour. Jonson's supposedly misogynistic treatment of Fallace can only disintegrate before the textual evidence which instead reveals a playful Jonson, employing flexibility in his approach to observing, assessing and participating in the world.³⁵

In the Fallace character's active pursuit of desire, Jonson suggests not only himself but also every man and woman. Fallace neither sits back to wait nor disguises herself as a man to act. She exerts her own personal power to achieve her own, not her husband's or her community's, desires and ends. The outcome of her actions does not bring circumscription in marriage (she is already there, pushing the boundaries), revirginization, monumentalization, maiming or death, the traditional responses of Renaissance dramatists to

empowered women.³⁶ Instead Jonson sets Fallace on a path to the active pursuit of her goal, putting her in contact with the miles gloriosus and courtier extraordinaire, Fastidious Brisk through whom she imagines access to her social goals. From his first words – “Saue you, signior Deliro: how do’st thou, sweet lady? Let mee kisse thee” (2.6.1-2) – Fallace is smitten. Brisk’s social performance, after all, answers all her critiques of Deliro.

The confidence of Brisk’s “let mee kisse thee” is at once a request, a command, and an expression of familiarity – “thee.” Although Jonson has Deliro interrupt the embrace and draw Brisk away, he centers all of Fallace’s attention on the courtier and maintains her presence on the stage throughout the scene even though her dialogue is minimal. At first Jonson positions her to stand conversing with her brother and then, after her brother’s exit, her stage business occupies her with flitting (and flirting) around the crowd in her home. As she listens to the conversation between Brisk and her husband, as he does with Macilente, Jonson also has Fallace interject. She compliments Brisk: “Indeed sir, ’tis a most excellent sute, and you doe weare it as extraordinary” (2.6.28-9). She luxuriates in his manners: “Ah, the sweet grace of a courtier!” (2.6.40). She chastises Macilente when she overhears one of his censures: “Out, out, vnworthy to speake, where he breatheth” (2.6.58-9). She affirms Brisk’s assessments: “He saies true” (2.6.67). When the men set off for Paul’s, Deliro’s request – “Nay, deare wife, I beseech thee, forsake these moods: looke not like winter thus” (2.6.104-5) – indicates that she expresses her displeasure both at Brisk’s departure and at her husband’s decision to stake his claim on her by calling her his “deare” and then his “sweete wife” (2.6.110) in front of Brisk. Her retort, with its breaks to indicate what Jonas Barish has labeled “live thinking” (50) – “God lord! How you are perfumed! In your terms and all”

(2.6.111-2), suggests her flushed reactions. She seems at once embarrassed by Deliro's loving behavior and flushed with a sexual excitement aroused by Fastidious Brisk.

It is at this point in the play that Jonson gives Fallace her first soliloquy. Standing alone on stage in the aftermath of the men's exit, she basks in the merits of Brisk.

Fallace: I, I! Let thy words euer sound in mine eares, and thy
 graces disperse contentment through all my senses! O, how
 happy is that lady aboue other ladies, that enioyes so
 absolute a gentleman to her seruant! A countesse giue him
 her hand to kisse? ah, foolish countesse! hee's a man
 worthy (if a woman may speake of a mans worthe) to kiss
 the lips of an empresse.

(2.6.115-20)

Jonson matches her evident desire for Brisk to her desire for upward mobility. With her sighs, her references to Brisk's words, her commanding requests, her apostrophes, her comparisons and fantasies to drive her character, Jonson grounds Fallace's character in this particular moment. He also establishes the character's awareness of her sexuality and her place in the world. She is not a "lady aboue other ladies," "countesse" or "empresse" however much she longs or pretends to be. Memories and fantasies will have to provide her "contentment." Jonson ends the soliloquy with an allusion to the kiss with which he begins the connection between Brisk and Fallace; perhaps touching her own lips, Fallace recalls the overly familiar kiss Brisk has already taken and indicates her openness to him.

The sentiments Jonson provides Fallace contrast sharply with those he offers Deliro. Deliro too acts, expressing his displeasure by breaking up the kiss at the scene's opening and

again in an aside. “I shall ne’er bee rid of him” (2.6.99), Deliro laments as Brisk hastens to follow him to Paul’s; “I was a beast to giue him any hope” (2.6.101). That “hope” refers to the loan an indebted Brisk strives to procure from Deliro throughout the play. As Fallace and Deliro both give performances which offer hope to their observer even as each party desires a very different outcome, Jonson again emphasizes the positive and negative consequences of social performance.

Jonson interrupts Fallace’s fantasies with the reappearance of her brother Fungoso. Creating another layer and parallel among his characters and their interactions, Jonson makes Fungoso as enamored with Brisk as Fallace is. While Fallace flirts and fawns, Fungoso studies Brisk’s every affectation. Brother and sister both praise the courtier and seek to copy his behaviors. In an amusing “conversation,” through which Fungoso’s tailor stands patiently by, and both siblings rhapsodize over Brisk and all of his “good parts” (2.6.140)³⁷ – Fallace focuses on the physical, his “face,” his “body,” his “tongue” (2.6.123, 126, 130), Fungoso, literally, on the material of his clothes – Fungoso extracts from Fallace Brisk’s whereabouts. Sending Fungoso rushing off to Paul’s to catch Brisk, Jonson leaves the stage to Fallace.

Leading up to her second soliloquy, Jonson employs the cataloging effect of Brisk’s physical attributes to reiterate and to heighten Fallace’s desire and to focus attention on individual desire. As he dramatizes the pursuit of that desire, Jonson gives his characters agency and power and, in her second soliloquy, Jonson turns Fallace’s thoughts from musings to action. She begins, “Well, I will not altogether despaire: I haue heard of a citizens wife, has beene belou’d of a courtier; and why not I?” (2.6.136-8). Jonson then scripts her first course of action to be a private one. Dramatizing a moment of pure self-

delight, Fallace reveals to the audience her course of action: “I will into my priuate chamber, locke the dore to mee, and thinke ouer all his good parts, one after another” (2.6.138-40). While not as overt as Nashe’s *Choyce of Valentines* or “The Merie Ballad of Nash His Dildo,”³⁸ with the figurative presence of Fastidious Brisk in the “priuate chamber” or ladies’ closet where only husbands and lovers gain entrance, Jonson suggestively depicts Fallace as one whose sexual desires can be stimulated and gratified by her imagination and, most importantly with regard to agency, by herself.³⁹ This is a rare dramatic moment of female liberation. Jonson shifts his text from blank verse to prose to indicate the intimacy of Fallace’s thoughts and with the setting, Fallace onstage alone, highlights her actions as a private, unobserved performance. With the soliloquy, Jonson qualifies the social performances – self-assured woman, Petrarchan mistress, shrewish wife, Fallace has given so far in the play and reveals another layer of character: agent. Even keyed to the auto-eroticism of Fallace’s next action, the scene Jonson creates works neither to malign nor to contain her desire. The agency enacted in this private moment specifically elevates rather than punishes her character.

While the scene could be read as one in which Jonson shamelessly depicts a woman willing to cuckold her husband for social gain, from the perspective of Jonson’s artistic theory as articulated in his previous work and explicitly in this play, Fallace’s desires beyond the confines of her marriage express Jonson’s own unromantic view of the world. The perfect, all-fulfilling marriage is a social, not to mention fantastical, construction.⁴⁰ When Fallace exits the stage, Jonson enlists his chorus, the *Grex Mitis* and *Cordatus*, to defend and to clarify the scene and, by extension, Fallace and himself. Speaking for the critics, *Mitis* begins; *Cordatus* answers for Jonson.

MIT. Well, I doubt, this last *Scene* will endure some
grievous torture.

COR. How? you feare 'twill be rackt, by some hard construction?

MIT. Doe not you?

COR. No, in good faith: vnlesse mine eyes could light
mee beyond sense. I see no reason, why this should
be any more liable to the racke, then the rest.

(2.6.141-8)

Fallace's moment of agency stands.

While some critics read Jonson's characterization of Fallace as an indictment of randy women and their adulterous desires, the play does not support the reading. Not only because the characterization, choral explication, and Jonson's own artistic theory do not support it but also because, in a parallel plot line establishing grounds on which to judge Fallace's "humor," Jonson's criteria rely on personal idiosyncrasies not on gender. As analogue, Jonson supplies Fungoso, Fallace's brother and an aspiring courtier, who throughout the play also gushes and gambols after Fastidious Brisk. Jonson has the siblings meet Brisk at the same time and has Fungoso, like Fallace, strive after Brisk. Fungoso's course of action leads him to emulate Brisk's manner and dress and, as with each character in the play, Jonson dramatizes the layers of social performance at work in Fungoso's act by having him appear in scene after scene in the exact suit Brisk wore the scene before. The embarrassingly "blush" colored suit in which first Brisk (3.5) and then Fungoso (4.8) appears exemplifies the humor and the horror of being caught striving to be something one is not. By having Fungoso and Fallace both desire Brisk, Jonson demonstrates that Fallace's actions are not

gender specific. In fact, Jonson indicates, social identities manufactured in social performance trump gender.

In 4.1, Jonson stages another sibling “sharing” scene (the previous scene was 2.6) in which Fallace and Fungoso dissect the wonders of Brisk, calculating him as the sum of his parts. As they share their observations and fascination, Fallace rhapsodizing on his language, carriage and manners, Fungoso on his clothes and courtiership, Jonson both reveals the siblings’ similarities and differentiates their characters. Fungoso focuses on appearing a gentleman: “Is any man term’d a gentleman that is not alwayes i’ the fashion?” (4.1.13-4). Fallace also admires Brisk’s gentlemanly qualities – how he “sits at table,” “carues” his meat, “wipes his spoone” (4.1.36-8) – but seeks the benefit of having a “courtier to her husband” and thus a “friend i’ the court” (4.1.31, 33). Jonson shows that both brother and sister desire the power invested in higher class status, Fungoso bemoaning his father’s inconsistent support “to make his sonne a gentleman” (4.1.8-9), and Fallace realizing and, Jonson suggests, fearing that she “ha’ not one friend i’ the world besides my [merchant] husband” (4.1.20-1). Brisk seems to exceed Deliro in every category, and Fallace’s comparison of the two draws her attention to Brisk as a man. “Hee mak’st me sigh,” Jonson has her admit, and her wonder at his kiss – “how full hee hits a woman betweene the lips when he kisses” (4.1.30, 35) – reminds the audience of the liberties, a demonstration of the power conveyed by performance based on a particular social standing, Brisk takes on their first meeting.

Throughout the scene, Jonson relates Fungoso and Fallace to one another as family and as people with interest in a common asset, interest based on their belief in the veracity of Brisk’s social performance as gentleman. At various points, however, Jonson makes it clear that they do not actually listen to one another. Fungoso plots to get money from their father

for yet another suit of clothes, and Fallace imagines the social benefits of having a husband like Brisk. Through their dialogue of monologues, Jonson establishes that, like Brisk, they too are the sum of their parts, their internal thoughts and desires and their external affects and performances. In addition to Fungoso's fascination with fashion, Jonson hints at his worries about the pressure of representing his family – "I must bee the first head of our house" (4.1.11-2). With Fallace, Jonson complicates her desires for another man by introducing her fears of isolation and abandonment. After her husband, she relies on Fungoso for support – "there are but two of vs in the world, and if wee should not bee comforts to one another, god helpe vs" (4.1.3-5), to keep her secrets (2.6, 4.1, 4.2) and to act on her behalf in the world (4.2). Placing his characterization of family members Fungoso and Fallace side by side, Jonson establishes that gender is only a part of identity, a part connected to but also separate from such constructing social norms as the desire for upward mobility and conformity to expectation.

Jonson breaks Fungoso and Fallace's fastidious fantasizing with the return of Deliro and the musicians, a return labeled another example of his humour: "I'le lay my life, this is my husbands dotage. I thought so" (4.2.10-1). The way Jonson stages the scene – Deliro hides to observe Fallace who correctly identifies the music as her husband's handiwork and then discovers Deliro – dramatizes the levels and mutuality of performances at work in human interactions. Fallace's recognition of Deliro's action reveals his attempt to play courtier but without the confidence to keep from hiding. "Nay, neuer play peeke-boe with me," Fallace chastises. "I know, you doe nothing but studie how to anger me, sir" (4.2.11-2). With the word "studie," Jonson signals the basis of social performance in observation, imitation, external reaction (the socially normalizing praise or censure), and internal

response. Jonson's lesson, rooted in the untimeliness and obsequiousness of Deliro's action, indicates that his performance is still off.

As Jonson concludes *Every Man Out*, he exposes the false social performances of all his characters. Throughout the play, Deliro teeters between the instructions of Fallace and Macilente as each asserts the proper way for him to act a husband, and so Jonson returns Macilente back to the stage to balance Fallace's advice and to catalyze the chain reaction required to move every character out of his and her humor. Beginning with Deliro's question about Macilente's treatment at court by "BRISKES Mistris, and the rest of the ladies, for his sake" (4.2.27-8), a seeming stab at Fallace whom Jonson distances from the men's conversation, Jonson uses Macilente's report to disclose the ineptitude of Brisk's social performance: "his masking vizer is off" (4.2.57). Jonson registers the information with both Deliro and Fallace. For his part, Deliro "repent[s]" that he "e'er credited him so much" (4.2.56). For hers, Fallace continues to defend Brisk and, by extension, her own judgment. In her opinions, expressed in a series of asides which punctuate the scene, Jonson has Fallace see partially through Macilente's performance and correctly label his envy; Jonson emphasizes, however, that in her proximity to the situation she only discovers part of the act. Jonson allows Fallace to see that Macilente is envious of Brisk because she is too, but to reveal her myopia he obscures her recognition that Macilente also envies her and Deliro. Carefully Jonson builds the performance layers: failure and success, correction and revision. Significantly, because some of Macilente's performance succeeds, he will be able to use what he has observed in Fallace and Deliro's performances against them without being questioned himself.

Jonson employs Macilente's "Judas"-like (4.2.68) action to move Fallace from the sidelines to the main action. When Deliro backs Macilente instead of her, Jonson has Fallace announce her departure – "I'll not bide here, for all the gold, and siluer in heaven" (4.2.75-6) – and quit the stage to execute her plan. An uncured and distraught Deliro follows. Jonson's stage then erupts in a flurry of stage business, exits and entrances, as Fallace becomes all action. From behind her closed door, she warns Deliro to leave her be else "I'll doe my selfe a mischiefe" (4.2.82), and then enlists Fungoso's aid to warn Brisk that his creditors are upon him and to bring him money. Throughout Jonson dramatizes her awareness of her precarious social situation; he has her refuse Deliro's capitulating promise to call off the creditors as a demonstration of her awareness of the leverage he would then have over her: "you shall ne'er ha' that vantage of me, to say, you are vndone by me" (4.2.85-6). Her awareness, as with Macilente's motivations, however, does not extend beyond her situation. Jonson will still set her as the cause of Deliro's undoing, but he will do so at Macilente's hands not her own.

Despite repeated, envious attempts to discredit her, Jonson has Deliro continue to defend his wife against Macilente's criticisms: "Though shee be froward, yet I know shee is honest" (4.2.104). The certainty, "I know," provides the opportunity for the undoing of them.⁴¹ Jonson suppresses Macilente's infatuation with and desire to be Fallace (2.4) and, in a series of moments not unlike those Shakespeare will use between Iago and Othello five years later, pushes the attack by having Macilente disparage his own judgment (4.2.105), malign Fallace's honesty (4.2.106-7), question Deliro's manhood (4.2.108), deny his own appreciation of Fallace (4.4.45-54), urge Deliro to see the truth of his words (4.4.63-4), and trap him with rhetorical strategies Deliro cannot decipher (4.2, 4.4). Words alone, however, will not convince Deliro and, after each of Macilente's presses, Jonson has Deliro leave him

to his machinations. Suggesting that seeing rather than hearing is believing, Jonson's Deliro needs ocular proof to be persuaded, and Macilente, realizing that his methods are not working, changes direction and promises "I will neuer labour to perswade you" (5.8.5). Jonson then has him set about the manipulation of events to set the correction of humours in motion.

Endeavoring to "make my loue to you most transparent" (5.8.2), Macilente offers Deliro a plan to "make her [Fallace] dote, and grow madde of your affections" (5.8.19-20). Jonson dramatizes the dangers of desire when desirous of the outcome Macilente promises, Deliro leaves his home and wife alone with Macilente. As characters focus on only what they desire, others can easily manipulate them. Jonson makes Fallace suspicious of Macilente's "intents" (5.8.47) but only until he paints a dire picture of an imprisoned Brisk. Fallace is moved – "Aye me!" (5.8.61) – but, surprisingly for all the agency Jonson has staged for her already in the play, not to action. Instead Jonson protects Fallace and her honesty, dramatizing Macilente pushing Fallace to send a bribe to help him. When she finally agrees, offering the money to Macilente and asking him (as she did with Fungoso) to commend her to Brisk, Macilente refuses: "No, ladie, I shall doe you better seruice, in protracting your husbands returne, that you may goe with more safetie" (5.8.68-70). This is the outcome Macilente needs, and Jonson suggests that Fallace falls into the trap because of her myopic focus. With this example, Jonson argues that social winners are those who can see all the performances in play, at once working adepting within the game and yet also standing beyond it. Both Fallace and Deliro have been moved by Macilente, as would anyone like them, because he could see to the core of their desires while they could not see beyond his performance.

At this point in the play, Jonson gives Fallace her third soliloquy. Her two previous set speeches situated her in a particular moment and focused on her desire and her agency to pursue it. In this third focused stage moment, her desire now seemingly within her grasp, Jonson emphasizes her lack of social gamesmanship by focusing her speech on Macilente. She considers her previous opinion and revises it: “Lord, how a woman may be mistaken in a man?” (5.8.72). Jonson makes sure the audience knows that she has been correct and only now makes the mistake of seeing what she wants to see. In this moment, Jonson shows how her humor undermines her. The Petrarchan mistress of Act Two and the self-aware woman of Acts Four and Five would have considered all of Macilente’s performances as contributing to the whole. Blinding her with the proximity of her prize, Jonson demonstrates that Fallace, in keeping with the complicated self-image he has been developing over the course of the play, is, like Macilente, himself, and the rest of us too, a contradiction, a layered personality subject to influences beyond her control.

As has been the case throughout the play, Jonson uses the Grex to guide the audience to the interpretations and reactions he requires. Deliro may dote on his wife and Fallace may elevate Brisk over her husband, but neither would have gone to the Counter/prison without Macilente’s encouragement. Cordatus and Mitis clearly establish Macilente’s inappropriate influence on Deliro and Fallace’s marriage. In their discussion of the scene in which Fallace “deciphers” Macilente’s “enuie” (4.2.112), the Grex underscores Fallace’s discovery and explains that Macilente’s envy causes him to “labour so seriously to set debate betwixt a man, and his wife” (4.2.112-4). As Macilente now successfully manipulates first Deliro and then Fallace, Jonson has Mitis point out Macilente’s effort against the couple: “How Macilente sweates i’ this busines, if you marke him” (5.8.77-8). Cordatus quickly agrees,

then warns that it will only get worse from here: “I, you shall see the true picture of spight anon” (5.8.79-80). By this scene in the play, of course, Macilente has already “cured” Puntarvolo’s Don Quixote-like humour by poisoning his dog and, in the supper meeting at the Mitre, has outed the humours of all the other characters except Fallace, Deliro and himself. Jonson leaves the last of his “spight” for the man to whom he must “bow” even though “my parts are euery way as good as his,/ If I said better? why, I did not lie” (2.4.13-4), for the woman he wanted both to have and to be, and for himself.

As Jonson effects a cure for Fallace’s – her pursuit of elevated social status by means of the only path available to her, he does move her out of that humor at the expense of her character. Jonson has her demur, “Sweet husband” (5.11.16), but not abdicate. Instead Jonson presents Fallace as a lesson for the husband who would not go along with the envious man’s opinion: “I told you, you might haue suspected this long afore, had you pleas’d; and ha’ sau’d this labor of admiration now, and passion, and such extremities as this fraile lump of flesh is subject vnto” (5.11.6-9). The staged observation of Fallace’s interaction with Brisk abruptly destroys Deliro’s idolization of her, and for the first time he sees her not as the fantastical and non-human ideal he desires but as she, the embodied woman, is.

Those who focus on the seeming misogyny of the scene overlook the blame Jonson focuses on Deliro for Fallace’s misstep and the absence of punishment for Fallace’s sexually interested and even active woman. To the end of the play, Jonson maintains his balance between Macilente and Fallace, using Macilente to expose and to punish and Fallace actively to pursue desire. Jonson, of course, has Macilente orchestrate Deliro’s observation of an unchaperoned and thus compromised Fallace at the prison. Significantly, the cuckolding “kisse” Brisk promises as “contract” is not bestowed before Deliro emerges from his

observation point (5.10.37-40),⁴² and the supposedly compromising position is a lesser liberty than the one Deliro has already observed in his own house (2.6). Jonson expresses Deliro's horror as he confronts the loss of his ideal and, in keeping with each previous encounter in which Deliro received information he did not wish to have, directs his exit. As a behavior change indicative of growth and transformation, for the first time Jonson sends Fallace after him with Macilente's advice: "Remember you are a woman" (5.11.22), the woman he himself admired for her "impudence" (5.11.22) and power (2.4.162-6). With the manufactured scenario, Jonson enables both marriage partners to see their humours as others have seen them. Fallace may be out of her humor, but, more importantly, Jonson positions her neither to gain nor to lose from the experience. Instead she stands onstage alongside the play's other "outed" characters, Jonson's example of not a fallen woman but a complexly layered female character undergoing the profits and the pleasures required to become one's best self.

Saving Saviolina

Jonson also introduces Saviolina, his third female character in *Every Man Out*, through the descriptions of other characters. According to Puntarvolo, she is "our court-starre" (2.3.194-5), a "planet of wit" (2.3.195), and "the lady of a most exalted, and ingenious spirit" (2.3.204-5). Fastidious Brisk claims his place at court by identifying Saviolina as his mistress, showing a ribbon supposedly belonging to her as proof and extensively praising her voice, her wit, her musical talent, her grace and composure (3.3.23-7). His encomia end with an expression of the orgasmic pleasure he takes in her presence: "the goodliest modell of pleasure that euer, was to behold. Oh! shee strikes the world into admiration of her—(ô, ô, ô) I cannot expresse 'hem, beleeeue me!" (3.3.27-9). Carlo, whether in refutation of Puntarvolo

and Brisk's effusiveness or with actual knowledge of Saviolina, offers a counter opinion.⁴³ He describes her voice as "nothing but sound" (2.3.208) and suggests that she steals her witticisms from others (2.3.209). With these comments, Jonson situates Saviolina within the court milieu. The variations in the commentary about her self-presentation reveal the way her performances differ depending on the interaction; they also suggest she may be nothing more than the performance she gives.

The effect of the three perspectives demonstrates how Jonson, as he did in the telescoping scene with Puntarvolo's Lady, complicates his characterization by layering and juxtaposing reactions to his character's performances. Jonson uses the judgments themselves to illuminate both the character under discussion – in this case Saviolina – and the characters offering their viewpoints. The varied reactions also show Jonson anticipating and guiding the responses of his audience. Before Saviolina even graces the stage, Jonson establishes her character as the consummate courtier invested in the elaborate game of self-definition through social performance. Jonson leaves it to the audience to determine the quality of her performance.

In her first performance, Jonson relies on Saviolina's physical appearance and presence, emphasizing self-presentation and encouraging audience assessment. Jonson's makes her first stage entrance startlingly brief – "*She is seene and goes in againe*" (s.d. 3.9.41) – and without the benefit of performance, her single line, loses some of the effect of Jonson's dramaturgy. The combination of the stage direction and her line do, however, require the actor playing the role to make a show. The actor must draw the audience's attention despite the short entrance and other stage business underway. Jonson has Brisk interrupt himself to announce her arrival to Cinedo, his boy, and Macilente. Macilente,

newly attired in a suit purchased with Deliro's money, in turn, speaks aside to the audience, expressing his disdain of Brisk's conversational abilities. Saviolina then enters on Brisk's interruption – "here she comes, sir" (3.9.40), appears in action determined by the actor to be observed only as long as it takes Macilente to deliver his aside – "'Twas time, his inuention had beene bogd else" (3.9.41), and then, calling for a "fanne" (3.9.42) she will use in the upcoming performance before these suitors, departs. With Brisk's rapt attention and the possibility that Macilente turns from his aside only in time to see the back of the departing Saviolina, Jonson again offers various audience perspectives: focused on Brisk and thus Saviolina, focused on Macilente, focused on Cinedo, focused entirely on Saviolina. The brevity of the visual introduction, the dramaturgical decisions made by the actor, and the stage business underway combine to meld Jonson's earlier layers of description with the current performance. Jonson uses Brisk to cue the audience to connect what they have heard with what they now observe and to judge for themselves.

With the lines following Saviolina's exit, Jonson provides additional ways to read the moment. Brisk's explanatory, "A kind of affectionate reuerence strikes mee with cold shiuering (me thinkes)" (3.9.44-5), suggests his open-mouthed regard for her beauty and presence and his uncertainty. The comments of both Macilente and Cinedo focus on Brisk, critiquing his behavior and his planned "tricke" (3.9.51) for winning her favor. With the superficiality of Brisk's methods – a vaulting horse, long stockings, a little dance, his pipe – Jonson critiques court performance and, consequently, Saviolina. She now seems, like the other male characters in the play, little more than the sum of her parts as calculated by her observers, fellow characters and Globe audience alike.

Jonson's dramatic pause in the action is as ephemeral as Saviolina's first appearance. She returns to the stage sixteen lines later to greet and to converse with her guests. The interactions Jonson creates in this scene confirm the previous interpretations: Saviolina is *the* courtier, Brisk is not but he aspires to court recognition, and Macilente's envy makes him ever the critic. As the scene unfolds, Jonson's characterizations suggest that courtiers and courtiership are simply affect, and Saviolina serves as Jonson's example to Brisk and Macilente of how to play the role of the courtier. In this, Jonson's characterization of Saviolina differs significantly from that of the other two women in the play. Like Fallace and Lady Puntarvolo, Saviolina's character depends on the interplay of her performances, but Jonson specifically differentiates her from Fallace and the Lady by positioning her as the one to be emulated, the arbiter of good taste, the one to approve the performances of others.

In Saviolina's courtly performance, Jonson demonstrates the correct hand movements, the proper speeches, fine-tuned musical dexterity, the correct opinions of the time, the well-timed compliment and the use of wit and intelligence required to perfect the act of a courtier. Against Saviolina's performance, Jonson sets the contrast of Brisk whose performance is a disaster. Jonson punctuates his speech with great plumes of smoke. He has Brisk fumble his compliments and fail utterly at the viola. In the exchange of wits, Saviolina, in keeping with her name,⁴⁴ easily turns each of Brisk's statements against him. His "a second good morrow" (3.9.59) prompts her to promise to thank him "a day hence, when the date of your salutation comes forth" (3.9.60-1). His decision to "honour the meanest rush in this chamber, for your loue" (3.9.71-2) earns her mock dismay that he would "prize a rush, before my loue" (3.9.74). Jonson positions Macilente aside to provide explanatory comment on the poor performance, noting "I were a simple courtier, if I could

not admire trifles” (3.9.63-4). Throughout the scene, Jonson critiques the lack of prowess, of *sprezzatura* to provide his lesson and, making sure the audience grasps his point, Jonson even makes Brisk aware of own inadequate performance. In his humiliation, he “beseech[es] you [Macilente to] be silent in my disgrace” (3.9.140-1). By juxtaposing these performances, Jonson specifies aptitude and ineptitude and elevates the performer who makes every action look effortless. Saviolina remains Jonson’s successful courtly model but, like all of Jonson’s characters, she too has a flaw, a humour, in need of correction.

While her skillful routine shames and teaches Brisk, Jonson asks the audience also to assess the quality of Saviolina’s performance. Again, Jonson has Macilente guide the consideration: “Is this the wonder of nations?” (3.9.75) and, while Macilente’s commentary throughout the scene specifically undermines Brisk, after Saviolina’s departure he also destabilizes her position. Referencing the earlier descriptions, he asks, “Are these the admired lady-wits? ... Is this the Comet?” (3.9.134,137). With Macilente’s queries Jonson raises several possibilities: Macilente, envious of any wit that is not his own, must critique the wit of another;⁴⁵ Macilente seeks to bolster the humiliated Brisk by suggesting that Saviolina’s opinions are not the ones that matter; Macilente’s comments encourage the audience to evaluate the success of Saviolina’s performance. Regardless of Macilente’s grumblings the fact that Jonson provides Saviolina with quips that have been used before does not undermine her performance. Quite the contrary, the effect works. Saviolina punctures Brisk’s performance while maintaining her own.

That said, Jonson also expects his audience to take Macilente’s points. Even as her performance succeeds, Jonson emphasizes that, like all the characters in the play, Saviolina is herself an imitator. She can play her own role, and her scenes reveal a trained performer

always hitting her mark. As such, she represents a person who believes herself to be her performance: in this case, a court lady of wit and intelligence. When the script deviates from what she knows, however, her aptitude diminishes. In this way, Jonson demonstrates that the inability to adapt indicates a lapse in accomplishment and exposes the performance for the act it is. Having offered Saviolina in the security and supremacy of her courtly environment (Act Three), Jonson sets Macilente to challenge her (Act Five). To identify her performance not as “starre” material but as self-conceit, he enlists the aid of her supposed admirers.

MACI. Troth, I like her well enough, but shee’s too selfe-conceited, me thinkes.

FAST. I indeed, shee’s a little too selfe-conceited, and ’twere not for that humour, she were the most-to-be-admir’d ladie in the world.

PVNT. Indeed, it is a humour that takes from her other excellencies.

MACI. Why, it may easily be made to forsake her, in my thought.

(4.8.54-60)

The comeuppance stages another of Jonson’s interventions in social competition. The men believe that bringing Saviolina down raises them up. Jonson makes clear not only that her fall will not elevate them but also that her humbling is a matter of humility not humiliation. Importantly in my ongoing correction of Jonson’s critical reception as a misogynistic playwright, the “outing” of Saviolina’s humour derives not from her gender but from her pride. Her courtly arrogance, her inability to deviate from her own script is but another opportunity for Jonson to argue for social performance as a crucial link in

characterization and his own social project of bettering her audience. All the characters in the play will have their punishments dramatized. When Jonson has other characters in the play band together to correct Saviolina, he does so because their humiliations have already been dramatized. In their coinciding assessments of Saviolina's performance, Jonson demonstrates how his characters, like his audience, can see the flaws in others but not always in themselves. Jonson issues the challenge to the audience to put these lessons, including Saviolina's, to themselves, using the scenes of correction as inducements to change.

Saviolina's major scene (5.2), considered by many critics to be among the best scene in *Every Man Out*, and its corrective outcome works as a critique not just of Saviolina or courtiers but of all performers who become only their role, only a sum of affectations and scripted habits.⁴⁶ Jonson reveals that Saviolina cannot outwit her challengers because she has only the courtier act at her disposal. Curing her of her humour, then, becomes a matter of using her courtiership, her very strength, against her. In its simplicity, Jonson's plan for Saviolina is almost a direct inversion of festive comedy's generic conventions. Puntarvolo, Brisk, Macilente and Fungoso present Sogliardo, the rustic uncle willing to sell his farm to become a courtier, to Saviolina. Telling her that Sogliardo is as "wel-parted a gentleman, as yet your lady-ship hath neuer seene" (5.2.18-9) who "doth so peerelessly imitate any manner of person for gesture, action, passion, or whateuer—I, especially a rusticke, or a clowne" (5.2.40-3) instead of the farmer that he is and arguing "that it is not possible for the sharpest-sighted wit (in the world) to discern any sparkes of a gentleman in him, when he does it" (5.2. 44-6),⁴⁷ the group challenges Saviolina's understanding of herself as that sharpest wit. With the superlative form, Jonson indicates that her excessive pride makes her susceptible to their trick.

The trick itself relies on the vouching. Puntarvolo, whom Saviolina knows to be a gentleman, “report[s]” (5.2.22) Sogliardo’s valiance, scholarship, travels, contacts at court and wit (5.2.23-32) while Brisk, whom Saviolina knows to be a fool – “Monsieur BRISKE, be not so tyrannous to confine all wits within the compasse of your owne” (5.2.47-8), issues the challenge. Dramatizing Saviolina’s decision to stake her reputation on her ability to tell one courtier from another, Jonson reveals that neither her wit nor her courtiership symbolize her humour. Rather, her unshakeable confidence in herself and her lack of awareness in how the roles she plays are observed by others and, in turn, how she should be observing their performances form her flaw.

As Jonson propels the interaction between Saviolina and Sogliardo, Jonson has Saviolina ultimately outwit herself.⁴⁸ After seeing him, talking with him, being insulted and propositioned by him, Saviolina declares him a gentleman indeed. As the scene questions her certainty, Jonson stages her attempt, believing the group attempts to outwit her, to talk herself around: “if you would haue tryed my wit, indeed, you should neuer haue told me he was a gentleman, but presented him for a true clowne indeed; and then haue seene if I could haue decipher’d him” (5.2.79-83). As each of the four gentlemen again gives her a chance to change her mind, she stiffens her resolve and falls back on her arrogance: “Why, gallants, let mee laugh at you, a little: was this your deuce, to trie my iudgement in a gentleman?” (5.2.102-3) and “if your worships could gull me so, indeed, you were wiser then you were taken for” (5.2.111-2). Jonson places the evidence of the performance before her; the clothes, the words, the gestures, the performance of a gentleman may, indeed, be an act that can be “put on,” but the calluses the plow gives a working man’s hands (5.2.116-9) are incontrovertible proof that he is no gentleman. As Jonson stages her devolution, Saviolina no

longer knows what to do. Her open-mouthed confusion yields only insults: “you’re goodly beagles!” (5.2.125) and “fooles” (5.2.129). Her performance exposed, her self-perception explodes; as Macilente reports, “The poor lady is irrecoverably blown up” (5.5.8-9).

While with this scene Jonson moves Saviolina out of her humour, his primary focus remains social performance. In her role, Saviolina plays a court lady who maintains her position by parlaying her wit into will and authority in a world dominated by men. Sogliardo plays the country bumpkin who believes himself a courtier because others tell him so. Puntarvolo trades on his gentlemanly status, and Brisk and Fungoso both rely on their adherence to fashion to convey their courtiership. Macilente, also in a courtier’s clothes, steps forward as the scholar cynic after the others have played their hand. Just as he moves each of the play’s characters from their humours, Jonson also deflates Saviolina’s arrogant humour. While unlike the Lady and Fallace before her, Jonson does not give Saviolina a signal moment of agency, he does empower her. Saviolina, not Puntarvolo or Brisk, is the play’s model of courtiership and, while her pride is “blown-up,” it is also bolstered. Only Saviolina’s comeuppance requires the combined efforts of a team, essentially a pick-up game of five on one. Not every man or woman, Jonson reminds us, receives or deserves in equal measure. Instead each character, each of us, plays several roles, putting forth various personas for the others to read and reacting accordingly.

With *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Jonson’s artistic manifesto asserts a dramatic investment in social performance. These social performances in turn propel Jonson’s program of artistic, dramatic and social reform and disclose the specificity of detail with which Jonson creates all, but particularly, his female characters. The women of *Every Man Out* are the play’s source of power and energy. Their presence in the play unveils humours

and inspires schemes to “out” them. Their characterization – Jonson’s use of detail to situate each character within a particular physical and social space, Jonson’s complication of that situatedness by staging the character’s social performance and awareness of the performance – introduces a more playful approach to gender visible throughout his dramatic career. The playfulness, even rebelliousness, of *Every Man Out* culminates in Jonson’s decision to bring Queen Elizabeth herself onto the stage as a character. As this final woman strides forth, the only possible cure for Jonson’s stand-in Asper/Macilente and the entire Globe audience, Jonson specifies once more that women, as they have throughout the play, empower, inspire and transform.

NOTES to CHAPTER THREE

¹ All quotations from *Every Man out of His Humor*, unless specifically noted, can be found in Herford and Simpson 3: 405- 604.

² While critics follow Lever's claim that *Every Man Out* has only "tenuous links" (xiii) to its predecessor *Every Man In*, in the crafting of his female characters and his reliance on social performance to do so, I see an explicit next step in Jonson's dramatic development.

³ Including the Induction, Prologue and Epilogue, *Every Man Out of His Humour* has a total of forty scenes.

⁴ The play was first selected for and staged at The Globe. Censorship followed its initial performances, and the play was pulled from the stage to be revised. When *Every Man Out* returned to the stage, Jonson had softened language and tone and rewritten the ending to remove the role of Queen Elizabeth, a part acted by a boy player. The revision was less popular with audiences than the original but did receive a request from court for a performance during the 1599/1600 Christmas season. For the court performance, Jonson returned to his original version, and Queen Elizabeth played herself in the culminating role. After the court performance, Jonson decided to publish the original text in quarto. See Herford and Simpson 3:186.

Like Jonson's dramatic and artistic decisions about *Every Man Out*, his decision to publish was unusual. Most play texts were not published until they had diminished as viable stage properties. With its court appearance, *Every Man Out* could anticipate a resurgence at the playhouse. Publication, however, gave Jonson the opportunity to restore, explain and defend his original text, and the three separate printings in 1600 confirm *Every Man Out* as a runaway bestseller: not only Jonson's most successful printed text but also the most popular play-text published by anyone in the period. For the play's stage and publication history, see Ostovich, Introduction 28-38.

Until the *Shakespeare Bulletin's* Renaissance Drama in Action Conference decided to stage portions of the play in November 2006 in Toronto, ON, *Every Man Out* had not been revived for the stage in over 400 years. The Wayne State University's Hilberry Theatre plan to stage the play in its entirety as part of the 2006-2007 repertory season did not come to fruition.

⁵ For David Erskine Baker's 18c view on *Every Man Out's* character originality and performance possibilities, see Ostovich, "Isaac Reed" 39. See Partridge, "Ben Jonson" for the equivocation that "nothing that Jonson has written up to this time, nothing, indeed, in the Elizabethan drama quite prepares one for *Every Man Out of His Humour*" (229). For positive and negative reaction to the play, see Barton 65-72; despite approving "the innovative daring" (65) of the play, Barton finds it is "impossible in reading...let alone experiencing it on stage – to applaud" (72). For *Every Man Out* as a watershed moment in Jonson's career, see Kay "Shaping" 231 and *Ben Jonson* 38-49. Kay's reformulation of *Every Man Out* as the play "which marks a watershed in Jonson's work" has most influenced current critical reception of the play. Kay dismisses the play as a theatrical work, calling it "merely a conventional comedy of humours without the reconciliation and marriage that

ensure a festive ending” (38) and its seemingly innovative extra dramatic devices, such as the Induction and the Grex/Chorus “essentially the same as Will Summers’ commentary in Nashe’s *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*” (38). Kay does, however, note Jonson’s sense of his own accomplishment, Jonson’s assertion of his own innovation and, although he characterizes the play as Jonson’s break from conventional Elizabethan drama, he also places it in Jonson’s literary rather than dramatic career.

⁶ For discussion of Jonson and the classical tradition, see *Kay Ben Jonson* 30-38.

⁷ For a rehearsal of Jonson’s self-creation as the Poet with a capital P, see Helgerson 130-183.

⁸ See also Induction lines 15, 117, 57-9, 138-9, 201 and 202. Regarding “attentive auditors,” a common scholarly position on Jonson focuses on his insistence on the ear’s superiority to the eye for understanding what he has written. In *Every Man Out*, however, Jonson calls on his audience to lend both ear and eye to his play. Note that in his artistic manifesto, Jonson balances spectacle and auditory pleasure. For “ear” references in the play, cf. “I will giue you musick worth your eares” (Ind.65), “To please, but whom? Attentive auditors” (Ind.201), “hang my richest words/ As polished jewels in their bounteous eares” (Ind.207-8), and “sit still, seale vp their lips, and drinke so much of the play, in at their eares” (Ind.352-3). For “eye” references, cf. “to these courteous eyes oppose a mirrour” (Ind.118), “Make my braine fruitfull to bring forth more objects/ Worthy their serious, and intentive eyes” (Ind.137-8), “We hope to make the circles of your eyes/ Flow with distilled laughter” (Ind.216-7), “as if they were dropt downe with a feather, into the eye of the spectators” (2.3.300-1), and “it fills the eye better, and with more contentment. How tedious a sight were it to behold a proud exalted tree lopt, and cut downe by degrees” (4.8.168-71). Despite the critical commonplace that Jonson privileges the ear over the eye, by number and appearance throughout the play (as opposed to all ear references located only in the opening Induction), in *Every Man Out* the “eyes” have it.

⁹ Sweeney describes the social force of Jonson’s comical satire and its attempt to affect an audience to enact their “best selves,” presenting *Every Man Out* as “not just a new choice of subject or genre but a radical shift in Jonson’s relation to his audience” (18). See Sweeney 18-34.

¹⁰ See below the entire passage tracing the expansion of the classical tradition to Jonson’s contemporary moment.

CORD. ...If those lawes you speake of, had beene deliuered vs, *ab initio*, and in their present vertue and perfection, there had beene some reason of obeying their powers: but ’tis extant, that that which we call *Comoedia*, was a first nothing but a simple, and continued *Song*, sung by only one person, till SVSARIO inuented a second, after him EPICHARMVS a third; PHORMVS, and CHIONIDES deuised to have foure Actors, with a *Prologue* and a *Chorus*; to which CRATINVS (long after) added a fift, and sixt; EVPOLIS more; ARISTOPHANES more then they:

euery man in the dignitie of his spirit and iudgement, supplied something. And (though that in him this kinde of *Poeme* appeared absolute, and fully perfected) yet how is the face of it chang'd since in MENANDER, PHILEMON, CECILIVS, PLAUTVS and the rest; who haue vtterly excluded the *Chorus*, altered the property of the persons, their names, and natures, and augmented it all with liberty, according to the elegancie and disposition of those times, wherein they wrote? I see not then, but we should enioy the same licence, or free power, to illustrate and heighten our inuention as they did; and not bee tyed to those strict and regular formes, which the nicenesse of a few (who are nothing but forme) would thrust vpon vs.

(Ind.247-70)

¹¹ Jonson resuscitates the classical model of a Greek Chorus. Traditionally, twelve to fifty members of the chorus performed a Parados, Stasimon/Odes after each Episode, and an Exodos. The Greek Chorus functioned as townspeople and/or Poet mouthpiece, offered commentary, exposition, emphasis and alternative viewpoints, and provided spectacle and entertainment. Jonson would have been aware of contemporary attempts at a chorus, notably the version of the Greek Chorus in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1588) in which Jonson himself acted the part of Hieronimo and later supplied additions for the 1602 edition of the play. Kyd, as Jonson does in *Every Man Out*, used only two chorus members: the Ghost of Andrea and the allegorical figure Revenge. Kyd's "chorus" frames the play, appearing at the beginning and end of the play (1.1 and 4.5), and adds comment at the end of each act (1.5, 2.6, 3.15), but they do not interrupt action, scenes and acts or connect to the audience as Jonson's Grex does.

¹² Critics Waldorf and Statler, of *Muppets'* fame, sat over the stage and offered comments throughout each episode.

¹³ As previously discussed, the structure of the play provides the Grex as the external frame forging a compact between playwright, players, and audience and utilizes that position to elucidate the principles of Jonson's artistic theory. For a delineation of what she calls "Jonson's nest of five frames" (53), see Ostovich, Introduction 51-9.

¹⁴ See Cicero's definition of comedy, "*Imitatio vitae, Speculum consuetudinis, Imago veritatis*; a thing throughout pleasant, and ridiculous, and accommodated to the correction of manners" (*EMO* 3.6.206-9) – as an influence on Jonson's artistic theory and practice. The Latin translates "The imitation of life, the glass of custom, the image of truth." Jonson places the entire definition in the mouth of Cordatus, one half of his Grex. For the influences of Horace, Martial, Pindar, Juvenal et al on Jonson's work, see Kay *Ben Jonson* 27-42 and "The Shaping" 231-6, Parfitt 104-23. For the influence of Aristophanes, see Gum and Ostovich, Introduction 18-28.

¹⁵ Jonson also uses the Grex to demonstrate how his art surpasses that of his rivals because he does not break the unities of place. When Mitis suggests that Jonson "cannot

lightly alter the *Scene* without crossing the seas” (Ind.277-8), Cordatus replies: “He needs not, hauing a whole Iland to run through” (Ind.279-80). The critique is clear, but Mitis drives it home by asking, “No? How comes it then, that in some one Play we see so many seas, countries, and kingdoms, past ouer with such admirable dexteritie?” (Ind.281-3). Cordatus’s jovial and dismissive, “O, that,” continues as criticism of those “Authors [who] can trauaile in their vocation, and out-run the apprehension of their auditorie” (Ind.284-6).

The Grex’s critique of place unities also raises one of Jonson’s concerns about festive comedy. As a genre, festive comedy’s sweeping movements from place and its plot shifts and resolutions rely on wild, imaginative leaps; Jonson’s comical satire does not. When he supplies Mitis with an “objection” he “fear[s] will be enforced against the author” (3.6.191-2) because he, Jonson, did not write a festive comedy, Jonson uses the Grex to mock festive comedy while elevating his comical satire. A fictitious plot in keeping with festive comedy would mean

his *Comoedie* might haue beene of some other nature, as of a duke to be in loue with a countesse, and that countesse to bee in loue with the dukes sonne, and the sonne to loue the ladyies waiting maid: some such crosse wooing, with a clowne to their seruing man, better then to be thus neere, and familiarly allied to the time.

(3.6.195-201)

Later in the Poets’ War this fictitious plot will become Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* (1601); see Bednarz *Shakespeare* 175-200, Penniman and Small. For Jonson’s immediate influence on drama at the Inns of Court, see Glatzer.

¹⁶ See discussion of the Act Two observation scenes and the Saviolina scenes in Acts Four and Five below in this chapter. For a detailed analysis of staging and effect, see Ostovich, “To behold” 76-92. Note that the public promenade in this scene is completely devoid of women.

¹⁷ While I read this moment as an example of Jonson concordance with and exposure of a socially formalized norm central to his awareness of social performance, Ostovich, Introduction – citing Henke – glosses the line as follows: “Although Carlo claims that he is addressing the ladies first out of politeness, his object is the sly innuendo of sexual ingression” (131 n. 326). Sexualizing the notice of women in the audience supports the negative view of Jonson’s treatment of women in his drama.

¹⁸ Even as Jonson directs his audience to “apply it [the lessons of the play] as the foile to their owne vertues” (2.6.165-6), he also cautions against acceptance of the characters metonymically: no one character represents any and all parallel characters. To be clear, Jonson has the Grex emphasize

that a man, writing of NERO, should meane all Emperors: or speaking of MACHIAVEL, comprehend all States-men; or in our SORDIDO, all Farmars; and so of the rest: then which, nothing can be vtter’d more malicious, or absurd.

(2.6.166-70)

¹⁹ While much of the drama in the years preceding *Every Man Out* is no longer extant, a representative sample of festive and romantic comedies survives. See George Peele's *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe* (1587); John Lyly's *Endymion* (1588); Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589), *George a Greene* (1590), *Orlando Furioso* (1591); Miller, Stephen Roy, ed. the anonymous *Taming of a Shrew* (1589); Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592); Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* (1592), *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1593), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594), *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595); George Chapman's *A Humourous Day's Mirth* (1597); and Thomas Dekker's *Shoemakers' Holiday* (1599).

The female characters in these plays function as accessories rather than principals, their actions manipulated in cross-wooing scenarios often undertaken and resolved by magic. The female characters in these comedies also complete the central couple whose attraction, separation, and union drives the drama. Female characters in the histories and tragedies differ. Margaret in Shakespeare's first Tetralogy (1589-93), Zenocrate and Dido in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine I* (>1587) and *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1588), Bel-Imperia in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1588) have agency, acting on their own behalf and desires. The result of their actions, however, is the ultimate removal from society: death.

²⁰ I have already demonstrated how Jonson begins this process in his two previous plays, *Case* and *Every Man In*. Jonson's departure from the type of heroine found in festive comedy is limited but apparent. See Chapter One and Chapter Two.

²¹ The critical history of *Every Man Out* focuses on the play as a literary piece devoid of plot and populated by characters discounted as mechanical, two dimensional and farcical types. For a discussion of *Every Man Out's* characters as "ludicrous pattern not people," see Ostovich, Introduction 15-7.

²² The term "*sprezzatura*" belongs to Baldasare Castiglione's early modern self-help book, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* or *The Courtier*.

²³ For the Petrarchan lady, see Rackin, *Shakespeare's Women* 95-100. For example, "The lady may have been the object of the poet's devotion, but the subject of the sonnets was the poet himself" (97), and "In addition to discrediting the physical bodies of actual women, the Petrarchan ideal silenced women's voices" (100).

²⁴ Jonson demonstrates Puntarvolo's knowledge of observers when at 2.3.5 he has Puntarvolo greet Sordido and then asks him to "Stand by, retire your selues a space" (2.3.19) while he continues his performance.

²⁵ Note that this play within a play follows the same format as Jonson's own play *Every Man Out*. After the sounding calls the audience and players to attention, Puntarvolo, like Jonson, gives an Induction in which he describes the performance we are about to observe.

²⁶ CARL. O, no: it's a meere floud, a torrent, carries all
afore it.

PVNT. *What more then heauenly pulchritude is this?
 What magazine, or treasurie of blisse?
 Dazle, you organs to my optique sense,
 To view a creature of such eminence:
 O, I am planet-stroocke, and in yond sphere
 A brighter starre then VENVS doth appeare!*

FAST. How? In verse!

CARL. An extacie, an extasie, man.

(2.3.24-33)

²⁷ Jonson gives to Macilente, the “enuious” malcontent whose “iudgement is so dazeled, and distasted, that he growes violently impatient of any opposite happinesse in another” (H&S 3:423), a speech in which he spouts and quotes the stereotypical marriage hierarchy and advice of the day. See the complete speech below.

MACI. You are too amorous, to obsequious,
 And make her too assur’d, shee may command you.
 When women doubt most of their husbands loues,
 They are most louing. Husband must take heed
 They giue no gluts of kindnesse to their wiues,
 But vse them like their horses; whom they feed
 Not with a manger-full of meat together,
 But halfe a pecke at once: and keepe them so
 Still with an appetite to that they giue them
 He that desires to haue a louing wife,
 Must bridle all the shew of that desire:
 Be kind, not amorous; nor bewraying kindnesse,
 As if loue wrought it, but considerate duty.
 “Offer no loue-rites, but let wiues still seeke them,
 “For when they come vnsought, they seldom like them.

(2.4.60-74)

²⁸ Ostovich reiterates the assessment in her notes to *Every Man Out*, quoting Florio on “Falace, *false, deceivable, deceitful, fraudulent, guileful*” and the Italian “Falacia” which “suggests illusion, or delusion” (106 n.54).

²⁹ See Ostovich, Introduction 106.

³⁰ See Van Den Berg 1-14 and her claim that “There are few personal lyrics among his poems, no soliloquies in his plays: his is an art of community and contest” (1). While arguably the Grex presence onstage throughout the play could disqualify the solo speeches as soliloquies, Van Den Berg’s point reiterates the critical commonplace which disregards Jonson’s female characters without looking to the text of all his dramatic works. Fallace’s focused stage time appears at 2.4.96-169; 2.5.1-51; 2.6.1-140 (soliloquy #1 l.115ff; soliloquy #2 l.136ff); 4.1.1-41; 4.2.1-76 and 81-97; 5.8.30-76 (soliloquy #3 l.71ff); 5.10.1-40; 5.11.1-25. *Every Man Out* demonstrates Jonson’s art as that of community and contest, and his use

of soliloquy, like his use of extra-dramatic devices, works to solidify the connection between play and audience.

³¹ Regarding declamations of “I” and “I am” as “taking a subject position” (167) and even acquiring a new identity and/or finding a new purpose in life, see Griffin 158-182.

³² See Spenser 397-424 and Helgerson.

³³ Cf. the reactions of the desiring male in Wyatt (“The long love that in my thought doth harbor”) and Surrey’s (“Love, that doth reign and live within my thought”) versions of Petrarch’s sonnet #140. The blush of red (“banner”) that shows on the man’s face is his undoing and his shame because such an outward signal of emotion causes displeasure in the lady who functions to modulate, and even to regulate, the external expression of desire.

³⁴ For the contradictions made visible in Jonson’s work, see Barton, Donaldson, Dutton *Ben Jonson*, and McDonald *Shakespeare and Jonson*.

³⁵ For summary of Jonson’s efforts to hold up a mirror to society, for argument that the first face Jonson sees will always be his own, see Dutton, “Jonson’s satiric styles” 58-71. That Jonson sees himself in his female characters is a point to which I shall return with Ursula in *Bartholomew Fair*. Note also that Fallace is only a few letters from Face, the one Jonson sees in the mirror and the one he will create in *The Alchemist*.

³⁶ See Traub 120-41.

³⁷ For definition of “good parts” as slang for genitalia and for a discussion of the sexualized nature of a catalog of physical attributes, see Partridge, *Shakespeare’s Bawdy*.

³⁸ Nashe’s poem seems to have circulated only in manuscript. See manuscript copies available in the Inner Temple Library (Petyt MS. 538, Vol. 43, f. viii., 295 b, circa 1680) and the Bodleian Library (Rawl. MS. Poet 216, leaves 96-106, circa 1610-20).

³⁹ See additional Renaissance poems with allusion to masturbation: Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*, esp. “Sonnet #4;” Thomas Campion’s “On Himself;” see Davies and Boe; and Thomas Nashes’s “*Choyce of Valentines*.” In 1597 Jonson collaborated with Nashe on the scandalous *Isle of Dogs*, a “lost” play for which Jonson was censured and sentenced to prison. According to the OED, the first use of the word “masturbation,” defined as “the stimulation, usually by hand of one’s genitals for sexual pleasure,” appears in 1603 in Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s *Essays* (II.xii.340). Helen Ostovich has also noted the auto-eroticism implicit in this scene; see Ostovich, *EMO* 212 n.355-7. Her discussion focuses on the bawdy puns of the text as a continuation of Jonson’s sexually aggressive play.

See also Stevenson 223-39, Stone, Laquer, Greenblatt, “Me, Myself and I,” and Losse 383.

⁴⁰ Jonson’s biographical details indicate that his own marriage was not the best. That said, he does credit his wife, Anne Lewis whom he married in 1594, with being “a shrew, yet

honest” (H&S 1:139, 1.254). According to Ostovich, “Jonson’s focus on marital discord reflects the times; the worst period of marital breakdowns amongst the nobility was recorded between 1595-1620...Middle-class marriages are less easy to track...but some suite for separate maintenance...do appear in the Chancery court records and in the ecclesiastical courts” (*EMO* 195). Cf. Erickson, Stone, Mendelson and Crawford.

⁴¹ Also in *Every Man Out*, a similar situation prompts the undoing of Puntarvolo. Carlo Buffone suggests poisoning the dog in 2.3, and Macilente files that away to use later 5.4.

⁴² For argumentation that “In fact, in Fallace’s final scene with Brisk, alone together at last, she is irritated by his attempt to kiss her in inappropriate circumstances” (75), see Ostovich, Introduction.

⁴³ Carlo feigns knowledge, a successful social performance, before Brisk and Sogliardo. Jonson reveals in 4.8 that Carlo has never met Saviolina before.

⁴⁴ Saviolina means wise and witty and contains a reference to dueling. While critics use the “fallacy” possibility in Fallace’s name as evidence of Jonson’s misogyny, critics do not use the possibilities in Saviolina’s name as proof of his positive gender characterization. Instead critics present Saviolina as another negative example of the Jonsonian woman.

⁴⁵ Jonson has established this pattern throughout the play. With each new character Macilente meets, his envious humour generates an envious reaction. With specific regard to wit, see Macilente’s reactions to Carlo Buffone and his “jester”ing wit and his comments on his own scholarship, wit and intelligence in his soliloquies, monologues and asides.

⁴⁶ Balancing the acts of social performance and the quotidian realities of being, Jonson stages the complexity of character (female and male, merchant and courtier) and, subsequently, the complexity of dramatizing identity categories accurately. In other writings, Jonson offers the historical women Lucy Bedford and the Sidneys as positive actors at court. See Miles.

⁴⁷ *Every Man Out* is the next step in Jonson’s artistic theory and his formal break from festive comedy. With this plot, Jonson upends the festive comedy trope of mistaken identity whereby the long lost noble person disguised as a simple man or woman is recovered. Jonson used this conceit himself in *The Case is Altered*.

⁴⁸ I am reminded here of the scene from *The Princess Bride* in which Wallace Shawn’s character, the Sicilian, attempts to outwit Wesley in the battle of iocane powder by talking through all the strategies of what he would do, what Wesley would do, what they would both do because they are thinking like the other. His “dizzying intellect” culminates in his undoing decision: “I can clearly not choose the wine in front of me.” A modern example of social performance gone wrong.

CHAPTER FOUR

Boys Will Be Girls and Girls Will Be Boys but**Does *Cynthia Revel* at the Blackfriars?¹**

We act our mimicke trickes with that free licence,
 That lust, that pleasure, that securitie,
 As if we practiz'd in a paste-board case,
 And no one saw the motion, but the motion
 Well, checke thy passion, lest it grow too lowd:
 While fooles are pittied, they waxe fat, and proud.
(CR 1.5.61-66)²

Like his previous play, the artistic manifesto *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), Jonson's fourth play *Cynthia's Revels, or the Fountain of Self-Love* (1600) opens "After the second sounding" (s.d. Ind.1) with an Induction in which the "Authour" (Ind.7) sets parameters for the play to follow. But unlike the erudite discussion about social performance and artistic theory of *Every Man Out's* Grex, Jonson begins *Cynthia's Revels* at the opposite end of the intellectual register with a petty squabble between three boy players:

3. Pray you away; why fellowes? Gods so? What doe you
 meane?
2. Mary that you shall not speake the *Prologue*, sir.
3. Why? doe you hope to speake it?
2. I, and I thinke I haue most right to it: I am sure I studied
 it first.
3. That's all one, if the Authour thinke I can speake it
 better.
1. I pleade possession of the cloake: Gentles, your
 suffrages I pray you.

(*Within*) Why *Children*, are you not asham'd? come in there.

(Ind.1-11)

The Induction, of course, continues from here but, importantly, in this opening exchange Jonson again raises the key artistic and theoretical purposes that identify his position in the ongoing battle with his contemporaries – the Poets' War³ – about the role of drama in English Renaissance society. Specifically, *Cynthia's Revels* begins by offering in miniature the theoretical issues Jonson treats dramatically within the play itself: the connection between actor and audience; the authority, office and duty of the Poet; the societal constancy of social performances and role-playing; and absent presence, that emptiness which provides essential meaning but is seldomly fully or explicitly explored, in social and theatrical performance and character. It is in this last, absent presence, that Jonson introduces and connects to women as allies and representatives; his characterization of the court ladies, Gelaia and Arete, with the reality of the boy players beneath them, reveal not only limits and assumptions about social performance but also Jonson and women. Jonson's dramatization of a full spectrum of womanhood, diversified and particularized by age, class, sexuality and idiosyncratic personal experience, specified by varying and evolving viewpoints, disallows a single vision of "woman" and questions the possibility of fully unified, integrated gender identity.

As he has done in his previous dramatic offerings, Jonson uses the beginning of his plays, his Inductions, to connect his actors and his audience. Within the first ten lines, player one addresses the crowd directly, asking "Gentles, your suffrages I pray you" (Ind.9-10). With this single sentence, the action of the play asks for the approval, consent, witness and assistance of its audience.⁴ The mutuality of the relationship between audience and actor

established, both sides have roles to play and energies to give, *Cynthia's Revels* proceeds with its didactic and theoretical purpose: to use this play about the court by which “the whole Kingdome dresseth it selfe, and is ambitious to use thee as her glasse” (Ded.7-8) to forward a program of social reform. Specifically, Jonson seeks to disclose inappropriate social performances and to provide “figures truly” “render[ed]” (Ded.9), worthy of emulation, and designed to “teach them no lesse to hate their deformities, then to love their formes” (Ded.9-10).

These lessons are for Jonson’s audience, but they are also a clarification and further development of his theoretical argument about the role of drama in society. *Cynthia's Revels* is Jonson’s response to his opponents, specifically Shakespeare and Marston,⁵ who in their responses to his own *Every Man Out* staged Jonson himself as a talker rather than a doer/actor and thus as a dramatically uninteresting character.⁶ With his second critical assault on his contemporaries, Jonson works to put his theories into practice in a form that matches and competes with the dramatic work and experience audiences found in the plays of his contemporaries.⁷ As a result from start to finish in a more overt and in depth manner than in his previous plays, *Cynthia's Revels* is a play about performance.

As the “*Children*” (Ind.11) argue over who will “speak” (Ind.4) or perform the role of the conventional “*Prologue*” (Ind.3), the “*Authour*” emerges as an authority to which the players look for judgment of quality: “That’s all one, if the Authour thinke I can speake it *better*” (Ind.7-8, my italics). For Jonson the authority and ability to make distinctions rests only in the monarch and the Poet, and he argues that it is the Poet’s duty – his own duty – to judge and to correct.⁸ His arguments about the role of drama in society rest on this authority, and his dramatic productions propagate and insist that this authority be used for social

change. The players' acceptance of the power of the "Authour" overseeing the whole of their enterprise with this authority demonstrates the acceptance Jonson also expects from the audience. The "Authour"ity is at once an absent presence overlooking and guiding the actions of those on stage, a fountain of judgment critiquing and correcting the behavior of those in the audience, and a literal figure behind the play. When the voice calls from "within" (s.d. Ind.11) to admonish and refocus the squabbling players, "Why *Children*, are you not asham'd? come in there" (Ind..11), Jonson reinforces poetic authority and once again inserts his actual person into the play. The call claims ownership and direction of the work to follow, but it also introduces shame as authority's powerful tool.

Shame, in the Induction, in *Cynthia's Revels* as a whole, and in society at large, functions as the way through punishment to monitor and modify social performance. As we saw in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, social performance – the way people act in both public and private/non-public spaces – provides the foundation for Jonson's artistic theory of verisimilitude. As Norbert Elias demonstrates in his sociological analysis of civilization past to present *The Civilizing Process*, shame and even the threat of shame modify behavior and change how people "act" both immediately and in the same situation another time.⁹ In Jonson's dramatic work, these social performances are part of observable personality and therefore must also be part of dramatic characterization. For Jonson, social life and literature are products of one another. As drama imitates life, it also establishes a model for emulation, a model specified by Jonson in the Dedication to *Cynthia's Revels*. This is the next step in Jonson's dramatic process, moving from the "mirroure,/ As large as is the stage, whereon we act:/ Where they shall see the times" (*EMO* Ind.118-20) to the characterization in which just as everyday persons evolve, characters also appear in constant states of change and

transformation, striving to attain a perfect performance. In the context of *Cynthia's Revels*, the query, “are you not ashamed?” (Ind.11), propels the players toward a solution to their argument. They respond to the outside stimuli of an authority the way Jonson expects playgoers to respond to the lessons plays and their Poets – “Such shalt thou find some here” (Ded.17) – offer for the improvement of society. This is after all, Jonson argues, the primary purpose of the Poet and his works.

When Jonson has the first player “pleade possession of the cloake” (Ind.9), he refers directly to dramatic convention. As a costume piece, the cloak identifies the player wearing it as the Prologue and imbues the actor with the authority attendant on the role. In the Induction, Jonson uses the convention of the cloak to rearticulate his theoretical arguments about verisimilitude, social performance, and social change. By having the children argue over who speaks the Prologue, Jonson underscores the social desire he observes in everyday London to “act” as the authority, to gain power and to move socially upward. While demonstrating that performance is an observable part of identity, Jonson also reveals the agency in clothes (here the cloak) and in the roles (here the authority of the Prologue) a social performance creates. The concept of absent presences emerges again here too. The boy player fighting to put on the cloak and to speak the Prologue is a literal presence onto which playwrights layer costumes, words, and actions to make present that which is absent, that which is not – and in many cases cannot – be on the stage. More specifically, Jonson emphasizes how the boy player cannot only become the authority of the Prologue but can also stand in for any member of society; he at once can be and is the author, the monarch, the citizen’s wife. On a third, more esoteric level, the player embodies the lessons, moral

judgments and corrections the Poet – in fulfillment of the duty of his own role – conveys to the audience.

The theoretical implications of Jonson's view of the Poet's obligation emerge in his deployment of those cases most obviously unable to represent themselves on stage. A burgeoning and bustling London contained a sexually, racially, economically, socially, politically and religiously diverse group of individuals, and yet only white men and boys willing to take up the label "actor" and thus the social status "vagabond" were able to tread the boards as professional players.¹⁰ Women were not allowed on stage as actors until the Restoration, and yet female characters populate the plays and women joined the audience in the early modern period.¹¹ For Jonson whose dramatic practice demands the staging of observable persons and events, whose theoretical orientation sees and instantiates the mutually influential relationship between life and drama, drama and life, whose determination to raise his own position in the socially constructed hierarchy, women – actual women and the category "women" – are quintessential allies and representatives. Despite the critical commonplace that reads Jonson as a misogynistic playwright, Jonson again and again makes the absent presence¹² of women a focal point in his work.

Through his characterizations of women, Jonson effectively conveys his Poets' War arguments that drama accurately represent the society to which it is presented and that, in doing so, drama advocate social improvement. In their physical presence as audience members and denizens of London, women comprise half of the society Jonson intends to teach. In their physical absence from the ranks of the politically, socially, economically, even religiously, empowered, women offer the desire for and possibility of social change and upward mobility. As Jonson characterizes women physically absent from the stage, visually

present in the costume and gesture of the boy players, dramatically staged and determined by others rather than by themselves, his female characters demonstrate and emphasize what is missing from and what is read onto social performance. Layering the multiple significations of absent present women onto the simultaneously available but also signifying canvases of the boy players, Jonson at once exposes and deploys the complicated interchange between artificial performances and observable, naturalized role-plays to indicate the constructed and constructing social possibilities in identity. Not coincidentally, *Cynthia's Revels* triples the Renaissance standard of two to three female characters per play.¹³ Nine women propel the dramatic and theoretical content of Jonson's play, and Jonson uses the rest of the Induction to introduce these characters as well as to clarify and to assert his artistic and critical positions. The rest of the Induction at once reaches out to his audience and responds to the attacks of his Poets' War combatants.

Maintaining the Induction's squabble between the boy players with which the scene begins, Jonson now uses their verbal sparring to insist on the originality of his latest offering. In a span of sixty-five lines, player three introduces each of the characters, describing their persons, their interactions and relationships, and their ends and then divulges in great detail the entirety of the plot. Jonson's parameters are set. *Cynthia's Revels* is unapologetically a comical satire, jettisoning any attempt at a central love story or a socially harmonizing union and elevating character completely over plot.¹⁴ Jonson's dramatic decision preserves his adherence to the theatrical unities, focusing on a single day at the court of the titular Cynthia.¹⁵ Ostensibly motivated by the pursuit of the miraculous waters of the fountain of self-love, four court ladies (Phantaste, Argurion, Philautia, and Moria), three courtiers (Hedon, Anaides, and Amorphus), and an aspiring courtier citizen (Asotus) flirt, fawn and

jockey for social position while a retired scholar Crites and Arete, Cynthia's virtuous right-hand lady, work to fulfill the queen's request for an evening masque entertainment. The lengthy plot summary and detailed character sketches demonstrate Jonson's originality while the responses of players one and two emphasize Jonson's superiority to his rivals. In the mouths of these players, Jonson explains that his plays do not "deriue their best grace (with seruile imitation) from common stages" (Ind.181-2), do not find their "invention liu'd wholly vpon another mans trencher" (Ind.184), and are not "haunted" (Ind.197) by the "ghosts of some three or foure plays departed a dozen yeeres since" (Ind.195-6). He does not simply rewrite well-known plays; he speaks to a higher cause – the social good.¹⁶

Jonson's next move in the Induction provides an object lesson on social performance. Theoretically *Cynthia's Revels* demonstrates Jonson's complete investment in social performances as the foundation of characterization in his dramatic practice and, as he did in his previous plays, Jonson once again uses the opening of his play to teach his audience how to read and to interpret what they are about to see. (This lesson will be thrust home again in 4.1 when the court ladies critique the courtiers' practice performances.) To make his instruction clear, Jonson has the boy players act out two exaggerated caricatures of social performances typically on view in any playhouse audience. The first stands as a negative example while the second is made positive by intervention, correction and acknowledgement.

In the wholly negative impersonation, player three becomes a fulminating and fumigating courtier with "three sorts of tabacco in [his] pocket" (Ind.119). Blowing copious plumes of smoke, player three preens before the crowd, rails against boy players and any spectators "mad" (Ind.121) enough to attend their production, and advises the audience that for entertainment it "were better [to] visit fifteene jailes,—or a dozen or two hospitals—then

once adventure to come near them” (Ind.130-1).¹⁷ Jonson creates the character portrayed to be so ridiculously enamored with his affectations – his tobacco, his clothes, the sound of his own voice – that he cannot tell the difference between a proper play and the entertainments on view at Bethlem, and Jonson leaves the performance as an example beyond instruction and correction.

Jonson now has player three insist on staging “a more sober, or better-gather’d gallant” (Ind.134-5), and to this act Jonson joins the other players. Player two, in the guise of a stage boy, encourages the gallant (player three) to pay “six pence” (Ind.142) to “throne your selfe in state on the stage, as other gentle-men vse” (Ind.145-6). Player three’s gallant rightly refuses, recognizing the inappropriateness of this action and the “wagge[’s]” (Ind.147) attempt to “make an imple-ment of me” (Ind.148), but then errs by officiously demanding to “speake with your Authour” (Ind.158-9). Player two’s stage boy rebuffs him, offering to allow the gallant to “conferre with our Author, by attorney, you may, sir: our proper selfe here stands for him” (Ind.168-70). The gallant now backpedals; it is “no such serious affaire to negotiate with him, but what may verie safely bee turn’d vpon thy trust.” (Ind.171-2). He would, however, speak “in the generall behalfe of this faire societie here” (Ind.173), the audience, and does so by offering a lengthy opinion on playmaking, misstepping again when he specifically critiques Jonson’s theory of verisimilitude:

That they would not so penuriously gleane wit, from euerie
laundresse, or hackney-man, or deriue their best grace (with seruile
imitation) from common stages, or obseruation of the companie
they conuerse with.

(Ind.180-3)

The equally lengthy and much more detailed reply Jonson gives player two's stage boy shreds the gallant's assertions and attitudes as he acts "a *Poet*" (Ind.199) to "find" (Ind.200) five specific examples "vpon you, that are of the auditorie" (Ind.200-1).¹⁸ These audience members, like the gallant, may think they know better than the playwright, but player two quickly reveals each one to be as lacking in knowledge as the gallant himself. Player three's gallant becomes a positive example for everyone in the playhouse when Jonson dramatizes his shame and change. Admitting to player two that "you haue put mee downe," player three's gallant then confesses, "I would I knew how to get off with any indifferent grace" (Ind.218-9). Jonson and his play, of course, will show him...and the audience...exactly how.

Before turning to the action of the play itself, Jonson punctuates the teachable moment with which the Induction ends with a formal Prologue. Speaking in ten carefully constructed rhyming couplets, player two, now as the official Prologue, enumerates Jonson's poetical claims. First he crafts the kind of audience required, one as unlike as to be antithetical to the one described at the Induction's end: "Our doubtful authour hopes" (Pro.4) the Blackfriars houses an audience equipped with "the lights of iudgement" (Pro.3), "gracious silence, sweet attention,/ Quicke sight, and quicker apprehension" (Pro.1-2). Having issued this challenge, the Prologue announces that the author "opens he himself to those;/ To other weaker beames, his labours close" (Pro.5-6). Second, the Prologue insists on the author's difference from, his superiority to, his contemporaries. His work is a "virgin straine" (Pro.7) which "shunnes the print of any beaten path;/ And proues new wayes" (Pro.10-1) and, unlike those dramatists he criticizes for "hunt[ing]...after popular applause,/ Or fomie praise, that drops from common iaws" (Pro.13-4), the author seeks praise only from those "who can," like himself, "both censure, vnderstand, define/ What merit is" (Pro.16-7).

While elevating his own work, Jonson is, of course, also preparing and praising his audience for his own purposes. His play, in keeping with his definition of the duty of a Poet, has a social project in mind and when the Prologue concludes with the assertion that the author “knowes” “his *poesie*” “affoords/ Words, aboue action: matter, aboue words” (Pro.19-20), he focuses all attention on the “matter” to follow.¹⁹ His “matter,” specifically his treatment of social performance as the basis of both dramaturgical realism and social improvement, is the “matter” he expects his audience to understand, to accept and to incorporate into their lives after they quit the playhouse.

Jonson’s elevation of “matter” here also signals a literary direction he adds to the comical satire in *Cynthia’s Revels*. Unlike his approach in *Every Man In* and *Every Man Out*, in this play Jonson provides an additional layer to his discussion of social performance: allegory. In keeping with the Renaissance understanding of allegory as “diverse and sundry meanings” “wrapped as it were in their writings” (Harrington 309, 310), Jonson complicates his characterization of the women and men peopling this play by providing each character with additional, allegorical levels of meaning.²⁰ For example, the court ladies Phantaste, Argurion, Philautia and Moria are also – as the Greek roots in their names suggest – “light wittiness,” “money,” “self-love” and “folly.”²¹ The young girl Gelaia who dresses as a page boy to follow the courtier Anaides allegorically figures as laughter, the daughter of folly, while Anaides, who knows fully well Gelaia is a girl but boldly disregards convention anyway, is impudence.

In *Cynthia’s Revels*, Jonson uses allegory as an additional way to accomplish the task he set for himself when he argued in *Every Man Out* that in quality drama theory and practice must be united. *Cynthia’s Revels* restates his case, attempting through more detailed

example and the use of allegory, to convince his rivals that his drama provides a model for them to follow and at the same time that his ideas about the role of drama in society can succeed with an audience. Throughout the play, Jonson's allegory reinforces his multiple purposes, uniting his theory and practice on a critical, literary level. Allegory, itself a layer and abstraction, transforms an open and direct statement at the literal level into something encoded with hidden meanings.²² Theoretically, this is exactly what Jonson's plays and the characters in them also do. They at once offer open and direct types of character in a surface action and, in a series of layers crafted by Jonson to be unfolded by an attentive and erudite auditory and/or reader, they stage the social performances and personal idiosyncrasies that reveal identity to be a social construction.

For example, in *Every Man Out* Jonson's surface action follows a collection of humorous characters on a journey from country to court where they are ultimately purged and corrected. On its additional levels, as has been discussed in detail in the previous chapter, *Every Man Out* strikes a blow for the "proper" use of drama; demands that the unrealistic social harmony of festive comedy be replaced by the verisimilitude of social London; demonstrates how quality characters for the stage must be individuated just as they would appear to an observer in everyday London; reveals how social performance begins as an imitation but results in an identity constructed at all levels; and pushes a program of social reform by calling for more positive performances worth emulating and fewer negative performances requiring censure. In *Cynthia's Revels*, allegory works dramatically and theoretically at once providing a model of Jonson's theoretical purposes with his drama and functioning in miniature as the whole of his plays do. Allegory, after all, is the repository of

multiple meanings and by fully deploying the multiplicity of allegory, Jonson notes, exploits and balances the tensions between his metaphorical, symbolic and actual purposes.

Cynthia's Revels, although clearly a representation of the Elizabethan court, never specifically mentions Elizabeth and takes place not in England but in the mythological "GARGAPHIE" (Ind.42). The setting and the decision to name Cynthia, an alternate image Elizabeth sanctioned and used herself,²³ nevertheless explicate allegorical interpretation, emphasizing that that which is not named, or absent, is made apparent, or present. Jonson crafts his characters with a similar accumulation of layered meaning(s). For instance, a boy actor in the Blackfriars' company becomes the character "squabbling boy player" in the Induction to *Cynthia's Revels*. "Squabbling boy player" then takes up the name Gelaia and instantly becomes both a girl, the daughter of Moria, and laughter, the offspring of folly. A fifth layer unfolds when in the action of the play actor-player-Gelaia-laughter puts on the disguise of a page boy. In this way, Jonson plays with meaning, construction, and form. The character Gelaia signifies in numerous ways and stands forth a complicated construction based on and created in performance. Allegory now functions as the height of Jonson's ideas about social performance. Allegory and social performance are at once all that is and all that is pretended or "acted."

Throughout *Cynthia's Revels*, Jonson's union of theory and practice emerges and operates, as in the above examples, like a carefully constructed house of cards. Character balances signification, allegory multiplies meaning, the full spectrum of female diversity plays against the presence of the boy players; and every turn of the play reveals multiplicity and a tangle of dramatic and social performances. The foundational level of character with which Jonson begins the play evolves throughout as Jonson builds layers onto the players'

dramatic performances with the various social performances he has them take up to advance their standing at court, to learn by watching each others, to practice by giving one another instruction, to imitate in the ambition to gain notice, and to revise after censorship.

As a result and to the detriment of *Cynthia's Revels'* plot, Jonson focuses exclusively on character, putting his dramatic persons in scenarios in which performance can be exposed as performance. Both the audience in the playhouse and the audience onstage closely watch the games and machinations and, in turn, understand exactly how these performances are enacted, when they work, and when they need to be censored. These social performances provide the "matter" for Jonson's program of social reform, but they also bring his theory and practice together. At once we find in Jonson's dramatic practice the specificity of detail and particularity with which he asserts characters must be crafted, and we find his critique of form, performance and society. The play's dramatic action sends the members of Cynthia's court seeking after magical waters while the play's message satirizes these self-seeking courtiers and the court in which they flourish. Gelaia, along with the eight other female characters in the play, stages feminine multiplicity and a critique of festive comedy. The boy players, at once themselves and adults both female and male, intensify Jonson's mockery of political and social structures as well as the individuals behind them. Jonson's constant barrage of meaning is, of course, the reason critics dismiss *Cynthia's Revels* as a dramatic failure. Yet, taken for what it is – the second phase in Jonson battle with peers and audience alike – the play itself succeeds in theory and practice just as it succeeded in print.²⁴ Jonson restates and then literally stages his position: All – in life as in *Cynthia's Revels* – is performance; art and life are mutually influential, and the Poet has the power, indeed the responsibility, to deploy this connection for social improvement.

Reveling with these courtly “lady nymphs”

The court with all its pomp and circumstance provides the ideal setting for Jonson’s treatment of social performance. At court, he finds a situation steeped in procedure, duty, custom, ritual and presentation; a system of advancement and opportunity based on the proper fulfillment of those roles; and a varied assortment of people and personalities willing to play the game, to act the part. The range of character already existing in the court milieu supplies Jonson with a ready-made *dramatis personae* he easily adapts to his own dramatic and theoretical purposes. With Jonson’s skill at character development, what W. David Kay calls “the way he selects, combines, and gives dramatic vitality to the traits ridiculed by his predecessors” (25), the courtiers – female and male – he creates for *Cynthia’s Revels* become a spectrum of humanity.²⁵

From the lowest page to the reigning monarch, from the flawed to the virtuous, Jonson stages all aspects of his contemporary London, touching those he observes, those he calls friends, those with whom he desires to cultivate relationships and patronage.²⁶ His characters – the women, wits, gallants and courtiers – exemplify the deficiencies of and variations on social performance Jonson at once understands and seeks to expose and correct.²⁷ Using the page-gods Mercury and Cupid as a chorus to explain and to refine his purposes throughout the play, Jonson focuses on the imitations: the imperfections, the gaps, the attempts at effortless performance, the failures.

[S]ince wee are turn’d cracks, let’s studie to be like cracks;
 practice their language, and behaviours, and not with a dead imita-
 tion: act freely, carelessly, and capriciously, as if our veines ranne

with quick-siluer, and not vtter a phrase, but what shall come forth
steep in the verie brine of conceipt, and sparkle like salt in fire.

(2.1.4-10)

The play, like the Dedication, Induction and Prologue, guides the audience through additional instruction on how to read, to judge, and to amend all the imitative performances, and the final act – itself a culmination of Jonson’s handbook and an inversion of Castiglione’s *Courtier* – urges a project of reform rather than humiliation.²⁸

The entrance of the revelers plunges the audience into the colorful chaos of the court. In a nod to the layers of identity he creates for each character, Jonson has Cupid “lay colour vpon colour” (2.3.159) as he details each character, her situation at court, her role in the social drama and the allegory Jonson himself layers onto each lady. ARGVRION is money, “A *Nymph* of most wandring and giddy disposition, humourous as the aire” (2.3.164-5). Her “looke as cleere and fresh as the morning” (2.3.168-9) changes easily to be “as melancholike as mid-night” (2.3.169-70). She likes a “close obscure lodging” (2.3.170-1) and dotes equally on “student,” “*poet*,” “*philosopher*,” “*player*,” “*lawyer*” or “foole” (2.3.175-180), and “The worst in her is a want of keeping state” (2.3.182-3). MORIA is folly, the “guardian of the *Nymphs*” (2.4.11), and in his characterization Jonson compares her to “your ignorant *Poetasters* of the time” (2.4.15-6). In this way, he simultaneously attacks his contemporaries and demonstrates that Moria likes to hear her own pontifications. PHILAVTIA, or self-love, excels at everything she does and “she knowes it” (2.4.37). “Shee is faire” (2.4.37), “has a pretty light wit” (2.4.38), “can dance” (2.4.38-9) and “play at shittle-cock” (2.4.39). She knows her history, her poetry and her rhetoric and advances at court because she can “very subtilly” (2.4.43) promote herself while diminishing others. PHANTASTE is light wittiness,

and we are told “her very name [fantasy] speakes for her” (2.4.102). To her alone, Jonson gives a scene in the midst of these character sketches through which to demonstrate her name and presence. She is, indeed, “all motion, an *vbiqutarie*, shee is euery where” (2.4.100-1). She is also the first to criticize those who “doe most pittifully imitate” (2.4.81.)

To complete his spectrum, Jonson introduces the “starres” (2.4.106) of Cynthia’s court, “the diuine ARETE, TIMÈ, PHRONESIS, THAVMA” (2.4.107-8): Virtue, Honor, Prudence and Admirableness.²⁹ Of these, Jonson focuses on Arete, adding her to the *dramatis personae* as another member of the court. In Jonson’s characterization, she is an essential link to the monarch, virtuous and poor, “a creature...no lesse scorn’d, then himselfe” (Ind.92-3), the “retired” scholler and Jonson stand-in Crites.³⁰ Until the final scenes of the play, Arete speaks for Cynthia, plotting with Crites to purge the court. The pairing of Arete and Crites creates a female and male version of virtue in the play, extends Jonson’s presence (the virtuous Arete is Jonson’s feminine counterpart), and emphasizes the connection between monarch and poet. Each time she appears on stage, Arete’s “blacke robe” (Ind.91) contrasts sharply with the sea of colorful courtiers, punctuating the differences between their flawed examples and her own. She functions as Jonson’s model and paradigm and provides the opportunity for the correction the play promotes in its final movement.

Within the dramatic frame, each of these characters simultaneously serves as an actual woman, a metaphor, a symbol and an allegory. Through a slow accretion of detail, Jonson establishes these female characters as parallel to the variety, complexity and contradictions in female positions in early modern England and disrupts the appearance of universal categories. These court ladies could be someone the audience recognizes; they could be you. Jonson advances the tensions between these multiple layers of signification,

noting and exploiting characteristics to demonstrate the constructed and constructing possibilities in imitative performance and naturalized role-play. Women are an absent presence on the Renaissance stage, but their social participation – in the playhouse, the market, at court – underscores Jonson’s argument about what is missing from and read onto social performance. The bodies of the boy players underneath the layers Jonson creates intensify the point, and Jonson makes certain his audience knows it. In addition to framing the play with an induction dominated by their antics, throughout the play Jonson references the boy players. For example, Act Three begins with a court rehearsal session in which the “young courtier” is compared to the “*neophyte-player*” (3.1.3-4).

This well-placed reminder emphasizes the performance aspect of Act Three. The center of *Cynthia’s Revels* stages, practices, discusses, deconstructs and critiques social performance and, as Michael Shapiro explains in his discussion of child actors on the Renaissance stage, Jonson’s use of the boy players makes the dramatic action seem even more affected (106-13). In the first scene, Amorphus instructs Asotus how to “practise...some few formes” (3.1.21-2) such as sitting at table, “wisely mixe[ing] your self in ranke” (3.1.41), buying poetical words with which to impress the ladies “prouided you pay for the silence, as for the worke” (3.1.64-5). With each imitation Jonson teaches the audience to question and to critique what they observe, to see beneath the layers as well as the layers in concert. Jonson puts the lesson to practice in the next scenes when unsuccessful courtiers discuss and dismiss those who refuse to perform according to the “rules” of engagement. Jonson provides the audience with “the best iudgements” (3.3.10) the opportunity to recognize the wrongs, lies and slanders (3.3.10-1) then brings Crites and Arete to the stage to

detail the results. The anatomy of the court types is laid bare, the rules of performance enumerated and the triumph of virtue announced:

ARE. It is the pride of ARETE to grace
 Her studious louers; and (in scorne of time,
 Envie, and ignorance) to lift their state
 Aboue a vulgar height. True happinesse
 Consists not in the multitude of friends,
 But in the worth, and choice. Now would I haue
 Vertue a popular regard pursue:
 Let them be good that loue me, though but few.

(3.4.100-7)

Having aligned the audience with Arete and Crites, Jonson ends the act with another practice session. In a mockery of the *As You Like It* scene in which Rosalind teaches Orlando how to woo her, Amorphus and Asotus enact the courtship.³¹ “Belike you measure me by your selfe then?” (3.5.130-1). The instructed audience can see through it all – the practice, the performance, the judgment – and now knows to do exactly that.

After carefully constructing his characters layer by layer – idiosyncratic particularities and habits, costumes and social situations, practice performances and discussions, multiplicities of meaning – the “real time” performance begins when the courtiers converge in Act Four. Scene One belongs to the lovely lady nymphs. Typically read as a satire of the court ladies (which, of course, it is just not as the critical commonplace would have it; the play mocks everyone, female and male, for their pretensions), the interaction of the female characters offers much more.³² While their conversation fixates on the very inanities

Jonson's play teaches us to disdain – fashion, fads, frivolous games, the court ladies' wish fulfillment fantasy also imparts another lesson: that of right desires wrongly directed. The foolish Moira wishes to be a “wisewoman” (4.1.141), a virtuous attribute, but mistakenly applies that wisdom to advancement at court through the knowledge of all the court gossip. Self-loving Philautia rightly accepts herself “the verie same I am” (4.1.161) only to push her own approval too far when she wishes “a little more command, and soueraigntie” (4.1.162) would make her the center of everyone else's world too. By staging the improper application of virtue, Jonson encourages the corrections of such misguided efforts.

The fourth and final lady Phantaste (fantasy) turns out to be an even more direct mouthpiece for Jonson. Through the “wish my selfe [to be] all manner of creatures” (4.1.172), a protean chameleon, Jonson introduces a catalog of first feminine and then masculine types. The empress, the duchess, the great state lady, the waiting woman, the citizen's wife, the country gentlewoman, the dairy maid, the shepherd lass (4.1.173-94) all grace the stage, and Jonson establishes again the variety of womanhood on display in early modern England. His examples cut across class and age and rank, suggesting observable female multiplicity rather than static dramatic ideals. When Phantaste then decides “for one yeere, [to] wish my selfe one woman” (ll.195-6), Jonson does the same for the various masculine types one woman might encounter.³³ Granting attention to the diversity in both sexes, Jonson offers an equal rather than misogynistic treatment; his focus on the particularities of these male and female experiences extends his spectrum of humanity and champions heterogeneity. Finally, the character's concluding thoughts – “Then, I to haue a booke made of all this, which I would call the booke of humours” (4.1.212-3) – align this female character with Jonson. The book would, of course, be called *Cynthia's Revels*.

The ladies' dissection of the male performances with which the act begins continues. As they compare the gentlemen, choosing their favorites – “which is the properst man amongst them?” (4.1.46-7), critiquing their “fault”s (4.1.71), and challenging their performances – “but, how doth this draw on the dittie, sir” (4.3.293), Jonson transforms the court ladies into an onstage audience, one also set to judge, to correct, to instruct. The choral Mercury and Cupid support their actions, providing asides – “she is too quicke with him, he has not deuis'd it yet” (4.3.294-5) – that emphasize Jonson's reading and instruction. Jonson's shift in his presentation of the ladies becomes particularly apparent in 4.3 and 5.1-4 as Jonson offers elaborate analyses of court amusements in which the ladies as onstage audience-participants, the courtiers and the pages create an instruction manual for the playhouse audience.³⁴

Jonson defends the depth of his satire (and, indeed, the excoriation of the amusements are painfully long) by “approue[ing]/ The fit rebuke of so ridiculous heads,/ Who with their apish customes, and forc'd garbes,/ Would bring the name of courtier in contempt” (5.1.33-6). Developing the ladies' didactic function Jonson aligns them – like Crites, Arete and Phantaste – with himself, and with this action, Jonson's work again challenges the charges of even unconscious misogyny.³⁵ Jonson does not take great care in his writing to separate himself from women. In fact, he does just the opposite. Certainly, he critiques the ladies' flaws (although a tally of the text reveals that he does so in lesser measure than the male courtiers), and Arete and Crites are his ideal; but throughout the play these courtly lady nymphs both speak and enact Jonson's worldview. Alternatively surface and layer, statement and abstraction, social performance and critique, they provide part of the elaborate revelation of socially constructed identity on which this play focuses.

Reveling with “a wench in boy’s attire”

By contrast, Gelaia is not one of the court ladies. Within the narrative construct of the play, she acts the part of “a wench in boyes” or “page’s attire” (Ind.60-1; 2.2.83). Within the critical commentary about the play, she is wrongly dismissed as “Anaidēs’ whore,” another supposed example of Jonson’s misogyny (Barton 74).³⁶ But most importantly, within Jonson’s critical arguments about drama and its role in society, she is his mockery of festive comedy and its conventions. Jonson crafts Gelaia to be one recognized by those within the narrative world of the play and within the walls of the playhouse as a character in *acknowledged* male dress; she isn’t trying to fool anyone. To accomplish his purposes, then, Jonson, as he has done with his previous female characters, introduces us to Gelaia long before “she” graces the stage.

Jonson uses first the boy players and then Mercury to instruct us that Gelaia is a young girl in the employ of one Anaidēs the impudent and that, allegorically, she is also laughter, the daughter of folly. Her most distinctive feature, however, one born out by its textual repetition, is a costume. Just as Jonson pointed to dramatic convention when he had the players “pleade possession of the cloake” (Ind.9), with Gelaia’s page costume he also emphasizes the trope, underscoring its layered performance and absent presence possibilities. Gelaia, we are reminded, is a boy-girl-boy. In this role, Jonson’s Gelaia exists within the tradition of the female pageboy, but Jonson, of course, is not content to follow a popular convention. He establishes her character to tweak it and its adherents. From the first mention of Gelaia, the play focuses on her female presence in a male costume, on her disguise *as* a disguise, and throughout the play her development maintains this disguise as another layer of her personal idiosyncrasy. Whether mocking Anaidēs’ laboriously plotted

wooing “looke, thy page takes to it too” (2.2.50-1), joke-building as the sly servant with Mercury and his slights – “I, and a little more too, when the spirit is vpon him” (2.5.15), or refusing to “follow you any longer” (4.4.6) when her person and page services are insulted not praised, the pageboy costume is always central to her character. In this way, Jonson refuses to repeat the tropes of the female pageboy and, by keeping the layers of performance (the pageboy) and character (a woman in acknowledged disguise) in balanced play, strips the convention of its illusions. This character is not hiding its female sex to travel safely beyond familiar environments. This character is not pursuing a future husband. This character is not strengthening sex-gender roles by failing to excel at sword play, fainting or crying. In short, this character is not reinscribing women to the lower position in the gender hierarchy as the use of the female pageboy device does in play after play of this period.³⁷

Instead, by discussing the pageboy attire as costume and characterization both before and after we meet Gelaia, Jonson unmask the device, the character and the tradition and places the focus on identity as a series of layers externally applied. “Gelaia,” it turns out, is a complicated fabrication and performance, and she offers a specific, early example of Jonson’s depiction of gender as construction, as fiction, as an imitation of an imitation. The perfection of his example will, of course, grace the stage in 1609 as *Epicoene* (Dryden 429-33), but in 1600 Jonson was still developing the Gelaia performance layers to function on various levels. At the level of character, the performance is one chosen by Gelaia and is an acknowledged, self-performance. Within the action of the play, the page performance critiques the affectations of those who procure such pages. For the audience, the cross-dressed pageboy/girl exploits and critiques an enjoyed dramatic device, a pleasure-giving performance. As allegory, the performance literally laughs at Jonson’s contemporaries.

At the narrative level of character, Jonson creates another woman who chooses for herself and revels in that decision.³⁸ In this, as he did earlier with Rachel and the sisters, Dame Kately and Fallace, Jonson depicts without censure a character acting for her own pleasure. Reintroducing the Gelaia character to the stage action throughout the play, Jonson demonstrates how the mutual both/and of an acknowledged girl-boy page creates an entity free of the social and gender conventions that preside over the courtly interactions the play stages. Jonson gives Gelaia the run of the court, a pleasure she takes laughingly in stride by commenting on the court performances (2.2), jesting with her fellow pages (2.5 and 5.3), traveling abroad to follow the “fashion” to the fountains (Act 3), defying treatments she finds inadequate (4.3 and 4.4), and participating in the court masque (5.11).

More than simply balancing the layers of the Gelaia character, Jonson also gives her agency in reaction. In her discussion of the play, Anne Barton reduces the character to a punching bag for Anaides, the impudent, whom she describes as “given to abusing her obscenely” (74). Missing from this account are the entirety of the play as well as the responses Jonson crafts for the moment of abuse – one at which Gelaia is not even present. In 4.3, the courtiers begin to bemoan the tardiness of the pages’ return from their errand to fetch the waters from the Fountain of Self-Love: “In good faith, these vnhappie pages would be whipt for staying thus” (4.3.204-5) and “I doe wonder at their protraction!” (4.3.207). Anaides joins the lament by blaming his page. Focusing on the simultaneity of her genders, he labels his girl/boy page a “whore” (4.3.208) and later one among “all *cockatrices*” (4.3.224) and, suggesting that she “be the cause of their stay” (4.3.209) for “shee has opened all” (4.3.223), asserts that “if she haue plai’d loose with me, I’le cut her throat, within a haire breadth, so it may be heal’d againe” (4.3.224-6). Jonson quickly contains the

aggression by attributing the character flaw to Anaides not Gelaia. Note that Jonson underscores the character's duality when he has Mercury ask, "What, is he jealous of his *Hermaphrodite*?" (4.3.227). Cupid's rejoinder, "O, I, this will be excellent sport" (4.3.228), sets up the reaction this abuse will receive.

It arrives in the very next scene as Jonson writes Gelaia to waste no time countering Anaides'³⁹ (not his own) misogynistic insults. The response is direct not defensive and, importantly, longer than the total of the Anaides' abuse lines. The encounter begins when Gelaia identifies the problem, "here's a coile indeed, with your iealous humours" (4.4.2-3); explicates the result, "Nothing but whore, and bitch, and all the villanous swaggering names you can thinke on?" (4.4.3-4); and acts to protect herself, "take your bottle, and put it in your guts for me, I'le see you poxt ere I follow you any longer" (4.4.5-6). Anaides tries to placate, but his admission of jealousy meets only with Gelaia's affirmation, "That's true indeede" (4.4.9) and her intended departure with her fellow pages, "pray let's goe" (4.4.9). Despite the drinking of the waters of self-love, the verbal scuffle draws the attention of the courtiers. In response to the question "What's the matter, there?" (4.4.10), Jonson uses Gelaia's next five lines to put the blame where it belongs: on Anaides for questioning her word and resorting to name-calling.

GEL. S'light, he has mee vpon intergatories, (nay my mother shall know how you vse me) where I haue beene? and, why I should stay so long? and, how ist possible? And withal, call me at his pleasure, I know not how many cockatrices, and things.

(4.4.11-15)

Jonson also confirms her choice to quit a damaging situation: “these are no good *epitaphs*, ANAIDES, to bestow vpon any gentlewoman” (4.4.16-7), whose best efforts to blame the victim herself go unsupported. Jonson emphasizes the moment of agency when Anaides is told “I must haue you leaue it, minion” (4.4.32).

While agency prevails at the character level, *Cynthia’s Revel’s* overt staging of the page“boy” convention also satirizes social pretension. In the play’s opening movements the gods, Cupid and Mercury, elect to become pages. With this single and signal move, Jonson establishes that his play reorganizes social hierarchy and that everyone performs as something they are not. Jonson then moves on to the social group – the court – around which the play revolves. The audience learns that Cupid serves Philautia/self-love, Mercury serves Hedon the voluptuous, Gelaia serves Anaides the impudent and that, in the world of *Cynthia’s Revels*, aspiring social climbers will have pages but that these pages will be aware of the same dramatic ironies with which Jonson keeps his audience apprised.⁴⁰ In this way, Jonson uses the page boy/girl performance to expose the social pretension of the court.

Jonson underscores the pretension when at the culmination of Act One he stages the lowest of the group, two would-be gallants named Amorphus and Asotus, procuring their own pages. While meeting nice at the Fountain of Self-Love (thanks to an introduction from Jonson’s stand-in Crites) and pledging their mutual admiration and aid to one another’s advancement at court, a vagabond looking for work interrupts the men.⁴¹ “Saue you, sweet blouds: do’s any of you want a creature or a dependant?” (1.5.1-2). Crites’ asides instruct the audience how to read the interactions: “Beshrow me, a fine blunt slaue” (1.5.3). By contrast Amorphus sees “a page of good timber!” (1.5.4) and decides “it will now bee my grace to entertaine him first, though I casheere him againe in priuate” (1.5.4-6). Not to be outdone

Asotus, emulating Amorphus, looks around, sees another “creature” and resolves to “entertaine this other fellow” (1.5.14). Jonson employs Crites to instruct the audience to read the absurdity when he labels the new pages as the “beggars” (1.5.21) they are and then mockingly suggests that the new pages, who explicitly duplicate the aspirants own place in the play, “will ranke euen with you (er’t be long)? If you hold on your course” (1.5.23-5). The audience now understands to read future characters through their pages. Anaides’ acquisition of a girl-boy page, it turns out, suggests not the grander demonstration he aspires to project but the magnitude of his own flaws.⁴²

Jonson’s ridicule censures not only the individuals who hire pages but also the environment rewarding the affectation as a demonstration of social success. Emphasizing the critique, the scene ends with a forty-three line speech in which Crites discourses on the “vanitie” (1.5.24) and “vice” (1.5.48) that inspires “emptie ideots!” (1.5.26) “not [to] striue t’erect his groueling thoughts” (5.1.34) but instead to “woo” (1.5.50) advancement through “vulgar humor” (1.5.39), “impostures” (1.5.51) and pretense.⁴³ The correction is harsh but tempered. Demonstrating that his social reforms apply to everyone, even himself, Jonson has his authorial stand-in conclude the condemnation with the inclusive first person plural pronoun:

We act our mimicke trickes with that free licence,
 That lust, that pleasure, that securitie,
 As if we practiz’d in a paste-boord case,
 And no one saw the motion, but the motion
 Welle, checke they passion, lest it grow too lowd:

While fooles are pittied, they waxe fat, and proud.

(1.5.61-6)

Jonson lifts the curtain on social performance and commands everyone, “we,” to see and the to “checke” and correct ourselves accordingly.

Having taught the audience members to read social performance and to apply the lesson to themselves, Jonson shifts his deployment of the Gelaia character to focus beyond the confines of the play and directly onto his audiences and poetic rivals. Despite her impression of Gelaia as punching bag, Barton’s description of her as “the child not only of Folly, but of that debased popular taste which enjoyed seeing the heroine in doublet and hose” (75) evokes Jonson’s theoretical purposes. The appeal of the cross-dressed page rests in the sexuality the disguise at once conceals, reveals and intensifies.⁴⁴ With the Gelaia character, Jonson redirects the fascination to see what lies beneath the clothes onto the more abstract speculation about, the “motion” (1.5.64), what exists beneath the layers of performance. And so, Jonson turns the convention inside out, stripping away the ambiguities of the cross-dressed character, jettisoning the disguise in favor of an acknowledged costume, and concentrating on that costume as an intentional identity choice.

Jonson further plays with the convention when he turns the expected promiscuity of a woman consciously in male dress to the service of his critique of the tropes of festive comedy. The supposed Anaiides’ abuse scene (4.3) seems to satisfy the audience expectation; Gelaia’s chastity and honor are maligned. In a festive comedy, a heroine would be left without a defense, and the play would instantiate the gender hierarchy in which women are lacking and powerless. In *Cynthia’s Revels*, however, Jonson does not have Gelaia shrink from the slander, faint or cry. Instead, Jonson crafts a refutation of the offensive behavior

and removes the character from the situation. Jonson's appropriation of the dramatic device ultimately mitigates its debasement.

Jonson does not treat his contemporaries as kindly. Allegorically, Gelaia represents laughter, and Jonson's play literally laughs at his rivals. His adherence to the power and responsibility of the poet-dramatist to improve society makes laughable his contemporaries' continued efforts to stage a fantasy of social harmony in their festive comedies. Jonson's employs the character Gelaia to mock the absurdity of the festive comedy genre and those who write it. Cross-dressed heroines distort the verisimilitude, "the mirroure...to show the times," Jonson argues must be on display in the playhouse; festive comedy offers an unrealizable social structure, and the genre's playwrights, he contends, need to adapt.⁴⁵

Reveling for Queen and Virtue

The play ends with the very revels promised by the title. Significantly, Jonson propels the action of the play to its dramatic conclusion through the collaboration of his primary stand-ins. The charge for a masque to include all the courtiers comes from Arete and when Crites contends "so many follies will confusion proue" (5.5.10), Arete also provides the solution: a complementary anti-masque. In the ensuing discussion (5.1.1-72) on art, humours, presumptive social performance, the correcting power of the monarch, and the influential impact of poetry, the two characters – collaboratively and in equal measure – reaffirm Jonson's theoretical principles and detail the success of the dramatic project that has and will be *Cynthia's Revels*. The Arete half of the dialogue presents Jonson's artistic ideals;⁴⁶ the Crites half queries and critiques, theorizes and praises. Arete's replies emphasize the appropriateness of Jonson dramatic and theoretical goals; the monarch "hold[s] true intelligence" (5.5.41), knows the imperfections that have "crept into her palace" (5.5.42), and

trusts the poet to create “sports, and triumphs” (5.5.43) through which “shee might more strictly, and to roote,/ Effect the reformation shee intends” (5.5.45-6).

Like the rest of Jonson’s female characters, however, Arete is critically dismissed as a “figure so minor as to barely register” (Barton 76).⁴⁷ This reduction not only obscures her participation in the dramatic action of the play – Arete appears alongside the court ladies, Crites and Cynthia – but also discounts the tensions Jonson balances to create her character. Jonson employs Arete’s character as a completion and compliment to the actions of the scholar Crites and as punctuation for the corrections ordained by the play. Her black robe contrasts as sharply with the jewel-hued gowns of the social-climbing courtiers as her behavior does with their follies. Simultaneously, Jonson layers the Arete character with the suggestion of actual early modern women such as the Countess of Bedford to whom he gifted a quarto copy in 1601 and with the tribute of being the feminine half of his own perfected self-portrait, an example of properly enacted courtiership and an the allegorical figuration of virtue.⁴⁸

Over Arete, in fact over all the *dramatis personae*, Jonson positions the monarchical Cynthia. Like Arete, Cynthia too suggests an historical and ideal woman: the reigning sovereign Elizabeth I. Jonson has attempted to stage the queen before...with mixed results.⁴⁹ Having learned from his previous effort, in *Cynthia’s Revels* the queen’s presence – from title to final line “*and, with refined voice, report/ The grace of CYNTHIA, and her court*” (Pal.39-40) – is a constant. These revels are hers as much as Jonson’s.

On the one hand, this is Jonson’s shameless bid for patronage at the highest level; on the other, his artistic and theoretical mandate requires him to establish and to deploy the connection between monarch and poet to effect social change. Dramatically he once again

achieves all of his goals in the culminating characterization of the queen. Balancing interpretive meanings and embodiment, allegory and person, Jonson's Cynthia combines the sense of the monarch herself, the authority of her office, and the mythical status of her symbolic persona. The outcome yields a character in correct proportion: humours checked, performance effortless. In this way, the character Cynthia completes Jonson's spectrum of humanity, both representing and enacting the culmination of virtue demonstrated in the Arete and Crites pairing.

Dramatically, and theoretically for that matter, it is no surprise when Jonson elects to have Cynthia respond to the "revells" penned by Crites and performed by all the elements of the court with a speech (5.11.1-99) in which her character applauds the effort, outs and shames the pretenders, and rewards Jonson's two halves, Arete and Crites, with the power to dispense punishments and corrections.⁵⁰

Dear ARETE and CRITES, to you two
 We giue the charge; impose what paines you please:
 Th' incurable cut off, the rest reforme,
 Remembring euer what we first decreed,
 Since revells were proclaim'd let none now bleed.

(5.11.95-99)

The "offenders" (5.11.135) agree they "merit sharpe correction" (5.11.137), and once again as an instruction manual for the audience Jonson recounts their errors. They do not, however, deserve further abuse; they are still examples of Jonson's audience, his social London, and they have earned mercy for "there's not one of these, who are vn pain'd/ Or by themselues unpunished: for vice/ Is like a furie to the vicious minde/ And turnes delight it

selfe to punishment” (5.11.130-3). *Cynthia’s Revels* with its collaborative effort from poet and monarch, masculine and feminine presents a kinder, gentler Jonson, focused on reform not humiliation.⁵¹

The punishable offense turns out to be the lack of self-knowledge. Reformation begins with acknowledgement, and the play returns to its beginnings in the Induction when the players demonstrated positive and negative social performances and their corrections. Once the courtiers admit their faults and confess their error – “ALL. We doe...Yes” (5.11.136-7), they have taken the first step. The second step requires their remorse; they must proclaim their wrongs and “offer vp two tears apiece” (5.11.145). Admission, acceptance, and remorse must lead to active change, and the courtiers are sent off on the pilgrimage not to the fountain of self-love but to the “well of knowledge” (5.11.153). Once there, equal parts humility and self-punishment will “purge” them of their “present maladies” (5.11.153). The final stage of the cure requires they serve others; on their return, they must offer themselves in service to great Cynthia who will “ratifie it [their sentence and success] with her high consent” (5.11.159).

With the detailed correction and the play’s conclusion, Jonson once again emphasizes the necessary collaboration between monarch and poet, poet and audience. He vests authority in virtuous models and asserts the obligation of the virtuous to provide example and correction:

“ Princes, that would their people should doe well

“ Must at themselues begin, as at the head;

“ For men, by their example, patterne out

“ Their imitations, and regard of lawes:

“ A vertuous *Court* a world to vertue draws.

(5.11.169-73)

Above everything, of course, Jonson positions the poet-playwright. *Cynthia's Revels* at once challenges his playwriting contemporaries, argues for his own theories of art and drama, corrects the populace at large, and instructs his own monarchs and their courts.

And so, boys have been girls and girls boys, but does Cynthia revel at the Blackfriars? The play's reception indicates it was not an entertainment success in the playhouse, but it was viewed favorably enough to earn a court performance in 1601. Jonson appears to have been satisfied enough with the court response to issue that version in Quarto before year's end. Queen Elizabeth I's immediate reaction is lost to us, but an intriguing overlap can be found in her own assessment of the court in the waning years of her old advisors and the ascent of her younger favorites. In 1601 she remarked, “now the wit of the fox is everywhere on foot, so as hardly a faithful or virtuous man may be found” (Neal 79). The symbolism of the fox, the allusion to pretense and performance, the absence of virtue each suggest the court Jonson dramatized with *Cynthia's Revels*. His own allusions to the Essex affair in Act One (1.1.82-3) and in Cynthia's final speech (5.11.9-15) increase the correlation. Cynthia/Elizabeth may not have reveled in the portrayal, but she certainly seems to have recognized it.

Perhaps she also appreciated Jonson efforts to utilize the variety and number of the boy players to create a full spectrum of womanhood. With his first play for the Chapel Boys, Jonson stages female characters diversified and particularized by age, class, sexuality and idiosyncratic personal experience. With the resulting spectrum, Jonson creates a continuum which includes such multiplicity as monarch and myth, courtier and citizen, cross-dresser and

coquette, paradigm and allegory. The talents of the full company of boy actors enables Jonson to write a play filled with varied and individuated female characters, but the detailed description of each of the nine women within a particular physical and social space remains Jonson's alone. As he characterizes each one, his insistence on staging their mobile and various viewpoints disallows a single vision of "woman" and questions the possibility of fully unified, integrated gender identity. In fulfillment of what has too often been the limited expectation for "good feminist fiction" in early modern texts, Jonson does offer images of a number of complex women with whom the audience can identify – be they those in need of correction or those approaching the ideal of the monarch herself.⁵² He earns the label "misogynist," yet he stages the varying social performances that create contradictory and diverse images of femininity.

The misogynist label is undeserved. A closer look at Jonson's work reveals that his full spectrum of female types enacts what we would call a feminist position. Jonson's insistence on representing the observable, everyday world with all its layers and performances further complicates a dramatic medium which already refuses to be pinned down to one unifying angle of vision. In doing so, Jonson's own contradictions, those of his world – both quotidian and theatrical, and those of his audience – past and present – commingle to study, dismantle, expose, reconstruct and question identity as a category and a construct. When Jonson proffers and follows a theory that demands the deconstruction of identity, he consequently approaches what Julia Kristeva describes as an authentically feminist position (13-35). His answer to the what question, What is a woman?, is, like Toril Moi's, "It depends" (*Sex x*).

Women are not a monolith. The layers of personality, experience, perspective revolve and evolve with performance, and Jonson's very clear sense of the connection between art and life, the imitation of life required by comedy, and the daily imitations in which everyone must take part, must assume a role in order to compete socially compels him to stage that multiplicity concretely, playfully and critically. Jonson's move in *Cynthia's Revels* to create a detailed spectrum of humanity, of femininity, that culminates with characters suggestive of historical women demonstrates his deployment and explosion of the myths of womanhood. Close reading of the play – the kind Jonson's meticulous manuscript preparations expected but that critics seldom do – reveals a complexity and multiplicity of women that is, frankly, ahead of its time. These supposedly misogynistic portrayals not only participate in the “joke,” they write, reward and *revel* in it.

NOTES to CHAPTER FOUR

¹ Enter, stage right, the boy players...

Cynthia's Revels is a Children of the Queen's Chapel at Blackfriars production, Jonson's first shift from adult to boy companies. In 1600, the long defunct boy companies gained a new lease on life in the private theatres. All the playing companies had been suppressed in 1590 for their participation in the Martin Marprelate religious controversies. The adult companies survived; the boy companies did not. With the return of the boy companies a decade later, however, Jonson found a new canvas. See Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage* 27-79 and *Shakespearean Playing* 55-77 and 347-65.

The Blackfriars with its smaller, more restricted and focused physical space, full cast of boy players all trained to play "the woman's part" (*Cymb.* 2.5.22), and more learned, affluent and even noble audiences provided concrete practical challenges to Jonson's artistic theories. This reference to "the woman's part" raises Lisa Jardine's argument that boy players may take the woman's part and represent femaleness, but they are objects of erotic interest in their own male right. At the same time, the "private" audience moved Jonson closer to the monarchical sanctioning for his art he pursued throughout his career. For boy players in female roles, see Jardine 9-36. For contrasting takes on the composition of the "private" audience, cf. Gurr, *Playgoing* and Cook.

...and so, in Jonson's next comical satire, *Cynthia's Revels*, the boys will be girls and a girl will be a boy as Jonson unveils a new structure for his female characterization.

² All quotations from *Cynthia's Revels, or the Fountain of Self-Love*, unless specifically noted, can be found in Herford and Simpson 4:1-184.

³ The ensuing debates, experimentation and dramatic production were labeled the Poets' War or "Poetmachia" by Thomas Dekker in *Satiromastix* (1600) and has since also been called the War of the Theatres and the Stage Quarrel. For a play by play analysis of the phases of the Poets' War, see Bednarz, *Shakespeare*. For additional background, see Penniman, Small, and Glatzer.

⁴ According to ten of the *Oxford English Dictionary's* eleven definitions for "suffrages," all except the first definition, which shows the word's origin in prayers and intercession, suggest a vote or favorable opinion for, support and approval of, or assent to. The *OED* uses Jonson himself as an example in the fourth definition: "4. gen. A vote in support of or an opinion in favour of some person or thing; hence (now Obs. or arch.), in neutral sense, an opinion. ... 1610 B. JONSON 'Alch. To Rdr., If it were put to the question... the worse would finde more suffrages."

In this passage from the Induction, "Gentles" can also be read as player one's address to players two and three, but this is a stretch 1) because the respectful nature of the moniker, address and title and the tone itself are not in keeping with the players conversation among themselves throughout the Induction and 2) because the address recurs again when a player returns as the Epilogue and greets the audience: "Gentles, be't knowne to you, since I went in/ I am turn'd rimer; and doe thus begin" (Epi.1-2).

⁵ Of the thirty-five dramatic works listed for the year 1600, five were never completed, three were revisions and revivals, and two were also registered a second time that same year under different titles. Of Jonson's rivals, Dekker's revision of *Fortune's Tennis* (1597) and an early version of *The Whore of Babylon* (1606), Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment* and *Antonio's Revenge*, and Shakespeare's revival of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (*Harbage Annals of English Drama* 76-77) were mounted in 1600.

⁶ Marston caricaturizes and satirizes Jonson first as Chrisoganus in *Histrionomastix, or the Player Whipt* (1599), then as Brabant Sr. in *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1600), and again as Lampatho Dura in *What You Will* (1601). The plays attack what Marston sees as Jonson's negative attributes, including his verbosity, physicality and sexuality. Marston also refutes Jonson's ideas about social reform and poetic authority. Similarly, with the melancholic and anti-social Jacques in *As You Like It* (1599-1600), Shakespeare suggests that Jonson's theories cannot function within society. Jacques to the cave with Duke Frederick and the "convertites" (5.4.173) effects the separation and mocks the religious fervor of Jonson's convictions. In *Cynthia's Revels* Jonson offers parodies of Marston and Dekker in the characters Hedon and Anaides, and he borrows dramatic strategies from both playwrights. Jonson reappropriates Marston's satire and transforms Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* (1599) which, like *Cynthia's Revels*, begins with Echo and ends with Virtue.

⁷ For analysis of Dekker's *Histrionomastix*, Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment* within the context of the Poets' War, see Bednarz, *Shakespeare* 83-151, Penniman 149, and Small 89

⁸ For a detailed discussion of Jonson's attempt throughout his career to be "authorized" by the crown he believed represented and proffered, in concert with the Poet, the moral authority that should guide society, see Helgerson 130-83 and Riggs 11.

⁹ For use of shame in the Renaissance to change behavior, see Elias 56-7 and 66.

¹⁰ As a result, the numbers of players in London reduced to those players protected by a patron. A week and a half later on 19 February 1598, a Privy Council directive issued to the Justices in Middlesex and Surrey as well as to the Master of the Revels further restricted the number of acting troupes in the London area. While the "Vagabond Act" suggested that those players with patrons could continue performance in London, this new mandate limited patronage to that proffered by the crown only. For a reprinting of the 9 February 1598 *Acte for punyishment of Rougues Vagabondes and Sturdy Beggars* which states that the term "vagabond" includes all unlicensed players, see Chambers 4:324-5.

¹¹ Cf. Gurr, *Playgoing* and Cook.

¹² As a critical term, "absent presence" is called upon as a category to delineate cultural groups that will be focal points but which are, in themselves, seldomly fully available or explored. While critics argue that print is the first technology to force absent presence and look to the sonnets as early examples, dramatic performance, as the publication of its medium and in its use of boy players rather than female actors, also employs active

presence. For connection between absent presence and the Renaissance, see Gozzi 82-5 and Callaghan *Shakespeare*.

¹³ For details, and consequent creative limitations of, “‘normal’ London company” (68) which employed eight to twelve adult male players and three to four boys for the women’s parts, see Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage* 67-72. Jonson’s first three plays conform to this balance.

Critical responses to *Cynthia’s Revels* agree that the play provides more theoretical information about Jonson as a playwright than artistic value for Renaissance drama. See Dutton, “Jonson’s Satiric Styles.” For Jonson’s earned respect as a creator of characters, see Kay, *Ben Jonson* 25.

¹⁵ Jonson’s direct address to the Queen in his title may be an attempt to make up for his presumption in using her person in the censored version of *Every Man Out* (1599) or to extend the favor of its court performance (1599/1600) in which Elizabeth I herself played the role of the Queen. The play’s allusion to Actaeon and Diana/Cynthia suggests connections to Essex who burst into the Queen’s bedchamber in Sept of 1599 and was executed for treason 25 February 1601.

¹⁶ Jonson’s originality claim and the mockery of his contemporaries for not themselves being original recur throughout *Cynthia’s Revels’* Induction and Prologue. Cf. “to/ give them the inventory of their cates aforehand, were the/ discipline of the tavern” (Ind.104-6); the full text on “servile imitation,” taking invention from “another man’s trencher,” and stealing from past plays (Ind.180-198). After the third sounding, the actual Prologue overtly claims our Author “shunnes the print of any beaten path;/ and proues new ways” (Pro.10-16). As always, Jonson defines himself by saying what he is not. That his contemporaries pander for applause with the entertainments makes him, by contrast, the teacher who tries to reform and perfect.

¹⁷ The text’s long dashes indicate “the breaches” at which “he takes his tabacco” (s.d. Ind.121). For the cross-pollination between the playhouses and visitations at jails, madhouses and hospitals, see Jackson, *Separate Theaters*.

¹⁸ See all of player two’s reply Ind.199-217.

¹⁹ For Jonson’s background in Westminster and his training under Camden at St. Peter’s College that impressed upon him this responsibility and engendered in him this sense of entitlement, see Riggs 35-63. For connections between Jonson and Sidney see Kay *Ben Jonson* 37-9.

²⁰ Harrington delineates four levels of meaning – “literal sense,” “moral sense,” “natural philosophy or sometimes of politic government,” and “divinity.” See Harrington 302-24. According to Brian Vickers, “Renaissance scholars (notably Erasmus) rejected this scheme [the four levels], usually preserving only the moral sense” (309 n.31). For Jonson’s relationship to Harrington, see Miles *Ben Jonson* 89.

²¹ Following a literary technique he learned from Camden, Jonson provides the allegorical meanings in the construction of the names themselves. Philautia, from the Greek roots *phil-* and *autós*; Phantaste, from the Greek *phantasia*; Argurion from the Greek *arguros*; and Moria, itself the Greek noun for foolishness or absurdity are all direct correlations to their Greek counterparts. Jonson first elucidates the allegorical layer for each character with player three in the Induction when he divulges the entirety of the plot. See Ind.55-74. These allegorical constructions recur throughout the play and participate in the action of the plot. For instance, when the prodigal Asotus wins the heart of Argurion who gifts him lavishly only to have him give her love liberally away to everyone at court, Argurion expires, and Asotus is left penniless.

²² See Fletcher *Allegory*, Tuve 219-333, and Foucault. For a “continuum of allegory” that moves from the “naïve” – a thing named, as in Gelaia as laughter – to the “private” – wherein only the author and perhaps his coterie can parse the suggestions, see Frye. For a more complicated continuum in which the direct rhetorical mode of allegory is linked to the multi-meaning exegetical mode to create a dramatic mode in which allegory works on all levels simultaneously, see Caldwell 580-600. Jonson’s use of allegory in *Cynthia’s Revels* provides examples from all three of Caldwell’s modes.

²³ For discussion of Elizabeth I as Cynthia in the literature of the period, see Strong and Montrose 65-87. For delineation of Elizabeth I’s personal symbolism (color, flower, jewel, etc.), see Strong and Bridgen 313.

²⁴ For Jonson’s special inserts for Camden and the Countess of Bedford, see Kay *Ben Jonson* 54. For Jonson’s confidence in his dramaturgy and the ability of his plays to hold up under the scrutiny of publication as they are not required to do in the memory of theatrical performance, see Miles *Ben Jonson* 45-8. Jonson dedicated the Folio edition to the Inns of Court – a more literary crowd for his more literary play.

²⁵ In this way, *Cynthia’s Revels* becomes its own handbook, one not unlike Baldassare Castiglione’s *Courtier*. See Kay *Ben Jonson* 25 on how Jonson’s spectrum of humanity creates a continuum along which to rate the characteristics and performances he examines and audiences will encounter when they leave the playhouse.

²⁶ For Jonson’s friendships with the very people he mocks: gallants, wits, courtiers and women, see Miles *Ben Jonson* 81 and Kay *Ben Jonson* 86-110.

²⁷ Jonson’s confidence in his perspective is noted repeatedly by Jonson scholars. See Helgerson; Kay *Ben Jonson*; Miles *Life and Craft*; Riggs; Barton; Donaldson; Dutton *Ben Jonson*; Jackson *Yale Ben Jonson*. Miles’ assessment that “in the country of his own mind, Jonson was lawgiver, priest and king” (*Craft* 41) is most apt here.

²⁸ Like Castiglione’s *Courtier*, *Cynthia’s Revels* depicts the closed society of the court. Also like the *Courtier*, the action of the play surrounds a collection of conversations between courtiers. In keeping with his satirical elements of his comical satire, Jonson’s version, however, does not focus on the ideal courtier and the expectations for that courtier.

Instead Jonson stages the imperfections, teaching his audience how to recognize and then correct them. Only at the end of the play does the ideal model of a courtier emerge.

²⁹ See Rewa 5-32. In his discussion of Donald Justice's modern poem "In Bertram's Garden," Rewa uses a selection from *Cynthia's Revel's* masque (a poem known separately from the play as "Queen and Huntress") to analyze poetry conventions. In his treatment, Rewa raises the foci on the Cynthia/moon symbol and notes that the "dignity" of the physical, moral and value of the image is figured in the play at large by the nymphs Arete, Time, Phronesis and Thaumata.

³⁰ See Ind.86-93 for the first description of Arete. Note the emphases placed on the similarities between Arete and Crites.

³¹ Recall that it is in *As You Like It* that Shakespeare mocks Jonson in the caricature Jacques.

³² For critical surveys of Jonson's misogyny, see Barton, *Miles Craft*, and Clare 28-47, who sees Jonson "reducing female power to such trivial dimensions" (41).

³³ See 5.1 for a complete accounting of "all manner of suitors, of all humours and of all complexions" and 5.2-4 for the complete unmasking and labeling of the poorly performing courtiers. In an aside, Crites labels the enactment "meere lunacy" (5.4.174) and asks of the audience "would any reason-able creature make these his serious studies, and perfections?" (5.4.174-5).

³⁴ According to Hereford and Simpson, these scenes were drastically reduced if not entirely eliminated from the court performance. For the excisions for the Blackfriars and court performances and the additions made to the Quarto and Folio editions, see Herford and Simpson 4:17-22.

³⁵ I do not contend that the ladies escape censure. They are corrected, and it is that censure which guarantees the disruption of any universal category for men or women. The variations – humorous, mocked, applauded, corrected – ensure that Jonson's continuum contains representations from all aspects of society. For definition of unconscious misogyny, see Rackin *Shakespeare* 5, 88; *Moi Sex* vii-xi and 2-120.

³⁶ See also Riggs, *Miles Ben Jonson* and *Kay Ben Jonson*.

³⁷ On the damaging effects of the female pageboy device see Jardine; Shapiro; Barbour 1006-22; Howard, "Crossdressing" 418-40; Levine 1-15 and 73-88; and Rackin, "Androgyny" 29-41. In one of her more positive treatments, Barton claims that "such disguise has been used in Elizabethan plays...[as] an instrument for the serious exploration of a love relationship" (74). For festive comedy's participation in the production and management of femininity, see Newman.

³⁸ In 4.4, when the Gelaia character also chooses to forego her position as page, Jonson reveals that her mother Moria knew of and endorsed her daughter's pageboy disguise.

³⁹ For details on Anaides as Jonson's caricature of Thomas Dekker, see Bednarz *Shakespeare* 160-4.

⁴⁰ Recall that in this play Cupid and Mercury fulfill the similar function as the Grex – Cordatus and Mitis – in *Every Man Out*.

⁴¹ Their meeting and progress creates the action of scenes three, four and five. For analysis of the fellowship of men in Jonson's work, see Hutson 1065-96. With the beginning of Act Two, Mercury resolves to become a page too.

⁴² According to Kay, Jonson's contemporary and Poets' War rival John Marston introduced the method of "satiriz[ing] his youth for hiring a Ganymede to further his 'hot and lewd luxury'" (*Ben Jonson* 48). In keeping with this aspect of the ongoing literary battle between playwrights taking place on the field of one another's dramatic work, Jonson, of course, takes up and elevates Marston's satiric technique. For detailed analysis of the uses to which each participant in the Poets' War put his contemporaries' dramatic and literary techniques in service of his own position in the critical exchange, see Bednarz *Shakespeare*.

⁴³ See all 5.1.24-66.

⁴⁴ See Orgel, Levine, Howard, Rackin and Shapiro. See Shapiro for a literary review of critical takes on cross-dressing which include Orgel, Howard, Jardine, Garber, Belsey and Woodbridge. For a more recent take on the Elizabethan cross-dressed tradition, see Mann.

⁴⁵ Jonson's critique is not unlike that Dymrna Callaghan makes in *Shakespeare Without Women*. Callaghan argues that the substitution of male actors for female ones supplies a presence that cannot be equated with representation or with inclusion. In Callaghan's formulation, when the dramatic action of the text layers an additional persona (this one male) onto a female character through cross-dressing, the return to the male actor completely erases the female presence, absent or otherwise. When we celebrate Shakespeare's heroines, she argues, we celebrate a world without women. By contrast, when we take a fresh look at Jonson's plays, we discover characters that begin the plays as women and remain so throughout. Yes, male actors still perform the female parts, but unlike the cross-dressed erasure or static idealization, Jonson's characterizations embrace the variance and multiplicity, the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of authentic identity and representation. Jonson's theory of theatrical mimesis links his realistically portrayed creations to his generic innovations and his attention to verisimilitude results in staged depictions of the population as he observed it. This is most clearly shown by setting Jonson's characters against those of his contemporaries.

⁴⁶ The anti-masque Jonson has Arete suggest introduces into his drama the masque form that will dominate his creative production during the monarchy of James I. Including *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603), written under Elizabeth I and performed and published under James

I, and *Eastward Ho!* (1605) co-written with John Marston and George Chapman, Jonson writes eight plays and eighteen masques in the Jacobean period. His masques earn Jonson the title of Court Poet he bids for in *Cynthia's Revels*.

⁴⁷ For echoes of Barton's position, see Miles *Life and Craft*. For the divergent opinion, see Kernan 4-6 who notes an "energy of dullness"; Kay *Ben Jonson* who sees Jonson "aggressively seeking to impress others with their superficial accomplishments" (25), and Riggs who defends what others label Jonson's flat characters thusly: "since health consisted in the total absence of eccentric symptoms, a healthy, humourless individual was in performance a man without qualities" (76).

⁴⁸ I am not the first to see Lucy, Countess of Bedford in this portrayal. See Kay *Ben Jonson* 54 and Riggs 70. Jonson gifted a copy of the 1601 Quarto of *Cynthia's Revels* to the Countess of Bedford in May of that same year. Like the copy dedicated to Camden, the Bedford copy also has a specially printed dedicatory insert.

⁴⁹ At the conclusion of his preceding comical satire *Every Man Out*, an actor portraying the queen enters to provide the final and ultimate social cure to Jonson's authorial stand-in Macilente and to the audience as a whole. The negative reactions of his audiences compelled Jonson both to modify and to apologize for his original ending. The use of queen as *dea ex machina* worked only at court where the presence of Elizabeth I herself offered the grandeur and effect Jonson sought.

For the original ending and subsequent performance, quarto and folio revisions, see Jonson-H&S, *EMO* 3:599-604 and Jonson-Ostovich, *EMO* 367-79.

⁵⁰ Throughout the play, Jonson has charged the Cupid character with describing and explaining the "female crew" (5.11.107). In the masque, like the other courtiers, Cupid performs as his opposite: Anti-Eros. Despite his participation in the artistic instrument of reform (both the play as a whole and the revels in miniature), Jonson has Cynthia herself banish "love" from the court (5.11.80-89). Mercury, incidentally, is "intreat[ed] to stay" (5.11.90).

⁵¹ Among her numerous criticisms of *Cynthia's Revels*, Barton also finds Crites to be bland and passive, specifically lacking when compared to *Every Man Out's* Jonson stand-in Asper/Macilente. See Barton 78.

⁵² For a balanced reading of the various approaches to feminist criticism and their assertion of what constitutes "good feminist fiction," see Moi, *Sexual/Textual* 1-18.

CHAPTER FIVE

When Julia Met Chloe:

Poetaster, or The Arraignment (1601) and the Culmination of the Poets' War

CHLO. And how must one behaue her selfe amongst 'hem?
you know all.

CYTH. Faith, impudently inough, mistris CHLOE, and well
inough. Carrie not too much vnder-thought betwixt
your selfe and them

(*Poet.* 4.1.29-33)¹

Ben Jonson's first plays, *The Case is Altered* (1598) and *Every Man In His Humour* (1598), reveal a playwright testing his dramatic abilities and ideas about art. With *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599) and the use of authorial stand-ins and extra-dramatical devices, Jonson painstakingly delineates and explains each point of his artistic theory and dramatic practice. In *Cynthia's Revels* (1600), Jonson achieves his dramatic ideal, successfully crafting and staging a play that at every level exemplifies the ambition of his theory in practice, balances dramaturgy and didacticism, and models his expectations for playwrights, courtiers and audiences alike. *Cynthia's Revels* stands as the professional and polemical zenith of Jonson's Elizabethan period; his characterizations of women with their layers of personality, experience, and perspective revolving and evolving through social interaction and his dramatization of the social performances everyone must enact to compete socially showcase a critical yet playful Jonson reveling in the particular, correcting the inappropriate, challenging the normative, and elevating the genre. Its follow-up *Poetaster, or The Arraignment* (1601), a third and final installment in Jonson's comical satire trilogy rushed to the stage in just "fifteen weekes" (*Poet. Ind.*14)² – Jonson usually spent a year or more on each play – offers a continuation of Jonson's character development with regard to individuated, situated and particularized women layered with awareness of social

performance, but because his characters exist in isolated episodes, the play as a whole is a let down from the integrated theoretical and dramatic pinnacle of his previous effort.

We know that Jonson meant for *Poetaster* to be a preemptive strike in the ongoing wrangling of the Poets' War and to forestall future attacks, in particular, Thomas Dekker's rumored to be forthcoming *Satiromastix* (1601).³ In *Poetaster*, Jonson transforms his fears about Dekker's play into envy of himself and his plays.⁴ In the Induction, Jonson stages the character Envie "as *Prologue*" (Ind.18) to "this hated play" (Ind.17). The speech itself describes the "wounded nerues" (Ind.1) and "couetous hope" (Ind.22) with which Envie expects "To blast your pleasures, and destroy your sports,/ With wresting, comments, applications,/ Spie-like suggestions, priuie whisperings,/ And thousand such promoting sleights as these" (Ind.23-26) and calls upon the audience to "Helpe me to damne the Authour" (Ind.46) and "to hisse, sting, and teare/ His worke, and him" (Ind.52-3). Of course, as this is Jonson's preemptory strike the audience does not take the side of his competitors:

What? doe you hide your selues? Will none appeare?

None answere? what, doth this calme troupe affright you?

Nay, then I doe despaire: downe, sinke againe.

This trauaile is all lost with my dead hopes.

If such bosomes, spight haue left to dwell,

Envue is not on earth, nor scarce in hell.

(Ind.56-61)⁵

The play's interlocution with Dekker, Marston and Shakespeare, however, undermines his *Poetaster*. Pilloried, censured and maligned in its own time as well as in ours, in 1601 *Poetaster* survived on the stage in repertory, meaning not as a continuous run,

until the fall or about as long as it took Jonson to write it in the first place.⁶ Its single laudatory achievement in the early seventeenth century seems to be beating *Satiromastix* to the stage.⁷ Yet *Poetaster* remains an important stage in Jonson's development and his arguments about artistic theory and dramatic practice, characterization and social performance and, in particular, women.

While with the nine women of *Cynthia's Revels*, diversified and particularized by age, class, sexuality and idiosyncratic personal experience, Jonson stages a broad spectrum of womanhood, in *Poetaster*, Jonson's characterizations and interactions of Chloe, the self-proclaimed gentlewoman become citizen's wife by her own choice, and Julia, the courtly daughter of Emperor Augustus in love with and pursuing the lowly younger son and poet Ovid, extend his depictions of feminine multiplicity, dramatize the vivaciousness available from characterization layered with social performance and social interaction, and continue to challenge the rigidity of normative gender types. Jonson has Chloe and Julia, both and in turn, demand focus in their scenes, act according to their understanding of their own authority, and adapt throughout the course of the play to the situations in which they find themselves. Despite its failings as a five-act play, with its heavy borrowing from his own creative catalog – *Every Man In's* Kno'wells return as the Ovids; *Every Man Out's* Fallace and Deliro reappear in Chloe and her merchant husband Albius; Tucca, critically adored as the best of what *Poetaster* has to offer,⁸ is a tantalizing mix of *Every Man In's* Brainworm and Bobadill, *Every Man Out's* Brisk and Macilente; and Jonson reprises the authorial stand-ins, *Every Man Out's* Asper/Macilente and Fallace, *Cynthia's Revels's* Arete and Crites, with Horace – *Poetaster* continues Jonson's current work and introduces his next creative direction. *Poetaster, or The Arraignment*, it turns out, is at once an end and a beginning.

The play itself begins, as have Jonson's previous comical satires, "*After the second sounding*" (s.d. Ind.1) when an allegorical Envie, an overt reference to his attackers, rises from a trap door in the stage center (s.d. Ind.1) "to damne the Author" (Ind.46). After sixty-one lines of invective, Jonson ushers in an equally overt "armed *Prologue*" (Pro.6) to crush Envie's "head" (Pro.1) under "our bolder foot" (Pro.2) and to explain his reasons for "put[ting] on this forc't defence" (Pro.11). It would seem Jonson too was aware of the play's dramatic shortcomings. Continuing to work at the layers and levels balanced in *Cynthia's Revels*, this play, which "our Authour should, once more,/ Swear...were good" (Pro.15-6), also employs "*allegorie* and hid sence" (Pro.12), but it does so to "fright their pride and laugh their folly hence" (Pro.14) rather than to argue for, by staging, his artistic and dramatic theories integrated and in action.

As Jonson strives to defend himself against the attacks he anticipates and as he disingenuously insists that "His mind it is about their iniuries" (Pro.28), Jonson "knowes the strength of his owne *muse*" (Pro.24) and uses it to satirize his rivals rather than to craft a balanced and unified play. Jonson's confidence maintains the consistent temper and tenor of his previous comical satires in this play. In *Poetaster* Jonson continues to create character through behaviors, social performances and interactions, and corrections and to argue the social implications of drama. When Jonson uses shame and punishment in this play to instruct his dramatic contemporaries and his audiences, the edicts come from the direct authority of the state: Emperor Augustus Caesar. Unlike *Every Man Out* and *Cynthia's Revels*, however, *Poetaster* does not balance or integrate the didactic portions of the play (Acts One, Three and Five) with scenes rich in characterization and social interaction (Acts Two and Four).⁹ As a result, the play moves disjointedly from scene to scene and yields a

fragmented whole. Simply put, the play follows a poet, Ovid Jr., to an assignation arranged by his love Julia at the merchant's home and then to court where he is banished for his liberties with Julia by her father Augustus Caesar while, in turn, Caesar elevates reason over romance, poets over poetasters,¹⁰ and Horace/Jonson. Act One rehearses a disagreement between father and son, Ovids Sr. and Jr., through which Jonson attacks his detractors, defends poetry's honor and launches critiques of actors and the theater, lawyers and the law, the distance between wit and wealth. Ovid Sr. never returns.¹¹ Acts Two and Four stage relationships: the marriage of Chloe and the citizen jeweler, the affair of Ovid and Julia, the interactions of citizens and courtiers, and the pursuit of pleasure. Acts Three and Five pick up the critiques of Act One, introducing Horace and focusing on various and random interactions between false poets or poetasters and persons throughout the city, before it concludes with a half-hearted purging of Jonson's rivals and critics – one encased in “vizards” (5.3.434), one purged with pills, one dressed in a dunce cap and gown – and a monarchical decree to “despise” (5.3.620) all but the “true arts, and learning” (5.3.618), the plays Poets like Jonson write.

Playing within the Play: Chloe and Julia Act Up

Acts Two and Four create a play within, or perhaps without, the play. In these acts and with brief references to their characters in Acts One and Three, Jonson unfolds the stories of Chloe and Julia, two female characters who demonstrate that alongside his personal, social agenda with his rivals Jonson continues to advance his artistic theories in his dramatic practices. As with the female characters in his previous plays, to craft character Jonson again focuses on the details – situational as well as personal, idiosyncratic and performative. The first indication that *Poetaster* offers a new development in characterization occurs when,

unlike in the previous plays, Jonson introduces the women not through the advance description of other characters but, in media res, through their own words and actions. The second appears in the constant and heightened awareness Jonson gives the characters about social performance; reading, interpreting, practicing, reacting and even commenting, Jonson's characters act with the knowledge that one's social performances correlate to one's social successes. With *Poetaster*, then, Jonson indicates a trust in his audiences, a trust that they too know the social game and have learned how to read character and social performance for the lessons and applications poet-playwrights offer.

Act Two opens with the merchant's home in full preparation for the arrival of the courtiers, and Jonson emphasizes the various social scripts being enacted and anticipated as the household "so busie for the receiuing of these courtiers here" (2.1.3-4) it "can scarce be a minute with my selfe, for thinking of them" (2.1.4-5) already has to greet a early guest. With Chloe's entrance, maids in tow, fifteen lines later, Jonson doubles the activity of the already bustling scene. Scripting her entrance to coincide with her first words, Jonson offers Chloe in a flurry of stage business and decisive action. "Come, bring those perfumes forward a little, and strew some roses and violets here" (2.1.15-16), she orders. Jonson uses the quick succession of imperative verbs to signal that Chloe knows her own mind and that Chloe commands.

The tenor of that command and the situation in which she wields it emerge in the subsequent lines. In contradiction of the recently arrived guest who complimented the home's "excellent ayre" (2.1.9), Jonson has Chloe, perhaps with wrinkled nose and exaggerated gesture, complain of a stench: "Fye, here bee rooms sauour the most pitifully ranke that euer I felt: I crie the gods mercie, my husband's in the winde of vs" (2.1.16-18).

Playing on the audience's awareness of that very husband's stage presence and of a pun on "ranke," Jonson indicates Chloe as the hierarchically superior and empowered half of the married pair. Her husband's reply drives home the point: "Why, this is good, excellent, excellent: well said, my sweet CHLOE. Trimme vp your house most obsequiously" (2.1.19-21). In his leap from "good" to "excellent," his repetition, his compliment on the insult she has paid him, his endearment and his malapropism, Jonson undermines the husband and aligns his discerning audience with Chloe. Jonson's decision to have her husband call her immediately by her given name – we learn she is "Chloe" five lines after her entrance – establishes her identity as separate from her husband, creates distance between the character's individual self and the more general and objectifying possession the claimant "my wife" indicates, and imbues her character with the effervescent quality the very sound of the name itself, "Chloe," suggests.

Jonson uses the husband's fawning – in Chloe's word "fulsome" (2.1.27) – behavior as a way to add complexity to Chloe's character with a specific back story. This character layer not only provides this figure with a concrete lived experience but also individuates her from the play's other characters, male and female. When the obsequious husband asks her to consider his opinion, the explosion of detail with which Jonson invests Chloe's response suggests that before our arrival in the scene, and perhaps even since the marriage began, the pair has been quarreling over the social affectations each believes, based on their individual experiences, to be the way to increase their social opportunities. Chloe would give

A pinne for your pinnion. In sinceritie, if you be thus fulsome to
me in euerie thing, I'le bee diuorc't; Gods my bodie? You know
what you were, before I married, you; I was gentlewoman borne, I;

I lost all my friends to be a citizens wife; because I heard indeed,
 they kept their wiues as fine as ladies; and that wee might rule our
 husbands, like ladies; and doe what wee listed: doe you thinke I
 would haue married you, else? (2.1.26-32)

In addition to arguing that their marriage elevated him from “what you were” while costing her her social place, with the pragmatic reasons for marriage itself (money and power), Jonson solidifies Chloe’s social and economic positions while, with the directness of the language, an honesty bordering on insult, he at once eradicates guile and indicates her knowledge of her own power and her willingness to use it. Jonson reveals that Chloe has her own authority and that she will act accordingly.

Throughout the scene, Chloe’s character demands the focus of both onstage and playhouse audiences. The dramaturgy of the scene circles the couple on and off the stage as they continue preparations for an expected “number of coaches, and courtiers” (2.1.154), but the power of the final say rests with Chloe. Every “cushion” (2.1.110), “stool” (2.1.111), “picture” (2.1.126) and “gilt andyron” (2.1.135) will be placed by her direction or approval and, in this way, Jonson underscores Chloe’s command of her husband, her house, her servants and her stage. Jonson also reveals how performance and expectation authorize that command. In the husband’s asides, we learn that he would rather his wife made “bumpes on my head” (2.1.36-7) than “offend her” (2.1.37) because he admires her beauty, speech, movement, wit and social potential. More importantly, however, Jonson clinches Chloe’s authority with a particularizing detail: Chloe is a second wife. Dramatizing Chloe’s awareness that she exceeds the previous mistress of the house – “not a gentleman came to your house i’ your tother wiues time” (2.1.64), she “debast my selfe” (2.1.67) to marry him,

the “sinne of the citie” (2.1.124) – in every way, Jonson stages a woman free to act by her own authority because she has taken a security of situation not usually afforded to early modern wives dependent on the male figures in their lives for support and deployed it knowingly. Again Jonson disrupts the gender hierarchy with situated particularity; hierarchies of class like age and economy continually cross those of gender. “Doe I not beare a reasonable corrigible hand ouer him” (2.1.131-2), Jonson has Chloe coyly ask. The source of Chloe’s power, Jonson suggests, is not only that she has the more to offer in this relationship, but that she knows it and how to use it too.

The dialogue Jonson provides the couple in their first scene juxtaposes two views of how social performance works to advantage in social competition and shows Chloe knowingly deploying her authority over her husband. Jonson roots the husband’s view of social performance in his social station (that of merchant) and business practices. For the husband, “he that respects to get, must relish all commodities alike” (2.1.56). In the jeweler’s worldview, action yields results and all desires are like commodities, procurable if pursued accordingly. He has observed behavior and action in the world and now expects to imitate it to achieve the social status he desires; he knows not to look “tauerne-like” (2.1.112) and to hang pictures “in the gallerie only, for ’tis not courtly else” (2.1.127). After all he has procured for himself a gentlewoman wife and “the greatest ladies, and gallantest of gentlemen of ROME” (2.1.43-4) as guests. By contrast, Jonson bases Chloe’s view in her pride of birth and past experience. She is “a gentlewoman borne” (2.1.29 and 102) who experienced the possessions of her previous station, “my hood and my fartingall” (2.1.67) rather than “these bumrowles, and your whale-bone bodies” (2.1.67-8), and disdains that her merchant husband could “tell how to entertain ladies, and gentle-folkes better than I” (2.1.52-

3).¹² Chloe is confident in her hierarchical position over her husband, and with her disdain, Jonson dramatizes Chloe knowingly exerting her authority of class status, her knowledge and linguistic control over her husband. Jonson's Chloe ridicules: "I'ts not grace enough for you, that I call you husband, and you call me wife" (2.1.39-40). Jonson's Chloe threatens: "meddle...with your wife in your bed onely; or on my faith, I'le not be pleas'd with you onely" (2.1.115-18). Jonson's Chloe dismisses: "Goe. I neede your instructions indeed; anger mee no more, I aduise you" (2.1.121-2). Throughout the play, Jonson emphasizes that Chloe's ability to react within the confines of her marriage and according to her own desires. Jonson's Chloe will have her way, demanding attention and acting on her own authority, neither swayed nor disadvantaged by others.

With the constant reminders of her class status and desires to fit in with the "brauest ladies in court" (2.1.141), Jonson makes Chloe an inveterate snob, but he further empowers her too. Chloe may not be at once in and above the social game, like *Every Man In's* Dame Kately, or have the focused stage time and alignment with Jonson himself of *Every Man Out's* Fallace, but Jonson does give Chloe a linguistic dynamism – allusions, puns, clarity, curiosity and directness – and a satirist's sharp tongue that adds to the variety of feminine types Jonson creates with his female characters. Most importantly, as Jonson has Chloe use language, situation, performance and action to her advantage, he crafts a socially secure citizen's wife who, like all his characters, is completely unique. In the verve and puissance of Chloe's language and the way he deploys that language in her pursuit of her own desires, Jonson creates what critics recognize as one of his most vivacious characters.¹³ From dreams of social elevation, Jonson raises and maintains her; Chloe is the citizen's wife who makes it

to the party, a woman rewarded with a place among courtiers because, in accordance with Jonson's theories on social performance, she can at once enact her social roles and be herself. Chloe's access to the inner circle of courtiers comes from the "loue" and "approue"al (2.2.8) of Julia, the Emperor's daughter. In keeping with his artistic progression in this play, as he did with Chloe, Jonson presents Julia to his audience through her own action rather than through advance descriptions provided by other characters. Unlike the flurry of stage activity heralding Chloe's arrival and beginning the characterization of her person, Jonson introduces Julia through her intellectual abilities. Her entrance arrives in the form of a letter written to her lover. With her act of writing, Jonson adds an immediately complexifying layer to her character; Julia, in contrast to the low literacy rates of the early seventeenth century,¹⁴ has education and erudition. By giving her the ability to write, Jonson also imbues her character with authority, one he then shows her using to command.

The letter itself arranges a meeting and demands her lover's presence (1.3.25), and with the letter Jonson also focuses the attention of the scene on Julia. From the letter's arrival (1.3.17) to the scene's close (1.3.78), all else save Julia is "forgot" (1.3.27). Her written words like, by extension, Julia herself have great power, the power to raise her lover Ovid from the "melancholy" (1.3.19) with which Jonson has dogged him since 1.1 and even to destroy his identity by subsuming it within her own. As Ovid's friend and bearer of the letter cautions "thou'lt lose thy selfe" (1.3.46-47), Jonson mitigates fear of the powerful woman he creates in Julia with Ovid's reply:

in no labyrinth, can I safelier erre,

Then when I lose my selfe in praysing her¹⁵

Hence *Law*, and welcome, *Muses*...

... whose musicke striekth on my heart
 And with bewitching tones steales forth my spirit,
 In IVLIA name.

(1.3.48-50, 53-55)

The complexity and multiplicity with which he layers his female characters may, Jonson argues, unfold in mazelike fashion, but the turns and paths to their discovery promise safety, inspiration and reward.

Through the letter, “Subscrib’d¹⁶ IVLIA!” (1.3.20), Jonson also provides an initial layer of context for Julia, one which situates her in a relationship of her choosing and beyond the scope of court and father. In her letter, Jonson has Julia display her “wit” (1.3.22) and efficacy (1.3.25). Her words “rauish” (1.3.23) her lover even as they command his obedience (1.3.25). With Ovid’s poetic and effusive response to her letter – “my IVLIA, the Princesse IVLIA” (1.3.25), “bright IVLIA” (1.3.37), “IVLIA, the gemme, and iewell of my soule” (1.3.38),¹⁷ “Heauen she is” (1.3.20 and 43), “faire IVLIA” (1.3.55), Jonson establishes Julia as a woman worthy of respect and one able to inspire great passion in a poetic, intellectual, and potentially nurturing equal. While “my IVLIA” suggests his possession of her, “Princesse IVLIA” also rules over him. Her beauty matches her intelligence and his. She is the best of his soul and his rewarding paradise. Her love is “law” (1.3.55-6), and he will “studie” it (1.3.56). Although literally absent from the stage in Act One, Jonson makes Julia a driving force. In doing so, he also emphasizes her ability to act according to her own authority. As Jonson has Julia overlook Ovid’s social position as “a yonger brother, and hast nothing” (1.2.75-6), Jonson underscores his character’s personal agency, demonstrating that

Julia, like his other complex female characters, will exert her personal power to achieve her own desires.

Having established Julia in a private love relationship of her own choosing and direction, Jonson turns to the layer of identity created by a publicly determined priority of social and political power and place. But an allusion in Ovid's *encomia* of 1.3, Julia's title forms the foundation of her identity when she arrives at the merchant's house.¹⁸ Julia, Jonson reminds us, actually is a princess; she is "IVLIA the Emperors daughter"¹⁹ (2.1.170-1). As the daughter of Augustus Caesar, in whose person Jonson places the highest authority of the play, her "Excellence" (2.2.4) commands its attention and respect even as she also remains representative of and dependent on her father. No longer simply a lover, Jonson complicates her situation by emphasizing its proximity to the pinnacle of the play's social world. From her first spoken words, Jonson demonstrates the character's awareness of and ability to adapt to the situation in which she finds herself. By shifting her previous performance as lover beneath her role as Emperor's daughter and dramatizing her social responsibilities by showing her enact the proper social performances which accompany this additional role, Jonson stages a character balancing the various identity layers which create her and performing effortlessly.

In this role, one which requires privileging duty over desire, Jonson has Julia graciously show favor, make introductions, offer love, promise to "approue in any grace my father the Emperor will show you" (2.2.8-9), extend invitations to "come to court" (2.2.27), give thanks for the hospitality, exhibit interest in the aptitude of her host by asking to see the jeweler's craft (2.2.88-9), exert the royal we to compel musical performance – "our self will be the first shall promise to him more then thankes" (2.2.127-8), and pronounce the final

word to move the evening forward (2.2.201-2). As Jonson introduces the network of relationships surrounding Julia, he at once reveals and continues to develop an identity for Julia's character which depends on interactions with others, each generative of socially sanctioned actions and performances. In keeping, then, with his theory of social performance as the creative force for character, Jonson balances the definitive and socially coded roles of the public world in Act Two against the private roles of lover and love interest she played in Act One to create a complex and multiply signifying Julia. Like the very members of Jonson's audiences, Julia's character, her particularities and her person, constantly evolves and changes with each situation and with each performance she gives.

Jonson's development of the Julia character embodies women observable in social London, establishes a connection to the virtuous Arete from his previous play *Cynthia's Revels*, and offers another allusion to his patron Lucy, the Countess of Bedford.²⁰ The Countess's role and influence at court, her virtuous, and to Jonson's view, consistent nature, and her reputation as above all a lover of poetry²¹ all emerge in Jonson's Julia. In addition, then, to providing supplementary context for his characterization, Jonson's character decisions and choices demonstrate his artistic and theoretical arguments on the constructed basis of character and any identity associated with it, emphasize the necessary interplay between roles and realities and the enactments of both, and thus continue to challenge the normative gender types all of his work and the female characters in it playfully call to question.

As he situates the Julia character historically, socially, artistically, Jonson also inserts a personal focus by providing her with a moment of opinion beyond the social roles he has introduced for her so far in the play. As the discussion turns to a courtier who cannot be

cheered from his grief for his lost love, Julia diverges from the group and expresses her admiration of his constancy: “Me thinks I loue him, that he loues so truely” (2.2.60). The content of Julia’s opinion connects Act One, Two and Four, restating the “romantic” and “poetic” theme absent from the acts featuring Horace and the rational, while the opinion itself differentiates Julia from the rest of her party. Julia may be the Emperor’s daughter and the lover of Ovid, but within her group of friends she is also her own person, a woman, like Chloe, with a mind of her own. As Jonson uses the statement of opinion to individuate Julia, he also uses her opinion to establish her authority in her own right. With lines equal to or longer than those of her compatriots, Jonson gives her voice and thought equal weight: she is heard, engaged and answered. In this way, Jonson deepens Julia’s individuated personality and reinforces Julia’s personal power.

Jonson places the effortless, the *sprezzatura*, of Julia’s multi-level performance alongside the social performance of her hostess Chloe. For all of the confidence and awareness Jonson establishes for Chloe in her marriage situation, in her bid for social elevation Jonson indicates an uncertainty and marks out an area of growth for her character. Demonstrating Chloe’s eagerness to fit in with “all the brauest ladies in court” (2.1.141), Jonson has her seek the guidance of a self-professed gentleman and cousin (2.1.2, 142, 167, 168) to Cytheris, a lady of the court currently lodging – for reasons unexplained in the text – with Chloe.²² “[H]ow might I behaue to my self now, as to entertayne them most courtly,” (2.1.142-3), she asks. Even as she asks for direction, Jonson indicates that Chloe’s uncertainty has not undermined her ability to measure the efficacy of a social situation and demonstrates that need always to evaluate and to consider the source of the advice one receives. Jonson does not have her relinquish her power to choose the part she plays or how

she performs it. With Chloe's clarifying question – "Is that the fashion of the courtiers" (2.1.149), Jonson suggests the dubious nature of two-faced advice even if it is the behavior currently being "obseru'd" (2.1.150) at court:

you must say (A poxe on 'hem, what doe they here?) And yet
when they come, speake them as faire, and giue them the kindest
welcome in wordes, that can be.

(2.1.145-8)

Having her try the act out on her husband, laugh at him because "He knowes not the trick on't" (2.1.158-9) but then choose to enact only a gracious welcome when the courtiers themselves arrive, Jonson establishes Chloe's practical wisdom and separates her from the socially unsuccessful gentleman who offered the advice.

As Act Two progresses, Jonson uses Chloe to emphasize the role social performance plays in characterization and social competition. As Chloe incorporates newly acquired advice into her own practice, Jonson shows her character's growth. Chloe's awareness of social performance as a necessary part of social success dictates that she test a new role then accept or reject it based on the reactions she receives and observes. When Chloe does so with the "poxe" example, rejecting the curse and selecting observation, Jonson demonstrates a modification in Chloe's approach. As she then instructs her guest to observe and note as she herself will do, Jonson stages her character evolution. Just as the quotidian interactions of society influence everyday people, Jonson has Chloe take, adapt and claim a new behavior as her own. Jonson confirms her self-revision as a permanent change, when he has her give the instruction to observe (2.1.160, 175) another as if it were her own:

you can obserue, you say; let me intreat you for all the ladies
 behaiours, iewels, iests, and attires, that you marking as well as I,
 we may put both our markes together, when they are gone, and
 conferre of them.

(2.1.160-4)

In her desire to observe and to learn, Jonson also creates additional layers for Chloe. At once he balances her present situation, gentlewoman married to a citizen merchant, with the elaborate social performances she is willing and expects to give, to perfect, in order to be accepted at court and then grafts her perception of courtier-like behavior onto her confidence in her own opinions and the directness of her self-expression. With the arrival of the courtiers, Jonson puts the social script into action. Welcomes are exchanged and compliments easily given as Jonson establishes Chloe as the member of the household with whom to interact. Her “health” (2.2.1), her “beauties” (2.2.4), her “favor, and behavior” (2.2.6) all receive notice and acclaim. Then, as the gracious Julia asks, “Is this your husband?” (2.2.9-10), Jonson punctures the carefully constructed performance Chloe has prepared to give. Before she can answer the question Jonson has Julia address to Chloe directly, Jonson raises before her the reality of her husband and all the fears she has about him. Jonson has him jump her line and answer for himself with all the cavalier panache of any parrot: “For fault of a better, if it please your highnesse” (2.2.11). In the husband’s line, Jonson places the truth as Chloe sees it and dramatizes the horror of her recognition. She would rather have a “better” specimen than her by de-“fault” spouse, but she does not want her husband to share that information for public consumption or to trumpet it before the courtly assembly. Jonson dramatizes her horror that her husband has shared what he should

not share rather than her recognition of the truth in his answer. Yielding her courtly persona to her own blunt, self-expression, Jonson works the previously suggested curse into her performance: “Gods my life! how hee shames mee!” (2.2.12). Jonson’s text suggests the outburst as one meant as an aside, perhaps muttered behind a fan, yet overheard by the group member closest to Chloe. With the listener’s reply, Jonson rewards Chloe’s honesty, realigns the direct character he introduced in 2.1 with the aspiring courtier in 2.2, and affirms her social outlook:

Not a whit, CHLOE, they all thinke you politike, and wittie; wise
women choose not husbands for the eye, merit, or birth, but
wealth, and soueraigntie.

(2.2.13-5)

Cytheris’s definition of “wise women” matches the pragmatic reasons for her marriage Jonson gave Chloe in 2.1.26-33 and as Jonson returns the two women to the conversation at large, he rewards her. Julia extends Chloe an invitation to court: “You must needs come to court, ladie, yfaiethe, and there bee sure your welcome shall be as great to vs” (2.2.27-8).

As the scene progresses, Jonson shifts the focus and circles the action, as he did in *Case’s* courtship scene and *Every Man Out’s* Paul’s Walk, between various groups of characters. Having received her invitation to court, Chloe happily exits with her husband to prepare “for the banquet” (2.2.36). Ovid and his friends joke that they may “bee bold to welcome [their] Mistresses” (2.2.39-40) in the merchant’s house.²³ The ladies weigh in on the conversation about “the perfect’st loue” (2.2.61), Chloe returns to the stage to compare observation notes with Cytheris’s cousin (2.2.64-85), and the citizen jeweler reenters to invite everyone in for the banquet (2.2.86-7). When Jonson refocuses the conversation to

include the group at large, he again stages and rewards Chloe's confidence in herself and in the reception of her opinions. The banquet stays for the performance of a song and, when the musician declines to perform on request, Cytheris's cousin urges Chloe *sotto voce* to "intreat the ladies, to intreat me to sing then" (2.2.135). Jonson has Chloe follow through with his request but in a manner in keeping with the character he has been developing throughout Act Two.

Shifting from private conversation to an address of the crowd, Jonson has Chloe share the details without the guileful patina Cytheris's cousin expected.

CHLO. I beseech your grace, intreat this gentleman to sing.

IVLI. That we will CHLOE; can he sing excellently?

CHLO. I thinke so, Madame: for he intreated me, to intreat you, to
intreat him to sing.

CRIS. Heauen, and earth! would you tell that?

(2.2.137-42)

With the repeating word "intreat," Jonson marks out the variety of roles being played in this situation and creates a corollary to the earlier moment when Chloe expressed "shame" (2.2.12) for her husband's behavior. As Chloe delivers the musical request, Jonson establishes the difference of the role she plays within the group and her guileless performance as an extension of her character and, as with outburst of shame for her husband's poor performance, Jonson affirms her behavior. Jocularly at the expense of the musicians cycles through the rest of the scene and, significantly, Jonson does not have Julia rescind her invitation to Chloe to join her at court even though she has spoken the blunt truth rather than enact the false modesty of the pretentious poet as Jonson suggests others might

have done.²⁴ The differences and continuities between role, performance and self demonstrate Jonson's larger social purpose and reassert his directive to merge performance and person, to "be you yourselues" (5.3.621). Despite the isolation of events and actions in *Poetaster*, Jonson continues to focus on identity and its creation and modification through social performances rather than simply on false performances. As example, Jonson offers the vivacious Chloe in the dress and comportment of a gentlewoman learning how to be a contributing and positive member of court and eschewing the route of the pretentious courtier.

In Chloe, of course, Jonson also replicates his own cultural moment. At the turn of the century, the financial success of the merchant class fueled the fires of social competition;²⁵ the individuals comprising those classes struggled to move upward by challenging traditional social structures, including the aristocracy and court, and the law, in particular the sumptuary statutes. Within the character Chloe, Jonson dramatizes the pragmatic side of merging social status with financial capital as well as its possibilities: Chloe is the "gentlewoman born" (2.1.29 and 102), her husband is the merchant with the "excellent iewels you are commended to haue" (2.2.89), both halves of the married couple wish to increase their social status through courtly connection, and the courtiers seek financial support (Cytheris)²⁶ and a designated place to meet up with one another in private (the lovers). As Jonson dramatizes Chloe's successful entrance and acceptance into the world of courtiers, Act Two of *Poetaster* works as a model and lesson for his audience on the rewards of observation and the reasoned application of social performance merged with the complexities and individuations of personality.

Neither Chloe nor Julia makes another stage appearance until Act Four of the play.²⁷ With the two acts and their focus on relationships, Jonson crafts a play within the play, one that continues the work of his artistic and dramatic vision alongside the larger purpose of *Poetaster*, “this forc’t defence” (Pro.11). While Act Two assembled social aspirants and courtiers alike at the home of the jeweler, in Act Four Jonson makes good on Julia’s invitation to court (2.2.27) and reassembles the group there. Jonson dedicates the first scene of the act to the dramatization of socially constructed identity based on costume and performance.

While in Act Two Jonson stages Chloe’s concerns about her ability to fit in with the “brauest ladies in court” (2.1.141), in 4.1. he stages her apprehensions about fitting in at court. As Chloe worriedly asks Cytheris, “am I well enough attir’d for the court” (4.1.1-2), Jonson dramatizes the fear of false social moves and the search for identities suitable for public consumption. Jonson has mitigated the confident assertion of identity Chloe expresses in Act Two – “I am a gentlewoman borne” (2.1.102) – with the questioning “am I?” of Act Four. As the scene progresses, Jonson crafts a new identity layer for Chloe, one signified by the externally visible affects and trappings of courtiership. Her jewels, ruffles and linen (4.1.7) augmented by a “muffe” and a “dogge” (4.1.13), a “fanne” and a “masque” (4.1.20) will provide the perfect setting for a beauty “many of them would defie the painter, if they could change with you” (4.1.9-10), but they will also inspire “the worst is, you must looke to be enuied, and endure a few court-frumps for it” (4.1.10-11). Jonson emphasizes that the external trimmings, however, present only a façade and cannot themselves change a person’s internal landscape.

As he did in Act Two, Jonson again has Chloe ask, “how must one behaue her selfe amongst ’hem?” (4.1.30). With the shift in the query from “might” (2.1.142) to “must” and “I” (2.1.142) and “my selfe” (2.1.243) to “one” and “her selfe,” Jonson signals that his message extends beyond the confines of this scene, of this play, and reissues his challenge of normative and static identity types. Jonson moves the scene from the costume to the performance. The social performance of court demands that one act “impudently inough” (4.1.31) but “not too much” (4.1.32) and “not too often” (4.1.34), that one must “never say” (4.1.35) this or act “too humbly” (4.1.39). As Jonson delineates the rules, he discloses the gamesmanship of social interaction and reveals the game to be a false construction rife with challenges and difficulties. As he urges his audience to consider the question, “How does one determine the necessary balance between ‘enough,’ ‘too much,’ ‘too often’ and ‘never’?”, Jonson argues that identity remain dynamic to be found changing and adapting in the disconnect between social performances and actions, words and instincts.

As Jonson provides Chloe access to court and extends her the friendship of its courtiers, he dramatizes the various levels of and interactions between self-awareness and awareness about social performance.

CHLO. Are we inuited to court, sir?

TIBV. You are, ladie, by the great Princesse, Ivlia: who
longs to greet you with any fauours, that may worthily
make you an often courtier.

(4.2.10-13)

Specifically, Jonson has Chloe recognize some elements of the social performance she observes around her – “a prettie fiction in truth” (4.2.25), she comments about being

“exalted” (4.2.24) amongst “All the Gods, and Goddesses [who] will bee there” (4.2.23) – but not all of them. Cytheris can still take advantage of her wealth, Crispinus, Cytheris’ cousin, can still take advantage of her absence from court to pretend to have knowledge she needs, the gentlemen can still flirt and tease without her full comprehension. But, Jonson suggests throughout the progression of Act Four, with a combination of savvy and naiveté, of acting a part and of “be[ing] you yourselues,” he can maintain the layered integrity of his primary female character, his model and example, and he elevates her still by placing in the position to save herself from irreparable social damage.

Literalizing the gamesmanship of social interaction and the roles people enact in social situations for the benefit of others, Jonson stages the Banquet of Gods²⁸ alluded to earlier in Act Four. The seeming orgy of competition, play and libidinous desire which ensues threatens to consume the entire group.²⁹ The “game” of the evening has each guest “play” the role of a god – for instance, Julia and Ovid fill the ruling roles of Juno and Jupiter while Chloe and her husband become Venus and Vulcan, and in a clichéd scene of wine, women and song, Jonson brings the subtext of the party to the forefront. Not only will the night’s festivities be a banquet of intentional misrule and instigation governed only by “free licence” (4.5.18), but it is also decreed that all “shall” (4.5.29) freely “change their louers, and make love to others” (4.5.31-2). As the social actors get into the characters of the roles they play, Jonson dramatizes the heady sensation of grasped power as well as the consequences of its misuse. As the party progresses, new rules join the game: “matterie” or meaningful “sentences” are banished “away” (4.5.37), and all agree (4.5.45) “He, that speakes the first wise word, shall be made cuckold” (4.5.42-3).

Jonson deploys the joint leadership of Julia/Juno and Ovid/Jupiter to intensify the overlap and interplay between games and role plays, lived experiences and social selves and to play on the inherent dangers too. In the love game with which Jonson mocks the court and its lovers, Jonson has Julia/Juno hold her own with Ovid/Jupiter linguistically (their lines equal in number) and rhetorically (their images and strategies match). When, however, Jonson shows the two lovers beginning to invest more in the evening activities than simple sport, beginning to react to the interactions at the god-layer not in the characters of Juno and Jupiter but in the characters of their Julia and Ovid selves, he demonstrates the intrinsic conflicts involved in social performance and social interaction, the potential misinterpretations and missteps.

As Julia/Juno challenges, “Wilt thou be ranging, Jvpiter, before my face” (4.5.87-8), Jonson creates a fissure, a disjuncture between the performance world in which the lovers act the parts of the voraciously fickle gods Juno and Jupiter and the court world in which they are an equal but uncertain and unsanctioned pair. As the lovers spar over love, cuckoldry, poetry and power, Jonson indicates the slip between god role and courtly person when he has another of the courtiers call attention to the excellence of Julia’s performance – “A good smart-tongu’d Goddess; a right IVNO” (4.5.104) – and Ovid/Jupiter respond with a threat of violence and a reminder that “we told thee so yesterday, when thou were iealous of vs, for THETIS” (4.5.105-6.) “Yesterday,” of course, exceeds the boundaries of the game Jonson’s characters play and shatters the illusion of the freedom and lack of consequence built into the performances of the group of faux gods and goddesses. Jonson invests the heated conversation that follows with additional veiled threats: Ovid’s “wee will cudgel thee, IVNO” (4.5.112), Julia’s “Your nose is not long enough to doe it” (4.5.119) and “there is neuer a

starre in thy fore-head, but shall be a horne” (4.5.121-2), Ovid’s “we will thunder thee in peeces” (4.5.4.5.125). With this interaction, Jonson argues the impact of social performance, how its enactment, its observation and its assessment have and create serious outcomes, altering perceptions and relationships, altering the “scene” both performed and actual. Jonson then emphasizes the dangers of misunderstanding and misinterpretation he expects his audience to perceive in the scene. Using the repetition of the drunken jeweler’s contribution to the evening’s festivities – “make them friends” (4.5.128, 131, 135-8),³⁰ Jonson punctuates the scene with explicit reminders of what the situation lacks and what the game might have cost. Social performances, Jonson’s scene instructs, are positively and negatively creative and consequent.

Jonson introduces Chloe to the potential pitfalls in the overlap and interplay between games and role plays, lived experiences and social selves when he focuses the desire of the men on the physical beauty and allure of her person. Yet even with the courtiers’ encouragement to act at their level and the success of her court performance in the guise of Venus with the men and women alike, Jonson does not objectify her. According to the rules of the game when her husband “speakes” the first “wise word” of the evening (4.5.46-7),³¹ Chloe is to be awarded as a trophy to another lover. Jonson does have Ovid/Jupiter comply with the rules of the game on which all attendees have agreed – “Take his wife, MARS, and make him cuckold, quickly” (4.5.50-1), but he empowers Chloe to refuse. “No” (4.5.53), she replies imperiously to Jupiter’s command and Mars’ subsequent invitation and, turning away from the potential lovers, in seeming refutation of the entire evening’s conceit she asks to be “let alone” (4.5.53) with her own husband. At one level, this is another example of Chloe’s recognition of some of the elements and levels of social performance and her obliviousness

to others. At another, Jonson has Chloe act according to her own desire and authority. As she schools and corrects her husband and his behavior – “I’ll make you take heed, sir” (4.5.53-4), Jonson maintains Chloe’s investment in the sphere she believes she fully understands: her own empowered path and position in her marriage.

Despite disdaining the wisdom of both Ovid and her husband and rejecting all amorous advances, Jonson enables Chloe’s character to draw the “affection” (4.5.86) of the crowd of gods and gamers. As she is toasted, applauded and desired, Jonson rewards her literal reading of the scene and balances the layers of characters he has developed for her throughout the play. In this way, he affirms her confidence in her own opinions, her willingness to join the social game and her actions in keeping with her own sense of her authority. As Jonson reveals Chloe’s seeming lack of social expertise as defined against the performances of the courtiers, he emphasizes that she has not been corrupted by the court. Instead Jonson utilizes Chloe to magnify the dangers of social performance. Social performances have consequences; social climbing has risk. As Chloe joins the games at court, Jonson demonstrates how the unfamiliar roles demanded by one particular social setting interact with the more familiar roles enacted at another and how past and present performances interact to create and to modify character based on the circumstances of every given situation. Jonson’s decision to protect Chloe by validating her literal, face-value readings of the activities at court rather than to punish her for attempting to step beyond her place in the social hierarchy underscores the focus in his artistic and dramatic theory on social performance as an essential element in characterization. For Jonson, each performance creates an additional character layer, and the subsequent interaction between the layers adds

to the complexity of not only that character's identity but also the concept of identity itself as a dynamic and fluctuating construct.

The punishments Jonson implies as consequences of social performance misused and abused moves from the imagined to the actual when he brings the emperor, Caesar Augustus himself, into the banqueting hall in time to overhear the culmination of the lovers', Julia/Juno and Ovid/Jupiter's, heated exchange. Jonson's use of an outsider, particularly one of such authority, intensifies the dangerous slippage between the various social roles a single social being enacts. Acting in character as the god Jupiter but reacting like an angry lover, Jonson has Ovid command

...Goe from our selfe, the great God IVPITER, to the great Emperour, AVGVSTVS CAESAR: And command him, from vs (of whose bountie he hath receiued his sir-name, AVGVSTVS) that for a thanke-offring to our beneficence, he presently sacrifice as a dish to this banquet, his beautifull and wanton dauther IVLIA. Shee's a curst queane, tell him; and plaies the scold behind his backe: Therefore, let her be sacrific'd. Command him this, MERCVRV, in our high name of IVPITER ALTITONANS.

(4.5.201-210)

Jonson has Julia's reply be no less damaging or balanced. "Stay, feather-footed MERCVRV," she commands,

and tell AVGVSTVS, from vs, the great IVNO SATVRNIA; if he thinke it hard to doe, as IVPITER hath commanded him, and sacrifice his daughter, that hee had better to doe so ten times, then suffer her to

loue the well-nos'd *poet*, OVID: whom he shall doe well to whip.
 Or cause to be whipt, about the capitoll, for soothing her, in her
 follies.

(4.5.201-17)

In the reaction and action of a father and an emperor, Jonson metes out the punishments the lovers' verbal battle requests and the punishment their errors require. It is the hyperbole and the hubris of the false performances – “the sight” (4.6.1), the sound (4.6.2), the “phantasie” (4.6.4), Jonson explains – that draw the monarch's ire, urging him to “evert my soule” (4.6.10) and to make “*offers to kill his daughter*” (s.d. 4.6.12).³² As Jonson matches punishments to crimes, he makes explicit the stakes with which every social performance is invested. Social performance, Jonson argues, is literally a matter of life and death.

As he again uses a variety of layers at the level of character, plot and allegory to make multiple points simultaneously, Jonson stages his own ideal, his own “phantasie.” The courtly gamers stand as substitutes for Jonson's attackers and detractors as well as for the untutored and unreceptive. When the king threatens to destroy them all, the moment would seem to enact Jonson's own desire, his hope, for this play *Poetaster* which he meant at once to preempt his peers' attack and to punish them for daring to mock and to disagree with him. Yet just as the most dire of punishments threatens, Jonson mitigates the violence of the moment and his own more caustic desires in favor of his theoretical and artistic aims. Bringing forward his second self, his authorial stand-in Horace, Jonson redirects the emperor before he acts: “What meanes imperiall CAESAR?” (4.6.14), Horace asks. The question leads to the emperor's queries about identity, to his pronouncement of cessation, disbanding and

banishment rather than death and, most importantly for Jonson's purposes, to the ratification of the necessary and necessarily beneficial relationship between a Poet and his monarch.

Significantly, Jonson keeps Chloe on stage for the duration of the act, for the emperor's entrance and his judgment. While her stage business during the scripted action of the play remains at the direction of the actor in the role of Chloe, Jonson's decision to maintain her stage presence throughout the conclusion of the scene solidifies her place and purpose. When he has Caesar see Chloe amidst the courtiers and demand "what are you?" (4.6.24 and 26), Jonson again promotes his dramatic theory and its focus on character over his social program of correction. The characterization itself, after all, offers another of Jonson's object lessons. As Chloe answers the question first with the name of the role she acted in the pageant of gods – "I play Venus" (4.6.24) – and then, after being requestioned, with the reality of her social situation "[I am] Your citizen, and jewellers wife, sir" (4.6.27), Jonson demonstrates the complexity of identity, self-definition and self-awareness and its contingency on social situation. Jonson's use of repetition marks the overlap, labeling the literal role play, the social performance at court, the social performance based on economic and domestic relations, and the assertion of self suggested in the implicit "I am" statements. Having Caesar refine his queries – "I aske not, what you *play*? but, what you *are*?" (4.6.26, my italics), Jonson discloses his central point: complete characterization emerges in the dramatization of identity, itself discovered only in the complicated and often contradictory interactions between, repetitions and confluences of, self-definition, social definition and social performance.

When Caesar punishes everyone for the parts they have played in the Banquet of the Gods, Jonson stresses the importance of the relationship between "what you are" and "what

you act,” the same relationship he has argued in each of his previous plays and will assert emphatically in Caesar’s final decree at the end of *Poetaster* to “Be you your selues” (5.3.621). Chloe provides one way to demonstrate his argument; Caesar’s daughter Julia, the impetus for Caesar’s command to exile, provides another.

A Horace is a Horace, of course, of course

Poetaster’s Horace is the latest in a line of authorial stage personas Jonson crafts for himself throughout his Elizabethan period. Horace, the Roman satirist and poet, is also the first historical figure Jonson has chosen as his stand-in.³³ While Dekker also chooses Horace for his caricature of Jonson in *Satiromastix* and Jonson is responding in advance to that play, Jonson’s decision to layer his authorial persona onto Horace offers multiplicity of signification beyond Dekker, signification at once in keeping with his previous theoretical positions and suggestive of his current. Both playwrights see and use Horace as a classic authority: Dekker to demean Jonson with his lack of originality and “for his translating” (4.3.121-2),³⁴ Jonson to defend comical satire and himself, to elevate drama as a medium, and to define the ideal relationship between poetry and the public.³⁵ Horace provides an ideal mouthpiece for Jonson’s defense, attack and instruction even as he disallows the particularity and creativity with which Jonson aligned himself with *Every Man Out*’s Asper/Macliente and Fallace and *Cynthia’s Revels*’s Arete and Crites. Of the stand-ins, *Poetaster*’s Jonson seems the least playful, the least like the Jonson revealed in his previous plays.

The most important aspect of Jonson’s decision to characterize Horace seems to be the latitude he provides Jonson; because Horace has not only been authorized by history but also was himself a caustic satirist, in the guise of Horace, Jonson can be unrepentant. As the

Horace of the play represents the Jonson embattled at the turn of the sixteenth century in London and as the poetasters embody Jonson poetic rivals and detractors, Jonson presses his own arguments: “My stile,” Horace/Jonson insists, “no liuing man shall touch,/ If first I be not forc’d by base reproch” (3.5.65-6). Jonson claims for his own work that only the classic greats come close or “touch” his production, and he explains that he only deigns to respond to charges now because the “base” or unlearned have “forc’d” his hand. In keeping with the tradition of the Poets Jonson explicates and places himself within in *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), a tradition in which all the Poets who have proceeded an artist form that artist’s foundation and authorize that artist’s power, Jonson will use his comical satire “like a sheathed sword, [and] it shall defend/ My innocent life” (3.5.67-8). While historical precedent stands on his side, Jonson remains unsatisfied. It is not enough to be right; Jonson wants everyone to acknowledge their errors and his supremacy. Thus Jonson places his character Horace on the attack:

he that wrongs me (better, I proclame,
 He neuer had assai’d to touch my fame.)
 For he shalle weepe, and walke with euey tongue
 Throughout the citie, infamously song.

(3.5.75-8).³⁶

Jonson’s threat conveys his confidence in himself as the Poet. Again he asserts his “fame,” insists that his pen can and will destroy his enemies, and refuses to back down. In 3.5, Horace speaks Jonson’s defense and renews the charge: “I will write *satyres* still” (3.5.100).

To underscore his power and determination, Jonson at once diminishes his rivals and elevates himself by espousing his self-description not only through the words and actions of

his stand-in but also through Horace's nemeses. As *Poetaster's* art imitates life, not this time to "oppose a mirroure...where they shall see the times" (*EMO* Ind.118-20) but to raise the fantasy of Jonson's artistic victory, Jonson frames the arguments against him and his drama as petty envies. Jonson's dramatic theory demands verisimilitude which Demetrius tries to insult but merely reaffirms: "HORACE! Hee is a mere sponge; nothing but humours, and obseruation" (4.3.104-5). Likewise Tucca's reply, "Thou saiest true, my poore *poeticall Furie*, hee will pen all he knowes. A sharpe-thornie-tooth'd *satyricall* rascal" (4.3.108-10), indicates that the perceived shortcomings are actually strengths. By placing the words of his manifesto into the mouths of his rivals – the explanation of humours, observation, knowing and satirizing, even the *Furor Poeticus*, all appear in the Induction to *Every Man Out* – Jonson quotes and reemphasizes his own artistic theory and evacuates their critique. Jonson has Tucca continue, "he carries poison in his teeth, and a sting in his taile...I'le haue the slaue whipt one of these daies for his *satyres*, and his humours" (4.3.115-8). The scene asks the audience to appreciate that if these are the complaints his contemporaries have, then their objections have no substance.

While Jonson strives to defend himself and to defang his rivals, the moment contains a provocative insight too. Before his own shift to new genres, the historical Horace recognized that his satires had made him unpopular, and he tried to mitigate their sting.³⁷ By selecting Horace as his stand-in, Jonson also brings this portion of his model's history to his own project, suggesting that he may also have been trying to modify his personal reception although certainly not his message.³⁸ While the play's invective does match the "poison" and "sting" described, the actions of the character Horace suggest a new direction. In his first scene in the play (3.1), Jonson has Horace endure the inanities of Crispinus or the

Marston caricature. Despite practicing the social niceties of departure in 3.1-2, the character Horace “escape”s (3.3.10) only in the melee created by the lictors who arrive to arrest Crispinus for debt. In 4.3, Jonson has Horace share, without scorn, the news that fellow poet Propertius gives into grief over his lost love³⁹ and in 4.6 and 7, he intercedes on Julia’s behalf with Caesar, urges forgiveness and mediation for the lovers, and defends Ovid and company’s “innocent mirth/ And harmless pleasures, bred, of noble wit” (4.7.41-2).

The culmination of the play also supports a reading in which Jonson softens, even feminizes, his person while intensifying his theoretical position on the role of drama, his drama in particular, in society. As in *Cynthia’s Revels*, the poet and the monarch again combine forces to correct and to teach.⁴⁰ Jonson still punishes the offensive rivals and their behaviors, but he does so primarily with words rather than with action.⁴¹ The poetasters

confesse: but that hee kept better company (for the most part) then
I: and that better men lou’d him, then lou’d me: and that his
writings thriu’d better than mine, and were better lik’t, and grac’t:
nothing else.

(5.3.449-53)

Horace forgives: “If this be all; faith, I forgiue the freely” (5.3.455). Then, even as the dialogue issues in imperative form as a command – this is still Jonson after all – Jonson places Horace in a proper place below the ideal poet and monarch: “Enuy me still, so long as Virgil loues me” (5.3.456), Caesar and his court “thinke me worthy/ Their honour’d, and ador’d societie,/ And reade, and loue, proue, and applaud my *poemes*” (5.3.459-61).

This Horace/Jonson yields authority to the monarch, albeit one beholden to the advice and example of Jonson’s persona Horace and his poetic ideal Virgil. In doing so, Jonson

continues to equate his dramatic production and its purposes to poetry and all its classic traditions and social responsibilities. The shift is one devised to authorize both monarch and poet for the benefit of all. Jonson ends the original *Poetaster* with a speech from Caesar, one that reaffirms all that Horace/Jonson has asked, promotes “all true arts, and learning” (5.3.618) over “iangling rimers,/...with their bad and scandalous practices” (5.3.616-7), and asserts the whole of Jonson’s artistic and dramatic enterprise. While his demand for verisimilitude requires the dramatization of the social performances we all enact, the correction of pretentious and false performances compels us to avoid affect and imitation and, as Jonson in the voice of Caesar commands, to “Be you your selues” (5.3.621).

From “this forc’t defence” to “an apologetical Dialogue”

The caustic voice with which Jonson begins his play yields and is integrated into the balance with which Jonson ends *Poetaster*. Jonson’s arguments, it turns out, begin and end with character and with himself. Chloe’s plainspeaking and acting save her from ruin just as Jonson anticipates that his direct address with this play will clear the field for him with his rivals and audiences. Julia’s love earns banishment and disavowal but not from Jonson who, rather than undermine his Julia character, concludes Act Four with two more scenes in which the lovers tell their own story in their own words (4.8-9). Similarly Jonson has just used *Poetaster* to counter the “banishment” which places him alone on one side of the theoretical battle, to argue against the “disavowals” of his critical ideas, and to offer his version of the Poets’ War in his own words. In Act Five Jonson still works his cures, punishing each of the poetasters in turn. Significantly, by the conclusion of the act, all have been forgiven because Jonson remains confident that his work, his theories, his explanation and he himself will be accepted. The play itself ends with a balanced reminder about character and action, about

self and observation, about social reform and social ills. “Be you your selues,” the poet and the monarch assert, because false social performances will be discovered: “*apes are apes, though cloth’d in scarlet*” (5.3.630).

The end of *Poetaster* offers a controlled Jonson content with his message, satisfied in the success of his preemptive strike, and secure in the abilities of his audiences at all levels to see through the acts and performances, the follies and the envies, to whom and what are right and meritorious. The play’s end suggests an air of the last and authorized word. History, however, reveals that Jonson misjudged his audiences, his rivals and his world and had to offer a last-last word again. When his audiences disdained to provide “Plaudite” for his *Poetaster* (1601), Jonson responded emphatically, ending his dramatic battles and beginning a two-year retirement from the theater. His putative defeat was, indeed, a public humiliation, but it did nothing to mitigate his confidence in himself as The Poet, in his artistic and dramatic abilities, or in his right, in fact, his duty, to insist upon his standard with auditors, spectators, readers and peers. In his much discussed final word, a piece it has become a critical commonplace to call after Jonson’s own label “*an apologeticall Dialogue*” (ad.3), Jonson both attempts to obviate the sting of what he describes as so many “*sundry impotent libells then cast out (and some yet remayning) against me, and this Play*” (ad.4-6)⁴² and to assert himself as one who departs to sing “high, and aloofe” (ad.238) yet “To come forth worth the iuy, or the bayes” (ad.235).

That Jonson believed the vilification of *Poetaster* directed at him personally rather than the result of any imperfections within the play itself – “Onely, it [the play] had the fault to be call’d mine./ That was the crime” (ad.80-1) – offers, in part, an explanation for why he brought the comical satire phase of his career to such a dramatic end. The “apologeticall

Dialogue” also provides Jonson a way to acknowledge that he has taken comical satire as far as he can as an artist and, more importantly, to have the last and next word. The Chapel Boys at the Blackfriars, the same actors Jonson used to put his artistic theories into dramatic practice in both *Cynthia’s Revels* and *Poetaster*, aid Jonson again as he publicly enacts “all the answers I euer gaue” (ad.4) and, once again, attempts to control the possible meanings and applications of his drama. For all that his “answers” function like another of his comical satire Inductions, theorizing his art and teaching his audience how to read his play, how to read him, the text itself is deeply personal: wounded and willful, self-deceiving and disingenuous. Two boy players, Nasutus and Polyposus, worried, ostensibly, about “how he lookes/ After these libells” (ad.13-4) track the “Author” to his “lodging” (ad.19) and encourage him to break his “silence” (ad.42), to answer “the Multitude.../ [that] thinke you hit, and hurt” (ad.40-1). Jonson does.

As the 240-line “dialogue” unfolds predominantly in monologue, Jonson, through another stand-in “Author,” claims to take the high road with his “silence.”⁴³ The assertion of acceptance, however, proves hollow. As Nasutus, Polyposus and the Author rehearse the reception of *Poetaster* and its aftermath, the dialogue tells Jonson’s side, rewriting the record and assigning blame to Jonson’s contemporaries – “three yeeres/ They did prouoke me with their petulant stiles/ On euery stage” (ad.96-98) – before asserting that “they that haue incens’d me, can in soule/ Acquit me of that guilt. They know, I dare/ To spurne, or baffull ’hem; or squirt their eyes/ With inke, or vrine: or I could doe worse” (ad.157-60). Exerting once again the power of his poetry, Jonson, through his “Author,” explains how he declines to take overt action only because of his confidence in his poetry’s place in literary

history: “my prints should last, still to be read” (ad.168) and thus “make them infamous” (ad.173).⁴⁴

Again Jonson’s dramatic text creates for Jonson a seemingly contradictory space.⁴⁵ At once he stakes an elevated position with and for his art, and then he descends to wrangle with his enemies. Unable to resist response, Jonson answers each complaint raised against him – the perceived mockery of lawyers, soldiers and actors (ad.81-152), the railing nature of his plays (ad.185-93), the care or slowness with which he writes (ad.193-221) – and then he rises once more, declaring his decision to “leauē the monsters/ To their owne fate” (ad.221-22), to forsake “the *Comick MVSE/* [which] Hath proued so ominous to me” (ad.222-23) and to “trie/ If *Tragoedie* haue a more kind aspect” (ad.223-24).⁴⁶ His departing censure finds all targets, now made asses and wolves, ending and beginning on an imperious note of poetic inspiration: “Leauē me. There’s something come into my thought,/ That must, and shall be sung, high and aloofe/ Safe from the wolues black iaw and dull asses hoof” (ad.237-9). Jonson’s decision to isolate himself by seeking sanctuary in his own thoughts and his own space returns him to the home, a domestic sphere of creativity, fecundity and, of course, the space considered the woman’s domain. Jonson’s “something” is *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603), a play he called a “poem” and “the first fruit” of his retirement, a play which critics past and present applaud as “arguably his first great play” (Miles *Craft* 70) and a play which provides the continuation of Jonson’s critical arguments about the reforming role of drama, the moral obligations of the Poet, and feminine multiplicity.⁴⁷

NOTES to CHAPTER FIVE

¹ All quotations from *Poetaster or The Arraignment*, unless specifically noted, can be found in Herford and Simpson 4:185-325.

² Jonson's decision to rush *Poetaster* to the stage in just "fifteene weekes" (Ind.14), when he had previously spent a year each on *Every Man Out* and *Cynthia's Revels*, indicates a reacting rather than exacting Jonson. Despite its Jonsonian hallmarks – particularized and individuated, thus seemingly human characters, vivacious and detailed dialogue and social interaction, instruction and erudition, the play itself evidences a Jonson working against himself and at times outside his own parameters of dramatic and artistic theory.

³ As Jonson wrote *Poetaster*, rumors about *Satiromastix* claimed the play would retaliate for abuses believed levied in his previous play and had been commissioned by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, another sign the company who had mounted his *Every Man In* and *Every Man Out* had sided with his rivals. Thomas Dekker's *Satiromastix, or the Untrussing of the Humourous Poet* (1601) was staged at both the Globe, with its adult company, and at the Blackfriars, with the very Children of the Queen's Chapel who had acted Jonson's own *Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster*. See Herford and Simpson 1:416-27, Bednarz *Shakespeare* 203-256, McDonald *Shakespeare* 93-96.

⁴ See all of Induction (ll.1-61) and the final speech of the play (5.3.615-625).

⁵ In the play's final speech, Jonson reiterates his defense and affirmation by placing it in the mouth of the monarch, Caesar.

It is the bane, and torment of our eares,
To heare the discords of those iangling rimers,
That, with their bad and scandalous practices,
Bring all true arts, and learning in contempt.
But let not your high thoughts descend so low,
As these despised obiects; Let them fall,
With their flat groueling soules : Be you your selues.
And as with our best fauours you stand crown'd:
So let your mutuall loues be still renown'd.
Enuy will dwell, where there is want of merit,
Though the deseruing man should cracke his spirit.
(5.3.615-25)

⁶ The play, performed by the Children of the Queen's Chapel at Blackfriars, opens and closes between Spring and Autumn of 1601. For a detailed chronology of *Poetaster* and the other plays of the Poets' War, see Bednarz *Shakespeare* 9-11 .

⁷ For a summary of how *Poetaster* earned Jonson a reputation for moral didacticism and elitism rather than theatrical success, see Craig 4-11. For the argument that the play's lack of reception lies with the consistent drive in *Poetaster* as in *Everyman In* (1598) and

Everyman Out of His Humour (1599), *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) that brought Jonson's critic-poet to the stage, see Donaldson *Ben Jonson*.

See also Kay *Ben Jonson* – “*Poetaster* is at once a reply to his critics, a defense of satire, and a statement about the ideal relationship between poetry and the commonwealth” (58-9); Miles *Life – Poetaster* is a “dramatized defence [sic] of the sacred rights of playmaking itself, ‘poetry,’ in Jonson’s term” (64); and Riggs – “In *Poetaster*...he had disclaimed any interest in either the high style of epic and tragedy or the middle style of elegy, but couched his declinations in a form (the *recusatio*) that allowed him to try his hand at the very genres he was rejecting” (88).

⁸ For critics singing Tucca’s praises, see Barish *Ben Jonson* 123-30 and Barton 86-90.

⁹ This summary is, of course, an oversimplification of Jonson’s *Poetaster*. The following chapter examines the play’s individual scenes in context of Jonson’s larger designs. Herford and Simpson, for one, thought the story of Julia and Ovid surpassed the scenes of the “more important persons” and “demanded a more important function” (1:430).

¹⁰ For detail on how Jonson caricatures Marston and Dekker in the guise of minor characters Crispinus and Demetrius, see Bednarz *Shakespeare* 203-24.

¹¹ While Ovid Sr. does not reappear in the play, his friend and praetor Lupus and parasite Tucca, whom critics, seeing in him a forerunner of favored Jonsonian rogues like Mosca and Face, praise as the highlight of the play, continues to serve Jonson’s defensive attacks and purges throughout.

¹² The insistence that Chloe ranks above her husband and knows more about courtiers than he does is an ongoing aspect of this scene. See also: “you would aduise me to entertaine ladies, and gentlemen” (2.1.48-9), and “I take it highly in snuffe, to learne how to entertaine gentlefolkes, of you, at these yeeres” (2.1.61-2).

¹³ In a rare exception to the negative critical reception of Jonson’s female characters, Chloe has been praised for her “empty-headed vitality”; see McLuskie 53-62. Of course, the “empty-headed” label repeats the demonizing case of Jonson’s misogyny; like the tradition followed, it too fails to consider the entirety of Chloe as character, her interactions at court, and her marriage. Throughout the play, Jonson protects and supports Chloe’s character. In the play’s conclusion, rather than punish or purge, Jonson gently warns her character against social pretension.

¹⁴ See Prior, esp. Appendices 232-74, Crawford and Gowing 43-54 and 205-15, Bridgen 146-7.

¹⁵ In this reply, Jonson layers one of the few couplets in 1.3. In 1.1-2, Jonson has already demonstrated that when his Ovid character cares most deeply he expresses himself in verse, specifically couplets.

¹⁶ The description itself is a play on words: subscribe, as a verb, indicates not only that which she has written but also her signature, her consent and her promise.

¹⁷ This is an example of a subtle through-line in the play Jonson uses to suggest connection between the play's couples; Julia and Ovid are like gems and jewels in need of a setting in which to shine while the merchant's home at which they meet is literally that of a "jeweler" (1.3.30, 2.2.89).

¹⁸ Recall that Jonson reveals the invitation to be Julia's; it is her Act One desire to meet her lover at "the jewellers" (1.3.30) that brings the group of courtiers to Chloe's home.

¹⁹ It is an historical inaccuracy but one in keeping with late sixteenth/early seventeenth century English views, that Julia was the daughter of Augustus Caesar.

²⁰ See Miles *Life* 49-104, Van Den Berg 5, and Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* "Dedication Page" to the Countess of Bedford in which he calls her "Cynthia's fairest nymph" (Hereford and Simpson 8:662). In May 1601, Jonson gave the Countess of Bedford a copy of 1601 Quarto of *Cynthia's Revels* with a specially printed dedication page. The countess provides the model on which Jonson bases his virtuous Arete. See Kay *Ben Jonson* 54.

²¹ Pairing Julia with Ovid, Jonson makes her a literal lover of poetry. That Jonson reveals Ovid's nickname for Julia to be "Corinna" (1.3.34), the Sixth Century BC Greek lyric poet believed to be a mentor to Pindar, underscores the point. See Skinner 9-20.

²² With the character's early and unannounced arrival and repeated lurking at the edge of the scene, Jonson suggests that Crispinus might not actually be a blood relation of Cytheris but a pretender using the lady's name to gain access to the court. When in 2.1, Jonson has the character Cytheris repeat his greeting – "CRIS. ...Good morrow cousin CYTHERIS./ CYTH. Welcome kind cousin" (2.1.167-68) – Jonson at once offers acknowledgement and an example of good manners and *sprezzatura*. By contrast, Jonson has the bluntly speaking Chloe question and twice insult the Crispinus character in this scene, first for his "little legges" (2.1.92) and then for his "haire" (2.2.84-5).

²³ Unlike the innocence of Jonson's Tib and Cob's in *Every Man Out*, the jeweler's and Chloe's house turns out to be a pander's place. In 1.3, Jonson lets the audience know through Julia's letter that in pursuit of her own desires she has arranged to meet her lover at "the jewellers" (1.3.30).

²⁴ In a return to his artistic argument about the right of Poets to instruct the masses for their own as well as the greater good, Jonson also uses the interactions between Chloe and Crispinus to elevate the "idea" of the Poet.

Chlo. What gentlemen are these? doe you know them?

Cris. I, they are *poets*, lady.

Chlo. *Poets?* they did not talke of me since I went, did they?

Cris. O yes, and extold your perfections to the heauens.
 Chlo. Now in sinceritie, they be the finest kind of men, that
 euer I knew: *Poets*? Could not one get the Emperour to
 make my husband a *Poet*, thinke you?
 Cris. No, ladie, 'tis loue, and beautie make *Poets*: and
 since you like *Poets* so well, your loue, and beauties
 shall make me a *Poet*.

(2.2.66-77)

Crispinus (or Jonson's caricature of Marston) leaves Chloe's presence with the desire to elevate himself to the status of poet, a progress for this poetaster and an empowering moment for Jonson's point about the Poet's role in society. Jonson, however, quickly undermines his redemptive moment by having Crispinus activate his plan not by practicing "true arts and learning" (5.3.618) but by "presently goe[ing] and enghle[ing] some broker, for a *Poets* gown, and bespeake a garland" (2.2.224-5). Once again, Jonson skewers affectation, false and inappropriately applied social performance.

See also "the sacred breath of a true *poet*, an blow any virtuous humanitie, vp to *deitie*?" (4.1.34-6), "To tell you the femall truth (which is the simple truth) ladies; and to shew that *poets* (in spight of the world) are able to *deifie* themselues" (4.1.37-9), and "mee thinks, a bodie's husband do's not so well at Court" (4.1.55-6). In 4.3, Jonson has Chloe refuse partners because they are not Poets.

²⁵ For the city comedies and James I's allowance for "new men" to buy peerages, see Bruster.

²⁶ As a guest in the jeweller's home, Cytheris trades her courtly knowledge for room and board. As she instructs Chloe, introduces her to society and offers encouragement, she reveals her own interest – and the courts's – in financial backing: "they all thinke you politike, and witte; wise women choose not husbands for the eye, merit or birth, but wealth and soueraigntie (2.1.13-5). By Act Four, Cytheris will have at least partially achieved her goal; Chloe will "keep" her "By my troth, ladie, I would not for a world, but you had lyen in my hous: and i' faith you shall not pay a farthing, for your boord, nor your chambers" (4.1.40-3).

²⁷ Jonson references Chloe in Act Three when Crispinus discusses her with Horace (3.1.45-48 and 85-91) and describes her to Tucca (3.4.374).

²⁸ According to Herford and Simpson, Jonson draws on the Banquet of Gods in Book I of Homer's *Iliad*, and the historical record indicates that it was Augustus Caesar not Ovid who reenacted the banquet for his pleasure (I:427-37).

²⁹ For the specific rules of the evening's entertainment, see *Poetaster* 4.5.12-45, including

no God
 Shall need to keep himself more strictly to his Goddess
 Then any man do's to his wife.
 Nor any Goddess

Shall need to keep her selfe more strictly to her God
Then any woman do's to her husband.

...

It shall be lawfull for euery louer,
To breake louing oathes,
To change their louers, and make loue to others
(4.5.21-26 and 29-31)

and

TVCC. Do'st heare, mad IVPITER? Wee'll haue it enacted; He,
that speaks the first wise word, shall be made cuckold. What
sai'st thou? Is't not a good motion?
OVID. *Deities*, are you all agreed?
ALL. Agreed, great IVPITER.
(4.5.41-5)

³⁰ Jonson places the jeweler's interjections at key moments in the action to forward his own purposes, yet he also gives him the correct formulations. For instance, the jeweler assumes the role of Vulcan in the Banquet of the Gods, and Jonson peppers his language with the correct allusions: "hammers" and "*Cyclops!*" (4.5.127). His advice – "this boy fills not wine enough, to make vs kind enough, to one another" (4.5.127-8), "I'le ply the table with *nectar*, and make them friends" (4.5.131-2), and "Wine, and good liuers, make true louers: I'le sentence them together. Here father, here mother, for shame, drinke your selues drunke, and forget this dissention: you two should cling together, before our faces, and giue vs example of unities" (4.5.133-8) – earns praise from the courtiers for his "excellently spoken" (4.5.139) counsel.

³¹ The wise words are: "to play the foole wisely, is high wisdom" (4.5.46-7). With them, Jonson again plays on social performance, on his theories of verisimilitude, on the content of his own *Poetaster* scene, and even on his didactic relationship with his audience. The wisdom was acquired from "a booke" (4.5.46).

³² This offer is also a cheeky backhand to Shakespeare's darkest moment in *Twelfth Night* (1601), a play itself based on a plot supplied by Jonson. See *Twelfth Night* 5.1 for Orsino's attempt to kill Viola/Cesario: "Come, boy, with me. My thoughts are ripe in mischief./ I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love/ To spite a raven's heart within a dove" (5.1.125-8). For the plot of *Twelfth Night*, see *Every Man Out* (1599) 3.6.195-201.

³³ Jonson's attempt to balance the historical record about Horace with his own needs for the Horace character may account for critical assessment that this authorial stand-in is "less like Jonson than Asper or Crites through whom he had spoken his mind in the earlier plays" (Herford and Simpson 1:422). See Chapters Three and Four of this dissertation for discussions of these earlier Jonson authorial stand-ins. See also Helgerson. Beginning with his artistic manifesto *Every Man Out*, Jonson repeatedly casts himself as one of the great Poets, the next in the line of classic poets serving the common good.

³⁴ For discussion of Demetrius as Jonson's caricature of Dekker, see Bednarz *Shakespeare* 213-15.

³⁵ For use of the Roman setting as authorization for English Renaissance artistic arguments, see Steggle.

³⁶ As a bid to bolster the claim, Jonson repeats it in 4.3:

A sharpe thornie-tooth'd *satyricall* rascall, flie him; hee carries
 hey in his horne: he wil sooner lose his best friend, then his
 least iest. What he once drops vpon paper, against a man, liues
 eternally to vpbraid him in the mouth of euery slaue tankerd-
 bearer, or water-man; not a bawd, or a boy that comes from the
 bake-house, but shall point at him; 'tis all dogge, and scorpion;
 he carries poison in his teeth, and a sting in his taile.

(4.3.109-16)

³⁷ The first *Satire* of Horace's second book "describes his mission as a satirist" (Herford and Simpson 4:194). "This Satire forms a sort of general apologetic preface to the second book, and, though prefixed to that collection, was, perhaps, the last composed. Horace found that his Satire had made him unpopular" (Arthur Palmer qtd. H&S 4:194). Jonson uses Horace's recognition that his satire made him unpopular as a parallel to his own historical moment as he begins his third and final comical satire.

³⁸ For reverberations of history reclaimed and recreated by intertextuality and allusion, see Hawlin 1516-30. "They are not only writing the poem and its genre for the present time but also recouping the antecedent text, or subtext, into the present, implying its contemporaneity with our historical moment" (1517).

³⁹ In addition to Propertius, Jonson makes free use of history's other, so-called, "seductive poets" Ovid, Tibullus and Gallus.

⁴⁰ For the argument that Jonson's poet-monarch relationship in *Poetaster* is "less embarrassing" than the one in *Cynthia's Revels*, see Kay *Ben Jonson* 58-65.

⁴¹ Prior to the gift of the character Horace's forgiveness, Tucca is gagged and encased in "vizards" (5.3.385, 433-4), Crispinus is given pills that make him vomit (5.3.391) and ordered to "obserue/ A strict and holsome dyet" (5.3.535-6), Demetrius is outfitted in a dunce coat and cap and instructed to "thinke thy selfe/ No other, then they make thee" (5.3.577-8), and all are required to take an oath not to malign Horace (5.3.583). Caesar punished the courtiers by breaking up the party, jailing Julia (4.7.6), banishing Ovid on pain of death (4.6.55-57), and warning Chloe against social pretension. Gallus and Tibullus reconcile with Caesar, a class privilege seemingly unavailable to Ovid the younger son, in 5.1. Herford and Simpson contend that the ridiculous nature of the poetaster purgings are yet another dramatic distraction from the Julia and Ovid storyline and Virgil's poetry in 5.2 and diminish both.

⁴² The sting continued to bite as many as fifteen years later. During the preparation of his 1616 *Works*, Jonson appended to the Folio edition of *Poetaster* a direct address “To the Reader” in which he provides a brief introduction allowing that “*I am willing thou should’st yet know more, by which followes: an apologeticall Dialogue*” (ad.2-3). It is in this 1616 letter, then, that Jonson himself, in a move demonstrating his command of his work product and confidence in his influence in poetic and dramatic circles, labels his final word in the Poets’ War the “Apologetical Dialogue.”

For the letter and text of the dialogue purportedly spoken only once upon the stage (ad.3-4), see Herford and Simpson 4:317-24. Note that the style and form of the addendum follows that of Jonson’s inductions.

⁴³ Of course, the claim is disingenuous. Of the 240 lines in the “apologeticall Dialogue,” only thirty-six of them are spoken by Nasutus and Polyposus. The rest belong to the “Author,” a poetic surrogate in the tradition of Jonson’s early comical satire phase. See Macilente in *Every Man Out*, Crites in *Cynthia’s Revels*, and Horace in *Poetaster*. For analysis of Jonson’s artistic use of these three stand-in characters, see Helgerson 143-83.

⁴⁴ Of course, this is *exactly* what the ‘apologeticall Dialogue’ accomplishes. Discussions of the Poets’ War rely on this key document. As a result of Jonson’s “silence” on the matter, critics continue 400 years after the battle’s cessation to consider the effects of the Poets’ War on late Elizabethan drama. See Bednarz *Shakespeare*, Penniman, Small and Glatzer.

⁴⁵ My reading of the “apologeticall Dialogue” and its contradictions focuses on this appended text as a connecting point bridging Jonson’s Elizabethan and Jacobean plays. For a treatment of the contradictions as challenge to Jonson’s humanist project and for a reading of the text as a “piece of dramatic satire in its own right,” see Jones 447-67.

⁴⁶ The “apologeticall Dialogue” (ad) is hardly an apology – only the actors receive an “I am sorry” (ad.150) – and its inherent contradictions have lead to numerous readings. For “ad” as “reprise” of the Poets’ War and a defense of self and poetry example, see Riggs 88 and 143. For discussion of the dialogue’s dates, of its stage appearance, and as another fictionalization of self and history, see Barton 89-91; for description of the apologetical Dialogue’s reappearance in *Volpone*’s extra-textual devices as Jonson’s “boldest literary manifesto to date” (87), see Kay *Ben Jonson*. For a reading of the apology to actors as Jonson’s response to Shakespeare’s “little eyases” passage in *Hamlet*, see Bednarz *Shakespeare* 225-56.

⁴⁷ See Jonson, “Letter to Aubigny” and “To the Readers,” H&S 4:349-51; Jonson *Discoveries*, H&S 8:555-649; Miles *Craft*; Craig 95-102; Ayers 22-28.

CHAPTER SIX

Falling Forward, Flirting with the Feminine:**Jonson's Tragic Turn, *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603)**

...lye,
 Flatter, and sweare, forswear, deprave, informe
 Smile and betray
 (Sej. I.27-9)

None, but the plaine, and passiuë fortitude,
 To suffer, and be silent
 (Sej. IV.294-5)¹

When Ben Jonson announces his decision to “trie/ If *Tragædie* have a more kind aspect” (*Poet.* ad.223-24) in a “apologeticall Dialogue” appended to his final comical satire *Poetaster* in 1601, he attempts to create some distance between himself and the residual effects of his dramatic and theoretical battles with his playwriting contemporaries, battles linked together under the label the Poets’ War, 1599-1601. In addition to the professional impact – an entirely new genre, a two year retirement from the stage² – Jonson also reveals the personal price he has paid as well as how deeply personal his work has been for him in a way his previous authorial stand-ins have not, could not have done. In the “apologeticall Dialogue,” he is Ben Jonson, “Author” not Ben Jonson, fictional character.³

The apologeticall Dialogue’s narrative forges a connection to his next dramatic work, *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603), and indicates Jonson’s plan to continue to develop the theoretical and artistic directions he explains and models, although without the support and acceptance he desired, in each of his previous plays.⁴ The apologeticall Dialogue also introduces a disillusioned⁵ poet and discloses a crucial moment in Jonson’s own social performance. Even as it reinforces Jonson’s artistic theories and practices – dramaturgical verisimilitude, social awareness, knowledge and improvement; the mutually influential relationship between

art and life; the Poet's moral authority and duty to deploy that influence for social reform; social performance and its layers, idiosyncrasies and responsiveness as the basis of character; the flexibility of gender identity and multiplicity in the category "woman" – it also introduces the directions and risks involved in his next creative project. Layering and crafting, layering and re-crafting, Jonson explicitly dramatizes his own image – not an authorial stand-in or fictionalized mouthpiece – for the first time. Jonson at once offers himself for public consumption and strives, while his own act of *sprezzatura* obscures the effort, to control the interpretation of his person. The result demonstrates Jonson's own social performance as a person and as a playwright in action. Each visible movement of Jonson's performance participates in and simultaneously divulges his process of identity formation;⁶ each response to and recalibration of performance based on external social forces reinforces the mutuality and fluidity shared between art and life, between Poet, play (v.) and play (n.), between Jonson and society.

The dramatization of Jonson's social performance also raises the normative gender binary Jonson's situated and individuated female characters have been challenging since he tweaked the festive comedy form with Rachel, Aurelia and Phœnixella in his first play, *The Case is Altered* (1598). Throughout the progression of his playwriting career, each new play in Jonson's art and evolution as a dramatist has more and more closely connected him to the female characters he creates: *Every Man In's* (1598) Dame Kitely encapsulates Jonson's social ideal, a balanced performer at once successfully in and above the social game; in *Every Man Out* (1599), Jonson aligns his authorial stand-in Asper/Macilente, and thus himself, with Fallace; alignment becomes union in *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) when Jonson authorial projection finds its dramatic realization in the pair of Arete and Crites; and Jonson's

Poetaster (1601) is the first to introduce the feminizing effect⁷ of culture on Jonson as the softer, gentler Horace defends and supports Julia and Chloe, mitigates the expected invective of a Jonsonian authorial representative and, of course, offers the apologetical Dialogue. In the context of his Elizabethan work as a whole, a seemingly small line – “Which to pursue, were but a feminine humour,/ And farre beneath the dignitie of man” (ad.178-9)⁸ – becomes a significant disclosure. The “feminine humour” in this formulation is revenge, and Jonson situates himself in the midst of the gendered feminine-masculine pair, taking up the “feminine humour” (ad.178) and eschewing the supposed “dignitie of man,” not only by writing the apologetical Dialogue but also by taking his comical satires and going home to turn to tragedy.⁹ By his own definition, Jonson has once again put on a feminine humour, and in doing so he once again also shows the flexibility of these terms, the dynamism and playfulness of testing the norms they define. In his latest performance, then, Jonson, disabused of his positive reformer’s belief in communal improvement, manages to be both silent and aggressive, to occupy the positions of both the authorial poet and the subjugated, hierarchically inferior feminine.

The self-positioning is, of course, another of Jonson’s rhetorical ploys, another fiction and layer in the complicated social performance Jonson balances in his next moment of self-creation, self-definition. It does, however, demonstrate the continuation of Jonson’s both/and position with regard to gender, to the binary feminine/masculine observed in his previous plays. The examination of the plays themselves reveals that not one of the female characters Jonson creates is “her”self subjugated.¹⁰ Jonson deploys this purposeful alignment strategy throughout *Sejanus* and, as he further emphasizes the connection, the overlap in gendered positions, he again destabilizes the normative type by revealing its descriptive rather than

prescriptive powers. In his last Elizabethan, first Jacobean play, Jonson's authorial stand-in no longer only flirts with the feminine, crafting equally individuated situations, staging agency, admiring and desiring to be a woman¹¹ or aligning himself with women to promote social virtue.¹² In *Sejanus, His Fall* Jonson now layers his authorial presence directly onto the female characters themselves. Fragmenting himself and his Poets' War experience and distributing the pieces among the characters of Arruntius, Agrippina and even Livia, Sosia and Fortune herself,¹³ Jonson dramatizes his own ineffectiveness, his lack of faith in his audiences, his inability to change the world or his contemporaries' ideas about theater and dramaturgy. As he recasts himself, his female characters exemplify the phases of social interaction and offer coping mechanisms against an indicted society. As he struggles to recreate himself and to find a different approach to art, theorization and social reform, Jonson finds "a more kind aspect" (ad.224) and "her favours" (ad.225) in his latest "will [to] trie" (ad.223).

Social Acts and "only talk"

Sejanus, His Fall indicates that Jonson fully grasps the vagaries of disempowerment made apparent by the end of his literary battles with his rivals, by the loss of Elizabeth I and the ascension of James I,¹⁴ and by his own displacement as he retires from dramatic circles and departs from London.¹⁵ Gone is the active social reformer; returned is a sufferer of Fate and Fortune. In the apologeticall Dialogue, Jonson alludes to the contradictory roles Fate and Fortune play in a poet's or a citizen's life (ad.23-7);¹⁶ in *Sejanus* Jonson literalizes the correlation, offering Fortune as an active, female character in the play's dramatis personae and Fate as a mutable and capricious force people may or may not overcome. The ambivalence with which Jonson then treats these two forces – humanity is free/not free; the

gods are near/not near¹⁷ – establishes a feminizing effect at work in his play and on the culture it represents. The embrace of feminization is Jonson's greatest risk. Reducing and splintering his own dramatic persona, in this transitional text Jonson himself flirts with the cultural feminine, aligning himself throughout the play with marginalized characters who now, more than ever, offer the most accurate approximation of his own conflicting social position.

In the comical satires, Jonson's onstage personae instructed the audience not only how to read each play and its performances but also how to apply the offered lessons to their own lives. In his first tragedy, Jonson begins by enacting concessions based on his awareness of his life losses and on the lessons he has subsequently learned. First and foremost is the de-authorization of the traditional authorial stand-in; in *Sejanus* no Asper/Macilente/Fallace, Crites/Arete or Horace strides the stage to control the direction of the play or to lecture the audience. The recognizable type remains in the figure of Arruntius,¹⁸ but now Jonson has fragmented its efficacy and viewpoint. In previous offerings, Jonson would have elevated Arruntius and his perspective; in *Sejanus*, Jonson undermines this spokesman and his former dramatic method: "there's Arruntius too, he only talks" (2.299).¹⁹ With Arruntius' ineffective talk and inability to act, Jonson concedes a criticism from his peers; the lecturing didact returns a modified dramatic trope in service to Jonson's dramatic effort.

As a result, for the first time the action of Jonson's play builds around what Philip Ayers calls "a central intrigue" (10).²⁰ The central intrigue belongs to Sejanus and his rise during the reign of Rome's emperor Tiberius. In a ruthless quest for power, Jonson has Sejanus epitomize the ability to "lye/ Flatter, and swear, forswear, depraue, informe/ Smile

and betray” (I.27-29), and his many acts destroy the Germanicans, manipulate the emperor, even poisoning the son and heir, and blind himself to the dangers of his own ambition. Jonson shows Sejanus lose his ability to see and to assess himself acting and in the act and how his blindness obscures Tiberius’ suspicions from him. Sejanus falls when in a letter to the senate the emperor denounces him.²¹ Even though Jonson alters his dramatic structure, less has changed than at first seems apparent. Arruntius’ “talk” now offers a point of comparison, exposing the same emptiness or lack of substance found in other characters’ talk as well as emphasizing the layered performances and thus constructed and hollowness of those characters enacting their chosen roles. The social performances delivered in both public and private/non-public spaces and their impact on larger social situations remain Jonson’s continued and more concentrated aim. In concert with social performance, Jonson emphasizes the importance of language and rhetoric as measure and indicator of character.

As if to assert to his contemporaries, readers and audiences that even though he has turned to tragedy and supposedly eschewed didacticism he will continue to execute a dramatic practice based on verisimilitude, Jonson, in Act One of *Sejanus*, focuses entirely on social performance. Beginning with a repudiation of “good inginers” (I.4), social performers whose “fine arts, & their thriuing vse/...make vs grac’d, or favour’d of the times” (I.5-6), Jonson distributes readings of positive and negative performance among the numerous characters with whom he crowds the stage. The increased number of characters, the largest of any of Jonson’s plays and in excess of fifty with the multiples signaled by the designations “LICTORES” and “MINISTRI,” marks another dramatic change. With the sheer numbers, Jonson elevates social performance over initial character identity, mandates that character must be determined through the combination of performances staged and, most importantly,

distinguishes the few with the ability to separate themselves from the crowd, making them more pronounced and underscoring their significance.

First, Sabinus and Silius define the necessarily duplicitous flexibility of a successfully ambitious actor. Then Natta and Latiaris explain that everyone must have and must act according to a known position and known alliance. Within a conversation of fluctuating perspectives, Jonson has Arruntius, Silius, Sabinus and Cordus establish Agrippina and the Germanicans as the ideal and as an antithesis to false performance. Agrippina is the model of honor and virtue. In the course of Act One, Jonson also delineates that each character is in process of enacting his or her own role as befits the Roman²² political setting and the place he or she has achieved or desires to achieve within it. As always, Jonson plays with the interacting layers of character and social performance. He also plays against the double and triple-ness of the Kings' Men's actors in their performances as *Sejanus*'s various characters, characters who in turn enact numerous roles themselves. In doing so, Jonson designates instability as the rule of the play and, by extension, of the time. None of these characters can be taken at face value; all must be questioned.

Throughout Act One, Jonson conflates the world of the play, the Rome of Tacitus' *Annals*, with his own social London. The resulting uncertainty about where to look for truth works with the play's central intrigue. If it is those who "lye/ Flatter, and swear, forswear, depraue, informe/ Smile and betray" (I.27-29) who realize their ambitions, what is truth? Jonson's play continues to pose destabilizing questions: who has the performative power to gain control of Rome? And, by extension, who has the performative power to gain control of London or England?²³ As *Sejanus* unfolds, the play demonstrates that power is acquired and extended on the basis of the ability of each actor, each political striver, each social climber,

successfully to create and to fulfill his or her own role in his or her own drama and that such power is ephemeral, easily undermined when another becomes director, controlling and determining roles and dialogue. By the end of Act One, the increased role an awareness of social performance plays offers a paradoxical expression of realism, of observable social action and reaction that underscores Jonson's artistic theory and its demand for verisimilitude. Despite his disillusionments, Jonson continues to expect that his audience knows exactly how to read each performance and how to ascertain the success or failure of its actor and, after Act One, his audience cannot help but have imbibed Jonson's negativity, seeing everywhere, as Jonson does, degeneracy and disempowerment already rampant within the community. In *Sejanus* all actors, including Jonson himself, are mutual targets of the playwright's ambivalence and aggression.

I am Agrippina

While his expositional and social reform failures and frustrations become part of the Arruntius character, Jonson charges the character Agrippina Germanicus with other aspects of his experience. Throughout the play, Jonson has Arruntius ineffectively talk and Agrippina stoically act. The one, Arruntius, suggests the extra-dramatic devices – the inductions, prologues, choruses and epilogues – of Jonson's previous plays while the other, Agrippina, parallels the modeling, the dramatic practice and example, of his plays' characters and narratives. In the character Agrippina, Jonson offers an ideal of positive virtue and a commitment to what is right. In Agrippina, Jonson also exemplifies the isolation and disempowerment attendant on a socially unpopular position, a position not unlike the one he created from himself in the playwriting scene of London theater with his comical satires. In

Agrippina who, like Jonson himself, stands on principle, proudly, tenaciously, even inflexibly certain of her position, Jonson creates a female version of himself.²⁴

In keeping with his consistent method of character introduction, Jonson first brings Agrippina to the stage through the descriptions offered by other characters. In this way, Jonson situates her socially before he moves on to her individuating details. Agrippina belongs to a storied historical and political family. She is not only the widow of Germanicus but also the daughter of Agrippa and the granddaughter of Augustus, the very authority on which Jonson relies in his previous play *Poetaster*. In Act One, Jonson has Silius, Sabinus, Arruntius and Cordus praise the Germanicans as the model humanity at large should follow. To be a Germanicus is to be “most like to virtue” (I.124) and “In all,/ And euery action, nearer to the gods,/ Then men” (I.124-26), to “temper...greatness with grauitie” and to “avoid all selfe-loue” (I.130), and display honest emotion (I.133-36) not false “images, and pompe” (I.132). The men agree that the “seedes of the old virtue” (I.119) grow in the Germanican line. As Jonson sees himself the heir apparent or next in a line of classic Poets (*EMO* Ind.247-70), Agrippina is the continuation of the Germanican line of noble and principled civic leaders.

The descriptions in Act Two shift to the specificity of Agrippina as a person and as the current head of the Germanican household. As an individuated person, her glory burns like “fires” (II.42) that must be made “extinct” (I.42) if others, especially Sejanus are to shine. In temperament, she is a “male-spirited dame”²⁵ (II.211), a worthy and equal rival, raising sons to carry on her name and inspiring many “to declare themselues/ Of AGRIPPINA’S partie” (II.371-72). In action, she has proven herself to have “too much faith/ To be corrupted” (II.395-96) and “too-too vnreproou’d a chastitie,/ To be attempted” (II.397-

98). As the head of the Germanicans, she is a threat because she connects the family to its allies by precedent and by principle and can call in earnest on “the memorie of GERMANICUS” (II.227) to bolster her claims.

With these descriptions, Jonson underscores the ideal nature of Agrippina’s character and establishes her as the antithesis and consequently chief rival of the smoke-and-mirrors, corrupted and corrupting, lying, cheating Sejanus. As Jonson devotes the first half of Act Two to the political machinations of Sejanus and his discussions with Tiberius, Agrippina emerges a worthy adversary to the degenerate elite in Rome. As a result of locating her in a position of dissent, Jonson emphasizes the threat she poses to the accepted norm. Like Jonson’s departure from and challenges to the generic conventions of festive comedy and his contemporaries, Agrippina’s conviction to her beliefs and her determination to remain uncorrupted and fixed to her own path demand reaction. Like Jonson’s own rivals, Tiberius and Sejanus both recognize the challenge Agrippina poses (II.42, 190-444) and target her for attack, undermining and removal. Jonson deftly handles the resulting disparaging remarks, remarks themselves appropriate to Jonson’s characterizations of these two men and their followers, separating them from descriptions constitutive of Agrippina’s character by placing them and other untoward criticisms of Agrippina in the mouths of characters he clearly marks as unsympathetic, corrupt and unredeemable, characters he expects the audience to distrust and to dismiss.

As Jonson emphasizes Agrippina’s virtue and her empowered yet threatened social position, he infuses his characterization of her with parallels to himself during the Poets’ War and to his own current position in society. Using his vision of the right in his arguments, his empowerment by the classic models and a proper monarch’s vision, and his threatened and

undermined position at the hands of his contemporaries and the masses, Jonson adds complexity to the layers he creates for Agrippina. These layers mix and balance the historical realities of Rome while the historical Agrippina lived and the observable realities of Jonson's own social London and his experience in it. The resulting conflation merges Jonson with his portrayal of Agrippina, aligning him with her female character and signaling his sense of ineffectualness. Jonson's characterization decision continues the work with female character he began in his first play and, as it marks the progression in his evolution of the dramatization of feminine multiplicity – Jonson himself is now a part of the spectrum of womanhood established by his plays – it dismantles gender's binary distinctions by complicating delineations between masculine and feminine. To his dramatized overlap between male and female, Jonson adds his larger point. There is no female or male: all are equal, equally oppressed, equally disenfranchised, and equally endangered in a society as corrupt as this one.

Jonson demonstrates this point when in Act Two he locates the action of the play at “the house/ Of AGRIPPINA” (II.410-11) and brings Agrippina herself to the stage for the first time. Agrippina's home functions as a meeting place for those with the “right” or “old seeds” (I.119) of Roman virtue and in keeping with such civic values, the door stands open to all.²⁶ Jonson places Agrippina's entrance in *media res*, both into the middle of an on-stage conversation about false actors sent by Sejanus to “bayte” (II.413) them all – male and female – into compromising actions and in an on-going conversation between Agrippina and Silius in which Agrippina's off-stage words garner the reply: “May't please your highnesse not forget your selfe,/ I dare not, with my manners, to attempt to trouble you farder” (II.428-

30). In Silius' comment, Jonson exemplifies his previous characterization of Agrippina: she puts others before her "selfe" regardless of the "farder" "trouble" it might cause.

As the conversation continues, Jonson establishes the difference and certainty of Agrippina's position. Unlike the corrupt factions of her world, she sees "there's no gaine, but vertu's" (II.434) and refuses to modify her behavior because actions and reactions of a (false) majority of others seek it: "Vertues forces/ Shew euer noblest in conspicuous courses" (II.456-57). While Jonson has indicated that the play's characters cannot be taken at face value and that all must be questioned, he has Agrippina steadfastly hold to her value system as he himself did in the early phases of his dramatic career. At this early point in the play, Agrippina is not yet adept at, nor even aware of, the complex balancing act that the layers of social performance and by extension identity formation require. Agrippina is as she believes, says and acts without layer or guile.

...AGR. Heare me, SILIVS,
 Were all TIBERIVS body stuck with eyes,
 And eu'ry wall, and hanging in my house
 Transparent, as this lawne I weare, or ayre;
 Yea, had SEIANVS both his eares as long
 As to my in-most closet: I would hate
 To whisper any thought, or change an act

(II.449-55)

The "too suspitious, SILIVS" (II.470) may "feare/ Some subtill practice" (II.471-72), but Jonson will not yet have his Agrippina "forget [her] selfe" (II.4280). She is who she is; she is Agrippina.

Within the action of the play, Jonson shows Agrippina commanding her own house, those who follow her values, those who wish to better and to change society. She lectures on virtue (II.449-57), she participates equally in political conversation (II.479-500), she sends Silius to the Senate for news (II.495), she draws Sosia, his wife, into her home for protection (II.496). Setting Agrippina's actions alongside those of Tiberius and Sejanus's Rome, Jonson dramatizes the difficulty of maintaining a correct and certain value in "a world of wolfe-turn'd men" (III.251), where nothing is as it seems. As Agrippina refuses to bend to the political advice around her and to play the games demanded of ambition and perfected in social performance – "You take the morall, not the politique sense" (II.435),²⁷ Jonson replicates his own conviction throughout the Poets' War to his artistic theory and dramatic practice. As Jonson did in each of his Elizabethan plays despite the external pressures of rivals and audiences, Agrippina remains committed to her belief in what is right: "there's no gaine, but vertu's" (II.434). When Sejanus and Tiberius begin to move against Agrippina (III.488-90, 526-50, 630-39, 679-83), Jonson dramatizes his own demise at the hands of his rivals and the populace. Even here Jonson maintains the verisimilitude of his artistic theory in his dramatic practice, unflinchingly portraying his failures rather than revising them to fit or fulfill a fantasy as he did in the apologetical Dialogue. The Jonson of *Sejanus* is a transformed Jonson, and Jonson's Agrippina is as unsuccessful and ineffectual as he.

Jonson begins and ends Act Four with Agrippina; it is her (and his) act, her (and his) practiced social performance. Act Four opens with advice to Agrippina: "You must haue patience, royall AGRIPPINA" (IV.1). In a line reminiscent of *Poetaster's* "apologeticall Dialogue," Jonson has Agrippina dismiss the advice for patience just as the Dialogue's "Author" dismissed the boy players with whom he spoke. Instead she, like Jonson with his

rushed *Poetaster* and apology, will act according to her own desires, taking action by preempting, attacking, defending, revenging: “I must haue vengeance, first: and that were *nectar*/ Vnto my famish’d spirits” (IV.2-3). If she cannot act as her personal experience dictates and succeed after the exertion of her personal power, she will not demur but commands that “Fortune” “strike” a “sodaine” end or “destinie” (IV.3-7). The remaining followers see her decision as “tyrannies, on your selfe” (IV.8), but Jonson indicates the opposite view and validates Agrippina’s placement of herself and her values above socially prudent action with a thirty-four line speech in which she explains and teaches.²⁸

The parallels to Jonson and his career continue as Agrippina’s opening speech continues. She too will “not feare” (IV.7) potential responses or outcomes, and she will not bend to the pressures around her, refusing capitulation and choosing instead to continue to be herself. Jonson’s use of both probing and rhetorical questions throughout Agrippina’s speech gives the speech thoughtful pauses and moments of silence which convey an inner mind at work and deepen the individuated personality he crafts for his dramatic double.

Is this the happiness of being borne great?

Still to be aim’d at? Still to be suspected?

To live the subject of all ieousies?

At the least colour made, if not the ground

To euery painted danger?

(IV.9-13)

As Jonson has her contemplate her social position, he delineates the pressures he sees associated with greatness – targeting, suspicion, jealousy, false accusation – pressures his previous play indicated Jonson believed directed at him and his talents. Agrippina’s

followers, like the boy players, urge safe action, but action that would compromise her values, that would yield social gain but at personal loss. The response Jonson gives Agrippina signals disdain; she replies as abruptly as Jonson, interrupting Gallus before he can finish a line – “What, my Gallus? (IV.15) – and continuing uninterrupted for another twenty-eight lines on the topics of what she will and will not do. This speech, Jonson emphasizes, belongs to Agrippina, to him, and argues the integrity of self, the “Be you your selues” (*Poet.* 5.3.621) with which his previous play ended.

The decision to measure self by an internal rather than social register offers a critique of social performance and destabilizes identity. Throughout *Sejanus* Jonson dramatizes the denizens of Rome setting themselves aside in order to achieve or maintain social power and position: “The way to rise, is to obey, and please/ ...[to] neglect/ The trodden paths, that truth and right respect” (III.735-37). Staging the struggle to maintain a performance in constant alignment with the empowered, Jonson reveals the confusion and doubt, loss of choice and ultimately of self: “These forked tricks, I vnderstand ’hem not,/ Would he would tell vs whom he loues, or hates/ That we might follow, without feare, or doubt” (IV.423-25). In Agrippina, however, Jonson crafts a character in concert with his own assertions. Just as Jonson’s previous authorial stand-in knew the poet’s intrinsic power of his pen but disdained on principle to use it, so does Jonson have Agrippina reject the reduction of her power to that of sexuality and have her disdain on principle to use that sexuality as weapon or defense (IV.15-17). As Jonson’s model of self-containment, right and virtue, Agrippina, as Jonson himself does when he claims to refuse reply to his rivals, embraces her subjugated position as proof of the moral authority possessed by standing firm to one’s convictions.

When Jonson dramatizes Agrippina's decision to be true to herself and her explanation of that decision, he underscores his own determination to leave comical satire behind for tragedy, to take his theories and practices on to the more fittingly "high, and aloof" (*Poet.* a.d.238). Of course, the complexity of character, both Jonson's own and those of the characters he creates, that his dramatic practice demands requires layers, idiosyncrasies and even the conflicts that lived experience with its fluctuating and situation relations creates. In *Poetaster* Jonson's choice of the historical Horace as an authorial stand-in adds a multiplicity of personality and perspective that includes reacting within social confines and one's own desires, learning from each experience, and willingly choosing how to respond to and in the world. As Jonson layers his own experiences onto the historical Agrippina, he again illustrates the necessary ability to adapt and the necessary interaction between and balance of social and self-awareness. The precarious nature of Agrippina's political situation, one in which rivals scheme to destroy her, demands a creative deployment of performances that up to this point in the play Jonson has had her loath to accept. As in his own career, Jonson finds a way to occupy a both/and position. In his characterization of Agrippina, she can at once be herself by refusing to compromise her values (Jonson's defense of his plays and his dramatic theory) and demonstrate that she has learned by observing the consequences of other, "true" and "virtuous" Romans (Jonson's two year hiatus from the stage after the rejection of his last comical satire). Because one must exist, acting and reacting, in a dynamic world, behavior may have to be modified to avoid personally unacceptable consequences.

...O, foolish friends,

Could not so fresh example warne your loues,

But you must buy my fauours, with that losse

Vnto your selues...

...leaue me.

Here to be seene, is danger; to speake, treason:

To doe me least obseruance, is call'd faction.

Your are vnhappy' in me, and I in all.

(IV.24-27, 29-32)

Jonson shows Agrippina refusing to compromise her own principles and to choose for her followers what they must decide for themselves. She can no longer protect and save those she loves just as Jonson could not protect and maintain his comical satire, but both can adapt. Jonson's own moves at the juncture between his Elizabethan or comical satire phase and his turn to tragedy offers a parallel, and again Jonson connects to and recreates himself in Agrippina.

The confluence of Silius' suicide (III.339), Sosia's arrest (III.355-64), and Sejanus's latest victory (IV.47-60) motivates Agrippina's decision to modify her actions. The adaptation maintains the integrity of her character, underscoring the ability to react within social confines and according to personal desire. To her character, then, Jonson adds a determination once again like his own; Jonson has Agrippina decide to teach. With Sejanus in possession of the "power, to turn those ruines all on vs" (IV.61), Jonson has Agrippina instruct her sons how to act according to their "birth, and bloud" (IV.65) and how to be worthy of the "vertue" of Rome (IV.63-76). As she urges her sons to emulate her own actions, Jonson blurs the lines between feminine and masculine and reasserts his point that in

societies built on power, hierarchies all are equal, equally subjugated and equally disempowered.

With Agrippina's instructions to her sons, Jonson creates another opportunity to incorporate his own instruction. Her call to

...Thinke on your birth, and bloud,
 Awake your spirits, meete their violence,
 'Tis princely, when a tyran doth oppose;
 And is a fortune sent to exercise
 Your vertue

(IV.65-69)

demands self-assessment, and with it Jonson asks his audience to consider its own location in terms of the social situation in his own London, his own England. Jonson then mitigates Agrippina's commands – think, awake, meet, exercise – with a question that focuses attention back on the social situation that instigated the lesson: “What can you hope, but all the change of stroke/ That force, or slight can give?” (IV.72-73). Jonson again dramatizes the balance between self and social awareness and, in Agrippina's next instruction, offers a middle ground. The commingled complexities of person, identity, position and social situation, require a presentation that suggests an integrated whole, and Jonson provides the model with Agrippina's closing couplet:

...then stand vpright;
 And though you doe not act, yet suffer nobly:
 Be worthy of my wombe, and take strong cheare;

What doe we know will come we should not fear.

(IV.73-6)

In Agrippina's words, Jonson offers both the passive and the active requirements of effective social performance while also indicating the likely points of fracture between character exteriority and interiority. Worthiness and fearlessness will be observable and judged while the persistence of purpose and principle will be known only to the passive actor. Agrippina Germanicus, like Benjamin Jonson, accepts and adapts to feelings of ineffectualness. At this point in the play, the results of the decided action remain unknown. When the end of the act and then the play reveal that Agrippina has been imprisoned and "confined," Jonson offers another personal argument: even if principled according to "truth and right respect" (III.737) like Agrippina (and Jonson himself), virtue, when unendorsed, unsupported and un-modeled by the political power, will be undermined as Jonson himself was undermined during the Poets' War. Further, and most significantly, the destruction of the feminine, here represented by Agrippina and Jonson in Agrippina, equates to the destruction of creativity, positive action and social progress.

Leveraging Livia for Place and Gain; or Leveraging Livia Survives the Play

At the surface level, Livia, another female character in *Sejanus*, would seem both to counter and to negate Jonson's alignment with and connection to the feminine. "Light Livia" (II.398), also described as among the "wittiest," "meriest," "wantonnest" (I.313) of women and herself as "quick, and quaintly spirited" (I.320), and, in particular, Livia's "cosmetics scene" with Eudemus in Act Two provide examples commonly used by critics as proofs of Jonson's misogyny.²⁹ Overlooked by the cursory view at the surface level of this character, however, is the role Livia plays in Jonson's own social performance, in *Sejanus* as the next

move in Jonson's dramatic career. In this context, Jonson's Livia offers an alternate phase of social interaction, of Jonson's social interaction in particular. While Arruntius keeps talking and Agrippina stoically acts according to principle, Livia capitulates and commits to a path intended to provide a consistent if not more elevated position in the social world. Her character's drive to survive determines her decisions, performances and actions.

Like the other characters in *Sejanus* onto whom Jonson layers the fragments of himself created in his decision to follow a "feminine humour," Livia provides another example that, female or male, all are equal in a subjugating world. With the character Livia, however, Jonson dramatizes the inability, despite repeated variations in social performance, to change the world to match one's own desires. In the enacted cycle of performance, reaction, recalibration, repetition, Jonson suggests his own inability, despite his repeated attempts, to change the dramatic landscape to match his own desires. As Jonson situates Livia in the striving and corrupting world of Tiberius and Sejanus' Rome, he creates a character acted upon by others without consent and as he dramatizes her responses, choices and failures, the individuated personality which emerges offers a coping mechanism for survival in a world where "no innocence is safe" (IV.40). Perhaps not surprisingly, the coping strategy Jonson practices with the Livia character will provide a basis for the "criminal types" (Herford and Simpson 2:20) Jonson will successfully center in his subsequent plays, characters who acquiesce to situation and then, like Livia, turn it to a survivalist's advantage.³⁰

Jonson introduces Livia by placing her within the network of her social connections. Before Jonson brings Livia to the stage, other characters label her "LIVIA, DRUSU'S wife" (I.181) and "LIVIA, the princesse" (I.279). Through these descriptions, Jonson indicates that

Livia is a lever, a hinge, a link to her husband and to the Roman leadership. She seems an extension of her husband and also provides a potential access point to him. As the emperor's son and heir, her husband Drusus in turn connects Livia to the uppermost echelon of Rome, giving Livia an enviable proximity to power and conferring a level of influence seemingly commensurate with Agrippina's. But Jonson does not craft Livia to be like Agrippina; Livia is not the head of her own household, she embodies possession not principle, and she is a reactor not a creator. These factors, all Jonson's play reveals about Livia before others move against her, supply reasons for her objectification, for others pursuit of her possession. Unlike Arruntius and Agrippina, then, Jonson emphasizes Livia's subjugated position. She is the possession of her husband, of the royal line and, before the end of Act One, she will be the object of Sejanus', and his physician proxy's, political designs and supposed affections.

In a revision of the historical record, a record Jonson alters in order to align the Livia character more closely with his own experience, Jonson moves his titular character Sejanus in pursuit of Livia for his own social gain not in retaliation to an injustice committed or perceived. Rather than dramatizing Sejanus's decision to procure Livia as a response to a political insult from her husband Drusus, Jonson introduces the proposed seduction of Livia in the play's argument, stages the seduction plan in Act One, and depicts the aftermath in Act Two. Significantly, Jonson's revision reveals Sejanus's plan to be one fueled only by naked ambition rather than one of revenge for a political insult, the slight from Drusus in the Senate at I.565.³¹ In separation from the crowd, Jonson has Sejanus review his plan.

If LIVIA will be now corrupted, then

Thou hast the way, SEIANVS, to worke out

His secrets, who (thou knowest) endures thee not,

Her husband DRUSUS: and to worke against them.

(I.569-72)

Establishing Livia herself as the first goal of Sejanus' actions, Jonson indicates Sejanus' corruption and, by contrast, the more positive, if more objectified, position of Livia; she neither knows about nor participates in Sejanus' manipulation of her physician (I.276-364) or the "private meeting" (I.352) arranged in exchange for "things, greater then thy largest hopes" (I.362). She is but a means to an end. In Act One it is the physician, not Livia, who is wooed and won, who commits himself fully to Sejanus. Livia's character makes no physical stage appearance at all.

Jonson begins Act Two with Livia already onstage and in conversation. Staging the equanimity of the stage trio Sejanus, Livia and the physician Eudemus, Jonson conveys that the first arranged meeting has long since passed, that Livia has acquiesced to the moves against her, and that the plot to assassinate Drusus has reached the final stage: "Drusus,/ (No more our husband, now) whom shall we choose/ As the most apt, and abled instrument,/ To minister it to him?" (II.10-12). With his decision to leave Sejanus' procurement of Livia offstage, he supplies a silence between the Act One machinations of Sejanus and the physician and the Act Two capitulation of Livia which suggests that even as Livia now acts in concert with the two social aspirants that she does so out of "high prudence" (II.92) and in reaction to their moves. With the progression of the scene, Jonson conveys the same message: Livia inhabits a subjugated position, one in which she has been acted upon by others and to which she now adapts accordingly.

After her initial response to Sejanus and Eudemus (II.7-11), Jonson deploys a combination of short, staccato sentences and silences to develop Livia's character.³² Her part

in the plot consists of questions – who will administer the poison (II.12) – and negations – “But...” (II.18), “No” (II.20), and “Neither” (II.21), and she stands silently (as does the physician) while for twenty-three lines (II.24-46) Sejanus flatters and promises her “triumphs in her proper sphere” (II.38), which he means for himself: “she and her SEIANVUS will divide” (II.39). Jonson uses the absence of dialogue for Livia as another layer of complexity for her; Jonson does not have Livia, unlike Agrippina, interrupt others to make her own points. Instead Jonson portrays Livia as a character coping with her situation, adaptively using the skills she possesses to flourish in the place where she finds herself. The current place happens to be in the sights of the striving Sejanus, and throughout his monologue Jonson demonstrates how the words of praise Sejanus speaks – as has been and will be the case throughout the play as a whole – manipulate and create the situation Sejanus desires. His words frame her person; her silence speaks acquiescence.

According to Sejanus, Livia “was not created for the idle second/ To a poore flash, as DRVSVS” (II.34-35), and she “will” use her “wisdom, iudgment, strength,/ Quicknesse, and will, to apprehend the meanes/ To [her] owne good, and greatness” (II.29-31). Jonson, of course, emphasizes Sejanus’ naked ambition as he places his desires onto Livia as if they were her own, but Jonson also reveals the bind that traps Livia. She wisely “apprehends” not only that in Sejanus’ pursuit of power she may achieve “greatness” that exceeds her current “idle second” but also that for her “owne good” she cannot make an enemy of the Sejanus who has more influence on the emperor than his own son and the power to “ruin...us” all (IV.61). Drusus will fall to Sejanus, and without him Livia will be unprotected, as vulnerable as Agrippina. Jonson punctuates Livia’s predicament and unveils her own cunning when he interrupts Sejanus’ bombastic encomia, the end of which focuses

completely on himself (II. 39-45) not on Livia, with a noise from another room. A startled Sejanus reacts, immediately assigning the sound to a person – “Who’s that?” (II.45) – and then commanding the physician to assuage his fear the person is Livia’s husband – “EVDEMVS,/ Looke, ’tis not DRVSVS?” (II.45-46). Significantly, Jonson has Sejanus address the physician Eudemus before he addresses Livia. As he did with his ambitions earlier in the scene, Jonson also has Sejanus displace his fears on to Livia: “Ladie, doe not feare” (II.46). The reply Jonson gives Livia again reveals her position: “Not I, my lord. My feare, and loue of him/ Left me at once” (II.47-48). Jonson uses another negation from Livia to lay the fear back on Sejanus. Her asserted “Not I” implies “but you,” and the trailing “my lord” both defines the “not I” as Sejanus and softens the implication of her slander with a well-placed reminder of the hierarchy between them. Her line, delivered as she walks away – “Illustrious ladie! stay—” (II.48), seems to offer Sejanus the abuses of Drusus he wants to hear. With closer examination, however, the line devolves to vague meaninglessness. Its multiple significations – her fear and love left at the same time, left when Sejanus arrived, left when Drusus did not appear, left with the knowledge that he is not vulnerable in this moment, etc. – ultimately offer nothing. Jonson indicates a pacified Sejanus by turning Sejanus’s attention away from Livia and onto the physician (II.49-53) until he quits the stage (s.d. II.53). With the few words she speaks and the stage business indicated in the surrounding dialogue, Jonson underscores Livia’s adeptness at social performance as she works within social confines and fulfills her own interests.

With the exit of Sejanus, the infamous “cosmetics scene” begins. As with the rest of Jonson’s Elizabethan plays, examination of the text countermands the critical commonplace which reads the scene as an example of Jonson’s misogyny. The scene itself offers an

example of the interaction of multiple levels of social performance and supplies additional characterization designed to deepen Livia's individuated personality. Again Jonson deploys silence, short sentences and stage business to layer Livia's performance. Rather than support the typical reading that this scene shows Livia's eagerness to make Sejanus fall in love with her,³³ the absence of Livia's dialogue, the brevity of her comments, and her silence during the physician's mini-monologues reveal her antipathy. With the departure of Sejanus, Jonson has not Livia but the physician wooed and won in Act One rhapsodize over Sejanus in his absence:

...Fortunate Princesse!
 How are you blest in the fruition
 Of this vnequall man, this soule of *Rome*,
 The empires life, and voice of Caesar's world!

(II.53-6)

In reply, Jonson has Livia offer enough response to propel the conversation forward and to keep herself protected in the event any of her words were repeated (I.343-6)³⁴: "So blessed, my EVDEMUS, as to know/ The blisse I haue, with what I ought to owe/ The meanes that wrought it. How do'I look today?" (II.57-9). The parroting of the physician's language, the absence of reference to any man save Eudemus, the vague and open-ended word choices, the emphasis of the couplet combine to signal calculated performance; in this case, one crafted specifically for the physician as audience. The abrupt change in tone, from the formal to the slangy compression "do'I," and topic shifts the focus onto Livia. In this way, Jonson shows her deft handling of situation and performance and dramatizes self-protection, promotion and

interest. She may be acted upon by forces larger than herself, but Jonson emphasizes that she copes with and adapts to the situation by turning it to advantage.

With the continuation of the “cosmetics scene,” Jonson stages Livia in the life she lived before Sejanus and the life she intends to maintain despite him. Perhaps positioning Livia before a mirror as large as is the stage, Jonson dramatizes a beauty-salon-style exchange between Livia and her make-up artist, Eudemus, who, not coincidentally, does most of the talking.³⁵ As Jonson focuses Livia’s attention on herself and the cosmetics, he illustrates the moment as one in which Livia is acted upon by another, literally layered with affectations, even as the moment offers pleasure and symbolizes a certain lifestyle. As Jonson maintains Eudemus’ focus on Sejanus, he emphasizes the moment as an opportunity for Eudemus to seize upon Livia as an object he can use to win Sejanus’s favor. The scene progresses with Eudemus’ praise of Sejanus and with Livia’s evasive parries. In this way, Jonson establishes Livia as a self-contained actor separate from, yet exerting influence for her own ends within a social game. Each time Eudemus’ praise overwhelms the topic of the Livia’s person and the cosmetics, Jonson has Livia interject: Eudemus’ “SEIANVS, for your love! His very name/ Commandeth aboute CVPID, or his shafts——” (II.65-66) is cut short by Livia’s “Nay, now yo’haue made it worse (II.67); Eudemus’ talk of Sejanus’ “charme,” his “absolute power,” his ability “To satisfie for any ladies honour” (II.67-70) is deflected by Livia’s query “What doe you now, EVDEMVS?” (II.71); and Eudemus’ consideration of Sejanus’ honored actions (II.72-75) is stifled with a commanding “Here, good physitian” (II.75). The resulting one-sided affair illustrates Livia’s principal occupation with herself and her exasperation with Eudemus and Sejanus.

Jonson emphasizes Livia's irritation when he does not allow Eudemus to be dissuaded. For another thirteen lines, he traps Livia in her beauty chair, a captive audience to the lecturing physician. In the advice Eudemus offers – "studie to perserue the loue/ Of such a man" (II.76-77), take care of your teeth and skin (II.77-81), use your body to enslave him (II.81-84), be glad he has "put away his wife" (II.85), Jonson introduces the perception that Livia's sexuality empowers her character. He then dismantles the perception, giving Livia a defensive outburst and her most specific words of the scene: "Haue we not return'd/ That, with our hate of DRVSVS, and discouerie/ Of all his counceles?" (II.88). With her first use of the royal "we," Jonson separates her actions and decisions with regard to Sejanus, separates these layers of her performance from those which indicate an alternative self-identity: "How do'I look?" Jonson's Livia knows Sejanus approaches her not for her person but for her husband, and she knows what she must do to continue safely in the corruption of Tiberius and Sejanus's Rome. The course of the scene underscores the point that, unlike Agrippina, Livia reacts within the social game, but she does not control it. In Livia, Jonson creates another phase of social interaction, one which modifies its own behavior, exerting what influence it may, to survive.

After her outburst, Jonson again sets Livia to listen in silence while Eudemus praises how "wisely" (II.90) she acts, recognizes her "high prudence" (II.92), and expounds upon the "fortune" that awaits her for aligning herself with Sejanus rather than Drusus (II.95-103). To emphasize her subjugated and reacting position, Jonson does not give her a reply and she does not speak again until Sejanus returns just long enough to give the pair instructions and depart again. When she does speak again, Jonson supplies Livia with an ambiguous verbal rebellion similar to her "Not I, my lord" (II.47) earlier in the scene before returning her to the

capitulating performer enacting the price of her maintenance. To Sejanus' good-bye, Jonson has Livia at first offer nothing: "I shall but change your wordes" (II.114). At one level Livia's reply reiterates exactly the good-bye Sejanus gave, maintaining equanimity by exchanging his sentiments with her own. On another level, however, the reply teases out the performance Livia has been giving throughout the scene as in her parroting of the words of both Sejanus and Eudemus she changes their words to have multiple meaning possibilities, meanings of her own.

Jonson lets this layer of personality appear only momentarily before covering it with the performance of the-means-to-an-end Livia who, but moments before Sejanus's return, was reminded of the cost attendant on her situation. Following her "Farewell" (II.114), Jonson has her remind Sejanus that she has divulged her husband's council to him – "You know, what I have told you" (II.116) – and then fall back from his praise – "Excellent lady,/ How you do fire my blood!" (III.118-19) – by covering her with yet another layer of performance, this one a formal couplet. Again Jonson uses the structured rhyme to emphasize the calculated nature of her performance: "Well you must go?/ The thoughts be best are least set forth to shew" (II.119-20). Jonson shows her in the midst of the work she performs simultaneously to demonstrate to Sejanus her openness to his demands while also rebuffing his advances.

The first 138 lines of Act Two comprise the whole of Livia's only scene in the play, and throughout the scene Jonson layers Livia's awareness of her own social performance with her reactions to the actions of those around her. Hers, Jonson demonstrates, is an intelligent implementation of performance in pursuit of self-interest, self-protection. Through the interactions of the social players, Jonson creates a distinct character for Livia,

one dominated by the layers of performance she gives but spiked with a cunning doubleness glimpsed in the ambiguity of her language. The limit of her stage time emphasizes that her character is one of utility and that, unlike Agrippina, is one defined not through initiative but through contrast. She is a consummate (re)actor, a social survivor struggling to maintain a place in a corrupt and corrupting world. Her final line of the play, one Jonson has her deliver after yet another mini-monologue from Eudemus, affirms her resilience and the facility with which she moves between performative positions. “I’le vse my fortune (you shall see) with reuerence” (II.137), she gravely replies. And then Jonson reveals a flip (hair and/or head toss implied) of her insouciance: “Is my coach ready?” (II.138).

Her last line hits the same notes Jonson did at the end of his own social performance in the apologeticall Dialogue: the assertion of what “I” will do (Jonson’s turn to tragedy), the promise of success (Jonson “com[ing] forth worth the iuy, or the bayes” (ad.235)), the reverence bestowed on the future action (Jonson seeing his work as “high and aloofe” (ad.238)), the commanding certainty that “you” shall bear witness (Jonson’s explanations and directives, the letter to the reader and apologeticall Dialogue itself), the tonally discordant, even contradictory, departure (Jonson’s final image is an insult equating his rivals to the “dull asses hoofe” (ad.239)). Jonson has Livia’s physical departure from the stage occur, like his own, on her own terms within the confines of the situation in which she, and he, finds herself and in turn acts/reacts. Further reference to Livia throughout the play transpires without consent or control, bandied about by other characters as Jonson himself in his own absence from the stage was bandied about by his rivals.³⁶ As *Sejanus, His Fall* crescendos to its tragic end, destroying innocent and corrupt alike, Jonson offers Livia’s silent and survivalist adaptations. Livia, like Jonson, survives the play.

With Livia's scene, Jonson enacts the construction of identity through the layering on of affect and performance, through the reaction of performance to the situation at hand. The scene also expresses Jonson's understanding of society's corruptible influence and offers an alternative phase of social interaction, one very different from those enacted by Arruntius and Agrippina. Livia's capitulation and thus seeming corruption as she responds to and pushes off both Eudemus and Sejanus parallels Jonson's imitations of his rivals as he responds to and ultimately rejects his critics. From this vantage when Jonson exposes the complex and interlaced layers of social performance, he reveals not an independent identity category but a fragmentary action-reaction to social pressure that discloses character, self, as an elaborate, external construction. The space of agency Jonson generates for Livia and, by extension, himself depends on the ability to bend without breaking, to contradict oneself as necessary, to adapt aggressively.

Jonson's characterization of Livia offers an alternate response to the marginalizing and feminizing power of society. Instead of showing her fighting against the corrupting influences as he did with his Agrippina character or ineffectively talking as he did with Arruntius, Jonson dramatizes her decision to embrace the powerlessness of the subjugated situation and work within its confines to create her own space. As with Agrippina, Jonson characterizes Livia as enacting, even while acted upon, her own character choices. Jonson's description in the play's center that "Livia, she can best, her selfe, resolute" (III.538) continues to place the agency of self-creation in the character's or the social performer's hands and indicates that variations in approach and performance are not only possible but necessary. As Jonson dramatizes Livia's deployment of a different set of individuated, situational and fluctuating performances throughout *Sejanus*, he reinforces his artistic theory

and dramatic practice by again staging the constructive and creative as well as destructive and damaging power of social performance.

With his first move into a second phase of his own dramatic career, Jonson practices multiplicity, staging the contradiction of his own current social position, fragmenting himself and his message, aligning himself throughout the play with the seemingly marginalized and ineffectual and, in particular, with the feminine. In *Agrippina*, Jonson stands “high and aloof” on principle, refusing to play the social games required by others, sacrificing control of the exterior representations of self in order to maintain and to match an interior understanding of “truth and right respect” (III.737) while also demonstrating a potential way to correlate the two. In *Livia*, Jonson adapts, dramatizing a modification in the approach to social performance and subsequent interactions necessary to survive despite the personal costs and contradictions. In his characterizations of the two women, Jonson turns ineffectiveness and inability – “the plaine, and passiuē fortitude,/ To suffer, and be silent” (IV.294-95) – into its own action. Balancing exterior representations and repetitions against social responses and reactions to generate character and its reception, Jonson dramatizes the ability – his own as well as others – to regain a measure, however uncertain, of control in a world seemingly set against such singularity.

Sejanus, His Fall represents Jonson’s departure from comical satire and the early phase of his dramatic career, and it also demonstrates that, despite the genre change, for Jonson as a playwright more has been redirected theoretically and dramatically than changed. From the title page with its Martius quote – “Non hic Centauros, non Gorgonas, Hapryiasque Inuenies: Hominem pagine nostra sapit” (Not here will you find Centaurs, not Gorgons and Harpies: ’Tis of man my page smacks)³⁷ – to scene after scene in which Jonson once again

teaches his audience to see and to read social performance, Jonson asserts the continuation of his dramatic theories by introducing the redirection of his dramatic practice himself. With *Sejanus*, Jonson will continue to hold up “a mirroure/ As large as is the stage” (*EMO* Ind.119-20) to his world, fulfilling the Poet’s obligation to speak and to teach to his social moment. The moment, however, is one that has shaken his belief in social reform and fostered a pessimistic outlook on the degeneracy he sees everywhere in his society. Chafing against the marginalized, subjugated, one-down position in which he now finds himself, Jonson in his *Sejanus* turns to a cynical rather than comical social satire: all – female and male – are equal, equally oppressed, equally disenfranchised, equally endangered; all, including himself, are targets of his ambivalence and aggression; all are but social actors and reactors. Again Jonson emphasizes that behaviors, responses and machinations of all characters, all social performers, are situational and fluctuating. As he aligns himself with his female characters, layering himself and his fragmented world view onto them, Jonson enacts the variations of social interaction and the various coping mechanisms required to move against and to survive in an ever-changing and uncertain, corrupt and corrupting society.

The feminizing trends apparent in *Sejanus*³⁸ disclose the next step in the feminizing of Jonson, the playwright and social actor, and of his culture with its marginalizing effects and redefinitions, notably James I’s vision of England as his “wife”³⁹ and subject. The feminizing trends in *Sejanus* also dramatize an explicit destabilization of gender as an identity category, and throughout the play Jonson replaces the fantasy of stable identity with the mutability of social performance. Jonson’s characterizations and the audience readings of those performances argue against concreteness and binary limits and for the complexity and multiplicity of character. Ultimately, Jonson argues, we are not man or woman, monarch

or poet, but we are what we stand for: We are the enactments of our values and our actions in the situations in which we find ourselves. We are at once ourselves and the performance we give. Jonson himself, his dramatic production, his female characters, his artistic theories, practices and choices, all reveal Jonson to be less rigidly attached to the patriarchal values his work and supposed misogyny have helped scholars to define. Close and attentive reading of Jonson and his plays demonstrates Jonson offering alternatives to type and crafting individuated and layered characterizations which privilege interactive and reactive performance. Throughout his career, and particularly in the Elizabethan phase of his drama, Jonson and his plays flirt with the feminine, deploying, dramatizing, delighting in a more playful use of gender than has been previously acknowledged.

NOTES to CHAPTER SIX

¹ All quotations from *Poetaster or The Arraignment* and *Sejanus, His Fall* unless specifically noted, can be found in Herford and Simpson 4:185-325 and 4:327-486.

² At this point in his career Jonson had spent 7 of his 29 years in the theatre. After his 1603 return, he would remain connected to stage and performance for the rest of his life. He died in 1637. See Riggs 20-21 and 343-48.

³ Jonson's only previous appearance as "Author" instead of a fictionalized authorial stand-in occurred for a single line (Ind.11) in the opening Induction to *Cynthia's Revels*.

⁴ For details of the Poets' War, see Bednarz *Shakespeare*, Penniman and Small.

⁵ "Deeply disillusioned" (9) is the complete phrase Ayers uses in his Revel's edition of *Sejanus* to describe the apologeticall Dialogue. Scholarly work on *Sejanus* moves in two directions. The first direction connects the play to the high comedies *Volpone* (1606), *Epicoene* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610) and even *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), suggesting *Sejanus* as an influential precursor to these plays. For examples, see Ayers Introduction, McDonald "Jonsonian Comedy," Sweeney "Sejanus." McDonald and Sweeney both note the structural connection between *Sejanus* and the comedies. The second direction discusses *Sejanus* as part of a pair of Roman tragedies with *Catiline* (1611). For examples, see Patterson, Ayers "Nature" and Henderson. In these critical discussions, *Sejanus* is read as a thoroughly Jacobean play.

I include *Sejanus* with my dissertation on Jonson's Elizabethan phase because it provides another example of Jonson's consistent both/and position as a dramatist. In the specific instance of *Sejanus*, Jonson uses elements of both Jacobean tragedy and Elizabethan comical satire. The play itself was written in the two years preceding Elizabeth I's death and staged for the first time at the very beginning of James I's reign in 1603.

Cynthia Bowers has also made recent notice of the traditional, critical view of *Sejanus* although she never mentions the primary "influence" strand of discussion. "Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* (1601) and *Sejanus His Fall* [sic] (1603; 1605) are rarely examined side-by-side; rather critics and biographers isolate *Poetaster* as an artifact of the poetomachia [sic] and link *Sejanus* to Jonson's other Roman tragedy, *Catiline* (1611)" (153). Bowers' article links *Poetaster* and *Sejanus* to argue Jonson's positions on censorship, free speech, and the Bishops' Order of 1599. See Bowers 153-72.

⁶ For textual analysis of the apologeticall Dialogue, see conclusion of Chapter 5 "When Chloe Met Julia."

⁷ The ideological approach or, said another way, the granted or commonsensical approach to a "feminizing effect" I use here and throughout is entirely normative, even stereotypical. Hence the challenges to the static marker I see offered by Jonson's dramatic canon.

⁸ Jonson's designation of certain behaviors as of "a feminine humour" appears in the midst of a list of the revenges "they [his fellow poets] know I dare" (*Poet.* ad.158). The full quotation is:

But, to what end? When their own deeds have marked them
 And, that I know, within his guilty breast
 Each slanderer bears a whip, that shall torment him,
 Worse, then a million of these temporal plagues:
 Which to pursue were but a feminine humour
 And, far beneath the dignity of man." (ad.174-9)

Jonson has just spent the preceding twenty lines offering revenge schemes. In the following forty-five lines, he actively takes up his own "feminine humour," taking his revenge in print by "pursuing" and responding to the "censures" of his peers.

⁹ In Jonson's apologeticall Dialogue, tragedy itself is also gendered as woman: "If *Tragædie* haue a more kind aspect./ Her fauours in my next I will pursue" (ad.224-5).

¹⁰ See all chapters of this dissertation for specific examples from each play.

¹¹ For discussion of Jonson's character Fallace as a desiring woman, see Chapter Three "Pointing Out a Savvy Fallacy: Comical Satire's First Phase and the Women of *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599)."

¹² For discussion of Jonson's characters Arête and Cynthia as examples of virtue, see Chapter Four "Boys Will Be Girls and Girls Will Be Boys but Does *Cynthia Revel* at the Blackfriars?"

¹³ While this chapter focuses on Agrippina and Livia, the other women of the play including 1) Augusta the mother of the emperor who, like Lady Ferneze in *The Case is Altered*, emerges in the play as a presence from the past, 2) Sosia the wife of Silius and friend of Agrippina who provides the most outspoken voice in the play, 3) Apicata, Sejanus' widow and the one who denounces the false performances of others, especially Eudemus in II.87, and even 4) Lady Fortuna herself provide additional examples of Jonson's fragmentation of himself and his arguments about artistic theory and dramatic practice.

¹⁴ Whether part of the cause or part of the effect of the feminization of English transpiring in England in the late sixteenth-/early seventeenth-century, it is no mere coincidence that James I spent his monarchy equating and positioning himself as "husband" to England and relegating its subjects to the role "wife." See, in particular, James I's *The True Law of Free Monarchies: of the Recipric and Mutual Duty Betwixt a Free King and His Natural Subjects*.

¹⁵ See Riggs 86-102. During these years of retirement Jonson's only dramatic production will be Additions to the *Spanish Tragedy* (1602).

¹⁶ For Fate in *Sejanus* as having elements of both providential design and personal purpose, see Dollimore.

¹⁷ For discussion of gods versus humanity in *Sejanus*, see Barish Introduction 23.

¹⁸ Jonson places words from *Every Man Out* in Arruntius' mouth both to establish the connection and to undermine it. Jonson's program and purposes have changed. In *Every Man Out*, the authorial stand-in Asper/Macilente promises that Jonson would "oppose a mirroure,/ As large as is the stage, whereon we act:/ Where they shall see the times deformities" (Ind.118-120). In *Sejanus*, Arruntius shifts the focus away from society, the times, and to the individual: "Times? the men/ The men are not the same: 'tis we are base,/ Poore, and degenerate" (I.86-7).

¹⁹ For discussion of Arruntius as ineffective fool rather than social cure, see Marotti.

²⁰ For discussion of *Sejanus*' structure as natural lead to Jonson's subsequent comedies – *Volpone* (1606), *Epicoene* (1609) and *The Alchemist* (1610), see McDonald "Jonsonian Comedy" and Sweeney *Sejanus*. Ayers has most recently (1999) edited *Sejanus*.

²¹ *Sejanus* also differs from the majority of Jonson's plays in that it most closely follows the traditional five act structure of Renaissance drama: exposition and introduction of plot and character, action and development, climax and reversal, tying up of loose ends, denouement.

²² For Jonson's first allusions to a turn to Roman settings, see *Poetaster* setting and character, 3.5 and "apologeticall Dialogue."

²³ See Lake for a reading of *Sejanus* in which Jonson's use of the marginalized Agrippina and the Germanicans provides a lens through which to read the marginalized and challenging situation of Catholics in Elizabeth's reign.

²⁴ We will not see Jonson invest his personal biography so completely in a female character again until he offers Ursula in *Bartholomew Fair* (1614).

²⁵ Jonson also uses Agrippina as a foil for Sejanus. That, however, is the topic of another paper: Hayes, Tara J. "Going Ganymede: Sexual Ambiguity in Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* and *Epicoene*." Newberry Library, Chicago. 26 Apr. 2003.

²⁶ For discussion of Agrippina and the Germanicans as representative of a "whole heroic world," see Barton 100-1.

²⁷ While throughout this scene, Jonson has Silius urge Agrippina to prudence, wariness and less conspicuous assertions of her self and her beliefs, Jonson will have Silius himself offer the ultimate "example" (III.343) of self-conviction and consistency. In Act Three when Silius is brought before the Senate on charges of treason based on comments overheard "at Agrippina's table" (III.273), he refuses to capitulate to their views. Rather he, like Agrippina in Act Two, asserts his own identity ("I am" at (III.234, 235, 330)), demands

that his enemies “Reueale your selues” (III.240), and lectures his captive audience on honor, virtue and reading performances. Note especially:

Since I haue done thee that great seruice, CAESAR,
Thou still hast fear’d me; and, in place of grace
Return’d me hatred

(III.300-302),

Your studies are not how to thanke, but kill.
It is your nature to haue all men slaues
To you, but you acknowledging to none.
The meanes that makes your greatnesse, must not come
In mention of it; if it doe, it takes
So much away, you thinke: and that, which help’d,
Shall soonest perish, if it stand in eye,
Where it may front, or but vpbraide the high

(III.308-15),

and

The coward, and the valiant man must fall,
Only the cause, and manner how, discernes them:
Which then are gladdest, when they cost vs dearest.
Romanes, if any here be in this *Senate*,
Would know to mock TIBERIVS tyrannie,
Looke vpon SILIVS, and so learn to die.

(III.334-39)

After this final word, Jonson has Silius commit suicide onstage, an act requiring no interpretation, a defiant act to be taken at face-value. In the aftermath, Jonson shows the men of the Senate scrambling to revise Silius’ meaning by assigning their own interpretations.

²⁸ For discussion of the eloquence of Agrippina’s speeches, see Herford and Simpson II:19.

²⁹ For critical interpretations and uses of the “cosmetics scene,” see Ayers Introduction, Barton, Evans *Contexts*, Craig, Donaldson, Kay *Ben Jonson*.

³⁰ For further discussion, see Herford and Simpson, *Sejanus* Intro 1-28 and Bevington 72-89. In this play, most often paired with *Volpone* (1606), critics see Livia as a precursor to the unrepentant “criminal” character that will elevate Jonson’s Jacobean comedies to “major” (Bevington) status.

³¹ See *Sejanus*, Argument lines 7-11, I.369ff, and Ayers Introduction 10-16.

³² Livia’s lines, are often single word responses like “No” and “Neither.” See II.13, 18, 20, 21, 22, 47-48, 57-59, 61, 67, 71, 75, 88-90, 113-18, 119-20, 121-23 and 136-38.

³³ See Ayers Introduction, Barton, Brock 155, Evans *Contexts*, Craig, Donaldson, Kay *Ben Jonson*.

³⁴ Recall that in Act One Sejanus woos Eudemus, seducing from him information about the ladies on whom he attends and that the physician promises to report all he learns of Livia to Sejanus. See I.260-365.

³⁵ During the “cosmetics scene,” Jonson does not have Livia reference or discuss Sejanus a single time. Significantly, Jonson also does not have Livia reference Sejanus in the play as a whole. Instead, Jonson dramatizes Livia’s reactions to the machinations of Sejanus and Eudemus. Interestingly, Jonson does have Livia speak of her husband repeatedly; see II.9-12, 13, 47, 89-90, 122.

³⁶ During his two years away from the stage, his rivals characterized Jonson as Horace in Dekker’s *Satiromastix* (1601), as Ajax in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (1601), through mocking reference in Marston’s revision of *Antonio and Mellida* (1602).

³⁷ From the 1605 quarto to the 1640 Folio, the Martius epigraph, despite all the additional revisions Jonson makes as author and editor, remains consistent. For this translation, see W.C.A. Ker’s Loeb edition (London 1950); see also Jowett 175-86.

Note that Jonson’s epigraph selection emphasizes the “page” rather than the stage and as such marks another key transition in Jonson’s career. While *Sejanus*, the play, may have been hissed off the stage, its 1605 publication earned an extensive and admiring readership. See the encomia preceding the play text in the 1605 quarto, Ayers Introduction 49-69, Craig 95-102, and Loxley 25.

³⁸ In keeping with the focus of my dissertation, I have discussed the primary female characters in the play. That said, the feminizing effects I have been discussing are equally apparent in the character Sejanus. Sejanus occupies the center of his dramatic world and, as such, he provides the standard against which the other characters are measured and judged. The ambiguous sexual codes surrounding Sejanus also function as a measure. Diminishing the fixedness of gender and sexual categories, these codes establish the possibility of fluid transition between positions. Throughout the play and with an elaborate variety of performative words, gestures and actions, Jonson pieces together a constructed Sejanus character.

Crafting for Sejanus a common identity with Tiberius’s mother Augusta, Jonson complicates conventional gender identity and performance. Defining Sejanus against Agrippina, Jonson crosses the permeable boundaries of gender and begins to dismantle the normative definitions. Gender, once again, appears as only a performance, an imitation, a shifting and shuffling of words, impressions and acts. With the layers given to the sexuality of Sejanus – boy prostitute, father, partner of the emperor – and to the gendered constructions of the play’s characters, Jonson depicts an evolving and mutually influencing series of sexual and gender ambiguities which expose the parody of gender. Together the play and its parody present gender as fluid and foundationless, as sets of scripts whose meanings derive only from one another.

While the play itself ends gruesomely, Sejanus punished in the traditional Roman fashion designated for traitors, dismembered and tossed toward the Tiber, I do not agree with

Bruce R. Smith's argument in "Rape, Rap, Rupture, Rapture" that this is Jonson meting out punishment specifically for Sejanus's "homosexual transactions" (118). (Significantly, the children of Sejanus, an innocent daughter and a son, are also dispatched at the play's end.) The homosexual transactions that assist in the characterization of Sejanus emphasize the tenuousness rather than the solidity of sex and gender codes and roles.

³⁹ See James I's *Basilikon Doron*.

CONCLUSION

Women and Jonson, Jonson and Women

...one is not born,
but rather becomes a woman.
Simone de Beauvoir

And so, in final refutation of the critical misunderstandings of the man and his work, I assert again: Ben Jonson did not hate women. Ben Jonson was a woman...as we are all women.

In her then revolutionary 1949 *Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir challenged the essentializing understanding of gender identity which accepted that we are as the externals of biology indicate, that we are “born” and thus must remain that way. In place of this static view, de Beauvoir offered an alternative that focused not only on our beginning but also on our constant, dynamic, reciprocating and repeating actions; we “become” that way.¹ In her work, de Beauvoir explored all the forces, including the biological ones, which shaped women and a woman’s identity, and she did so by allowing in all the contradictions, nuances, particularities, ambiguities and ambivalences that add up to the sum of everyday, situated, experienced, lived-in life. In his own dramatic career, Jonson theorized then followed a dramatic practice in which his demand for theatrical verisimilitude crafts character dependent on layers of identity created in poetry and in performance, in the description of character and in the dynamic character actions of becoming. These constant, dynamic, reciprocating and repeating actions include those to whom characters speak, the content of those speeches, and even the particularities of the situations in which they find themselves. In Jonson’s work, his female characters reconcile the same seemingly exclusive ideas, namely biological determinism and social construction, de Beauvoir’s work uncovers. For Jonson, then, because the complexity of character demands a combination of the both/and position,

characterization must include observable, lived experience, and the open-ended and ongoing interaction between the individual, the person and/or the character, and the world in which each half of the interaction continuously constructs the other. For Jonson, character, self, is at once a being and a becoming. Jonson's theatricalized social performances, then, construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct the various socially manufactured and artificial norms determining gender identity. The interactions between verisimilitude and social performance in Jonson's work and career demonstrate how it is that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman," how it is that we are all both/and, how each of us has or enacts an experience in which we all become women, in which we all embrace the supposed feminine.

Throughout this dissertation, I have deployed gender as a tool with which to stress the crucial importance of dis-identification from dominant norms of identity and have offered examples from Jonson's early dramatic work which indicate the way his female characters and characterization choices complicate, challenge and even dismantle normative gender types. I have also suggested that by focusing on the social performances each of us must give in public and private/non-public situations in order to compete and to survive Jonson's dramatic strategies take a step toward the redefinition of the roles between and within the sexes, the genders. That said, my primary concern has been to focus attention on Jonson's female characters, to reframe the perceptions surrounding representations of and relationships with women in the work of Jonson, and to demonstrate his playful use of gender as well as to provide examples of his playful gender. Jonson's individuated and layered characterizations of women and his explicit destabilization of gender as an identity category craft female characters who emerge as complex combinations of many positions, female characters who at the same time trouble and even transcend the limits of those positions.

Bringing together all of the female characters from the Elizabethan plays in the Jonsonian canon, I reveal Jonson's awareness and use of gender identity as a mutable construct. Throughout his career, Jonson's experimentation participates in a reconstruction and alteration of representable gender because of his awareness, exploitation, and insistence of staging social performance as a significant part of verisimilitude. My attention to and reframing of Jonson's work and the female characters in his plays not only refreshes our approach to Jonson but also, by extension, makes available a new way to see the work of Shakespeare and other contemporaries.

The new approach offered in this dissertation – an approach which considers the mutually influential relationship between performances, the mutually influential relationship between the female characters Jonson creates, the mutually influential relationship between female patrons and performers who supported and collaborated with Jonson, and the mutually influential relationship between Jonson himself, his theories and his practice – encourages a reconsideration of all of Jonson's plays, of Jonson's impact on the craft of playwriting and on his contemporaries, and of what “women” and the relationship between the representations of women suggest both for our understanding of the deployment of gender categories and the development of dramatic artistic theory in the early modern period. As Jonson developed as a dramatist, he merged his dramatic practice with his artistic and theoretical arguments as proof that the only way to create character lay in staging the social performances people of all sexes, classes, races, social and economic statuses, and situations enacted in both public and private/non-public spaces as they work to get ahead and to get along in the social game of life. As a result, his dramatic production reveals the constructed basis of character and any identity associated with it, emphasizes the necessary interplay

between roles and realities and the enactments of both, and challenges normative gender types. As a result, his female characters playfully question, invert and even destroy static identity markers until Jonson himself is a part of the spectrum of womanhood established by his plays.

An examination of Jonson's female characters, the kind I have been doing throughout this dissertation, demonstrates that women stand at the forefront of Jonson's dramatic arguments and supply examples and models of his artistic and social theories in dramatic practice. From his first challenges to festive comedy and static identity based on stock types in *The Case is Altered* (1598) to his moves to destabilize gender as a category and to focus on social performance as the basis of character, of self-identity in his middle plays *Every Man In His Humour* (1598), *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) and *Poetaster* (1601) to his flirtation and fusion with his female characters in *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603), Jonson creates individuated and layered characterizations of women in all shapes, sizes, classes and attitudes. Return to, re-reading and close analysis of the specific texts and characters themselves – a primary focus and motive of this dissertation – reveal the playfulness of Jonson's representations and defeat claims of his misogyny. Jonson's adherence to verisimilitude, to the crafting of imitations observable in the social and political realities he perceived in his cultural interactions in the streets of makes each creation a uniquely concrete and embodied character, female and male.

By looking for the multiplicity and complexity created in the layers of character and performance, my analysis of Jonson's representations of women for the stage during the Elizabethan period not only corrects distortions about this major author but also provides groundwork for further studies of the relationship between the representations of women by

male authors such as Shakespeare and the development of dramatic artistic theory in the early modern period. My genealogy of Jonson's women in the Elizabethan plays (Rachel, Aurelia, Phoenixella in *The Case is Altered*; Dame Kitely, Bridget and Tib in *Every Man In of His Humour*; Lady Puntarvolo and her gentlewoman, Fallace and Saviolina in *Every Man Out of His Humour*; Cynthia and her courtly ladies, Geleia and Arete in *Cynthia's Revels*; Chloe and Julia and even Horace and the "Author" in *Poetaster*; Agrippina, Livia, Sosia and Fortuna herself in *Sejanus, His Fall*) is but a beginning. The analytical practices that brought each of these female characters to the forefront of Jonson's Elizabethan canon, however, offer strategies for looking at the rest of Jonson's dramatic work, for extending the genealogy of female characters, patrons and performers from *Eastward Ho!* (1605) and *The Masque of Blackness* (1605) to *Love's Welcome at Bolsover* (1634) and the *Sad Shepherd* and *Fall of Mortimer* fragments discovered after Jonson's death. Jonson does not discontinue the evolution of his artistic theories and dramatic practices begun in his Elizabethan, Poets' War phase; he continues to fine tune them, earning the recognized success and influence these early plays and female characters show him striving to achieve.

Before my final word, I would also like to suggest that my examination of women and Jonson brings new energy to the performance of his plays. Currently Jonson's plays are rarely revived because people have a misconception that his women are not "good" characters to play. My work makes the case that Jonson's Dame Kitely, Fallace, Julia and Chloe – to name a few – are as, if not more, satisfying for actors as Rosaline, Viola and Portia. Following Barbara Hogdon's definition of performance as a site where social meaning is (re)arranged and influenced by theatrical meaning, I call for the intervention of

female directors, performers and adapters who can find productive and rewarding ground in Jonson's plays.²

We must cast aside the constricting stereotypes which currently limit our understanding and approach to Jonson's work and Jonson's women. Revealing the critical precedents for the misnomers, misunderstandings and misdirections those precedents are will lessen their strength over the direction of Jonson scholarship with regard to women, in particular, but even so much more work remains to be done. I look forward to rereadings of all of Jonson's dramatic works and of *Epicoene's* titular character and the Ladies Collegiate, *Volpone's* Celia, *The Alchemist's* Doll Common, *Bartholomew Fair's* Ursula and Frances in *The Devil is an Ass* in particular for in these plays too, as in his early work, we will discover an openness and a playfulness at which we all should take another look. As each of Jonson's plays holds up a "mirroure" to "show the image of the times," so do Jonson's women "mirroure" images of women, their experiences, their performances in the "times" in which they are produced. Changing the way we see the women in Jonson's plays not only can extend the range of gender possibilities we imagine but can also change the ways we see the woman in ourselves.

NOTES to CONCLUSION

¹ Cf. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*

Jessica Rabbit: You don't know how hard it is being a woman looking the way I do.

Eddie Valiant: You don't know how hard it is being a man looking at a woman looking the way you do.

Jessica Rabbit: I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way. Who framed Roger Rabbit's *I was drawn this way*.

² For the specific call, see Hogdon 254-86.

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ABSTRACT**JONSON AND WOMEN;
OR, HOW ONE MAN'S INSISTENCE ON HIS OWN ARTISTIC THEORY
CHALLENGES DRAMATIC PRACTICES AND VIEWS OF HIS OWN GENDER
REPRESENTATIONS ON THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE**

by

TARA J. HAYES**December 2010**

Advisor: Dr. Arthur Marotti
Major: English (Literature)
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Literary scholars consider Jonson's treatment of women "uninspiring" and "misogynistic." Surprisingly enough, however, there are no studies of Jonson's women to verify this categorization. This dissertation addresses the oversight, analyzing the female characters in the plays Jonson wrote during the Elizabethan period and revealing what prevailing scholarship has missed in Jonson's work: his individuated and layered characterizations of women, his playful use of gender and use of playful gender, his destabilization of gender as an identity category. With each play and each female character Jonson created as guides, I dismantle the standard consensus on Jonson and women and challenge the generalizations limited focus on and analysis of his texts continues to perpetuate.

Attention to his representations of women is not only relevant but long overdue. The texts themselves reward that attention: in description and in detail, with the idiosyncratic speech and behavior patterns, the dramatic women differ recognizably from one another and

from the idealizing or disparaging stereotypes traditionally populating Elizabethan plays. The interplay between theatrical verisimilitude (staged realism dependent on the layers of identity which include those to whom characters speak, the content of that speech, and in which situation in which they find themselves...both in Jonson's plays and in Jonson's career) and social performance construction (the concept of socially manufactured and artificial norms determining gender identity) energizes my analysis of Jonson's theatrical and historical women.

This dissertation provides a first step toward a comprehensive treatment of Ben Jonson's female characters, patrons and performers and reveals that Jonson was much more innovative, open, realistic, and sensitive to gender identity, representation, and agency than has been allowed (or can be expected when so few of Jonson's plays are actually considered.) By presenting the complete spectrum of Jonson's representations and interactions with women in his Elizabethan plays, I not only correct distortions about this major author but also I provide the groundwork to reevaluate feminist Shakespearean commentary. Jonson's experimentation leads to a reconceptualization of representable gender and the evolution of dramaturgical realism, developments that culminate, of course, in modern dramatic art.

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 “Comical Satire, Merchant and *Merry Wives*, and Jonson's Playful Gender,” RMMLA Conference, 20-22 October 2005, Couer d'Alene, ID.
 “In Manner Consequential: *Jephtha, Titus*, Women and Sacrifice,” GEMCS Conference, 23-26 October, 2003, Newport Beach, CA.
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