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Ben Jonson and the Court.

Mildred Shows Chapman
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BEN JONSON AND THE COURT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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ABSTRACT

This study endeavors to show Ben Jonson's relationship with the courts of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I and the influence that each of the courts exerted on his literary career. One major aim is to determine to what extent the court affected Jonson's writings, particularly his dramatic works; a second is to ascertain to what degree the court and court society influenced his choice of subject matter; a third is to show Jonson's conception of royalty and nobility, and more importantly, his opinions of their aristocratic society. This involves several lines of investigation, but the major endeavor centers on researching all of Jonson's extant works and selecting for study those that in any manner reflect his conception of the court or that mirror courtly life.

Although this inquiry focuses its attention on the plays, it of necessity gives consideration to the masques, poems, dedications, letters, the Discoveries, the Conversations, and comments on Jonson by others. Even though this is primarily a literary study, it inevitably makes use of materials of biography, history, and literary history that shed light, if only obliquely, on ways in which the court influenced the dramatist's progress. Thus an introductory
chapter shows the dependence of Jonson and his fellow-playwrights on noble patronage and protection. Jonson himself often had to call upon his noble friends and patrons to intervene with the legal authorities in his behalf.

For the purpose of showing Jonson's changing attitudes toward the court, I discuss the plays and most of the other works in the chronological order in which they are written. Thus, Chapters One and Two focus attention on his satirical depiction of certain affected courtly manners in his two earliest comedies and on his progressively more pronounced attack on court behavior in the comical satires. Jonson is first and foremost a reformer, and he attempts to point up the undesirable aspects of the court because he feels that they are not only detrimental to aristocratic society but a corrupting influence on society at large.

The next part is a study of the period in which the playwright achieved his greatest success, both in drama and in favor at court. It shows Jonson's rise to a place of prominence at court, discusses his preeminence as a writer of masques, examines those works that relate to the court, and shows the strong influence that the court of James I exerted on his literary endeavors, particularly his plays. Despite his high place at court, Jonson shows considerable concern about certain economic evils of the age that were sanctioned by the court and nobility.

The last chapter shows Jonson's decline at court
under Charles I and later a slight resurgence of royal favor, even though he attacked the ultra-refined tastes of the new court and its doting on elaborate spectacle, courtly romances, and Platonic posturing. Throughout his career, Jonson strongly denounces any influences that will undermine the great image that he believes the court should project.
INTRODUCTION

THE RELIANCE OF THE THEATER ON COURT PROTECTION AND PATRONAGE

The important role that the courts of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I, played in the growth and development of English drama can hardly be overemphasized. The period from the accession of Queen Elizabeth until the closing of the theaters in 1642 is one of unprecedented dramatic activity. During the reign of Elizabeth, modern English drama came into being and came to the fore as a full-blown genre; under James I it attained an excellence unsurpassed in the history of literature; and in the reign of Charles I, despite its qualities of decadence, drama continued to flourish and to dominate the literary scene.

Royal interest, patronage, and protection not only contributed immeasurably to the great forward strides in the dramatic movement, but also figured prominently in helping drama to survive. For example Ward, in speaking of the Elizabethan age, says that the popular drama "would have run a serious risk of drying up, if not of being extinguished, had it not been for the patronage which was above
the law,"¹ and C. G. Fleay observes that "had it not been for the Queen's liking for the drama and the courtiers' imitation of her taste . . . it would have been long before the stage would have emerged from its earlier condition as a mere vehicle for the production of mysteries, miracles, and moral interludes."²

The Queen's fondness for dramatic performances, strongly evidenced from the beginning of her reign onward, steadily affected the strength of drama. Shortly after her accession, dramatic entertainment became the court fashion. Between the years 1559 and 1586, more than two hundred dramatic performances were given at court, which occasions Schelling's remark that "it is probable that no week in any year elapsed without at least one afternoon or evening devoted to this form of amusement."³ Moreover, she was provided with her favorite diversion throughout the realm by subjects anxious to please their sovereign. Noblemen in and near London, gentlemen residing in the country, the colleges of the two universities, and the Inns of Court were happy to entertain her Majesty with dramatic productions. And as was to be expected, most of them vied with one

³Felix E. Schelling, Elizabethan Drama 1558-1642 (New York, 1908), I, 100.
another in the elaborateness of their entertainment. Ward comments that there were many competitors "for the smiles of the Queen" and "a lavish expenditure upon her favorite amusement was incurred both by her and for her."^4

Queen Elizabeth's love for plays remained steadfast with the passing of the years, and so did the nobles' eagerness to supply them. As a result, theatrical performances became readily accessible to the people, who, in time, came to prefer them to any other form of entertainment. Thus, with royal sanction and support and an ever-growing public demand for plays, the theater became London's most popular form of entertainment by the late part of the Tudor rule. Because of its immense popularity, the theater attracted scores of young men who felt that the stage offered both a livelihood and an opportunity to those who wished to make a reputation for themselves in letters.

On the whole, however, the theater did not prove as rewarding as was popularly supposed; on the contrary, it was attended by many adverse conditions, which were quite naturally imposed upon the dramatists. It is indeed important to recognize some of the special disabilities under which Shakespeare, Jonson, and their fellow playwrights pursued their profession, difficulties which made the support of the court and aristocracy essential.

^4Ward, I, 155.
To minds like these, it was doubtless quite discouraging to see that drama was only slowly and grudgingly accorded its deserved literary merit. The age, J. W. Saunders explains, exhibited a certain moral hesitation about the value of imaginative literary arts, particularly lyric poetry and drama. Even the aristocratic amateurs, who produced reams of lyrical poetry, poetic plays, and masques had definite reservations about these kinds of literature: the art served a worthy and needful purpose in the private courtly circles for which it was written, but it was perhaps too frivolous to be regarded as literature or to deserve the permanence of print. Courtier, humanist, Puritan, and critic measured all literature by the yardstick "Use." Literature to the Tudor mind was to be useful socially and religiously, which quite naturally meant that it must give prominent attention to moral instruction. In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham holds that literature is to both please and instruct, but he emphasizes that the gratification of pleasure is only a nominal consideration. Just a few years earlier Sidney had pronounced the same judgments in *The Defence of Poesie*. As is well known, Sidney did not hesitate to condemn the public theaters and the public balladists and rhymers, but he was hard pressed to defend the lyrical sonneteers of the court.

Saunders says that "he fell back on the insistence that good poetry was utile et dulce, upon classical and Biblical precedents, and advocated forms of poetry, like the epic poem and the play constructed on classical models, of which at that time English Literature had few examples."  

Thus, throughout the reign of Elizabeth I, drama received only token consideration as a branch of literature. Another reason advanced for this is that, prior to 1587, most of the plays performed by the men's companies were provided by members of the company, who had little or no education and who modeled their dramas on the old interludes. Queen Elizabeth, of course, could exercise her royal prerogative and demand plays written by men of the universities or the Inns of Court. But Fleay states that "until 1587 educated men who made it the business of their lives to promote the interest of the stage by their plays or their playing were unknown."  

Ward likewise points out that men of education did not write for public theaters, and he emphasizes that university men were "almost exclusively the representatives of higher intellectual training."  

Therefore, the age was very slow to accept dramatists as literary men. In fact, the word dramatist was not

6 Ibid., p. 62.
7 Fleay, A Chronicle History, p. 72.
8 Ward, A History, I, 450.
current in the language in the sixteenth century, and one who wrote for the stage was commonly known as a play-maker or a "maker of interludes." Playwrights could not expect to be recognized as men of letters on the basis of their dramatic endeavors; indeed, the only writers generally acknowledged as literary men were the historians, philosophers, theologians, and nondramatic poets. This accounts in part for the fact that Marlowe was best remembered for his **Hero and Leander** and that Shakespeare made his first bid for noble favor, not with a play, but with a narrative poem, **Venus and Adonis** (1593). It also accounts for part of the criticism that Jonson incurred in 1616 when he published his plays and masques under the title of **Works**.

The dramatist's profession was further discredited because it necessitated a close association of the playwright with the player. Several playwrights, of course, had originally been actors, and a few continued to act after they were established dramatists. Schelling insists that there were very few "actor playwrights," and he states that Peele seems to have been the only man of note who shared with Shakespeare the double function of actor and playwright. But Miss Phoebe Sheavyn points out that whether playwright or not, the social position of the actor was of

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9 Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama*, II, 375-76.
the lowest.  

Not all actors were regarded as vagabonds and outcasts, even though they were classed as such under the law. Yet, as Tucker Brooke notes, "The actor was not recognized in the reign of Elizabeth as a bona-fide wage-earner, and in a London still governed by the old guild system he had no professional safeguards." In part, the low status of actors stemmed from the early years of the century when the pioneer troupes were indeed recruited from vagabonds, adventurers, and others of the vagrant class; nevertheless, the low conduct of some actors doubtless contributed to their remaining in ill repute throughout the years. A royal edict of 1572, reaffirmed as late as 1596, declared that common players not belonging to a member of nobility would be dealt with as rogues and vagabonds. And important to notice is that successive royal statutes under James I and Charles I, as well as those issued through 1649, continued to refer to actors as "vagrants" and "rogues."

Equally as distressing to sensitive actors and dramatists was the low regard of gentlemen and educated men for the professional stage. J. Dover Wilson's discussion of the situation presents some interesting points. He


cites the Oxford controversy (1592-1599) between Dr. Gager, the Latin dramatist, and Dr. Rainolds, the theologian, and shows that while the dramatist staunchly defended drama at Oxford, he fully agreed with his opponent in the worst he had to say about "common playes." Wilson says, "As an occasional recreation for gentlemen, acting received his [Gager's] highest praise; as a regular means of livelihood, it was regarded with scorn." He further comments that "this contempt of the gentleman for the rising class of actors . . . was, undoubtedly, a factor in determining the social status of Shakespeare and his fellows."\textsuperscript{12} Hardin Craig, among others, finds evidence in the Sonnets that Shakespeare regarded his connection with the stage "as of doubtful respectability":\textsuperscript{13} In Sonnet CX he laments: "Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there/ And made myself a motley to the view," and in Sonnet CXI he deplores the fact that he earns his living by "public means" whereby his "name receives a brand."

The dramatist, perhaps, could better have endured his degrading station in life had he been adequately remunerated for his work. However, the drama did not provide a livelihood, and those who attempted to live from the sale

\textsuperscript{12}The Cambridge History of English Literature, eds. A. W. Ward and A. W. Waller (New York, 1933), VI, 450.


of their plays found themselves reduced to a wretched subsistence. Ben Jonson, certainly a great figure in drama, told Drummond that he never gained two hundred pounds for all his plays, which indicates that he averaged some twelve to fourteen pounds per play. This price is thought to be considerably above the average. Most historians fix the rate at five to eight pounds up until 1602; Fleay notes that there is no instance in Henslowe's Diary of more than eight pounds for any play, with six pounds as the usual price for a new one.

Obviously the dramatic poet had to find some means of supplementing his income. Occasionally a playwright added to his earnings by acting, but as has previously been mentioned, this case was rare. Schelling identifies only eight actor-playwrights, and Miss Sheavyn lists nine. Even fewer playwrights are known to have risen to the enviable position of "sharer." Miss Sheavyn says, "Nothing, perhaps, illustrates more clearly the general poverty, or the want of business ability of dramatic authors, than the fact that only three are known to have held shares in any Company." She names Shakespeare, Samuel Rowley, and William Rowley as known sharers and adds the name of Thomas Heywood as a possible sharer.

14 Fleay, A Chronicle History, p. 108.
15 Sheavyn, p. 95.
It is evident then that the playwright had to look outside of the theater for a source of additional income. One recourse open to him, and certainly the most desirable, was that of securing a generous patron. The difficulty here lay in the fact that the number of literary men seeking patronage far exceeded the number of patrons; indeed, patronage was the one goal of every writer. Dramatists, to be sure, joined the host of prose writers and poets who were hoping to attract the favorable attention of a benevolent nobleman. As described by Miss Sheavyn, "The halls of great men, the courtyards of country gentlemen, the antechambers of the court, were thronged with suitors pleading for every conceivable kind of gift, from the office of Groom of the Chamber to Her Majesty to the honourable employment of turnspit in a country kitchen."\textsuperscript{16}

Patronage was extended in many forms: a gift in money in varying amounts, the hospitality of the patron's home for periods of months or even years, maintenance at one of the universities, the grant of an official appointment, the bestowal of an annuity, or a fee to the writer for a dedication. The dedication was the usual method employed by the writer seeking patronage. Some used it to obtain an immediate monetary reward; a few, to express appreciation for past favors; but the majority, to secure a

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 11.
patron who would sponsor them before the world. Certainly a notable example of the last case is that of Shakespeare's first dedication to the Earl of Southampton, which was prompted by the poet's realization that if he was to get on in the world, he needed a patron.

Not least of the rewards of patronage was the prestige it afforded the writer, since approbation of a distinguished nobleman usually insured the poet wide recognition. Shakespeare, then, in dedicating *Venus and Adonis* (1593) to the third Earl of Southampton, hoped to gain the favor of this patron of letters; and many commentators feel that he was doubly rewarded by finding in the nobleman both a patron and a personal friend. But in spite of their probable close friendship, the poet could not lay sole claim to his benefactor, nor could he be assured of continuing to hold him. Intense literary rivalry, which was the inevitable consequence of the struggle for patronage, was a cause of grave concern to all writers; and the fact that Shakespeare was not free from this anxiety is clearly evidenced in Sonnets LXVIII through LXXXVI. Sonnet LXXX betrays his uneasiness about a rival poet:

O, how I faint when I of you do write,  
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,  
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,  
To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame!

The other sonnets of this group reveal that Shakespeare both admired and feared his rival, whom some believe
to have been Chapman. The greater poet defends his silence and professes his deep affection in lines that are rich in praise of his patron, but he does not hesitate to point out that the rival, in "the proud full sail of his great verse," seeks to win the patron through "words of praise, richly compiled," "precious phrase," and "gross painting."

"Gross painting" was a charge that was leveled against most literary men, and unfortunately, many were guilty. In a bid for favor, many writers jeopardized their self respect by the use of servile flattery or by engaging in undignified competition, which often sank to the point of sordidness. E. H. Miller says, "So effusive and so commonplace were 'songs' of men claiming to be authors" that patrons "inured to the melodies quickly perceived the materialistic motivation." But he feels that "such was the economic insecurity of writers that their only recourse was to indulge in literary diplomacy." Moreover, the other dishonorable practices of writers can be understood only when one realizes that more often than not the sixteenth-century writer deserted his home community "and went to London to seek his fortune; it was an economic necessity for him to interest a patron in his writing and thus earn a place in society; if he failed, he either starved or went

In view of the great numbers soliciting aid, most patrons of letters found it advisable to distribute their benefits among many, rather than concentrate them, or confer lifelong patronage. Those fortunate enough to receive patronage for life were indeed few; in fact, Miss Sheavyn feels that Ascham, Daniel, and Jonson were the only ones to attain this goal. But even their reward was not adequate to their needs. Jonson, who fared better than most professional writers, told Drummond that "sundry times" he was forced to sell part of his library for necessities.

Most of the burden of patronage was borne by those noblemen and noblewomen who were genuinely interested in literature, outstanding among whom were Sir Philip Sidney, his relatives, and friends. Sidney, though a man of limited means, assisted numerous writers. He was regarded as the greatest friend of the literary artist and was praised for his benevolence by nearly every writer of the times. After Sidney's death, his sister, Mary, the Countess of Pembroke, made a valiant effort to provide for his many proteges. She was joined in this endeavor by her son, William Herbert, the third Earl of Pembroke, who shared his uncle's and mother's love of literature. He was one of the most generous patrons of the seventeenth century, and his

18Saunders, p. 29. 19Sheavyn, p. 12.
kindnesses were extended to many, some of whom were the poets George Herbert and Donne, and the dramatists Massinger, Chapman, Jonson, and probably Shakespeare. The Herbert tradition of patronage was continued by Philip, the fourth Earl of Pembroke, who died in 1649. It is interesting to note that Sir Philip's daughter, the Countess of Rutland, was chided by Ben Jonson for not displaying a greater "love unto the Muses." She was, however, poetically inclined, and a patroness of letters, whose benefits were received by Jonson himself, Donne, Daniel, and others.

It is impractical to mention all of the known patrons and the many recipients of their aid; however, the Earl of Southampton and the Countess of Bedford deserve special recognition. Southampton, doubtless the most enlightened and generous literary patron in the early part of the seventeenth century, generously befriended innumerable writers. The Earl, an enthusiastic lover of the drama, gave freely to several playwrights. He is praised for his liberality by the dramatists Nashe, Chapman, Shakespeare, Daniel, and Beaumont, and by more than a score of other writers. The Countess of Bedford was the most discriminating and benevolent patroness of arts during the reign of James I. She, herself a poet, was regarded as the poet's best friend, and her helpfulness is gratefully acknowledged by many, including notable writers such as Drayton, Daniel,
Donne, Chapman and Jonson. 20

As has been shown, most patrons had a number of proteges, and quite understandably they could give neither liberally nor frequently to individuals. Writers, usually faced with want, were reluctant to recognize the real situation, but ready to complain that their work was not appreciated. Over and over again the age was declared degenerate because patrons were not more munificent. By the close of the sixteenth century, disgruntled writers who had not received sustained patronage labeled the Elizabethan Age the Iron Age. Certainly patronage did not exist on the scale that it could be extended to the horde of writers who swarmed London; nor did the frugal Elizabeth compare to the great Italian humanist princes in liberality to artists. She does not, however, deserve the blunt criticism directed at her by B. B. Gamzue that "the reputation of Elizabeth as a patron of letters and learning, has been derived not from her deeds, but largely from legends based upon the many adulatory dedications to her. No such reputation was ever more cheaply bought." 21 But J. E. Neale says that although "a vast amount of patronage was at her disposal," she did not have sufficient funds to maintain herself, her court,

20 For the discussion of specific patrons of letters I have relied heavily on Miss Sheavyn's study.

and that "Illustrious Order of Mendicants, the Court and Nobility." Her great interest, of course, was the drama, and Alwin Thaler says that she was as fond of the drama as her father had been, but her prudence as well as her necessities led her to keep her outlays upon it within reasonable bounds. Nor does Thaler find her exceedingly parsimonious in her outlay for drama. Elizabeth expended 2,186 pounds on Court plays, and James I, 3,391 pounds, but it must be remembered that James paid in pounds that were "Pounds Scots," worth only about 20 pence sterling. It is believed, moreover, that the Queen (whose interest in drama was strong enough to thwart the London magistrates in their determination to close the theaters) found many ways to subsidize those noblemen whom she had urged to become patrons of playing companies.

A close look at the preferments and monetary rewards given to authors reveals that patrons of letters were not so niggardly as the disappointed place-seekers pictured them. Their resources, however, were not sufficient to extend to every mediocre or hack writer; consequently, their bounty was usually proffered to the best writers of the age. Thus when thwarted writers complained, there were


just as many able writers who voiced gratitude to their benefactors, praised their beneficence and declared that patronage alone had kept them from want and had enabled them to continue their literary careers. The fact is that every writer who persevered in his profession was indebted in a greater or lesser degree to the help of some nobleman.

The dramatists' dependence upon patronage did not end here by any means. Another reason why they needed patrons was for protection against attacks on the stage. In Elizabethan London, predominantly Puritan in spirit, there was pronounced opposition to plays, players, and playwrights. The propriety of acting any plays at all, which became a controversial matter with the secularization of drama, grew into a bitterly contested issue during the latter part of Queen Elizabeth's reign. As long as drama retained its intimate association with religion, it had the sanction of the people, but when it became a mere form of diversion, a great wave of opposition arose against it.

The large Puritan element of London, feeling that plays were immoral, godless, and an evil influence on the citizenry, strenuously opposed the theaters. Their opposition to the stage did not burst forth into violence until around 1576, but from this time onward it gradually gained strength until it was powerful enough to effect the complete suppression of drama before the middle of the next century.
The Puritan attack on the stage was waged through the pulpit, through pamphlets, and through ordinances passed by the city authorities. Puritan preachers, who regarded "playes" as synonymous with "sinne," were both vehement and unrelenting in their condemnation of the stage. Even when they were not condemning plays explicitly, L. A. Sasek says, they used the terms "stage," "stage play," and "play-poet" in "such an uncompromisingly and inescapably derogatory sense that the force of their authority was applied against plays even in their sermons and treatises on quite other subjects."24 Pamphleteers, equally as obdurate, poured forth treatises that were virulent in their denunciation of the theater. Among these are three pamphlets of special interest because they were written by "sometime" playwrights: The Schoole of Abuse (1579) and Playes Confuted in Five Actions (1582) by the reformed playwright Stephen Gosson, and A Second and Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theaters (1580) by Anthony Munday, who temporarily embraced conversion, but later returned to play-writing. Even though written attacks on the stage showed some abatement from time to time, they did not cease until 1633, at which time William Prynne furiously assailed the drama in Histrio-Mastix: the Players Scourge or Actors Tragedy. The excessive and vindictive punishment of Prynne

silenced the pamphleteers once and for all.

Most of the sermons and writings against the stage were addressed to the Lord Mayor and the city aldermen. Their protests to the magistrates were based on the usual arguments: Plays scoffed at religion and virtue; they set before the citizens examples of murders, rebellions and treacheries, or showed intrigues characterized by lewdness and licentiousness; playhouses were the habitual resorts of harlots and other undesirable people; public performances were a disturbance of the peace; performances on Sunday desecrated the Sabbath; and finally, the more logical objection that crowded playhouses posed a danger to the spread of the plague.

The city authorities were not only in full agreement with the Puritans' condemnation of plays, but they were determined to prohibit public theatrical performances, which constantly provoked breaches of the peace. The City Fathers, no doubt, faced a real problem, for the theaters were large and attracted large unruly crowds. Although John de Witt has been criticized for giving the seating capacity of the Swan at 3,000, this estimate is thought not unlikely by E. K. Chambers, who further mentions that Fynes Moryson, upon visiting the London theaters, declared them to be "capable of many thousands." Moreover, Harold

Child agrees that the Swan's capacity of 3,000 was not improbable, especially in view of John Taylor's report that "three or four thousand persons daily crossed the river to the Bankside in the days when the Globe, Rose, and Swan were all open as playhouses, and bear-baiting also was in progress." 26

The throng of playgoers, both walking and riding, caused a great congestion in the narrow streets, and the large assemblage of people was conducive to the operation of beggars, pickpockets, and the criminal underworld. In addition, public performances during working hours prompted absenteeism among apprentices, and plays dealing with matters of religion or politics only served to increase the risk of trouble. Thus, the Lord Mayor and the aldermen, with just cause to fear and oppose the players, came to the conclusion around 1582 that the only way to control the theaters was to abolish them. Had the matter rested solely in their hands, there is little doubt that the stage would have been immediately and permanently suppressed. But the decision was not theirs to make.

It is true that the city had long held jurisdiction over public theatricals in London. A royal patent issued in 1559, although doubtless politically motivated, made it mandatory that all performances in London be licensed by

26 Cambridge History of English Literature, VI, 293.
city officials. The Queen, however, had steadily negated this authority through subsequent proclamations, which were designed to place drama in the hands of the aristocracy. From the beginning of her reign onward, the more favored noblemen had been encouraged to keep playing companies, which in turn were allowed to perform in certain locales. Then in 1572 all companies were placed exclusively under the nobility by a royal edict declaring that all players not belonging to a baron or nobleman of higher degree would be dealt with as vagabonds and rogues. Two years later, Elizabeth issued a patent to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, allowing his company of actors to perform regularly on weekdays within the city of London.

This act, a direct infringement on the powers of the city, precipitated the impending battle between the city and the court for the control of drama. Official records from this time until the close of Elizabeth's reign show that the city aldermen were perpetually petitioning the court or enacting laws to limit the number of theaters, the number of playing companies, and the number of players; to restrict performances to certain areas, to certain days, and to specific hours; to close or abolish theaters when lawlessness occurred at any playing place; and to prevent theaters that had been closed in the height of the plague from reopening. The court, on the other hand, as perpetually attempted to nullify the city's ordinances through
counter declarations and statutes imposed by the Privy Council, or by royal patents.

The Lord Mayor and aldermen won some important victories. They succeeded in driving the public theaters out of London around 1577 and in keeping them out for some two decades; and when theaters were closed because of the plagues, they were stubbornly determined in their repeated refusals to reopen them. These refusals were countered by the court with the usual but always effective argument that the players must have "exercise" in order to perform worthily before her Majesty at Christmas and on other holidays. Therefore as Chambers states, "In a sense it was really the Court play which saved the popular stage, and enabled the companies to establish themselves in a position which neither preachers nor aldermen could shake." 27

Most historians of the drama are in complete accord with Harold Child's statement that "in the conflict between the drama and the corporation, the weight of Elizabeth herself was thrown entirely on the side of the drama." 28 This opinion is supported by J. Dover Wilson's statement that there is no reason why, without special royal injunctions, the privy council "should have lifted a finger to succour the stage," 29 and by Miss Gildersleeve's opinion that the

27 Chambers, I, 267.
28 Cambridge History of English Literature, VI, 274.
29 Ibid., p. 429.
privy council represented the view of the Queen, "who went even further than this in her extreme fondness for dramatic performances, and many of the Councillors were also friends of the drama and patrons of the Companies."\(^{30}\)

Thus it was not unexpected when the Government decided in 1597 to exercise its authority by placing the regulation of drama under a more centralized control: Authority over the stage was given to the Master of Revels; the Vagabond Act of 1572 was reaffirmed, which gave the noblemen a monopoly on playing companies; and the control of drama in London and its suburbs was taken over by the Privy Council, with the Master of Revels as an adviser and agent.\(^{31}\) "Another noticeable epoch in this period," Fleay remarks, "is the final practical settlement of the dispute between Court and City, as to allowing theatres within the city walls by the opening of the Blackfriars Theatre in 1597."\(^{32}\) And the playwright whose production was the first to be staged at the Blackfriars was Ben Jonson, who had been informed upon and sentenced to the Marshalsea in 1597 for his part in The Isle of Dogs. So there can be little doubt that he took extreme pleasure in having his play, The Case is Altered, herald the triumphant return of the theater to the city of

\(^{30}\) Virginia Crocheron Gildersleeve, Government Regulations of the Elizabethan Drama (New York, 1908), p. 149.

\(^{31}\) Chambers, I, 299-300.

\(^{32}\) Fleay, A Chronicle History, p. 120.
London.

Although the city continued to pour forth its complaints and petitions to the court, they were to no avail. For as Chambers emphasizes, from 1597 onwards, it was definitely the Crown and its administrators (the Privy Council, the Lord Chamberlain, and the Master of Revels) that assumed total responsibility for the regulation of the stage throughout the London area. "And the policy of the Crown, alike under Elizabeth and under the Stuarts, was consistently in favour of such solace and recreation for the Sovereign and the subjects as the players ministered."

Upon the accession of James I all of the men's companies, and the children's companies shortly thereafter, were placed under the patronage of the Royal family. A royal statute of March, 1604, abolished the right of noblemen to commission players to perform in public; thus, the complete authority over the stage was vested in the Royal family. Now the city and church could thunder and rail as they chose, but the safety of the English stage was assured so long as James I wore the crown. Moreover, all public theatricals remained directly under royal patronage (and thus under absolute protection) during the reign of Charles I, until puritan hatred and indignation provoked the ordinance of the lords and commons in 1642 that swept...
"publike Stage-Playes" away.

It is readily apparent that the stage, so bitterly and sincerely hated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was almost completely dependent upon the court and nobility for its survival and growth. Chambers, who lays particular emphasis on court influence, declares that "the palace was the point of vantage from which the stage won its way against the linked opposition of an alienated pulpit and an alienated Municipality."\(^\text{34}\) Wilson, in full agreement, says, "Throughout its whole career, the Elizabethan theater, though essentially popular in origin and character, depended for its very existence upon the patronage of the court."\(^\text{35}\) Thus, in view of the drama's dependence upon aristocratic and royal patronage, one speculates to what extent patronage influenced the shaping of drama, as well as its development.

Certainly it was the queenship of Elizabeth that set the stage and provided the moment for the great age of drama of her reign (which may be considered to date from the destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588); her rule likewise provided the motivation by offering "every stimulus and theoretical as well as practical encouragement" to drama in an effort to induce "literary genius" to apply


\(^\text{35}\) *Cambridge History of English Literature*, VI, 429.
itself to this form of literary composition.\textsuperscript{36}

Moreover, once the patronage of the court was assured, public support of plays increased from year to year, with the important result that the people, following the lead of the court, continually demanded better actors and better plays. The citizens' demand for better actors was met by men like Alleyn, Burbage, and Kempe; their demand for better plays, according to Schelling, "was answered by the great 'actor-playwrights' Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Jonson, as such a demand has never been answered before."\textsuperscript{37}

With actors and playwrights such as these heading their profession, and with continuing court sanction, it was inevitable that the stage would become a more respectable institution. J. Dover Wilson, in referring to the dramatic years of the first Stuart kings, explains that "the playhouses . . . by entering into close relations with the court, added the finishing touches to the reputation for respectability which they had been slowly acquiring during Elizabeth's last years."\textsuperscript{38}

It is true that late Jacobean and Caroline drama lost much of its universal character because it was written to appeal to the sophisticated taste of the wealthy class

\textsuperscript{36} Ward, I, 268.

\textsuperscript{37} Schelling, \textit{Elizabethan Playwrights}, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Cambridge History of English Literature}, VI, 451.
and the more fashionable segment of society; nonetheless, it continued to be of high poetic and dramatic worth.

It is interesting (though perhaps dangerous) to speculate on what Elizabethan drama would have been without the effective support of the Crown and nobility. Could English drama have advanced so spectacularly during the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I without the steadfast encouragement, protection, and support of nobility and royalty? Could the Elizabethan playwrights have achieved the great age of English drama without the enduring favor of the court and nobility? Evidence points strongly to a negative answer and to the validity of the conclusion reached by most Elizabethan scholars, which is expressed here by L. C. Knights: "It is true that Elizabethan drama owed, if not its existence, at least its favorable development to the persistent patronage of the governing class."39

In view of the overwhelming importance of court patronage, one realizes how fortunate Ben Jonson was in attaining more extensive and more continued support from the Crown than perhaps any other Elizabethan dramatist. Although he was the recipient of many kindnesses from patrons almost from the beginning of his career, his unusual favor at court was not attained until the accession of James I.

CHAPTER I

THE FORMATIVE YEARS AND THE EARLY PLAYS
IN THE REIGN OF ELIZABETH

Ben Jonson is one of the confirmed Londoners of English literature. Like Samuel Johnson and Eliot, he regarded London as the most interesting place in the world; and like Dickens, he was thoroughly familiar with the capital city and its infinite variety of human types. While Dickens was not at ease in picturing the upper class, Jonson was, for he knew the metropolis all the way from the slums to the court and from the lowest wretch to the monarch. London, moreover, knew Ben Jonson. He, of course, was more famous in his day than any other dramatist, including Shakespeare, and as a result we know more of the facts of his life than of any of his contemporaries. We have innumerable references to him in the works of his admirers, and he was "Father Ben" to the majority of the young poets of the next generation. But another major source of information was the poet himself. Certainly he was a robust individualist who possessed a powerful, demanding, massive personality that was bound to arouse comment and likely to inspire either great admiration or intense
dislike. And stamped with the honesty that was always his hallmark (and definitely his disadvantage), he was as forthright in revealing his personal vices as he was in declaring his theories of drama. Thus his character as an author has since his own day been very much compromised by knowledge of his personal sins and foibles, and he himself is largely responsible for the knowledge.

Although Jonson has told us more than we need to know about certain aspects of his life, there are other points that he either omitted or that have not come down to us. We do not, in fact, know exactly when or where he was born, but certain pieces of evidence fix his birthdate between May 5, 1572, and January 19, 1573, and lead to the probability that he was born in or near London. As to his ancestry, Jonson was somewhat more explicit. He told Drummond that his paternal grandfather was "a Gentleman," who served under King Henry VIII, and that he "came from Carlisle and he thought from Annanadale to it." Jonson further stated that his father lost "all of his estate under Queen Marie, having been cast in prison and forfeitted, at last turn'd Minister." The phrase "all of his estate" leads one to believe that his father's holdings were not


2Conversations with Drummond, 235 (Herford and Simpson), I, 139.
inconsiderable. Even Edmund Wilson's scurrilous attack on Jonson corroborates this belief, and Wilson, as a self-appointed psychoanalyst, finds his subject to be harboring "the grievance of the man of good birth unjustly deprived of his patrimony." ³

Jonson's arms, so he told Drummond, were "three spindles or rhombi." This information prompted Symonds' study of the Annandale Johnstones' shield, and after relating it to old Scotch heraldry, he concluded that the poet's coat of arms had the same specific bearing of his Allandale forebears. ⁴ Other commentators readily accept Symonds' conclusion and attribute the dramatist's combative spirit and vigorous self-assertiveness to his blood inheritance from the powerful Johnstone clan that was so famous in Border song and story. It must have been gratifying to Ben Jonson to know that the Johnstone name was prominent in records from the thirteenth century onward, that his family had staunchly supported the crown for generations, and that his relative Sir James Johnstone was created Lord Johnstone of Lockwood by Charles I in 1633. ⁵

Despite his blood inheritance, however, the


dramatist was a thoroughgoing Englishman. It was England and Englishmen and London and Londoners that he knew so intimately and that appeared almost exclusively in his works. Although the Cambridge wit was jesting in saying that "the wittiest fellow of a Bricklayer in England" was "a meere Empyrick, one that gets what he hath by observation," he was calling attention to one of Jonson's highly developed faculties—a faculty that did not ripen overnight, but one that probably stemmed from childhood. Thus, on this premise, it is of interest to trace his life and the opportunities that he had to acquire his knowledge of the court and that segment of society whom he labeled "would-be courtiers."

According to Fuller, Benjamin Jonson was born in Westminster, but since he could not definitely "find him in his cradle," the more cautious scholars attribute the dramatist's birth to the environs of London. All, however, readily accept Fuller's positive assertion that Jonson as a small child "lived in Hartshorn-lane near Charing-cross, where his Mother married a Bricklayer for her Second husband." The small village of Charing stood about midpoint between the walled city of London and the royalty-dominated city of Westminster; consequently, Jonson as a boy and a

6 The Pilgrimage to Parnassus with the Two Parts of the Return from Parnassus, ed. W. D. Macray (Oxford, 1886), II, 300.

youth could view both the London tradesmen and the wealthy (as well as the poor), who inhabited the aristocratic and churchly city of Westminster. He was, of course, a part of the poor, but he probably was not in the poverty class, since his step-father sent him to a private school for beginners within the church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. In all likelihood this would have ended his formal education had it not been that some person, identified only as "a friend," became actively interested in him and sent him to Westminster School. Queen Elizabeth was vitally interested in the school, which she had established and endowed during the early years of her reign. Both she and her secretary of state, the scholarly Lord Burleigh, kept a watchful eye on the institution, which they hoped would eventually equal Eton. The Dean of Westminster, as the official head of the school, governed it with the assistance of a board of prebendaries composed of professors of theology, thus placing it under the joint supervision of the Crown and the church. This fact doubtless accounted for its offering one of the best educations of the time.

It was indeed a fortunate circumstance for the boy Jonson when his benefactor made it possible for him to attend Westminster School. Even though he was not selected as one of the Queen's scholars, he received the same education as they and had the same opportunity of seeing the Queen and high court officials when they made their not
infrequent visits to the grammar school. Moreover, he was in school with many boys who came from the best families and with others from less important families. He himself was one of the "forty poor scholars," and was placed in the category of the Oppidians. This group, whose homes were in Westminster, stayed with their families and walked to school. From Charing Cross to Westminster School there was only one road, The Strand and its continuation, known as King's Street. This street passed through the stately group of buildings that made up Queen Elizabeth's palace, and this was the path that Jonson as a boy traveled daily for some six years to go to and from school. So one can say with Miss Chute that even as a schoolboy Jonson was thoroughly familiar with the buildings, the gardens, and the grounds that made up the royal residence. Nor is it unlikely that he had frequent opportunities to observe many of the throng of courtiers who poured in and out of Whitehall, as well as occasional opportunities to glimpse royalty. To what extent these observations of the court and court life impressed Jonson as a boy and youth cannot be determined, but it is logical to assume that they were not lost to the youth, who later as a dramatist was to be singled out for his acute powers of observation.

It must have been most frustrating to the sixteen-

or seventeen-year-old Jonson to be taken from school and put to a craft, which he told Drummond he could not endure. As half-gentleman and half-scholar, he no doubt felt the indignity quite keenly, but the years of his apprenticeship were not a total waste. The report that while he labored with the trowel he always had a book handy in his pocket is readily acceptable. Although he could not attend Oxford or Cambridge, he could continue his studies on his own. In addition his job as a bricklayer surely took him to all parts of the city where he could further familiarize himself with the London scene and observe the many types of Londoners that later filled his plays. But Jonson despised the trade; he was, moreover, aware that as the grandson of a gentleman, he should either be a scholar or a soldier. Scholarship, of course, was out of the question; therefore, he took the remaining recourse and joined the army. In the English camp, Jonson's associates ranged all the way from the sons of gentlemen (Lord Burleigh's son, for example) to the basest mercenary. One can be sure that Jonson, in the midst of this varied company, availed himself of every opportunity "to suck in" (which Fuller says was his habit) "their several humors into his observation." He was particularly observant of the admirable qualities exhibited by the worthy soldier, to whom he later paid tribute in the

9Fuller, p. 243.
epigram "To True Soldiers." On the other extreme, he watched with glee the antics of the "mis-called Captains," and it is readily apparent that the Hungrys and the Bobadils were a large part of the spolia opima that the satirist took from his sojourn in the Low Countries.

Upon leaving the army, Jonson returned to London, where he again pursued his "wonted studies," plied some trade to earn a living, and kept a watchful eye upon London society. The city, which had been growing with great rapidity, was now one of the leading European capitals and had many different sides to its character. A critical observer like Ben Jonson would watch with interest the experts (as well as the charlatans and swindlers) who flocked to London to engage in medicine, mining, metallurgy, commerce, and finance; he would be mindful of the actions of the young lawyers, courtiers, and university graduates who made up that small but influential segment of society known as the Inns of Courts; but he would rivet his attention upon the court, which he recognized as the dominant shaping force of society. The Court and the courtiers, as the centers of national life, had studied the art of being brilliant and lavish. The Queen's love of finery and pomp and her all but insatiable desire for adulation had led her to surround herself with a splendid court and to extend preferred favors to those who showered fulsome praise both on her person and her sovereignty.
But despite her foolish vanity Queen Elizabeth was a good and wise ruler who commanded the love and admiration of her subjects. There were, nonetheless, decided aspects of hollowness about the court, and these did not escape the critical notice of Ben Jonson. As a son of the Renaissance, he would question to what extent the courtiers met the standards of the ideal gentleman as prescribed by Castiglione and others, and whether their practices were sufficiently commendable to serve as exemplars to the English people. He was acutely aware that the eyes of Englishmen were fixed upon the smart, fashionable, and often irresponsible ruling class, for daily he watched the inane actions of that fatuous group of Londoners who servilely attempted to imitate the behavior, manners, speech, and dress of the courtiers. To one of Jonson’s forthright nature, sham and imposture were intolerable; thus, it was not unexpected that the poseur was most frequently subjected to his sardonic gaze in his later criticism of society.

If one is to criticize society constructively, he must above all know whereof he speaks; secondly, he must devise some plan whereby society can recognize its ills and rid itself of them. These requirements Jonson abundantly met. He had a thorough knowledge of Elizabethan society, its power, and its aspirations, and he recognized that certain aspirations often led to avarice (both greed and niggardliness), lust, hypocrisy, fraudulence, and other forms
of deceit and dishonesty. But he was equally, if not more, concerned with those individuals whose accentuated social ambitions caused them to indulge in pretensions, affectations, and other ludicrous follies. Certainly it was to Jonson's credit that he was able to approach the ills of society in a series of comic dramas that, in true classic form, exposed the "popular errors" of the times in such a manner that one could recognize, "confess," and be purged of these errors "by laughing at them." Hence, in applying the corrective of laughter to the foibles of man, the dramatist was fulfilling the Renaissance demand that literature should mix profit with pleasure and instruction with delight.

Apparently Ben Jonson felt that among the worst of the "popular errors" of his age were the upstart courtier's manners and morals and the depravity and hypocrisy practiced at court. When we turn to his plays we see that this is emphasized as a principal object of satire from the very first. For in his plays Jonson fixes his critical attention upon the more superficial aspects of the court, particularly the practices of the vain and shallow courtier, who, in parading his elegant manners and fastidious tastes, becomes an example for imitation among the more fatuous men and women of lower estate.

The Case Is Altered, perhaps his first extant comedy, lampoons the pseudo-elegance of courtly speech and
other courtly habits. The play opens with Juniper, a cob­ bler, who is so enthralled by the gigantic words, foreign phrases, Petrarchan conceits, and scraps of verses, gleaned from the conversations of courtiers, that he has incorpor­ ated them bodily into his daily speech. It matters little to Juniper that he doesn't know the meaning of his approp­ riated words and expressions; nor is he in the least dis­ concerted when his meaning is questioned:

Juniper: Nay, slid I am no changling, I am Juniper still, I keep the pristinate ha, you mad Hieroglyphick, when shal we swagger?
Valentine: Hieroglyphick, what meanest thou by that?
Valentine: Why, but stay, stay, how long has this sprightly humor haunted thee?
Juniper: Foe humour, a foolish naturall gift we haue in the AEquinoctiall.
Valentine: Naturall, slid it may be supernaturall, this?
Juniper: Valentine, I prithee ruminate thy selfe welcome. What fortuna de la Guerra?
(I.iv.5-17)10

Even in speaking to men of higher estate, Juniper's explo­ sive speech is flooded with courtly jargon. In a plea to General Maximilian to pardon his fellow-servant Onion, Juniper defends Onion on the grounds that he is

. . . a foolish fellow, somewhat procliue, and hasty, he did it in a preiudi­ cate humour; mary now vpon better computa­ tion, he wanes; he melts; his poore eyes are in a cold sweat. Right noble Signior, you

can have but compunction, I love the man, tender your compassion.

Maximilian: Doth any man here understand this fellow?
Juniper: O God sir, I may say frustra to the comprehension of your intellect.

(I.viii.5-12)

Onion, who serves as groom of the hall in the household of Count Ferneze, has likewise overheard much gentlemanly speech, which he parrots whenever he can remember. Eager to impress Antonio, the pageant poet, Onion says, "I am no Gentleman borne I must confess, but my mind to me a kingdom is truly" (I.ii.41-42). Antonio, who of course is Antony Munday, commends the ignorant Onion on his "very good saying" and later attacks the playwrights who "write you nothing but humours:indeed this pleases the Gentlemen: but the common sort they care not for't, they know not what to make on't" (I.ii.62-64). This affords Onion the opportunity to give his critical opinion:

You are in the right, I'll not give a halfepeny to see a thousand on 'hem. I was at one the last Tearme, but & euer I see a more roguish thing, ... nothing but kings & princes in it, the foole came not out a iot.

Antonio: True sir, they would have me make such plaies, but as I tell hem, and they're give me twenty pound a play, I'll not raise my vaine.
Onion: No, it were a vaine thing, and you should sir.
Antonio: Tut giue me the penny, giue me the peny, I care not for the Gentlemen I, let me haue a good ground. . . .

(I.ii.66-76)

Later through Valentine, another nobleman's servant, we get a picture of the empty consciousness of the usual
theater audience. The country gentleman who rarely comes to London except when Parliament is in session makes sure to see all of the plays that are showing, and in an effort to appear the able critic, he listens to the opinions of the London gentlemen and gallants: "One says he likes not the writing, another likes not the plot, another not the playing." And soon the provincial gentleman "will be as deepe myr'd in censuring as the best, and sweare by God's foote he would neuer stirre his foote to see a hundred such as that is" (II.vii.44-49). Later, Valentine gives special attention to the behavior of the "capricious gallants," who attend the theater as a matter of fashion: "And they haue taken such a habit of dislike in all things, that they will approwe nothing, . . . but sit disperst, making faces, and spitting, wagging their upright eares, and cry filthy, filthy" (II.vii.76-79).

Toward the close of the play Valentine again appears, and this time it is for the purpose of helping to unmask Juniper and Onion, who having stolen Jacques' gold, decide to "turn gentlemen." Through the two ignorant servants Jonson derides the English gentleman's preoccupation with certain status symbols, foremost of which was coats of arms. Thus Juniper and Onion decide that their first step should be to seek out a "harrot of armes" noted for his "infidelity," who would give them a "scutcheon or a gudgeon." Either would suit Juniper, for in his opinion "all is one."
Like all gentlemen, they realize that they must "bee most sumptuously attir'd," and Juniper declares that he will have "three or foure most stigmaticall suites presently." Having richly dressed themselves, they apparently visited several taverns, for when they decide to engage in the noble art of fencing, Juniper is drunk. Onion has already acquired the services of a page, but Juniper with true aristocratic mien will not hire a page until he has ascertained his "parentage," "ancestry," and "genealogy." But even after this careful inquiry the pages "did pilfer," "purloin," and "procrastinate" their purses, thus forcing their masters to "put them to the stocks." When the would-be gentlemen were uncovered as thieves, they were somewhat reluctant to give up their pretensions to gentility, claiming "equivalence" to General Maximilian and their master, Count Ferneze. The burlesque continues with the suggestion that nobility can be bought:

Count F.: What are my hinds turnd gentlemen?
Onion: Hinds sir? Sbloud and that word will beare action, it shall cost vs a thousand pound a pheece, but weele be reuenged.
Juniper: Wilt thou sell thy Lordship Count?
Count F.: What? peasants purchase Lordships?
Juniper: Is that any Nouels sir?

(V.xiii.10-16)

In Juniper's question we hear the caustic tongue of Jonson, who does not feel that nobility can be obtained by purchase. It is evident in this first comedy, as Robert Knoll says, that the dramatist is conservative in his views of nobility,
believing it "a quality more frequently found in the well-born than in the base." Specifications that one of noble birth possesses the inherent qualities of a true gentleman. Chamont, before discovering that his friend Gasper is of noble parentage, extols his companion's many virtues and concludes:

Sure thou art nobly borne,  
How euer fortune hath obscurd thy birth:  
For natiue honour sparkles in thine eyes.  

(IV.iv.20-23)

In contrast the miserly Jacques de Prie is pictured in the ignoble act of burying his stolen treasure beneath horse dung, and at the same time he addresses his idol in poetic lines filled with courtly images: "Ile take no leaue, sweet Prince, great Emperour,/ But see thee euery minute. King of Kings" (III.v.22-23). Later, upon finding a piece of gold, he exclaims: "A golden crowne, Jacques shall be a king" (V.ii.14). Jacques, in habitually speaking verse, does not conform to the general rule in this play of assigning verse to noble personages and prose to their inferiors. Yet throughout Jonson emphasizes the poetic fervor of the base Jacques, has him deliver his extravagant courtly speeches with the eloquence and grace that would be the envy of any courtier, and repeatedly has him liken his money to the glories of the court. Jacques

is apparently intended to be a complex character, and the reason for his preoccupation with the court is not entirely clear. Seemingly, however, in his single-minded obsession with money, he equates it with nobility. In the midst of his gold, he exults:

This is the Court
And glorious palace where the God of gold
Shines like the sonne, of sparkling majesty.

(V.iv.4-7)

The other two low characters, Onion and Juniper, whose purpose is to expose the follies of the gallants, are pointedly ludicrous in their awkward attempts to affect "gentlemanly" speech and manners. While their antics are clever and laughable, Jonson never again used such typically low comedy figures to carry the satire. But the pair are the forerunners of the innumerable gulls and fops that swagger through later Jonsonian theater. Here, as in later comedies, the dramatist strikes at the artificiality of certain courtly practices and emphasizes the ridiculous incongruity of one's seeking a higher station in society when his social ambitions so greatly exceed his capacities.

With his next play, Every Man in His Humour (1598), Jonson not only scored an immediate success, but also established his reputation as one of the leading dramatists of the times. The original version of the play employed a foreign setting, as did The Case Is Altered, but later when it was extensively revised (probably about 1612 for
inclusion in the 1616 Folio), the scene was moved to England and the characters became true Englishmen. By the time of the revision Jonson had reached the height of his dramatic craftsmanship and had definitely defined his theory of comedy. Thus, his purpose in adding a prologue was to reaffirm his conviction that comedies of romantic extravagance had lost touch with life and that real life or "deeds and language such as men do use" should be the basic fabric of good comedy. Arthur Sale feels that the model is "too much that of Roman comedy to allow realism as an end in itself," but that in reworking the play, Jonson achieves realism through local touches and references.

On the same point, Gregory Smith states that on the "rare occasion" when Jonson borrowed from Latin comedy "he transformed all to contemporary purpose," for he recognized "that the whole must be self-expressive to Englishmen of their own London."

In Every Man In the dramatist is looking directly at Londoners, and quite clearly he is striking at the false social values that dictated the behavior of the fashionable and would-be fashionable, those who attempted to ape the manners of the court. In the Folio version Jonson makes it

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12 Herford and Simpson, I, 332-333.


explicit that a "humour" is a peculiar foible of the fashionable world. In answer to Cob's question, "Humour? What is that humour?" Cash replies, "Mary, Ite tell thee, Cob: It is a gentleman-like monster, bred, in the speciall gallantry of our time, by affectation; and fed by folly" (F.III.iv.16-22). Thus, the satire, which is more prominent than in the first play, is directed against the folly of affectation. Stephen, a country gull, affects the ways of the city gallant; Matthew, a town gull, affects courtly manners; and Bobadill, a Paul's man, affects the ways of the gentlemanly soldier. Here, as Miss Baum points out, he uses these humorous characters and not the gallants themselves for his satiric exposé of their follies.15

In the opening scene we meet Stephen, a young man of good family and means, who has come from the country to reside with his relatives, the Knowells, so that he may be introduced to town society. Both the elder Knowell, "an old Gentleman," and his son Edward have attended universities, which the age thought necessary for all gentlemen. But the egotistical Stephen attaches little importance to university training; instead, he feels that a man must be proficient in the gentlemanly art of quarreling and in the skill of the "hawking and hunting languages," which he declares are "more studied than the Greeke, or the Latine."

He is for no gallants companie without 'hem. . . . Slid a gentleman mun show himselfe like a gentleman" (I.i.41-50). Through the senior Knowell's upbraiding lecture to Stephen we see Jonson's complete lack of patience with the ignorant and the pretender. Knowell in disgust calls the witless Stephen "a prodigall absurd cocks-combe" and is bitingly sarcastic about Stephen's idea of what will make him a "gentleman." Stephen, in an effort to forestall his uncle's anger, asks "What would you ha' me doe?" (F.I.i.64). Here Jonson stops the play to let Knowell deliver a speech of twenty-five lines, really addressed solely to the would-be courtiers, who never failed to arouse the dramatist's ire. Knowell-Jonson advises Stephen first to learn to be wise, and not to spend his money on every "bable" that he fancies or on every "foolish braine" that humors him. Then, lest the more dense among his auditors mistake his meaning, the author becomes more specific:

I would not haue you inuade each place,  
Nor thrust your selfe on all societies,  
Till mens affections, or your own desert,  
Should worthily inuite you to your ranke.  
He, that is so respectlesse in his courses,  
Oft sells his reputation, at cheape market.  
Nor would I, you should melt away your selfe  
In flashing brauerie, lest while you affect  
To make a blaze of gentrie in the world,  
A little puffe of scorn extinguish it,  
And you be left, like an vnsauorie snuffe,  
Whose propertie is onely to offend.  
(F.I.i.70-81)  

In the intervening years between the Quarto and the Folio versions, Jonson had watched closely the endless procession
of the pompous silken young gentlemen, any one of whom might at one moment be a court favorite and in the next lose his place to a rising parvenu, or who might become an outcast by the machinations of one in authority. Hence in the Folio revision, the playwright adds lines to explain why one should not place too much store on gentle birth:

Nor, stand so much on your gentilitie,
Which is an aërie, and meere borrow'd thing,
From dead mens dust, and bones: and none of yours
Except you make, or hold it.

(F,I.i.86-89)

But all advice is wasted on the empty-headed Stephen, who immediately turns to greet a servant with "Nay, we do' not stand much on our gentilitie, friend," and in the immediate presence of his uncle, he boasts, "mine vnCLE here is a thousand a yeare, Middlesex land: hee has but one sonne in all the world, I am his next heire." Then with supreme imbécility he joyfully declares that he will inherit his uncle's wealth "if my cossen die (as there's hope he will) I haue a prettie liuing o' mine owne too, beside, hard-by here" (F,I.ii.1-8).

The fatuousness of Stephen, Matthew, and Bobadill is greatly hightened in the Folio text, and they emerge as far more humorous and much stronger characters. In fact, all of the changes that Jonson made were for the purpose of building up the roles of these comic figures. In the new version, for example, Young Knowell is divested of his lengthy metrical defense of poetry, and he is stripped of
most of the poetic fervor that dominated his counterpart Lorenzo Junior. Thus Young Knowell becomes simply the witty gallant about town whose greatest delight is to bait the gulls and then help deflate them. Moreover, Downright, "a plaine Squier," was not assigned the same lines of his predecessor. Downright's speech is much more idiomatic, employing such homely phrases as "he has the wrong sow by the eare, ifaith" (F,II.i.78), "counsell to him, is as good, as a shoulder of mutton to a sicke horse" (F,II.i.173-74), and "'Sdeath, he mads me, I could eate my very spurlethers, for anger" (F,II.i.183-84). The practical squire with his plain speech is set in direct contrast with the swaggering Bobadill, whose speech is studded with elegant phrases and gorgeous oaths. Through his gentlemanly demeanor, the pseudo-soldier and would-be gentleman attracts the admiration of the obtuse Matthew and Stephen, who attempt to imitate his every word and action. These three comic characters receive Jonson's greatest attention, and he seemingly derives great pleasure in having them preen themselves before the mirror of London society as they attempt to affect the airs and poses of gentlemen.

The "gull," Miss Chute observes, was the rather "shopworn Elizabethan type," but in Jonson's plays he becomes "that ridiculous but rather pathetic social climber, Stephano, with his anxious determination to be taken for a
While neither of the gulls has any mind of his own, the country-bred Stephen greatly excels the city-born Matthew in crudity as he struggles to learn the ways of a gallant. Believing himself adept at the gentlemanly art of quarreling, he peevishly bursts forth at a servant: "And so I would sir, good my saucie companion! an' you were out o' mine vncles ground, I can tell you; though I doe not stand vpon my gentilitie neither in't" (F,I.ii.23-25). And the servant's denial of any intended disrespect further inflames him and brings forth: "Whorson base fellow! a mechanica11 servuing-man! By this cudgell, and' t were not for shame I would----" But his uncle forcefully interrupts with "What would you doe, you peremptorie gull?" (F,I.ii.27-30). Although Knowell Senior severely scolds him for his "vnseason'd, quarrelling, rude fashion," Stephen continues to "huffe it" and accuses his cousin Edward Knowell of laughing at him. When Young Knowell questions, "Why, what an' I had cousse, what would you ha' done?" Stephen stubbornly asserts, "By this light, I would ha' told mine vncle" (F,I.iii.81-85). Young Knowell, who greatly enjoys flouting the simple Stephen, pursues the quarrel.

E. Knowell: Nay, if you wold ha' told your vncle, I did laugh at you, cousse.
Stephen: Did you, indeede?
E. Knowell: Yes, indeede.

16 Chute, p. 68.
Stephen: Why, then----
E. Knowell: What then?
Stephen: I am satisfied, it is sufficient.

(F,1.ii.84-90)

This delightful quarrel scene did not appear in the Quarto text, but of course Jonson had hit at this courtly folly earlier in this play and in The Case Is Altered. But in the opinion of E. E. Stoll it was Marston's popular play The Malcontent (1604) that so convincingly showed a fashion for querulousness to be a mark of aristocratic behavior. Marston dedicated the play to Jonson, who is called "poet most accomplished and most eminent," and who is praised in the epilogue for his vast learning. The Malcontent won the hearty acclaim of the fashionable class for whom the young Templar wrote, and its success could have influenced Jonson's decision to have Stephen exhibit further petulance in the later version.

Another gentlemanly practice that Stephen thought he had mastered was that of indulging in melancholy. Thus upon being introduced to Wellbred, Bobadill, and Matthew, he immediately informs them: "I am somewhat melancholy, but you shall command me, sir, in whatsoever is incident to a gentleman" (F,III.i.78-79). A moment later he avows that he is "mightily giuen to melancholy," which elicits Matthew's comments that melancholy is "your only fine humour,"

and Matthew continues, "I am melancholy my selfe diuers times, sir, and then doe I no more but take pen, and paper presently, and ouerflow you halfe a score, or a dozen of sonnets, at a sitting" (F,III.i.89-93). Stephen, who loves "such things, out of measure" graciously accepts Matthew's offer to make use of his studie, which indeed has the required stool "to be melancholy' vpon." And it is from this same stool that Matthew daily pens his "extempore" courtly verse with which to woo the fair Bridget.

By having Matthew court Bridget in a parody of the courtly manner, Jonson can covertly but soundly ridicule the amateur versifier at court, as well as his fashionable rhymes, that abounded in Petrarchan conceits and other stock conventions. As a professional writer, the author did not feel that non-dramatic poetry was the express domain of the courtier, who used it as an artful expedient to further his prestige in courtly circles. Jonson hints indirectly that the courtiers are not above borrowing lines from professional writers by having Matthew's "extempore" verses recognized by Edward Knowell as lines from Marlowe's Hero and Leander. Justice Clement, upon reading other lines of the poetical Matthew, exclaims "How? this is stolne!" To which Edward Knowell adds his meaningful comment: "A Parodie! a parodie! with a kind of miraculous gift, to make it absurder then it was!" (F,V.v.25-27). This was doubtless Jonson's exact intent--to make Daniel's
silvery but wearisome lyricism "absurder then it was." It does not seem, as some scholars indicate, that the clownish Matthew was meant as a representation of Daniel. The well-bred and learned Daniel, having tutored in several noble houses, had won the respect and admiration of many aristocrats, chief among whom were his patronesses, Mary, Countess of Pembroke and the Countess of Bedford. Since Jonson had not yet been able to secure patronage, one can imagine his perturbation at seeing the older poet succeed with his dull stanzas and rather bad rhyme. Thus in alluding to Daniel he is attempting to point out his weakness as a poet, and not to represent the whole man.

Other foibles of the gallant are exposed through Bobadill, one of Jonson's most memorable characters. Captain Bobadill is a far more sophisticated miles gloriosus than his English predecessors. His feigned modesty is in keeping with his lordly tone and his pose as a connoisseur. Completely dominated by his social aspiration, he expends great effort to ply the path of the gentleman. His speech is filled with elaborate words and polite phrases, picturesque oaths that he has coined, and dueling terminology drawn from books on the subject. The result is a rather high-flown language that captivates Stephen and Matthew, who attempt to parrot his every word. Both of the mimics very quickly adopt the gentleman-soldier's ready phrase "as I am a gentleman and a soldier," but Stephen fears that
he will never be able to emulate the Captain's swearing:
"Oh, he swears admirably! (by PHAROAHS foot) (body of
CAESAR) I shall neuer doe it, sure (vpon mine honor, and by
Saint GEORGE) no, I ha' not the right grace"
(F,III.v.131-135).

Although Bobadill is the dashing gallant by day, he
lodges at night on a bench in the humble abode of Cob, the
water-bearer. Even the lowly waterman is not without social
aspirations. When the stupid Matthew inquires, "Thy linage,
Monsieur COB," Cob boasts of an "ancient" and "princely"
lineage that proceeded from "Herring the King of fish."
Cob's progenitor was not only a "monarch," but he was also
of the first family known to man: "The first red herring,
that was broil'd in ADAM, and EVE'S kitchin, doe I fetch my
pedigree from, by the Harrots bookes. His COB, was my
great-great-mighty-great Grand-father" (F,I.iv.8-16). An­
other fashionable foible that Cob has picked up is that of
swearing. He has learned the art from Bobadill, who, in
Cob's opinion, is one of the "braue gallants about the town,"
and who "dos sweare the legiblest, of any man christned:
By St. GEORGE, the foot of PHARAOH, the body of me, as I am
a gentleman, and a souldier: such daintie oathes!"
(F,I.iv.82-85) Cob is equally impressed with his guest's
taking tobacco "the finest, and cleanliest! it would doe a
man good to see the fume come forth at's tonnells!"
(F,I.iv.87-88) Bobadill is not only skilled in smoking
tobacco in the manner that fashion dictates, but he is a competent judge of tobaccos. He prefers "Trinidado," which he has used seven pounds of "since yesterday was seuen-night." He assures his audience that "the world shal not reproue" his statements on tobacco because he has been in the Indes "where this herb growes." After discoursing volubly on the merits of tobacco, especially "Trinidado" and "Nicotian," he declares he holds it "and will affirme it (before any Prince in Europe) to be the most soueraigne, and precious weede, that euer the earth tendred to the vse of man" (F,III.v.93-95).

When the would-be gentleman Matthew (who is the son of a fishmonger) discovers Bobadill's abode, his gentlemanly instinct rises to the fore: "Lye in a water-bearers house! A gentleman of his hauings! Well, I'le tell him my mind" (F,I.iv.60-61). But his feeling of aversion is soon dispelled, and instead he compliments his fellow-gallant on his quarters. Although the Captain is momentarily embarrassed, he quickly recovers and with lofty disdain explains that he chose this lodging because of his desire for privacy: "I confesse, I loue a cleanely and quiet priuacy, aboue all the tumult, and roare of fortune. What new booke ha' you there? What! Goe by, HIERONYMO!" (F,I.v.45-47) Thinking The Spanish Tragedy to be high on the approved list for fashionable reading, he declares, "I would faine see all the Poets, of these times, pen such another play as
that was," and compared to Kyd, he finds all of the poets to be "shallow, pittiful, barren fellowes" (F,I.v.50-54). He does, however, admire Matthew's courtly poem on "turtle-billing lovers," which the author nonchalantly shrugs off as "a toy o' mine owne, in my nonage: the infancy of my Muses!" And then he casually remarks, "That boot becomes your legge, passing well, Captayne, me thinkes!" (F,I.v.72-76) Bobadill replies that it is currently the fashion among gentlemen. The mention of fashion leads to Matthew's disclosure that he and Squire Downright "are fall'n out exceedingly" over differing opinions about a hanger, which Matthew declared "both for fashion, and worke-man-ship, was most peremptory-beautifull, and gentlemanlike! Yet, he condemn'd, and cry'd it downe, for the most pyed, and ridiculous that euer he saw" (F,I.v.80-84). Bobadill is amazed that one of Matthew's standing would "loose a thought vpon such an animal: the most peremptory absurd clowne of christendome . . . I protest to you, as I am a gentleman, and souldier, I ne're chang'd wordes, with his like" (F,I.v.90-94). But upon learning that the Squire has threatened to give Matthew the bastinado, the Captain's valor is aroused and he demands that his friend "chartel" his adversary. He modestly denies that he is skilled in fencing, professing only "some small rudiments i' the science," but enough knowledge to instruct Matthew so that he shall kill his opponent with "the first stoccato."
Springing into action, the fencing expert calls to the landlady: "Hostesse, accommodate vs with another bed-staffe here, quickly" and having secured it, he instructs his pupil to twine his body about so that "you may fall to a more sweet comely gentleman-like guard. So, indifferent. Hallow your body more sir, thus. . . Oh you disorder your point, most irregularly!" (F,I.v.125-136) It is not until later that the Captain discloses his true ability with the sword and also his true identity. Having told his listeners how he has often been assaulted by "some three, foure, fiue, sixe" swordsmen, whom he drove down the street in view of all "our gallants" and "pittying to hurt them," he then takes Edward Knowell into his strictest confidence: "I will tell you, sir, by the way of priuate, and vnder seale; I am a gentleman, and liue here obscure, and to my selfe. . ." (F,IV.vii.63-65). After this revelation he outlines his plan whereby her Majesty and her subjects will never again have to worry about the expenditure of money and life against any warring nation whatsoever. The Captain would select nineteen gentlemen, much like himself, whom he would personally teach "the speciall rules, as your Punto, your Reuerso, your Stoccata, your Imbroccata, your Passada, your Montanto: till they could all play very neare, or altogether as well as my selfe" (F,IV.vii.76-80). These twenty superior swordsmen could face an army of forty thousand and by challenging twenty of the enemy daily, could
kill them all in a matter of two hundred days. Captain Bobadill is assured that his plan will succeed, for, as a gentleman himself, he knows that those who are challenged "could not, in their honour, refuse vs" (F,IV.vii.84).

Both Bobadill and Matthew, though performing the same function of Bobadilla and Matheo in the Quarto, are a bit more sophisticated than their counterparts. Throughout the Folio text their courtly jargon is appreciably heightened, and likewise each assumes more of the character of the contemptuously proud gallant. Thus Bobadilla gives no explanation as to why he resides in such humble quarters, but his later counterpart, with gentlemanly aloofness, has the sophisticated explanation that it provides "quiet priuacy." In the same scene several changes occur. Bobadilla addresses Matthew: "For do you see sir, by the hart of my selfe" (Q,I.iii.121), but for the more chivalrous Bobadill, the oath becomes "by the heart of valour, in me" (F,I.v.40); Bobadilla calls to the hostess to "lend us another bedstaffe here quickly" (Q,I.iii.195-196), but Bobadill commands her to "accommodate vs with another bedstaffe" (F,I.v.125); the original Captain advises Matheo to send Downright a "challenge" (Q,I.iii.183) and the later Captain uses the more precise word "chartel" (F,I.v.111); and while Bobadilla admonishes Matheo for disordering his point "most vilely" (Q,I.iii.203), his successor employs the more refined "most irregularly" (F,I.v.136). Changes
such as these occur in a large number of the speeches of Bobadill and Matthew. In fact, Jonson does not hesitate to replace a common word with a more elegant one for the would-be gallants, for he is intent on their displaying a more fastidious refinement in language and a more lordly tone in general. As has been previously mentioned, some other characters (particularly Downright and Edward Knowell) have been endowed with more common sense so that by contrast, the seekers for gentlemanliness are made to appear even more absurd.

These alterations in the Folio revision have been considered in some detail because aside from showing Jonson's superior ability as a dramatic craftsman, they reflect in their enlarged satire of the court the greater contact Jonson had had with it in the intervening years. When the dramatist wrote the original play in 1598, he was practically unknown and without patronage and, therefore, somewhat hesitant to be too outspoken about the foolish artificial manners that the Court—and foolish imitation of it by hangers-on—had inflicted upon society. But by the time that he revised the play he had become a leading dramatist and a court favorite (and was no doubt somewhat conscious of his greatness). Consequently, he has no qualms about making the social criticism more pronounced in order to make a more pointed indictment of the era for placing too great an emphasis on the acquisition of fashionable
In *Every Man In*, as in his later plays, it is evident that what *humors* means for Jonson is *manners*. Here, in a rather pleasant and highly humorous way, he sportively derides the manners of the gallant, but nicely veils the identity of his target. However, in his next play, *Every Man Out of His Humor*, he drops the cloak, and unleashes a scathing attack on the courtier's behavior. The other "comical satires," *Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster*, although somewhat milder in tone than *Every Man Out*, continue to satirize courtly society; in addition, they suggest that the artist can effect changes in that society.
CHAPTER II

JONSON'S VIEW OF THE COURT IN THE COMICAL SATIRES

Every Man Out of His Humour

Jonson was so delighted with the success of Every Man In and the immediate fame it brought him that he hurried to employ the same theme in a new play, Every Man Out of His Humour. It was presented at the newly-erected Globe Theater in the winter of 1599 and rushed through the press in the following year. Although the play was sufficiently acclaimed to merit a presentation at court, it was not favorably received there; nevertheless, the author was determined to publish the work. He not only needed the extra revenue, but he also felt that the published edition would be appreciated by the more learned readers. In an effort to insure the success (and likewise the sale) of his first published play, he pored over the manuscript, prefixing the text with a brief piquant description of each character. The brilliant "Character of Persons" proved to be a happy innovation that readily attracted prospective buyers. He, moreover, selected a publisher whose bookshop was strategically located near the law schools. Jonson felt that his play would particularly appeal to the well educated young
men of the Inns of Court, who in addition to coming from the moneyed and best families, were on the whole quite intelligent. He apparently was right in his conjecture, for the first edition sold so quickly that a second edition had to be made within the year. Thus when he finally published the play in the *Works* (1616), it was accompanied by a dedication to "the noblest novrceries of humanity, and liberty in the kingdom: the Innes of Court." Herein he states, "When I wrote this Poeme, I had friendship with diuers in your societies; who, as they were great Names in learning, so they were no lesse Examples of living." Numbered among these friendships no doubt were Donne, Heywood, and certainly Selden, who became one of Jonson's closest and most beloved friends. Jonson recognized that many of the future lawyers were the cleverest scholars to be found in London, and in 1599 this was precisely the type of audience that he hoped to attract.

*Every Man Out of His Humour* like the two previous plays is directed against false social and intellectual standards. In the present play, however, Jonson is almost solely concerned with the affectation of courtiers. Beyond this he expresses concern for the way in which money becomes a corrupting influence, but this is shown primarily through Sordido, a character somewhat isolated from the rest of the story. Most of the other characters are the superficial courtiers whose behavior shows that they do not
possess the right moral and social standards. The characters in Jonson's earlier plays engage in absurd, but rather pleasant and harmless foibles, which on the whole are shown to be humorous; here, however, the courtiers and court aspirants are addicted to vicious follies that the author treats with disdain and contempt. This sudden and radical change in Jonson's technique has aroused much comment. Why did the dramatist abandon the gentle, urbane Horatian satire of Every Man In and turn to bitter, angry Juvenalian satire for Every Man Out? Several critics offer the historical explanation that Jonson was following the vogue of formal satire which was at its height between 1597 and 1599. Baskervill relates the tone of Jonson's comical satires with that of the Elizabethan formal satires,¹ and like Herford and Simpson, he feels that the immense popularity of formal satire led the dramatist to put the satiric instruments to use on the stage.² O. J. Campbell reasons that Jonson, in writing this dramatic satire, was attempting to nullify the restraining order against the satirists issued on June 1, 1599, by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London. Campbell states that Jonson "determined that he would incorporate within this play as many of the distinguishing characteristics of the suppressed

¹C. R. Baskervill, English Elements in Jonson's Early Comedy (Austin, 1911), p. 152.
²Herford and Simpson, I, 397.
literary art as he could."

While all of these explanations serve to show why the playwright at this particular time in his career was influenced to switch to comical satire, they do not explain what influenced the choice of his subject for this particular satire. Again the answer can in part be attributed to the thinking of the age. We find that many of the characters in Every Man Out exhibit the same depravities of the posturers, gallants, and courtiers pictured by Donne, Marston, Lodge, Hall, and other formal satirists in the later nineties. However, Jonson would not have been one to imitate his contemporaries. Ben Jonson, by nature, could not be a follower; he had to be a leader. But above all he was a reformer. It was not his purpose, however, to reform the individual, but the social system that had corrupted the individual. There can be little doubt that his views of society had to some extent been shaped by the scores of writers, who, throughout the sixteenth century, regarded high society as degenerate; denounced its evil practices; and lamented that its degradation had seeped through to the lower classes. Perhaps George Gascoigne's Steele Glas (1576) best represents the concern of contemporary writers. Gascoigne, a courtier, soldier, and member of Parliament, wrote the work (generally regarded as the earliest blank

3Oscar James Campbell, Comicall Satyre and Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida" (San Marino, 1938), p. 54.
verse satire) just two years before his death. Here he
taxes kings who dote on "pompe," "pleasant sports," sumptuous palaces, and clothes of "silkes of strange devise."
He concludes: "The sumpteous house, declares the princes state,/ But vaine excesse, bewrayes a princes faults."4
Gascoigne, like other moralists of the century, attacked the vain courtier's foolish addiction to fashionable dress:

Our bumbast hose, our treble double ruffes,
Our suites of Silke, our comely garded capes,
Our knit silke stocks, and spanish lether shoes,
(Yea velvet serves, ofttimes to trample in)
Our plumes, our spangs, and al our queint aray,
Are pricking spurred, provoking filthy pride,
And snares (unseen) which lead a man to hel.5

Jonson, with Gascoigne, believed that a straightforward approach was the best when attacking the vices of contemporaneous manners. Certainly he is outspoken in Every Man Out. It is essential to the study of this satire to recognize that here he is a social critic, who feels it his obligation to show that false standards have usurped the rightful place of true social values. Moreover, he is so determined to have every man get the full import of his criticism that he provides a pair of explicators, Cordatus and Mitis. The latter is censorious and frequently questions the author's judgment, which affords Cordatus, the "Author's Friend," full opportunity to explain in detail

5Ibid., pp. 152-153.
the author's intent in the various scenes. In addition, Asper, Macilente, and even the scoffing Carlo Buffone aid the author in revealing the several functions of a writer of satirical comedy. Through his spokesman Cordatus, Jonson states clearly what he is striving for in this satire. He cares little how the "autumne-judgements" define comedy, for he is following Cicero in writing a comedy that is "Imitatio vitae, . . . a thing throughout pleasant, and ridiculous, and accommodated to the correction of manners" (III.vi.206-209). He explains that the comedy of extravagant fantasy and "crosse wooing" will not serve his purpose, for in order to correct manners the comedy must be "neere, and familiarly allied to the time" (III.vi.200-201).

Almost from the opening lines it is readily apparent that the perfidious courtiers will be severely scrutinized. While it is hinted that the vices of strumpets, ruffians, brokers, usurers, and lawyers will be unmasked, this is only a ruse, and the true target is revealed in the opening chorus by Asper:

I feare no courtiers frowne, should I applaud
The easie flexure of his supple hammes,
Tut, these are so innate, and popular,
That drunken custome would not shame to laugh
(In scorne) at him, that should but dare to taxe 'hem.

(11. 27-31)

Asper-Jonson makes it clear that this will be a ruthless exposure: "Ile strip the ragged follies of the time,/Naked, as at their birth" (11. 17-18), and despite
Cordatus' warning "Be not too bold," Asper continues "and with a whip of steele/ Print wounding lashes in the yron ribs" (11. 18-20). Later Mitis urges caution: "The dayes are dangerous, full of exception/ And men are growne impa­tient of reprooфе" (11. 124-125), but Asper is convinced that "Good men, and vertuous spirits, that loathe their vices,/ Will cherish my free labours, loue my lines" (11. 134-135). Here Jonson is expressing the prevailing opinion of satirists, but more than this his words are in­dicative of the moral zeal that he put into this satire on the court.

The first victims of the satirist's derision were the gallants whose very presence in the theater Jonson seemed to find objectionable. Mercilessly impatient with these supercilious gallants, he gives Asper full rein in ridiculing them. Asper can spot them easily because any one of them "Sits with his armes thus wreath'd, his hat pull'd here,/ Cryes meaw, and nods, then shakes his empty head" (11. 161-162). He finds them "more infectious then the pestilence" and not "fit for faire societies," and then he lashes out at their ignorance and behavior in the theater:

How monstrous, and detested is't, to see
A fellow, that has neither arte, nor braine,
Sit like an ARISTARCHVS, or starke-asse,
Taking mens lines, with a tabacco face,
In snuffe, still spitting, vsing his wryed lookes,
(In nature of a vice) to wrest, and turne
The good aspect of those that shall sit neere him,  
From what they doe behold! O, 'tis most vile.  
(11. 177-184)

As these lines suggest, Asper is to assist the author in castigating follies and vices. Described in the "Characters" as "an ingenious and free spirit, eager and constant in reprofe, without feare controuling the worlds abuses," Asper greatly resembles the author, and indeed exhibits the satirist's moral indignation when confronted by the impostors and social aspirants.

Among the first of these whom we meet are Sogliardo, who is "so enamour'd of the name of a Gentleman, that he will haue it, though he buyes it" (Characters, 11. 78-80), and Carlo Buffone, who encourages men to pursue follies so that he can laugh at their discomfiture. While he is called a "Publike, scurrilous, and prophane Iester" by Jonson, he is far from ignorant, and he with Macilente are the only ones who make no pretense of being what they are not. In this scene, he directs Sogliardo in how to be a courtier. Sogliardo, one of the nouveau riche, declares, "Nay looke you CARLO: this is my Humour now! I haue land and money, my friends left me well, and I will be a Gentleman, whatsoeuer it cost me" (I.ii.1-3). Carlo counsels: "But SOGLIARDO, if you affect to be a gentleman indeede, you must obserue all the rare qualities, humours, and complements of a gentleman" (I.ii.20-23). This evokes from the would-be gentleman the request that his friend instruct
him in his pursuit of gentility, and from this time on we watch the gleeful jester mold "this lumpe of copper." He strongly advises: "First (to be an accomplisht gentleman, that is, a gentleman of the time) you must giue o're housekeeping in the countrey, and liue altogether in the city amongst gallants" (I.ii.37-40). The importance of "housekeeping" in the life of the sixteenth century is discussed at length by L. C. Knights. He explains how important the household of a great lord in the country was to the economy. Such a great house employed scores of laborers from the peasant class to raise the food crops, to tend the animals, to raise the beeves, sheep, poultry, and then ready them for the table, and to help with the household duties such as cleaning, spinning, weaving, sewing, cooking, preserving, wine-making, and distilling. Among the forty or sixty persons who ate daily in the halls of noblemen were relatives, tutors, companions to the children, and a number of "gentle" dependents such as scholars and poets.  

Since a number of the latter group often counted the nobleman's hall their residence for months on end, it is small wonder that writers deplored the decay of "housekeeping." This was regarded as one of the responsibilities of the aristocracy, most of whom accepted it as an obligation. However, in the late Tudor period the system was rapidly breaking down, and even

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as early as 1575 we find Cascoigne arraigning the noblemen for shirking this duty:

The Gentleman, which might in countrie keepe  
A plenteous boorde, and feede the fatherlesse,  
With pig and goose, with mutton, beepe and veale,  
(Yea now and then, a capon and a chicke)  
Wil breake up house, and dwel in market townes,  
A loytring life, and like an Epicure.

In a lengthy reprimand addressed to knights, squires, and men of gentle blood, he reminds them: "You were not borne al onely for your selves:/ Your countrie claymes, some part of al your paines." He then returns to the main issue:

The stately lord, which woonted was to kepe  
A court at home, is now come up to courte.7

This, of course, is precisely what Carlo Buffone advises the newly-rich Sogliardo to do. He further recommends that Sogliardo turn four or five hundred acres of his best land into two or three trunks of apparel; that he "feede cleanly" at his "Ordinarie" and sit melancholy and pick his teeth when he cannot speak; that when attending plays he should laugh only at his own jests, "or else as the Noblemen laugh"; and that he sit on the stage and "flout" provided he has a good suit. These are only a few practices of the courtier that a would-be gentleman must adopt, and Carlo continues his instruction: He must pretend "alliance with Courtiers and great persons" and when he dines in any "strange presence," he must hire a fellow

to bring him letters "feign'd from such a Noble man, or such a Knight, or such a Ladie" (I.ii.71-76); he must dress his servants in "fine pyed liueries, laid with good gold lace," which hopefully will bring him into debt, for with gentleman "it's an excellent policy to owe much in these daies" (I.ii.106); but he must immediately ride to the city and be measured for a "Coat of armes, to fit you of what fashion you will" for "you shall ha' your choise for money" (I.ii.147-151). At this point Macilente, "a man well parted, a sufficient Scholler, and trauail'd," explodes in wrathful indignation:

This clod? a whorson puck-fist? O god, god, god, god, &c.
I could runne wild with griefe now, to behold
The ranknesse of her bounties, that doth breed
Such bull-rushes; these mushrompe gentlemen,
That shoot vp in a night to place, and worship.

(II.ii.159-163)

Concern about the "mushrompe gentlemen" was both grave and widespread during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. These newly titled members of the Elizabethan aristocracy often as not came from the mercantile class. Although of the middle-class, they had made considerable money and stood ready to buy the land of noblemen and even of squires, who found themselves getting deeper and deeper into debt in their efforts to maintain their estates. Certainly it is not surprising, as Bacon reveals, that "Men of noble birth are noted to be envious towards new men when
they rise; for the distance is altered . . . ."8 Yet scholarly men of the middle class resented the "new men" not just for their refusal to accept the responsibilities of service borne by the older aristocracy, but because most of them lacked the education befitting a nobleman. Henry Peacham, a schoolmaster, traveler, painter, and antiquary, although more accomplished, was closely akin to Jonson's Macilente. Assuredly, Peacham speaks Macilente's feeling in declaring that the upstart gentleman "like a plague, I think, hath infected the whole world, every undeserving and base peasant aiming at nobility," and he deplores the fact that this "miserable ambition" has brought such a new list of coats, "that, were Democritus living, he might have laughing matter for his life."9 For this reason he thinks a study of heraldry important, otherwise how could one know "an intruding upstart, shot up with last night's mushroom, from an ancient descended and deserved gentleman, whose grandsires have had their shares in every-foughten field by the English since Edward I?"10 Thus, it is particularly galling to Macilente to have the "hulke of ignorance" Sogliardo show contempt for the scholar: "No sir, I scorne to


10 Ibid., p. 160.
liue by my wits, I. I haue better meanes, I tell thee, then to take such base courses, as to liue by my wits" (I.ii.184-187). And upon learning that Macilente is a scholar, he affects the attitude of many of the new nobility toward those who live by their pen: "For Gods sake let's be gone, and he be a Scholler, you know I cannot abide him, I had as leeue see a Cockatrice . . ." (I.ii.219-221). There can be little doubt that Jonson had more than once encountered the living example of Sogliardo.

Shortly afterward, the pièce de résistance is brought on the stage in the person of Fastidius Briske. This "neat, spruce, affecting courtier," whose prototype was quite familiar to Londoners, was to be found at every fashionable tavern and "flouting it" on the stage at every play. He was doubtless the true gentleman's anathema, and certainly the playwright's curse. Driven by an ambition to establish himself on a firm foundation at court, he spent most of his waking hours busily circulating among those who could further him socially, or with those who would lend him the money necessary to move in these social circles. It is through following him on his daily rounds that the satirist shows the perverted sense of values of this type of courtier and his debasing influence on middle-class society. Fastidius Briske has come to call on Sir Puntarvolo, who is described in the "Characters" as a "Vaine-glorious Knight, ouer-Englishing his trauels" and "so palpably
affected to his owne praise, that (for want of flatterers) he commends himselfe, to the floutage of his owne family" (11. 15-20). Jonson has great fun with Puntarvolo, who is first seen returning from the hunt with his entourage and then saluting the fair maiden (his wife) in a stilted, well-rehearsed speech that bespeaks knightly courtesy, generosity, and good breeding. Here, the Renaissance-minded author to some extent is ridiculing the chivalric romance, which was still being produced, but he is more intent on ridiculing the contemporary mercenary knight. Thus the modern Sir Puntarvolo shows the absurd contrast as he assumes the manners and postures of the knight of chivalric tradition. The degraded knight now "deales upon returnes," and he boasts to Fastidius and his other guests that he is "now determined to put forth some fiue thousand pound" that will pay him five to one, and he greedily anticipates his return of "fiue and twenty thousand pound, to entertaine time withall" (II.iii.245-250). He, like Fastidius, delights in bragging of his associates at court, which is primarily for the benefit of his middle-class guests who are not admitted at court. He inquires if Fastidius is a friend of Count Gratiato, which allows the courtier to vaunt:

I am exceedingly endear'd to his loue: by this hand (I protest to you, signior, I speake it not gloriously, nor out of affection, but) there's hee, and the count FRVGALE, signior ILLVSTRE, signior LVCVLENTO, and a sort of 'hem; that (when I am at court) they doe share
me amongst 'hem. Happy is he can enjoy me most priuate. I doe wish my selfe sometime an ubiquitarie for their loue, in good faith.

(II.iii.181-188)

This evokes Carlo's candid remark: "There's ne're a one of these, but might lie a weeke on the rack, ere they could bring forth his name" (II.iii.189-190). But continuing in name-dropping, the knight hints at an intimate acquaintance with "our court starre" that "planet of wit, MADDONA SAVIO-LINA"; Fastidius tops this by declaring that she is indeed his mistress and passionately inquires: "Did you euer heare any woman speake like her? or enricht with a more plentifull discourse?" (II.iii.206-207); but Carlo, the common-sense jester, shows his complete disgust: "O villainous! nothing but sound, sound, a meere eccho; shee speaks as shee goes tir'd, in cob-web lawne, light, thin: good enough to catch flies withall" (II.iii.208-210). Evidence of the knight's total degeneration is shown in his reply: "Come, regard not a iester: it is in the power of my purse, to make him speake well, or ill, of me" (II.iii.214-215).

Had Puntarvolo, whom Knoll so aptly labels "an aristocrat gone into decay," and the unprincipled courtier, Fastidius Briske, been isolated from middle-class society, their influence would not have been so

detrimental. But as the satirist is so clearly pointing out, these practitioners of despicable follies were injurious to the morals of their middle-class associates. Deliro, a highly successful merchant, imitates Sir Puntarvolo's courtliness in playing the abject servant to his wife. Unaware that the knight's protestations of love for his wife are a flimsy ritual designed to elicit praise of himself, Deliro follows him implicitly, and taking courtly traditions too seriously, the merchant lays both himself and his wealth at the feet of his wife, Fallace. She, however, in courtly fashion scorns his every attempt to please her; moreover, she is enamored of Fastidius and longs to be a part of his fashionable world. In conversation with her brother she declares that she has much cause to be melancholy "for I'le be sworn, I liue as little in the fashion, as any woman in London" (IV.i.17-19). Being socially ambitious, she has carefully observed the fine manners of courtiers, as well as imitated their speech, which is evidenced by her attempt to use courtly jargon in her apostrophe to Fastidius Briske:

Oh, sweete FASTIDIVS BRISKE! Oe fine courtier! thou art hee mak'st me sigh, and say, how blessed is that woman that hath a courtier to her husband! and how miserable a dame shee is, that hath neyther husband, nor friend i' the court! O, sweet FASTIDIVS! Oe fine courtier! How comely he bows him in his court'sie! how full hee hits a woman between the lips when hee kisses! how vpright hee sits at the table! how daintily he carues! how sweetly he talkes, and tels newes of this lord, and of that lady! how cleanly he wipes his spoone, at euery spoonfull of any whit-meat he eates,
and what a neat case of pick-tooths he carries about him, still! O, sweet FASTIDIVS! & fine courtier!

(IV.i.29-41)

It matters little to Fallace that sweet Fastidius Briske pursues the elegant way of life at the expense of her husband. Nor will she accept Macilente's report that Fastidius is a vain dissembler, who apishly imitates the "gallant'st" courtiers' manners, and who in trying to thrust himself upon the greatest at court has incurred their detestation. Fallace, moreover, is incensed when her husband declares "I'll forbear him no longer. All his lands are morgag'd to me, and forfeited: besides I haue bonds of his in my hand, for the receit of now fifty pound, now a hundred, now two hundred: still, as he has had a fan but wagg'd at him, he would be in a new sute" (IV.ii.58-62).

Briske places great emphasis on the importance of clothes because he believes that they contribute immeasurably to the success of a gentleman. "Why," he tells his auditors, "I had three sutes in one yeere, made three great ladies in loue with me: I had other three, vn-did three gentlemen in imitation" (II.vi.32-34); "Why, ... rich apparell has strange vertues: it makes him that hath it without meanes, esteemed for an excellent wit" (II.vi.45-47); and it "sets the wits of ladies at worke, ... furnisheth your two-shilling ordinarie; takes possession of your stage at your new play" (II.vi.50-53). This provokes Macilente's perspicacious comment: "Pray you, sir, adde this; it giues
respect to your foolies, makes many theeues, as many strumpets, and no fewer bankrupts" (II.vi.55-57).

Fallace, on the other hand, is so entranced with court fashions that she rapturously murmurs, "Ah, the sweet grace of a courtier" (II.vi.40), and her brother, Fungoso, falls completely under the spell of Fastidius and pathetically labors to imitate him. Fungoso, a young law student, forsakes his studies to follow the fashion and "makes it the whole bent of his endeavours, to wring sufficient means from his wretched father, to put him in the Courtiers cut" (Characters, 73-75). He bitterly complains to his sister that their father Sordido is too miserly to buy him the clothes to make him "a true gentleman indeed" for no man is "term'd a gentleman that is not always i' the fashion" (IV.i.13-14). Having been the shadow of Fastidius, however, he has learned the gallant's business tactics. Thus he pawns his law books, gets money from his sister, seeks money from his father under the pretense that it's to buy law books, runs into debt with his tailor, and attempts to borrow money from his tailor to buy "ribbands" for his shoes and points. Even with all his maneuvering, he is always a suit behind the extravagant fashionmonger Briske. Here, Jonson is explicit in showing how the false social standards of superficial courtiers can infect those of a lower social stratum.

The satirist points to the inequality among social
classes and rigorously censures society for its views on what constitutes a gentleman. By having the gallants prepare to go to the court, the author exposes the many fallacies of the social order. Of course, Fastidius Briske and Sir Puntarvolo can go to court at their pleasure; Macilente, having been fitted with the proper clothes at the expense of Deliro, can go; the ignorant, but wealthy Sogliardo, having been instructed in the manners of a courtier by Carlo, now has "a great humor to the court"; and Fungoso, though swooning when he sees Fastidius in another new suit and himself thus behind the fashion, is still enough in fashion to be acceptable at court. But Carlo, though endowed with a keen penetrating wit, does not meet the other requirements, and is forced to say, "Pardon me, I am not for the court," to which the vain, unfeeling Sir Puntarvolo responds, "That's true: CARLO comes not at court, indeed" (IV.viii.102-104). At court we have further evidence of the knight's aristocratic arrogance. Upon arriving at the palace stairs, he looks about for someone to care for his cherished dog and seeing a groom carrying a basket thrusts the animal upon him. Feeling that those of the lower class are meant to serve him, he offers the groom no payment for the service, but directs "let me find thee here at my returne" (V.i.21) and adds "pray thee let thy honestie be sweet" (V.i.29). Quite rightfully the groom is enraged by this high-handed treatment and gives the dog
over to be destroyed. In this thrust at the upper class, the dramatist is pointing to a flagrant defect in the social order and suggesting that the lack of respect between classes could have serious results.

The author calls attention to several ills of society that need correcting, but he is primarily concerned with false courtliness, its evils, and its threat to the whole of society. Most of his satirical scorn is directed at the shallow courtier and his superficial manners, few of which escape the satirist's derision. As the false courtiers, would-be courtiers, and their adherents inanely attempt to affect what they believe to be the courtly manner, they incur the full measure of Jonson's ridicule and contempt. Through this harsh exposé, he is determined to show that undue emphasis is being placed on artificial manners by vain, unfaithful courtiers, with the result that they and their middle-class followers have substituted hollow and ostentatious display for true moral and social values.

One can be certain that Jonson had misgivings about his unduly rigorous censure, and for this reason he has his loyal commentators assure the audience that no offense has been intended. Mitis is fearful that the city will take offense at certain scenes, but Cordatus, secretly fearing the court's displeasure, attempts to forestall their objections.
Why (by that proportion) the court might as well take offence at him we call the courtier, and with much more pretext, by how much the place transcends, and goes before in dignitie and vertue: but can you imagine that any noble, or true spirit in court (whose sinowie, and altogether vn-affected graces, very worthily expresse him a courtier) will make any exception at the opening of such an emptie trunke, as this BRISKE is! or thinke his owne worth empeacht, by beholding his motley inside?

(II.vi.153-161)

Despite the earnestness of this, and other protestations, the play was not liked at court, and it is difficult to understand why the officials asked for a court presentation. This play, as Herford and Simpson state, was "a far more daring violation of precedent and tradition than its predecessor," and they feel that Shakespeare's company was willing to take the risk because the earlier humour comedy had won great repute for its author, particularly with the more exclusive and cultured section of London.\textsuperscript{12} None the less, it is quite puzzling to see the author making a bid for court recognition with so bold a satire, and more especially at a time when the aging Queen was finding it increasingly more difficult to enforce a standard of reasonable behavior at court.

Moreover, his special attempt to recommend himself to the Queen by presenting her on the stage at the end of the play was forbidden by court authorities. Jonson, in great annoyance, explains that he had been forced to alter the original conclusion, shown at the first playing, because

\textsuperscript{12}Herford and Simpson, I, 22.
"many seem'd not to rellish it." In the first performance Macilente, the spirit of envy, had come to court, the author says, with a purposed resolution "to maligne at any thing that should front him," but suddenly he is confronted by the Queen and "the verie wonder of her Presence strikes him to the earth dumbe, and astonisht" (Appendix X.27-30), and purges him of his evil passion. Whereupon Macilente proclaims:

Blessed, Diuine, Vnblemisht, Sacred, Pure,
Glorious, Immortall, and indeed Immense;
O that I had a world of Attributes,
To lend or adde to this high Maiestie.

(Appendix X.34-37)

Certainly Queen Elizabeth, whose vanity fed at the fountain of praise and adulation, could not have been displeased with these and the continuing lines which extended into a lengthy and glowing tribute to her virtues. But, the author (who was never to be commended for tactfulness) most unwisely refers to her advanced age in imploring:

Let . . . death himselfe admire her:
And may her vertues make him to forget
The vse of his ineuitable hand.
Flie from her age; Sleepe time before her throne,
Our strongest wall falls downe, when shee is gone.

(Queen's Epilogue, 32-36)

Although the sentiment is noble, and the poet's expression of affection for his sovereign doubtless sincere, the indiscretion closes upon Elizabeth's main point of vanity and greatly offends her. The ladies and gentlemen of the court, many of whom probably felt that they had been glanced at
earlier in the play, shared the Queen's displeasure. In any event, the actual representation of the living queen on the stage could hardly be permitted.

Even though the play did not gain for Jonson the favorable recognition at court that he had hoped for, the work was by no means a failure. This brilliant, colorful drama was enjoyed by the city at large, but more particularly by the better educated, who saw with the author the need for social reform and appreciated his efforts in this direction.

Cynthia's Revels, or The Fountain of Self-Love

It would be reasonable to assume that the dramatist, having suffered a disappointment at Whitehall's reception of his first comical satire, would not immediately return to the court as the subject of a drama. Such a supposition, however, does not reckon with Jonson's determination to gain royal favor, nor with his resolve to emphasize that the unseemly aspects of courtly behavior can be corrected. Cynthia's Revels, then, is a continuation of the theme of Every Man Out, but the setting of the present play is confined to the heart of the court of Cynthia, who rules a land called Gargaphie. This drama, first performed in 1600, was written to attract the fashionable audiences of the Blackfriars Theatre, and apparently it met with their approval, since the title-page states that "it hath beene
sundry times privately acted in Black-Friers by the Children of her Maiesties Chappell." Catering to the taste of the more fashionable segment of London, the dramatist employs allegory, mythology, and the courtly masque in this comical satire. In addition, he abandons the satirically hostile approach to the reformation of manners and adopts an idealistic method, and here, perhaps more than in any other work, we see the strength of his idealism.

Indeed, Jonson's habit of referring to his plays as poems is completely justified in the case of Cynthia's Revels, for what distinguishes this play from others is its high poetic purpose. The play magnifies Jonson's conception of the poet as poet-moralist and poet-teacher, and it exhibits his complete agreement with the Renaissance tenet that comedy is an instrument of ethical reform. This is not to say that he was less the moral instructor and reformer than in the previous plays, but as he himself obviously realized, he needed to refine his approach for this more important task.

Doubtless, Cynthia's Revels is Jonson's most ambitious play. First of all it is his most serious and concentrated effort to attract the favorable attention of the Queen, but at the same time, he has the more subtle design of instructing the prince. His most obvious purpose, however, is that of correcting the morals and manners of pretentious courtiers. All of these aims are clearly evidenced
in the dedication, which is addressed to "The Speciall Fovntaine of Manners: The Court." He begins by praising the court as "a bountifull, and braue spring" that "water­est all of the noble plants of this Iland." Then he cau­tions the court: "In thee, the whole Kingdome dresseth it selfe, and is ambitious to use thee as her glasse. Beware, then, thou render mens figures truly, and teach them no lesse to hate their deformities, then to loue their formes." As his earlier plays have clearly shown, Jonson could not abide the preening fashion-monger; thus, he continues: "It is not pould'ring, perfuming, and euery day smelling of the taylor, that convuerteth to a beautiful objeect: but a mind, shining through any sute, which needes no false light either of riches, or honors to helpe it." It must be agreed with John Palmer that "this was odd language for a cour­tier," and as he adds, "the play was in keeping, for it presented a palace swarming with elaborate fools and water flies." Equally as singular, but characteristic of the author, is the signature: "Thy seruant, but not slaue, Ben. Ionson."

The dedication did not appear in the Quarto version, which F. G. Fleay, followed by Chambers, and Herford and


Simpson, believe to be the text of the court performance of January 6, 1601. The Folio text of 1616, which they feel more nearly represents the original version of the play, has several scenes of extended satire on the court that do not appear in the Quarto. Thus it appears that the author, who was determined to win court favor with this play, deemed it wise to exclude certain satirical portions when it was presented before an audience of courtiers. Even with these excisions, however, the satire in the shortened version was sufficiently trenchant in its exposé of those courtiers who were weakening court society by being foolishly fond of externals and ignoring the principle of true gentility.

As the play opens, the boy actors are arguing over who is to speak the prologue, but shortly they switch to one of Jonson's favorite techniques—that of deriding the absurd actions of the witless gallants who frequent the theater. Here the boys mimic the fops by making "much ado" about paying their money at the door, displaying their "three sorts of tabacco," and by censuring the actors, the play, and the "pittiful fellows that make them--Poets." Then Jonson turns to instruct his auditors in behavior befitting a gentleman by having one of the children pose as a "more sober, or better-gather'd gallant." He, upon entering, is urged by a fellow player to rent a stool so that he may "throne" himself "in state on the stage, as other
gentlemen vse." His reply (which most surely voices Jonson's disapproval of those who customarily sit on the stage) is a sharp reproof:

Away, wagge; what, would'st thou make an implement of me? Slid the boy takes me for a piece of perspectiuue (I hold my life) or some silke cortaine, come to hang the stage here! sir cracke, I am none of your fresh pictures, that vse to beautifie the decaied dead arras, in a publike theatre.

(Induction, 147-152)

To insure that one and all understand the difference between pseudo and true gentility, the teacher-playwright has the boy remark on this gentleman's conservative dress as opposed to the usual foppish attire. Further he has the gentleman graciously accede to a player's suggestion that he take his seat in the audience so that the play may begin.

Nowhere, perhaps, is Jonson more explicit in stating the difference between the would-be and the true gentleman. But he was seeking the approval of the more genteel element of the fashionable Blackfriars audience, who most surely had an aversion to the foolish gallants and their affected manners. Since this is a select audience, the children refer to them as "this fair society here," and the prologos begins with a glowing compliment:

If gracious silence, sweet attention,
Quicke sight, and quicker apprehension,
(The lights of judgements throne) shine any where;
Our doubtfull authour hopes this is their sphere.

(Prologue, 1-4)

And he continues in this flattering vein by addressing them
as "learned" and those "Who can both censure, understand, define/ What merit is" (ll. 15-16).

This courtly speech is indicative of the tone of the artfully designed drama to follow. Intent on constructing a play that will please the taste of courtiers, Jonson proceeds to sublimate the satiric framework. He approaches this objective through a variety of means and devices that were known to appeal to this special audience. Ladies and gentlemen who attended festivities at the court and followed its progresses were accustomed to masques, pastorals, allegorical and mythological representations, pageantry, and other entertainment involving a great show of spectacle. Also many of them had been nurtured on the artistically elegant and classically ornamented court comedies that John Lyly had provided for the royal court. With this awareness, the author uses an allegorical structural plan which lends itself to the graceful masque, lovely song, and beautiful costuming and scenery. Within this framework he places gods and goddesses, various members of society, the poet, and the Queen, through whom he inveighs against the more unseemly aspects of upper class and Court society.

The play proper opens in a grove adjoining Cynthia's court. Cupid and Mercury enter and begin taunting each other, but shortly declare a truce, and Cupid explains that his mission here is to take part in the gala festivities presently to be held at the royal palace. He further
discloses that Diana, the huntress and queen of these groves, has proclaimed these solemn revels, which she will descend to grace in order to defend herself against "some black and envious slanders hourelly breath'd against her, for her diuine iustice on ACTEON" (I.i.92-94). He adds that her appearance at the revels will "intimate how farre shee treads such malicious imputations beneath her," and show "how cleere her beauties are from the least wrinckle of the austerity, they may be charg'd with" (I.i.100-103).

The introduction of the Earl of Essex incident through the Actaeon myth is indeed regrettable. But Jonson at twenty-seven lacked the delicacy of perception to recognize that this was an acutely sensitive subject, particularly for the Queen whose attention he was expressly trying to attract. Most certainly he showed a complete lack of tact in having the play repeatedly state that Cynthia (Elizabeth) is being criticized for her severity to Essex. Whether he is referring to the death sentence or to Essex's long imprisonment and loss of his offices can only be a matter of conjecture, but Queen Elizabeth's harsh treatment of the popular Devereux did indeed arouse much resentment throughout her realm.

In committing himself to the Actaeon story, the author quite obviously plans to show that the sentence meted out to the Earl proceeded from the wisdom of the divine sovereign and thus is not liable to question. It is
in part for this purpose that he introduces the sad nymph Echo, who in the first scene is volubly lamenting the death of Narcissus. Her expression of grief is so greatly prolonged that Mercury interrupts her and cautions: "ECCHO, be briefe, SATVRNIA is abroad,/ And if shee heare, sheele storme at IOVES high will" (I.ii.54-55). She responds with a promise to be brief but requests that she be allowed to conduct these last rites properly by singing a "mourning straine" over the "watrie hearse" of Narcissus. At the conclusion of this song (which is one of Jonson's love-liest), she again pleads for more time so that she can review the incidents that have happened in this spot. Here Mercury tries to buy her silence: "Foregoe thy vse and libertie of tongue,/ And thou maist dwell on earth, and sport thee there" (I.ii.80-81). But the talkative nymph, oblivious to his promise, continues, "Here yong ACTEON fell, pursu'de, and torne/ By CYNHIA'S wrath (more eager, then his hounds)" (I.ii.82-83).

This harsh criticism of Diana, coupled with the fact that the nymph cannot be persuaded to cease her tirade, bears out Talbert's belief that Echo probably represents the derisive speakers and those women and inferiors who will not be silenced.\textsuperscript{15} This seems to be clearly indicated

in Mercury's final and severe admonition:

Stint thy babling tongue;
Fond ECCHO, thou prophan'st the grace is done thee:
So idle worldings (meerely made of voice)
Censure the powers aboue them. Come, away,
IOVE calls thee hence, and his will brookes no stay.

(I.ii.92-96)

But the determined Echo, ignoring even the high command of Jove, delays her departure to perform one final task.

Henceforth, thou treacherous, and murthering spring,
Be euer call'd the Fountayne of selfe-Loue:
And with thy water let this curse remaine,
(As an inseparate plague) that who but tastes
A drop thereof, may, with the instant touch,
Grow dotingly enamor'd on themselues.

(I.ii.99-104)

Thus the stage is set for the long procession of shallow courtiers who are to drink at the fountain of self-love. In this group there are four prime examples of ridiculous gallants, who are called Amorphus (Deformed), Anaides (Impudence), Asotus (Wasteful) and Hedon (Pleasure). They are carefully balanced by four equally foolish ladies of the court, bearing the names Gelaia (Laughter), Philautia (Self-love), Phantaste (Fancy), Argurion (Money), and Moria (Folly), who is the guardian of these ladies. The first four acts are given to the presentation of these social pretenders, who, dwelling on the fringes of the court, are desperately struggling for a place within the royal halls.

Each of the gulls is introduced through a satiric portrait so sharply focused that it shows the subject's
every blemish in glaring detail. It is the individual poseur, highly desirous that his portrait reflect all of his attributes, who glibly supplies the artist with minute details revealing his inner self, his aspirations, and his many profound accomplishments. The fact is that their speeches of self-praise were so protracted that too often there was little time for action. While it would appear that the court aspirants were thoroughly proficient in delineating their social graces, Jonson, nevertheless, provides them with three able assistants: Mercury, the god of wit; Cupid, the god of love; and Crites, a retired scholar, who is not only truly learned but also a "creature of a most perfect and divine temper." The three, with true devotion to their assignment, were ever ready with edifying remarks, detailed comment, and full explanations of the poses, attitudes, moods, and every other aspect of the courtlings' behavior.

The first of the foppish courtiers to come under their scrutiny is Amorphus, the most accomplished gentleman of the group, who devotes most of his time to emphasizing his travels, his culture, his refinement in language, and his proficiency in the art of courtship. Thus, as an expert on courtship, he is assured of his charm for the ladies; consequently, he is much discomfited when his courtly greeting to Echo is promptly rebuffed. Hence he retires to the spring, drinks twice from its ambrosial
waters, and tries to solve the enigma of Echo's repulse to his advances, for he knows himself to be "an essence so sublimated, and refin'd by trauell; of so studied, and well exercis'd a gesture; so alone in fashion," and he is the "first that euer enricht his countrey with the true lawes of the duello" (I.iii.30, 36). More important, however, is his tremendous success with the ladies, for he is one

whose optiques haue drunke the spirit of beautie, in some eight score and eighteen Princes courts, where I haue resided, and beene there fortunate in the amours of three hundred fortie and fiue ladies (all nobly, if not princely descended) whose names I haue in catalogue; to conclude, in all so happy, as euen admiration her selfe doth seeme to fasten her kisses vpon me.

(I.iii.36-42)

Later Amorphus demonstrates his superior knowledge of the laws of dueling in an elaborate mock-duel of courtship; in addition, the other accomplishments that he boasts of are shown when he tutors Asotus, his zany, in every aspect of courtliness.

Asotus, the neophyte courtling, is a citizen's heir, and Amorphus, upon learning this from Crites, suggests that he would like to be introduced to the young gentleman. At this point Crites takes command, and what follows constitutes one of the most effective and sustained pieces of irony in the entire play. Crites with cool detachment prolongs the introduction while he cleverly baits the pair, who in their eagerness to meet each other, continually take him aside and implore him to defer the matter no longer.
Crites, however, relishing every moment of their uneasiness and their absurd antics, is reluctant to let the comedy end. Moreover, he knows that the "reciprocally brace of butterflies" will shortly bestow themselves upon one another. It is Amorphus who makes the advance by commenting on the other's "neatly-wrought band," and from then on there is a steady exchange of glowing compliments in which each showers elaborate praise on the other's clothes. Their inane parlance and preening provokes Crites to incisive, biting comments, and even to irreverence: "S'light, will he be prais'de out of his clothes?" (I.iv.161). And Asotus is indeed praised out of his fine beaver hat that he had purchased that same morning at a cost of eight crowns.

Asotus, however, is a prodigal, as is shown when he spends his inheritance with reckless abandon by lavishing gifts about when he is wooing the courtesan Argurion. But more convincing evidence of his prodigality is revealed in the masque when he assumes the role of the "truly benefique EVCOLOS," who "imparteth . . . without difficulty," and whose kindnesses seem double by "the timely, and freely bestowing thereof" (V.ix.46-49). Asotus' liberality doubtless prompted Amorphus to take the novice in hand and teach him all of the courtly elegances. Mercury, who witnesses some of the lessons on etiquette, is rather severe with both of the gentles. He tells Cupid that Amorphus is "one so made out of the mixture and shreds of formes, that
himselfe is truly deform'd"; he usually walks with a "cloue, or pick-tooth in his mouth, hee is the very mint of comple­ment"; and he "speakes all creame, skimd, and more affected then a dozen of waiting women" (II.iii.86-92). Asotus "sweates to imitate" his teacher "in every thing (to a haire) . . . speakes as hee speakes, lookes, walkes, goes so in clothes, and fashion: is in all, as if he were moulded of him" (II.iii.103-108). None of the commentators are present when Amorphus instructs his protegé in the in­tricate art of courtship, for here the absurd antics of the pair speak for themselves. In this lengthy scene, the pre­tender to a familiarity of all court manners and to an ex­tensive knowledge of literature, coaches his disciple in the proper way to address a lady. Asotus is drilled on the impressive entrance, on studied poses, gestures, and stances, and is coached in an affected, magniloquent, lit­erary discourse. Amorphus, while tutoring him on the ways to be "exotic and exquisite," also poses as the lady, who he insists is to be called Lindabrides after the heroine of The Myrrour of Knighthood (a romance very popular among the lower middle class and half-educated Londoners). 16 Thus, his giving prominence to what he regards as a literary work and his ludicrous attempts to imitate what he believes to be courtly manners and courtly speech doubtless brought

16 Campbell, p. 98.
gales of laughter from the Blackfriars audience. But, Amorphus, unmindful of others' opinions, declares that his student is on his way to becoming "an accomplisht, elaborate, and well-leuelled gallant" and ready for his debut at court.

Two others who move in Amorphus' social circle are Hedon and Anaides. Hedon, labeled by Jonson as "the Voluptuous, and a courtier," is not the brassy type who would force himself into courtly circles. Instead, he is one who is totally given up to the pursuit of pleasure, and like his forerunner, Fastidius Briske, he uses every means to maintain himself in the peak of fashion. Mercury, who serves as Hedon's page, describes him to Cupid.

These are his graces. Hee doth (besides me) keepe a barber, and a monkie: Hee has a rich wrought wastcoat to entertaine his visitants in . . . Hee loues to haue a fencer, a pedant, and a musician seene in his lodging a mornings . . . . He beates a tailour very well, but a stocking-seller admirably: and so consequently any one hee owes monie too . . . Hee neuer makes generall inuitement, but against the publishing of a new sute . . . .

(II.i.41-55)

Mercury also characterizes him as quite a braggart, who courts ladies "with how many great horse he hath rid that morning" or with the number of times "he hath done the whole, or the halfe pommado in a seuen-night before," and he sometimes "dares tell 'hem how many shirts he has sweat at tennis that weeke" (II.i.63-68).

Hedon's worst fault is in allowing his minor social affectations to completely dominate his life, but his close
associate Anaides, the Impudent, is one who is completely devoid of shame. Mercury comments that Anaides possesses "two essential parts of the courtier, pride, and ignorance; mary, the rest come somewhat after the ordinarie gallant," and he is "one, that speakes all that comes in his cheekes, and will blush no more then a sackbut" (II.ii.77-81). Mercury adds that he is greatly proficient in the "illiberal sciences, as cheating, drinking, swaggering, and whoring," and points to his lechery shown by his keeping Gelaia, a wench in boy's attire, to serve as his page. Here and throughout he is characterized as the essence of coarseness.

The female pretenders, like their male companions, are shallow, self-loving creatures, heady in their pursuit of worldly pleasure. Each, however, true to her symbolic nature, is dedicated to her own special folly or vice. Philautia, Self-love, "admires not her selfe for any one particularity, but for all: shee is faire, and she knowes it; . . . she can dance, and shee knowes that too; play at shittle-cock, and that too . . . A most compleat lady in the opinion of some three, beside her-selfe" (II.iv.35-47). Phantaste, the light-witted and fanciful, is a "Nymph too, of a most curious and elaborate straine, light, all motion, an vbiquitarie, shee is euery where, PHANTASTE" (II.iv.99-101). Convinced that she is a scintillating wit, Phantaste flashes about flinging her ready (though obtuse)
repartee. Both she and Philautia are copies of contemporary London ladies who constantly struggle to be ultra-fashionable. Moria, Mistress Folly herself and guardian of the nymphs, is "One that is not now to be persuaded of her wit, she will think her self wise against all the judgments that come. A lady made all of voice, and aire, talkes any thing of any thing" (II.iv.11-15). The last of the foolish court ladies is Argurion, who is Madam Money. She is possessed of "a most wandring and giddy disposition, humorous as the aire, shee'le runne from gallant to gallant, . . . and seldom stayes with any" (II.iii.165-167). She takes no notice of the student, the poet, or the philosopher, but she loves "a player well, and a lawyer infinitely: but your foole aboue all" (II.iii.178-180). Then we hear Jonson's critical voice, which is doubtless directed to the real court: "Shee can doe much in court for the obtaining of any sute whatsoever, no doore but flies open to her, her presence is aboue a charme." And now the criticism is broadened to include the sensuous nature of Jonson's base courtiers: "The worst in her is her want of keeping state, and too much descending into inferior and base offices, she's for any coarse employment you will put vpon her, as to be your procurer, or pandar" (II.iii.180-185).

Argurion is an allegorical representation of money, and her consorts are likewise threaded with varying allegorical filigrees, but on the whole they are realistically
conceived individuals through whom certain aspects of life in Jonson's London are revealed. They represent the vacuous part of court society that the satirist is determined to unmask completely. Recognizing that this pretentious element is undermining court society as a whole, Jonson directs some of his most poignant satire to this shallow group. In scene after scene the "mincing Marmosets" and their babbling mistresses inanely parade their accomplishments.

Pictured in their ineffectual and absurd efforts to pass as members of the courtly circle, the Court Dors are shown vainly striving for elegance through highly affected manners and speech; boasting of travels, possessions, conquests in love, and prowess in sports; claiming a fastidious taste when dealing with the tailor, perfumer, barber, milliner, jeweller, or feather-maker; displaying their presumed wit by exchanging silly phrases and reciting insipid verses; and absurdly posing as arbiters of fashion with their prattle of head-tires, fans, court-tires, "colour'd ribbands," scarfs, gloves, bands, et cetera. But whether languishing beside the pool of self-love, or engaging in endless discussions of members of the opposite sex, their conversation usually has overtones of sensuality and often lewdness, which was characteristic of many of the gentlemen and ladies in waiting at the court of Elizabeth.

As the court aspirants steadily increase their presumptuousness, in like manner the commentators step up the
tempo and sharpness of their satiric invective. Cupid, who enjoys deriding the courtiers, makes it clear that the female contingent, though a part of the court, never come into the presence of Cynthia. They are, in fact, brought in surreptitiously by Moria during this "licentious time, . . . and (like so many meteors) will vanish, when shee appeares" (II.iv.110-111). They naturally despise the divine Arete, Time, Phronesis, Thauma, and others whose virtues earn them a place in the train of Cynthia. But it is Arete, pure virtue, and Crites, true wisdom and sagacious critic of morals and manners, who incur the pseudo-courtiers' intense detestation.

Mercury devises a plot against these "prizers" by which he, Crites, and Cupid can "inflict iust paines" on their monstrous follies. Then he reminds Crites of the worthy purpose of satire.

It is our purpose, CRITES, to correct,  
And punish, with our laughter, this nights sport  
Which our court-Dors so heartily intend:  
And by that worthy scorne, to make them know  
How farre beneath the dignitie of man  
Their serious, and most practis'd actions are.  

(V.i.17-22)

Crites, fearful that the whole court will think itself abused, is hesitant to agree with the plan, but Mercury alleviates his misgivings.

You are deceiu'd. The better race in court  
That haue the true nobilitie, call'd vertue,  
Will apprehend it, as a gratefull right  
Done to their separate merit: and approwe  
The fit rebuke of so ridiculous heads,
Who with their apish customes, and forc'd garbes,
Would bring the name of courtier in contempt.

(V.i.30-36)

Here Jonson is explicit in defining the element of the court to which his satire is directed. Beyond this he is advising the prince that the noxious behavior of this pretentious group should be expurgated.

Arete reports that Cynthia is aware of the follies that have intruded into her palace and is resolved to effect a reformation through a masque, which Crites is directed to prepare. To set the mood for the masque Hesperus sings Jonson's delightful "Queene and Huntress." This hymn of praise to Elizabeth, with its stately lyrics and regal accent, must certainly have delighted the aged queen. Following this and until the end of the play there are numerous encomiums to her Majesty. The lofty poetical compliments elaborate on her benevolence, true virginity, righteousness, purity of character, her worthiness in thought and deed, her love of justice, her judicious reign, and her eminent wisdom. Also the "matchlesse" and "divinest" Cynthia is given the title "cleare pearle of heauen."

Cynthia, then, is an allegorical representation of the moral and intellectual ideal, but in the surface story she is Jonson's sovereign. And the elaborate and extended praise should only partially be construed as the playwright's attempt to flatter the queen; instead, his underlying motive is that of instructing her. Here, in
recounting the virtues of Cynthia, he tends to be prescribing the qualities of the good prince (which from this point forward was to become his practice). He continues his instruction by showing that it is a ruler's responsibility to recognize, indict, and correct those whose indecorous behavior is undermining the dignity of the court. Only the moral and royal Cynthia can purge the recalcitrants of their guilt, yet she may seek counsel and assistance from the virtuous Arete and the wise Crites in this worthy undertaking. In Crites' masque each of the fatuous courtiers is masked to represent a virtue that is the exact opposite of his own particular vice. Allan H. Gilbert points out that the virtues represented in the masque are not the fundamental ones of noble character, but rather the secondary ones of good manners,\(^{17}\) which here of course were Jonson's main concern.

Unfortunately, Jonson interrupts the usual procedure of the masque for another lengthy discourse on the Actaeon-Essex case in which Cynthia-Elizabeth is placed in the discreditable position of defending the severity of her judgment. She explains that Actaeon by "presuming farre" incurred "a fatall doome"; and "so, swolne NIOBE (comparing more/ Then he presum'd) was trophaeed into stone" (V.xi. 14-17). In these two lines Jonson quite clearly, though

\(^{17}\)Allan H. Gilbert, "The Functions of the Masques in Cynthia's Revels," PQ, XXII (1943), 221.
unwisely, is alluding to the fate of Mary Queen of Scots, but even more imprudent is his detailed review of Essex's bold intrusion into the "sacred bowers" of the virgin queen. Equally incautious are Cynthia's lines asserting that she will still take revenge on lewd blasphemies, for "we are no lesse CYNHIA, then we were" (V.xi.34). All of this scene, but particularly the implied infirmity of Elizabeth, was hardly the way to win the favor of the queen, who, though now an old woman with only three more years to live, retains the pride and vanity of her youthful years.

When the dancers are finally allowed to unmask and Cynthia recognizes the insensate obtruders, who, disguised as virtues have mixed themselves with others of the court, she is rightfully indignant. Declaring that "we must lance these sores" or else "all will putrifie," she gives Arete and Crites the charge to "impose what paines you please:/ Th' incurable cut off, the rest reforme" (V.xi.96-97).

Before formulating a fitting method of purgation, Crites makes an impressive and idealistic point.

But there's not one of these, who are vnpain'd,
Or by themselues vnpunished: for vice
Is like a furie to the vicious minde,
And turnes delight it selfe to punishment.

(V.xi.130-133)

The penance imposed upon the infatuates takes the form of a ceremonious recantation. The penitents march in pairs to Niobe's stone to offer tears of remorse, and then the orderly procession moves to the well of knowledge, Helicon, the
waters of which are not only an effective antidote against the draughts from the spring of Self-love, but are also powerful enough to purge them of the last vestige of their follies. And now that they have been purified through knowledge, they are to return to the court and offer their services to "great CYNTHIA."

This highly idealized reformation of manners, so unlike the bitterly satirical reform in Every Man Out, would hardly have been considered theatrically effective by the Londoners whose main fare was the public theater. To the average play-goer the lack of dramatic action and the extraordinarily clumsy and flimsily motivated play would have been boring. But the Blackfriars audience, for whom it was expressly written, would have recognized the significance of the allegorical and mythological reinforcement. More important, they would have been highly amused by Jon­son's making gentle fun of members of their social set and his dispensing harsh derision to those who were clamoring to become a part of this admired set. Though many of the things satirized are obscured to the modern reader, the Elizabethan audience would recognize many of their fellow-Londoners in the satirical portraits, particularly the husbands and wives of the newly rich mercantile class. And the more staid ladies and gentlemen would have the feeling that his picture of the foppish courtiers' behavior had struck just the right contemporary chord, that it wasn't
too much sillier than the real situations it was satirizing unmercifully.

Many critics, feeling that the broad coverage of the Essex affair precluded any hope of a command performance at Whitehall, have stated that Cynthia's Revels was not requested at court. Herford and Simpson, however, on the basis of more recent information, have emended their original statement from "there is no evidence that the play was performed at Court,"\(^{18}\) to the positive affirmation: "It was presented at Court on 6 January 1601."\(^{19}\) However, Penniman feels that the Queen and the ladies and gentlemen witnessing the court performance disapproved of it, since the title page of the Quarto, published in 1601, bore the motto: "Quod non dant Proceres, dabit Histrio."\(^{20}\) And Dekker's taunt at Jonson in Satiromastix (1602) "when your Playes are misse-likt at Court, you shall not cry Mew like a Pusse-cat, and say you are glad you write out of the Courtiers Element"\(^{21}\) further substantiates the fact that Cynthia's Revels was another disappointing effort of the dramatist in seeking court favor.

\(^{18}\) Herford and Simpson, I, 393.  
\(^{19}\) Ibid., IX, 188.  
Poetaster

It was only a matter of some four or five months until Jonson was ready with his third comical satire, Poetaster. It was performed early in the year 1601, and the title page of the Quarto says that it was performed "sundry times priuately . . . in the Blacke Friers, by the Children of her Maiesties Chappell." Indicative of the haste with which the play was written, Envy relates in the Induction that it was only "these fifteene weekes . . . since the plot was but an embrion" (11.14-15), and both the Induction and the Prologue emphasize the vehemence of the author's revengeful resolve against the "coniuring meanes" of "base detractors" and "illiterate apes."

From the opening build-up, one would expect the author to concern himself primarily with deflating that "common spawne of ignorance" who are the "frie of writers" attempting to beslime his name. Quite to the contrary, the "poet-apes" Crispinus-Marston and Demetrius-Dekker, his chief adversaries in the stage quarrel, receive far less attention than the opening remarks advertise. In fact the two only appear in several scattered, but highly amusing scenes, where, of course, they are thoroughly lampooned, but the limited attention they receive indicates that the basic purpose of the play is not that of attacking his detractors. Instead of the false poet, it is the good poet and his influence on society and the good prince and the
wisdom of his judgment that occupy the center of attention.
Beyond this the play focuses on social pretenders and the
low morals of court society. To a large extent Jonson con-
tinues the instruction begun in Cynthia's Revels, particu-
larly the instruction of the prince.

The fact that both Cynthia's Revels and Every Man
Out had been rebuffed at court (certainly grave disappoint-
ments to the author) did not deter him from again discuss-
ing certain dissipations of court society. Indeed, it is
probable that these repulses spurred him on, for he appears
to be smarting more from these slights than from the criti-
cism of the poetasters. But his experiences have taught
him a need for discretion; thus, exercising extreme caution
he chooses antique Rome for the setting, a fact which he
carefully emphasizes in the Induction. Despite this insis-
tence and the fact that the main characters are Augustus
Caesar and the major poets of his great age, it is the dis-
solute Elizabethan society that Jonson unmaskas under the
protective cover of ancient Rome.

The play opens with Ovid, whose precise function in
the drama is argued by critics, but obviously Jonson had
several reasons for making the poet a central figure. Here
is a young man who, coming from a family of means, and
having been educated for the law, turns his back on the
profession and moves to Rome. Almost immediately he is
accepted at the emperor's palace and becomes a favorite in
court society. From this time on, although repeatedly urged by his father to return to law, the young man spends his time in writing poetry and amusing himself, which was characteristic of many of the gallants of Jonson's London.

Ovid Junior strongly resembles Edward Knowell of Every Man In. Young Knowell, a scholar of good account in both universities, wishes to be a poet in spite of his father's urging against it. There is also a similarity in the cases of Ovid Junior and Fungoso of Every Man Out. Fungoso is a law student and a gentleman, but he is so intent on dressing in the latest "courtier's cut" that he forgets his studies and spends all the money that his father sends for law books on fashionable clothes.

Even though Jonson greatly admired the famous Roman poet's works, he was never one to lose a jest. Thus it is not surprising to see him gird at the gentry through Ovid, who is a descendant of an old equestrian family. In the Quarto (as Penniman and Herford and Simpson point out) the voluble Tucca habitually addresses Ovid in fleering knightly terms such as "Knight of worshippe," "knight Errant," "Mirror of Knighthood," or "Knight." However, these and all other jeers at knighthood are either altered or cut from the Folio, which Penniman suggests was probably done to allay the criticism of those who objected to his satirizing knights.22

22Herford and Simpson, IX, 540.
Despite the fact that Ovid is a poet of great talent, his character as a poet is impaired by his association with Julia. Ovid, as the court favorite, and Julia, Augustus' daughter, set the tone for court society, and include in their circle an odd assortment of social pretenders. Among their associates is the officious Captain Tucca, who is ever ready to advise Ovid, particularly against pursuing poetry, because it will not "purchase him a Senators revenue"; then there is the poetical coxcomb Crispinus, who follows all of his declarations for the love of poetry with "wee are a gentleman besides"; but the most priceless of the social climbers is Chloe, the wife of the monied jeweler, Citizen Albius.

Chloe, the self-appointed regal mistress of middle-class society, is determined to advance her social status to that of the upper class. To this purpose she makes Cytheris, a close friend of Julia, a member of her household and lavishes entertainment upon Cytheris' many young friends of the court. It is while she is preparing for such an occasion that we meet Chloe and Albius, both of whom affect court jargon. He advises her to trim up the house "most obsequiously" and emphasizes that "here are the greatest ladies, and gallantest gentlemen of ROME, to bee entertain'd in our house now: and I would faine advise thee, to entertain them in the best sort, yfaith wife" (II.i. 42-45). But the social leader is incensed: "You would
aduise me to entertaine ladies, and gentlemen? . . . you can tell how to entertaine ladies, and gentle-folkes better than I?" (II.i.48-51). And having learned that ladies of fashion exercise sovereignty over their husbands, she soundly upbraids him:

Gods my bodie? you know what you were, before I married you; I was a 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? (II.i.28-33)

This draws forth Albius' admiring statement that Chloe has the best wit of any woman in Italy. However, he continues to advise her against setting pillows in the parlor windows and dining-chamber windows and against hanging pictures anywhere but in the gallery, "for 'tis not courtly else."

Outraged that Albius doubts her knowledge of social affairs she tells him: "I take it highly in snuffe, to learne how to entertaine gentlefolkes, of you, at these yeeres, I faith. Alas man; there was not a gentleman came to your house i' your tother wiues time, I hope? nor a ladie? nor musique? nor masques?" (II.i.61-65).

Chloe, however, readily accepting the fatuous Crispinus' declaration that he is a gentleman born, frantically beseeches him to tell her how she should "behaue" to entertain the "brauest ladies of court" in the most "courtly fashion." She follows his instructions to the letter, and when Albius calls out that the coaches and courtiers are
come, she cries, "A poxe on them: what doe they here?"
(II.i.155). This brings a protest from Albius, but Chloe, assured by Crispinus that this is the fashion of courtiers, retorts:

Come? come, you are a foole, you: He knowes not the trick on't . . . good master CRISPINVS, you can obserue, you say; let me intreat you for all the ladies behauiours, 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.

(II.i.158-163)

The impressive guest list includes not only the poet Ovid, but also Gallus, Tibullus, and Propertius, who are described by Ovid Senior as gallants that have drunk too much of the poison of poetry. The amorous fool, Chloe, is equally impressed with the poet Crispinus, and she declares that poets "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?" (II.ii.72-74). The feminine guests, Julia, Plautia, and Cytheris, think their hostess "politike and wittie" for choosing a husband, not for merit or birth, but for "wealth and soueraigntie." However, Chloe scores her greatest victory when the princess invites her to come to court. The night was likewise a triumph for Albius, and we hear him exult:

O, what a charm of thankes was here put vpon me! O IOVE, what a setting forth it is to a man, to haue many courtiers come to his house! Sweetly was it said of a good olde house-keeper; I had rather want meate, then want ghests: specially, if they be courtly ghests.

(II.ii.205-209)
In this act the satirist focuses his ridicule on the crude efforts of the pretenders, but he also scores the poets and their ladies for lavishing compliments on the hostess, for making a fetish of their elegant graces and speech, for their sophisticated discussion of the "perfect'st loue," and for their extravagant praise of the songs of Crispinus and Hermogenes (both of which are travesties of the court poetry of the gallants). It is evident that Jonson strongly disapproves of the courtiers' encouraging the bourgeois in their ambitious pursuit, for in addition to Chloe's becoming enamored of poets, Crispinus leaves the party hurriedly with the covert declaration: "Ile presently goe and enghle some broker, for a Poets gownte, and bespeake a garland: and then ieweller, looke to your best iewel yfaith" (II.ii.224-226).

Throughout Act III Jonson twits the court about their elegant speech, which Crispinus strives to affect at all times and Tucca uses at will, and about the elaborately ornate hair styles of the ladies, which, according to Crispinus, feature curls glittering with spangles, high gable ends, Tuscan tops, coronets, arches, and pyramids, all of which may be variously sprinkled with ornaments. In addition the exquisite fabrics of court gentlemen's clothing is derided by Horace, who addresses the pseudo-gallant with the mock title "Sir, your Silkenesse," and by his remarks on Crispinus' frayed "sattin sleeue" and his stained "ample
velvet bases," which draws the boaster's question: "How many yards of velvet dost thou thinke they containe?" (III.i.72). The gadfly Crispinus affects to be both a poet and a gentleman, and his determined effort to ingratiate himself with Horace serves a dual purpose: he wants to meet Horace's friends, who are "all most choice spirits" as well as "of the first ranke of Romanes"; and he wants to be introduced to Horace's noble patron, Mecoenas, whose patronage he wishes only to share in, and though he hopes to "lift" Virgil and Varius out of Mecoenas' favor, he declares that he has no such intention for Horace. This thrust, it seems, is not directed to contemporary writers in general, but to Marston specifically, which indicates that Jonson-Horace has already gained the favor of some noble patron, whose beneficence Marston has attempted to share.

Crispinus, however, tends to be a representative of the social pretender who affects poetry as an entree to fashionable society. He protests that Horace has too much esteem for Varius, Virgil, and Tibullus, and reasons, "I would faine see, which of these could pen more verses in a day, or with more facilitie then I; or that could court his mistris, kisse her hand, make better sport with her fanne, or her dogge" (III.i.165-169). His interest in poetry, moreover, is forgotten when Horace escapes from him and Tucca appears. Then the two impecunious pretenders swagger
and play the gentleman, and the scene closes with their eager talk of their mistresses. The presumptuous Crispinus boldly declares: "Faith, Captaine, I'le be bold to show you a mistris of mine, a iewellers wife, a gallant, as we goe along" (III.iv.373-374).

The fourth act opens with the social-climbing Chloe and her house guest Cytheris attiring themselves to attend a banquet at court. Chloe (who becomes more and more the amorous fool as the act progresses) is assured by the courtier, Cytheris, that her attire will "stir a courtiers bloud," that she is jewelled as well as any of the ladies, that she shall have a multitude of kisses upon her lips from all the lords and poets, and that her ears will be furred with the compliments that they will breathe in her ear. Chloe is completely exultant upon learning that the princess has sent a coach for them, for she longs "most vehemently" to ride in a coach. When she is told that the guests will represent gods and goddesses at the court banquet, and she is to be Venus and Albius is to be Vulcan, she questions: "But harke you, sweet CYTHERIS; could they not possibly leave out my husband? mee thinkes, a bodies husband do's not so well at Court: A bodies friend, or so--but husband" (IV.ii.53-56). Assured that her husband will be left outside in the lobby, or great chamber, while she is closeted "by this lord" or "by that lady," she declares that he shall go.
The giddy Chloe is even more determined that Captain Tucca, whom Crispinus brings along, shall accompany them, for this "noble Roman," "gentleman," and "commander" finds her to possess the merit of an empress; moreover, she, highly receptive to his amorous advances, finds him "as good as a poet." Quite unabashed, the light-minded Chloe inquires of Cytheris if there is not a god left to spare for Tucca so that he may accompany them to court. And having been apprised that Tucca can play the role of Mars, and Crispinus that of Mercury (both of whom have somewhat "to doe" with her in the role of Venus) she insists: "Pray' let's goe, I long to be at it" (IV.iii.152).

The banquet scene, based on Suetonius' account of an historical banquet of the gods, is hilarious, but decidedly amoral. The sophisticated courtiers may possibly regard themselves as merely playing the parts of the gods they represent, for Horace refers to their revelry as "innocent mirth,/ And harmlesse pleasures, bred, of noble wit" (IV.vii.41-42). Nevertheless, the proclamation with which Jupiter opens the festivities would be strongly suggestive of total promiscuity to the uninitiated pretenders. It is announced that Jupiter, in his "licentious goodnesse" gives all "free licence" to be nothing better than common men, or women, and therefore no goddess shall need "to keepe her selfe more strictly to her God,/ Then any woman do's to her husband" (IV.v.25-27). And to those who are in
bonds:

It shall be lawfull for every louer,
To breake lousing oathes,
To change their louers, and make louse to others,
As the heate of euery ones bloud,
And the spirit of our nectar shall inspire.

(IV.v.29-33)

This declaration, sportive though it may be, would suggest a moral laxity in court behavior, and especially to Chloe, whose amorous bent has led her to want a courtier for a lover. Chloe and the other pretenders have not only received a distorted picture of true gentility, but they have also been spurred on in their social ambitions by their brief association with this somewhat libertine group of courtiers.

The indictment here is twofold: it calls to account those courtiers who, by their frivolous behavior and lack of moral responsibility, are corrupting both the court and middle-class society; and it charges the social climber with crass presumptuousness. But the courtiers receive the stronger censure from the emperor.

When Caesar invades the banquet, he is astonished by the sacrilege: "O, impious sight!... the very thought/Euerts my soul with passion" (IV.vi.8-10). Then offering to kill his daughter, he turns to Ovid, who, in the role of Jupiter, had playfully requested that the emperor's daughter be offered as a sacrificial dish at the banquet.
looke not, man.
There is a panther, whose unnaturall eyes
Will strike thee dead: turne then, and die on her
With her owne death.

(IV.vi.10-13)

Turning to the pretenders, Caesar demands to know "what" they are, and having identified themselves, the jeweller, the jeweller's wife, and the "gentleman, parcel-poet" follow Tucca's example in making a hasty exit.

The emperor's wrath is kindled against his daughter for degrading her position by associating with people so far beneath her station. He demands, "And are these seemely companie for thee,/ Degenerate monster?" And glancing at the remaining guests, who are Julia's constant companions, he continues: "All the rest I know,/ And hate all knowledge, for their hatefull sakes" (IV.vi.31-33). It is here that he unleashes a sixteen-line tirade denouncing poets in general (but Ovid, Gallus, and Tibullus in particular), who, though commissioned to "teach" and "eternize" virtue, have profaned both poetry and virtue, and thus have led others to believe that virtue is but "painted."

Facing Ovid, whom he addresses as "Licentious NASO," Caesar declares the courtier-poet banished for his illicit relationship with "our base daughter," and decrees that Julia shall be committed to "patronage of iron doores." Mecoenas and Horace implore Caesar to "let royall bountie mediate," but he declares that no bounty can be shown to those who have "no reall goodnesse" and who live to worship
"that idoll, vice." The banishment of course is an historical fact, but the extremely harsh words with which the emperor upbraids Julia, Ovid, and the other courtiers are those of the dramatist. Moreover, in the opening lines of Act V, we learn that Cornelius Gallus and Tibullus had incurred Caesar's particular disfavor, yet at the same time the sycophant courtlings escape severe censure by being allowed to make a hurried departure. The last that we hear of the chastened Albius and Chloe is that "they are rid home i' the coach, as fast as the wheeles can runne" (IV.vii.3-4). The dramatist's severity with the courtiers (as opposed to his leniency with their inferiors), shows his firm belief that it is incumbent upon those of the court to exercise a great degree of responsibility, since all of their actions are closely watched and imitated by those of middle-class society. Thus, the courtier and poets in heedlessly seeking personal pleasures are weakening the foundation of society at large.

Jonson uses this fable for more than one purpose. Through it he makes his stern pronouncement on that errant and somewhat immoral element of contemporary court society against whom he inveighed in Cynthia's Revels. The social satire, even though secondary in this play, is nevertheless, quite prominent, and despite the cloak of Rome, it is evident that much of the critical attention is directed against conditions prevailing at Queen Elizabeth's court.
Another important use of the Ovid story is that of showing that a poet must not lose sight of his high mission in society. Talbert says, "In Jonson's vatic conception of his art, true poetry, which includes playwriting, is synonymous with true learning and virtue." Moreover, in the dedication to Volpone, the dramatist states emphatically that it is impossible for one to be a good poet without first being a good man (11. 20-23). Thus, by Jonson's standards, Ovid is disqualified for the high office of the poet, for he is not a good man.

This brings us to the final act, in which the dramatist devotes his full attention to the relation of the good poet and the good prince. Without doubt one of the main reasons why he turns from London to ancient Rome for his setting is so that he may present the Augustan tribunal as the wise ruler. The historical Augustus, as a writer himself, was completely sympathetic with poets, a virtue which Jonson found sadly lacking in his own sovereign. Although the queen liked to be surrounded by poets and welcomed their adulation in verse, she was not noted for her generosity toward them.

A prime example of her parsimony and general indifference to poets is the case of John Lyly, who after long and faithful service as court poet, wrote complainingly to

to the queen: "Thirteen yeares, yo": Highnes Servant; Butt; yett nothinge."\textsuperscript{24} Nor did Spenser fare much better. He, like Jonson, Shakespeare, and Chapman, was a true believer in the old ideals of court, nobility, and poet, and especially the interdependence of poet and aristocrat. Certainly the \textit{Faerie Queene} reveals his devotion to these ideals, and the homage paid Elizabeth herein should have moved her to considerable bounty. Yet the annual fifty-pound pension was his sole reward, and in "Mother Hubberds Tale" he laments that he has "wasted much good time, / Still wayting to preferment up to clime."\textsuperscript{25}

Jonson, like Spenser, had been eager for royal recognition, and both writers having been sorely disappointed in the reception of their bids for favor, voice their discontent in later works. It is to be remembered, moreover, that the younger writer had been severely criticized not only for bringing the queen on the stage at the end of \textit{Every Man Out}, but also for \textit{Cynthia's Revels} in which he had symbolically portrayed Elizabeth as the ideal monarch who wisely enlisted the sage counsel of poets. To Jonson, who took the utmost pride in his work, these reproaches (even though they stemmed from the court), would


hardly be taken lightly or quietly. Thus it is not unex-
pected to see him deliver his comments on these rebuffs by
choosing Rome as the setting so that he could present Augus-
tus, instead of Elizabeth, as the perfect exemplar of
rulers in Poetaster.

In the present play, in fact, he concentrates more
on instructing the queen than in the preceding drama. His
practice of providing moral instruction for the prince was,
of course, to continue into the reign of James I, and it is
suggested by Thayer that Jonson perhaps anticipated that
Elizabeth's successor would be the man for whom he was to
have the greatest admiration and highest respect. ²⁶

But whatever his several motives, the fifth act
opens with Caesar, who having forgiven Gallus and Tibullus
for their erring ways, is now restoring them to their former
places of state. Then in praise of poetry, the emperor
voices the argument of Renaissance poets that they alone
can immortalize great men and great deeds by recording them
in verse:

Sweet poesies sacred garlands crowne your gentrie:
Which is, of all the faculties on earth,
The most abstract, and perfect; if shee bee
True borne, and nurst with all the sciences.
Shee can so mould Rome, and her monuments,
Within the liquid marble of her lines,
That they shall stand fresh, and miraculous,
Euen, when they mixe with innouating dust.

(V.i.17-24)

²⁶C. G. Thayer, Ben Jonson: Studies in the Plays
He closes his discourse on poetry with the declaration that "CAESAR shall reuerence the Pierian artes" (V.i.32). In response, the several poets proclaim Caesar's greatness as a ruler and reveal the weaknesses of "other princes." The noble Mecoenas states that the emperor's "high grace to poesie" will stand against the detractions of "leaden soules," who "Containe her worthiest prophets in contemp" (V.i.37). Perhaps the dramatist, numbering himself among the "worthiest prophets," and one who is now held in contempt, is recalling the criticism leveled at his two preceding comical satires. Moreover, the "leaden soules" are likely some of his critics from the court, for he immediately turns again to instructing the prince: "Happy is Rome of all earths other states, To haue so true, and great a president, For her inferiour spirits to imitate" (V.i.38-39).

To whatever extent Horace may represent Jonson, the following acrid lines are Jonson's personal remarks on the royal repulses he had endured. After tendering Caesar the highest praise for his great esteem of poets, the dramatist turns to other monarchs:

Where other Princes, hoisted to their thrones
By fortunes passionate and disordered power,
Sit in their height, like clouds, before the sunne,
Hindring his [Phoebus'] comforts; and (by their excesse
Of cold in vertue, and crosse heate in vice)
Thunder, and tempest, on those learned heads,
Whom CAESAR with such honour doth aduance.

(V.i.47-53)
Tibullus adds that Fortune, being blind, usually bestows her gifts not on the best poets, but the worst. This brings forth the emperor's declaration that whatever Fortune puts into his hand, he shall bestow it with worth and judgment. He continues by censuring the manner in which other sovereigns dispense gifts:

"Hands, that part with gifts,
"Or will restraine their vse, without desert;
"Or with a miserie, numm'd to vertues right,
"Worke, as they had no soule to gouerne them.

\[V.i.61-64\]

Having freely voiced his feelings on royal indifference to worthy poets, and particularly to himself, Jonson turns to show the proper relationship between poetry and the state, or more specifically, the true poet and the prince. He believes with Sidney that the poet is a finer influence and more effective teacher than the historian, the philosopher, or the mathematician. In Discoveries he calls poesy "the queen of arts" and says: "The study of it (if we will trust Aristotle) offers to mankind a certain rule and pattern of living well and happily, disposing us to all civil offices of society."\(^ {27} \) He feels justified in this belief because "the wisest and best learned have thought poetry to be the absolute mistress of manners and nearest of kin to virtue."\(^ {28} \) Likewise in the dedication to


\(^ {28} \) Ibid., pp. 419-420.
Volpone he declares that the poet "can alone, or with a few, effect the business of mankind." Moreover, such a conception of poetry was not at all unconventional, for Sidney placed the counsel of poets above that of all others. In comparing the philosopher's wisdom with that of the poet, he says:

But even in the most excellent determination of goodness, what philosopher's counsel can so readily direct a prince as the feigned Cryus in Xenophon? Or a virtuous man in all fortunes as Aeneas in Virgil? Or a whole commonwealth, as the way of Sir Thomas More's Utopia?  

This lofty conception of the poet's office, though not shared by Jonson's queen, is heartily endorsed by the wise and perfect Augustan ruler. Thus the emperor, upon being apprised that Virgil is approaching the palace, commands that a chair for the poet be set "on our right hand; where 'tis fit,/ Romes honour, and our owne, should euer sit" (V.i.70-71). He then asks the assembled poets for their appraisal of Virgil and his writings. This renowned Roman poet, unlike his fellow-poet and countryman Ovid, is free of any moral taint; therefore, both Horace and Gallus are pleased to proclaim that both Virgil's character and his works are distinguished by the highest virtue and merit. Then Jonson's insistence that the poet is best able to effect the business of mankind is heard in Tibullus' tribute to Virgil:

That, which he hath writ,
Is with such judgement, labour'd, and distill'd
Through all the needfull vses of our liues,
That could a man remember but his lines,
He should not touch at any serious point,
But he might breathe his spirit out of him.

Caesar: You meane, he might repeat part of his workes,
As fit for any conference, he can vse?

Tibullvs: True, royall CAESAR.

(V.i.118-126)

Virgil, then, emerges as the ideal poet, whose works reveal
the highest moral and social function; thus, he is eminently
fitted for the office of consultant to the emperor.

As the perfect ruler, Augustus has profound respect
for true poets and values their wise and virtuous teachings.
Moreover, he welcomes their counsel, which is vividly shown
by his seeking their advice in administering correction to
the maledictory Lupus, Tucca, Histrio, Crispinus, and Demetrius.

The correction of evil-doers is, of course, an essential element of comical satire, and one phase to which Jonson usually gives special attention. To this purpose, then, he reintroduces the offenders of society, and in addition he uses them to show the standards by which he judges those who transgress the moral and social laws.

In this highly amusing satirical scene, the culprits are tried, not by Caesar, but by the assembly of poets. Virgil, appointed by Caesar to serve as praetor, conducts the trial, but all of the poets serve as judges.
First, Lupus, Tucca, and the player are heard and punished for their false accusations against Horace. This makes it possible for the author to concentrate his attention upon the two poetasters who have maligned Horace. The main point of interest here is that the two malefactors admit that their base actions are prompted by their jealousy of Horace's literary and social success. Tibullus, as prosecutor, brings out the point that neither Crispinus nor Demetrius is admitted into noble houses any further than the "noble-mens buttries" and the "puisne's chambers" at the Inns of Court; thus they envy Horace both because he transcends them in merit and for "keeping himselfe in better acquaintance," and "enioying better friends" (V.iii.598-600). Earlier Demetrius had confessed that he envied Horace only because "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 ... were better lik't, and grac't" (V.iii.450-453). Horace responds that he doesn't mind being envied so long as he has the love of Virgil, Gallus, Tibullus, Caesar, and "My deare Mecoenas." His words "My deare Mecoenas" are almost conclusive proof that Horace-Jonson is enjoying the patronage of a somewhat generous and distinguished gentleman, for had he not been, he would not have thus made himself liable to counter-attacks from Dekker and Marston. In addition, Horace says there are "many more./ (Whose names I wisely slip) shall thinke me
worthy/ Their honour'd, and ador'd societie,/ And reade,
and loue, proue, and applaud my poemes" (V.iii.458-461).
Among those whose names he wisely omits is doubtless the
Countess of Bedford, whom Buxton says the poet had known
as early as 1601 because a leaf of verse dedicated to her
was specially inserted in a copy of his Cynthia's Revels. 30
Also in the same year, he refers to her in somewhat familiar
terms in an ode that he contributed to Robert Chester's
Love's Martyr (1601).

In any case, he seems to feel secure enough in his
friendship with certain members of nobility to say with
confidence that he "can safely scorne the tongues of
slaues" (Apologetical Dialogue, 26); and as for the "Multi-
tude," they are "like the barking students of Beares-
Colledge" (1. 45). Jonson, like his friend Chapman, de-
clares repeatedly that he prefers the friendship and ap-
plause of a few cultured aristocrats to that of the entire
common herd, whom he regards as the poet's worst enemy.

Jonson's regard for nobility does not stem entirely
from his dependence on them. He, as well as the better
poets of his age, believes in the ideals of true nobility
and seeks to uphold them. Quite evidently one of the drama-
tist's purposes, both in Cynthia's Revels and Poetaster, is
that of defining the high standards necessary to court

society. In both dramas, the main character is a poet, who, upon authority from the prince, seeks to protect the dignity and honor of the court by purging it of vulgar obtruders who are demeaning approved social standards. McAlindon, in writing on the aristocratic nature of Jonson, feels that Crites, moral consultant to the Court of Cynthia, and Horace as sage counsellor to Augustus and favorite of Maecenas, both portray and defend the ideal of life that occupied the imagination of Jonson, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Chapman when they thought of the court. 31

Jonson's personal feelings about nobility and royalty and their responsibilities to society are made abundantly clear in this his last comical satire. He feels with Ovid that "within the court, is all the kingdome bounded," and the "chiefe end of life is there concluded" (IV.viii.2-3). Like Ovid, all the characters in this drama look toward the court. The social climbers, poetasters, and frivolous courtiers regard it as the center of opulence, but Horace, Virgil, and Mecoenas think of it as the seat of wisdom, truth and justice. And while these virtues reign supreme in the palace of the great Augustus, the dramatist seems to find them somewhat less in evidence in the court of his own sovereign.

When Poetaster was performed, it unleashed a

veritable hornet's nest, and although the author had anticipated counter-attacks from the dramatists whom he so soundly derided, he was seemingly unprepared for the strong resentment of the lawyers, soldiers, and actors, who felt that he had attempted to discredit their professions. In an effort to assuage the feelings of those whose enmity he had incurred, the satirist affixed an Apologetical Dialogue to the play disclaiming any intention of satirizing the various professions. Nonetheless, his enemies remained unrelenting, and Jonson, in fact, would probably have been prosecuted in the Star Chamber, had not his good friend, the distinguished lawyer Richard Martin, intervened in his behalf, a favor which the poet gratefully acknowledged by dedicating the Folio version to his intercessor. Temporarily defeated, but superbly confident of his poetical ability and of his resources, the dramatist decides to abandon comedy for the heights of tragedy. In announcing his decision, he confidently declares that he will continue to write for the cultivated ear when he turns to tragedy:

Where, if I proue the pleasure but of one,
So he iudicious be; He shall b' alone
A Theatre vnto me.

(Apologetical Dialogue, 226-228)

And as if a sudden inspiration for his forthcoming tragedy Sejanus has come to him, he bids his friends:

Leaue me. There's something come into my thought,
That must, and shall be sung, high and aloofe,
Safe from the wolues black iaw, and the dull asses hoofe.

(Apologetical Dialogue, 236-239)
CHAPTER III

COURT RECOGNITION THROUGH CLASSICISM AND ERUDITION

The show of self-confidence that permeates the "Apologetical Dialogue" to Poetaster and Jonson's public announcement to retire "high and aloofe" to write a classic tragedy is not without foundation. For before the close of Queen Elizabeth's reign, Jonson had achieved considerable literary and social success. He was recognized as the leading dramatic satirist, as one of the best tragic writers, and, in fact, the leading figure in the entire field of drama; he was considered one of the best poets and was called upon to contribute poems and "poetical essays" to the most popular anthologies; and because of his sound critical principles, derived from his deep knowledge of ancient theory and practice, he was regarded as the dominant literary critic.

Moreover, his social aspirations had been gratified in that he had gained the friendship and admiration of a number of distinguished people. Among this number were many Inns of Court men, whose intellectual alertness had drawn them to fully appreciate the novelty and erudition of Jonson's comedies and to welcome him into their company.
The author's association with the young barristers was not only intellectually stimulating, but also provided an introduction to the better class of London society. Thus ensconced with a group who occupied an enviable position in society, Jonson proudly told the Poetaster audience that he now kept better company than actors.

His social position had improved considerably in a matter of some two years. In the belated Dedication of Every Man Out to the Inns of Court, he states that when he wrote this drama (1599) he had friendship with "divers in your societies"; nevertheless, he laughingly pictures himself in the Prologue as one who can afford to dine out only once a fortnight in company with the players, and who at home must keep a good "philosophical diet of beans and buttermilk." At that time, moreover, his only friend outside of the theater seems to have been his former schoolmaster William Camden, but now he enjoys the friendship of the great scholar-jurist John Selden, the poetical Christopher Brooke and Sir John Davies, the antiquary and great library-founder Sir Robert Cotton, the learned Bacon, and the popular poet John Donne.

To have such scholarly men as these for his friends was indeed a tribute to Jonson's own scholarship; nor could he possibly want for intellectual stimulus among such learned men. Yet scholarship and wit alone were not sufficient to the writer of his age, for only the aristocracy
could afford to buy books, and only they could provide the kind of assistance that was necessary for a writer to become recognized. Jonson, of course, had failed miserably in his bids for royal favor with the result that he was not too kindly disposed toward the court. In this feeling he was not alone, for then as now there were some very prominent people who did not agree with the administrators of government, and there were others who had faithfully backed their ruler only to be greatly disillusioned. Such a person was the Earl of Bedford, who abandoned Essex as soon as the queen had proclaimed him a traitor, and for his stand with the Crown he had been jeered at by the friends of Essex and branded a coward. Since the Earl of Bedford had thus been placed in such an unenviable position, it is not to be doubted that the Bedfords with others in similar circumstances waited, as Buxton says, "for the old Queen's death with some impatience, for all their hopes, after the Essex fiasco, were set on winning the favour of the new King."¹

Jonson, as was shown in the discussion of Poetaster, was numbered among those who anticipated better fortune under a new ruler. He had apparently decided that he would never attain royal recognition as long as Elizabeth occupied the throne, but in the meantime he had won the

friendship and admiration of certain distinguished members of nobility. One of his early acquaintances (made prior to 1601) we know to have been Lady Bedford. Through such a distinguished lady and patron of the arts, he quite naturally would have ready entree to the best London society. It is highly probable that by this time he enjoyed the hospitality of Lady Bedford's cousin, Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, of Lord Spenser and his family at Althorpe, and of other noble houses. We can say with more certainty that he was acquainted with James, the Earl of Desmond, by 1600, if not earlier. Jonson's first ode, written to give hope to the Earl that Queen Elizabeth would restore the vast estate that she had seized from his rebel father, was included with other works of Jonson in Robert Allot's anthology, *England's Parnassus, or the Choicest Flowers of our Modern Poets* (1600).

However, the one nobleman whose patronage Jonson sincerely appreciated in these early years was Sir Robert Townshend. This wealthy patron of letters offered the hospitality of his house to the dramatist at one of his most troubled times. Just where Jonson spent the few months immediately following the production of *Poetaster* is not known, but on February 12, 1602, the law student John Manningham recorded in his diary that "Ben Johnson, the poet, nowe lives upon one Townesend, and scornes the world."²

We do not know exactly how long Jonson resided here, but sometime during the year 1602-1603 he became a guest in the home of Lord Aubigny. Apparently, however, he continued to enjoy the patronage and close friendship of his former host, for when Sejanus was printed in 1605 he autographed a copy to Sir Robert Townshend, as "The Testimony of my Affection . . . which I desire may remayne with him, and last beyond Marble."\(^3\)

The great house of Esmé Stewart, Lord of Aubigny, became the poet's home for five years (1602-1607), which is verified by Jonson's statement to Drummond (Conversations, xiii). As a welcome member of the household, Jonson was free to pay country visits when he chose, and return at will with the assurance that he would always be happily received.

One of the country houses that he frequently visited and where he must have felt quite at home was Sir Robert Cotton's at Connington in Huntingdonshire. Their friendship stemmed from the years that they were classmates at Westminster school under the great scholar William Camden. Even though the two, both as boys and men, were poles apart socially and financially, they shared the common bond of a deep devotion to scholarship and the joy which its devotees had in one another's society.

\(^3\) Herford and Simpson, I, 30-31.
Jonson's visits to Connington must have been a matter of course well before 1603, for it was here that both he and Camden retired when the plague ravaged London in that year. And we learn from the Conversations that it was during this sojourn that he had the prophetic vision of his eldest son's death. When news reached him that the child had indeed died, he was profoundly shaken. Nevertheless, he did not return to live with his wife, but continued to count Lord Aubigny's house as his main residence.

Seemingly Jonson was often a visitor in Sir Robert Cotton's Westminster home, which housed the antiquarian's famous library, where he entertained the members of the Antiquarian Society, and where men of learning often gathered. Evidence of the frequency of Jonson's visits is shown when he was examined in 1628 by the Attorney General concerning verses considered treasonable that he had seen at Sir Robert Cotton's house at Westminster. Upon being asked when he had seen them, his reply was "Coming there, as he often does, these verses lying on the table after dinner...". The close and lifelong friendship of the antiquarian and the playwright is attested to in writings too numerous to mention, but the tone of the letter requesting to borrow a book from Sir Robert, which was


written by Jonson in his latest years, reveals the continued closeness of their relationship.

But to return to the years 1602-1607, we find that this was a period of vigorous literary activity for Jonson. At the same time, each of these years seems to have brought an ever increasing amount of social activity, which in all likelihood began when he took up residence with Lord Aubigny sometime in 1602. Certainly it is logical to assume that the bachelor Esme Stewart was much in demand by every hostess in London and its environs and that his house guest, as a quasi-bachelor and man of letters, would also be regarded as a welcome addition at social functions. In addition, it was probably to these years that Jonson referred when he unwisely revealed to Drummond certain indiscreet affairs with women, particularly married women.

For the most part, however, Jonson allowed few things to interrupt his work; instead, he took advantage of the relaxed atmosphere in this nobleman's house for hard study, serious reading, writing and translating. It was in "my Lord Aubany's house" in 1604, he says, that he translated Horace's Art of Poetry, which was indeed a signal contribution to English classicism. It was also here that he wrote his "discourse of Poesie both against Campion & Daniel especially this Last"; and here that he laboriously

\footnote{Conversations, i.}
worked on his Roman tragedy in collaboration with that "so happy a Genius," who was probably the scholarly Chapman. Since the dramatist wanted to produce a classically designed and historically accurate tragedy, it is logical to assume that he turned to his close friend, the great classicist Chapman, for advice and assistance. But before they had proceeded very far on Sejanus, the whole of England was plunged into mourning.

Queen Elizabeth, simply by her invincible spirit and her indomitable will to live, had warded off death for some months, and thus the news of her death on March 24, 1603, did not come as a shock to her subjects. Nor was the jockeying for place with the new sovereign long delayed. Linklater reports: "Almost beating her [the Queen's] last breath, Sir Robert Carey leapt to his horse" and rode to Edinburgh to inform James of his cousin Elizabeth's death. But after Sir Robert's arrival, a two-day wait ensued until Sir Charles Percy and Thomas Somerset came with the official letters from the Privy Council. At the moment of the Queen's death, moreover, a feminine cortege composed of the Countess of Bedford, her mother, and other ladies went privately to Scotland to escort Queen Anne to England, thus forestalling the official group selected for this mission by the Council. Buxton regards this forward gesture of

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Lady Bedford as one of "little dignity and much shrewdness," but one which was decidedly advantageous to her with the new court and that also enabled her to introduce her favorite poets to royal favor.  

Daniel, decidedly the favorite of Lady Bedford, was chosen to compose the welcoming tribute to James I when he stopped at her father's home, Burley Hill, on the trip south. It was Daniel, moreover, who was commissioned to write the first masque with which the extravagant Anne of Denmark entertained her court on January 8, 1604.

Ben Jonson was another literary artist whom the Countess of Bedford admired; in addition he had the full support of his patron Lord Aubigny, his patron Sir Robert Townshend, and others. But Jonson's first opportunity to entertain members of the royal family came in June, 1603, when the Queen came south, bringing with her the two older children, Henry and Elizabeth. Her trip had been carefully planned to include visits to a number of great estates, where many ladies and gentlemen were invited to meet her and share the elaborate entertainment prepared for her majesty. Among the country homes chosen for her to visit was that of Sir Robert Spenser, one of the wealthiest and most respected men in England. Upon learning that his house was to be thus honored, he summoned Ben Jonson to

8Buxton, p. 228.
prepare some form of dramatic entertainment fitting to this regal occasion. Cognizant of the great responsibility entrusted to him, as well as the opportunity that it afforded him personally, the dramatist laid his plans with infinite care. Taking advantage of the wide expanse of lawns, the newly planted oak groves, and the screens of shrubs and woodland, he designed an exquisite fantasy based on fairy mythology. This exemplary pastoral, marked by its beauty in setting, costuming, music, dance, lyrics, and dialogue, as well as by its delicate compliments to the royal family, was apparently highly pleasing to the new queen, who delighted in elegant and splendid exhibitions. Moreover, she was probably amused and pleased to hear Jonson's thrust at the ministers of the late Elizabeth, which was led up to through a description of the modesty of their host, Sir Robert Spenser.

He can neither bribe a grace,  
Nor encounter my lords face  
With a plyant smile, and flatter  
Though this lately were some matter  
To the making of a courtier.

As Herford and Simpson point out, commissions to write entertainments for the new king's progress to England (1603) and for the Coronation procession (1604) were awarded to "men of known accomplishment in classical study. The preeminence of Jonson in this respect had already been made evident two years before by Poetaster; and . . . it was no secret to his noble friends that he was at work upon the Tacitean tragedy of Sejanus. . . . It is thus not surprising that it fell to Jonson to provide the first extant Entertainment designed to welcome the royal party on the journey southwards" (II, 259-260).
In the new reign things will be different:

Since a hand hath gouernance,
That hath giuen those customes chase,
And hath brought his owne in place.

(A Satyre, 11. 177-186)

One can imagine that these lines brought applause from the throng of noble ladies (and many gentlemen) who had flocked to Althorp to ingratiate themselves with the new queen. Since Althorp was only sixty-five miles from London, it is not surprising that on the Sunday after this entertainment "an infinit number of Lords and Ladies" were assembled here. On Monday afternoon Jonson was ready with an impromptu entertainment featuring morris dancers, but the crowd was so great that the accompanying poetic speeches could not be heard. But Jonson had already won his laurels with The Satyr, the success of which quite likely contributed to his host's being advanced to the dignity of a Baron within the month.

In all probability it was here at Althorp that Jonson impressed Queen Anne with his artistic ability and where he won her very good favor. Of course, it was to be some while before he won the admiration of the learned King James, who was to bring the dramatist to court to provide elegant masques for the entertainment of the fashionable court society.

In the meantime Jonson completed and staged *Sejanus*. It was performed some time during 1603 by the Chamberlain's Men, certainly the company most able to give the proper rendition of the drama that Jonson hoped would be his masterpiece. But the work failed with the groundlings at the Globe, partly because of its long speeches, but primarily because of its vast erudition. This audience, untutored in Roman history, was not impressed by the meticulous care of the author to be historically accurate; nor did they know the details and background of the story, which Una Ellis-Fermor finds necessary to distinguish the people and the action.  

Bryant, in commenting on *Sejanus* and *Catiline* (1611), says that though written for the edification of the populace, the tragedies, nevertheless, "are written so far above their knowledge that anyone but Jonson would have expected of the masses that only the specially learned can comprehend them at first reading."  

There can be no doubt that it was precisely for the specially learned that Jonson wrote this polymathic work. In announcing plans for *Sejanus* in the Apologetical Dialogue to *Poetaster*, he says explicitly that if he pleases only one judicious person in the audience "he shall be alone/ A


theatre unto me" (11. 227-228). As has been seen, his close associates during the time that he was writing the tragedy included scholarly men like Camden, Cotton, Bacon, Selden, and Chapman, as well as a number of cultured aristocrats; and it was doubtless to this group that he wished to prove himself after his failure with *Poetaster*. Thus he worked long and painstakingly to reconstruct a classical tragedy on a Roman theme, which Enck says he was determined to have "tower above detractors" because he "felt obligated to regain his damaged prestige after *Poetaster*."

It is not only possible but most likely that he also hoped to attract the learned ear of King James with this carefully wrought drama. Queen Elizabeth, of course, occupied the throne at the time he began work on *Sejanus*, but with her failing health it was known that a man strongly marked by his scholarly tastes and a genuine love of learning was soon to succeed her. And with the accession of James I, there followed a great surge of scholarly effort, much of which was in deference to the literary taste of the new sovereign. Writers turned increasingly to study, particularly of the classics, with the result that their works became more and more studded with learned allusions and quotations. Herford and Simpson cite as cases in point Burton's vastly erudite *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1612)

and the progressive learnedness in each of the successive editions of Bacon's *Essays*. At the same time they point to *Sejanus* with its weighty learning as an early symptom of this Jacobean tendency and note that the tragedy was not completed when James succeeded to the throne.  

Whether or not Jonson was making a definite bid for royal recognition with this tragedy, which shows his vast and precise knowledge of Latin literature, can be only a matter of conjecture, but the time was indeed ripe for such an effort. However, we can be sure that *Sejanus* was written, not for a popular audience, but for those familiar with the classics. Moreover, it was for the learned that in the Quarto he carefully documented the classical source for every character, for the action, and for much of the dialogue. For as he explains in the prefatory notes, the quotations are in Latin and the work in English because "it was presupposed, none but the Learned would take the paynes to conferre them" (To the Readers, 34-36). It must be agreed with Una Ellis-Fermor that Jonson's prefaces were "concerned not solely or even mainly with the treatment the play had received at the hands of its audience, publisher or players" or even with "the nature of theatrical effec- tiveness." Instead, as he tells the readers of *Sejanus*,

14 Herford and Simpson, I, 35-36.

15 Una Ellis-Fermor, pp. 75-76.
they should judge the play on "truth of Argument, dignity of Persons, gravity and height of Elocution, fulnesse and frequencie of Sentence" (To the Readers, 18-20). And though he did not please the multitude and those contemporary writers who "bring all wit to the Rack" (Marston for example), he did please those who could recognize the quality of this work. Among these were Lord Aubigny (to whom he later dedicated the drama) and a number of writers who wrote commendatory verses that were prefixed to the 1605 edition.

Sejanus His Fall, which Jonson first called the tragedy, aptly describes the work, for it deals with a man who has risen to a high position of state but whose complete arrogance leads to his doom. Sejanus is neither a virtuous man nor one of noble birth; on the contrary, he is a Roman of obscure parentage, whose shameless relations with the emperor, coupled with his unscrupulous opportunism, have made him the second most powerful figure in Rome. But with rank arrogance and an inordinate lust for power, he

16 It is to be suspected that some of those whose resentment he had aroused in Poetaster and others who envied his masterful reconstruction of the Roman scenes both in Poetaster and Sejanus fomented some of the criticism that was leveled at the tragedy. Though Marston wrote a glowing tribute on the merit of Sejanus, the next year (by which time Jonson was a court favorite) the writer gibes at Sejanus. In the preface to Sophonisba (1606) he writes: "To transcribe authors, quote authorities, and translate Latin prose orations into English blank verse, hath, in this subject, been the least aim of my studies" (Bradley and Adams, p. 54).
plots to gain full control of the government. Eventually he pits his political strength against that of the weak, but rightful prince, whose own willful depravity has placed both himself and the state in jeopardy.

Thus it is neither Sejanus nor Tiberius, but the state that elicits our sympathy, and in reality it is the state itself that becomes the protagonist. The tragic struggle is both social and political, and history is used as the basis for the ethical instruction. As is usual with Jonsonian drama, the moral instruction is quite prominent; in fact, the plot lends itself nicely to Jonson's moral expansiveness on evil men in positions of power and on weak-willed noblemen who allow evil to go unchecked.

As the play opens a number of noblemen, most of whom are senators, are bitterly complaining of the deplorable and very dangerous conditions existing in the Roman government. Sabinus irately condemns "all" of the consuls and "most" of the senators for their base servility to Tiberius, and declares it is their "vile" and "filthier flatteries" that corrupt the times and encourage tyranny. Moreover, he sees Tiberius' plan to exercise his cruelty through his ministers so that he himself will not be blamed: "Tyrannes artes/ Are to giue flatterers, grace; accusers, power;/ That those may seeme to kill whom they deuoure" (I.70-72).

Silius feels that they themselves, by their inaction,
have allowed despotism to grow. He admits, "Well, all is worthy of vs," and he continues:

We, that (within these fourescore yeeres) were borne Free, equall lords of the triumphed world, And knew no masters, but affections, To which betraying first our liberties, We since became the slaues to one mans lusts; And now to many: every ministring spie That will accuse, and sweare, is lord of you, Of me, of all, our fortunes, and our liues.

(I.59-66)

Arruntius, the author's spokesman, agrees that the apathy of society in general, and the unwillingness of leaders like himself to take a stand, have permitted this tyrannical rule. In answer to Sabinus' statement that "these our times/ Are not the same," Arruntius says "Times? the men,/ The men are not the same: 'tis we are base" (I.85-87). He questions where among them is a "god-like CATO" or the "constant BRVTVS" that will stand against the evil ruler. And he laments:

Those mightie spirits
Lye rak'd vp, with their ashes, in their vrnes,
And not a sparke of their eternall fire
Glowes in a present bosome. All's but blaze,
Flashes, and smoke, wherewith we labour so,
There's nothing Romane in vs; nothing good,
Gallant, or great: 'Tis true, that CORDVS say's,
Braue CASSIVS was the last of all that race.

(I.97-104)

Having elaborated at length on the evils that may befall a state when leaders are derelict in their duties, Jonson turns to show the qualities of the good prince. In direct contrast to the despotic Tiberius, the former emperor, Prince Germanicus, was "a man most like to vertue'; In all,
And every action, neerer to the gods" (I.124-125).

But he had other touches of late Romane,
That more did speake him: POMPEI'S dignitie,
The innocence of CATO, CAESAR'S spirit,
Wise BRVTVS temperance, and every vertue,
Which, parted vnto others, gaue them name,
Flow'd mixt in him. He was the soule of goodnesse.

(I.149-154)

Here, as in Poetaster, Cynthia's Revels, and the Discoveries, Jonson insists that the worthy prince must possess every moral virtue.

In Sejanus, however, we are confronted with a consummately bad ruler, who, with an equally evil man, is in league against society. Decidedly lacking in discernment and resolution, Tiberius steadily relinquishes his power to the conniving Sejanus. And now the noblemen can only be moan the fact that it was their weakness and inaction in affairs of state that has allowed Sejanus to become

... the second face of the whole world.
The partner of the empire, hath his image
Rear'd equall with TIBERIVS, borne in ensignes,
Command's, disposes every dignitie,
Centurions, Tribunes, Heads of provinces,
Praetors, and Consuls, all that heretofore
Romes generall suffrage gaue, is now his [for] sale.

(I.217-223)

But the power-mad Sejanus (though once a lowly serving boy) is determined to become sole ruler. The main obstacle in his way is Drusus Senior, the emperor's son. Thus he carefully lays plans to seduce Drusus' wife, the beautiful but light Livia, and enlist her aid in poisoning her husband. By plotting with Eudemus, physician of Livia, Sejanus is
able to corrupt the "royall" and "fayre" lady. It is awesome to hear Sejanus and Livia coldly plotting her husband's death as they at the same time engage in lovemaking, but the horror is greatly heightened, when just after such a session, she turns to her physician:

How do I looke to day?
Evd. Excellent cleere, beleue it. This same fucus
Was well laid on.
Liv. Me thinkes, 'tis here not white.
Evd. Lend me your scarlet, lady. 'Tis the sunne
Hath giu'n some little taint vnto the ceruse,
You should haue vs'd of the white oyle I gaue you.

(II.59-64)

This vein of conversation, interspersed with great praise of "Honor'd SEIANVS," is continued. Eudemus advises his royal client:

('Tis now well, ladie, you should
Vse of the dentrifice, I prescrib'd you, too,
To cleere your teeth, and the prepar'd pomatum,
To smoothe the skin:) A lady cannot be
Too curious of her forme, that still would hold
The heart of such a person, made her captiue,
As you haue his.

(II.78-84)

In this instance, the satire of ladies of the court (heretofore a constant element of Jonsonian comedy) serves to intensify the appalling situation.

It is to be noted, moreover, that even at this point the murder of Drusus likely could have been prevented had not the noblemen been completely spineless. The half-hearted suggestion of Arruntius that Tiberius should be told of the senators' fears concerning Sejanus is quickly
stemmed by Sabinus: "Stay, ARRVNTIVS, . . . It is not safe
t'enforce a soueraigne's eare:/ Princes heare well, if they
at all will heare" (I.430-434). Moreover, as Jonson says
through Tiberius:

Princes haue still their grounds rear'd with themselues,
Aboue the poore low flats of common men,
And, who will search the reasons of their acts,
Must stand on equall bases.

(I.537-540)

Though men continue to murmur against Sejanus'
greatness, "the nobles/ Sticke not, in publike, to vpbraid
thy [his] climbing" (III.560-561). And even after Drusus'
murder, Arruntius describes himself and his fellow-senators
as "the good-dull-noble lookers on" who are only called to
the Senate "to keepe the marble warm" (III.16-17).

Thus Sejanus had a clear field in which to get rid
of most of the obstacles (including opposing noblemen and
rightful heirs) standing between himself and the throne.
But the rankly presumptuous Sejanus committed the fatal
error in attempting to cross that impregnable barrier that
prevents royalty from marrying people of questionable
birth. Had Sejanus been content to remain the favored
minion of Tiberius, he doubtless would have long retained
his high place. However, he overreaches himself when he
asks Tiberius to allow him to marry the royal Livia. It is
to be noted that even the arrogant Sejanus is fully cognizant of the vast social gulf between himself and Livia. He
prefaces his suit with:
I haue heard, AVGVSTVS
In the bestowing of his daughter, thought
But euen of gentlemen of Rome: If so,
(I know not how to hope so great a fauour).

(III.515-518)

The proposal immediately causes the emperor to become suspicious of his minion's motives, for such a union would make Sejanus a Caesar himself. Thus alerted, Tiberius recognizes the need to use finesse in discussing the matter with his wily co-partner; nonetheless, he never wavers in reminding Sejanus of his low station in life. He begins by stating: "The rest of mortall men,/ In all their drifts, and counsels, pursue profit:/ Princes, alone, are of a different sort,/ Directing their maine actions still to fame" (III.533-536). Therefore, he says he will take time to think and answer. Continuing, he makes it perfectly clear that Livia will not remain satisfied with a husband so inferior to herself:

Canst thou beleueue, that LIVIA, first the wife
To CAIVS CAESAR, then my DRVSVS, now
Will be contented to grow old with thee,
Borne but a priuate gentleman of Rome?

(III.551-554)

Moreover, he declares that the Senate will not tolerate one of "thy scale" marrying a princess.

Or say, that I should wish it, canst thou thinke
The Senate, or the people (who haue seene
Her brother, father, and our ancestors,
In highest place of empire) will indure it?

(III.556-559)

Here Jonson is closely following Tacitus (Ann.IV.xl), but
the soliloquy of Tiberius, which comes shortly afterward, is strictly Jonsonian. In this he purports to show that the depraved emperor (who was so "dead to vertue" as to be "carried like a pitcher, by the eares, To euery act of vice" [I.416-418]) is suddenly jolted to reality: "To marry LIVIA? will no lesse, SEIANVS, Content thy aimes? no lower obiect? well!" (III.623-624).

It is crystal clear to Tiberius that if Sejanus is so boldly presumptuous as to think that he can overstep the bounds of noble birth, then his ambition knows no limit. Thus, the emperor immediately summons one Sertorius Macro, and with him sets in motion his plan that results in Sejanus' death and dismemberment.

As we turn from Sejanus, our pity and fear, which were primarily for the state, have not been alleviated. For, as Jonson expects his audience to know, Macro becomes but a new instrument of Tiberian duplicity, and the reign of terror continues. What we do receive from the drama is a vast amount of instruction. Sejanus is in reality the tragedy of the Roman state, and we are shown that it could have been averted by an intelligent, alert, and incorruptible senate. And the personal tragedy of the presumptuous Sejanus could have been prevented had he not regarded his emperor as a totally "dull, heuie" and "Voluptuous CAESAR."

Quite clearly the tragedy teaches the virtue of humility and shows how vice leads to destruction, but in addition it
emphasizes a king's duty to be honorable and a subject's obligation to be loyal to his sovereign.

Jonson's concern with kings and courts is greatly in evidence in a number of major, as well as minor, works; moreover, his writings on the theory of kingship occupy considerable space in the Discoveries. One of these observations, entitled Tyranni.--Sejanus, indicates that much of his concern in this tragedy is that of kingship:

There is nothing with some princes sacred above their majesty. ... All is under the law of their spoil and licence. But princes that neglect their proper office thus, their fortune is often-times to draw a Sejanus, who will ... put them in a worthy fear of rooting both them out and their family. For no men hate an evil prince more than they that helped to make him such.

He concludes with the statement: "A good King is a public Servant"; but on the reverse side of the coin he is equally as adamant:

After God, nothing is to be lov'd of man like the Prince: He violates nature, that doth it not with his whole heart. For when hee hath put on the care of the publike good, and common safety; I am a wretch, and put off man, if I doe not reverence and honour him: in whose charge all things divine and humane are plac'd.

(Discoveries: Princeps, 11. 986-991)

Jonson seemingly felt that the historical Sejanus was particularly appropriate for teaching the lesson of obedience and loyalty to sovereigns, for in the prefatory "Argument" of the 1605 Quarto he added a final paragraph:

This do we advance as a marke of Terror to all Traytors, & Treasons; to shewe how iust the Heauens are in powring and thundring downe a weighty vengeance on their vnnatural intents, even to the worst Princes: Much more to those, for guard of whose Piety and Vertue,
the Angels are in continuall watch, and God himself miraculously working.  

Perhaps Sejanus does not merit being called "a purer work than the English stage deserves"; however, it is a significant work that not only shows a great degree of constructive skill and learning, but also illuminates a particularly interesting phase of Roman history. And Jonson makes it clear that the court of Rome has lessons for the English court.

Even though the drama failed with the public, Jonson, in dedicating the Folio edition to Lord Aubigny, says that "it begot it selfe a greater fauour then he lost, the loue of good men." Among these in all likelihood was James I, for certainly the scholarly work would have appealed to him. In any event, Jonson had gained the admiration of the king well before Christmas of 1604-5, since he was commissioned to write the court masque for this date. This, of course, was the beginning of Jonson's long and successful career as the chief writer of masques and entertainments for the court of James.

Just who among Jonson's influential friends was first to call royal attention to the poet is not known. However, a likely conjecture would be his host Lord Aubigny, who was a cousin of James. Certainly a commendation from a

17 Herford and Simpson, IV, 353.
18 Enck, p. 109.
high personage was needed. But at the same time, King James had ample opportunity to view the poet's entertainments and assess his ability before summoning him to write the Christmas masque. The first occasion was on the day of the Coronation (March 15, 1604), when Jonson shared with Dekker the honors of providing the entertainment honoring the king's passing through the city to Whitehall. Of the seven pageants staged along the way, Jonson devised the first and final ones. His contributions, entitled Part of the Kings Entertainments in Passing to his Coronation, were marked with extraordinary learning, which was doubtless pleasing to James I. Even more than in previous works, Jonson addressed himself exclusively to the cultivated few. He comments that "the dignitie of these shewes" demands that they be presented to "the sharpe and learned: And for the multitude, no doubt but their grounded iudgements did gaze, said it was fine, and were satisfied" (11. 264-266). On the whole the speeches were congratulatory and highly complimentary, but as Herford and Simpson observe "it is easy to detect under Electra's exalted prophecy the note of grave counsel." And in the Panegyre that he composed for King James for the opening day of Parliament, the counsel to the king is quite pronounced. The "reuerend THEMIS" suggests how Kings may win their subjects' love and

She tells him first, that Kings
Are here on earth the most conspicuous things:
That they, by Heauen, are plac'd upon his throne,
To rule like Heauen; and have none more, their owne,
As they are men, then men.

(11. 77-81)

Themis' speech, which extends to some fifty lines, is solely concerned with instructing kings. She advises that princes "should take more care, and fear/ In publick acts what face and forme they beare" (11. 87-88); that those who wish to command with love "Must with a tender (yet a stedfast) hand/ Sustain the reynes, and . . . forbear/ To offer cause of injury, or fear" (11. 122-124); and that "kings, by their example, more do sway/ Then by their power" (11. 125-126). While Jonson believed in the divine right of kings, he, nevertheless, regarded it the poet's solemn duty to warn the prince of certain pitfalls as well as remind him of his obligation to be righteous and just. He says "For Right is as compassionate as wise" (1. 108). Moreover, at the close of the epigram he writes Solus Rex, et Poeta non quotannis nascitur. In fact, the manner in which Jonson addresses his new sovereign in the Panegy in is indicative of his attitude toward kingship, the court and the subjects, which he later, as court poet, both maintains and expresses throughout the reign of James I.

Two weeks after the coronation, Jonson provided the May-day entertainment given for the king and queen by Sir
William Cornwallis at Highgate. This exquisite little production, which Gifford calls The Penates, was presented in two parts. In the morning entertainment, the gods of antiquity extend an elegiac and gracious welcome to the royal couple as they are conducted through the spacious gardens. The afternoon performance somewhat anticipates Jonson's antimasque in its frolicsome spirit, yet it concludes on a note of counsel in Mercury's wish that King James "triumph . . . over the ridiculous pride of other Princes; and forever live safe in the love, rather than the fear of your subjects" (11. 273-275). Gifford reports that "James was accompanied by the Lords and Ladies of his Court: others were probably introduced by Sir William: but whoever they might be, they were known to Jonson (who was always present on these occasions)."

Apparently Gifford properly assessed the poet's popularity with the members of nobility, for he provided The Entertainment of the two Kings of Great Britain and Denmark in July of 1606 at Theobalds, the home of the Earl of Salisbury. Again at Theobalds in May 1607, it was his composition that celebrated the transfer of this estate to King James. Moreover, he was given these commissions in spite of his and Sir Thomas Roe's very bad behavior at the court presentation of Daniel's masque for Christmas of 1603.

20Nichols, I, 436.
Jonson doubtless felt himself a better poet than Daniel and more deserving of writing the court masques. And Rowe in verses to Jonson about this occasion agrees. He says "The State and mens affaires are the best playes/ Next yours; 'Tis not more nor lesse than due praise"; later he refers to their being expelled from the performance by Lord Suffolk: "Forget we were thrust out; It is but thus,/ God threatens Kings, Kings Lords, as Lords doe us."  

Though Daniel was regarded by Jonson as "a good honest man, but no poet," he was nevertheless a favorite in courtly circles, and one would think that Jonson's rudeness would have ended his own chances at court. However, in the ensuing months the festivities welcoming the royal family provided Jonson several opportunities to show his creative ability. Suffice it to say his brilliance and resourcefulness far outweighed that of the unimaginative Daniel, and his entertainments were appropriately artistic, charming, and stately to please the elegant taste of the extravagant Queen Anne. But it was the marked degree of classical learning in these compositions that drew the more learned approval of King James and that doubtless led to the poet's commission to provide the Twelfth-Night masque at Whitehall in that year. Moreover, it was Jonson's vast erudition and his continued devotion to scholarship that led the king to

21 Bradley and Adams, pp. 36-37.
place him in the office of court poet.

Edmund Wilson, though Jonson's chief denigrator of the present age, rather accurately assesses the dramatist's position at the beginning of the Jacobean era. Wilson says, "He had acquired classical learning where he could not acquire money; and it was to remain for him a reservoir of strength, a basis of social position, to which he was to go on adding all his life." 22

Though Jonson's classicism had been rejected by the public audiences of the Bankside, it finally won the recognition of royalty and aristocracy and brought its author to Whitehall. And throughout the reign of James I and longer, he devised masques and entertainments that displayed the court in its most magnificent and brilliant moments. Perhaps it is to be regretted that his masque writing and position as court poet took him too long and too often from the theater, but since he had worked long and hard for royal recognition, one must say with Miss Dunn that it is gratifying and pleasant "to think of Jonson in the midst of the great figures of the Court." 23


CHAPTER IV

THE PERIOD OF JONSON'S GREATEST SUCCESS
AT COURT AND IN THE THEATER

The Masques

When Ben Jonson received his first commission to write a court masque in 1604, he probably did not anticipate that he was entering upon a career that would occupy much of his attention for two decades and more. Nor did he envision that throughout the years he would compose more of these courtly entertainments than all other writers combined. When we question (as so many have done) what prompted his long devotion to this art form, we are asking several rather complex questions. Certainly one consideration, though not the most important one, was that of greatly increased material benefits. Of course, even the strong-willed and independent Ben Jonson could ill afford to turn down a royal commission in view of the fact that James I paid him five times as much for a masque as his producers had paid him for a play. And in addition to good pay and patronage, there was the further attraction of great social prestige, which was indeed a valuable asset to a struggling writer in that it opened new avenues of patronage to him.

However, these factors do not account for his
taking this ephemeral form of art so seriously, for, as Symonds observes, "Jonson threw his whole spirit into the work" with the result that "his masques are not only infinitely varied, witty, tasteful, and ingenious but vast erudition is exhibited in the notes with which he enriched them."\(^1\) Also Gregory Smith, like most critics, regards Jonson as "the true creator of the masque and the unchallenged master of the genre" and for the reason that he "brought to the task experience and learning, and above all a purpose as deliberate and defined as in his fight for a reformed comedy."\(^2\)

Certainly Jonson had formulated definite theories about the masque, which are to be found in the several dedications, prefatory notes, and footnotes to the printed editions. Though these comments extend to many points, he strongly emphasizes that the purpose of the masque is to honor magnificence, but at the same time it should inspire in the beholder the desire to imitate those virtues embodied in the king. Consequently, it should exhibit a moral truth and be vested with that decorum and solid learning (preferably learning of antiquity) fitting to the dignity of the royal audience. Equally prominent in the


comments is his conviction that poetry is a vastly important element of the masque. He insists that it is the poetry that molds, unifies, and elevates this form of art, moreover, it preserves for posterity these celebrations honoring "the greatest and most absolute births." In the preface to his first masque, The Masque of Blackness, he explains:

The honor, and splendor of these spectacles was such in the performance, as could those hours have lasted, this of mine, now, had been a most unprofitable worke. But (when it is the fate, even of the greatest, and most absolute births, to need, and borrow a life of posteritie) little had been done to the studie of magnificence in these, if presently with the rage of the people, who (as a part of greatness) are priuiledged by custome, to deface their carkasses, the spirits had also perished. (11. 1-9)

He continues by paying tribute "to that Maiestie who gaue them [masques] their authoritie, and grace; and, no lesse then the most royall of predecessors, deserves eminent celebration for these solemnities," and he adds that he, as a poet, will redeem them from oblivion. Thus, from the outset of his career in masque writing, we see that Jonson attaches a permanence to these courtly entertainments, which perhaps accounts in part for the scholarliness of his work.

It is to be noted that a commission for a masque quite often imposed certain requirements, but for the versatile and erudite Jonson this was of little consequence. In fact, Queen Anne's desire to have her ladies appear in
blackface poses no problem for Jonson in composing The

Masque of Blackness, for he recalls that

PLINY, SOLINVS, PTOLOMEY, and of late LEO the African, remember vnto vs a riuver in Aethiopia, famous by the
name of Niger; of which the people were called Nigrita, now Negro's; and are the blackest nation of the world.

Hence (because it was her Maiesties will, to
haue them Black-mores at first) the inuention was de-
riued by me, and presented thus. (11. 15-23)

Many of Jonson's contemporaries could not cope with
these restrictions (Daniel for instance) and excused their
limitations by agreeing with Bacon that masques were but
"Toyes" and not worthy of serious consideration. But Jon-
son took them quite seriously and poured his prodigious
learning into their composition. In the preface to
Hymenaei, he is probably hitting at Daniel.

And, howsoever some may squemishly crie out, that all
endeuour of learning, and sharpnesse in these transi-
torie deuices especially, where it steps beyond their
little, or (Let me not wrong 'hem) no braine at all,
is superfluous; I am contented, these fastidious
stomachs should leaue my full tables, and enjoy at
home, their cleane emptie trenchers. (11. 19-25)

Again in the witty and ingenious Neptune's Triumph, Jonson,
as both master-cook and poet, insists that his masques are
banquets of learning, replete with a wide variety of nour-
ishing meats, pies, relishes, and sauces to please the
daintiest or the most exacting palate.

On several occasions, Jonson voices the opinion
that it is the dignity of poetry that exalts and gives per-
manence to the masque. In the preface of Hymenaei he says
that "the glorie of all these solemnities had perish'd
like a blaze, and gone out, in the beholders eyes. So short-liu'd are the bodies [spectacle] of all things, in comparison of their soules [poetry]." Because these entertainments celebrate royalty and nobility, Jonson feels that they should be eternized, and declares that they will be, because the soules will live:

"This it is hath made the most royall Princes, and greatest persons (who are commonly the personaters of these actions) not onely studious of riches, and magnificence in the outward celebration, or shew; (which rightly becomes them) but curious after the most high, and heartie inuentions . . . (and those grounded vpon antiquitie, and solide learnings) which . . . their sense, or doth, or should alwayes lay hold on more remou'd mysteries. (11. 10-19)

By "sense" Jonson obviously means the ethical quality, which he elaborates on in the preface to the Masque of Queens. He states that in all courtly entertainments the poet should observe "that rule of the best Artist, to suffer no obiect of delight to passe without his mixture of profit, & example" (11. 7-9). Years later in the preface to Love's Triumph (his first masque for Charles I), he reaffirms his belief:

"Whereas all Repraesentations, especially those of this nature in court, publique Spectacles, eyther haue bene, or ought to be mirrors of mans life, whose ends, for the excellence of their exhibitors (as being the donatiues, of great Princes, to their people) ought alwayes to carry a mixture of profit, with them, no lesse then delight. (11. 1-7)

The way that his masques achieve the goal of profit mixed with pleasure is through magnificence, which is an attribute of royalty. Jonson (closely following Aristotle's concepts)
believes that the contemplation of magnificence inspires admiration and respect for the king and for the virtues inherent in kingship and arouses in the spectators the desire for moral imitation. Since the masque is for the purpose of honoring the prince and royalty it must be so constructed that it will be magnificent in each and every part. An example in case is Hymenaei, which Jonson describes:

Such was the exquisit performance, as (beside the pompe, [and] splendor . . .) that alone (had all else beene absent) was of power to surprize with delight, and steale away the spectators from themselues. Nor was there wanting whatsoeuer . . . eyther in riches, or strangenesse of the habites, delicacie of daunces, magnificence of the scene, or diuine rapture of musiique.

(11. 568-576)

Marked by beauty in all details, the masque brings surprise, delight, and self-forgetfulness, which combined, achieve the effect of wonder. Wonder, regarded as an end of poetry by the Renaissance, was one of the aims of most masque writers. Jonson, according to most critics, accomplishes this purpose in a more artistic and effective manner than his rivals. Characteristic of his approach is News from the New World. Here in the "Antimaske" he prepares the audience for the act of contemplating the greatness of the king. This act (as he brings out in the closing songs) is the source of wonder and admiration, which not only gives pleasure and knowledge, but also leads to respect for the
sovereign and the desire to imitate his perfection. But the climactic point, occurring in the second of the four songs, calls pronounced attention to the sovereign and his inherent virtues.

Now looke and see in yonder throne,
   How all those beames are cast from one.
    This is that Orbe so bright,
    Has kept your wonder so awake;
    Whence you as from a mirrour take
    The Suns reflected light.
    Read him as you would doe the booke
    Of all perfection.

(11. 334-341)

Today we might not look upon James I as a model of perfection, but in accord with Jonson's theory of kingship, the prince should possess every moral virtue.

Although Queen Anne appeared in The Masque of Beauty, and Prince Henry was Oberon in Oberon, the Faery Prince, King James, who though always the central figure of these noble exhibitions, preferred to remain a spectator. This meant that Jonson had to "apt" his inventions to find an appropriate manner in which to pay homage to the sovereign. But Jonson's ingenuity was equal to the occasion, and he devised a variety of clever ways to introduce the traditional apostrophe to the sovereign. In The Gypsies Metamorphos'd he came up with the happy idea of having the captain of the gypsies tell King James' and Prince Henry's

³For some of the foregoing points, I am indebted to Dolora Cunningham's elucidative article "The Jonsonian Masque as a Literary Form," in ELH, XXII (1955), 108-124.
fortune. This unique device was apparently appealing, and the masque appears to have greatly pleased King James for he had it performed three times in 1621, at Burley-on-the-Hill, at Belvoir, and at Windsor.

Another solution to linking the king to the masque is in The Vision of Delight, when Wonder questions

Whence is it that the ayre so sudden cleares,  
And all things in a moment turne so milde?  
(11. 174-175)

and Phant'sie, directing attention to the throne, replies,

Behold a King  
Whose presence maketh this perpetuall Spring,  
The glories of which Spring grow in that Bower,  
And are the marks and beauties of his power.  
(11. 201-204)

Immediately following the introduction of the sovereign, the choir praises his majesty in song and directs the masquers to express their homage in a dance.

With rare exceptions Jonson's many and varied ways of calling attention to the fact that the king was the center of the masque are skillfully and artistically conceived. In commenting on the means that Jonson used to make the court an essential part of his production, Orgel says that his "sensitivity to his audience--and especially, in the later years, to the tastes of the king--is one quality that sets him off from the rival poets, Daniel, Campion, and Beaumont, and will go far to explain his
continued popularity in a court headed by James I.\textsuperscript{4}

Up until recent years critics of Jonson's masques have regarded the reference to the court and the king as the usual and conventional compliment or have characterized it as "ingenious flattery" as Gifford did one hundred fifty years ago. Today scholars and critics are showing considerable interest in the masques as literature, and an increasing number are strongly opposing the charges that the complimentary element is flattery. Dolora Cunningham takes a firm stand on the way in which this matter should be considered. She expresses her point of view very clearly in her commendation of Professor D. J. Gordon for "undermining the unhistorical and altogether unsupported prejudice against those praises of kingship which provide the ethical substance of the masque." And then she reasons, "For it may be said that the virtue of princes is to masque as the fall of princes is to tragedy.\textsuperscript{5}

One of the first to object to interpreting the praise of King James as flattery in Jonson's courtly entertainments was Allan Gilbert. In his convincing study, he declares, "It is dangerous to set down as flattery any Renaissance address to a monarch which smacks of the theory of kingship and is intended to suggest to a ruler his


\textsuperscript{5}Dolora Cunningham, p. 123.
duties to his subjects." A close study of Jonson's masques reveals the frequency with which they allude to the responsibilities incumbent upon the prince. In The Haddington Masque, Hymen counsels:

A Prince, that drawes
By'example more, then others doe by lawes:
That is so iust to his great act, and thought,
To doe, not what Kings may, but what Kings ought.
Who, out of pietie, vnto peace, is vow'd;
To spare his sujects, yet to quell the proud,
And dares esteeme it the first fortitude,
To haue his passions, foes at home, subdued.

(11. 216-223)

Again in Prince Henries Barriers, Jonson, knowing the youthful prince's love of arms, reminds him that martial strength should be used only for defense. He recalls the reigns of England's most illustrious monarchs, and urges the prince to study their examples:

These, worthyest Prince, are set you neere to reade,
That ciuill arts the martiaall must precede.
That lawes and trade bring honors in and gayne,
And armes defensiue a safe peace maintayne.
But when your fate shall call you forth to'assure
Your vertue more (though not to make secure)
View here, what great examples she hath plac'd.

(11. 211-127)

The speeches also pay high tribute to the wisdom, temperance, and justice of James I, who is hailed as the greatest of all Britain's kings.

Shortly after the Barriers and Prince Henry's

investiture as the Prince of Wales, he was ready to give a masque of his own for the following Christmas celebration. Jonson was again commissioned and wrote Oberon, one of his most charming courtly entertainments. Since Jonson was writing to the direction of the prince, he included notes to his sources. For Prince Henry, who showed promise in letters, had earlier requested that annotations of the classical sources be prepared for The Masque of Queens. This gave Jonson no little trouble, for in writing this masque he had relied solely on his vast store of knowledge.

Even though the masque of the fairy prince is written to feature Prince Henry, the author does not forget the homage due the most exalted person in the realm. The Prince of Wales leads his train before his father's throne to pay their vows,

and all their glories lay
At's feet, and tender to this only great,
True maiestie, restored in this seate:
To whose sole power, and magick they doe giue
The honor of their being.

(11. 328-332)

Then through the sage Silenus, the poet both counsels against tyranny and praises King James' manner of dealing with his subjects. James I is said

To teach them by the sweetnesse of his sway,
And not by force. He'sis such a king, as thay,
Who'are tyrannes subiects, or ne're tasted peace,
Would, in their wishes, forme, for their release.

(11. 346-349)

That kings rule better by example than by power is a
recurring theme in Jonson's courtly entertainments, and re­veals that Jonson is writing in the spirit of works that give advice to princes. Moreover, the passages in praise of James I that are often set down as flattery, follow the conventional doctrine that works of praise may best en­courage a ruler toward good and just government. Jonson expresses this belief clearly in his "An Epistle to Master John Selden":

Though I confesse (as every Muse hath err'd
And mine not least) I have too oft preferr'd
Men, past their termes, & prais'd some names too much;
But 'twas with purpose to have made them such.

This precept is advanced throughout the ages by numerous writers, including Aristotle, Castiglione, Erasmus, as well as Jonson and his contemporaries. Even Bacon, who had reservations about the value of masques and triumphs, fully understood the principle underlying these encomiums to the king:

Some Praises come of good Wishes, and Respects, which is a Forme due in Ciuitietie to Kings, and Great Persons, Laudando praecipere; When by telling Men, what they are, they represent to them, what they should be.7

When we consider the interest of the Renaissance in political precepts and counsel to the prince, and view Jonson's masques in this light, we realize that the pas­sages in praise of King James contain advice rather than flattery. Here, one is reminded of Jonson's statement to

Drummond that "he heth a minde to be a churchman, & so he might have favour to make one Sermon to the King, he careth not what y'after should befell him, for he would not flatter though he saw Death." 8

Jonson, of course, had a sympathetic attitude toward the divine right of kings, but as Herford and Simpson state, "he instinctively emphasizes the side of the doctrine least favorable to royal arrogance." 9 They cite one of the many passages illustrative of this point from A Panegyire, written to James I in March, 1603, but it is interesting to note that thirty years later when Jonson addresses Charles I in The Kings Entertainment at Wellbeck (1633), he writes in the same vein:

\begin{verbatim}
A Prince, that's Law
Unto himselfe! Is good, for goodnesse-sake;
And so becomes the Rule unto his Subjects!
That studies not to seeme, or to show great,
But be! Not drest for others eyes, and eares,
With Vizors, and false rumours; but makes Fame
Wait on his Actions, and thence speake his Name!
\end{verbatim}

(11. 320-326)

Here again Jonson is writing in the spirit of those works that give advice to rulers, as he most often does in his courtly entertainments. But apparently such speeches as the above have been passed over by those critics who characterize his masques as works of flattery to the king. However, as has been mentioned earlier, this idea is now being dispelled by a number of critics. In a valuable

8Herford and Simpson, I, 141.  9Ibid., II, 262.
article that considers the masques in the light of Renaissance ethical humanist literature, E. W. Talbert suggests that Jonson's courtly entertainments should be "interpreted in accordance with his own words, if his purpose and his long preoccupation with the genre are to be understood."\(^{10}\) Today scholars are professing particular interest in Jonson's own statements about the genre, and find with Stephen Orgel the expression of humanistic convictions; moreover, most agree with Orgel's statement that "ultimately he [Jonson] speaks of the masque in the specifically moral terms he applies elsewhere to his best poetry."\(^{11}\)

This, of course, is in accord with Talbert's arguments that the masques should be viewed as other ethical-didactic poems of the Renaissance. Referring to Jonson's insistence upon the "voice" and the "sense" of the masque, Talbert urges that the critic should examine carefully the voice and sense of each masque: "And the voice of Jonson's courtly spectacle, I submit, is that of panegyric laudando praecipere; the sense, that of the precepts de regimine principum enlarged by the ethical-poetical credo of a staunch Renaissance humanist."\(^{12}\) In my opinion, Talbert quite accurately defines Jonson's conception of the masque, as he spoke of it and dealt with it in the seventeenth

\(^{10}\) Ernest William Talbert, "The Interpretation of Jonson's Courtly Spectacles," \textit{PMLA}, LXI (June 1946), 473.

\(^{11}\) Orgel, p. 107.

\(^{12}\) Talbert, p. 473.
In any event, Jonson's courtly entertainments met with the approval of his royal patrons, who, because of their literary and theatrical interests, imposed somewhat stringent demands. As a result, the tastes of Queen Anne and King James are often reflected in the Jonsonian masque. For, as Orgel observes, "Not since the time of Henry VIII had the masque been so completely involved with court protocol; and to the artistic conventions of the form were added a whole new set of social conventions to which the poet was required to adapt his invention." But Jonson, more than any other masque writer, was able to treat each requirement as an organic element of his work of art.

Jonson was probably correct in telling Drummond "that next himself only Fletcher and Chapman could make a Mask," and apparently James I shared his feelings. The poet's trip to Scotland precluded his providing the Christmas masque for 1618, and a letter from Drummond of January, 1619, says: "I have heard from Court, that the late Mask was not so approved of the King, as in former Times, and that your Absence was regreted: Such Applause hath true Worth, even of those who otherwise are not for it." 

There can be little doubt that James I admired both

13Orgel, p. 63.  14Herford and Simpson, I, 133.  15Ibid., I, 205.
the poet and his works. Jonson was regularly providing the Twelfth-night masque, and in 1616 King James granted him a pension of 100 marks in consideration of "the good and acceptable service done and to be done unto vs by our welbeloved Servaunt Beniamyn Johnson." Moreover there was evidently talk of a knighthood for the poet. The account of this offer, recorded in a letter from Joseph Mean to Sir Martin Stuteville in 1621, is worth repeating in full: "A friend told me this Faire time (Stourbridge) that Ben Jonson was not knighted, but scaped it narrowly, for that his majestie would have done it, had there not been means made (himself not unwilling) to avoyd it." Perhaps Jonson had too often written and spoken disparagingly of the "thirty pound knight" to accept, but more likely he did not wish to be placed in the compromising position that frequently came with favors from the king. Again in 1621 came the royal gift of the reversion of the Office of Master of the Revels, which he would receive upon the decease of Sir George Buck and Sir John Astley; but Astley outlived Jonson. Another distinguished honor was accorded him when King James selected him to translate Barclay's Argenis. While engaged in this task, he continued to provide all of the masques performed at court and to enjoy royal goodwill throughout the reign of James I.

16 Ibid., I, 231.  17 Bradley and Adams, p. 122.
Even though Herford and Simpson speak of royal coolness toward Jonson in 1624-25, Orgel convincingly refutes this: He reasons that Jonson's having received three commissions for masques in the space of about a year does not indicate "marked coolness," and cites the fact that the masque written by the young courtier Maynard (presumably for Prince Charles' return) was neither commissioned by the court nor staged at court.\textsuperscript{18} And according to a letter from John Chamberlain (August 21, 1624) to Sir Dudley Carleton, Maynard's masque was "poore stuffe" and received "no great approbation."\textsuperscript{19}

A few days after Maynard's masque came Jonson's production, \textit{The Masque of Owles} (August 19, 1624), and on the following Christmas, \textit{The Fortunate Isles} (January 9, 1625). This masque was scheduled for Twelfth-night, but because the king was ill, it was put off until he was able to attend. Only three months later (March, 1625) King James died.

Thus it appears that there is little reason to believe that the poet laureate suffered a decline in favor with the king; however, at this time, and later, there is evidence of Prince Charles' indifference to the poet. But during the reign of King James, Jonson enjoyed great prestige and unprecedented success, not only with his court

\textsuperscript{18}Orgel, p. 78.  \textsuperscript{19}Herford and Simpson, X, 700.
masques but also with his plays. Much of his prosperity during these years (as well as his lack of antagonism from poetasters) can be attributed to the strong backing of James I.

The Plays of the Period (1605-1625)

Jonson's employment at court interfered from time to time with his work in the theater, but it was during the first decade of this period that he produced the four great comedies: *Volpone* (1605), *Epicoene* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). In addition, the tragedy *Catiline* was staged in 1611, and *The Devil is an Ass* in 1616; moreover, in the same year came the publication of his *Works*. Yet a period of some ten years was to elapse, and a new king was to occupy the throne, before Jonson again produced anything for the stage.

However, during the last decade of the reign of James (1616-1625), Jonson was preeminent in English letters and a prominent figure at court. Consequently, in studying the above-mentioned plays and observing the references to the court and courtiers, it is significant to note that they are among the works that ushered in the author's great popularity. In addition, it is of particular interest to note the frequency with which he attacks certain courtiers, particularly the knight, who is so soundly derided in the first great comedy.
Volpone was written in a period of five weeks and was the best drama the author had produced by 1606. Indeed it proved to be the masterpiece that Jonson had hoped for in Sejanus, which barely missed the mark. The comedy was first performed by the King's Men at the Globe and within a few months before the two universities, to whom it was later dedicated. The dedication is addressed to "The Most Noble and Most Eqvall Sisters" and expresses grateful acknowledgement of "their love and acceptance shew'n to his poeme in the presentation."

The play, though presumably set in Venice, exploits popular English materials. But the author exercised great wisdom in laying the scene in Venice and making his hero Volpone a Magnifico of the Republic. First, the Venetian setting lends verisimilitude, for many Englishmen regarded Venice as a city of crime and believed deviousness and vice to be innate in the Italian; secondly, he could ill afford to have the action take place in London, since the sensual, cruel, and avaricious Volpone was a nobleman.

The play is centered around the machinations of this evil Venetian grandee, who for three years has feigned dire illness and cunningly baited his gold-crazed neighbors into believing that they will become heirs to his estate. Consequently, his palace is besieged by legacy hunters bearing costly gifts in an attempt to get their names in his will. Prominent among this group is the delightful English woman,
Lady Would-be. She and her husband, Sir Politic Would-be, are tourists visiting Venice for their first time, and the antics of this naive, blundering, self-important couple are highly amusing.

With Sir Politic and his wife, Jonson turns again to the familiar English scene and to two of his favorite acquaintances: the pompous, blustering knight and his socially ambitious and presumptuous wife. Sir Politic, as his name implies, is a politician in the Elizabethan sense, a politic member of the gentry who is woefully misinformed on matters of state and who ludicrously misinterprets the secret affairs of state.

When we first meet the talkative knight, he is in conversation with young Peregrine, another English traveler, who has recently arrived in Venice. Sir Politic eagerly inquires of news from England, particularly of the very strange story of the raven that built in a "ship royall of the Kings," for he believes this to be another of those ominous events that presage national peril. Peregrine, realizing that his new acquaintance is a gull, cleverly baits him. First he inquires: "Your name, sir," and then:

Your lady
Lies here, in Venice, for intelligence
Of tyres, and fashions, and behauiour,
Among the curtizans? the fine lady WOVL-BEE?

POL. Yes, sir, the spider, and the bee, oft-times,
Suck from one flowre. PER. Good sir POLITIQVE!
I cry you mercie; I haue heard much of you:
'Tis true, sir, of your rauen. POL. On your knowledge?
The politic knight is struck with amazement at all of these "prodigies," which like the "fires at Benwicke" and the "new starre" are "full of omen," and he inquires if there is truth in the fearful report that three porpoises were seen above the bridge. Peregrine is delighted to confirm this report, and increases the number of porpoises from three to six, plus a sturgeon. Then he adds to the knight's astonishment by stating that the very day he put forth from London a whale had been discovered in the Thames, and it was presumed that it had lain in wait there many months for the subversion of the Stode-Fleet. This bit of chicanery from Peregrine completely convinces Sir Politic that "'Twas either sent from Spaine, or the Arch-dukes!/ SPINOLA'S whale, vpon my life, my credit!" (II.i.50-51).

Continuing to capitalize on Sir Politic's gullibility, Peregrine reports that Stone, the fool, is dead, and the portentous gravity of this news is such that the knight can scarcely apprehend it.

Well before the end of this scene the author has not only succeeded in showing that Sir Politic is completely devoid of statecraft, but also that he is a gullible fool. But characteristic of Jonson's references to himself in the plays, he has Peregrine exclaim:
0, this Knight
(Were he well knowne) would be a precious thing
To fit our English stage: He that should write
But such a fellow, should be thought to faine
Extremely, if not maliciously.

(II.i.57-60)

These lines rather clearly express Jonson's opinion of cer­
tain members of the nobility, who are far better equipped
to play the comic fool on the stage than to concern them­
selves with affairs of state. The dramatist quite rightly
held a high view of the responsibility and dignity of
statesmanship; consequently, it was most annoying to him to
watch trivial-minded men pose as authorities on matters of
state. In fact, he deemed this one of the greatest of
court deficiencies.

This knight, like Sir Puntavolo, deals in projects
by which he hopes to make a huge profit. And it is with
deep seriousness that he boasts to Peregrine of his inge­
nious plans to supply Venice with red herrings, to disin­
fect plague-infested ships by the use of onions, and to
prevent the arsenal from being blown up by making it ille­
gal for individuals to own tinder-boxes. Peregrine ex­
presses great admiration for these projects; moreover, when
Sir Politic offers some instructions that should be known
by your "crude traueller," the young man enthusiastically
encourages him to proceed. First the knight advises the
young man on clothes: "For your garbe, it must be graue,
and serious;/ Very reseru'd and lock't" (IV.i.12-13). Next
he cautions that the traveler should never speak a truth and never profess a religion. Equally important is the matter of table manners:

Then, must you learrne the vse,  
And handling of your siluer forke, at meales;  
The mettall of your glasse: (these are maaine matters,  
With your Italian) and to know the houre,  
When you must eat your melons, and your figges.  

(IV.i.27-31)

One of Sir Politic's purposes in traveling abroad was for cultural benefits, but as one can see, the shallow minded man could grasp only the externals. Through Sir Politic Jonson is denouncing the new-made knight, who is so filled with self importance that he not only tries to imitate the customs and manners of established courtiers, but also attempts to take part in affairs of state.

Lady Would-Be, the fashionable bluestocking, is equally as inane and meddlesome as her husband. She is more closely associated with the main plot, since her primary function is to harass Volpone with her endless harangue on poets, philosophers, medicine, music, and painting. Having joined the ranks of legacy-hunters, Lady Would-Be arrives at Volpone's home accompanied by two of her servingwomen. She is in a state of agitation, and fumes, frets, and snaps at the women:

Come neerer: is this curie  
In his right place? or this? why is this higher  
Then all the rest? you ha' not wash'd your eies, yet?  
Or do they not stand even i' your head?  

(III.iv.10-13)
And a little later she demands:

I pray you, view
This tire, forsooth: are all things apt, or no?

WOM. One haire a little, here, sticks out, forsooth.
LAD. Do's 't so forsooth? and where was your deare sight
When it did so, forsooth? what now? bird-ey'd?
And you, too? 'pray you both approch, and mend it.

(III.iv.16-21)

Even though she finds the "fucus too course too" and that "This band/ Shewes not my neck inough," she musters her self confidence with "in good faith, I, am drest/ Most fauourably, to day, it is no matter" (III.iv.2-6). Here, as he most often does, Jonson indicates that the painted surface and the expensive, fashionable dress covers an inner shallowness.

But Lady Politic believes herself to be quite knowl-edgeable, and when she descends upon Volpone she is so de-termined to impress the rich nobleman with her profundity that she becomes a never-ending talking machine. She has "a little studied physic" and prescribes for Volpone several remedies, lists in detail the various ingredients, and offers to prepare them. Her never-ceasing discourse brings Volpone's remark: "Before I fayn'd diseases, now I haue one," and when she starts again, he bemoans, "Another floud of wordes! a very torrent!" (III.iv.62-64). From here she moves on to show her cultural interests: She professes to be all for music, devotes an hour or two a day to painting, and "would haue/ A lady, indeed, t'haue all, letters, and
artes,/ Be able to discourse, to write, to paint," but "concent/ In face, in voyce, and clothes: and is, indeed,/ Our sexes chiepest ornament" (III.iv.70-76). When Volpone responds that the poet says the highest female grace is silence, she inquires: "Which o' your Poets? PETRARCH? or TASSO? or DANTE?/GUERRINI? JOHNSTO? ARETINE?/ CIECO di Hadria? I haue read them all" (III.iv.79-81).

Despite Volpone's efforts to silence her "eternall tongue," she continues to expound on poets, and pronounces her superficial judgment of each:

MONTAGNIE:
He has so moderne, and facile a veine,
Fitting the time, and catching the court-eare,
Your PETRARCH is more passionate, yet he,
In dayes of sonetting, trusted 'hem, with much:
DANTE is hard, and few can understand him.
But, for a desperate wit, there's ARETINE!
Onely, his pictures are a little obscene.

(III.iv.80-97)

Scarcely pausing, she launches into a new topic, and Volpone, unable to stem the barrage of the "Madam, with the euercasting voyce," implores Mosca, "For hells sake, rid her hence" (III.v.11).

As always, Jonson seems to delight in exposing the vain, shallow female who professes great learning. Doubtless E. C. Dunn is correct in suggesting that his joy is likely a form of retaliation for many a tiresome conversation with some pretty and empty-headed lady who attempted
to discourse learnedly with him. Moreover, Miss Chute says that Lady Would-Be is a portrait from life and adds that Jonson must have seen many of her sisters at Whitehall. At the same time, it has been thought that Sir Politic is a satiric portrait of Sir Henry Wotton, and Jonson may have incorporated certain aspects of the character of Sir Henry. But more likely Sir Politic is a composite picture drawn from Jonson's observations of certain officious and vainglorious knights who paraded their ignorance whether at home or abroad.

In reality Lady and Sir Politic are humour characters and are as fully drawn and equally as gullible and pretentious as their predecessors. In fact, the boldness of his satiric thrusts at the gentry is somewhat surprising when we recall that at the time of the writing he was just beginning to gain the much-coveted court favor. Yet three years later, when he was moving more freely in aristocratic circles, he again attacks courtly behavior in Epicoene (1609).

In the prologue to Epicoene, Jonson promises that when his cates are all brought in, something in the play

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will

Be fit for ladies: some for lords, knights, squires,
Some for your waiting wench, and citie-wires,
Some for your men, and daughters of white-Friars.

(11. 22-24)

And indeed Epicoene bears out the author's assertion in its beautifully ordered plot structure, and its brilliant comic and satiric material.

In this comedy the single action is concerned with the young knight Dauphine's outwitting Morose, his uncle. The chicanery by which Sir Dauphine achieves his aim engages the interest and participation of many other members of society, most of whom are courtiers, and others pretend to be. The actions of this group, of course, bring forth the author's elaborate and detailed commentary on contemporary upper-class society. Thus Epicoene, like most of Jonson's major comedies, is concerned with exploring the question of decorum in society.

Morose, the central character, is a wealthy old gentleman who can endure no noise, and when we meet him he is interviewing a prospective bride, notable for her silence. One main reason for Morose's hatred of noise is that he has "euer" had his "breeding in court," and has been subjected to so much artificiality and sham and especially to the "wittie conferences, pretty girds, scoffes, and dailiance" (II.v.49) of ladies that he has come to despise all forms of courtliness. Consequently, he carefully
tests his bride-to-be by pointing out that if she chooses to remain silent, she will have to forbear such courtly and "audacious ornaments" as affecting to be "learn'd, to seeme iudicious, to seeme sharpe, and conceited"; moreover, she will be unable to "haue her counsell of taylors, lineners, lace-women, embroyderers, and sit with 'hem sometimes twise a day, vpon French intelligences"; nor with this frugality of speech can she give the manifold instructions for "that bodies, these sleeues, those skirts, this cut, that stitch, this embroyderie, that lace, this wire, those knots, that ruffe, those roses, this girdle, that fanne, the tother skarfe, these gloues?" (II.v.56-81).

It is evident that Morose sees the court lady as one who bustles about with a lot of noisy activity and who, in her self-important display of fussiness, creates a constant commotion. An interesting observation is made by Heffner on Jonson's development of the noise symbol in this scene. He says that the noisy woman is given over to "all the vanity, hypocrisy, and affectation to which her sex and the courtly society of her age are prone. Morose can concentrate his hatred of all these things by hating the inclusive and concrete symbol, noise itself." This interpretation is further verified in Morose's thirty-line

scornful tirade against his nephew's knighthood. He says of Sir Dauphine

he would be knighted, forsooth, and thought by that meanes to raigne over me, his title must doe it: no kinsman, I will now make you bring mee the tenth lords, and the sixteenth ladies letter, kinsman; and it shall doe you no good kinsman. Your knighthood it selfe shall come on it's knees, and it shall be rejected.

(II.v.101-106)

As he continues he shows his complete disdain for knights in general because their titles help them to escape old creditors, to buy clothes on credit, and to fool lawyers; moreover, a knight is known for "the attempting of a bakers widdow," for a "stallion, to all gamesome citizens wiues," but "the best and last fortune to it knighthood shall be, to make DOL TEARE-SHEET, or KATE COMMON, a lady: and so, it knighthood may eate" (II.v.123-130).

This is indeed a strong expression of contempt for knighthood, and indicates that Heffner is correct in saying that Morose held all of the world of lords, ladies, and courtly society in contempt. Morose feels that in acquiring a wife who is characterized by modesty and acquiescent to his wishes that he will not only be lord of the manor, but will also be able to sit aloof and heap his scornful derision on the court and courtiers. A clue to Morose's character is his statement that "all discourses, but mine owne, afflict mee, they seeme harsh, impertinent,

24 Ibid., p. 79.
and irksome" (II.i.4-5), but when he attempts to impose si-
ience upon his wife, and to disassociate both her and him-
self from society, he brings down upon himself the most
noisome and boisterous representatives of courtly society.

The first to arrive to help Morose and Epicoene
celebrate their wedding day are the Collegiates, whom
Truewit describes:

A new foundation, sir, here i' the towne, of ladies,
that call themselues the Collegiates, an order betweene
courtiers, and country-madames, that live from their
husbands; and giue entertainement to all the Wits, and
Braueries o' the time, as they call 'hem: crie downe,
or vp, what they like, or dislike in a braine, or a
fashion.

(I.i.73-79)

This group of gossips and scandalmongers, bent on enlisting
the bride Epicoene to their ranks, repair with her in pri-
vate to teach her their arts: Epicoene must manage her
husband from the first; she must demand a coach, four
horses, a woman servant, a chambermaid, a page, a gentle-
man usher, a French cook, and four grooms; besides "ladies
should be mindfull of the approach of age" or else who will
make "anagrames of our names, and inuite vs to the cock-pit,
and kisse our hands all the play-time, and draw their weap-
ons for our honors?" (IV.iii.40-50). The ladies not only
affect to be authorities on social matters, but they also
pretend to be learned. Among the gentlemen whom they enter-
tain with their wit are the gallants Clerimont, Truewit,
and Dauphine. But the only subjects on which they are
knowledgeable are their clandestine love affairs and cosmetics. As Truewit says, "Why, all their actions are governed by crude opinion . . . they know not why they do any thing, . . . and in aemulation one of another, doe all these things alike" (IV.vi.64-69). Nevertheless the loud, demanding, and aggressive Collegiate Ladies exert a powerful influence on the wealthy Mistress Otter, a newcomer, who aspires to become a member of this select group of society. She, as a social climber and pretender to gentility, delights in filling her house with fools of fashion. Although both she and her husband are on a lower social plane, Mistress Otter holds the purse strings, and thus ascendancy over her husband. She is convinced that Otter, with his low class tastes for the bull, beare, and horse, is impeding her social progress: "Neuer a time, that the courtiers, or collegiates come to the house, but you make it a shrouetuesday!" (III.i.5-7). Then after threatening to commit him to the "Master of the garden," she asks, "Must my house, or my rooфе, be polluted with the sent of beares, and buls, when it is perfum'd for great ladies?" (III.i.30-32). And later she vaunts:

Who graces you with courtiers, or great personages, to speake to you out of their coaches, and come home to your house? Were you euer so much as look'd upon by a lord, or a lady, before I married you?

(III.i.44-47)

Even though Jonson can portray the absurdities of the socially ambitious with wry good humor, he most often
becomes abusive in depicting prominent and influential members of society, particularly those who feel that their titles make them superior to poets, philosophers, and scholars. We meet such a person in Sir John Daw, whom Truewit describes as "a fellow that pretends onely to learning, byyes titles, and nothing else of bookes in him" (I.ii.75-77). But Sir John, believing himself to be a "very good scholler," is of the opinion that Plutarch and Seneca are "Graue asses! meere Essaists! a few loose sentences, and that's all" (II.iii.49-50). Moreover, he attributes dullness to all poets and critics: "There's ARISTOTLE, a mere common-place fellow; PLATO, a discouser; THVCIDIDES, and LIVIE, tedious and drie; TACITVS, an entire knot: sometimes worth the vntying, very seldom" (II.iii.57-60). And Sir John finds the poets "Not worthy to be nam'd for authors. HOMER, an old tedious prolixe asse, . . . VIRGIL, of dunging of land, and bees. HORACE, of I know not what" (II.iii.62-65).

Sir John's authority stems from the fact that he himself is a poet, for he has written several foolish madrigals. Thus, Dauphine inquires of the pompous courtly poet: Why? would not you liue by your verses, sir IOHN?
CLE. No, 'twere pittie he should. A knight liue by his verses? he did not make 'hem to that ende, I hope.
DAVP. And yet the noble SIDNEY liues by his, and the noble family not asham'd.

(II.iii.113-118)
Another male representative of affected courtliness is Sir Amorous La-Foole: "He is one of the Braueries, though he be none o' the Wits. He will salute a Judge upon the bench, and a Bishop in the pulpit" (I.iii.29-31); and then Clerimont adds, "He do's giue playes, and suppers, and invites his guests to 'hem aloud, out of his windore, as they ride by in coaches" (II. 33-35). Here, Sir Amorous appears at Dauphine's lodging to invite the gallant to one of his famous dinners at Mistress Otter's house, and he explains "she is my kins-woman, a LA-FOOLE by the mother side, and will invite, any great ladies, for my sake" (I.iv.31-33). When Dauphine inquires whether they are of the La-Foole of Essex, Sir Amorous replies, "No, sir, the LA-FOOLES of London," and then launches into a full account of his genealogy:

They all come out of our house, the LA-FOOLES o' the north, the LA-FOOLES of the west, the LA-FOOLES of the east, and south—we are as ancient a family, as any is in Europe—but I my selfe am descended lineally of the French LA-FOOLES—and, wee doe beare for our coate Yellow, or Or, checker'd Azure, and Gules, and some three or foure colours more, which is a very noted coate, and has, some-times, been solemnely worne by divers nobilitie of our house.

(I.iv.36-45)

Without pausing the boastful knight proudly announces that his menu will consist of a brace of fat does, half a dozen pheasants, a dozen or two of godwits, and some other fowl, all of which has been sent him by friends. He is inordinately impressed by his guest list and names each "great lady" (the Collegiates), each "honorable Knight," and the
several gallants.

When the feast does take place, it is indeed a feast of fools, and here and throughout, the author makes it clear that many fools can be found in upper class society. Of course, Jonson is treating a social order that he felt to be decidedly lacking in decorum, and one where artificiality had replaced naturalness in social intercourse. However, in this work we do not have Jonson's heavy didactic scorn; instead, he lightly, deftly, and comically explores the question of what should constitute the standards of fashionable society, and with the result that *Epicoene* is the best example of his handling of aristocratic personages. Dryden, in his high praise of *Epicoene*, observes that Jonson "has here described the conversation of gentlemen in the person of Truewit and his friends, with more gaiety, air, and freedom, than in the rest of his comedies." 25 Obviously Jonson's close association with the aristocracy at this time accounts for his satirical restraint as well as for his ease in handling the dialogue of gentlemen.

Nonetheless, Jonson, as always, is especially severe with knights. Both Sir John Daw, the fool intellectual, and Sir Amorous, the fool social, who are constantly baited by the wits, become progressively more asinine until

the end of the play. Furthermore, a knight is the only courtier to be severely derided in his next comedy, The Alchemist.

The Alchemist, staged in 1610, is dedicated to Lady Mary Wroth, Sidney's niece, whom Jonson admired tremendously. The play is set in London in the Blackfriars, where Jonson resided when writing the work, and it deals with a subject of great interest in the London of 1610. Of course, in Jonson's generation both alchemy and astrology remained subjects of serious inquiry. Queen Elizabeth was interested in both, and kept court alchemists, the chief of whom was Dr. John Dee. At the same time Lord Burleigh, the Earl of Leicester, Sir Edward Dyer, the Countess of Pembroke, and other prominent members of the court were deeply committed to alchemy, on which some of them expended large sums for a number of years. And not long before The Alchemist was written Dr. Dee had been consulted by half of the fashionable society of London, many of whom were either acquaintances or friends of the author.

This social malady that was sweeping the fashionable courtly circle was a subject that Jonson would find made to order for a satiric comedy. That he himself did not believe

26"Between 1606, when Sir Robert Wroth succeeded to his father's estates, and 1614, when he died, Jonson was on a familiar footing with both husband and wife, and assuredly knew at first hand the rural hospitalities which they dispensed at Durance, and which he describes . . . in the epistle to Wroth." Herford and Simpson, I, 55.
in alchemy is evidenced in his masque Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists at Court (1616). Likewise he had little faith in astrology: he told Drummond that he could set horoscopes, but had no trust in them (Conversations, xiii).

The Alchemist is a satire about the gullible and the sharers who cunningly swindle the gullible. The action takes place in a rather fashionable Blackfriars residence, which three "cozeners" have conveniently borrowed, and here the trio of defrauders, Subtle, Jeremy, and Doll Common, have set up shop for the practice of alchemy and other magical arts. Most of the gulls that pour into the house are middle-class citizens, but one particularly naïve pair are Kastrill, heir to a large estate, and his sister Dame Pliant, who is a young widow. Drugger, a regular client, wishes to bring Dame Pliant to consult with the "Doctor," and he relates that she is a rich young widow of nineteen up from the country and "Shee's come vp here, of purpose/ To learne the fashion. . . . And shee do's strangely long to know her fortune" (II.vi.37-39). The con artists urge Drugger to bring her and promise to make her famous and supply her with a multitude of suitors. Drugger adds that her brother has taken a vow that she'll marry no one under a knight. When the greedy Face hopefully inquires if the brother is a knight, Drugger replies:

No, sir, a gentleman, newly warme in'his land, sir, Scarse cold in'his one and twenty; that do's gouerne His sister, here: and is a man himselfe
Jonson is quite scornful of those landholders who will not accept the responsibility that goes with landed wealth, and who, because of social ambitions, live in the city and return to the country only to collect their rents.

Even though Kastrill is not yet a knight, one suspects that his means will gain him knighthood, for as Face says, one should not despair "seeing so many, o'the citie dub'd" (II.vi.54).

However, the rogues do indeed have a full-fledged knight, Sir Epicure Mammon, as a regular client; in fact, he is their prize victim, their largest and most eager investor. Thus it is in gleeful anticipation that the trio of bilkers watch Sir Epicure coming along at the far end of the lane for another consultation; moreover, he is bringing a prospective client, Pertinax Surly. As they approach, Subtle says of the knight:

O, I did looke for him
With the sunnes rising: 'Maruaile, he could sleepe!
This is the day, I am to perfect for him
The magisterium, our great worke, the stone;
And yeeld it, made, into his hands: of which,
He has, this month, talk'd, as he were possess'd.

(I.iv.11-16)

And Subtle visualizes how the ultra gullible knight, thinking himself soon to possess the philosopher's stone, has visited the ordinaries, the plague houses, the "more-fields"
for lepers, the citizens' wives, the bawds, and the beggars, with the promise of returning soon with such a plenitude of wealth and magical wonders that he will either alleviate their ills, make them young again, or make them rich. And as Sir Epicure and Surly prepare to enter the house, the knight confidently invites:

Come on, sir. Now, you set your foot on shore
In nouo orbè; Here's the rich Peru:
And there within, sir, are the golden mines,
Great SALOMON'S Ophir! He was sayling to't,
Three yeeres, but we haue reach'd it in ten months,
This is the day, wherein, to all my friends,
I will pronounce the happy word, be rich.

(II.i.1-7)

As the avaricious knight shows Surly about the laboratory, his enthusiasm swells and his pompous oratory floods the place:

This night, I'll change
All, that is mettal, in my house, to gold.
And, early in the morning, will I send
To all the plumbers, and the pewterers,
And buy their tin, and lead vp: and to Lothbury,
For all the copper.

(II.i.29-34)

Moreover, he'll "purchase Deuonshire, and Cornwaile,/ And make them perfect Indies!" (II. 35-36).

When Surly, who is a confidence man himself, expresses disbelief, Sir Epicure declares that he has a book that shows "where MOSES and his sister,/ And SALOMON haue written, of the art" (II.i.81-82). And again he urges Surly, "be rich./ This day, thou shalt haue ingots: and to morrow,/ Giue lords th'affront" (II.ii.6-8). Thus with
complete confidence the knight willingly hands over ten pounds for some fresh materials needed by the alchemists, and promises to send over in the afternoon all of his brass, his pewter, and even his andirons.

His only worry is where to get enough metals to project on, for the town will not half serve him, and he readily accepts Face's suggestion to buy the covering of the churches. In turn he will supply the churches with a good thatch roof (II.ii.11-16). Then he must have clothes, for as Jonson always emphasizes knighthood is dependent upon fine, fashionable attire. Sir Epicure will have shirts of "taffata-sarsnet, soft, and light/ As cob-webs"; his other raiment will be such "as might prouoke the Persian"; and his gloves "of fishes, and birds-skins, perfum'd/ With gymmes of paradise" (II.ii.89-94).

In addition to his fantastic gullibility, Sir Epicure is a rank sensualist, and he describes in detail the richly furnished chambers, that he and his concubines will occupy. Moreover, his wealth will bring to him the finest ladies in London:

Where I spie
A wealthy citizen, or rich lawyer,
Have a sublim'd pure wife, unto that fellow
I'll send a thousand pound, to be my cuckold.

(II.ii.53-56)

And when Face offers to be his procurer, the great knight declares emphatically that he'll have no bawds; in fact, for the "fooles," "Diuines," and poets who will reside with
him he'll have "Ladies, who' are knowne most innocent, for them" (II.ii.67). Thus, the crowning piece of irony follows when, after begging, cajoling, and making the most extravagant promises, he finally persuades Face and Subtle to allow him to privately visit the very scholarly Baron's daughter residing in the house, who, of course, is Doll Common, the high priestess of prostitutes.

It is hardly possible to do justice to Jonson's superbly conceived Sir Epicure Mammon, but, in short, he is the dupe prima inter pares, who, as Thayer so aptly remarks, "suffers from verbal diarrhea." Unfortunately, the grossly avaricious, gullible, voluptuous, yet lovable Sir Epicure is the last fully drawn portrait of courtiers that Jonson provides us.

Although Jonson continues to deride the follies of the court and courtiers, some of his later dramas do not show the intense moral zeal and constructive scorn that marked his earlier satires. Moreover, some of his courtiers tend to become more stereotyped, as is seen in his next work Catiline (1611). In the tragedy he devotes considerable space to attacking feminine vanity and follies. However, the court ladies here are remarkably similar to the collegiate ladies in Epicoene, and Eliot, who feels that the ladies' antics constitute "the best scene in the

play," finds it "one which cannot be squeezed into a tragic frame." In this scene, involving the ladies Sempronia, Fulvia and her maid Galla, there is the usual flood of oratory on coiffures, cosmetics, dentifrices, and fashionable attire. But, of course, the predominant theme is men, and here Jonson unleashes some of his strongest invective against Fulvia's immorality.

This scene, however successful it may be, has neither the dignity for tragedy nor for this learned classical drama. Jonson, quite proud of the work, dedicated the Folio edition of the "poem" to his friend William, Earl of Pembroke, the Lord Chamberlain. Apparently there was a close personal tie between the poet and the nobleman. For a little later Jonson dedicates "the ripest of my studies, my Epigrammes" to the Earl; likewise, in a letter to the Earl (Letters VII) he says, "You haue ever been free and Noble to mee," which is borne out in Jonson's statement to Drummond that every New Year's Day Pembroke sent him twenty pounds to buy books (Conversations, xiii).

In addition to his friendship with Pembroke, Sidney's nephew, Jonson was on quite friendly terms with Sir Robert Sidney and Sir Philip's daughter, the Countess of Rutland, as well as his niece, Lady Wroth. Certainly, as Herford and Simpson state, the author frequently enjoyed

the warm hospitality of this family, both at their several homes and at the ancestral mansion Penhurst.\textsuperscript{29}

Moreover, by the time that \textit{Catiline} was staged, Jonson was on equally as friendly terms with many members of nobility, and it is likely that his next comedy \textit{Bartholomew Fair} (1614) was written largely for their enjoyment. Further he was deferring to royal opinion (and possibly royal suggestion) in his scornful derision of the Puritans, who seem to have been James I's personal hair shirt.

The prologue addressed to "The Kings Maiesty" begins:

\begin{quote}
Your Maiesty is welcome to a Fayre;  
Such place, such men, such language, & such ware,  
You must expect: with these, the zealous noyse  
Of your lands Faction, scandaliz'd at toyes,  
As Babies, Hobby-horses, Puppet-playes,  
And such like rage, whereof the petulant wayes  
Your selfe haue knowne, and haue bin vext with long.
\end{quote}

In addition to stating his intentions of castigating the vulgar, troublesome Puritans, he warns the king that among the fair-goers there will be many low characters with their characteristic coarse language and actions. Thus, this play will be far removed from the world of the court and courtiers. In fact, quite early in the play, the sensible Grace Wellborn verifies the fact that we will encounter no courtiers here: "Truely, I haue no such fancy to the Fayre; nor ambition to see it; there's none goes thither of any

\textsuperscript{29}Herford and Simpson, I, 55.
quality or fashion" (I.v.130-133).

With this assurance, the court society can relax and enjoy the ridiculous antics of the Puritans, the Justice of Peace and other gulls, and the delightful low-life gamesters, swindlers, scoundrels, bawds, cutpurses, and other rogues. With this comedy, in which Jonson seems to be catering to James and the court, he apparently scored his biggest hit, both with the court and with the public. A contemporary account says that it was from the popular applause of this play that he received the acclamation "O rare Ben: Jonson."\(^{30}\)

Despite the fact that Jonson sometimes sought the approval of King James and the court, he was, nevertheless, not at all hesitant in attacking any court policies that he regarded as detrimental to the common weal. And it is not surprising to see him explore a somewhat questionable practice of the court in his next drama.

In The Devil is an Ass (1616), Jonson directs his satire against the contemporary practice of projecting, which was flourishing at the time the play was produced. This was indeed a sensitive subject for one to treat satirically, for from the early seventeenth century James I had consistently issued royal grants (monopoly rights) for the manufacture and trade of specific articles and for

\(^{30}\)Ibid., I, 183.
various projects, such as reclaiming waste lands.

The patents that were issued to the nobility were either to reward services rendered the Crown or to provide an opportunity for enrichment, since many of high birth had insufficient means to live up to the courtly magnificence that characterized the reign of King James. In these industrial projects, the courtiers were usually associated with men of the mercantile class who could provide the needed capital. In fact, the projects were usually initiated by mercantilists, who then secured the endorsement of an influential nobleman by some form of bribery. Thus, as Price states, "In the hands of corrupt courtiers the system of monopolies, designed originally to foster new arts, became degraded into a system of plunder"; moreover, Price says that "the great majority of courtiers holding these privileges acted in the boldest spirit of exploitation."

Despite the fact that there was corruption in these practices that Jonson and his fellow dramatists witnessed daily, it was decidedly bold of him to attack the projectors in King James' court. Certainly the drama did not please, for Jonson told Drummond only three years later that "he was accused" for the play and "the King desyred him to

Thus the play was presented only once, and there can be little doubt that the printed play was altered in spots to tone down that which was construed as criticism of the king's policies.

The satire is not only animated and varied, but direct, for here we see a revival of the author's didactic scorn. Though the satire is ostensibly concerned with the actions of the lesser devil, Pug, it gives far more attention to the follies of courtiers, those on the fringes of the court, and other comic characters. The central characters are the "projector," Meercraft, and his dupe, Fitzdottrel, a squire of Norfolk. The socially ambitious young squire is so eager to become one of London's men about town that he readily exchanges his wife's favors to the gallant Wittipol for a fashionable cloak.

Fitzdottrel is the swaggerer supreme: "He dares not misse a new Play or a Feast" (I.iv.23); today he is going to see The Devil is an Asse, and is bent on appearing at the theater in this cloak of plush, trimmed with lace and velvet. He explains to his wife that the gift had cost fifty pounds and that he can sell it for thirty,

when I ha' seene
All London in't, and London has seene mee.
To day, I goe to the Black-fryers Play-house,
Sit i' the view, salute all my acquaintance,
Rise vp between the Acts, let fall my cloake,

32 Conversations, 409, 414-415 (Herford and Simpson, I, 143-144).
Publish a handsome man, and a rich suite
(As that's a speciall end, why we goe thither).
(I.vi.29-35)

Then the gallant, Wittipol, who is very much the courtly lover, commends Mistress Fitzdottrel on her beauty, pours forth his love for her, and implores her to become his paramour. All of this, according to the bargain made for the cloak, takes place in the presence of her husband, who acts as referee and timer. The cloak is a symbol of folly: Wittipol sheds it and becomes progressively more honorable; Fitzdottrel dons it and retrogresses to the state of a complete fool. The cloak episode, though highly comical, is perhaps Jonson's most severe condemnation of the Jacobean gentleman's obsession for fashionable and elegant attire—an obsession, considerably heightened because of the king's insistence upon fastidious and extravagant attire.  

Fitzdottrel is easy prey for the smart "projector" Meercraft, who through his promise of patents and monopolies, lures a number of monied and socially ambitious fools into his net. He outlines in rapid succession the various projects that will bring the squire millions. He offers patents for bottle-ale, for supplying the whole state with

33 It was said of James I: "He doth admire good fashion in clothes. . . . We have lately had many gallants who failed in their suits for want of due observance of the matters [of fashion]. The King is nicely heedful of such points, and dwelleth on good looks and Handsome accoutrements." (Letter of Lord Thomas Howard [1607] in The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harington, ed. McClure, pp. 32-34.)
tooth-picks, for making gloves of dogskins and wine of
blackberries, for the laudable use of forks, and for \textit{aqua vitae}. But Fitzdottrel will have none but the project for
the recovery of "drown'd land," which will not only "arise
to eyghteene \textit{millions}" but will insure him of a dukedom.
Moreover, the drainage of submerged land in England doubt­
less appeared quite practicable to the dotterel, because it
was a popular undertaking in the reigns of both Elizabeth I
and James I, and later in the rule of Charles I. In fact,
the Crown often took these projects over as a means of add­
ing to the royal purse. In any case, the Crown had to be
promised about a half of the money accrued from these under­
takings. Thus Meercraft explains this condition to Fitz­
dottrel:

\begin{quote}
. . . the Crowne's to haue his moiety,
If it be owner; \textit{Else}, the Crowne and Owners
To share that moyety: and the recoverers
T'enjoy the tother moyety, for their charge.
\end{quote}

(II.i.46-49)

On other occasions Meercraft speaks of getting the "counte­
nance" of great men for his projects and he reminds the
dupes Sledge and Guilthead of all "My paines at \textit{Court}, to
get you each a patent" (V.iv.16). Lady Tailbush, "the lady
projectress," who wants to secure a patent for a new fucus,
has to spend considerable time visiting influential cour­
tiers to get the proper backing: "I sweare I must, to mor­
row,/ Beginne my visits (would they were ouer) at \textit{Court}./
It tortures me, to thinke on 'hem" (IV.ii.4-6). And to
Lady Eitherside, who made the fucus a fashion, she promises "every month a new gowne, out of it" (IV.ii.20).

While most of the characters are pushing their various schemes for making money, Wittipol is pushing his suit with Mistress Fitzdottrel. Thus the squire, thinking that he has surprised them in the act of making love, reproaches her for being ungrateful for his efforts on her behalf:

O, Bird!
Could you do this? 'gainst me? and at this time, now?
When I was so impoy'd, wholly for you,
Drown'd i' my care... to make you peere-lesse?
studying,
For footmen for you, fine-pac'd huishers, pages,
To serve you o'the knee; with what Knights wife,
To beare your traine, and sit with you're foure women.

(II.vii.28-35)

Then he threatens to "depose" her and make another the Duchess of Drowned Lands; however, shortly afterward he consults Meercraft about an academy for women, where his wife can learn the social graces necessary to fit her for the role of a duchess.

The super-salesman Meercraft quickly arranges such a school, and has Fitzdottrel purchase a diamond ring to give the Spanish lady who will tutor his wife. The lady (Wittipol in disguise) has recently traveled in Spain and keeps the Spanish habit: "Such a rare woman! all of our women heere,/ That are of spirit, and fashion flocke, vnto her,/ As to their President; their Law; their Canon"

(II.viii.29-31). The ladies gather at the home of Lady
Tailbush, who admits to being the leader of fashion in London, and Meercraft introduces the tutor: "Here is a noble Lady, Madame, come,/ From your great friends, at Court, to see your Ladiship" (IV.iii.1-2). The witty young gallant, in fashionable women's attire, charms not only Ladies Tailbush and Eitherside, but also Fitzdottrel, who has brought his wife to be instructed. He implores the ladies to let him join them:

> Sweet honoured Ladies,
  Let mee fall in wi' you. I ha' my female wit,
  As well as my male. And I doe know what sutes
  A Lady of spirit, or a woman of fashion!

(IV.iv.152-155)

What follows is one of Jonson's most spirited comical scenes. As Ladies Tailbush and Eitherside try both to impress her "Ladiship" and to question her as to fashions, Wittipol rises superbly to the occasion and with great eloquence delivers a lengthy discourse on all feminine fashions. In reply to the request to "giue vs some o' your Spanish Fucuses," he says, "They are infinit, Madame" (IV.iv.16-17). And indeed they are; nevertheless, he willingly oblige with a number of rare fucuses, comments on their uses, and supplies with accuracy the dozens of ingredients for each. Finally the ladies interrupt to be apprised of the manners of Spain: ladies' cloaks, Spanish pumps, jewelry, perfumes, behavior at court, their servants, and their gentlemen as lovers. Then they switch to their own love affairs with gallants and lords, and as they reveal their bawdy practices,
the devil Pug comes forth with an anguished declaration: "You talke of a University! why, Hell is/ A Grammar-schoole to this!" (IV.iv.170-171). When the idiotic Fitzdottrel joins the collegiate ladies in their inane antics, Pug prays: "O, Chiefe, cali mee to Hell againe, and free mee" (IV.iv.210). Having been tormented by those with a passion for social position (and the necessary money to attain it), Pug finds this society unbearable: "My daies in Hell, were holy-daies to this" (IV.iv.223).

Certainly Pug's acrid statements quite adequately sum up the satirist's commentary on this segment of society. Here, as in most of his previous satires, Jonson attacks courtly affectation by presenting people who are so intent on quickly rising above their birth that they entirely mistake the fashionable trappings for the time-honored essentials of gentility.

The fact that Jonson was "accused" for the play probably accounts for the presence of the somewhat irrelevant scene on witchcraft, which quite likely was added as a high compliment to the king on his enlightened attitude and firm stand in eradicating the evils connected with exorcising and witch-hunting. Assuredly to his credit, King James, in August, 1616, had made it his personal business to investigate and expose false dealings in the celebrated witch
trials at Leicester. \(^{34}\) Whether or not the witchcraft scene was inserted to assuage the king's feelings about Jonson's attack on the Crown's projects, is impossible to determine from this distance; nonetheless, it is typical of Jonsonian strategy. In any case, it should be noted that the outspoken Ben Jonson was the first to supply a dramatic representation of the projects.

Even though *The Devil is an Ass* does not meet with the great comedies dramaturgically, it is quite remarkable both for its intellectuality and for its vivid pictures of some of the shady economic practices of Jacobean society.

Unfortunately, this is the last play that Jonson produced during the reign of King James, and it is not until the year 1626 that he returns to the stage with *The Staple of News*.

\(^{34}\) See George Lyman Kittredge, "King James I and *The Devil is an Ass,*" *MP*, IX (1911), 205-209.
CHAPTER V
CONTINUED PROMINENCE AT COURT OF JAMES I
AND DECLINE AT COURT OF CHARLES I

The year that Jonson produced *The Devil is an Ass* was the same year that the king appointed him poet laureate. It was also the year of an even greater personal triumph, for in 1616 Jonson gathered his plays, his poetry, and his masques and published them in a collective edition. This was an unusual endeavor at the time, since it had never before been attempted by a dramatist; nevertheless, the collection was pridefully acknowledged by the country at large. Even the jeers of his bitterest rivals proved ineffectual, for by this time the author had won considerable recognition throughout England.

As was previously noted the author produced nothing for the stage in the last decade of James' reign. But in these particular years, his financial situation was probably at its best, since he regularly wrote all of the court entertainments, except on the occasions that he himself chose to be away from London. Besides he enjoyed the patronage of a number of lords and ladies who were doubtless generous with their gifts because at this time he was not only a prominent figure at court, but also "stood beyond question
at the head of English letters."\(^1\)

It is then not unexpected that during his ten months' visit to Scotland (1618-1619) he was recognized as a celebrity, accorded the hospitality of many great noblemen as well as gentlefolk, publicly and lavishly entertained by the Edinburgh Town Council, and publicly honored on another occasion by the same body. Accordingly he was shown every courtesy when he made an extended visit to Oxford for the purpose of being formally inducted into the degree of Master of Arts, which had much earlier been conferred upon him.\(^2\) On July 19, 1619, in full Convocation, the degree itself was bestowed upon him for his distinguished learning in humane letters.

Such honors as these attest to the high regard that the educated English world now had for the poet's profound learning. The Oxford editors say that Jonson never lost his high status in English letters, and they state that "the years between the publication of his works in 1616 and the close of the reign were the heyday of his personal dictatorship in the literary world."\(^3\) It is possible that

\(^1\)Herford and Simpson, I, 84.

\(^2\)Jonson told Drummond that he was "Master of Arts" in both universities, and although there is no official record of the Cambridge degree, it is possible that both institutions may have planned about the same time to have awarded him honorary degrees. (Conversations, xiii)

\(^3\)Herford and Simpson, I, 84.
Jonson's title of poet laureate and his great prominence at court contributed in some measure to the high place accorded him by the literary world. However, it is more likely that he earned this esteem (just as he had earned his place at court) by his classicism and vast erudition. Assuredly his success at court was one factor that led to the production of his greatest works (1603-1616), in that his association with royalty and nobility not only bolstered his self-assurance, but greatly encouraged and inspired him, gave him considerable prestige, and freed him from financial stress. Paradoxically enough, these things that inspired Jonson's great dramatic successes in the first half of the Jacobean era, were probably the same that led to his complacency and dramatic inactivity in the second half.

The truth seems to be that Jonson, having become a big name at court and having grown accustomed to the easy, comfortable, and pleasant courtly life, was too happy and too prosperous to return to the public stage. Moreover, at this time he could (and did) sit "high and aloofe,/ Safe from the wolues black iaw, and the dull asses hoofe" (Poetaster: Apologetical Dialogue, 238-240). Since he had completely withdrawn from the stage, any failures there were either forgotten or overshadowed by his triumphs. Thus Jonson, as the great literary figure that he was, basked in his deserved glories. Of course, some of his time was devoted to writing and directing the court
entertainments, as well as the entertainments that he provided for certain members of the nobility; in addition, much of his time seems to have been spent visiting in the homes of these "Great Ones." 4

Even though he was engaged in writing several works of prose and in doing considerable study, we know that he whiled away many pleasant hours with his scholarly friends. For it was during these years that Jonson began to hold genial dictatorship over the literary gatherings in the taverns. These are not the wit feasts of which Beaumont wrote, for then Jonson was merely one of the group of scholars who met at the Mermaid. Instead, he was now the avowed leader of the choice spirits of London's men of letters, who, emulous of reputation, "sealed themselves of the tribe of Ben." Though they frequented the Mermaid, the Sun, the Dog, and the Triple Tun, the most Jonsonian of these places was the Old Devil Tavern. It was here in the famous Apollo room that the literary giant, Father Ben, dubbed many his "sons," and they were proud of the title. Among the group were the playwrights Field, Brome, Cartwright, Marmion, and Randolph; the writers Herrick, Rutter, and Howell; and the men of station included Bishop Morley, Lord Falkland, Sir John Suckling, Sir Henry Morison, and Sir

4 Jonson's close familiarity with members of nobility (and with their estates) is revealed in countless verses and other writings addressed to them. (These will be briefly treated later.)
Kenelm Digby. In "An Eclogue on the Death of Ben Jonson," Lord Falkland fondly refers to these meetings: "To him how daily flockt, what reverence gave, / All that had wit, or would be thought to have" (ll. 161-162); later, he adds "How the wise too, did with meere wits agree, / As Pembroke, Portland, and grave Aubigny" (ll. 168-169).

Unfortunately, Jonson's life did not always continue to be one of happiness and honors, for with the death of James I, the poet laureate lost his high place at court and consequently much of his financial security. The truth seems to be that the confident and forthright nature of England's chieftain of letters was not compatible with the delicate temperament of Charles I, nor with that of his fastidiously minded queen. After 1625 he was out of favor at court, and now the growing favorite was his old rival Inigo Jones, whose elaborate scenery and extravagant spectacle was quite in demand by Henrietta Maria and Charles. Thus it was necessity that drove Jonson to complete and produce The Staple of News that he had begun before King James' death.

The Staple of News was first acted for the public on February 2, 1626, and at court some two weeks later. Through it Jonson hoped to again attract royal patronage; however, he did not receive immediate favor from the new monarch. In the complimentary "Prologue for the Court," the author declares that the play,
Fitted for your Maiesties disport,
And writ to the Meridian of your Court,
Wee bring; and hope it may produce delight:
The rather, being offered, as a Rite,
To Schollers, that can iudge, and faire report.

(11. 1-5)

Then he continues by explaining that "although our Title,
Sir, be Newes,/ Wee yet adventure, here, to tell you none;/
But shew you common follies" (11. 8-10).

Thus, Jonson's immediate concern here, as always, is with social disorder. While the drama exploits a recent feature of London social life (the ravenous appetite of the public for transitory news) the satire is directed primarily at the avarice of society. But De Winter observes that in showing the evils attendant upon money worship, Jonson looks sharply at the misuse of money "in lavish gifts to sycophants and flatterers, and in feasting and dress, which, with its stronghold about the very throne of England, was impoverishing the nation with its exactions, and enervating it with its example."5

The story is centered around Lady Pecunia, who is introduced strictly in allegorical terms. She, as the symbol of money, is "A great Lady,/ Indeede, shee is, and not of mortall race,/ Infanta of the Mines" (I.vi.40-42). Her grandfather was a duke and cousin to the King of Ophyr; thus, she is a "great Princesse" of "mighty power," and

"All the world are suiters to her. All sorts of men and all professions" (I.vi.62-66).

The courtiers, lawyers, doctors, and divines court Pecunia in "perfum'd flatteries" of studied courtly speech, but Penniboy Junior, the heir and "The Lord, and the Prince of plenty" (I.iii.2), is her chief suitor; in fact, the gentlewoman was chosen for the young heir by his uncle. Penniboy Junior is the complete prodigal, and his "aboue two thousand a yeere" goes with rapid abandon to his shoemaker, tailor, linener, haberdasher, barber, and spurrier. His lavish wardrobe is a symbolic representation of folly, but his greatest folly is the prodigality with which he is willing to have Lady Pecunia lavish her embraces on all of his friends. Like several of Jonson's earlier characters, Penniboy Junior is aware of the social value of being attached to an attractive young lady. Thus he urges her: "Sweet Princesse, kisse him, kisse 'hem all, deare Madame,/ And at the close, vouchsafe to call them Cousins" (IV.ii.118-119).

The ensuing revels are abruptly interrupted, first by Penniboy Senior and later by Penniboy the Canter, and through them we hear some of Jonson's candid observations, particularly on nobility. The first occasion is when Pecunia's ladies-in-waiting, Statue, Band, and Waxe, refuse to leave the tavern revels.
BAN. We will stay, and wait here
Vpon her Grace, and this your Noble Kinsman.
P. SE. Noble? how noble! who hath made him noble?
P. IV. Why, my most noble money hath, or shall;
My Princesse, here.

(IV.iii.20-24)

Here the satirist is again hitting at the policy of selling peerages and knighthoods, which was instituted by James I and continued by Charles. Under this practice, baronies were sold for ten thousand pounds each and knighthoods freely dispensed to anyone "that had but a court friend, or money to purchase the favor." 6

Penniboy Junior is confident of securing nobility, for he has the money, as well as his court friend, Lady Pecunia. But Ben Jonson greatly deplored this practice because it outraged the country's reverence for pure and noble descent, in which he was a firm believer. And we see his scorn of the idea that money can buy nobility through the elder Penniboy, who storms out of the tavern with:
"Pecunia is a whore" (IV.iii.82).

Later we hear other of Jonson's beliefs about nobility from Penniboy's father as he denounces his son's low companions. Among these is Fitton, the courtier, who is first told what a true courtier should be and then is castigated for his "fly-blown projects."

A worthy Courtier, is the ornament
Of a Kings Palace, his great Masters honour.

This is a moth, a rascal, a Court-rat,  
That gnawes the common-wealth with broking suits,  
And eating grievances!

(IV.iv.140-144)

The next to be censured is Pyed-mantle, the spurious herald, who has drawn a "Pedigree for her Grace." As the speech reveals, Jonson firmly believed that persons of nobility should be distinguished by armorial bearings, but he detested the royal traffic in peerages and knighthoods. Thus he soundly upbraids the novice herald:

Here is Pyed-mantle,  
'Cause he's an Assë, do not I loue a Herald?  
Who is the pure preseruer of descents,  
The keeper faire of all Nobility,  
Without which all would runne into confusion?  
Were he a learned Herald, I would tell him  
He can giue Armes, and markes, he cannot honour,  
No more then money can make Noble: It may  
Giue place, and ranke, but it can giue no Vertue.

(IV.iv.150-158)

The last two lines are a rather succinct statement of Jonson's convictions on true nobility, which he voices in practically every one of his plays, and which certainly is one of the main themes of The Staple of News.

As was mentioned earlier, Jonson did not gain the 'oped-for court patronage with this comedy, and likely for the reason that King Charles did not appreciate his somewhat trenchant remarks on court policies. Charles, unlike

7Here Jonson is paying tribute to his beloved William Camden, who at the time of his death in 1623, had served for more than twenty years as one of the chief officers of the College of Heralds.
his learned father, did not care particularly for poets, and more especially he did not feel that the role of the poet extended to that of advising the king. Jonson, of course, still held to the Renaissance belief that all drama should administer social correction, but he was faced with the decision of greatly subordinating his teacher-reformer role or of giving up all hopes of re-establishing himself at court.

Seemingly, the more important consideration was that of re-establishing his place at court, for it appears that his next play was written largely to that purpose. The New Inn is quite unlike Jonson's other plays; in fact, upon first reading, it would appear that he was trying to write a romantic comedy, yet he himself calls it a Humours-play (Induction to The Magnetic Lady). In any case, the romantic overtones, the theme, and the structure of this drama were greatly influenced by the atmosphere pervading the new court.

Both Charles and his consort, priding themselves on an ultra-fastidious taste, tried to effect a rarefied air of refinement at their court. Henrietta Maria's French tastes sparked the introduction of a more elaborate scenery and costuming than the English stage had previously known. Furthermore, her avid interest in Platonic love was largely responsible for the revival of the old traditions of the Courts of Love that became the fashion of the Carolinian
court. The vogue of Platonic posturing, accompanied by a refined, but artificial gallantry and language, not only swept the court but threatened the integrity of society at large in that the actions and practices of the court were imitated by the populace.

Certainly Jonson would have regarded this new court craze as greatly corrupting to society, and in his earlier and more secure days would have attacked it with vehemence. It is possible that after his second paralytic stroke in 1628 he was "no longer capable of the fierce satiric temper," but it seems more probable that he realized that his approach to this social ill must be made in a genial and indirect manner, particularly if he hoped to regain court favor. By a similar reasoning the Oxford editors suggest that the romantic speeches of Lovell (which occupy an unprecedented space) are "perhaps to be taken as designed to conciliate the 'Platonic' chivalry which she [the queen] made fashionable at Court."  

These Platonic ideals are given considerable prominence in The New Inn. At the inn we meet Lady Frampul, a devotee of the cult. She and her maid-companion Prudence and "some Lords and Gentlemen," who are her guests, have come to the famous new inn for pleasure. Here she meets

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9 Herford and Simpson, I, 91.
the gentleman Lovel and is immediately attracted to him; moreover, he is in love with her, but being the "compleat Gentleman," cannot declare his love because one of her suitors, the young Lord Beaufort, is the son of Lovel's most respected friend and benefactor.

Nevertheless, when Lady Frampul and her coterie establish a Court of Love at the Light Heart Inn, Lovel is drawn into the festivities by Prudence, the sovereign of the sports. Prudence assigns Lovel a two-hour colloquy on love.

Earlier we saw Lovel languishing in the throes of love, but declaring to the Host that out of respect to the memory of his virtuous friend, the elder Lord Beaufort, he will not attempt to win the love of the Lady Frampul on whom the son, the "sweet, yong, hopefull Lord,/ Hath cast his first affections" (I.vi.149-150). He acknowledges to the Host, "it is Loue hath beene/ The hereditary passion of our house," and he adds:

The truth is, I haue lou'd this Lady long,  
And impotently, with desire enough,  
But no successe: for I haue still forborne  
To expresse it, in my person, to her.  
(I.vi.100-104)

Here, and throughout the lengthy declaration, we are fully aware that the gentleman's love for the lady is not Platonic, but one "with desire enough." He is not only descended from a house of lovers, but his entire being seems to be consumed with love, for he tells the Host: "There is
no life on earth, but being in love!" (I.vi.84).

When we again encounter Lovel he is ready to give his colloquy on love and valor to the ladies and gallants who have assembled for the court. And it is in this episode that Jonson makes most of his subtle attacks on this absurd practice. Here Lovel gives a lengthy and highly Platonic discourse on love which is completely alien to his true feelings, for he is actually consumed with passion. Lovel, as we were told, was bound by a sense of honor that caused him not to reveal his real feelings on love in the presence of Lady Frampul. But the author makes no such allowance for any of the others, who seem to be devoted to the principle and practice of Platonic love. However, as Lovel makes his eloquent defense of these ideals, we hear contrary opinions from the courtiers. When Lovel states that true love "hath no unworthy thought, no . . . vn-becoming appetite," but is "pure" and "immutable," Lord Beaufort embraces his lady and says aside:

(I relish not these philosophicall feasts;
Give me a banquet o' sense, like that of Ovid:
A forme, to take the eye; a voyce, mine eare;
Pure aromatiques, to my sent; a soft,
Smooth, deinty hand, to touch; and, for my taste,
Ambrosiack kisses, to melt downe the palat.)

(III.ii.125-130)

Lady Frampul, strong adherent of courtly love that she is, hangs on Lovel's every word, but does not really listen to his arguments for intellectual love because she is transported with emotions by his charm. Thus, she, too, favors
the "banquet o' sense":

How am I changed! By what alchimy
Of loue, or language, am I thus translated!
His tongue is tip'd with the Philosophers stone,
And that hath touch'd me through euery vaine!
I feele that transmutation o' my blood,
As I were quite become another creature,
And all he speakes, it is proiection!

(III.ii.171-177)

Here Prudence confidently applauds: "Well fain'd, my Lady" (1. 178) and later she exclaims, "Excellent actor! how she hits this passion!" (1. 210).

Lord Latimer, another of Lady Frampul's suitors, anxiously questions: "But doe you thinke she playes? ... I shake, and am halfe iealous" (11. 214-215). His suspicion is well founded, for Lady Frampul admits to herself: "I could begin to be in loue with him [Lovel],/ But will not tell him yet" (11. 233-234). Certainly she is pleased when the magistrate Prudence orders her to pay Mr. Lovel "his first kisse, yet, i' the Court,/ Which is a debt, and due: For the houre's run" (11. 239-240). To this she eagerly responds: "Here, take your kisse, Sir,/ Which I most willing tender you, in Court. ... And I could wish,/ It had bene twenty" (11. 244-247). And Lord Beaufort, who is always eager to kiss his lady, adds: ("And we doe imitate ——") (1. 246).

Platonic love is hardly what any member of the fashionable group really wanted, and this is shown more conclusively at the end of the play when each of them is
happily united in marriage. Jonson shows very clearly that the doctrine of intellectual love is purely an affectation and that the courtiers, in pretending to embrace its ideals, are merely following the current court fashion instituted by the queen. Quite wisely, Jonson handles this social malady with considerable restraint. Thayer points to the fact that disquisitions on Platonic love sponsored by Henrietta Maria were capable of ending in fornication, but that in The New Inn the situation is resolved through marriages and reconciliations.\textsuperscript{10} Despite the mildness of the satire, it is obvious that Jonson was quite concerned about certain aspects and preoccupations of the court of Henrietta Maria and Charles.

The satire (however bridled it may be) went to the very threshold of the court, and perhaps it was fortunate for Jonson that the play was such a failure on the stage that the scheduled court performance was never called for. Apparently Jonson recognized certain inadequacies of the play, for in the Epilogue he refers to his state of health:

\begin{quote}
If you expect more then you had to night, 
The maker is sick, and sad. But doe him right, 
He meant to please you.
\end{quote}

And in later lines he hints at neglect by the court:

\begin{quote}
And had he liu'd the care of King, and Queene, 
His Art in \textit{something} more yet had beene seene; 
But Maiors, and Shrieffes may yearely fill the stage: 
A Kings, or Poets birth doe aske an age.
\end{quote}

It has been supposed that these lines reached the ears of his Majesty or were submitted to him in manuscript,\textsuperscript{11} and that Charles, recalling his life-long association with the chief of poets, promptly sent him a gift of one hundred pounds. Another consideration was Jonson's announcement in his "Ode to Himselfe" that he meant to sing "The glories of thy King,/ His zeale to God, and his iust awe o're men" (11. 51-52); moreover, he states that his songs will serve "In tuning forth the acts of his sweet raigne:/ And raysing Charles his chariot, 'boue his Waine" (11. 59-60). Quite likely these lines impressed Charles, for Jonson was now the City chronologer,\textsuperscript{12} and certainly it would be to the king's advantage to have a favorable historian. In any event, a hundred pounds was quite a generous gift, and the poet gratefully acknowledged it with "An Epigram, To King Charles, For An Hundred Pounds He Sent Me In My Sickness" (1629).

This was followed by a series of epigrams addressed to the royal family in 1629 and 1630: a consolatory epigram to the king and queen upon the loss of their first-born (1629); one commemorating the anniversary of "Our Great and Good King Charles" (1629); another to "The Good


\textsuperscript{12}Upon the death of the city chronologer, Thomas Middleton, in September, 1628, Jonson was selected for the office.
Queen, Then Lying-In" (1630); and a fourth celebrating the birth of Prince Charles (1630). This seems to indicate that Jonson had become more closely related to the court, and, perhaps, that Charles was pleased to have Jonson sing the glories of his "sweet raigne."

Certainly Charles now showed the poet several considerations. In "The Humble Petition of Poor Ben," Jonson appealed to the king to raise his pension from a hundred marks to a hundred pounds. The request was granted, and in the warrant dated March, 1630, King Charles states that the increase is in consideration of Jonson's "good & acceptable service" to himself and to James I, "& especially to encourage him to proceed in those services of his wit & pen which we have enjoined unto him & which we expect from him."\(^{13}\) In addition, Charles granted him a tierce of Canary wine yearly from the Whitehall cellars. Indeed, Jonson welcomed the wine and likewise regarded the gift as appropriate to a court poet.

An even greater show of royal recognition came in the same year (1630), when Jonson was commissioned to write the masques for both the king and the queen for the ensuing Christmas season, which was the first court masque that he had provided since the coronation. His masque for the king, Love's Triumph through Callipolis, produced January 9, 1631,\(^{13}\)

\(^{13}\) Herford and Simpson, I, 246.
featured King Charles, but was also graced by the participation of her majesty. In the introductory explanation to the spectators, Jonson reaffirms his long held theory about the masque: "Whereas all Representations, especially those of this nature in court . . . (as being the donatives of great princes to their people), ought always to carry a mixture of profit, with them, no less than delight" (ll. 1-4). Thus, Jonson devises a highly artistic work wherein the god and goddess of virtuous Love (in the personages of both their majesties) depose those lovers not given to "right affection." When the detractors of chaste love are defeated, Callipolis again becomes the city of "Beauty or Goodness." The apparent lesson, directed both to the prince and the noble spectators, is that a sane and ordered society must rid itself of those who pose a threat to the true values of society.

The masque for the queen was entitled Chloridia: Rites to Chloris and her Nymphs, and Henrietta Maria, as the goddess of flowers and springtime, was enthroned in a radiantly beautiful spring setting. For the measure of "profit," Jonson introduced the detractors of spring. These appeared as dancers in the antimasque and were dressed as lightning, thunder, rain, and snow, with the queen's dwarf "richly appareled" as a prince of hell and attended by six infernal spirits. Again the lesson is obvious, and equally as obvious to the spectators and participants was
the fact that Jonson's ingenuity, skill, and ability to write lovely verse had been little impaired by his illness.

It is possible that Jonson could have partially re-established himself at court with the masques had he understood (or been willing to accept) the fact that his co-worker, Inigo Jones, was now a highly prominent figure at court. Jones, backed by his many years of study in Italy, was quite capable of furnishing the elaborate scenery and costuming that delighted Charles and Henrietta Maria. Moreover, during Jonson's five years of absence from Whitehall, Jones had succeeded in making himself the undisputed master of the court masque, just as he was in English architecture. Jones had apparently worked hard on both masques and Jonson acknowledged this when he published the king's masque by placing the designer's name beside his own on the title page. But Jones took considerable umbrage when it appeared with Jonson's name placed first. The old feud between the two flared anew, and Jonson greatly aggravated the strife when he published the queen's masque without mention of Inigo Jones. The ensuing quarrel between the two was open and bitter, and Jones quite rightly feared the satirist's sharp verse. However, the designer had long since made himself indispensable at court, and at his insistence Jonson was not allowed to write the masque for the following Christmas season, 1631-32. Instead Aurelian Townshend, a rather poor poet, was given the commission. John Pory in a letter
written in January, 1632, reports that Townshend was the inventor of the masque and explains, "Ben Jonson being, for this time, discarded by reason of the predominant power of his antagonist, Inigo Jones, who, this time twelve-month, was angry with him for putting his own name before his on the title-page."^14

Jonson, though ill, had sufficient strength and wit to avenge himself by writing several satires against Jones, just after the publication of Chloridia. These were circulated in manuscript, and two letters from James Howell speak of the king's anger with Jonson. The first of these says "I heard you censur'd lately at Court, that you have lighted too foul upon Sir Inigo, and that you write with a Porcupins quill dipped in too much Gall."^15 In the second letter Howell implores Jonson "to repress any more copies of the Satyre, for to deale plainly with you, you have lost some ground at Court by it, and as I heare from a good hand, the King . . . is not well pleased therewith."^16

Jonson, quite unwilling to retract any statements or in any way humble himself before Inigo Jones, lost all prospects of being commissioned to write another court masque, which, of course, meant a considerable financial loss. In addition, the city of London passed a resolution

^15 Herford and Simpson, XI, 151. ^16 Ibid., p. 152.
in November, 1631, to stop payment of his pension as the "Citties Chronologer until he shall have presented . . . some fruits of his labor." Thus, despite his growing illness, the poet was again forced to return to the stage. The Magnetic Lady, presented in 1632 by the King's Men, exhibits more tolerance toward the follies and vices of society than any of Jonson's previous plays. Both the court and courtiers, whom he usually derided so vociferously, were for the most part treated with indulgence.

We are told in the first chorus that this play marks the last of the humours cycle, for the author is "now neare the close, or shutting up of his Circle" with "this Magnetick Mistris" (ll. 104-105). She is described as a "brave bountifull Housekeeper, and a vertuous Widow" (ll. 106-107). Jonson repeatedly paid tribute to those noble men and women who still practiced housekeeping, and thereby extended the hospitality of their houses to numerous poor relations and friends. Lady Loadstone is one of these bountiful hostesses as we see from Compass' freedom in inviting Captain Ironside to her home:

Welcome good Captaine Ironside, and brother;
You shall along with me. I'm lodg'd hard by,
Here at a noble Ladies house i'th' street,
The Lady Loadstones (one will bid us welcome)
Where there are Gentlewomen, and male Guests,
Of several humors, carriage, constitution, Profession too.
(I.i.1-7)

17 Bradley and Adams, p. 167.
Jonson, as one of the "Profession" who had often enjoyed extended hospitality in many noble houses, had tremendous respect for Lady Loadstone, and she is shown to be nothing short of a perfect hostess and gracious lady. Her husband, having been the Governor of the East India Company, had left her "the wealth of six East Indian Fleets at least" (II.v.71-72), and the author feels that she is using her wealth in a noble endeavor.

Among the housekeeper's guests is her brother, Sir Moth Interest, "An Vsurer, or Money-baud." But Sir Moth believes himself to be a necessary member of the commonwealth: "I am perswaded that the love of monie/ Is not a vertue, only in a Subject,/ But might befit a Prince" (II.vi.41-43). Later he rationalizes: "We know,/ By just experience, that the Prince hath need/ More of one wealthy, then ten fighting men" (11. 65-67).

The satirist is not as severe with this avaricious knight as he is with the silken courtier, Sir Diaphanous Silkworm. The knight's elegant attire and courtly airs greatly irritated Captain Ironside. Moreover, the soldier resented the "perfum'd braggart's" drinking his wine with three parts water, but this did not warrant Ironside's breaking a wine glass on Silkworm's nose. Thayer explains that Jonson, having been a soldier, respected the soldier's office, and that Ironside, as the angry moralist of the play, is "merely doing what Jonson himself was no doubt
often tempted to do."\(^{18}\)

In addition, the author, having been often forced to drink watered wine, probably resented the fact that a wealthy man did so out of preference. But Silkworm's regard for his clothes furnishes some of the best satire in the play:

_Silk._ There's nothing vexes me, but that he has stain'd
My new white sattin Doublet; and bespatter'd
My spick and span silke Stockings, o' the day
They were drawne on: And here's a spot i' my hose too.
_Com._ Shrewd maimes! your clothes are wounded
desperately,
And that (I thinke) troubles a Courtier more,
An exact Courtier, then a gash in his flesh.

(III.iv.7-13)

In several other instances he derides the courtiers' attire, and in the second chorus he refers to his own clothes:

_Pro._ Why doe you maintaine your Poëts quarrell
so with velvet, and good clothes, Boy? wee have seen him in indifferent good clothes, ere now.
_Boy._ And may doe in better, if it please the King (his Master) to say Amen to it, and allow it, to whom hee acknowledgeth all.

(11. 49-54)

One of the editors of the play comments that "King Charles had proved an appreciative and fairly liberal patron to Jonson,"\(^{19}\) which on the whole is true. Apparently Jonson was now beginning to appreciate this fact. The poet, now often confined to bed, was unable to witness the production

\(^{18}\)Thayer, p. 243.

of either this play or The New Inn. Nevertheless, he took
great pains to write a highly complimentary epilogue "To
the supremest power, my Lord, the King."

After The Magnetic Lady, Jonson completed no more
plays. However, he did revamp an earlier play, The Tale of
a Tub, in which there is a brutal caricature of Inigo Jones
under the pseudonym of Vitruvius Hoop. Of course, this
part was cut out by authority, but the comedy was not only
produced for the public, but a repeat performance was re­
quested for Whitehall, which was staged in January, 1634.
Quite assuredly this was a blow to Inigo Jones, but more
than that it seems to indicate that the king's sympathies
had now swung in favor of the poet laureate.

Earlier evidence of Charles' renewed admiration for
Jonson came in the spring of 1633, at which time the king
made a progress into Scotland. As was customary all of the
great families along the way honored his majesty with
feasting. However, none of the nobility or gentry equalled
the magnificence of the hospitality extended by the Earl of
Newcastle, Jonson's great patron and loyal friend. When
Jonson was asked to provide a dramatic composition to grace
the royal visit, he rose to the occasion quite admirably
with Love's Welcome, better known as The King's Entertain­
ment at Welbeck. In the work, the poet-teacher reminds the
subjects of their duty to love and uphold the prince, and
the prince of his duty to set the proper examples by his
own adherence to goodness and virtue. To be sure, the words of advice to the king are far overshadowed by the words of praise and good wishes tendered his majesty. Both Charles and the Earl took great pleasure in the dramatic entertainment, and it added immeasurably to this notably resplendent festivity, which the Duchess says "cost my lord between four and five thousand pounds."  

The king's great pleasure in the entertainment possibly prompted the queen's resolve that both of them should make a progress into Scotland and again request the hospitality of Nottinghamshire. Thus, the king desired the Earl of Newcastle to prepare the same entertainment for the queen that had given him such delightful satisfaction in the preceding year. The Duchess relates that nothing was spared "that might add splendour" and that Ben Jonson was "employed in fitting such scenes and speeches as he could best devise." She adds that all of the gentry of the country were invited to the entertainment, held this time at Bolsover Castle, and that it cost her lord between fourteen and fifteen thousand pounds.  

He again employs the title Love's Welcome and distinguishes it with the sub-title The King and Queen's


21 Ibid., p. 184.
Entertainment at Bolsover. But in spite of the title, it bears no resemblance to the previous composition; in fact, the work reveals that the poet's resourcefulness and rich inventiveness had not been greatly affected by his growing illness. Moreover, Jonson must have been quite confident of the king's good will, for the entertainment included an unmistakable and highly amusing caricature of Inigo Jones in the self-important, pompous Coronel Iniquo Vitruvius. It is likely that both Charles and Henrietta Maria were greatly amused by the satirical portrait of the opinionated architect; at least there seems to have been no resentment. For a few weeks later Charles clearly evinced his deep regard for the poet by urging the city to restore his salary as chronologer. Out of deference to the king's wishes, the aldermen, on September 18, 1634, ordered that Jonson's yearly pension be continued, indicated that no work would be required, and made a full payment of arrears.

Jonson must have been touched by the king's benevolent concern, for there were no further outbursts against Jones or anyone else at court, and in the remaining three years of his life he comported himself as a loyal court poet should. Of course, some of this time, especially the last two years, Jonson seems to have been almost completely confined to his sick chamber, but his pen was not wholly idle. As long as he was able, he tried to fulfill his duties of court poet; thus he opened the year 1635 with "A
New-yeares-Gift sung to King Charles." Even though he reused some of the lines that he had previously written to King James, the poem is charmingly done. A little later (probably November, 1635) Jonson commemorates Charles' birthday with the poem "On the King's Birthday," which Gifford says "is probably Ben's last tribute of duty to his royal master." 22

For more than thirty-five years Jonson had been writing verses to various members of the court; in fact, more than a third of his non-dramatic poetry is addressed to his noble friends and to royalty. These verses are far from the usual encomiums that a writer addresses to the great people of his day; instead, the host of distinguished names that appear in his poems are those of his friends and close acquaintances. In these verses there is ample reflection of his respectful, but close familiarities with people of the court. These poems, collected in The Epigrams, Underwood, and Forest, give an interesting insight into his personal relations with nobility. Jonson considered himself as an equal, and behaved in like manner.

To Lady Bedford, a great patroness and brilliant figure at court, he writes a teasing epigram chiding her for not delivering to his home the buck that she had

promised him. Jonson celebrated her in *Epigrams* lxxvi, lxxiv, and xciv, which reveal their close friendship and his admiration for her; moreover, she danced in a number of Jonson's masques. But it is to be noted that as early as 1601, he addresses her quite familiarly and as an equal, in the special dedication to her in a gift-copy of Cynthia's *Revels*:

Goe little Booke, Goe little Fable
unto the bright, and amiable
LVCY of BEDFORD . . .
Tell her his Muse . . . that hath sent thee
And sworne, that he will quite discard thee,
   if any way she do rewarde thee
But with a Kisse.

(Inscriptions, II)

The kiss is "of her white Hand," but even so it is a most unusual way for a young, aspiring poet to address a countess. Nevertheless, this is indicative of the manner of Jonson's behavior in his long and close association with those of nobility. Even though he carefully observed those terms of courtesy which were due rank, he never did so to the detriment of his own dignity. To Lady Rutland, who was the daughter of Sir Philip Sidney and Jonson's friend of the earlier years, he sends a verse that begins:

That Poets are far rarer births then kings,
Your noblest father prou'd.

(*Epigrams*, LXXIX)

Among the noble families, who appear to have been

*Epigrams*, LXXXIV.
most generous to Jonson and who welcomed him into their homes in the earlier years, were the Bedfords, the Harringtons, the Herberts, the Goodyeres, and most especially the Sidney family, which included not only those bearing the Sidney name, but also the Rutlands, the Pembrokes, and the Wroths. Some of the many other noble friends whom he addressed in poetry are Lord Salisbury, Lord Mounteagle, Sir Henry Cary, Lord Suffolk, Lord Ellesmere, Sir Horace Vere, Sir John Radcliffe, Sir Edward Herbert, Sir Henry Nevil, Sir Thomas Overbury, Lord Aubigny, Lord Dorset, Lord Burleigh, Sir Edward Coke, Lord Bacon, Lord Delaware, Sir John Roe and Sir Henry Savile.

As Symonds remarks, it would be tedious to name "all of the noble men and women with whom Jonson lived on terms of honoured friendship"; however, some of his closest friends of the later years deserve special mention. These include a number of the most socially prominent people of the younger generation, who were some of Jonson's greatest admirers. Certainly two of his best friends, and apparently his most important patrons of the declining years, were Richard Weston, Earl of Portland, and William Cavendish, the Earl of Newcastle, who was previously mentioned. Other of his intimate friends whom he celebrated in poetry are Sir Kenelm Digby; his wife, Lady Venetia

Digby; Lady Jane Pawlett, Marchioness of Winchester; Lady Covell; Sir Henry Morison; and Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, the loftiest in character and the most devoted of Jonson's "sons." Another of his young noble sons of this period is Sir John Suckling. Lord Clarendon, then a young law student, was not sealed of the "Tribe of Ben," but he admired Jonson tremendously and claimed the poet as one of his "chief acquaintances."

Most of these intimates of later years were considerably younger than Jonson. In fact, some were the sons and daughters of older friends—notably, Lucius Cary and the young Lord Weston and his wife, the former Frances Stuart, whose father Esme, Duke of Lenox, was Jonson's loyal friend and patron. Though Esme Stuart and most of the poet's contemporaries had passed away, they were replaced by the admiring younger set. One must agree that "the extraordinary intimacy of Jonson's relations with the elite of the younger generation" is unusual. Nevertheless, they sought the society of the learned and amiable older man. Lord Clarendon, in his mature years, happily recalls his intimate association with the poet and emphasizes not only Jonson's prestige as a man of letters, but refers to his social status: "His conversation" (i.e., the society he frequented) "was very good and with men of most

Clarendon's friendship with the poet apparently began in 1626, the year of Jonson's stroke, and many of the younger friends mentioned belong to even later years of the poet's life. Thus it would appear that he continued to lead an eminently social life, at least until the two years preceding his death. Further it is reasonable to suppose that the kind offices of his noble friends were extended him until the end.

Jonson died August 6, 1637. Three days later he was buried in Westminster Abbey "with as great a train of mourners as though he had been a nobleman." And Sir Edward Walker, Garter, writes in 1637 that the throng of mourners included "all or the greatest part of the nobility and gentrie then in the towne."

An even greater tribute to the writer was the volume of memorial poems _Jonsonus Virbius_ published six months after his death. Symonds states that these "enthusiastic elegies prove that up to the very end he must have been a living celebrity and an honoured person in his generation."

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28 Sir Edward Walker, Garter, 17 August 1637. (Quoted in Bradley and Adams, p. 199.)
29 Symonds, p. 190.
Several of the poet's noble friends contributed poems to this volume, but perhaps the one that Jonson would have appreciated the most was the eclogue from the most beloved of his "sons," Lord Falkland. In this sincere and glowing tribute, Falkland credits Queen Elizabeth with encouraging Jonson's "younger muse," speaks of King Charles' love and admiration for him, and recalls

How learned James . . .
Declared great JONSON worthiest to receive
The garland which the Muses' hand did weave.

Ben Jonson had indeed been greatly recognized by royalty, and now at his passing he was mourned as the king of the English world of letters, which tellingly bears out his cherished belief:

Solus Rex, et Poeta non quotannis nascitur.
CONCLUSION

Ben Jonson's works, whether drama, prose, or verse, give an extraordinary amount of attention to the court and court society. Moreover, this great interest in the aristocratic society is evidenced in his writings almost from the beginning of his career until the end.

By the time Jonson began writing for the London stage he had formed some definite opinions about upper class society. For all of his life he had been poignantly aware of the nobility as they moved in their separate world. He had observed that the court and courtiers, as the centers of national life, had studied the art of being brilliant and lavish. Critical observer that he was, he found much in the manners and behavior of this elite group of which he thoroughly disapproved, for Jonson recognized that the court was the dominant shaping force of the society of his day. Furthermore he had very high ideals of what the court should be and accordingly deplored the unbecoming actions and practices of some of its members.

Of course, like all of the other Elizabethan dramatists, Jonson wanted and needed noble patronage, but he seems to have chosen to cultivate members of the older aristocratic families to this purpose. From the first to
the last, he regarded the older and more established aristocracy as the representatives of true gentility. For they, having been instilled with courage, dignity, courtesy, and other qualities of the wellborn, would help to maintain the ordered society appropriate to the court and nobility. To Jonson, these ladies and gentlemen were the upper echelon of nobility and the personages most worthy of honor; consequently, they are the ones most often celebrated in his poems.

On the other hand, he had little sympathy with the *nouveau riche*, the upstart courtiers and socially ambitious newcomers, who with their affectations and pretensions made a fetish of courtly manners, speech, and dress. In the dramatist's opinion, this element of court society not only lessens the image of the court and nobility, but is detrimental to society at large. Thus, in a large majority of his plays, Jonson fixes his critical attention upon the more superficial aspects of the court, particularly the practices of the vain and shallow courtier, who, in parading his elegant manners and fastidious tastes, becomes an example for imitation among the more fatuous men and women of lower estate.

In *The Case is Altered*, probably his first extant comedy, he lampoons the pseudo-elegance of courtly speech and other courtly practices. In his next play, *Every Man in His Humour*, he steps up the satire considerably and
strikes directly at the false social values of the fashionable world, particularly the foolish, artificial manners that the court and its imitators were inflicting upon society. It was this highly successful and extremely popular play that established his reputation as one of the leading dramatists of his time.

Up until the advent of this play, he was practically unknown and without patronage, but once he had received signal recognition as a dramatist he decided to make a bid for royal favor. Jonson was never lacking in confidence, in fact, he was somewhat arrogant, for he possessed a classical learning that was unusual both in soundness and in extent, and he daily added to it by pursuing his "wonted studies." But in spite of his scholarship, Jonson lacked tact, and for this reason his attempts to recommend himself to the queen in Every Man Out of His Humour, Cynthia's Revels, and Poetaster were unsuccessful. Though Lord Falkland in his eclogue "On the Death of Ben Jonson" asserts that "great Eliza"

    With her judicious favors did infuse
    Courage and strength to his [Jonson's] younger Muse
this is probably not based on any substantial proof of royal goodwill. And at Elizabeth's death, Jonson was asked to write in honor of the queen, but this again may have little significance.

    During Elizabeth's reign, Jonson's high ideals of
the court and nobility are greatly in evidence. Even though *Cynthia's Revels* was written expressly to please the court and thereby gain royal favor, it is largely concerned with the follies of courtiers. But this was the mirror whereby the satirist hoped that the shallow courtier with his vain and affected manners, once seeing that his image reflected adversely on the court, would reform. Jonson, firmly believing that the court should be a standard of perfection, continued throughout his career to point out certain factors that were detrimental to the court's betterment.

Again during Elizabeth's reign, we see Jonson fulfilling what he believes to be one of the poet's prime obligations—that of instructing the prince. Of course, in the policy of advising the king, he was working in a well established tradition; however, Jonson seems to have taken it more seriously than most dramatists of his age. Both in *Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster* one of the dramatist's main purposes is that of defining the high standards necessary to court society. In each of the plays, the hero is a poet whose function it is to champion the ideals proper to the court and to purge it of vulgar obtruders. Both Crites, moral arbiter to the court of Cynthia, and Horace, the sage counsellor to the emperor and favorite of Maecenas, enact the role that Jonson believed to be one of the functions of the poet's office.
Moreover, he continues his practice of advising the king in the next reigns. Even in his first greetings to King James, *The Kings Entertainments in Passing to his Coronation* and the *Panegyre* to King James on the opening day of Parliament, the counsel to the monarch is quite pronounced. Numerous works in both reigns contain notes of grave counsel and it appears quite strongly in *The King's Entertainment at Wellbeck* (1633), a work of Jonson's last years.

During the reign of Charles, Jonson enjoyed a fair amount of prestige at court; in any event, he was the poet laureate and received considerable court patronage, from a monetary standpoint. But in these years most of his patronage came from the younger members of nobility, with whom he was exceedingly popular. Jonson was greatly sought after by this elite young group, and they not only provided him with a full social life, but contributed to his material comforts.

But Jonson by nature was somewhat proud and in his acceptance of patronage, he always behaved as an equal, never as a social inferior. In thanking Sir Edward Sackville, Earl of Dorset, for some benefaction, he says:

> And though my fortune humble me, to take
> The smallest courtesies with thanks, I make
> Yet choyce from whom I take them.¹

¹*Underwoods*, XIII, in Herford and Simpson, VIII, 153.
This was apparently written soon after 1625, when, after James' death, the poet was first assailed by want.

Certainly Jonson did not know want during the reign of James I. For James, who was far more devoted to learning than Elizabeth and Charles, greatly admired the poet's scholarly vastly learned works. Thus in the Jacobean reign the poet became a very prominent figure at court; at the same time he became the greatest name in English letters, and during these two decades he received unprecedented recognition both from royalty and nobility.

Assuredly the court is one element that led to the great production of Jonson's genius (1603-1616), in that his close association with the court greatly inspired and encouraged him and gave vent to his creative faculties by freeing him of financial stress. Paradoxically, the court, having been a stimulus in the first part of the Jacobean era, led to a complacency in the second half that saw him enjoying too much prosperity and the finer ways of life to produce much other than the stately court masques.

Jonson boasted in 1624 that he had lived for twenty years where he could freely handle silk and had eaten with the "Beauties, and the wits,/ And braueries of Court,"\(^2\) and the records of his life fully bear out his boast, however brusque it may be.

\(^2\)Underwoods, XLII, Herford and Simpson, VIII, 209.
But on the reverse side of the coin we have Ben Jonson the classicist, the poet of royalty and nobility, who moved graciously in the midst of these great figures at court. And it is no wonder than when Yeats stood in the royal palace of the Danish court to receive the Nobel prize that he recalled Ben Jonson's address to the court of his time. Yeats is referring to the dedication of Cynthia's Revels addressed to the court. Certainly no lines so adequately express Jonson's feelings about the court (as well as his independent spirit) as these quoted by Yeats:

Thou are a bountifull, and braue spring: and waterest all the noble plants of this Iland. In thee, the whole Kingdome dresseth it selfe, and is ambitious to vse thee as her glasse. Beware, then, thou render men's figures truly, and teach them no lesse to hate their deformities, then to loue their formes. . . .

Thy seruant, but not slaue,
Ben. Ionson

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