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Lynn S. Meskill
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BEN JONSON AND ENVY

In the early modern period, envy was often represented iconographically by the image of the Medusa, with snaky locks and a poisonous gaze. *Ben Jonson and Envy* investigates the importance of envy to Jonson's imagination, showing that he perceived spectators and readers as filled with envy and created strategies to defend his work from their distorting and potentially 'deadly' gaze. Drawing on historical and anthropological studies of evil-eye beliefs, this study focuses on the authorial imperative to charm and baffle ritualistically the eye of the implied spectator or reader, in order to protect his works from defacement. Comparing the exchange between authors and readers to social relations, the book illuminates the way in which the literary may be seen to be informed by popular culture. *Ben Jonson and Envy* tackles a previously overlooked, but vital, aspect of Jonson's poetics.

LYNN S. MESKILL is a Lecturer in English at the University of Paris-XIII. She has published articles on Jonson, Shakespeare and Milton in *English Literary History*, *Cahiers Elisabethains* and the *Revue de la Société d'Etudes Anglo-Américaines*, among others.

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Note on the text

All quotations from Ben Jonson are from the eleven-volume edition of Jonson's works edited by C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson (1925–52). I have silently modernized u, v, i, j and scribal contractions as well as the titles of some of Jonson's plays and masques according to common practice. All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, second edition (1997), edited by G. Blakemore Evans and Herschel Baker *et al.*

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