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0521641136 - The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson

Edited by Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart

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Ben Jonson is, in many ways, the figure of greatest centrality to literary study of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. He wrote in virtually every literary genre: in drama, comedy, tragedy, and masque; in poetry, epigram, and epistle; in prose, literary criticism, and English grammar. He became the most visible poet of his age, honored more than even William Shakespeare, and his dramatic works, in particular his major comedies, continue to be performed today. This Companion brings together leading scholars from both sides of the Atlantic to provide an accessible and up-to-date introduction to Jonson's life and works. It represents an invaluable guide to current critical perspectives, providing generous coverage not only of his plays but also of his non-dramatic works. The volume is informed by the latest developments in Jonson scholarship and will therefore appeal to scholars and teachers as well as newcomers to his work.

Richard Harp is Professor of English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He has published a number of articles on Renaissance literature and on Irish literature, and is the editor of the forthcoming *Norton Critical Edition of Jonson's Plays and Masques*. He has also edited Thomas Percy's *Life of Dr. Oliver Goldsmith*, *Dr. Johnson's Critical Vocabulary*, and, with Robert Evans, *Frank O'Connor: New Perspectives* and the forthcoming *Companion to Brian Friel*.

Stanley Stewart is Distinguished Professor of English at the University of California, Riverside, and the author of numerous books, essays, and reviews, including *The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth Century Poetry*, *The Expanded Voice: The Art of Thomas Traherne, George Herbert*, and, most recently, "Renaissance" *Talk: Ordinary Language and the Mystique of Critical Problems*. He is also co-author, with Bernd Magnus and Jean-Pierre Mileur, of *Nietzsche's Case: Philosophy as and Literature* and, with James A. Riddell, of *Jonson's Spenser: Evidence and Historical Criticism*.

Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart are also the founders and editors, with Robert Evans, of *The Ben Jonson Journal*, which began publication in 1994.

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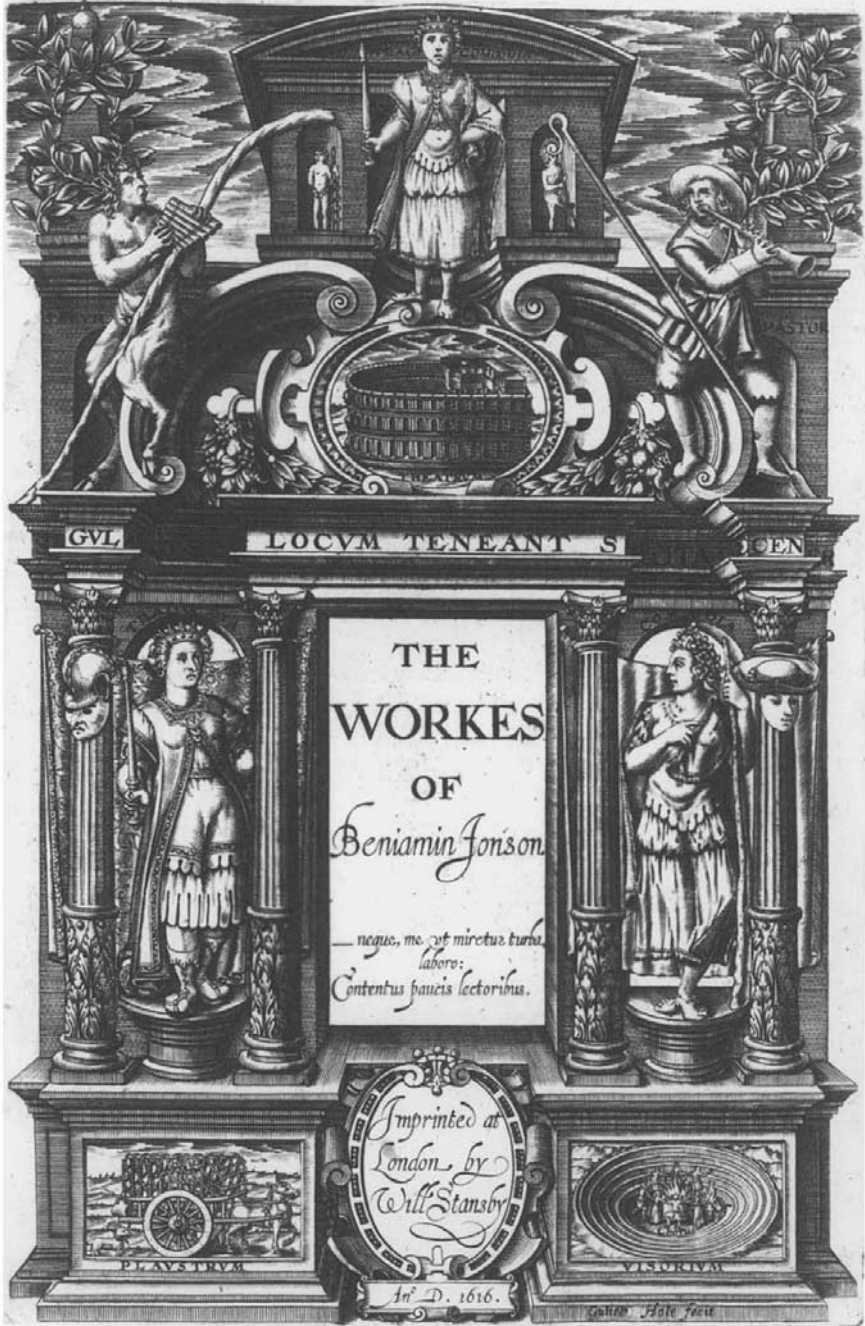
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COMPANION TO
BEN JONSON

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LEAH S. MARCUS is Edwin Mims Professor of English at Vanderbilt University. Her books include *Childhood and Cultural Despair* (1978), *The Politics of Mirth* (1986), *Puzzling Shakespeare* (1988), *Unediting the Renaissance* (1996), and *Queen Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (co-edited with Janel Mueller and Mary Beth Rose, 2000).

JOHN MULRYAN is Distinguished Professor of English at St. Bonaventure University and editor of *Cithara*. His books include *Milton and the Middle Ages* and, most recently, *Through a Glass Darkly: Milton's Reinvention of the Mythological Tradition*. He has also recently completed a translation of Natalis Conti's *Mythologiae, sive Explicationis Fabularum*.

STEPHEN ORGEL is the Jackson Eli Reynolds Professor of Humanities at Stanford. His most recent book is *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge, 1996). He has edited Jonson's masques for the Yale Ben Jonson, and *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* for the Oxford Shakespeare.

JAMES A. RIDDELL is the co-author, with Stanley Stewart, of *Jonson's Spenser: Evidence and Historical Criticism* and has published two dozen articles in journals such as *The Library* and *Studies in Bibliography*. Most recently he has published "Jonson and the Blushing Maid" in *English Language Notes*.

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R. V. YOUNG is Professor of English and Director of Graduate Programs in English at North Carolina State University. He is co-founder and co-editor of the *John Donne Journal* and has served as President of the John Donne Society. His most recent books are *At War with the Word: Literary Theory and Liberal Education* (ISI Books, 1999) and *Doctrine and Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (Boydell & Brewer, 1999).

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PREFACE

Although the contributors in this volume are Jonson specialists, this book is not an encyclopedia of accepted wisdom in Jonson studies. These critics might not even agree that consensus on this complex figure is a desirable goal. Raised the stepson of a bricklayer, Ben Jonson, whose career as a writer spanned the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I, became the most visible poet of his age, honored more than even William Shakespeare, whom he admired just “this side of idolatry.” In many ways, Ben Jonson is the literary figure of the greatest centrality of his time. He began his career in the last decade of Elizabeth’s reign, was the dominant writer for the stage in the Jacobean period, and went on writing well into the reign of Charles I. He died in the year that Milton’s *Lycidas* appeared in a volume of verse commemorating the death of a fellow student at Cambridge. During that forty-year literary career, Jonson took a hand at writing tragedy as well as comedy, for which he is largely remembered, and in which he was a great innovator. In poetry, he wrote in virtually every received genre and mode – so successfully, in fact, that an entire generation of poets sought to associate their names with his style. Jonson’s versatility was never at the expense of his intensity and combativeness, which mark many of his social and professional relations. Ben Jonson was not only long-lived, but complex: bricklayer, artisan, artist, poet, playwright, writer of masques, translator, literary critic, scholar, moralist, criminal, prisoner, editor, husband, father, drunk, Protestant, Catholic, traveler, tutor, actor, opportunist, court entertainer, brawler, anti-quarian, book-collector, book-seller, irrepressible reader, loyal friend, relentless foe. So if these essays seem to move off in different, even contradictory, directions, we need to remember the variegated life and interests of the subject, Ben Jonson.

Without any claim, then, to a definitive treatment of Ben Jonson, this volume undertakes a fresh introduction to Jonson’s literary world, his achievement, and his impact. First, contributors lay out what is known of his life as others saw it and as we see it represented in his work. Since Jonson was a man of the theatre, contributors describe the London theatres of his times, as well as the city and

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PREFACE

court that sponsored them, and the circle of playwrights with whom Jonson worked, drank, and competed. We know that, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, actors and theatres were viewed with suspicion, unless the actors happened to be aristocrats performing masques or entertainments for privileged audiences. So Jonson's professional relations to the court are, in this context, as important as his acquaintance with London. Then, too, as anyone who has read "An Execration upon Vulcan" will recall, Jonson was a man of learning, who thought of books as an integral part of friendship and conversation. Jonson's achievement in satire is very much a part of the swiftly changing world of London, the lively new theatre, and Jonson's erudition. With these contexts in mind, contributors discuss Johnson's major comedies, his minor plays, his understanding and employment of the related arts, and his relationship to William Shakespeare.

Since, above all, Jonson thought of his poetry as his likeliest claim to inclusion in that pantheon with such poets as Horace, Martial, Catullus, and Persius, the volume includes a generous treatment of "Jonson's Poetry." In his famous 1616 Folio edition of his Works, we can see Jonson's ambition to place his literary efforts in the tradition of classical authors. Jonson's interest in what we call the "classics" is integral to his understanding of his poetic vocation. So contributors discuss Jonson's editorial practices, the Renaissance understanding of the classical writers so important to Jonson's conception of his literary vocation, as well as his mastery of the classical languages. In Jonson's literary criticism, many of the themes already established converge; Jonson thought proper judgment in reading integral to achievement as a poet, and his erudition served as the keystone of his critical theory. Although the designation "Sons of Ben" is almost synonymous with "Cavalier Poets," in the end, Jonson was remembered through the ensuing centuries as a successful dramatist in the satiric (moral) mode.

The editors wish to thank the staffs of the British Library and the Huntington Library for their help in obtaining materials for this book. We also thank Joe McCullough, John Bowers, and John Ganim for their support, as well as the Center for Advanced Research at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (Ron Smith, Director) and the Research Committee of the Academic Senate at the University of California, Riverside. Jon Bauch provided editorial help of many different kinds. Our thanks also to the anonymous readers of the Cambridge University Press, who helped shape this project at an early stage, and to the reader who reviewed so expertly the final draft of the manuscript. Susan Watkins, our copyeditor, was careful and always helpful, and Victoria Cooper was a patient, sympathetic, and always intelligent editor, for all of which we are very grateful. Margaret Harp and Barbara Stewart were, as always, crucial in their forbearance and understanding of the project.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in referring to Jonson's works:

<i>Alch.</i>	<i>The Alchemist</i>
<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Catiline</i>
<i>Conv. Dr.</i>	<i>Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden</i>
<i>EMI</i>	<i>Every Man in his Humour</i>
<i>EMO</i>	<i>Every Man out of his Humour</i>
<i>Epig.</i>	<i>Epigrams</i>
<i>For.</i>	<i>The Forest</i>
<i>NI</i>	<i>The New Inn</i>
<i>P.H. Barr.</i>	<i>The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers</i>
<i>Queens</i>	<i>The Masque of Queens</i>
<i>Sej.</i>	<i>Sejanus</i>
<i>S. of N.</i>	<i>The Staple of News</i>
<i>Und.</i>	<i>The Underwood</i>
<i>UV</i>	<i>Ungathered Verse</i>
<i>Volp.</i>	<i>Volpone</i>

Editions of Jonson

- Donaldson *Ben Jonson*, edited by Ian Donaldson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- HS *Ben Jonson*, edited by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925–52).

CHRONOLOGY

- 1572 Born in Westminster, a month after the death of his father; his mother remarries a bricklayer.
- 1588 Leaves Westminster School, where he had studied with the famous teacher, William Camden.
- 1591–2 Enlists as a soldier in Holland and Belgium, where he kills an enemy in single combat in front of both armies.
- 1594 Marries Anne Lewis.
- 1597 Acting in and writing plays by this date for Philip Henslowe.
 Imprisoned for his share in a lost play, *The Isle of Dogs*.
- 1598 Imprisoned for killing the actor Gabriel Spencer in a duel but released when he claims “benefit of clergy” (he is able to recite a Bible verse in Latin); is converted to Roman Catholicism while in prison, most likely by the Jesuit priest Father Thomas Wright, and remains a Catholic for twelve years.
The Case Is Altered
Every Man in his Humour
- 1599 *Every Man out of his Humour*
- 1600–1 “War of the Theatres” with playwrights Thomas Dekker and John Marston.
Cynthia’s Revels (1600)
Poetaster (1601)
- 1601 Paid by producer Henslowe for additions to Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*.
- 1603 Death of Queen Elizabeth; accession of James I.
 Death of son Benjamin from the plague.
 Accused by the Earl of Northampton of popery and treason and called before the Privy Council.
Sejanus
The Entertainment at Althorpe
A Panegyre

CHRONOLOGY

- 1604 *King's Coronation Entertainment*
The Entertainment at Highgate
- 1605 Gunpowder Plot; Jonson offers to gather information for Lord Salisbury about the Plot but is ultimately unable to do so.
Eastward Ho! (collaboration with George Chapman and Marston; authors imprisoned for politically unwise satire against the Scots).
The Masque of Blackness (begins Jonson's association with architect Inigo Jones).
- 1606 *Hymenæi*
Barriers
The Entertainment of the Two Kings at Theobalds
Volpone
- 1607 *The Entertainment of King James and Queen Anne at Theobalds*
- 1608 *The Masque of Beauty*
The Haddington Masque
- 1609 *Epicœne*
The Masque of Queens
- 1610 *The Alchemist*
Prince Henry's Barriers
- 1611 *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*
Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly
Catiline
- 1612–13 Travels to France as tutor to Sir Walter Raleigh's son.
Love Restored (1612)
- 1613–14 *A Challenge at Tilt* (December/January)
The Irish Masque (29 December, 3 January)
- 1614 *Bartholomew Fair*
- 1615 *Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists at Court*
- 1616 Granted a hundred-mark pension by the King.
 Works published in a Folio edition; contains poetry collections.
Epigrams and *The Forest* in addition to plays.
The Golden Age Restored
Christmas, his Masque
The Devil Is an Ass
- 1617 *Lovers Made Men*
The Vision of Delight
- 1618 Walking trip to Scotland, where he visits William Drummond and others.
 Drummond makes a record of their conversations.
Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue

CHRONOLOGY

- 1619 *For the Honour of Wales*
 Honorary degree of Master of Arts from Oxford.
- 1620 *Pan's Anniversary*
The Entertainment at Blackfriars
- 1620–3 Deputy Professor of Rhetoric at Gresham College, London.
- 1621 *News from the New World*
The Gypsies Metamorphosed
- 1622 *The Masque of Augurs*
- 1623 His personal library and manuscripts destroyed by fire.
Time Vindicated
- 1624 *Neptune's Triumph*
The Masque of Owls
- 1625 Death of King James; accession of King Charles I.
The Fortunate Isles
- 1626 *The Staple of News*
- 1628 Jonson suffers a stroke that paralyzes him; appointed City Chronologer.
- 1629 *The New Inn*
- 1630 Annual pension increased to a hundred pounds and a tierce of royal sack.
- 1631 *Love's Triumph Through Callipolis*
Chloridia
- 1632 *The Magnetic Lady*
- 1633 *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck*
A Tale of a Tub
- 1634 *Love's Welcome at Bolsover*
- 1637 Dies in Westminster, August 6, and is buried in Westminster Abbey. A marble plaque marking his burial spot is inscribed "O rare Ben Jonson."
The Sad Shepherd
Mortimer his Fall
- 1638 Posthumously published book of poetic tributes to Jonson entitled *Jonsonus Virbius*.
- 1640 A second Folio edition of Jonson's *Works* is published, including the poetry collection, *The Underwood*, assembled by his literary executor Sir Kenelm Digby.