

BEN JONSON'S
PLAYS *and*
MASQUES



SELECTED AND EDITED BY
RICHARD HARP

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION
SECOND EDITION

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

BEN JONSON'S PLAYS AND MASQUES



Authoritative Texts of

VOLPONE • EPICOENE • THE ALCHEMIST

THE MASQUE OF BLACKNESS •

MERCURY VINDICATED FROM THE

ALCHEMISTS AT COURT • PLEASURE

RECONCILED TO VIRTUE

Contexts

Backgrounds and Sources

Criticism

SECOND EDITION

Edited by

RICHARD HARP

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

First Edition edited by

ROBERT M. ADAMS

LATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES



W • W • NORTON & COMPANY • *New York • London*

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Printed in the United States of America.

The text of this book is composed in Electra
with the display set in Bernhard Modern.

Composition by PennSet, Inc.

Manufacturing by Courier Companies

Book design by Antonina Krass.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Jonson, Ben, 1573?-1637.

[Selections. 2000]

Ben Jonson's plays and masques : authoritative texts of Volpone, Epicoene, The alchemist, The masque of blackness, Mercury vindicated from the alchemists at court, Pleasure reconciled to virtue : contexts, criticism.—2nd ed. / edited by Richard Harp.

p. cm.— (A Norton critical edition)

“First edition by Robert M. Adams.”

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-393-97638-6 (pbk.)

1. Jonson, Ben, 1573?-1637—Dramatic works. 2. Masques—History and criticism. I. Harp, Richard. II. Title.

PR2602 .A3 2000

822'.3—dc21

00-060906

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110
www.wwnorton.com

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 10 Coptic Street, London WC1A 1PU

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Preface

Ben Jonson wrote nineteen plays and had an assistant's hand in several others; he was the author of twenty-four masques and entertainments. To represent in reasonable compass the scope of his work for the stage and the court, one must select. The first choices are not at all difficult, since everyone agrees that his twin masterpieces for the stage are *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, both in verse. *Epicoene*, in prose, is our third choice; it has a beautifully articulated plot and a set of characters whose manners and motives are relatively easy to grasp. In fact it is close kin to the sort of gentlemanly comedy that would come into full fashion at the Restoration—easy and fluent in its wit, full of the spirit of play, but tough too (as Jonson could always be tough) in its judgment of moral and social values.

Jonson's masques and courtly entertainments, as they have come down to us, vary enormously in size and "seriousness," depending on the social occasion that called them forth. They might help to welcome a distinguished visitor to a country house, to celebrate a wedding or a birthday, or to enliven the Christmas season at court, when merry-making and feasting were traditional. The persons participating might be of the very highest rank under the king, or of somewhat lower status; the amount of money spent might be slight or enormous. For the great court masques, in which the richest ladies in the land vied to outdo one another, thousands of pounds might be invested in costumes, musicians, and stage-machinery; and for such occasions, the poet as well might feel impelled to outdo himself.

The plays and masques selected for this volume can be supplemented, for the poetry and critical prose, by Hugh MacLean's Norton Critical Edition of *Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets*; and from there, the devotee of Ben is invited to move on to the *Complete Works* edited by Herford and Simpson in a classic 11-volume edition. Our texts here have been modernized for greater accessibility, but checked against the old-spelling versions of Herford and Simpson, according to principles outlined in the Note on the Text. The background materials contain hints toward Jonson's structure of esthetic values and glimpses of his informal personality; the appended critical essays provide a cross section of modern views as they relate particularly to the materials of this collection.

This edition of *Ben Jonson's Plays and Masques* retains the three dramatic masterpieces printed in the first edition, *Volpone* (1606), *Epicoene* (1609), and *The Alchemist* (1610). Nearly all of that edition's notes have been retained as well, although a considerable number of new ones have been added to make the plays even more accessible to students. Jonson's comedy is rich in plot, character, and language, and the latter demands as much annotation as space allows without making the page too forbidding

for the reader. Two masques from the first edition are also here, *Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists at Court* (1615) and *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618), along with the new *The Masque of Blackness* (1605), Jonson's first masque and one that deals with issues of interest to our own culture.

A new section on "Backgrounds and Sources" has been added to this edition. Clear and coherent sources for many of Jonson's plays are lacking, but for *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, at least, there are certain obvious texts that helped to shape the dramatist's vision. Aesop's fable of the fox and the crow is the seed from which grew the abundance of *Volpone*, and the subsequent incarnations and adaptations of this fable are here represented in selections from the medieval bestiary, William Caxton's *Reynard the Fox*, Chaucer's "The Nun's Priest's Tale," and La Fontaine's "The Fox and the Crow." This last, of course, was published after Jonson died but is included here as representing the most famous short version of the fable in later literary history. Ancient satires on legacy hunting that were useful to Jonson's portrayal of his greedy birds of prey are represented in the selection from Horace's *Satires*. Sources for *The Alchemist* included here are Erasmus's famous dialogue on alchemy, first published in 1524, and some selections from Stanton J. Linden's book on the history of alchemy in English literature.

Nine new critical essays, most representing scholarship and interpretations of the past twenty years, are included in this edition. Those by Robert Evans and Leah S. Marcus relate Jonson's work to personalities and issues of his time, a frequent emphasis in current Renaissance scholarship. Interest in the masques has grown considerably since the publication of the first edition; that interest is reflected here in the article by Marcus as well as in those by John Mulryan on *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* and by Stephen Orgel and D. S. Gordon on *The Masque of Blackness*. Issues of religion and the theater in *The Alchemist* are considered in essays by Richard Harp and Ian Donaldson; Robert Watson discusses the ways in which Jonson "parodies" previous dramatic conventions in *Epicoene*, and Anne Barton examines the use of names in the three plays. The classic seventeenth-century "Examen" by John Dryden of *Epicoene* is reprinted in this edition, as are the important articles by Jonas A. Barish and Edward B. Partridge on *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, respectively. The bibliography has been considerably enlarged.

Jonson was one of the few important writers of the early seventeenth century to offer detailed literary criticism, and many of his comments will be found in the section "Jonson on His Work." His remarkably frank *Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden* is given in modernized English. The great impact he had on his contemporaries is further illustrated in the subsection "Contemporary Readers on Jonson." Much like his famous predecessor Thomas More, Jonson was a man for all seasons, and his work, in its variety and depth, and his person, magisterial and commanding yet always in touch with "life's common way," can be seen in much of its fullness in this volume.

The Staging of Jonson's Plays and Masques

The plays in this volume which were mounted on the stage were exhibited to paying audiences in theaters of two different sorts. *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* were staged, in 1606 and 1610 respectively, by the King's Men at the Globe Theater on the Bankside: this was a public theater. *Epicoene* was first acted in 1609 by the Children of the Queen's Revels, at the Whitefriars Theater; this was a private theater. The masques were not staged for a paying audience at all; each had a single performance in a large assembly-room at court, which served a number of functions besides theatrical display. All these circumstances call for a bit of explanation.

The King's Men were the oldest and most successful company of actors in London; under several earlier titles, they had been active since 1572, taking the name of the King's Men at the accession of James in 1603. Though they were nominally "his" men, and occasionally by particular request put on a play at court, the King actually had very little to do with them. They took his name and were under his protection largely because, years before, when actors were mainly strolling players and so liable to the laws against vagabonds, a custom had sprung up among them of claiming to be some nobleman's servants. But by now the King's Men were substantial citizens. They owned their own theater, in which the principal players held shares; they had a library of plays which they had already performed and could mount from time to time as a venture promised profit; they had an assortment of props and costumes. Shakespeare was of their number, and they produced most of his plays; for example, between 1606 and 1610, they put on *Antony and Cleopatra* and *King Lear*. It was a good time, obviously, to be an actor; and with plays like these to sink their teeth into, the King's Men were a practiced repertory company. Both Jonson's plays at the Globe were resounding successes, and *Volpone* was repeated twice the following year, when the King's Men went visiting to Oxford and Cambridge.

Working in their own open-air theater, the Globe, the King's Men had a large raised stage facing a substantial auditorium, without, however, any sort of artificial lighting or any proscenium curtain. Plays were

performed in the afternoon, and in both *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* Jonson is careful (far beyond the wont of his contemporaries) to confine the time of the action to a single day: thus the sun would be setting in stage time just as it was in real time. A full house would have consisted of about two thousand spectators, running the social gamut, from lords and knights who sat in boxes or on chairs at the side of the stage, down to the lowest-priced admissions, the "groundlings," who had standing room in what we would call the "orchestra" and they called the "pit." As the play began, there being no special way to signal that the action had started, the actors onstage had to assert themselves over the audience noise—hence the noisy quarrel with which *The Alchemist* begins, and the audacious blasphemies with which *Volpone* unveils his gold-hoard and performs devotions before it.

Because the stage protruded quite far out into the "pit" or "ground," a good deal of the action onstage must have been essentially "in the round," as we now say. Looking out over the upturned faces of the groundlings (just about the level of his feet), the actor would face three tiers of boxes. The audience, as they looked back at him, would see him against a wall or backdrop, which might be of one story or two; over his head would be a small roof or hut, covering the central part of the stage. Characters entered and exited through doors set in the rear wall: probably there were two of them, though some stage directions seem to imply three—the third might be a door in a screen placed onstage for the occasion. In the center of the rear wall there was often a hanging or curtain, which could be raised or drawn aside, as when *Volpone* uncovers his gold-hoard. Behind the wall (and invisible, of course, to the audience) was the "tiring room," in which the actors donned or changed their costumes. (During the performance of *The Alchemist*, it must have been a frantic place.) As for the roofed hut overhead, it served in the first place to keep brief rain showers off the actors—the groundlings got wet, but serious storms cancelled the show entirely—and it may also have had acoustical advantages. Besides, the hut may have had a second story, from which Celia, for example, could flutter her handkerchief coyly to "Scoto" atop his platform erected on the main stage.

Perhaps too much has been made of the plainness of the Elizabethan stage, its lack of scenic props—Puritan moralists of the day were apt to complain of its excessive and gaudy decoration. None of Jonson's plays call for palatial luxury or elaborate visual effects, but the rudiments of scenic differentiation were clearly available; the officers of the Scrutineo must have sat on some sort of raised bench, perhaps behind a desk; when the laboratory blows up in *The Alchemist*, it would be a very poor stage manager who couldn't contrive, in addition to crashing noises on tin sheets and a couple of gunshots offstage, a puff of smoke through the door leading to the laboratory. The well-known producer Philip

Henslowe has left us an inventory of the props available on March, 1598, in his theater, the Rose. They include such sizable items as numerous trees, a chariot, a little altar, "the cloth of the Sun & the Moon," dragons, lions, a rainbow, a good deal of armor, "the City of Rome," plus lesser items like cloaks, visors, crowns, and so forth. One wouldn't need much more than a fair selection of this stuff to make as much of Venice or London as Jonson's two plays were likely to require.

In some respects, the Elizabethans had more appetite for stage realism than we give them credit for. Battles might indeed be represented by "armies" of a few actors on a side, clad in tin armor and waving wooden swords; but in formal duels (like that in Act V of *Hamlet*), the audience clearly wanted a good show, the playwright drew out the scene to give them one, and it is very likely that at the height of the struggle a little bladder of pig's blood, hidden under the actor's outer garments, was punctured to procure a gory climax. Thunder was simulated by rolling a cannonball down a wooden trough, and boys touched off flashes of powder to suggest lightning. Rain on a roof was represented by pouring peas from a height onto a tin plate, and sailors just rescued from drowning in *The Tempest* were instructed to come onstage dripping wet. But Jonson, as we've said, was notably conservative about using these scenic devices: both *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* require very little stage machinery. Perhaps a screen pushed onstage could represent the door through which Lovewit parleys with Jeremy, and Bonario could be shoved, like Dapper, behind the hanging till it was time for him to interrupt the action onstage.

Though some plays were much more successful than others, it is not clear how, or even if, the more successful playwright was more largely rewarded. Publication of a play was not automatic, nor did publication imply (in those days before copyright and royalties) reward for the author. Jonson was the object of much ridicule when in 1616 he published his *Works*. English authors were not supposed to have "Works"; the word was applied only to Latin authors, whose works were called "Opera." In any case, during his last years when he was sick and poor, Jonson got some help from the King, some from the government of London city, and some from loyal patrons, but from those who had published his books and produced his plays he got nothing at all.

On the stage of the Globe, female parts were of course taken by boys; not till after the Restoration (1660) did actresses appear on the English stage. Because boys lost their clean chins and soprano voices in the natural course of time, their stage careers were relatively short, and skillful ones were not in large supply. In the plays done for the King's Men, Jonson makes use of a few female characters, whereas in *Epicene*, which was acted by and written for a company of boys, male and female characters are about equally balanced.

Where did these boys in the company known as "Children of the

Queen's Revels" come from? Historically, they had begun as a boys' choir, selected and trained for the musical delight of the court; under certain circumstances and during certain periods, boys could even be impressed (that is, forcibly removed from their parents) for service in the choir. Gradually they began putting on plays; then they largely ceased to sing (much to the distress of their parents, who often shared middle-class prejudices against actors, and thought they were being forced into a vagabond, ne'er-do-well existence); and by the turn of the century they were a regularly established theatrical company. Shakespeare speaks of them with ill-concealed bitterness in the second act of *Hamlet*:

but there is, sir, an eyrie [nest] of children, little eyases [eaglets], that cry out on the top of the question and are most tyrannically clapped for it; these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages—so they call them—that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills [pens], and dare scarce come hither.

The children's companies did not act at the Globe, across the river in the suburbs, but in "private" theaters within the city limits. These were smaller houses, roofed in so they were more available during the winter months, using artificial lighting, and on the whole attracting a more select audience than the raffish crowd that attended the Globe. The best known of them were a pair constructed in old abbey buildings lying between Fleet Street and the river Thames: from the monks who used to inhabit them, they were known as Blackfriars (Dominicans) and Whitefriars (Carmelites)—but it was many years since friars of any shade had occupied the buildings. They were used for storage depots and record offices, rented out to storekeepers, and adapted to playhouses. The relation of the "private" to the "public" theaters was not altogether antagonistic; for example, the Burbage family, who took the lead in building the Globe and its predecessor (known simply as The Theater) also built the Blackfriars Theater, and the King's Men sometimes played there. Perhaps they also recruited from the children's company; for these boys were not by any means fringe performers. They had excellent coaching, and by all accounts they were trained professionals; several, we know, went on to adult careers on the stage. Before *Epicoene*, they had staged several of Jonson's earlier plays (*Cynthia's Revels*, *The Case Is Altered*); other playwrights wrote for them, and plays of their performance were just as likely to make the author's reputation, and earn him money, as any others.

Whatever the theater in which they were staged, or the company producing them, Elizabethan plays did not generally have long consecutive runs because the supply of available spectators was not very large. When everyone who wanted to had seen the play, the script was placed in the company's library of reserve scripts, where it would be available

in case a revival was called for or a road company wanted to take it on tour. When they were unusually successful in London, like *Volpone*, plays might be performed in the universities, and they sometimes went out into the provinces (especially when the plague grew hot in London) to be performed in inn yards and the main halls of country houses. If he could interest a publisher, the author might get his play printed. The seventeenth-century stage represented one of the few ways to make money by writing, but nobody, not even the prolific and popular Shakespeare, got really rich at it; and Jonson died destitute.

The masque as it flourished in England in the early seventeenth century was a brief artistic growth, ephemeral if not exotic. There had been very primitive court-entertainments as early as the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries; they were called "mummings" or "disguisings." Early in the sixteenth century, they started to be called "masks" or "masques"; there may have been a Continental influence, but its extent is not clear. Sometimes the participants wore false faces, sometimes not; they generally figured or represented an imaginary personage or an abstraction. Masques reached a climax of complexity and beauty under James I, and withered under the chill blasts of Puritanism, disappearing for all-but-good with the outbreak of the Civil Wars in 1640.*

Because they were written by many different authors under a great variety of circumstances, because they had no classical precedents to follow, nor any critical canons to observe, masques took many diverse forms. They were, after all, not literary forms so much as courtly entertainments; poets and men of letters got involved with them only by the side door, as it were, and incidentally. The first and most important element of the masque was the practice of dressing up and showing off. Already this distinguishes them sharply from stage plays, where the actors, though they wear costumes and assume characters not their own, are precisely *not* showing off, *not* calling attention to their own qualities, *not* involving themselves in their own persons with the audience. Masques are analogies if not allegories, deliberately fantastic and unrealistic in their mode, so that they can more accurately mirror the ideals of a courtly audience. They grow out of three other courtly ceremonies, the *tournament*, the *pageant*, and the *triumph*, each of which is related to the others.

As tournaments ceased to consist of real or mock battles, they took on a kind of allegorical or didactic structure. The ladies were labeled Truth, Modesty, Virtue, etc.; the knights, Honor, Temperance, Fortitude, etc. The triumphant knight got to dance with the lady of his choice; each was complimented, and both joined to present their compliments to the person in whose honor the tournament, gradually being

* A few small exceptions must be made for later works like Dryden's *Secular Masque* (1700), which deliberately revived for a momentary occasion a form that was essentially dead.

converted to a pageant, was being held. All the participants wore their finest and fanciest costumes: they carried out some minimal instructive action, for they were all amateur actors, and not up to complex emotions or elaborate speeches. Dancing was a natural consequence of the choosing of partners, and music accompanied, inevitably, the dance. The whole structure led toward the presentation of the supreme compliment to the most important person present. And then the audience was called on to mingle with the masquers in a way that the playhouses would have found socially unthinkable and physically impossible. The final dance circled around the central luminary of the occasion; everyone took part in it because no one was present who was not part of the court, and everyone in the court was bound, by ties of loyalty and reverence, to its supreme figure. In this way the tournament-become-pageant easily melted into the pageant-become-triumph. Dignitaries visiting at country houses, monarchs on tour or celebrating a birthday, princes being crowned or princesses getting married, all could easily be made the centers of a festive event in which they were welcomed, revered, felicitated—in a word, flattered. By our rough democratic standards the flattery often appears fulsome; in the seventeenth century, within the narrow circles of the court, it was an expression of normal good manners and social propriety. One called King James the fountain of honor and the wellspring of nobility or one described Queen Anne as the paragon of feminine beauty, on the same principle that, nowadays, one tells a Hollywood actor that his latest film is “sensational,” or an actress that she’s looking “divine.”

Words, it is important to recall, were only one element in a masque; and though Ben Jonson ultimately made them equal partners, they never over-balanced their fellow-ingredients, music, dance, and spectacle. There was a lot of singing and dancing in every masque; professional composers wrote the melodies, instrumentalists were hired, and good voices were picked for the singing parts. The masquers were ladies and gentlemen of the court, that is, of the idle rich class. As they commonly dressed with great elegance in everyday life, when they dressed up for a masque they were bound to indulge in high fantasy and extravagant costuming. The masque was an occasion for the ladies in particular to show off, and some masques had much the character of a fashion show. Participation in them was very expensive; indeed, its cost was one of the limiting and exclusive features of the form. Finally, the masques generally called for the introduction of elaborate and costly “machinery.” Even though the anticipated run of a masque was for only one night, the sets were much more elaborate and expensive than those of the playhouses. Inigo Jones, the great architect and designer of the age, had brought back from his Italian travels ideas for perspective sets, which produced the illusion of three dimensions. One had to have rather a sophisticated eye to understand this principle. Most English-

men had seen very little of the art of the Renaissance; their eyes didn't readily compose a set of receding flats—that is painted canvas backdrops—into a deep landscape. And because a perspective stage has to be looked at fairly straight on, to produce its effect, perspectives couldn't be used on the Elizabethan stage. Most of the audience in the Globe would have seen sets as we know them from an impossibly acute angle, and some would have seen them, actually, from behind. But the masque focused so closely on one figure in the audience that perspectives could be used, and the King at least could enjoy them.

In addition, the masques made liberal use of onstage scenery. Mountains opened up into caves, witches' dens turned abruptly into the House of Fame. Generally, these effects were achieved by machines that actually rotated, their operation perhaps concealed by a puff of smoke. Sometimes characters or groups of musicians could be made to appear in moving chariots, or individuals could be made to descend from the sky, dangling on cords run over pulleys and worked by stagehands in the wings. New and surprising effects were much in demand; in the matter of stage machinery, the masques were far in advance of the playhouses. Engineers, painters, musicians, choreographers, poets, and stage designers made up a sizable troop of artists; a really ambitious masque, like *The Masque of Queens*, cost the royal treasury over £3,000, not to speak of the sums that the masquers themselves spent on their costumes. Money equivalents are extremely hard to estimate, but in those days a hundred pounds a year was comfort, a thousand pounds a nice fortune, and three thousand pounds for a single evening's entertainment inconceivable extravagance.

Being essentially so lofty and aristocratic a form, the masque inevitably required material for contrast and relief, and this led Jonson, with his strong theatrical sense, to develop anti-masques. These were simply counter-figures, either grotesque or comic, who appeared in the first part of the show: gentry, of course, never took these parts. They might be pygmies, satyrs, witches, Irishmen, alchemists; like Vices in the old morality plays, they were half-comic antagonists of the Virtues, macabre, funny, or actively sinister, they performed their antics and displayed their characters onstage for a while, until (inevitably) the forces of Virtue appeared and triumphed over them. In some ways they are like the villains of stage plays, but without intrigue or motivation. The conflict is heraldic, not dramatic; good appears, declaring itself, and the figures of evil withdraw like the shades of night when the sun rises.

The masque was thus a deliberately limited and exclusive form; though some masques were performed at country houses and under domestic circumstances (i.e., as family festivals), the great majority were performed at court, where vast halls, gorgeously attired courtiers, fine ladies, musical and artistic talent, and immense sums of money could be woven into a short-lived but stunning theatrical complex. But these

various elements were not easily reconciled. Like the court itself, where "favor" was sought with ferocious intensity, the masques easily became occasions for jealous resentment. Jonson quarrelled with Chapman over assignments; and after a short period of fruitful collaboration, he quarrelled bitterly and permanently with Inigo Jones, the architect and scene designer, who had contributed largely to Jonson's first masques.

Jones (1573–1652) was a remarkable man. Though born in humble circumstances, he was pensioned in his late twenties by William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke, to travel in Italy and study the works of painting and architecture, as well as the classical ruins, to be found there. The experience was not lost on Jones: he not only learned a great deal about the art of building in the neo-classical mode, he developed a taste for the painting of the Italian Renaissance such as few Englishmen possessed, and investigated the arts of theatrical design and scenic representation. One of the chief influences on his thinking was the Italian architect Andrea Palladio (1518–80), whose book on architecture he annotated and translated; and one of Palladio's outstanding achievements was the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, which certainly helped to make Jones what he was, the foremost scenic artist in England. His quarrel with Jonson, which became open warfare in the 1620s, was stirred more, it would seem, by personal than by artistic differences. The two men were strong, outspoken, even truculent characters; their collaboration ended in a welter of recriminations. In any event, Jones's real career was in architecture; and in the last part of his life, when masques had fallen out of fashion, and Jonson himself was old and neglected, Inigo Jones continued to carry on a busy career as builder and designer of stately homes and public edifices.

Because only a few aristocrats got to see them performed, masques naturally aroused a good deal of curiosity in the public at large; Jonson was proud of his part in them, and put forth the text of several in tiny quarto pamphlets. But even with their stage directions, masques were never long enough to constitute a proper volume, and most of Jonson's are known simply from their appearance in the several folio editions of his Works (1616, 1640). * * *

ROBERT M. ADAMS

1. Jonson's first masque was *The Masque of Blackness*, which was written for Queen Anne and performed at Whitehall Palace in the Old Banqueting House in 1605, and Jones was his collaborator for the scenic design. In it Jones introduced for the first time in England an illusionistic stage setting, a product of his Italian travels, which depended for its effectiveness upon the spectators applying the laws of perspective to the rich scene in front of them. Scenery played no part in regular theatrical productions of the time and not all the audience could appreciate the dynamic interrelationships between the various pieces on the busy stage. It might be easier for modern viewers, however, who are used to such scenery, and Jonson gives us a very detailed picture of Jones's design. Some of the notes that Jonson supplied to his text are included in brackets in the annotations [Editor].

A Note on the Texts

By the standards of his day, Jonson was a meticulous corrector of proof, and he had ample opportunity to correct most of the texts reprinted here. *Volpone*, printed as a separate quarto in 1607, and *The Alchemist*, similarly printed in 1612, were included in two folio editions of Jonson's *Works* published during his lifetime (1616, 1631), as well as the post-humous folio of 1640. *Epicoene*, first published in the folio of 1616, was reprinted as a separate quarto in 1620, as well as in the *Works* of 1631 and 1640. *The Masque of Blackness* was published with its sequel *The Masque of Beauty* in a quarto edition in 1608 and also in the folios of 1616 and 1640. *Mercury Vindicated* was first printed in the 1616 folio, and *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* in the 1640 folio. In the absence of positive evidence to the contrary, the authority of anything appearing in the 1640 *Works* is very good, for though Jonson never read proof on it, the editors had full access to his papers. The most careful and accurate reprint of all these texts is that of C. H. Herford, and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, in their classic eleven-volume edition of the *Works* (Oxford, 1925-52).

To make a proper text for modern students, however, Jonson's page has to be considerably altered. A lot of extra *e*'s have dropped off words like "selfe" and "heire"; *u* has set itself up as a separate letter from *v*, so that words like "enuie" and "deuill" look odd; *i* and *j* have similarly parted ways, so that "iuyce," "iest," and "iustice" are also strange; and Jonson's system of colloquial contractions has grown obsolete, so that forms like "I'am," "do's," "Ile," and "ha's" disturb the eye, though the intent is clear. Besides, some words have changed form with the years. Jonson is constant in spelling "window" as "windore," and "ostrich" as "estrich"; and his system of punctuation often does not agree with modern conventions. He or his printer uses an occasional ampersand (&) for "and"; he prints numbers ("a 1000 crowns") where we would spell out the word; he capitalizes and italicizes much more freely, and erratically, than we do. In these respects and a few others, like removing the extra *u* from "humour," "honour," etc., the text has been silently restyled in order to render it as accessible as possible to a modern American reader. Seventeenth-century texts had very few stage directions and made few scene divisions; for ease in following the action and referring to specific passages of the text, the editors have copied or

modified these pieces of apparatus, as first introduced by Jonson's major 19th-century editor, William Gifford.

Textual Notes: Major Variants

Volpone

- | | |
|----------|---|
| IV,v,43 | 1616 <i>substitutes</i> goodness <i>for</i> virtue |
| IV,v,130 | 1616 <i>substitutes</i> catholic <i>for</i> Christian |
| V,iv,55 | 1616 <i>substitutes</i> fitted <i>for</i> apted |

The Alchemist

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| I,i,48 | 1616 <i>substitutes</i> Death on me! <i>for</i> God's will! |
| I,ii,56 | 1616 <i>substitutes</i> Xenophon <i>for</i> Testament |
| I,ii,135 | 1616 <i>substitutes</i> Jove <i>for</i> Gad |
| II,ii,58–59 | 1616 <i>adds</i> They will do it best,
Best of all others. |
| III,i,2–5 | 1616 <i>substitutes</i>
And such rebukes we of the separation
Must bear with willing shoulders as the trials
Sent forth to tempt our frailties.
<i>for</i> 1612
And such rebukes th' elect must bear with patience;
They are the exercises of the spirit,
And sent to tempt our frailties. |
| V,iii,44 | 1616 <i>substitutes</i> Come forth you seed of sulphur, sons
of fire
<i>for</i> 1612 Come forth you seed of vipers, sons of Belial |
| V,v,23–24 | 1616 <i>substitutes</i>
They are the vessels
Of pride, lust, and the cart
<i>for</i> 1612
They are the vessels
Of shame and of dishonor |
| V,v,99 | 1616 <i>substitutes</i> Idol <i>for</i> Nimrod |

Epicoene

The basic text of this play is that reproduced in the Folio of 1616. The Quarto of 1620 is a careless reprint of this original text, and the Folio of 1640 also reproduces it, faithfully copying the consequences of an accident that occurred in the course of the 1616 printing. One large tray (form) of type was apparently spilled on the floor after a number of examples had been printed; it was picked up and put together, very carelessly, by someone about the print shop, and more copies of the

1616 folio were then printed off, containing about 280 changes from the original, correct version. It was one of these careless copies that was used as the basis for the 1640 Folio. The present editor has not thought it necessary to record these variants, or the other unimportant variants introduced by 1620 and 1640.

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