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Ben Jonson

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Abbreviations

(i) *General works*

DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography*
Donne, *Divine Poems*	John Donne, *The Divine Poems*, edited by Helen Gardner (Oxford, 1952)
Donne, *Epithalamions*	John Donne, *The Epithalamions, Anniversaries, and Epicedes*, edited by W. Milgate (Oxford, 1978)
Donne, *Satires*	John Donne, *The Satires, Epigrams, and Verse Letters*, edited by W. Milgate (Oxford, 1967)
Fleay	F. G. Fleay, *A Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama, 1559–1642*, 2 vols. (London, 1891)
Herrick	Robert Herrick, *The Poetical Works*, edited by L. C. Martin (Oxford, 1956)
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
Sugden	E. H. Sugden, *A Topographical Dictionary to the Works of Shakespeare and his Fellow Dramatists* (Manchester, London, and New York, 1925; repr. Hildesheim and New York, 1969)
Tilley	M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1950)

(ii) *Journals*

BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
CA	*Classical Antiquity*
CP	*Classical Philology*
Crit. Q.	*Critical Quarterly*
E. & S.	*Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*
E. in C.	*Essays in Criticism*
ELH	*ELH, A Journal of English Literary History*
ELN	*English Language Notes*
ELR	*English Literary Renaissance*
Eng. Misc.	*English Miscellany*
ES	*English Studies*
Expl.	*Explicator*
HLB	*Harvard Library Bulletin*
HSNPL	*Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*
JDJ	*John Donne Journal*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*

JMRS	*Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*
JWCI	*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
MP	*Modern Philology*
NQ	*Notes and Queries*
PBSA	*Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*
PQ	*Philological Quarterly*
RES	*Review of English Studies*
RMS	*Renaissance and Modern Studies*
RN	*Renaissance News*
RQ	*Renaissance Quarterly*
SEL	*Studies in English Literature* 1500–1900
SLI	*Studies in the Literary Imagination*
SP	*Studies in Philology*
SR	*Studies in the Renaissance*
SSE	*Sydney Studies in English*
TLS	*Times Literary Supplement*

(iii) *Works by Jonson*

Alch.	*The Alchemist* (1610)
Augurs	*The Masque of Augurs* (1622)
Beauty	*The Masque of Beauty* (1608)
BF	*Bartholomew Fair* (1614)
Blackness	*The Masque of Blackness* (1605)
Cat.	*Catiline* (1611)
Chall. Tilt	*A Challenge at Tilt* (1613/14)
Chlor.	*Chloridia* (1631)
Christmas	*Christmas his Masque* (1616)
C. is A.	*The Case is Altered* (written *c.*1598)
Conv. Dr.	*Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden* (1618/19)
CR	*Cynthia's Revels* (1600)
D. is A.	*The Devil is an Ass* (1616)
Disc.	*Timber, or Discoveries* (1640 Folio)
EMI	*Every Man in his Humour* (1598 version in 1601 Quarto; revision in 1616 Folio)*
EMO	*Every Man out of his Humour* (1599)
Eng. Gram.	*The English Grammar* (1640 Folio)
Ent. Alth.	*The Entertainment at Althorpe* (1603)
Ent. K. & Q. Theob.	*The Entertainment of the King and Queen at Theobalds* (1607)

* All references to the 1616 Folio text, unless otherwise specified.

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Ent. Welb.	*The King's Entertainment at Welbeck* (1633)
Epig.	*Epigrams* (1616 Folio)
For.	*The Forest* (1616 Folio)
Fort. Is.	*The Fortunate Isles, and their Union* (1625)
G.A. Rest.	*The Golden Age Restored* (1615)
Gyp. Met.	*The Gypsies Metamorphosed* (1621)
Haddington	*The Haddington Masque* (1608)
Hym.	*Hymenaei* (1606)
King's Ent.	*The King's Entertainment in Passing to his Coronation* (1604)
Leg. Conv.	*Leges Convivales*
Love Freed	*Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly* (1611)
Love's Tr.	*Love's Triumph Through Callipolis* (1631)
Love's Welc. Bols.	*Love's Welcome at Bolsover* (1634)
LR	*Love Restored* (1612)
Merc. Vind.	*Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists at Court* (1616)
Misc. Poems	*Miscellaneous Poems* (this edition)
ML	*The Magnetic Lady* (1632)
Nept. Tr.	*Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion* (1623/4)
NI	*The New Inn* (1629)
Oberon	*Oberon, the Fairy Prince* (1611)
Panegyre	*A Panegyre on the King's Opening of Parliament* (1604)
P.H. Barr.	*The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers* (1609)
Pleas. Rec.	*Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618)
Poet.	*Poetaster* (1601)
Queens	*The Masque of Queens* (1609)
Sad Shep.	*The Sad Shepherd* (unfinished)
Sej.	*Sejanus* (1603)
S. of N.	*The Staple of News* (1626)
SW	*Epicoene, or the Silent Woman* (1609)
Time Vind.	*Time Vindicated to Himself and to his Honours* (1623)
T. of T.	*A Tale of a Tub* (1633)
Und.	*The Underwood* (1640 Folio)
UV	*Ungathered Verse* (Herford and Simpson)
Vis. Delight	*The Vision of Delight* (1617)
Volp.	*Volpone* (1605 or 1606)

(iv) *Editions of Jonson*

Donaldson	*Ben Jonson*, ed. Ian Donaldson (Oxford, 1985)
Gifford	*The Works of Ben Jonson*, edited by W. Gifford, 9 vols. (London, 1816)

Gifford/Cunningham	*The Works of Ben Jonson*, edited by W. Gifford, with introduction and appendices by Lieut.-Col. F. Cunningham, 9 vols. (London, 1875)
H & S	*Ben Jonson*, edition by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford, 1925–52)
Hunter	*The Complete Poetry of Ben Jonson*, edited by William B. Hunter, Jun. (New York, 1963)
Johnston	*Poems of Ben Jonson*, edited by George Burke Johnston (1954)
Miller	Ben Jonson, *Selected Poems*, edited by Anthony Miller (Sydney University, Sydney, 1981)
Newdigate	*The Poems of Ben Jonson*, edited by Bernard H. Newdigate (Oxford, 1936)
Parfitt	Ben Jonson, *The Complete Poems*, edited by George Parfitt, Penguin English Poets (Harmondsworth, 1975)

Introduction

BEN JONSON's long professional career stretched from the final decade of the reign of Elizabeth I to the last troubled years of Charles I. It was a career characterized by spectacular contrasts and transformations. Jonson was the bricklayer who rose to become chief masque-writer at the court of James I; the Westminster student who, without benefit of university education, made himself one of the great classical scholars of his age. He was the 'poor journeyman player' whose reputation as a dramatist throughout the seventeenth century was to equal, if not surpass, that of Shakespeare himself.[1] He was the unremitting critic of 'the loathèd stage', for which he nevertheless continued to write.[2] He was the advocate of rationality who was famed also for his quarrelsomeness, interested in bizarre and supernatural occurrences, and 'oppressed with fantasy, which hath ever mastered his reason'.[3] Legislative in his critical utterances, keenly interested in juridical processes, Jonson was constantly on the wrong side of the law, imprisoned or interrogated on charges of murder, recusancy, or questionable writing. He converted to Catholicism while in prison in 1598, and continued in that faith until 1610, celebrating his return to the Anglican religion by quaffing a full communion cup. Throughout this Catholic period Jonson loyally wrote for a Protestant king and a Protestant court. Visiting Paris in 1612–13, he listened gravely to theological disputations between Protestant and Catholic champions, informed the brilliant Cardinal Duperron that his free translations of Virgil 'were naught', and was trundled, 'dead

[1] The quoted phrase is from Dekker's *Satiromastix*, ed. Josiah H. Penniman (Boston, 1913), IV. i. 159–60. The methodology of G. E. Bentley's *Shakespeare and Jonson: Their Reputations in the Seventeenth Century Compared*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1945) has been criticized by David L. Frost in *The School of Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 1968), but Bentley's general thesis concerning Jonson's dominant reputation in this period is still broadly persuasive.

[2] *Misc. Poems*, 11; Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, Calif., 1981), ch. v: 'Jonson and the Loathèd Stage'.

[3] *Conv. Dr.* xix. 692 (quotations here and elsewhere modernized). In 1598 Jonson was 'almost at the gallows' for killing a fellow-actor, Gabriel Spencer: *Conv. Dr.* xiii. 249. Anne Barton's *Ben Jonson: Dramatist* (Cambridge, 1984) deftly highlights the more fanciful and romantic aspects of Jonson's character and disposition.

drunk', through the city streets by his mischievous pupil, Sir Walter Raleigh the younger, who told curious onlookers 'that was a more lively image of the crucifix than any they had' (*Conv. Dr.* xiii. 295–305). In 1618–19, aged 46, weighing nearly twenty stone, he walked to Scotland and back, to see the country of his forebears. A disabling stroke in 1628 confined him to a single room of his house in Westminster, where during the last decade of his life he wrote some of his most delicate and haunting work. His death in August 1637 occasioned greater public notice and poetic lamentation than the death of Shakespeare nearly twenty years earlier.[4]

Contemplating the difference between Shakespeare's genius and that of Milton, Coleridge focused on the contrastive kinds of *subjectivity* that are to be found in their work. 'Shakespeare's poetry is characterless,' Coleridge wrote, 'that is, it does not reflect the individual Shakespeare; but John Milton himself is in every line of the Paradise Lost. . . . There is a subjectivity of the poet, as of Milton, who is himself before himself in everything he writes; and there is a subjectivity of the persona, or dramatic character, as in all Shakespeare's great creations, Hamlet, Lear, etc.'[5] The poetry of Ben Jonson might be said to resemble that of Milton, as Coleridge describes it here. Jonson, like Milton, seems 'himself before himself in everything he writes'. Much of his poetry appears to some degree self-referential or self-descriptive. The ninth poem of *The Underwood*, for example, offers what Jonson called 'a picture of himself'. What is 'pictured' in this poem is at once the poet's emotional state, and—in a literal, painterly sense—his physical appearance:

> Oh, but my conscious fears
> That fly my thoughts between,
> Tell me that she hath seen
> My hundred of grey hairs,
> Told seven-and-forty years;
> Read so much waste, as she cannot embrace

[4] The most reliable and readable modern account of Jonson's life is David Riggs's *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989).

[5] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Table Talk*, 12 May 1830, in *Table Talk From Ben Jonson to Leigh Hunt*, ed. James Thornton (London and New York, 1934), pp. 167–8. Cf. Tomalin's Report on Coleridge's Fourth Lecture on Shakespeare and Milton, in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shakespearian Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor, 2 vols. (London and New York, 1960) ii. 66.

My mountain belly, and my rocky face;
And all these through her eyes have stopped her ears.

(*Und.* 9. 11–18)

In other poems, likewise, Jonson himself seems solidly present; so solidly, indeed, that it also seems natural that on more than one occasion he should refer with some precision to his bodily weight, as though humorously offering such information as evidence and authentication of an inner plight:

. . . being a tardy, cold
Unprofitable chattel, fat and old,
Laden with belly, and doth hardly approach
His friends, but to break chairs or crack a coach.
His weight is twenty stone, within two pound,
And that's made up as doth the purse abound.

(*Und.* 56. 7–12)

In other ways, too, Jonson enforces the sense of his poetic presence. His very name returns repeatedly in his verse, a reminder of his authorial aims, achievements, and personality: 'Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry' (*Epig.* 45. 10); 'Ben | Jonson, who sung this of him, ere he went | Himself to rest' (*Und.* 70. 84–6); 'Sir, you are sealèd of the tribe of Ben' (*Und.* 47. 78).

Yet that seemingly solid presence is deceptive, for the self that is projected within Jonson's poetry is carefully fabricated, and the poems are 'autobiographical' only in the most complex and oblique of ways. For all his skill in humorous self-deprecation, Jonson seldom reveals within his poetry the deeper contrasts, contradictions, and insecurities of his social or moral position. 'I fly | To speak myself out too ambitiously,' he writes with seeming reticence in 'An Epistle, Answering to One that Asked to be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben' (*Und.* 47. 5–6), while simultaneously fashioning from classical sources an ideal portrait of a pious, modest, private citizen, a portrait which the poem persuades us to accept as another 'picture of himself': '*So short you read my character*' (l. 73). The poem at once conceals, reconstructs, and reasserts the poetic self. Written at a time when his own position at court was imperilled, it celebrates an alternative and morally confident community of 'Men that are safe and sure in all they do', a 'tribe' even more exclusive,

more difficult of access, than that from which he has recently been marginalized.[6]

An older generation of scholars was tempted often to regard much of Jonson's poetry as direct or thinly veiled autobiography. The poetic sequence 'A Celebration of Charis in Ten Lyric Pieces', for example (*Und.* 2), seemingly told of the 50-year-old poet's infatuation with a lady of the court circle: the scholar's primary task was to sleuth out her identity. F. G. Fleay thought that Charis was Lady Elizabeth Hatton, who was 'manifestly' also the subject of *The Underwood*, 19, and 'probably' the Venus of Jonson's *The Haddington Masque*. Herford and Simpson, though more cautious about this equation, agreed that Charis 'was probably the lady who played Venus' in this masque. Later they changed their minds: that role, they acknowledged, would have been played by a boy actor.[7] But if it is to be argued that the 'Charis' sequence is in some sense autobiographical, other facts need to be recognized. The sequence incorporates lyrical material that Jonson had written over a ten-year period, including a song—'Do but look on her eyes'—that had previously been heard in quite another context in Jonson's comedy *The Devil is an Ass*. 'O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!': 'she' may perhaps be a woman whom Jonson loved, but 'she' is also the dramatic character Mrs Fitzdottrel, wooed by Wittipol in the presence of her own husband. The highly wrought, playfully dramatic narrative of the sequence as a whole determinedly defies, even as it seemingly invites, biographical exegesis.

Jonson's ode beginning 'Helen, did Homer never see' (*Und.* 27) presents the biographically minded scholar with similar problems. The poet apparently wishes to commemorate an actual love, an actual woman:

> And shall not I my Celia bring
> Where men may see whom I do sing? (31–2)

Yet the ode could also be interpreted as saying that it is obligatory for poets to express wishes of this sort, whatever their actual circumstances may be. 'My Celia' is also the recipient of the lyrical proposal offered in *The Forest*, 5:

[6] See the studies of this poem by Richard S. Peterson and by Martin Butler, referred to in the notes, p. 201.

[7] See H & S i. 53, iii. 605, and notes to *Und.* 19, this edition.

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Come, my Celia let us prove,
While we may, the sports of love . . . (1–2)

Yet this song, too, has an earlier dramatic context, for it is sung in the third act of *Volpone* by Volpone himself to Corvino's wife, Celia, whom he is bent upon seducing. The song is a translation of Catullus' famous invitation to the woman he chose to call 'Lesbia', whom scholars reckon to be Clodia, wife of Quintus Metellus Celer.[8] If the woman referred to in *The Underwood*, 27, as 'my Celia' has a real identity, it is tantalizingly overlaid by the identities, real and fictitious, of other women.

And shall not I my Celia bring
Where men may see whom I do sing?

The question is silently resolved in the negative. Jonson does not bring 'Celia' where men may see whom he does sing. The nature of her identity and of Jonson's professions of love remains entirely a matter for speculation.

Jonson's classical borrowings have sometimes bewildered readers, especially those who expect the first-person pronoun to mean precisely what it says. In 1788 the dramatist Richard Cumberland revealed with a piously scandalized flourish that Jonson's celebrated lyric 'Drink to me only with thine eyes' (*For.* 9) was not in fact original:

I was surprised the other day to find our learned poet Ben Jonson had been poaching in an obscure collection of love-letters, written by the sophist Philostratus in a very rhapsodical stile merely for the purpose of stringing together a parcel of unnatural, far-fetched conceits, more calculated to disgust a man of Jonson's classic taste, than to put him upon the humble task of copying them, and fathering the translation.[9]

Cumberland may have been especially sensitive on the question of literary imitation, having been pilloried by Sheridan in *The Critic* a few years earlier (as Sir Fretful Plagiary) for his own dramatic thefts. A closer examination might have shown Cumberland that more than 'the humble task of copying' had been involved in the creation of Jonson's delicate lyric.[10] But the shock which

[8] Gordon Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford, 1968), p. 528.

[9] Richard Cumberland, *The Observer*, vol. ix, no. cix (1788), 136.

[10] See A. D. Fitton-Brown, *MLR* liv (1959), 554–7; but also Gordon Braden, *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, Conn., 1978), pp. 166–70.

Cumberland apparently felt at discovering this classical source may perhaps be attributable in part to the fact that the lyric, once revealed as an imitation, can no longer seemingly be regarded as a spontaneous expression of actual passion. The 'me' of the lyric no longer seems to be, in any simple sense, Ben Jonson himself; it seems in part Philostratus, or Jonson-playing-Philostratus. If originality, sincerity, and spontaneity are regarded as necessary, and necessarily related, components in poetry, such a confusion of authorial voice will naturally seem radically confusing.

Jonson's habit of 'playing' Philostratus, Catullus, Horace, Martial, and other figures from the classical past does not, however, necessarily rob his work of personal feeling, nor is it to be dismissed as idle plagiarism. Jonson is both passionate and serious. His writing repeatedly turns upon observed correspondences between his own acts, opinions, sentiments, and dilemmas and those of great writers of former ages. In the margin of his own copy of Scriverius' Martial, beside Martial's epigram on a jealous rival who attempts to discredit him with the emperor Domitian, Jonson wrote the single word, 'Inigo'. Martial's relationship to Domitian is seen at this moment to correspond with Jonson's relationship to his monarch; Martial's rival, to correspond with Jonson's old ally and enemy, Inigo Jones. The perception was to prompt in turn a petitionary poem by Jonson to King Charles, a poem which (as so often) implicitly compares past and present times.[11] The fact that Jonson's poem has a Roman model does not mean that it is without personal force or personal application; on the contrary, the model gives his emphatically personal request a classical authority and strength. A similar appeal to the past can be seen in this episode reported in the *Conversations with Drummond*:

> Being at the end of my Lord Salisbury's table with Inigo Jones, and demanded by my Lord why he was not glad, 'My Lord', said he, 'You promised I should dine with you, but I do not', for he had none of his meat. He esteemed only th[a]t his meat which was of his own dish. (xiii. 317–21)

Jonson's quip is taken from an epigram of Martial's to which we know he was much attached:

[11] *Und.* 76; cf. Martial IV. xxvii.

Since I am asked to dinner, no longer, as before, a purchased guest, why is not the same dinner served to me as to you? . . . why do I dine without you, although, Ponticus, I am dining with you?[12]

Jonson's experience at Robert Cecil's table satisfyingly corresponds with Martial's experience at the table of Ponticus; poets (it is implied) have ever suffered such indignities at the hands of great men. By 'playing' Martial, Jonson also strategically protects himself, speaking as he does in a voice not uniquely and offensively his own. The poem comes to his mind again when he praises Robert Sidney's hospitality in 'To Penshurst':

> Where the same beer and bread and self-same wine
> That is his lordship's shall be also mine;
> And I not fain to sit, as some this day
> At great men's tables, and yet dine away.
>
> (*For.* 2. 63–6)

'This day' is just like Martial's day. The same insults, the same pretensions, the same hollow hospitality recur—but so too, redeemingly, does the rare true host, and the rare true poet, who notices such things.

History, as Jonson perceives it, is not a changing and evolving process, producing an infinite series of unique moments. Instead, it is a repetitive and in part predictable affair, whose individual moments may be seen to resemble other moments that have occurred in the past or may occur in the future. To echo the poets of the past is not therefore a servile or insignificant act; it is rather a salute to their authority, a telling (and in turn authoritative) location of the present relevance and application of what they, in their age, have observed and written. Oscar Wilde's comment on Ben Jonson was apt: 'He made the poets of Greece and Rome terribly modern.'[13]

The pronoun 'I' in Jonson's writing has thus at times an oddly plural or impersonal force. Even when he seems most vigorously and unquestionably himself, Jonson may be gathering to himself the attributes, or voicing the sentiments, of other writers from other ages:

[12] Martial III. lx; cf. *Conv. Dr.* xvii. 433–4, xviii. 624–6.

[13] *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York, 1969), pp. 34–5.

Let me be what I am: as Virgil cold,
As Horace fat, or as Anacreon old;
No poet's verses yet did ever move,
Whose readers did not think he was in love.

(*Und.* 42. 1–4)

'What I am' is inevitably compounded in part of what other writers have been: even Jonson's fatness has classical precedent. Jonson further admits that poetical and historical truth do not always coincide. For the poet's readers to be moved by his verses, they must '*think* he was in love', whatever the facts of the matter may have been. As Jonson wrote elsewhere, 'poet never credit gained | By writing truths, but things like truths, well feigned'.[14]

Jonson's understanding of the concept of literary personality is, therefore, significantly different from that which has prevailed since Romantic times. For Jonson, the authorial 'I' who speaks in any writer's work may be in part fictitious, in part compounded of the personae of other writers; biographical deduction from work to life is therefore more than ordinarily hazardous. Yet literary imitation for Jonson is more than a matter of passive and impersonal agglomeration of writings of the past. 'For to all the observations of the ancients, we have our own experience,' he wrote in his commonplace book, *Discoveries*, 'which, if we will use and apply, we have better means to pronounce.' The ancients therefore are 'guides, not commanders' (*Disc.* 134–9). A writer appropriates what he needs from his sources, and remains, in an ultimate sense, 'himself'. Jonson discusses this process of absorption and resistance in an important passage elsewhere in the *Discoveries* (which—characteristically—itself derives from other sources):

The third requisite in our poet or maker is imitation, to be able to convert the substance or riches of another poet to his own use. To make choice of one excellent man above the rest, and so to follow him till he grow very he, or so like him as the copy may be mistaken for the principal. Not as a creature that swallows what it takes in crude, raw, or indigested, but that feeds with an appetite, and hath a stomach to concoct, divide, and turn all into nourishment. Not to imitate servilely (as Horace saith) and catch at vices for virtue, but to draw forth out of the best and choicest flowers, with the bee, and turn all into honey: work it into one relish and savour, make our imitation sweet . . . (2466–79)

[14] *Epicoene*, second prologue, ll. 9–10.

'So to follow him *till he grow very he*': this notion is central to Jonson's art. Though Jonson may seem to be, like Coleridge's Milton, 'himself before himself in everything he writes', that self is carefully constructed, carefully layered: like the dazzling impersonations of the characters in his greatest comedies, it is a product of subtlety and of art.

The text of this edition is a modernized version of the text established by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson; it is based upon my 1985 Oxford Authors *Ben Jonson* edition (which is in turn a revision of my 1975 Oxford Standard Authors/Oxford Paperback *Ben Jonson: Poems*). The annotation in this edition represents a thorough revision and updating of annotation to be found in the 1985 Oxford Authors edition.

*Chronology**

?1572	Jonson born (?11 June), one month after death of his father, 'a grave minister of the gospel'; his mother remarries, to bricklayer, not long after; family lives near Charing Cross; Jonson attends private school in St Martin's Church, and later Westminster School: taught by William Camden.
?1588	Leaves Westminster School.
early 1590s	Works as bricklayer; military service in Flanders: 'In his service in the Low Countries he had, in the face of both the camps, killed an enemy and taken *opima spolia* from him' (*Conv. Dr.* 244–5).
1594	Marries Anne Lewis (14 Nov.): 'a shrew yet honest' (*Conv. Dr.* 254). Children of this marriage include: Benjamin (?1596–1603: commemorated in *Epig.* 45); Mary (probably b. soon after 1598, d. aged six months: commemorated in *Epig.* 22); Joseph (b. Dec. 1599); Benjamin (Feb. 1608–18 Nov. 1611). Jonson probably had other children, legitimate and illegitimate.
1597	Mentioned in Henslowe's diary as an actor; likely to have begun this career before this date. Imprisoned for his share in lost play, *The Isle of Dogs* (Aug.–Oct.).
1598	Indicted (22 Sept.) for killing a fellow actor, Gabriel Spencer, in a duel; pleads self-defence, given benefit of clergy, branded on thumb, goods confiscated. Converted to Catholicism while in prison: 'thereafter he was twelve years a papist' (*Conv. Dr.* 251). Listed by Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* amongst English playwrights 'best for tragedy'.
1600–1	'War of the Theatres', with Dekker and Marston.
1601, 1602	Paid for 'additions' to *The Spanish Tragedy* (25 Sept.; 22 June).
1602	'Ben Jonson the poet now lives upon one Townshend, and scorns the world' (i.e. Sir Robert Townshend; Manningham's diary, Feb.). Jonson later lives five years with Esmé Stewart, Lord Aubigny; separated during this period from his wife.

* For dates of individual works by Jonson, see pp. xiii–xiv.

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