

Classic Poetry Series

Ben Jonson

- 103 poems -

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Ben Jonson (11 June 1572 – 6 August 1637)

Benjamin Jonson was an English Renaissance dramatist, poet and actor. A contemporary of William Shakespeare, he is best known for his satirical plays, particularly *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*, which are considered his best, and his lyric poems. A man of vast reading and a seemingly insatiable appetite for controversy, Jonson had an unparalleled breadth of influence on Jacobean and Caroline playwrights and poets.

Poetry

Jonson's poetry, like his drama, is informed by his classical learning. Some of his better-known poems are close translations of Greek or Roman models; all display the careful attention to form and style that often came naturally to those trained in classics in the humanist manner. Jonson, however, largely avoided the debates about rhyme and meter that had consumed Elizabethan classicists such as Campion and Harvey. Accepting both rhyme and stress, Jonson uses them to mimic the classical qualities of simplicity, restraint, and precision.

"Epigrams" (published in the 1616 folio) is an entry in a genre that was popular among late-Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences, although Jonson was perhaps the only poet of his time to work in its full classical range. The epigrams explore various attitudes, most but not all of them from the satiric stock of the day: complaints against women, courtiers, and spies abound. The condemnatory poems are short and anonymous; Jonson's epigrams of praise, including a famous poem to Camden and lines to Lucy Harington, are somewhat longer and mostly addressed to specific individuals. Although it is an epigram in the classical sense of the genre, "On My First Son" is neither satirical nor very short; the poem, and others like it, resemble what a later age sometimes called "lyric poetry." The poems of "The Forest" also appeared in the first folio. Most of the fifteen poems are addressed to Jonson's aristocratic supporters, but the most famous are his country-house poem "To Penshurst" and the poem "To Celia" ("Come, my Celia, let us prove") that appears also in *Volpone*.

"Underwood," published in the expanded folio of 1640, is a larger and more heterogeneous group of poems. It contains "A Celebration of Charis," Jonson's most extended effort at love poetry; various religious pieces; encomiastic poems including the poem to Shakespeare and a sonnet on Mary Wroth; the "Execration against Vulcan" and others. The 1640 volume also contains three elegies which have often been ascribed to Donne (one of them appeared in Donne's posthumous collected poems).

Relationship with Shakespeare

There are many legends about Jonson's rivalry with Shakespeare, some of which may be true. Drummond reports that during their conversation, Jonson scoffed at two apparent absurdities in Shakespeare's plays: a nonsensical line in Julius Caesar, and the setting of The Winter's Tale on the non-existent seacoast of Bohemia. Drummond also reported Jonson as saying that Shakespeare "wanted [i.e., lacked] art." Whether Drummond is viewed as accurate or not, the comments fit well with Jonson's well-known theories about literature.

In Timber, which was published posthumously and reflects his lifetime of practical experience, Jonson offers a fuller and more conciliatory comment. He recalls being told by certain actors that Shakespeare never blotted (i.e., crossed out) a line when he wrote. His own response, "Would he had blotted a thousand," was taken as malicious. However, Jonson explains, "He was, indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature, had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped". Jonson concludes that "there was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned." Also when Shakespeare died he said "He was not of an age, but for all time."

Thomas Fuller relates stories of Jonson and Shakespeare engaging in debates in the Mermaid Tavern; Fuller imagines conversations in which Shakespeare would run rings around the more learned but more ponderous Jonson. That the two men knew each other personally is beyond doubt, not only because of the tone of Jonson's references to him but because Shakespeare's company produced a number of Jonson's plays, at least one of which (Every Man in his Humour) Shakespeare certainly acted in. However, it is now impossible to tell how much personal communication they had, and tales of their friendship cannot be substantiated.

Jonson's most influential and revealing commentary on Shakespeare is the second of the two poems that he contributed to the prefatory verse that opens Shakespeare's First Folio. This poem, "To the memory of my beloved, The AUTHOR, Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us," did a good deal to create the traditional view of Shakespeare as a poet who, despite "small Latine, and lesse Greeke", had a natural genius. The poem has traditionally been thought to exemplify the contrast which Jonson perceived between himself, the disciplined and erudite classicist, scornful of ignorance and sceptical of the masses, and Shakespeare, represented in the poem as a kind of natural wonder whose genius was not subject to any rules except those of the audiences for which he wrote. But the poem itself qualifies this view:

Yet must I not give Nature all: Thy Art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.

Some view this elegy as a conventional exercise, but others see it as a heartfelt tribute to the "Sweet Swan Of Avon," the "Soul of the Age!" It has been argued that Jonson helped to edit the First Folio, and he may have been inspired to write this poem by reading his fellow playwright's works, a number of which had been previously either unpublished or available in less satisfactory versions, in a relatively complete form.

Reception and influence

During most of the 17th century Jonson was a towering literary figure, and his influence was enormous. Before the English Civil War, the "Tribe of Ben" touted his importance, and during the Restoration Jonson's satirical comedies and his theory and practice of "humour characters" was extremely influential, providing the blueprint for many Restoration comedies. In the 18th century Jonson's status began to decline. In the Romantic era, Jonson suffered the fate of being unfairly compared and contrasted to Shakespeare, as the taste for Jonson's type of satirical comedy decreased. Jonson was at times greatly appreciated by the Romantics, but overall he was denigrated for not writing in a Shakespearean vein. In the 20th century, Jonson's status rose significantly.

f Jonson's reputation as a playwright has traditionally been linked to Shakespeare, his reputation as a poet has, since the early 20th century, been linked to that of John Donne. In this comparison, Jonson represents the cavalier strain of poetry, emphasising grace and clarity of expression; Donne, by contrast, epitomised the metaphysical school of poetry, with its reliance on strained, baroque metaphors and often vague phrasing. Since the critics who made this comparison (Herbert Grierson for example), were to varying extents rediscovering Donne, this comparison often worked to the detriment of Jonson's reputation.

In his time Jonson was at least as influential as Donne. In 1623, historian Edmund Bolton named him the best and most polished English poet. That this judgment was widely shared is indicated by the admitted influence he had on younger poets. The grounds for describing Jonson as the "father" of cavalier poets are clear: many of the cavalier poets described themselves as his "sons" or his "tribe." For some of this tribe, the connection was as much social as poetic; Herrick described meetings at "the Sun, the Dog, the Triple Tunne." All of them, including those like Herrick whose accomplishments in verse are generally regarded as superior to Jonson's, took inspiration from Jonson's revival of classical forms and themes, his subtle melodies, and his disciplined use of wit. In these respects Jonson may be regarded as among the most important figures in the prehistory of English neoclassicism.

The best of Jonson's lyrics have remained current since his time; periodically, they experience a brief vogue, as after the publication of Peter Whalley's edition of 1756. Jonson's poetry continues to interest scholars for the light which it sheds on English literary history, such as politics, systems of patronage, and intellectual attitudes. For the general reader, Jonson's reputation rests on a few lyrics that, though brief, are surpassed for grace and precision by very few Renaissance poems: "On My First Sonne"; "To Celia"; "To Penshurst"; and the epitaph on boy player Solomon Pavy.

Works:

Plays

A Tale of a Tub, comedy (ca. 1596? revised? performed 1633; printed 1640)
The Case is Altered, comedy (ca. 1597–98; printed 1609), with Henry Porter and Anthony Munday?
Every Man in His Humour, comedy (performed 1598; printed 1601)
Every Man out of His Humour, comedy (performed 1599; printed 1600)
Cynthia's Revels (performed 1600; printed 1601)
The Poetaster, comedy (performed 1601; printed 1602)
Sejanus His Fall, tragedy (performed 1603; printed 1605)
Eastward Ho, comedy (performed and printed 1605), a collaboration with John Marston and George Chapman
Volpone, comedy (ca. 1605–06; printed 1607)
Epicoene, or the Silent Woman, comedy (performed 1609; printed 1616)
The Alchemist, comedy (performed 1610; printed 1612)
Catiline His Conspiracy, tragedy (performed and printed 1611)
Bartholomew Fair, comedy (performed 31 October 1614; printed 1631)
The Devil is an Ass, comedy (performed 1616; printed 1631)
The Staple of News, comedy (performed Feb. 1626; printed 1631)
The New Inn, or The Light Heart, comedy (licensed 19 January 1629; printed 1631)
The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled, comedy (licensed 12 October 1632; printed 1641)
The Sad Shepherd, pastoral (ca. 1637, printed 1641), unfinished
Mortimer his Fall, history (printed 1641), a fragment

Masques

The Coronation Triumph, or The King's Entertainment (performed 15 March 1604; printed 1604); with Thomas Dekker
A Private Entertainment of the King and Queen on May-Day (The Penates) (1

May 1604; printed 1616)
The Entertainment of the Queen and Prince Henry at Althorp (The Satyr) (25 June 1603; printed 1604)
The Masque of Blackness (6 January 1605; printed 1608)
Hymenaei (5 January 1606; printed 1606)
The Entertainment of the Kings of Great Britain and Denmark (The Hours) (24 July 1606; printed 1616)
The Masque of Beauty (10 January 1608; printed 1608)
The Masque of Queens (2 February 1609; printed 1609)
The Hue and Cry after Cupid, or The Masque at Lord Haddington's Marriage (9 February 1608; printed ca. 1608)
The Entertainment at Britain's Burse (11 April 1609; lost, rediscovered 2004)
The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers, or The Lady of the Lake (6 January 1610; printed 1616)
Oberon, the Faery Prince (1 January 1611; printed 1616)
Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly (3 February 1611; printed 1616)
Love Restored (6 January 1612; printed 1616)
A Challenge at Tilt, at a Marriage (27 December 1613/1 January 1614; printed 1616)
The Irish Masque at Court (29 December 1613; printed 1616)
Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists (6 January 1615; printed 1616)
The Golden Age Restored (1 January 1616; printed 1616)
Christmas, His Masque (Christmas 1616; printed 1641)
The Vision of Delight (6 January 1617; printed 1641)
Lovers Made Men, or The Masque of Lethe, or The Masque at Lord Hay's (22 February 1617; printed 1617)

Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue (6 January 1618; printed 1641) The masque was a failure; Jonson revised it by placing the anti-masque first, turning it into:

For the Honour of Wales (17 February 1618; printed 1641)
News from the New World Discovered in the Moon (7 January 1620: printed 1641)
The Entertainment at Blackfriars, or The Newcastle Entertainment (May 1620?; MS)
Pan's Anniversary, or The Shepherd's Holy-Day (19 June 1620?; printed 1641)
The Gypsies Metamorphosed (3 and 5 August 1621; printed 1640)
The Masque of Augurs (6 January 1622; printed 1622)
Time Vindicated to Himself and to His Honours (19 January 1623; printed 1623)
Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion (26 January 1624; printed 1624)
The Masque of Owls at Kenilworth (19 August 1624; printed 1641)
The Fortunate Isles and Their Union (9 January 1625; printed 1625)
Love's Triumph Through Callipolis (9 January 1631; printed 1631)
Chloridia: Rites to Chloris and Her Nymphs (22 February 1631; printed 1631)
The King's Entertainment at Welbeck in Nottinghamshire (21 May 1633; printed 1641)
Love's Welcome at Bolsover (30 July 1634; printed 1641)

Other works

Epigrams (1612)
The Forest (1616), including To Penshurst
A Discourse of Love (1618)
Barclay's Argenis, translated by Jonson (1623)
The Execration against Vulcan (1640)
Horace's Art of Poetry, translated by Jonson (1640), with a commendatory verse by Edward Herbert
Underwood (1640)
English Grammar (1640)

Timber, or Discoveries made upon men and matter, as they have flowed out of his daily readings, or had their reflux to his peculiar notion of the times, a commonplace book

On My First Sonne (1616), elegy
To Celia (Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes), poem

A Celebration of Charis: I. His Excuse for Loving

Let it not your wonder move,
Less your laughter, that I love.
Though I now write fifty years,
I have had, and have, my peers;
Poets, though divine, are men,
Some have lov'd as old again.
And it is not always face,
Clothes, or fortune, gives the grace;
Or the feature, or the youth.
But the language and the truth,
With the ardour and the passion,
Gives the lover weight and fashion.
If you then will read the story,
First prepare you to be sorry
That you never knew till now
Either whom to love or how;
But be glad, as soon with me,
When you know that this is she
Of whose beauty it was sung;
She shall make the old man young,
Keep the middle age at stay,
And let nothing high decay,
Till she be the reason why
All the world for love may die.

Ben Jonson

A Celebration of Charis: IV. Her Triumph

See the chariot at hand here of Love,
Wherein my lady rideth!
Each that draws is a swan or a dove,
And well the car Love guideth.
As she goes, all hearts do duty
Unto her beauty;
And enamour'd, do wish, so they might
But enjoy such a sight,
That they still were to run by her side,
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.

Do but look on her eyes, they do light
All that Love's world compriseth!
Do but look on her hair, it is bright
As Love's star when it riseth!
Do but mark, her forehead's smother
Than words that soothe her;
And from her arched brows, such a grace
Sheds itself through the face
As alone there triumphs to the life
All the gain, all the good, of the elements' strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
Before rude hands have touch'd it?
Ha' you mark'd but the fall o' the snow
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?
Ha' you felt the wool o' the beaver?
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the briar?
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
Oh so white! Oh so soft! Oh so sweet is she!

Ben Jonson

A Farewell to the World

FALSE world, good night! since thou hast brought
That hour upon my morn of age;
Henceforth I quit thee from my thought,
My part is ended on thy stage.

Yes, threaten, do. Alas! I fear
As little as I hope from thee:
I know thou canst not show nor bear
More hatred than thou hast to me.

My tender, first, and simple years
Thou didst abuse and then betray;
Since stir'd'st up jealousies and fears,
When all the causes were away.

Then in a soil hast planted me
Where breathe the basest of thy fools;
Where envious arts professed be,
And pride and ignorance the schools;

Where nothing is examined, weigh'd,
But as 'tis rumour'd, so believed;
Where every freedom is betray'd,
And every goodness tax'd or grieved.

But what we're born for, we must bear:
Our frail condition it is such
That what to all may happen here,
If 't chance to me, I must not grutch.

Else I my state should much mistake
To harbour a divided thought
From all my kind-that, for my sake,
There should a miracle be wrought.

No, I do know that I was born
To age, misfortune, sickness, grief:
But I will bear these with that scorn
As shall not need thy false relief.

Nor for my peace will I go far,
As wanderers do, that still do roam;
But make my strengths, such as they are,
Here in my bosom, and at home.

Ben Jonson

A Fit of Rhyme against Rhyme

Rhyme, the rack of finest wits,
That expresseth but by fits
True conceit,
Spoiling senses of their treasure,
Cozening judgment with a measure,
But false weight;
Wresting words from their true calling,
Propping verse for fear of falling
To the ground;
Jointing syllables, drowning letters,
Fast'ning vowels as with fetters
They were bound!
Soon as lazy thou wert known,
All good poetry hence was flown,
And art banish'd.
For a thousand years together
All Parnassus' green did wither,
And wit vanish'd.
Pegasus did fly away,
At the wells no Muse did stay,
But bewail'd
So to see the fountain dry,
And Apollo's music die,
All light failed!
Starveling rhymes did fill the stage;
Not a poet in an age
Worth crowning;
Not a work deserving bays,
Not a line deserving praise,
Pallas frowning;
Greek was free from rhyme's infection,
Happy Greek by this protection
Was not spoiled.
Whilst the Latin, queen of tongues,
Is not yet free from rhyme's wrongs,
But rests foiled.
Scarce the hill again doth flourish,
Scarce the world a wit doth nourish
To restore
Phœbus to his crown again,
And the Muses to their brain,
As before.
Vulgar languages that want
Words and sweetness, and be scant
Of true measure,
Tyrant rhyme hath so abused,
That they long since have refused
Other cæsure.
He that first invented thee,
May his joints tormented be,
Cramp'd forever.
Still may syllables jar with time,

Still may reason war with rhyme,
Resting never.
May his sense when it would meet
The cold tumor in his feet,
Grow unsouder;
And his title be long fool,
That in rearing such a school
Was the founder.

Ben Jonson

A Hymn on the Nativity of My Saviour

I sing the birth was born to-night
The author both of life and light;
 The angels so did sound it.
And like the ravished shepherds said,
Who saw the light, and were afraid,
 Yet searched, and true they found it.

The Son of God, th' eternal king,
That did us all salvation bring,
 And freed the soul from danger;
He whom the whole world could not take,
The Word, which heaven and earth did make,
 Was now laid in a manger.

The Father's wisdom willed it so,
The Son's obedience knew no No,
 Both wills were in one stature;
And as that wisdom had decreed.
The Word was now made flesh indeed.
 And took on him our nature.

What comfort by him do we win.
Who made himself the price of sin.
 To make us heirs of glory!
To see this babe all innocence;
A martyr born in our defence:
 Can man forget the story?

Ben Jonson

A Hymn to God the Father

Hear me, O God!
A broken heart
Is my best part.
Use still thy rod,
That I may prove
Therein thy Love.

If thou hadst not
Been stern to me,
But left me free,
I had forgot
Myself and thee.

For sin's so sweet,
As minds ill-bent
Rarely repent,
Until they meet
Their punishment.

Who more can crave
Than thou hast done?
That gav'st a Son,
To free a slave,
First made of nought;
With all since bought.

Sin, Death, and Hell
His glorious name
Quite overcame,
Yet I rebel
And slight the same.

But I'll come in
Before my loss
Me farther toss,
As sure to win
Under His cross.

Ben Jonson

A Nymph's Passion

I love, and he loves me again,
Yet dare I not tell who;
For if the nymphs should know my swain,
I fear they'd love him too;
Yet if he be not known,
The pleasure is as good as none,
For that's a narrow joy is but our own.

I'll tell, that if they be not glad,
They may not envy me;
But then if I grow jealous mad
And of them pitied be,
It were a plague 'bove scorn;
And yet it cannot be forborne
Unless my heart would, as my thought, be torn.

He is, if they can find him, fair
And fresh, and fragrant too,
As summer's sky or purged air,
And looks as lilies do
That are this morning blown:
Yet, yet I doubt he is not known,
And fear much more that more of him be shown.

But he hath eyes so round and bright,
As make away my doubt,
Where Love may all his torches light,
Though Hate had put them out;
But then t' increase my fears
What nymph soe'er his voice but hears
Will be my rival, though she have but ears.

I'll tell no more, and yet I love,
And he loves me; yet no
One unbecoming thought doth move
From either heart I know:
But so exempt from blame
As it would be to each a fame,
If love or fear would let me tell his name.

Ben Jonson

A Pangyre

On the happy entrace of Iames, our Sovereigne, to His first high Session of Parliament
in this his Kingdome, the 19 of March, 1603.
Licet toto nunc Helicone frui.

Mart.

Heav'n now not strives, alone, our breasts to fill
With joyes: but urgeth his full favors still.
Againe, the glory of our Western World
Unfolds himselfe: and from his eyes are hoorl'd
(To day) a thousand radiant lights, that streame
To every nook and angle of his Realme.
His former rayes did only cleare the sky;
But these his searching beams are cast, to pry
Into those dark and deep concealed vaults,
Where men commit black incest with their faults;
And snore supinely in the stall of sin:
Where Murder, Rapine, Lust, do sit within,
Carousing humane blood in yron bowles,
And make their den the slaughter-house of soules:
From whose foule reeking cavernes first arise
Those dampes, that so offend all good mens eyes,
And would (if not dispers'd) infect the Crown,
And in their vapor her bright metall drown.

To this so cleare and sanctified an end,
I saw, when reverend Themis did descend
Upon his State; let down in that rich chaine,
That fastneth heavenly power to earthly raigne:
Beside her, stoup't on either hand, a maid,
Faire Dice, and Eunomia; who were said
To be her daughters: and but faintly known
On earth, till now, they came to grace his throne.
Her third, Irene, help'd to beare his traine;
And in her office vow'd she would remaine,
Till forraine malice, or unnaturall spight
(Which Fates avert) should force her from her right.
With these he pass'd, and with his peoples hearts
Breath'd in his way; and soules (their better parts)
Hasting to follow forth in shouts, and cries.
Upon his face all threw their covetous eyes,
As on a wonder: some amazed stood,
As if they felt, but had not known their good
Others would faine have shew'n it in their words:
But, when their speech so poore, a help affords
Unto their zeals expression; they are mute:
And only with red silence him salute.
Some cry from tops of houses; thinking noyse
The fittest herald to proclaime true joyes:
Others on ground run gazing by his side,

All, as unwearied, as unsatisfied:
And every windore griev'd it could not move
Along with him, and the same trouble prove.
They that had seen, but foure short dayes before,
His gladding look, now long'd to see it more.
And as of late, when he through London went,
The amorous City spar'd no ornament,
That might her beauties heighten; but so drest,
As our ambitious Dames, when they make feast,
And would be courted: so this Town put on
Her brightest tyre; and, in it, equall shone
To her great sister: save that modesty,
Her place, and yeares, grave her precedency.

The joy of either was alike, and full;
No age, nor sexe, so weak, or strongly dull,
That did not beare a part in this consent
Of hearts, and voyces. All the aire was rent,
As with the murmure of a moving wood;
The ground beneath did seeme a moving flood:
Wals, windores, roofs, towers, steeples, all were set
With severall eyes, that in this object met.
Old men were glad, their fates till now did last;
And infants, that the houres had made such hast
To bring them forth: Whil'st riper age'd, and apt
To understand the more, the more were rapt.
This was the peoples love, with which did strive
The Nobles zeale, yet either kept alive
The others flame, as doth the wike and waxe,
That friendly temper'd, one pure taper makes.
Meane while, the reverend Themis draws aside
The Kings obeying will, from taking pride
In these vaine stirs, and to his mind suggests
How he may triumph in his Subjects brests,
'With better pomp. She tels him first, that Kings
'Are here on earth the most conspicuous things:
'That they, by Heaven, are plac'd upon his throne,
'To rule like Heaven; and have no more their own,
'As they are men, then men. That all they do
'Though hid at home, abroad is search'd into:
'And being once found out, discover'd lyes
'Unto as many envies, there, as eyes.
'That Princes, since they know it is their fate,
'Oft-times, to have the secrets of their State
'Betraid to fame, should take more care, and feare
'In publique acts what face and forme they beare.
'She then remembered to his thought the place
'Where he was going; and the upward race
'Of Kings, præceding him in that high Court;
'Their laws, their ends; the men she did report:
'And all so justly, as his eare was joy'd

'To heare the truth, from spight of flattery voyd.
 'She shewd him, who made wise, who honest Acts;
 'Who both, who neither: all the cunning tracts,
 'And thrivings statutes she could promptly note;
 'The bloody, base, and barbarous she did quote;
 'Where laws were made to serve the tyran' will;
 'Where sleeping they could save, and waking kill;
 'Where acts gave licence to impetuous lust
 'To bury Churches, in forgotten dust,
 'And with their ruines raise the panders bowers:
 'When, publique justice borrow'd all her powers
 'From private chambers; that could then create
 'Laws, Judges, Consellers, yea Prince, and State.
 'All this she told, and more, with bleeding eyes;
 'For Right is as compassionate as wise.
 Nor did he seeme their vices so to love,
 As once defend, what Themis did reprove.
 For though by right, and benefit of Times,
 He ownde their crowns, he would not so their crimes.
 He knew that Princes, who had sold their fame
 To their voluptuous lusts, had lost their name;
 And that no wretch was more unblest than he,
 Whose necessary good 'twas now to be
 An evill King: And so must such be still,
 Who once have got the habit to do ill.
 One wickednesse another must defend;
 For vice is safe, while she hath vice to friend.
 He knew, that those, who would, with love, command,
 Must with a tender (yet a stedfast) hand
 Sustaine the reynes, and in the check forbear
 To offer cause of injury, or feare.
 That Kings, by their example, more do sway
 Than by their power; and men do more obay
 When they are led, than when they are compell'd.

In all these knowing Arts our Prince excell'd.
 And now the dame had dried her dropping eyne,
 When, like an April Iris, flew her shine
 About the streets, as it would force a spring
 From out the stones, to gratulate the King.
 She blest the people, that in shoales did swim
 To heare her speech; which still began in him,
 And ceas'd in them. She told them, what a fate
 Was gently falne from Heaven upon this State;
 How deare a father they did now enjoy
 That came to save, what discord would destroy:
 And entring with the power of a King,
 The temp'rance of a private man did bring,
 That wan affections, ere his steps wan ground;
 And was not hot, or covetous to be crown'd
 Before mens hearts had crown'd him. Who (unlike

Those greater bodies of the sky, that strike
The lesser fiers dim) in his accesse
Brighter than all, hath yet made no one lesse;
Though many greater: and the most, the best.
Wherein, his choice was happy with the rest
Of his great actions, first to see, and do
What all mens wishes did aspire unto.

Hereat, the people could no longer hold
Their bursting joyes; but through the ayre was rol'd
The length'ned showt, as when th'artillery
Of Heaven is discharg'd along the sky:
And this confession flew from every voyce,
Never had Land more reason to rejoyce,
Nor to her blisse, could ought now added bee,
Save, that she might the same perpetuall see.
Which when Time, Nature, and the Fates deny'd,
With a twice louder shoute again they cry'd,
Yet, let blest Brittain aske (without your wrong)
Still to have such a King, and this King long.

Solus Rex, & Poeta non quotannis nascitur.

Ben Jonson

A Pindaric Ode

THE TURN

Brave infant of Saguntum, clear
Thy coming forth in that great year,
When the prodigious Hannibal did crown
His rage with razing your immortal town.
Thou looking then about,
Ere thou wert half got out,
Wise child, didst hastily return,
And mad'st thy mother's womb thine urn.
How summ'd a circle didst thou leave mankind
Of deepest lore, could we the centre find!

THE COUNTER-TURN

Did wiser nature draw thee back,
From out the horror of that sack;
Where shame, faith, honour, and regard of right,
Lay trampled on? The deeds of death and night
Urg'd, hurried forth, and hurl'd
Upon th' affrighted world;
Sword, fire and famine with fell fury met,
And all on utmost ruin set:
As, could they but life's miseries foresee,
No doubt all infants would return like thee.

THE STAND

For what is life, if measur'd by the space,
Not by the act?
Or masked man, if valu'd by his face,
Above his fact?
Here's one outliv'd his peers
And told forth fourscore years:
He vexed time, and busied the whole state;
Troubled both foes and friends;
But ever to no ends:
What did this stirrer but die late?
How well at twenty had he fall'n or stood!
For three of his four score he did no good.

THE TURN

He enter'd well, by virtuous parts
Got up, and thriv'd with honest arts;
He purchas'd friends, and fame, and honours then,
And had his noble name advanc'd with men;
But weary of that flight,
He stoop'd in all men's sight
To sordid flatteries, acts of strife,
And sunk in that dead sea of life,
So deep, as he did then death's waters sup,
But that the cork of title buoy'd him up.

THE COUNTER-TURN

Alas, but Morison fell young!
He never fell, -thou fall'st, my tongue.
He stood, a soldier to the last right end,
A perfect patriot and a noble friend;
But most, a virtuous son.
All offices were done
By him, so ample, full, and round,
In weight, in measure, number, sound,
As, though his age imperfect might appear,
His life was of humanity the sphere.

THE STAND

Go now, and tell out days summ'd up with fears,
And make them years;
Produce thy mass of miseries on the stage,
To swell thine age;
Repeat of things a throng,
To show thou hast been long,
Not liv'd; for life doth her great actions spell,
By what was done and wrought
In season, and so brought
To light: her measures are, how well
Each syllabe answer'd, and was form'd, how fair;
These make the lines of life, and that's her air.

THE TURN

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make men better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sear:
A lily of a day
Is fairer far, in May,
Although it fall and die that night,
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures life may perfect be.

THE COUNTER-TURN

Call, noble Lucius, then, for wine,
And let thy looks with gladness shine;
Accept this garland, plant it on thy head,
And think, nay know, thy Morison's not dead.
He leap'd the present age,
Possess with holy rage,
To see that bright eternal day;
Of which we priests and poets say

Such truths as we expect for happy men;
And there he lives with memory, and Ben

THE STAND

Jonson, who sung this of him, ere he went
Himself, to rest,
Or taste a part of that full joy he meant
To have exprest,
In this bright asterism,
Where it were friendship's schism,
Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry,
To separate these twi{-}
Lights, the Dioscuri,
And keep the one half from his Harry.
But fate doth so alternate the design,
Whilst that in heav'n, this light on earth must shine.

THE TURN

And shine as you exalted are;
Two names of friendship, but one star:
Of hearts the union, and those not by chance
Made, or indenture, or leas'd out t' advance
The profits for a time.
No pleasures vain did chime,
Of rhymes, or riots, at your feasts,
Orgies of drink, or feign'd protests;
But simple love of greatness and of good,
That knits brave minds and manners more than blood.

THE COUNTER-TURN

This made you first to know the why
You lik'd, then after, to apply
That liking; and approach so one the t'other
Till either grew a portion of the other;
Each styled by his end,
The copy of his friend.
You liv'd to be the great surnames
And titles by which all made claims
Unto the virtue: nothing perfect done,
But as a Cary or a Morison.

THE STAND

And such a force the fair example had,
As they that saw
The good and durst not practise it, were glad
That such a law

Was left yet to mankind;
Where they might read and find
Friendship, indeed, was written not in words:
And with the heart, not pen,
Of two so early men,
Whose lines her rolls were, and records;
Who, ere the first down bloomed on the chin,
Had sow'd these fruits, and got the harvest in.

Ben Jonson

A Sonnet, to the Noble Lady, the Lady Mary Wroth

I that have been a lover, and could show it,
Though not in these, in rhymes not wholly dumb,
Since I exscribe your sonnets, am become
A better lover, and much better poet.
Nor is my Muse, or I ashamed to owe it
To those true numerous graces; whereof some
But charm the senses, others overcome
Both brains and hearts; and mine now best do know it:
For in your verse all Cupid's armory,
His flames, his shafts, his quiver, and his bow,
His very eyes are yours to overthrow.
But then his mother's sweets you so apply,
Her joys, her smiles, her loves, as readers take
For Venus' cestion, every line you make.

Ben Jonson

An Elegy

THOUGH beauty be the mark of praise,
And yours of whom I sing be such
As not the world can praise too much,
Yet 'tis your Virtue now I raise.

A virtue, like allay so gone
Throughout your form as, though that move
And draw and conquer all men's love,
This subjects you to love of one.

Wherein you triumph yet-because
'Tis of your flesh, and that you use
The noblest freedom, not to choose
Against or faith or honour's laws.

But who should less expect from you?
In whom alone Love lives again:
By whom he is restored to men,
And kept and bred and brought up true.

His falling temples you have rear'd,
The wither'd garlands ta'en away;
His altars kept from that decay
That envy wish'd, and nature fear'd:

And on them burn so chaste a flame,
With so much loyalty's expense,
As Love to acquit such excellence
Is gone himself into your name.

And you are he-the deity
To whom all lovers are design'd
That would their better objects find;
Among which faithful troop am I-

Who as an off'ring at your shrine
Have sung this hymn, and here entreat
One spark of your diviner heat
To light upon a love of mine.

Which if it kindle not, but scant
Appear, and that to shortest view;
Yet give me leave to adore in you
What I in her am grieved to want!

Ben Jonson

An Ode to Himself

Where dost thou careless lie,
Buried in ease and sloth?
Knowledge that sleeps doth die;
And this security,
It is the common moth
That eats on wits and arts, and oft destroys them both.

Are all th' Aonian springs
Dried up? lies Thespia waste?
Doth Clarius' harp want strings,
That not a nymph now sings?
Or droop they as disgrac'd,
To see their seats and bowers by chatt'ring pies defac'd?

If hence thy silence be,
As 'tis too just a cause,
Let this thought quicken thee:
Minds that are great and free
Should not on fortune pause;
'Tis crown enough to virtue still, her own applause.

What though the greedy fry
Be taken with false baits
Of worded balladry,
And think it poesy?
They die with their conceits,
And only piteous scorn upon their folly waits.

Then take in hand thy lyre,
Strike in thy proper strain,
With Japhet's line aspire
Sol's chariot for new fire,
To give the world again;
Who aided him will thee, the issue of Jove's brain.

And since our dainty age
Cannot endure reproof,
Make not thyself a page
To that strumpet, the stage,
But sing high and aloof,
Safe from the wolf's black jaw and the dull ass's hoof.

Ben Jonson

Begging Another

For love's sake, kiss me once again;
I long, and should not beg in vain,
Here's none to spy or see;
Why do you doubt or stay?
I'll taste as lightly as the bee
That doth but touch his flower and flies away.

Once more, and faith I will be gone;
Can he that loves ask less than one?
Nay, you may err in this
And all your bounty wrong;
This could be called but half a kiss,
What we're but once to do, we should do long.

I will but mend the last, and tell
Where, how it should have relished well;
Join lip to lip, and try
Each suck other's breath.
And whilst our tongues perplexed lie,
Let who will, think us dead or wish our death.

Ben Jonson

Blaney's Last Directions

It is usual
for people in this country
(out of pretended respect
but rather from an impertinent curiosity)
to desire to see
persons
after they are
dead.

It is my earnest request that no person
on any pretence whatever
may be permitted to see my
corpse
but those who
unavoidably must.

I desire to be buried
in the north side of the churchyard
of Tregynon
somewhere about the centre
my coffin to be made in the most
plain and simple manner
without the usual fantastical decorations
and the more
perishable the material
the better.

I desire that no undertaker
or professed performer of funerals
may be employed:
but that I may be conveyed
to the churchyard
in some country hearse
which may be hired for the occasion
and my corpse
to be carried
from hearse to the grave
immediately
without going into the church
by six of the chief Tregynon tenants
to whom I give two guineas each
for their trouble.

It is my earnest request and desire
to have no upper bearers
or any persons whatever
invited to my funeral
which I desire may be at so
early an hour as will best prevent
a concourse of people
from collecting together:
the better sort

I presume will not intrude
as there is no
invitation.

I have been present at the funerals
of three of my uncles at Morville.
I was pleased with the privacy and decency
with which all things were conducted:
no strangers attended
all was done
by the servants of the family.
It is my earnest desire to follow these examples
however unpopular
and that
no coach
no escutcheon
and no pomp of any kind may appear.

I trust that my executor will be well justified
against the clamor and obloquy
of mercenary people
when he acts in performance of the last request
of a dying friend
who solemnly adjures him in the name of God
punctually to observe these directions.

codicil
I likewise give to all my servants
five guineas each
in lieu of all mourning
which it is my desire
no person may use on my account.

Ben Jonson

Christmas, His Masque (extract)

Why Gentlemen, doe you know what you doe? ha!
Would you ha'kept me out? Christmas, old Christmas?
Christmas of London, and Captaine Christmas?
Pray you let me be brought before my Lord Chamberlaine, i'le not be answer'd else:
'Tis merrie in hall when beards wag all:
I ha'seene the time you ha'wish'd for me, for a merry Christmas,
And now you ha'me; they would not let me in:
I must come another time!
A good jest, as if I could come more than once a year;
Why, I am no dangerous person, and so I told my friends, o'the Guard.
I am old Gregorie Christmas still

Ben Jonson

Come, My Celia

Come, my Celia, let us prove
While we may, the sports of love;
Time will not be ours forever;
He at length our good will sever.
Spend not then his gifts in vain.
Suns that set may rise again;
But if once we lose this light,
'Tis with us perpetual night.
Why should we defer our joys?
Fame and rumor are but toys.
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poor household spies,
Or his easier ears beguile,
So removed by our wile?
'Tis no sin love's fruit to steal;
But the sweet theft to reveal.
To be taken, to be seen,
These have crimes accounted been.

Ben Jonson

Conditions of Living

Living a whole life has three conditions:
absorbing work which demands and brings fulfilment,
a group of friends with whom to exchange minds,
and a full love to be lost in all the time.

Of these I have the easier two,
but lack the third in lacking you.

Ben Jonson

Epitaph on Elizabeth, L.H

Wouldst thou hear what man can say
In a little? Reader, stay.
Underneath this stone doth lie
As much beauty as could die;
Which in life did harbor give
To more virtue than doth live.

If at all she had a fault,
Leave it buried in this vault.
One name was Elizabeth,
Th' other let it sleep with death;
Fitter, where it died to tell,
Than that it lived at all. Farewell.

Ben Jonson

Epitaph on S.P., a Child of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel

Weep with me, all you that read
This little story;
And know for whom a tear you shed,
Death's self is sorry.
'Twas a child that so did thrive
In grace and feature,
As Heaven and Nature seemed to strive
Which owned the creature.
Years he numbered scarce thirteen
When Fates turned cruel,
Yet three filled zodiacs had he been
The stage's jewel;
And did act (what now we moan)
Old men so duly,
As, sooth, the Parcae thought him one,
He played so truly.
So, by error, to his fate
They all consented;
But viewing him since (alas, too late),
They have repented,
And have sought (to give new birth)
In baths to steep him;
But, being so much too good for earth,
Heaven vows to keep him.

Ben Jonson

Epitaph On The Countess Of Pembroke

Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of all verse,
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother:
Death! ere thou hast slain another,
Learned, and fair, and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

Ben Jonson

Epode

Not to know vice at all, and keep true state,
Is virtue and not fate:
Next to that virtue, is to know vice well,
And her black spite expel.
Which to effect (since no breast is so sure,
Or safe, but she'll procure
Some way of entrance) we must plant a guard
Of thoughts to watch and ward
At th' eye and ear, the ports unto the mind,
That no strange, or unkind
Object arrive there, but the heart, our spy,
Give knowledge instantly
To wakeful reason, our affections' king:
Who, in th' examining,
Will quickly taste the treason, and commit
Close, the close cause of it.
'Tis the securest policy we have,
To make our sense our slave.
But this true course is not embraced by many:
By many! scarce by any.
For either our affections do rebel,
Or else the sentinel,
That should ring 'larum to the heart, doth sleep:
Or some great thought doth keep
Back the intelligence, and falsely swears
They're base and idle fears
Whereof the loyal conscience so complains.
Thus, by these subtle trains,
Do several passions invade the mind,
And strike our reason blind:
Of which usurping rank, some have thought love
The first: as prone to move
Most frequent tumults, horrors, and unrests,
In our inflamed breasts:
But this doth from the cloud of error grow,
Which thus we over-blow.
The thing they here call love is blind desire,
Armed with bow, shafts, and fire;
Inconstant, like the sea, of whence 'tis born,
Rough, swelling, like a storm;
With whom who sails, rides on the surge of fear,
And boils as if he were
In a continual tempest. Now, true love
No such effects doth prove;
That is an essence far more gentle, fine,
Pure, perfect, nay, divine;
It is a golden chain let down from heaven,
Whose links are bright and even;
That falls like sleep on lovers, and combines
The soft and sweetest minds
In equal knots: this bears no brands, nor darts,
To murder different hearts,

But, in a calm and god-like unity,
 Preserves community.
 O, who is he that, in this peace, enjoys
 Th' elixir of all joys?
 A form more fresh than are the Eden bowers,
 And lasting as her flowers;
 Richer than Time and, as Times's virtue, rare;
 Sober as saddest care;
 A fixed thought, an eye untaught to glance;
 Who, blest with such high chance,
 Would, at suggestion of a steep desire,
 Cast himself from the spire
 Of all his happiness? But soft: I hear
 Some vicious fool draw near,
 That cries, we dream, and swears there's no such thing,
 As this chaste love we sing.
 Peace, Luxury! thou art like one of those
 Who, being at sea, suppose,
 Because they move, the continent doth so:
 No, Vice, we let thee know
 Though thy wild thoughts with sparrows' wings do fly,
 Turtles can chastely die;
 And yet (in this t' express ourselves more clear)
 We do not number here
 Such spirits as are only continent,
 Because lust's means are spent;
 Or those who doubt the common mouth of fame,
 And for their place and name,
 Cannot so safely sin: their chastity
 Is mere necessity;
 Nor mean we those whom vows and conscience
 Have filled with abstinence:
 Though we acknowledge who can so abstain,
 Makes a most blessed gain;
 He that for love of goodness hateth ill,
 Is more crown-worthy still
 Than he, which for sin's penalty forbears:
 His heart sins, though he fears.
 But we propose a person like our Dove,
 Graced with a Phoenix' love;
 A beauty of that clear and sparkling light,
 Would make a day of night,
 And turn the blackest sorrows to bright joys:
 Whose odorous breath destroys
 All taste of bitterness, and makes the air
 As sweet as she is fair.
 A body so harmoniously composed,
 As if nature disclosed
 All her best symmetry in that one feature!
 O, so divine a creature
 Who could be false to? chiefly, when he knows
 How only she bestows

The wealthy treasure of her love on him;
Making his fortunes swim
In the full flood of her admired perfection?
What savage, brute affection,
Would not be fearful to offend a dame
Of this excelling frame?
Much more a noble, and right generous mind,
To virtuous moods inclined,
That knows the weight of guilt: he will refrain
From thoughts of such a strain,
And to his sense object this sentence ever,
'Man may securely sin, but safely never.'

Ben Jonson

Evening: Barents Sea

The trawl of unquiet mind drops astern

Great lucid streamers bar the sky ahead
(bifurcated banners at a tourney)
light alchemizes the brass on the bridge
into fallow gold
now the short northern
autumn day closes quickly

the thin coast
(of grey Norway is it, or of Russia?)
distinguished only as a formal change
in the pattern of clouds on our port side

on the deck the strung lights illuminate no
movement but the sullen swill of water
in the washer, but the unnatural way
dead starfish and disregarded dabs swim
in the strict seas surging through the bilges
and out. A fishgut hangs like a hank of
hair from the iron grill in a pound board

brighter now that the sun, the fishfinder's
green bleep catches the skipper's intentness

and the trawl is down, is out, is catching!

Ben Jonson

For a Girl in a Book

Kim, composite of all my loves,
less real than most, more real than all;
of my making, all the good and
some of the bad, yet of yourself;
sole, unique, strong, alone,
whole, independent, one: yet mine
in that you cannot be unfaithful.

Ben Jonson

from.....Witches' Song

The owl is abroad,the bat and the toad,
And so is the cat-a mountain,
The ant and the mole sit both in a hole,
And frog peeps out o'the fountain;
The dogs they do bay,and the timbrels play,
The spindle is now a-turning;
The moon it is red,and the stars are fled,
And all the sky is a-burning.

Ben Jonson

Have You Seen But A Bright Lily Grow

Have you seen but a bright lily grow
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall of snow
Before the soil hath smutched it?
Have you felt the wool of beaver,
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier,
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she!

Ben Jonson

His Excuse for Loving

Let it not your wonder move,
Less your laughter, that I love.
Though I now write fifty years,
I have had, and have, my peers.
Poets, though divine, are men;
Some have loved as old again.
And it is not always face,
Clothes, or fortune gives the grace,
Or the feature, or the youth;
But the language and the truth,
With the ardor and the passion,
Gives the lover weight and fashion.
If you then would hear the story,
First, prepare you to be sorry
That you never knew till now
Either whom to love or how;
But be glad as soon with me
When you hear that this is she
Of whose beauty it was sung,
She shall make the old man young,
Keep the middle age at stay,
And let nothing hide decay,
Till she be the reason why
All the world for love may die.

Ben Jonson

His Supposed Mistress

If I freely can discover
What would please me in my lover,
I would have her fair and witty,
Savouring more of court than city;
A little proud, but full of pity;
Light and humourous in her toying;
Oft building hopes, and soon destroying;
Long, but sweet in the enjoying,
Neither too easy, nor too hard:
All extremes I would have barred.

She should be allowed her passions,
So they were but used as fashions;
Sometimes froward, and then frowning,
Sometimes sickish, and then swowning,
Every fit with change still crowning.
Purely jealous I would have her;
Then only constant when I crave her,
'Tis a virtue should not save her.
Thus, nor her delicates would cloy me,
Neither her peevishness annoy me.

Ben Jonson

I: Why I Write Not To Love

Some act of
Love's
bound to rehearse,
I thought to bind him, in my verse:
Which when he felt, Away (quoth he)
Can Poets hope to fetter me?
It is enough, they once did get
Mars, and my
Mother
, in their net:
I weare not these my wings in vaine.
With which he fled me: and againe,
Into my rimes could ne're be got
By any art. Then wonder not,
That since, my numbers are so cold,
When
Love
is fled, and I grow old.

Ben Jonson

III: To Sir Robert Wroth

How blest art thou, canst love the countrey, Wroth,
Whether by choyce, or fate, or both!
And, though so neere the Citie, and the Court,
Art tane with neithers vice, nor sport:
That at great times, art no ambitious guest
Of Sheriffes dinner, or Maiors feast.
Nor com'st to view the better cloth of State;
The richer hangings, or crowne-plate;
Nor throng'st (when masquing is) to have a fight
Of the short braverie of the night;
To view the jewels, stuffes, the paines, the wit
There wasted, some not paid for yet!
But canst, at home, in thy securer rest,
Live, with un-bought provision blest;
Free from proud porches, or their gilded roofes,
'Mongst loughing heards, and solid hoofes:
Along'st the curled woods, and painted meades,
Through which a serpent river leades
To some coole, courteous shade, which he cals his,
And makes sleep softer than it is!
Or, if thou list the night in watch to breake,
A-bed canst heare the loud stag speake,
In spring, oft roused for their masters sport,
Who, for it, makes thy house his court;
Or with thy friends; the heart of all the yeare,
Divid'st, upon the lesser Deere;
In Autumne, at the Partrich mak'st a flight,
And giv'st thy gladder guests the sight;
And, in the Winter, hunt'st the flying Hare,
More for thy exercise, than fare;
While all, that follow, their glad eares apply
To the full greatnesse of the cry:
Or hauking at the River, or the Bush,
Or shooting at the greedy Thrush,
Thou dost with some delight the day out-weare,
Although the coldest of the yeare!
The whil'st the severall seasons thou hast seene
Of flowry Fields, of cop'ces greene,
The mowed Meddows, with the fleeced Sheep,
And feasts, that either shearers keep;
The ripened eares, yet humble in their height,
And furrows laden with their weight;
The apple-harvest, that doth longer last;
The hogs return'd home fat from mast;
The trees cut out in log; and those boughs made
A fire now, that lend a shade!
Thus Pan, and Sylvane, having had their rites,
Comus puts in, for new delights;
And fils thy open hall with mirth, and cheere,
As if in Saturnes raigne it were;
Apollo's Harpe, and Hermes Lyre resound,
Nor are the Muses strangers found:

The rout of rurall folk come thronging in,
 (Their rudenesse then is thought no sin)
 Thy noblest pouse affords them welcome grace;
 And the great Heroes, of her race,
 Sit mixt with losse of State, or reverence.
 Freedome doth with degree dispence.
 The jolly wassall walks the often round,
 And in their cups, their cares are drown'd,
 They think not, then, which side the cause shall leese,
 Nor how to get the Lawyer fees.
 Such, and no other was that age, of old,
 Which boasts t'have had the head of gold.
 And such since thou canst make thine own content,
 Strive, Wroth, to live long innocent.
 Let others watch in guilty armes, and stand
 The fury of a rash command,
 Go enter breaches, meet the cannons rage,
 That they may sleep with scarres in age.
 And shew their feathers shot, and Cullours torne,
 And brag that they were therefore borne.
 Let this man sweat, and wrangle at the barre,
 For every price in every jarre,
 And change possessions, oftner with his breath,
 Than either money, war, or death:
 Let him, than hardest sires, more disinherit,
 And each where boast it as his merit,
 To blow up Ophanes, Widdows, and their states;
 And think his power doth equall Fates.
 Let that go heape a masse of wretched wealth,
 Purchas'd by rapine, worse than stealth,
 And brooding o're it sit, with broadest eyes,
 Not doing good, scarce when he dyes.
 Let thousands more go flatter vice, and winne,
 By being organes to great sin,
 Get place and honor, and be glad to keepe
 The secrets, that shall breake their sleepe:
 And, so they ride in Purple, eat in Plate,
 Though poyson, thinke it a great fate.
 But thou, my Wroth, if I can truth apply,
 Shalt neither that, nor this envy:
 Thy peace is made; and, when mans state is well,
 'Tis better, if he there can dwell.
 God wisheth, none should wracke on a strange shelve:
 To him man's dearer, than t'himselfe.
 And, howsoever we may thinke things sweet,
 He alwayes gives what he knowes meet;
 Which who can use is happy: Such be thou.
 Thy mornings and thy evenings Vow
 Be thanks to him, and earnest prayer, to finde
 A body sound, with sounder minde;
 To do thy Countrey service, thy selfe right;
 That neither Want doe thee affright,

Nor Death; but when thy latest sand is spent,
Thou maist thinke life, a thing but lent.

Ben Jonson

In the ember days of my last free summer

In the ember days of my last free summer,
here I lie, outside myself, watching
the gross body eating a poor curry:
satisfied at what I have done, scared of what
I have to do in my last free winter.

Ben Jonson

In The Person Of Womankind

A SONG APOLOGETIC

Men, if you love us, play no more
The fools or tyrants with your friends,
To make us still sing o'er and o'er
Our own false praises, for your ends:
We have both wits and fancies too,
And, if we must, let's sing of you.

Nor do we doubt but that we can,
If we would search with care and pain,
Find some one good in some one man;
So going thorough all your strain,
We shall, at last, of parcels make
One good enough for a song's sake.

And as a cunning painter takes,
In any curious piece you see,
More pleasure while the thing he makes,
Than when 'tis made--why so will we.
And having pleased our art, we'll try
To make a new, and hang that by.

Ben Jonson

Inviting a Friend to Supper

Tonight, grave sir, both my poor house and I
Do equally desire your company:
Not that we think us worthy such a guest,
But that your worth will dignify our feast
With those that come; whose grace may make that seem
Something, which else could hope for no esteem.
It is the fair acceptance, Sir, creates
The entertainment perfect: not the cates.
Yet shall you have, to rectify your palate,
An olive, capers, or some better salad
Ushering the mutton; with a short-legged hen,
If we can get her, full of eggs, and then
Lemons and wine for sauce; to these, a coney
Is not to be despaired of, for our money;
And though fowl, now, be scarce, yet there are clerks,
The sky not falling, think we may have larks.
I'll tell you of more, and lie, so you will come:
Of partridge, pheasant, woodcock, of which some
May yet be there; and godwit, if we can,
Knot, rail, and ruff, too. Howsoe'er, my man
Shall read a piece of Virgil, Tacitus,
Livy, or of some better book to us,
Of which we'll speak our minds amidst our meat;
And I'll profess no verses to repeat:
To this, if aught appear which I know not of,
That will the pastry, not my paper, show of.
Digestive cheese and fruit there sure will be;
But that which most doth take my Muse and me
Is a pure cup of rich Canary wine,
Which is the Mermaid's now, but shall be mine;
Of which, had Horace or Anacreon tasted,
Their lives, as do their lines, till now had lasted.
Tobacco, Nectar, or the Thespian spring
Are all but Luther's beer to this I sing.
Of this we shall sup free, but moderately,
And we will have no Pooly, or Parrot by;
Nor shall our cups make any guilty men,
But at our parting we shall be as when
We innocently met. No simple word
That shall be uttered at our mirthful board
Shall make us sad next morning, or affright
The liberty that we'll enjoy tonight.

Ben Jonson

IV: To The World

A farewell for a Gentlewoman, vertuous and noble

False world, good-night, since thou hast brought
That houre upon my morne of age,
Hence-forth I quit thee from my thought,
My part is ended on thy stage.
Doe not once hope, that thou canst tempt
A spirit so resolv'd to tread
Upon thy throat, and live exempt
From all the nets that thou canst spread.
I know thy formes are studied arts,
Thy subtill wayes, be narrow straits;
Thy curtesie but sudden starts,
And what thou call'st thy gifts are baits.
I know too, though thou strut, and paint,
Yet art thou both shrunke up, and old;
That onely fooles make thee a saint,
And all thy good is to be sold.
I know thou whole art but a shop
Of toyes, and trifles, traps, and snares,
To take the weake, or make them stop:
Yet art thou falsder than thy wares.
And, knowing this should I yet stay,
Like such as blow away their lives,
And never will redeeme a day,
Enamor'd of their golden gyves?
Or having scap'd, shall I returne,
And thrust my neck into the noose,
From whence, so lately, I did burne,
With all my powers, my selfe to loose?
What bird, or beast is knowne so dull,
That fled his cage, or broke his chaine,
And tasting aire, and freedome, wull
Render his head in there againe?
If these, who have but sense, can shun
The engines, that have them annoy'd;
Little, for mee, had reason done,
If I could not thy ginnes avoid.
Yes, threaten, doe. Alas I feare
As little, as I hope from thee:
I know thou canst nor shew, nor beare
More hatred, than thou hast to mee.
My tender, first, and simple yeares
Thou did'st abuse, and then betray;
Since stird'st up jealousies and feares,
When all the causes were away.
Then, in a soile hast planted me,
Where breathe the basest of thy fooles;
Where envious arts professed be,
And pride, and ignorance the schooles,
Where nothing is examin'd, weigh'd,
But, as 'tis rumor'd, so beleev'd:

Where every freedome is betray'd,
And every goodnesse tax'd, or griev'd.
But, what we'are borne for, wee must beare:
Our fraile condition it is such,
That, what to all may happen here,
If't chance to mee, I must not grutch.
Else, I my state should much mistake,
To harbour a divided thought
From all my kinde: that, for my sake,
There should a miracle be wrought.
No, I doe know, that I was borne
To age, misfortune, sicknesse, griefe:
But I will beare these, with that scorne,
As shall not need thy false reliefe.
Nor for my peace will I goe farre,
As wandrers doe, that still doe rome;
But make my strengths, such as they are,
Here in my bosome, and at home.

Ben Jonson

IX: Song: To Celia

Drink to me, only, with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kisse but in the cup,
And Ile not look for wine.
The thirst, that from the soule doth rise,
Doth aske a drink divine:
But might I of Jove's Nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.
I sent thee, late, a rosie wreath,
Not so much honoring thee,
As giving it a hope, that there
It could not withered be.
But thou thereon did'st onely breathe,
And sent'st it back to mee:
Since when it growes, and smells, I sweare,
Not of it selfe, but thee.

Ben Jonson

Living by

Walking, snow falling, it is possible
to focus at various distances
in turn on separate flakes, sharply engage
the attention at several spatial points:
the nearer cold and more uncomfortable,
the farther distanced and almost pleasing.

Living, time passing, it is preferable
to focus the memory in turn upon
the more distant retrospects in order
that the present mind may retain its peace.

Yet knowing that seeing and remembering
are both of course personal illusions.

Ben Jonson

Love-All

The decorously informative church
Guide to Sex suggested that any urge
could well be controlled by playing tennis:
and the game provided also 'many
harmless opportunities for healthy
social intercourse between the sexes.'

For weeks the drawings in the Guide misled
me as to what went where, but nonetheless
I booked the public courts and learnt the game
with other curious youths of my age:
and later joined a club, to lose six one,
six love, in the first round of the Open.

But the only girl I ever met had
her 'energies channelled' far too bloody
'healthily', and very quickly let me
know that love was merely another means
of saying nil. It was not as though I
became any good at tennis; either.

Ben Jonson

My Picture Left in Scotland

I now think love is rather deaf, than blind,
For else it could not be,
That she,
Whom I adore so much, should so slight me,
And cast my love behind:
I'm sure my language was as sweet,
And every close did meet
In sentence of as subtle feet
As hath the youngest he,
That sits in shadow of Apollo's tree.

Oh, but my conscious fears,
That fly my thoughts between,
Tell me that she hath seen
My hundreds of gray hairs,
Told seven and forty years,
Read so much waist, as she cannot embrace
My mountain belly and my rock face,
As all these, through her eyes, have stopt her ears.

Ben Jonson

Natural Progress

In all faith, we did our part:
generated punctually, prepared adequately,
ejected promptly,
and swam in the approved manner
in the appropriate direction;
did all instinctive things well,
even eagerly—
an exemplary start.

But then the barrier: unexpectedness
unexpectedly.
(They did not tell us this).
To go back impossible, unnatural:
so round; many times;
we tired ourselves.
Where were the promised homes,
embedded in the soft wall?
Or the anticipated achievement
so momentous, fulfilling?

So we died:
what else was there to do?
But in all faith, we did our part!

Ben Jonson

Nine stages towards Knowing

Why do we lie

'Why do we lie,' she questioned, her warm eyes
on the grey Autumn wind and its coursing,
'all afternoon wasted in bed like this?'
'Because we cannot lie all night together.'
'Yes,' she said, satisfied at my reasoning,
but going on to search her cruel mind
for better excuses to leave my narrow bed.

Too many flesh suppers

Abstracted in art,
in architecture,
in scholars' detail;

absorbed by music,
by minutiae,
by sad trivia;

all to efface her,
whom I can forget
no more than breathing.

Theatregoer

Somewhere some nights she sees
curtains rise on those rites
we also knew and felt

I sit here desolate
in spite of company

Love is between people

And should she die?

And should she die tonight,
with this three years' difference
as well between us now?

Or no, be maimed perhaps
and bearing pain, to live
on damages for life?

In any case, I wish
her no good, whom I loved
as Brunel loved iron.

All this Sunday long

All this Sunday long it has snowed,

and I weighted with the old grief
struggling to unseat her from my mind.

Yet winnowing our past I cannot find
a snow-gilded scene however brief:
thus do I wilfully increase my load.

Spatial Definition

Razed the room in which
we made so much love:

I try to re-place
it in space against
the windracked planetrees:

my eyes quarter air.

Able at last

'Able at last,' she writes,
'to see things as they were,
I wonder we were so blind
to think our trust could bind
instead of just defer.'

I shudder at her fall,
for that was, from the heights,
not how it was at all.

Arrived at the place

Arrived at the place
to which I always
said I was going:

comfortless for lack
of her who chose not
to travel with me:

too aware of my way
to wherever next
is also alone.

Knowledge

Knowledge of her was
earned like miners' pay:

afterwards I sought
friends' knowledge of her:

now I need to know
nothing of this girl:

she whom once I knew
as my tongue my mouth.

Ben Jonson

Occupation: Father

My son finds occupation
in almost nothing, in everything:
my soapy penitential toothpaste,
his mother's loosened hair
orts, containers, useless things;
watches as I pee
as at Victoria Falls,
once pushed his head between my knees
to risk some sort of baptism.

Before his birth I thought
I had room for no more love:
now when he (say) hurts himself
love, consideration, care
(copies from the originals)
as if burst inside me.

Undoggedly I interest myself
in his uninteresting concerns,
grow backward to him,
more than hoping to find
a forward interest for myself.

Ben Jonson

Ode

To the Immortal Memory and Friendship of that Noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir Henry Morison.

I.

THE TURN.

Brave infant of Saguntum, clear
Thy coming forth in that great year,
When the prodigious Hannibal did crown
His cage, with razing your immortal town.
Thou, looking then about,
Ere thou wert half got out,
Wise child, didst hastily return,
And mad'st thy mother's womb thine urn.
How summed a circle didst thou leave mankind
Of deepest lore, could we the centre find!

THE COUNTER-TURN.

Did wiser nature draw thee back,
From out the horror of that sack,
Where shame, faith, honour, and regard of right,
Lay trampled on? the deeds of death and night,
Urged, hurried forth, and hurled
Upon th' affrighted world;
Sword, fire, and famine, with fell fury met,
And all on utmost ruin set;
As, could they but life's miseries foresee,
No doubt all infants would return like thee.

THE STAND.

For what is life, if measured by the space
Not by the act?
Or masked man, if valued by his face,
Above his fact?
Here's one outlived his peers,
And told forth fourscore years;
He vexed time, and busied the whole state;
Troubled both foes and friends;
But ever to no ends:
What did this stirrer but die late?
How well at twenty had he fallen or stood!
For three of his fourscore he did no good.

II.

THE TURN

He entered well, by virtuous parts,

Got up, and thrived with honest arts;
He purchased friends, and fame, and honours then,
And had his noble name advanced with men:
But weary of that flight,
He stooped in all men's sight
To sordid flatteries, acts of strife,
And sunk in that dead sea of life,
So deep, as he did then death's waters sup,
But that the cork of title buoyed him up.

THE COUNTER-TURN

Alas! but Morison fell young:
He never fell,--thou fall'st, my tongue.
He stood a soldier to the last right end,
A perfect patriot, and a noble friend;
But most, a virtuous son.
All offices were done
By him, so ample, full, and round,
In weight, in measure, number, sound,
As, though his age imperfect might appear,
His life was of humanity the sphere.

THE STAND

Go now, and tell out days summed up with fears,
And make them years;
Produce thy mass of miseries on the stage,
To swell thine age;
Repeat of things a throng,
To show thou hast been long,
Not lived: for life doth her great actions spell.
By what was done and wrought
In season, and so brought
To light: her measures are, how well
Each syllabe answered, and was formed, how fair;
These make the lines of life, and that's her air!

III.

THE TURN

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make men better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sear:
A lily of a day,
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night;
It was the plant, and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures, life may perfect be.

THE COUNTER-TURN

Call, noble Lucius, then for wine,
And let thy looks with gladness shine:
Accept this garland, plant it on thy head
And think, nay know, thy Morison's not dead
He leaped the present age,
Possessed with holy rage
To see that bright eternal day;
Of which we priests and poets say,
Such truths, as we expect for happy men:
And there he lives with memory and Ben.

THE STAND

Jonson, who sung this of him, ere he went,
Himself to rest,
Or taste a part of that full joy he meant
To have expressed,
In this bright Asterism!
Where it were friendship's schism,
Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry,
To separate these twi-
Lights, the Dioscouri;
And keep the one half from his Harry,
But fate doth so alternate the design
Whilst that in heaven, this light on earth must shine.

IV.

THE TURN

And shine as you exalted are;
Two names of friendship, but one star:
Of hearts the union, and those not by chance
Made, or indenture, or leased out t'advance
The profits for a time.
No pleasures vain did chime,
Of rhymes, or riots, at your feasts,
Orgies of drink, or feigned protests:
But simple love of greatness and of good,
That knits brave minds and manners more than blood.

THE COUNTER-TURN

This made you first to know the why
You liked, then after, to apply
That liking; and approach so one the t'other,
Till either grew a portion of the other:
Each styled by his end,
The copy of his friend.

You lived to be the great sir-names,
And titles, by which all made claims
Unto the virtue; nothing perfect done,
But as a Cary, or a Morison.

THE STAND

And such a force the fair example had,
As they that saw
The good, and durst not practise it, were glad
That such a law
Was left yet to mankind;
Where they might read and find
Friendship, indeed, was written not in words;
And with the heart, not pen,
Of two so early men,
Whose lines her rolls were, and records;
Who, ere the first down bloomed upon the chin,
Had sowed these fruits, and got the harvest in.

Ben Jonson

Ode upon the Censure of his New Inn

Come, leave the loathed stage,
And the more loathsome age;
Where pride and impudence, in faction knit,
Usurp the chair of wit!
Indicting and arraigning every day
Something they call a play.
Let their fastidious, vain
Commission of the brain
Run on and rage, sweat, censure, and condemn;
They were not made for thee, less thou for them.

Say that thou pour'st them wheat,
And they will acorns eat;
'Twere simple fury still thyself to waste
On such as have no taste!
To offer them a surfeit of pure bread
Whose appetites are dead!
No, give them grains their fill,
Husks, draff to drink and swill:
If they love lees, and leave the lusty wine,
Envy them not, their palate's with the swine.

No doubt some mouldy tale,
Like Pericles, and stale
As the shrieve's crusts, and nasty as his fish-
Scraps out of every dish
Thrown forth, and rak'd into the common tub,
May keep up the Play-club:
There, sweepings do as well
As the best-order'd meal;
For who the relish of these guests will fit,
Needs set them but the alms-basket of wit.

And much good do't you then:
Brave plush-and-velvet-men
Can feed on orts; and, safe in your stage-clothes,
Dare quit, upon your oaths,
The staggers, and the stage-wrights too (your peers)
Of larding your large ears
With their foul comic socks,
Wrought upon twenty blocks;
Which if they are torn, and turn'd, and patch'd enough,
The gamesters share your guilt, and you their stuff.

Leave things so prostitute,
And take the Alcaic lute;
Or thine own Horace, or Anacreon's lyre;
Warm thee by Pindar's fire:
And though thy nerves be shrunk, and blood be cold,
Ere years have made thee old,
Strike that disdainful heat
Throughout, to their defeat,

As curious fools, and envious of thy strain,
May blushing swear, no palsy's in thy brain.

But when they hear thee sing
The glories of thy king,
His zeal to God, and his just awe o'er men:
They may, blood-shaken then,
Feel such a flesh-quake to possess their powers,
As they shall cry: 'Like ours
In sound of peace or wars,
No harp e'er hit the stars,
In tuning forth the acts of his sweet reign,
And raising Charles his chariot 'bove his Wain.'

Ben Jonson

Of Life And Death

The ports of death are sins; of life, good deeds:
Through which our merit leads us to our meeds.
How wilful blind is he, then, that would stray,
And hath it in his powers to make his way!
This world death's region is, the other life's:
And here it should be one of our first strifes,
So to front death, as men might judge us past it:
For good men but see death, the wicked taste it.

Ben Jonson

On A Robbery

RIDWAY robb'd DUNCOTE of three hundred pound,
Ridway was ta'en, arraign'd, condemn'd to die;
But, for this money, was a courtier found,
Begg'd Ridway's pardon: Duncote now doth cry,
Robb'd both of money, and the law's relief,
'The courtier is become the greater thief.'

Ben Jonson

On Don Surly

Don Surly, to aspire the glorious name
Of a great man, and to be thought the same,
Makes serious use of all great trade he know.
He speaks to men with a Rhinocerotes' nose,
Which he thinks great; and so reads verses too,
And that is done as he saw great men do.
He has timpanies of business in his face,
And can forget men's names with a great grace.
He will both argue and discourse in oaths,
Both which are great; and laugh at ill-made clothes-
That's greater yet-to cry his own up neat.
He doth, at meals, alone his pheasant eat,
Which is main greatness; and at his still board
He drinks to no man; that's, too, like a lord.
He keeps another's wife, which is a spice
Of solemn greatness. And he dares, at dice,
BlaspHEME God greatly, or some poor hind beat
That breathes in his dog's way; and this is great.
Nay more, for greatness' sake, he will be one
May hear my epigrams, but like of none,
Surly, use other arts; these only can
Style thee a most great fool, but no great man.

Ben Jonson

On Elizabeth L. H.

Epitaphs i

WOULDST thou hear what Man can say
In a little? Reader, stay.
Underneath this stone doth lie
As much Beauty as could die:
Which in life did harbour give
To more Virtue than doth live.
If at all she had a fault,
Leave it buried in this vault.
One name was Elizabeth,
The other, let it sleep with death:
Fitter, where it died, to tell
Than that it lived at all. Farewell.

Ben Jonson

On Giles and Joan

Who says that Giles and Joan at discord be?
Th' observing neighbors no such mood can see.
Indeed, poor Giles repents he married ever,
But that his Joan doth too. And Giles would never
By his free will be in Joan's company;
No more would Joan he should. Giles riseth early,
And having got him out of doors is glad;
The like is Joan. But turning home is sad,
And so is Joan. Ofttimes, when Giles doth find
Harsh sights at home, Giles wisheth he were blind:
All this doth Joan. Or that his long-yearned life
Were quite outspun. The like wish hath his wife.
The children that he keeps Giles swear are none
Of his begetting; and so swears his Joan.
In all affections she concurreth still.
If now, with man and wife, to will and nill
The self-same things a note of concord be,
I know no couple better can agree.

Ben Jonson

On Lucy, Countess of Bedford

This morning, timely rapt with holy fire,
I thought to form unto my zealous Muse
What kind of creature I could most desire,
To honour, serve, and love; as poets use.
I meant to make her fair, and free, and wise,
Of greatest blood, and yet more good than great;
I meant the day-star should not brighter rise,
Nor lend like influence from his lucent seat.
I meant she should be courteous, facile, sweet,
Hating that solemn vice of greatness, pride;
I meant each softest virtue there should meet,
Fit in that softer bosom to reside.
Only a learned and a manly soul
I purposed her; that should, with even powers,
The rock, the spindle, and the shears control
Of Destiny, and spin her own free hours.
Such when I meant to feign, and wished to see,
My Muse bade
Bedford
write, and that was she.

Ben Jonson

On My First Daughter

Here lies, to each her parents' ruth,
Mary, the daughter of their youth;
Yet all heaven's gifts being heaven's due,
It makes the father less to rue.
At six months' end she parted hence
With safety of her innocence;
Whose soul heaven's queen, whose name she bears,
In comfort of her mother's tears,
Hath placed amongst her virgin-train:
Where, while that severed doth remain,
This grave partakes the fleshly birth;
Which cover lightly, gentle earth!

Ben Jonson

On My First Son

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy;
My sin was too much hope of thee, lov'd boy.
Seven years thou'wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
O, could I lose all father now! For why
Will man lament the state he should envy?
To have so soon 'scap'd world's and flesh's rage,
And, if no other misery, yet age?
Rest in soft peace, and, ask'd, say here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.
For whose sake, henceforth, all his vows be such,
As what he loves may never like too much.

Ben Jonson

On Poet-Ape

Poor POET-APE, that would be thought our chief,
Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,
From brokage is become so bold a thief,
As we, the robbed, leave rage, and pity it.
At first he made low shifts, would pick and glean,
Buy the reversion of old plays; now grown
To a little wealth, and credit in the scene,
He takes up all, makes each man's wit his own.
And, told of this, he slights it. Tut, such crimes
The sluggish gaping auditor devours;
He marks not whose 'twas first: and after-times
May judge it to be his, as well as ours.
Fool, as if half eyes will not know a fleece
From locks of wool, or shreds from the whole piece!

Ben Jonson

On Salathiel Pavy

A child of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel
Epitaphs: ii

WEEP with me, all you that read
This little story;
And know, for whom a tear you shed
Death's self is sorry.
'Twas a child that so did thrive
In grace and feature,
As Heaven and Nature seem'd to strive
Which own'd the creature.
Years he number'd scarce thirteen
When Fates turn'd cruel,
Yet three fill'd zodiacs had he been
The stage's jewel;
And did act (what now we moan)
Old men so dully,
As sooth the Parcae thought him one,
He play'd so truly.
So, by error, to his fate
They all consented;
But, viewing him since, alas, too late!
They have repented;
And have sought, to give new birth,
In baths to steep him;
But, being so much too good for earth,
Heaven vows to keep him.

Ben Jonson

On Something, That Walks Somewhere

At court I met it, in clothes brave enough
To be a courtier, and looks grave enough
To seem a statesman: as I near it came,
It made me a great face. I asked the name.
'A lord,' it cried, 'buried in flesh and blood,
And such from whom let no man hope least good,
For I will do none; and as little ill,
For I will dare none.' Good lord, walk dead still.

Ben Jonson

Opening Doors

He smashed his hand
in opening a door for her,
and less pain than
embarrassment shrieked through him.
Concealing both,
grimacing as if theatrically,
he asked himself
who he thought he was to go
around opening
doors for anyone, much less for her.

Ben Jonson

Porth Ceiriad Bay

Descended to the shore, odd how we left
the young girl with us to herself, and went
straight to examine the stratified cliffs,
forgot her entirely in our interest.

You marvelled at the shapes the clockwork sea
had worn the stone, talking keenly, until
the pace of this random sculpture recalled
your age to you, and then its anodynes.

And so you turned, pretending youth, courting
the girl as if you were a boy again,
leaving the wry cliffs to their erosion
and me to my observant solitude.

Ben Jonson

Praeludium

And must I sing? What subject shall I choose!
Or whose great name in poets' heaven use,
For the more countenance to my active muse?

Hercules? alas, his bones are yet sore
With his old earthly labours t' exact more
Of his dull godhead were sin. I'll implore

Phoebus. No, tend thy cart still. Envious day
Shall not give out that I have made thee stay,
And foundered thy hot team, to tune my lay.

Nor will I beg of thee, lord of the vine,
To raise my spirits with thy conjuring wine,
In the green circle of thy ivy twine.

Pallas, nor thee I call on, mankind maid,
That at thy birth mad'st the poor smith afraid.
Who with his axe thy father's midwife played.

Go, cramp dull Mars, light Venus, when he snorts,
Or with thy tribade trine invent new sports;
Thou, nor thy looseness with my making sorts.

Let the old boy, your son, ply his old task,
Turn the stale prologue to some painted mask;
His absence in my verse is all I ask.

Hermes, the cheater, shall not mix with us,
Though he would steal his sisters' Pegasus,
And rifle him; or pawn his petasus.

Nor all the ladies of the Thespian lake,
Though they were crushed into one form, could make
A beauty of that merit, that should take

My muse up by commission; no, I bring
My own true fire: now my thought takes wing,
And now an epode to deep ears I sing.

Ben Jonson

Preconception

I have no children:

But tonight a poem came
in which a small child,
my daughter, appeared at the door
of a half-lit room
where late one night I wrote
at a heavy desk.

And though interruption
was hardly welcome
I took her to myself,
just as the poem,
comforted this daughter
until she found peace.

The poems as the children
come as they will come.

Ben Jonson

Queen and Huntress

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear when day did close:
Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright.

Ben Jonson

Simplex Munditiis

Still to be neat, still to be dressed,
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed:
Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all the adulteries of art;
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

Ben Jonson

So Breaks The Sun

So breaks the sun earth's rugged chains,
Wherein rude winter bound her veins;
So grows both stream and source of price,
That lately fettered were with ice.
So naked trees get crisped heads,
And colored coats the roughest meads,
And all get vigor, youth, and sprite,
That are but looked on by his light.

Ben Jonson

Song from The Silent Woman

Still to be neat, still to be dressed,
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed:
Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free;
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all th' adulteries of art:
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

Ben Jonson

Song To Celia - I

Come, my Celia, let us prove
While we may the sports of love;
Time will not be ours forever,
He at length our good will sever.

Spend not then his gifts in vain;
Suns that set may rise again,
But if once we lose this light,
'Tis with us perpetual night.

Why should we defer our joys?
Fame and rumour are but toys.
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poor household spies?
Or his easier ears beguile,
So removed by our wile?

'Tis no sin love's fruits to steal;
But the sweet theft to reveal,
To be taken, to be seen,
These have crimes accounted been.

Ben Jonson

Song to Celia II

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.

The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee
As giving it a hope, that there
It could not withered be.

But thou thereon didst only breathe,
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
Not of itself, but thee.

Ben Jonson

Song To Diana

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear when day did close:
Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright.

Ben Jonson

Song: from Cynthia's Revels

O, that joy so soon should waste!
Or so sweet a bliss
As a kiss
Might not for ever last!
So sugared, so melting, so soft, so delicious,
The dew that lies on roses,
When the Morn herself discloses,
Is not so precious.
O, rather than I would it smother,
Were I to taste such another,
It should be my wishing
That I might die kissing.

Ben Jonson

Song: To Cynthia

From
'Cynthia's Revels'

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear, when day did close:
Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright.

Ben Jonson

That Women Are But Men's Shadows

Follow a shadow, it still flies you;
Seem to fly it, it will pursue:
So court a mistress, she denies you;
Let her alone, she will court you.
Say, are not women truly then
Styled but the shadows of us men?

At morn and even shades are longest,
At noon they are or short or none;
So men at weakest, they are strongest,
But grant us perfect, they're not known.
Say, are not women truly then
Styled but the shadows of us men?

Ben Jonson

The Alchemist

The sickness hot, a master quit, for fear,
His house in town, and left one servant there;
Ease him corrupted, and gave means to know

A Cheater, and his punk; who now brought low,
Leaving their narrow practice, were become
Cozeners at large; and only wanting some
House to set up, with him they here contract,
Each for a share, and all begin to act.
Much company they draw, and much abuse,
In casting figures, telling fortunes, news,
Selling of flies, flat bawdry with the stone,
Till it, and they, and all in fume are gone.

Ben Jonson

The Alchemist: Prologue

Fortune, that favours fools, these two short hours,
We wish away, both for your sakes and ours,
Judging spectators; and desire, in place,
To the author justice, to ourselves but grace.
Our scene is London, 'cause we would make known,
No country's mirth is better than our own:
No clime breeds better matter for your whore,
Bawd, squire, impostor, many persons more,
Whose manners, now call'd humours, feed the stage;
And which have still been subject for the rage
Or spleen of comic writers. Though this pen
Did never aim to grieve, but better men;
Howe'er the age he lives in doth endure
The vices that she breeds, above their cure.
But when the wholesome remedies are sweet,
And in their working gain and profit meet,
He hopes to find no spirit so much diseased,
But will with such fair correctives be pleased:
For here he doth not fear who can apply.
If there be any that will sit so nigh
Unto the stream, to look what it doth run,
They shall find things, they'd think or wish were done;
They are so natural follies, but so shewn,
As even the doers may see, and yet not own.

Ben Jonson

The Hourglass

Do but consider this small dust
Here running in the glass,
By atoms moved;
Could you believe that this
The body was
Of one that loved?
And in his mistress' flame, playing like a fly,
Turned to cinders by her eye?
Yes; and in death, as life, unblessed,
To have't expressed,
Even ashes of lovers find no rest.

Ben Jonson

The Metamorphosed Gypsies (excerpt)

The fairy beam upon you,
The stars to glister on you;
A moon of light
In the noon of night,
Till the fire-drake hath o'ergone you.
The wheel of fortune guide you
The boy with the bow beside you;
Run aye in the way
Till the bird of day,
And the luckier lot betide you.

To the old, long life and treasure,
To the young, all health and pleasure;
To the fair, their face
With eternal grace,
And the foul to be lov'd at leisure.
To the witty, all clear mirrors,
To the foolish, their dark errors;
To the loving sprite,
A secure delight;
To the jealous, his own false terrors.

Ben Jonson

The New Cry

Ere cherries ripe, and strawberries be gone;
Unto the cries of London I'll add one;
Ripe statesmen, ripe: they grow in ev'ry street;
At six-and-twenty, ripe. You shall 'em meet,
And have him yield no favour, but of state.
Ripe are their ruffs, their cuffs, their beards, their gate,
And grave as ripe, like mellow as their faces.
They know the states of Christendom, not the places:
Yet have they seen the maps, and bought 'em too,
And understand 'em, as most chapmen do.
The counsels, projects, practices they know,
And what each prince doth for intelligence owe,
And unto whom; they are the almanacks
For twelve years yet to come, what each state lacks.
They carry in their pockets Tacitus,
And the Gazetti, or Gallo-Belgicus:
And talk reserv'd, lock'd up, and full of fear;
Nay, ask you how the day goes, in your ear.
Keep a Star-chamber sentence close twelve days:
And whisper what a Proclamation says.
They meet in sixes, and at ev'ry mart,
Are sure to con the catalogue by heart;
Or ev'ry day, some one at Rimee's looks,
Or bills, and there he buys the name of books.
They all get Porta, for the sundry ways
To write in cypher, and the several keys,
To ope the character. They've found the slight
With juice of lemons, onions, piss, to write;
To break up seals and close 'em. And they know,
If the states make peace, how it will go
With England. All forbidden books they get,
And of the powder-plot, they will talk yet.
At naming the French king, their heads they shake,
And at the Pope, and Spain, slight faces make.
Or 'gainst the bishops, for the brethren rail
Much like those brethren; thinking to prevail
With ignorance on us, as they have done
On them: and therefore do not only shun
Others more modest, but contemn us too,
That know not so much state, wrong, as they do.

Ben Jonson

The Noble Balm

HIGH-SPIRITED friend,
I send nor balms nor cor'sives to your wound:
Your fate hath found
A gentler and more agile hand to tend
The cure of that which is but corporal;
And doubtful days, which were named critical,
Have made their fairest flight
And now are out of sight.
Yet doth some wholesome physic for the mind
Wrapp'd in this paper lie,
Which in the taking if you misapply,
You are unkind.

Your covetous hand,
Happy in that fair honour it hath gain'd,
Must now be rein'd.
True valour doth her own renown command
In one full action; nor have you now more
To do, than be a husband of that store.
Think but how dear you bought
This fame which you have caught:
Such thoughts will make you more in love with truth.
'Tis wisdom, and that high,
For men to use their fortune reverently,
Even in youth.

Ben Jonson

The Noble Nature

It is not growing like a tree
in bulk, doth make Man better be;
or standing long an oak three hundred year,
to fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere;

A lily of a day
is fairer in May,
although it fall and die that night-
It was the plant and flower of Light.
In small proportions we just beauties see:
and in short measures life may perfect be.

Ben Jonson

The Short Fear

My awkward grossness grows: I go down, through

I maintain my self in the conviction
that I have as much to say as others
and more apposite ways of saying it

Certainly I feel it has all been said

The short fear is that even saying it
in my own way is equally pointless

Ben Jonson

The Speech

The long laments I spent for ruin'd Troy,
Are dried; and now mine eyes run teares of joy.
No more shall men suppose Electra dead,
Though from the consort of her sisters fled
Unto the Artick circle, here to grace,
And gild this day with her serenest face:
And see, my daughter Iris hastes to throw
Her roseat wings in compasse of a bow,
About our State, as signe of my approach:
Attracting to her seate from Mithras coach,
A thousand different, and particular hiewes,
Which she throughout her body doth diffuse.
The Sun, as loth to part from this halfe Spheare,
Stands still; and Phoebe labors to appeare
In all as bright (if not as rich) as he:
And, for a note of more serenity,
My six faire sisters hither shift their lights;
To do this hower the utmost of her rites.
Where lest the captious, or prophane might doubt,
How these cleare heavenly bodies come about
All to be seen at once; yet neithers light
Eclips'd, or shadow'd by the others sight:
Let ignorance know, great King, this day is thine,
And doth admit no night; but all do shine
As well nocturnall, as diurnall fires,
To adde unto the flame of our desires.
Which are (now thou hast closd up Janus gates,
And giv'n so generall peace to all Estates)
That no offensive mist, or cloudy staine
May mixe with splendor of thy golden raigne;
But, as th'ast free'd thy Chamber, from the noyse
Of war and tumult; thou wilt powre those joyes
Upon this place, which claimes to be the seate
Of all the kingly race: the cabinet
To all thy counsels; and the judging chaire
To this thy speciall Kingdome. Who so faire
And wholsome laws, in every Court, shall strive
By Æquity, and their first innocence to thrive;
The base and guilty bribes of guiltier men
Shall be thrown back, and Justice look, as when
She lov'd the earth, and fear'd not to be sold
For that, which worketh all things to it, gold.

The Dam of other evils, avarice
Shall here locke down her jaws, and that rude vice
Of ignorant, and pittied greatnesse, pride,
Decline with shame; ambition now shall hide
Her face in dust, as dedicate to sleep,
That in great portals wont her watch to keep.
All ils shall fly the light: Thy Court be free
No lesse from envy, than from flattery;

All tumult, faction, and harsh discord cease,
That might perturb the musick of thy peace:
The querulous nature shall no longer finde
Room for his thoughts: One pure consent of minde
Shall flow in every brest, and not the ayre,
Sun, Moon, or Stars shine more serenely faire.
This from that loud, blest Oracle, I sing,
Who here, and first, pronounc'd thee Brittaines King.
Long maist thou live, and see me thus appeare,
As ominous a Comet, from my Spheare,
Unto thy raigne; as that did auspicate
So lasting glory to Augustus State.

Ben Jonson

The Speeches of Gratulations

GENIUS.

Time, Fate, and Fortune have at length conspir'd,
To give our Age the day so much desir'd.
What all the minutes, houres, weekes, months, and yeares,
That hang in file upon these silver haire,
Could not produce, beneath the Britaine stroke,
The Roman, Saxon, Dane, and Norman yoke,
This point of Time hath done. Now London, reare
Thy forehead high, and on it strive to weare
Thy choisest gems; teach thy steepe Towres to rise
Higher with people: set with sparkling eyes
Thy spacious windowes; and in every street,
Let thronging joy, love, and amazement meet.
Cleave all the ayre with shouts, and let the cry
Strike through as long, and universally,
As thunder; for, thou now art blist to see
That sight, for which thou didst begin to bee.
When Brutus plough first gave thee infant bounds,
And I, thy Genius walkt auspicious rounds
In every furrow; then did I fore-looke,
And saw this day mark't white in Clotho's booke.
The severall circles, both of change and sway,
Within this Isle, there also figur'd lay:
Of which the greatest, perfectest, and last
Was this, whose present happinesse we tast.
Why keepe you silence daughters? What dull peace
Is this inhabits you? Shall office cease
Upon th'aspect of him, to whom you owe
More than you are, or can be? Shall Time know
That article, wherein your flame stood still,
And not aspir'd? Now heaven avert an ill
Of that black looke. Ere pause possesse your breasts
I wish you more of plagues: 'Zeale when it rests,
Leaves to be zeale. Up thou tame River, wake;
And from thy liquid limbes this slumber shake:
Thou drown'st thy selfe in inofficious sleepe;
And these thy sluggish waters seeme to creepe,
Rather than flow. Up, rise, and swell with pride
Above thy bankes. 'Now is not every tide.

TAMESIS.

To what vaine end should I contend to show
My weaker powers, when seas of pompe o'reflow
The Cities face: and cover all the shore
With sands more rich than Tagus wealthy ore?
When in the floud of joy, that comes with him,
He drownes the world; yet makes it live and swimme,
And spring with gladnesse: not my fishes here,
Though they be dumbe, but doe expresse the cheere
Of these bright streames. No lesse may these, and I
Boast our delights, albe't we silent lie.

GENIUS.

Indeed, true gladnesse doth not alwayes speake?
Joy bred, and borne but in the tongue, is weake.
Yet (lest the fervour of so pure a flame
As this my Citie beares, might lose the name,
Without the apt eventing of her heat)
Know greatest James (and no lesse good, than great,)
In the behalfe of all my vertuous sonnes,
Whereof my eldest there, thy pompe fore-runnes,
(A man without my flattering, or his Pride,
As worthy, as he's blest to be thy guide)
In his grave name, and all his brethrens right,
(Who thirst to drink the nectar of thy sight)
The Councill, Commoners, and multitude;
(Glad, that this day so long deny'd, is view'd)
I tender thee the heartiest welcome, yet
That ever King had to his Empires seat:
Never came man, more long'd for, more desir'd:
And being come, more reverenc'd, lov'd, admir'd:
Heare, and record it: 'In a Prince it is
'No little vertue, to know who are his.

With like devotions, doe I stoope t'embrace
This springing glory of thy god-like race;
His Countries wonder, hope, love, joy and pride:
How well doth hee become the royall side
Of this erected, and broad spreading Tree,
Under whose shade, may Britaine ever be.
And from this Branch, may thousand Branches more
Shoot o're the maine, and knit with every shore
In bonds of marriage, kinred, and increase;
And stile this land, the navill of their peace.
This is your servants wish, your Cities vow,
Which still shall propagate it selfe, with you;
And free from spurres of hope, that slow minds move:
'He seekes no hire, that owes his life to love.

And here shee comes that is no lesse a part
In this dayes greatnesse, than in my glad heart.
Glory of Queenes, and glory of your name,
Whose graces doe as farre out-speak your fame,
As Fame doth silence, when her trumpet rings
You daughter, sister, wife of severall Kings:
Besides alliance, and the stile of mother,
In which one title you drowne all your other.
Instance, be that faire shoot, is gone before,

Your eldest joy, and top of all your store,
With those, whose sight to us is yet deny'd,
But not our zeale to them, or ought beside
This Citie can to you: For whose estate
Shee hopes you will be still good advocate
To her best Lord. So, whilst you mortall are,
No taste of sowre mortalitie once dare
Approach your house; nor fortune greet your Grace,
But coming on, and with a forward face.

GENIUS.

Stay, what art thou, that in this strange attire,
Dar'st kindle stranger, and un-hallowed fire
Upon this Altar?

Fl.
Rather what art thou
That dar'st so rudely interrupt my vow?
My habit speakes my name.

Ge.
A Flamen?

Fl.
Yes,
And Martialis call'd.

Ge.
I so did ghesse
By my short view; but whence didst thou ascend
Hither? or how? or to what mystick end?

Fl.
The noyse, and present tumult of this day,
Rowsd me from sleep, and silence, where I lay
Obscur'd from light; which when I wakt to see,
I wondring thought what this great pompe might bee.
When (looking in my Kalender) I found
The Ides of March were entred, and I bound
With these, to celebrate the geniall feast
Of Anna still'd Perenna, Mars his guest,
Who, in this month of his, is yearely call'd
To banquet at his altars; and instal'd
A goddess with him, since she fils the yeare,

And knits the oblique scarfe that girts the spheare.
Whilest fourefac'd Janus turnes his vernall look
Upon their meeting houres, as if he took
High pride and pleasure.

Ge.

Sure thou still dost dreame,
And both thy tongue, and thought rides on the streame
Of phantasie: Behold here he nor she,
Have any altar, fane, or deity.
Stoope: read but this inscription: and then view
To whom the place is consecrate. 'Tis true
That this is Janus temple, and that now
He turnes upon the yeare his freshest brow:
That this is Mars his month; and these the Ides,
Wherein his Anne was honor'd; both the tides,
Titles, and place, we know: but these dead rites
Are long since buryed, and new power excites
More high and hearty flames. Loe, there is he,
Who brings with him a greater Anne than she:
Whose strong and potent vertues have defac'd
Sterne Mars his statues, and upon them plac'd
His, and the Worlds blest blessings: This hath brought
Sweet peace to sit in that bright State she ought,
Unbloody, or untroubled; hath forc'd hence
All tumults, feares, or other dark portents
That might invade weak minds; hath made men see
Once more the face of welcome liberty:
And doth (in all his present acts) restore
That first pure World, made of the better ore.
Now innocence shall cease to be the spoyle
Of ravenous greatnesse, or to steep the soyle
Of raysed pesantry with teares, and blood;
No more shall rich men (for their little good)
Suspected to be made guilty; or vile spies
Enjoy the lust of their so murdring eyes:
Men shall put off their yron minds, and hearts;
The time forget his old malicious arts
With this new minute; and no print remaine
Of what was thought the former ages staine.
Back, Flamen, with thy superstitious fumes,
And cense not here; Thy ignorance presumes
Too much, in acting any Ethnick rite
In this translated temple: here no wight,
To sacrifice, save my devotion comes,
That brings in stead of those thy masculine gums.
My Cities heart; which shall for ever burne
Upon this Altar, and no time shall turne
The same to ashes: here I fixe it fast,
Flame bright, flame high, and may it ever last.
Whilst I, before the figure of thy peace,

Still tend the fire; and give it quick increase
With prayers, wishes, vows; whereof be these
The least, and weakest: that no age may leese
The memory of this so rich a day;
But rather, that it henceforth yearely may
Begin our spring, and with our spring the prime,
And first accompt of yeares, of months, of time:
And may these Ides as fortunate appeare
To thee, as they to Cæsar fatall were.
Be all thy thoughts borne perfect, and thy hopes
In their events still crown'd beyond their scopes.
Let not wide heav'n that secret blessing know
To give, which she on thee will not bestow.
Blind Fortune be thy slave; and may her store
(The lesse thou seek'st it) follow thee the more.
Much more I would: but see, these brazen gates
Make haste to close, as urged by thy fates;
Here ends my Cities office, here it breakes:
Yet with my tongue, and this pure heart, she speakes
A short farewell; and lower than thy feet,
With fervent thankes, thy Royall paines doth greet.
Pardon, if my abruptnesse breed disease;
'He merits not t'offend, that hastes to please.

Ben Jonson

The Thames At Mortlake

if only for ten minutes

after the mass feeding of schoolchildren
after the careful inanity of the staff

at low tide
this was the place
for calm, for order of a kind

the relief of walking there

and the smell was acceptable
perhaps even preferable

the objects to be
seen
found

principally (I have it still)
a short fat halfpound brass bolt and nut
virgin, unscrewed

other things less permanent

sodden grey bones
scratched glass, rubbed brick, rusted gatebutts
once a chaffinch eggshell

every conceivable other

but mainly dirty shingle
silt
prairies of malachite slime

though was the important thing
that I met no one else there?

Ben Jonson

The Triumph Of Charis

See the chariot at hand here of Love,
Wherein my lady rideth!
Each that draws is a swan or a dove,
And well the car Love guideth.
As she goes, all hearts do duty
Unto her beauty;
And, enamoured, do wish, so they might
But enjoy such a sight,
That they still were to run by her side,
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.

Do but look on her eyes, they do light
All that Love's world compriseth!
Do but look on her hair, it is bright
As Love's star when it riseth!
Do but mark, her forehead's smother
Than words that soothe her!
And from her arched brows, such a grace
Sheds itself through the face,
As alone there triumphs to the life
All the gain, all the good, of the elements' strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily grow
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall o' the snow
Before the soil hath smutched it?
Have you felt the wool of beaver?
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier?
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!

Ben Jonson

To Celia

Drinke to me, onely, with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kisse but in the cup,
And Ile not looke for wine.
The thirst, that from the soule doth rise,
Doth aske a drinke divine:
But might I of Jove's Nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.
I sent thee, late, a rosie wreath,
Not so much honoring thee,
As giving it a hope, that there
It could not withered bee.
But thou thereon did'st onely breath,
And sent'st it back to mee:
Since when it growes, and smells, I sweare,
Not of it selfe, but thee.

Ben Jonson

To Censorious Courtling

COURTLING, I rather thou should'st utterly
Dispraise my work, than praise it frostily:
When I am read, thou feign'st a weak applause,
As if thou wert my friend, but lack'dst a cause.
This but thy judgment fools: the other way
Would both thy folly and thy spite betray.

Ben Jonson

To Doctor Empiric

When men a dangerous disease did 'scape,
Of old, they gave a cock to Aesculape.
Let me give two, that doubly am got free
From my disease's danger, and from thee.

Ben Jonson

To Fine Lady Would-Be

Fine madam Would-Be, wherefore should you fear,
That love to make so well, a child to bear?
The world reputes you barren: but I know
Your 'pothecary, and his drug says no.
Is it the pain affrights? That's soon forgot.
Or your complexion's loss? you have a pot,
That can restore that. Will it hurt your feature?
To make amends, you are thought a wholesome creature.
What should the cause be? Oh, you live at court;
And there's both loss of time, and loss of sport,
In a great belly: Write then on thy womb,
'Of the not born, yet buried, here's the tomb.'

Ben Jonson

To Francis Beaumont

How I do love thee, Beaumont, and thy muse,
That unto me dost such religion use!
How I do fear myself, that am not worth
The least indulgent thought thy pen drops forth!
At once thou mak'st me happy, and unmak'st;
And giving largely to me, more thou takest!
What fate is mine, that so itself bereaves?
What art is thine, that so thy friend deceives?
When even there, where most thou praisest me,
For writing better, I must envy thee.

Ben Jonson

To John Donne

Donne, the delight of Phoebus and each Muse
Who, to thy one, all other brains refuse;
Whose every work of thy most early wit
Came forth example, and remains so yet;
Longer a-knowing than most wits do live;
And which no affection praise enough can give!
To it, thy language, letters, arts, best life,
Which might with half mankind maintain a strife.
All which I meant to praise, and yet I would;
But leave, because I cannot as I should!

Ben Jonson

To Lucy, Countess of Bedford, with John Donne's Satires

Lucy, you brightness of our sphere, who are
Life of the Muses' day, their morning star!
If works, not th' author's, their own grace should look,
Whose poems would not wish to be your book?
But these, desir'd by you, the maker's ends
Crown with their own. Rare poems ask rare friends.
Yet satires, since the most of mankind be
Their unavoyd subject, fewest see;
For none e'er took that pleasure in sin's sense
But, when they heard it tax'd, took more offence.
They, then, that living where the matter is bred,
Dare for these poems, yet, both ask and read
And like them too, must needfully, though few,
Be of the best; and 'mongst those best are you,
Lucy, you brightness of our sphere, who are
The Muses' evening, as their morning star.

Ben Jonson

To My Book

It will be looked for, book, when some but see
Thy title,
Epigrams
, and named of me,
Thou should'st be bold, licentious, full of gall,
Wormwood and sulphur, sharp and toothed withal,
Become a petulant thing, hurl ink and wit
As madmen stones, not caring whom they hit.
Deceive their malice who could wish it so,
And by thy wiser temper let men know
Thou art not covetous of least self-fame
Made from the hazard of another's shame-
Much less with lewd, profane, and beastly phrase
To catch the world's loose laughter or vain gaze.
He that departs with his own honesty
For vulgar praise, doth it too dearly buy.

Ben Jonson

To Penshurst

Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show,
Of touch, or marble; nor canst boast a row
Of polish'd pillars, or a roofof gold:
Thou hast no lantherne, whereof tales are told;
Or stayre, or courts; but stand'st an ancient pile,
And these grudg'd at, art reverenc'd the while.
Thou joy'st in better marks, of soile, of ayre,
Of wood, of water: therein thou art faire.
Thou hast thy walkes for health, as well as sport:
Thy
Mount
, to which the
Dryads
do resort,
Where Pan, and Bacchus their high feasts have made,
Beneath the broad beech, and the chest-nut shade;
That taller tree, which of a nut was set,
At his great birth, where all the
Muses
met.
There, in the writhed barke, are cut the names
Of many a Sylvane, taken with his flames
And thence the ruddy
Satyres
oft provoke
The lighter
Faunes
, to reach thy
Ladies oke
.
Thy copp's, too, nam'd of Gamage, thou hast there,
That never failes to serve thee season'd deere,
When thou would'st feast, or exercise thy friends.
The lower land, that to the river bends,
Thy sheep, thy bullocks, kine, and calves do feed:
The middle grounds thy Mares, and Horses breed.
Each banck, doth yeeld thee Coneyes; and the topps
Fertile of wood, Ashore, and Sydney's copp's,
To crown thy open table, doth provide
The purpled Phesant, with the speckled side:
The painted Partrich lyes in every field,
And, for thy messe, is willing to be kill'd.
And if the high-swolne
Medway
faile thy dish,
Thou hast thy ponds, that pay thee tribute fish,
Fat, aged Carps, that run into thy net.
And Pikes, now weary their own kinde to eat,
As loth, the second draught, or cast to stay,
Officiously, at first, themselves betray.
Bright Eeles, that emulate them, and leap on land;
Before the fisher, or into his hand.

Then hath thy Orchard fruit, thy garden flowers,
 Fresh as the ayre, and new as are the houres.
 The earely Cherry, with the later Plum,
 Fig, Grape, and Quince, each in his time doth come:
 The blushing Apricot, and woolly Peach
 Hang on thy wals, that every child may reach.
 And though thy wals be of the countrey stone,
 They' are rear'd with no mans ruine, no mans grone;
 There's none, that dwell about them, wish them downe;
 But all come in, the farmer and the clowne:
 And no one empty-handed, to salute
 Thy Lord, and Lady, though they have no sute.
 Some bring a Capon, some a rurall Cake,
 Some Nuts, some Apples; some that think they make
 The better Cheeses, bring 'hem; or else send
 By their ripe daughters, whom they would commend
 This way to husbands; and whose baskets beare
 An Embleme of themselves, in plum, or peare.
 But what can this (more than expresse their love)
 Adde to thy free provisions, farre above
 The need of such? whose liberall boord doth flow,
 With all, that hospitality doth know!
 Where comes no guest, but is allow'd to eat,
 Without his feare, and of thy Lords own meat:
 Where the same beere, and bread, and selfe-same wine,
 That is his Lordships, shall be also mine.
 And I not faine to sit (as some, this day,
 At great mens tables) and yet dine away.
 Here no man tels my cups; nor, standing by,
 A waiter, doth my gluttony envy:
 But gives me what I call for, and lets me eate;
 He knowes, below, he shall finde plentie of meate;
 Thy tables hoord not up for the next day,
 Nor, when I take my lodging, need I pray
 For fire, or lights, or livorie: all is there;
 As if thou, then, wert mines, or I raign'd here:
 There's nothing I can wish, for which I stay.
 That found King James, when hunting late, this way,
 With his brave sonne, the Prince, they saw thy fires
 Shine bright on every harth as the desires
 Of thy Penates had beene set on flame,
 To entertayne them; or the Countrey came,
 With all their zeale, to warme their welcome here.
 What (great, I will not say, but) sodaine cheare
 Didst thou, then, make 'hem! and what praise was heap'd
 On thy good lady, then! who therein, reap'd
 The just reward of her high huswifery;
 To have her linnen, plate, and all things nigh,
 When she was farre: and not a roome, but drest,
 As if it had expected such a guest!
 These, Penshurst, are thy praise, and yet not all.
 Thy lady's noble, fruitfull, chaste withall.

His children thy great lord may call his owne:
A fortune, in this age, but rarely knowne.
They are, and have been taught religion: Thence
Their gentler spirits have suck'd innocence.
Each morne, and even, they are taught to pray,
With the whole houshold, and may, every day,
Reade, in their vertuous parents noble parts,
The mysteries of manners, armes, and arts.
Now, Penshurst, they that will proportion thee
With other edifices, when they see
Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else,
May say, their lords have built, but thy lord dwells.

Ben Jonson

To the Immortal Memory and Friendship of That Noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison

The Turn

Brave infant of Saguntum, clear
Thy coming forth in that great year,
When the prodigious Hannibal did crown
His rage, with razing your immortal town.
Thou looking then about
Ere thou wert half got out,
Wise child, didst hastily return,
And mad'st thy mother's womb thine urn.
How summed a circle didst thou leave mankind
Of deepest lore, could we the centre find!

The Counter-Turn

Did wiser nature draw thee back
From out the horror of that sack,
Where shame, faith, honour, and regard of right,
Lay trampled on?-the deeds of death and night
Urged, hurried forth, and hurled
Upon th' affrighted world?
Sword, fire, and famine, with fell fury met,
And all on utmost ruin set:
As, could they but life's miseries foresee,
No doubt all infants would return like thee.

The Stand

For what is life, if measured by the space,
Not by the act?
Or maskèd man, if valued by his face,
Above his fact?
Here's one outlived his peers
And told forth fourscore years:
He vexèd time, and busied the whole state,
Troubled both foes and friends,
But ever to no ends:
What did this stirrer but die late?
How well at twenty had he fall'n or stood!
For three of his four score, he did no good.

The Turn

He entered well, by virtuous parts,
Got up and thrived with honest arts:
He purchased friends, and fame, and honours then,
And had his noble name advanced with men;
But, weary of that flight,
He stooped in all men's sight
To sordid flatteries, acts of strife,
And sunk in that dead sea of life
So deep, as he did then death's waters sup,
But that the cork of title buoyed him up.

The Counter-Turn

Alas, but Morison fell young;-
He never fell, thou fall'st, my tongue.
He stood, a soldier to the last right end,
A perfect patriot and a noble friend,
But most a virtuous son.
All offices were done
By him, so ample, full, and round
In weight, in measure, number, sound,
As, though his age imperfect might appear,
His life was of humanity the sphere.

The Stand

Go now, and tell out days summed up with fears,
And make them years;
Produce thy mass of miseries on the stage
To swell thine age;
Repeat of things a throng,
To show thou hast been long,
Not lived; for life doth her great actions spell,
By what was done and wrought
In season, and so brought
To light: her measures are, how well
Each syllab'e answered, and was formed how fair;
These make the lines of life, and that's her air.

The Turn

It is not growing like a tree

In bulk, doth make men better be,
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night;
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures life may perfect be.

The Counter-Turn

Call, noble Lucius, then for wine,
And let thy looks with gladness shine:
Accept this garland, plant it on thy head,
And think, nay, know, thy Morison's not dead.
He leaped the present age,
Possessed with holy rage,
To see that bright eternal day,
Of which we priests and poets say
Such truths as we expect for happy men,
And there he lives with memory: and Ben

The Stand

Jonson, who sung this of him ere he went
Himself to rest,
Or taste a part of that full joy he meant
To have expressed
In this bright asterism:
Where it were friendship's schism,
(Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry)
To separate these two-
Lights, the Dioscuri,
And keep the one half from his Harry.
But fate doth so alternate the design,
Whilst that in heaven, this light on earth must shine.

The Turn

And shine as you exalted are,
Two names of friendship, but one star,
Of hearts the union. And those not by chance

Made, or indentured, or leased out t' advance
The profits for a time.
No pleasures vain did chime
Of rhymes, or riots at your feasts,
Orgies of drink, or feigned protests;
But simple love of greatness and of good
That knits brave minds and manners, more than blood.

The Counter-Turn

This made you first to know the why
You liked, then after to apply
That liking; and approach so one the t'other,
Till either grew a portion of the other;
Each stylèd by his end,
The copy of his friend.
You lived to be the great surnames
And titles by which all made claims
Unto the virtue: nothing perfect done,
But as a Cary or a Morison.

The Stand

And such a force the fair example had,
As they that saw
The good and durst not practise it, were glad
That such a law
Was left yet to mankind;
Where they might read and find
Friendship in deed was written, not in words.
And with the heart, not pen,
Of two so early men,
Whose lives her rolls were, and records,
Who, ere the first down bloomèd on the chin
Had sow'd these fruits, and got the harvest in.

Ben Jonson

To the Memory of My Beloved Author, Mr. William Shakespeare

To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;
While I confess thy writings to be such
As neither man nor muse can praise too much;
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these ways
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise;
For seeliest ignorance on these may light,
Which, when it sounds at best, but echoes right;
Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance
The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance;
Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,
And think to ruin, where it seem'd to raise.
These are, as some infamous bawd or whore
Should praise a matron; what could hurt her more?
But thou art proof against them, and indeed,
Above th' ill fortune of them, or the need.
I therefore will begin. Soul of the age!
The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!
My Shakespeare, rise! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further, to make thee a room:
Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive still while thy book doth live
And we have wits to read and praise to give.
That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses,
I mean with great, but disproportion'd Muses,
For if I thought my judgment were of years,
I should commit thee surely with thy peers,
And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
From thence to honour thee, I would not seek
For names; but call forth thund'ring {AE}schylus,
Euripides and Sophocles to us;
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
To life again, to hear thy buskin tread,
And shake a stage; or, when thy socks were on,
Leave thee alone for the comparison
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age but for all time!
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!
Nature herself was proud of his designs
And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines,
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please,

But antiquated and deserted lie,
As they were not of Nature's family.
Yet must I not give Nature all: thy art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion; and, that he
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses' anvil; turn the same
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame,
Or, for the laurel, he may gain a scorn;
For a good poet's made, as well as born;
And such wert thou. Look how the father's face
Lives in his issue, even so the race
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
In his well-turned, and true-filed lines;
In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
As brandish'd at the eyes of ignorance.
Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza and our James!
But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere
Advanc'd, and made a constellation there!
Shine forth, thou star of poets, and with rage
Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage;
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd like night,
And despairs day, but for thy volume's light.

Ben Jonson

To The Reader

Pray thee, take care, that tak'st my book in hand,
To read it well - that is, to understand.

Ben Jonson

To William Camden

Camden, most reverend head, to whom I owe
All that I am in arts, all that I know
(How nothing's that!), to whom my country owes
The great renown and name wherewith she goes;
Than thee the age sees not that thing more grave,
More high, more holy, that she more would crave.
What name, what skill, what faith hast thou in things!
What sight in searching the most antique springs!
What weight and what authority in thy speech!
Man scarce can make that doubt, but thou canst teach.
Pardon free truth and let thy modesty,
Which conquers all, be once o'ercome by thee.
Many of thine this better could than I;
But for their powers, accept my piety.

Ben Jonson

V: Song: To Celia

Come my Celia, let us prove,
While wee may, the sports of love;
Time will not be ours, for'ever:
He, at length, our good will fever.
Spend not then his gifts in vaine.
Sunnes, that set, may rise againe:
But, if once wee lose this light,
'Tis, with us, perpetuall night.
Why should we deferre our joyes?
Fame, and rumor are but toyes.
Cannot wee delude the eyes
Of a few poore houshold spyes?
Or his easier eares beguile,
So removed by our wile?
'Tis no sinne, loves fruit to steale,
But the sweet theft to reveale:
To bee taken, to be seene,
These have crimes accounted beene.

Ben Jonson

Venus' Runaway

Beauties, have ye seen this toy,
Called Love, a little boy,
Almost naked, wanton, blind;
Cruel now, and then as kind?
If he be amongst ye, say?
He is Venus' runaway.

She that will but now discover
Where the winged wag doth hover,
Shall to-night receive a kiss,
How or where herself would wish:
But who brings him to his mother,
Shall have that kiss, and another.

He hath marks about him plenty:
You shall know him among twenty.
All his body is a fire,
And his breath a flame entire,
That, being shot like lightning in,
Wounds the heart, but not the skin.

At his sight, the sun hath turned,
Neptune in the waters burned;
Hell hath felt a greater heat;
Jove himself forsook his seat:
From the centre to the sky,
Are his trophies reared high.

Wings he hath, which though ye clip,
He will leap from lip to lip,
Over liver, lights, and heart,
But not stay in any part;
But if chance his arrow misses,
He will shoot himself in kisses.

He doth bear a golden bow,
And a quiver, hanging low,
Full of arrows, that outbrave
Dian's shafts; where, if he have
Any head more sharp than other,
With that first he strikes his mother.

Still the fairest are his fuel.
When his days are to be cruel,
Lovers' hearts are all his food,
And his baths their warmest blood:
Naught but wounds his hands doth season,
And he hates none like to Reason.

Trust him not; his words, though sweet,
Seldom with his heart do meet.
All his practice is deceit;

Every gift it is a bait;

Not a kiss but poison bears;
And most treason in his tears.

Idle minutes are his reign;
Then, the straggler makes his gain
By presenting maids with toys,
And would have ye think them joys:
'Tis the ambition of the elf
To have all childish as himself.

If by these ye please to know him,
Beauties, be not nice, but show him.
Though ye had a will to hide him,
Now, we hope, ye'll not abide him;
Since you hear his falser play,
And that he's Venus' runaway.

Ben Jonson

VI: To The Same

Kisse mee, Sweet: The wary lover
Can your favours keepe, and cover,
When the common courting jay
All your bounties will betray.
Kisse againe: no creature comes.
Kisse, and score up wealthy summes
On my lips, thus hardly sundred,
While you breathe. First give a hundred,
Then a thousand, then another
Hundred, then unto the tother
Adde a thousand, and so more:
Till you equall with the store,
All the grasse that Rumney yeelds,
Or the sands in Chelsey fields,
Or the drops in silver Thames,
Or the stars, that guild his streames,
In the silent sommer-nights,
When youths ply their stoln delights.
That the curious may not know
How to tell 'hem as they flow,
And the envious, when they find
What their number is, be pin'd.

Ben Jonson

VII: Song: That Women Are But Mens Shaddows

Follow a shaddow, it still flies you,
Seeme to flye it, it will pursue:
So court a mistris, she denies you;
Let her alone, she will court you.
Say, are not women truly, then,
Stil'd but the shaddows of us men?
At morne, and even, shades are longest;
At noone, they are short, or none:
So men at weakest, they are strongest,
But grant us perfect, they're not knowne.
Say, are not women truly, then,
Stil'd but the shaddows of us men?

Ben Jonson

VIII: Song: To Sicknesse

Why, Disease, dost thou molest
Ladies? and of them the best?
Do not men, ynow of rites
To thy altars, by their nights
Spent in surfets: and their dayes,
And nights too, in worser wayes?
Take heed, Sicknesse, what you do,
I shall feare, you'll surfet too.
Live not we, as, all thy stals,
Spittles, pest-house, hospitals,
Scarce will take our present store?
And this age will build no more:
'Pray thee, feed contented, then,
Sicknesse; only on us men.
Or if needs thy lust will taste
Woman-kind; devoure the waste
Livers, round about the town.
But forgive me, with thy crown
They maintaine the truest trade,
And have more diseases made.
What should, yet, thy pallat please?
Daintinesse, and softer ease,
Sleeked lims, and finest blood?
If thy leannesse love such food,
There are those, that, for thy sake,
Do enough; and who would take
Any paines; yea, think it price,
To become thy sacrifice.
That distill their husbands land
In decoctions; and are mann'd
With ten Emp'ricks, in their chamber,
Lying for the spirit of amber.
That for the oyle of Talck, dare spend
More than citizens dare lend
Them, and all their officers.
That to make all pleasure theirs,
Will by coach, and water go,
Every stew in towne to know;
Date entayle their loves on any,
Bald, or blind, or nere so many:
And, for thee at common game,
Play away, health, wealth, and fame.
These, disease, will thee deserve:
And will, long ere thou should'st starve,
On their bed most prostitute,
Move it, as their humblest sute,
In thy justice to molest
None but them, and leave the rest.

Ben Jonson

X: And Must I Sing?

And must I sing? what subject shall I chuse?
Or whose great name in Poets heaven use?
For the more countenance to my active Muse?

Hercules? alas his bones are yet sore,
With his old earthly labours. T'exact more,
Of his dull god-head, were sinne. Ile implore

Phoebus? No. tend thy cart still. Envious day
Shall not give out, that I have made thee stay,
And foundred thy hot teame, to tune my lay.

Nor will I begge of thee, Lord of the vine,
To raise my spirits with thy conjuring wine,
In the greene circle of thy Ivie twine.

Pallas, nor thee I call on, mankind maid,
That, at thy birth, mad'st the poore Smith affraid,
Who, with his axe, thy fathers mid-wife plaid.

Goe, crampe dull Mars, light Venus, when he snorts,
Or, with thy Tribade trine, invent new sports.
Thou, nor thy loosenesse with my making sorts.

Let the old Boy, your sonne, ply his old taske,
Turne the stale prologue to some painted maske,
His absence in my verse, is all I aske.

Hermes, the cheater, shall not mix with us,
Though hee would steale his sisters Pegasus,
And ruffle him: or pawne his Petasus.

Nor all the ladies of the Thespian lake,
(Though they were crusht into one forme) could make
A beautie of that merit, that should take

My Muse up by commission: No, I bring
My owne true fire. Now my thought takes wing,
And now an Epode to deepe eares I sing.

Ben Jonson

XI: Epode

Not to know vice at all, and keepe true state,
Is vertue, and not Fate:
Next, to that vertue, is to know vice well,
And her black spight expell.
Which to effect (since no brest is so sure,
Or safe, but shee'll procure
Some way of entrance) we must plant a guard
Of thoughts to watch, and ward
At th'eye and eare (the ports unto the minde)
That no strange, or unkinde
Object arrive there, but the heart (our spie)
Give knowledge instantly,
To wakefull Reason, our affections king:
Who (in th'examing)
Will quickly taste the reason, and commit
Close, the close cause of it.
'Tis the securest policie we have,
To make our sense our slave.
But this true course is not embrac'd by many:
By many? scarce by any.
For either our affections doe rebell,
Or else the sentinell
(That should ring larum to the heart) doth sleepe,
Or some great thought doth keepe
Back the intelligence, and falsely sweares,
Th'are base, and idle feares
Whereof the loyall conscience so complaines.
Thus by these subtill traines,
Doe severall passions invade the minde,
And strike our reason blinde.
Of which usurping ranck, some have thought Love
The first; as prone to move
Most frequent tumults, horrors, and unrests,
In our enflamed brests:
But this doth from the cloud of error grow,
Which thus we over-blow.
The thing, they here call Love, is blinde Desire,
Arm'd with bow, shafts, and fire;
Inconstant, like the sea, of whence 'tis borne,
Rough, swelling, like a storme:
With whom who sailes, rides on the surge of feare,
And boyles, as if he were
In a continuall tempest. Now, true Love
No such effects doth prove;
That is an essence farre more gentle, fine,
Pure, perfect, nay divine;
It is a golden chaine let downe from heaven,
Whose linkes are bright, and even.
That falls like sleepe on Lovers, and combines
The soft, and sweetest mindes
In equall knots: This beares no brands, nor darts,
To murder different hearts,

But, in a calme, and god-like unitie,
 Preserves communitie.
 O, who is he, that (in this peace) enjoys
 Th Elixir of all joyes?
 A forme more fresh, than are the Eden bowers,
 And lasting, as her flowers:
 Richer than Time, and as Time's vertue, rare:
 Sober, as saddest care:
 A fixed thought, an eye un-taught to glance;
 Who (blest with such high chance)
 Would, at suggestion of a steep desire,
 Cast himselfe from the spire
 Of all his happinesse? But soft: I heare
 Some vicious foole draw neare,
 That cryes, we dream, and swears there's no such thing,
 As this chaste love we sing.
 Peace luxury, thou art like one of those
 Who, being at sea, suppose,
 Because they move, the Continent doth so.
 No, vice, we let thee know,
 Though thy wild thoughts with sparrows wings do flye,
 Turtles can chastly dye;
 And yet (in this t'expresse our selves more cleare)
 We do not number here,
 Such Spirits as are only continent,
 Because lust's meanes are spent:
 Or those, who doubt the common mouth of fame,
 And for their place and name,
 Cannot so safely sinne. Their chastity
 Is meere necessity.
 Nor meane we those, whom Vowes and conscience
 Have fill'd with abstinence:
 Though we acknowledge, who can so abstayne,
 Makes a most blessed gaine.
 He that for love of goodnesse hateth ill,
 Is more crowne-worthy still,
 Than he, which for sins penalty forbeares;
 His heart sins, though he feares.
 But we propose a person like our Dove,
 Grac'd with a Phoenix love;
 A beauty of that cleare, and sparkling light,
 Would make a day of night,
 And turne the blackest sorrowes to bright joyes:
 Whose od'rous breath destroyes
 All taste of bitternesse, and makes the ayre
 As sweet as she is faire.
 A body so harmoniously compos'd,
 As if Nature disclos'd
 All her best symmetrie in that one feature!
 O, so divine a creature,
 Who could be false to? chiefly when he knowes
 How only she bestowes

The wealthy treasure of her love on him;
Making his fortunes swim
In the full flood of her admir'd perfection?
What savage, brute affection,
Would not be fearefull to offend a dame
Of this excelling frame?
Much more a noble, and right generous mind
(To vertuous moods inclin'd)
That knowes the weight of guilt: He will refraine
From thoughts of such a straine.
And to his sense object this sentence ever,

Man may securely sinne, but safely never.

Ben Jonson

XII: Epistle To Elizabeth Countesse Of Rutland

Madame,

Whil'st that, for which all vertue now is sold,
And almost every vice, almightie gold,
That which, to boote with hell, is thought worth heaven,
And for it, life, conscience, yea soules are given,
Toyles, by grave custome, up and downe the Court,
To every squire, or groome, that will report
Well, or ill, only, all the following yeere,
Just to the waight their this dayes-presents beare;
While it makes huishers serviceable men,
And some one apteth to be trusted, then,
Though never after; whiles it gaynes the voyce
Of some grand peere, whose ayre-doth make rejoyce
The foole that gave it; who will want, and weepe,
When his proud patrons favours are asleepe;
While thus it buyes great grace, and hunts poore fame;
Runs betweene man, and man, 'twene, dame, and dame;
Solders crackt friendship; makes love last a day;
Or perhaps lesse: whil'st gold beares all this sway,
I, that have none (to send you) send you verse.
A present which (if elder Writs reherse
The truth of times) was once of more esteeme,
Than this, our guilt, nor golden age can deeme,
When gold was made no weapon to cut throats,
Or put to flight Astrea, when her ingots
Were yet unfound, and better plac'd in earth,
Than, here, to give pride fame, and peasants birth.
But let this drosse carry: what price it will
With noble ignorants, and let them still,
Turne, upon scorned verse, their quarter-face:
With you, I know, my offering will finde grace.
For what a sinne 'gainst your great fathers spirit,
Were it to think, that you should not inherit
His love unto the Muses, when his skill
Almost you have, or may have, when you will?
Wherein wise Nature you a dowrie gave,
Worth an estate, treble to that you have.
Beauty, I know, is good, and blood is more;
Riches thought most: But, Madame, think what store
The world hath seene, which all these had in trust,
And now lye lost in their forgotten dust.
It is the Muse alone, can raise to heaven,
And, at her strong armes end, hold up, and even,
The soules, she loves. Those other glorious notes,
Inscrib'd in touch or marble, or the cotes
Painted, or carv'd upon our great-mens tombs,
Or in their windowes; doe but prove the wombs,
That bred them, graves: when they were borne, they dy'd,
That had no Muse to make their fame abide.
How many equall with the Argive Queene,
Have beauty knowne, yet none so famous seene?

Achilles was not first, that valiant was,
 Or, in an armies head, that lockt in brasse,
 Gave killing strokes. There were brave men, before
 Ajax, or Idomen, or all the store,
 That Homer brought to Troy; yet none so live:
 Because they lack'd the sacred pen, could give
 Like life unto 'hem. Who heav'd Hercules
 Unto the starrs? or the Tyndarides?
 Who placed Jasons Argo in the skie?
 Or set bright Ariadnes crowne so high?
 Who made a lampe of Berenices hayre?
 Or lifted Cassiopea in her chayre?
 But only Poets, rapt with rage divine?
 And such, or my hopes faile, shall make you shine.
 You, and that other starre; that purest light,
 Of all Lucina's traine; Lucy the bright.
 Than which, a nobler heaven it selfe knowes not.
 Who, though shee have a better Verser got,
 (Or Poet, in the Court account) than I,
 And, who doth me (though I not him) envy,
 Yet for the timely favours shee hath done,
 To my lesse sanguine Muse, wherein she hath wonne
 My gratefull soule, the subject of her powers,
 I have already us'd some happy houres,
 To her remembrance; which when time shall bring
 To curious light, to notes, I then shall sing,
 Will prove old Orpheus Act no rule to be:
 For I shall move stocks, stones, no lesse than he.
 Then all, that have but done my Muse least grace,
 Shall thronging come, and boast the happy place
 They hold in my strange poems, which, as yet,
 Had not their forme touch'd by an English wit.
 There like a rich, and golden Pyramede,
 Borne up by statues, shall I roare your head,
 Above your under-carved ornaments,
 And show, how, to the life, my soule presents
 Your forme imprest there: not with tickling rimes,
 Or Common-places, filch'd, that take these times,
 But high, and noble matter; such as flies
 From braines entranc'd, and fill'd with extasies;
 Moods, which the god-like Sydney oft did prove,
 And your brave friend, and mine so well did love.
 Who, wheresoere he be ---

Ben Jonson

XIII: Epistle: To Katherine, Lady Aubigny

'Tis growne almost a danger to speake true
Of any good minde, now: There are so few.
The bad, by number, are so fortified,
As what th'have lost t'expect, they dare deride.
So both the prais'd, and praisers suffer: Yet,
For others ill, ought none their good forget.
I, therefore, who professe my selfe in love
With every vertue, wheresoere it move,
And howsoever; as I am at fewd
With sinne and vice, though with a throne endew'd;
And, in this name, am given out dangerous
By arts, and practise of the vicious,
Such as suspect themselves, and think it fit
For their owne cap'tall crimes, t'indite my wit;
I, that have suffer'd this; and, though forsooke
Of Fortune, have not alter'd yet my looke,
Or so my selfe abandon'd, as because
Men are not just, or keepe no holy lawes
Of nature, and societie, I should faint;
Or feare to draw true lines, 'cause others paint:
I, Madame, am become your praiser. Where,
If it may stand with your soft blush to heare,
Your selfe but told unto your selfe, and see
In my character, what your features bee,
You will not from the paper slightly passe:
No Lady, but, at sometime loves her glasse.
And this shall be no false one, but as much
Remov'd, as you from need to have it such.
Looke then, and see your selfe. I will not say
Your beautie; for you see that every day:
And so doe many more. All which can call
It perfect, proper, pure, and naturall,
Not taken up o' th'Doctors, but as well
As I, can say, and see it doth excell.
That askes but to be censur'd by the eyes:
And, in those outward formes, all fooles are wise.
Nor that your beautie wanted not a dower,
Doe I reflect. Some Alderman has power,
Or cos'ning Farmer of the customes so,
T'advance his doubtfull issue, and ore-flow
A Princes fortune: These are gifts of chance,
And raise not vertue; they may vice enhance.
My mirror is more subtill, cleare, refin'd,
And takes, and gives the beauties of the mind.
Though it reject not those of Fortune: such
As Blood, and Match. Wherein, how more than much
Are you engaged to your happie fate,
For such a lot! that mixt you with a State
Of so great title, birth, but vertue most,
Without which, all the rest were sounds, or lost.
'Tis onely that can time, and chance defeat:
For he, that once is good, is ever great.

Wherewith, then, Madame, can you better pay
 This blessing of your starres, than by that way
 Of vertue, which you tread? what if alone?
 Without companions? 'Tis safe to have none.
 In single paths, dangers with ease are watch'd:
 Contagion in the prease is soonest catch'd.
 This makes, that wisely you decline your life,
 Farre from the maze of custome, error, strife,
 And keepe an even, and unalter'd gait;
 Not looking by, or back (like those, that waite
 Times, and occasions, to start forth, and seeme)
 Which though the turning world may dis-esteeme,
 Because that studies spectacles, and showes,
 And after varied, as fresh objects goes,
 Giddie with change, and therefore cannot see
 Right, the right way: yet must your comfort bee
 Your conscience, and not wonder, if none asks
 For Truths complexion, where they all weare maskes.
 Let who will follow fashions, and attyres,
 Maintaine their liedgers forth, for forrain wyres,
 Melt downe their husbands land, to powre away
 On the close groome, and page, on new-yeares day,
 And almost, all dayes after, while they live;
 (They finde it both so wittie, and safe to give)
 Let 'hem on poulders, oyles, and paintings, spend,
 Till that no usurer, nor his bawds dare lend
 Them, or their officers: and no man know,
 Whether it be a face they weare, or no.
 Let 'hem waste body, and state; and after all,
 When their owne Parasites laugh at their fall,
 May they have nothing left, whereof they can
 Boast, but how oft they have gone wrong to man:
 And call it their brave sinne. For such there be
 That doe sinne onely for the infamie:
 And never think, how vice doth every houre,
 Eat on her clients, and some one devoure.
 You, Madam, yong have learn'd to shun these shelves,
 Whereon the most of mankind wracke themselves,
 And, keeping a just course, have early put
 Into your harbour, and all passage shut
 'Gainst stormes, or pyrats, that might charge your peace;
 For which you worthy are the glad increase
 Of your blest wombe, made fruitfull from above
 To pay your lord the pledges of chaste love:
 And raise a noble stemme, to give the fame,
 To Cliftons blood, that is deny'd their name.
 Grow, grow, faire tree, and as thy branches shoote,
 Heare, what the Muses sing above thy root,
 By me, their Priest (if they can ought divine)
 Before the moones have fill'd their tripple trine,
 To crowne the burthen which you go withall,
 It shall a ripe and timely issue fall,

T'expect the honors of great 'Avbigny:
And greater rites, yet writ in mystery,
But which the Fates forbid me to reveale.
Only, thus much, out of a ravish'd zeale,
Unto your name, and goodnesse of your life,
They speake; since you are truly that rare wife,
Other great wives may blush at: when they see
What your try'd manners are, what theirs should be.
How you love one, and him you should; how still
You are depending on his word, and will;
Not fashion'd for the Court, or strangers eyes;
But to prease him, who is the dearer prise
Unto himselfe, by being so deare to you.
This makes, that your affections still be new,
And that your soules conspire, as they were gone
Each into other, and had now made one.
Live that one, still; and as long yeares do passe,
Madame, be bold to use this truest glasse:
Wherein, your forme, you still the same shall find;
Because nor it can change, nor such a mind.

Ben Jonson

XIV: Ode: To Sir William Sydney, On His Birth-day

Now that the harth is crown'd with smiling fire,
And some do drink, and some do dance,
Some ring,
Some sing,
And all do strive t'advance
The gladnesse higher:
Wherefore should I
Stand silent by.
Who not the least,
Both love the cause, and authors of the feast.
Give me my cup, but from the Thespian Well,
That I may tell to Sydney, what
This day
Doth say,
And he may think on that
Which I do tell:
When all the noyse
Of these forc'd joyes,
Are fled and gone,
And he, with his best Genius left alone.
This day says, then, the number of glad yeares
Are justly summ'd, that make you man;
Your vow
Must now
Strive all right ways it can,
T'out-strip your peeres:
Since he doth lack
Of going back
Little, whose will
Doth urge him to run wrong, or to stand still.
Nor can a little of the common store,
Of nobles vertue, shew in you;
Your blood
So good
And great, must seek for new,
And study more:
Nor weary, rest
On what's deceast.
For they, that swell
With dust of ancestors, in graves but dwell.
'Twill be exacted of your name, whose sonne,
Whose nephew, whose grand-child you are;
And men
Will, then,
Say you have follow'd farre,
When well begun:
Which must be now,
They teach you, how.
And he that staves
To liue untill to morrow 'hath lost two dayes.
So may you live in honor, as in name,
If with this truth you be inspir'd;

So may
This day
Be more, and long desir'd:
And with the flame
Of love bee bright,
As with the light
Of bone-fires. Then
The Birth-day shines, when logs not burne, but men.

Ben Jonson

XV: To Heaven

Good, and great God, can I not think of thee,
But it must, straight, my melancholy bee?
Is it interpreted in mee disease,
That, laden with my sinnes. I seeke for ease?
O, be thou witnesse, that the reines dost know,
And hearts of all, if I be sad for show,
And judge mee after: if I dare pretend
To ought but grace, or ayme at other end.
As thou art all, so be thou all to mee,
First, midst, and last, converted one, and three;
My faith, my hope, my love: and in this state,
My judge, my witnesse, and my advocate.
Where have I been this while exil'd from thee?
And whither rapt, now thou but stoup'st to mee?
Dwell, dwell here still: O, being every-where,
How can I doubt to finde thee ever, here?
I know my state, both full of shame, and scorne,
Conceiv'd in sinne, and unto labour borne,
Standing with feare, and must with horror fall,
And destin'd unto judgement, after all.
I feele my griefes too, and there scarce is ground,
Upon my flesh t'inflict another wound.
Yet dare I not complaine, or wish for death
With holy Paul, lest it be thought the breath
Of Discontent; or that these prayers bee
For wearinesse of life, not love of thee.

Ben Jonson