

BEN JONSON IN SPACE

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ABSTRACTS

RE-SOUNDING BEN JONSON
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In his conversations with Drummond, Ben Jonson carves out a place for John Fletcher and George Chapman as fellow masque inventors: “next himself [Jonson] only Fletcher and Chapman could make a Mask.” The relationships of Ben Jonson with his younger contemporaries are fraught with psychological complexity and aesthetic challenges. In this essay, I wish to untangle a single thread of this nexus, and I shall begin with Jonson’s absence from London during the early months of 1613, a period of time in which his space as masque laureate for the Jacobean court was filled by Francis Beaumont for the festivities undertaken to celebrate the Palatine marriage. Beaumont’s *Masque of the Inner Temple* proved to be a successful spectacle to accompany the nuptials of Princess Elizabeth and the Count Palatine in February 1613, so successful that Fletcher and Shakespeare included one of its antimasques in their collaborative *Two Noble Kinsmen*. This play, which is a pastiche of classical, medieval, and native sources, opens with a courtly procession of Hymen and a wedding party that is—however briefly—Jonsonian in its solemnity. Shakespeare harkens back to Jonson’s earliest courtly success before vanquishing it from the play.

In this essay, I want to elaborate on this vocal space, this evocation of a Jonsonian moment penned by Shakespeare. The aural effect of this stage direction is designed for the Blackfriars stage, suggesting a procedural entrance with sacral origins more in keeping with Jonsonian invention. The ritual is part of what Tiffany Stern has called the nostalgic ambience engendered by the monastic aura of the theatre’s history, its walls resounding with Jonsonian echoes contrapuntal and sacred. In December 1613, ten months following the royal marriage and the appearance of Beaumont’s *Inner Temple Masque*, Ben Jonson staged his own version of rival loves in his *A Challenge at Tilts*, a masque staged at Whitehall and coterminous with *TNK*. Designed to celebrate another marriage, that of Francis Howard—her second marriage—to Robert Carr, the king’s favorite, the masque replays the erotic dynamics of *TNK* as a mythological agon between Eros and Anteros, rival Cupids contesting each other’s legitimacy. Once again, Hymen appears. If Shakespeare’s adaptation of

Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* of Arcite and Palamon only enervates the voice of Hymen and diminishes the masque as a genre that promoted matrimonial stability, Jonson's 1613/4 masque revises this effect and reinvigorates Hymen as the arbiter of erotic decorum. Unlike Shakespeare's staging of Hymen as an ineffectual figure in *TNK*, Jonson restores the god as the true rectifier of love's agon.

BEN JONSON'S USE OF SPACE IN TWO MASQUE TEXTS OF F1616
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The literary fame of Ben Jonson has influenced discussion of his masques to construe them as literature—as works to be analyzed for the ideas and emphases emerging from the words written for the various symbolic figures to speak or to sing. Thus his masques, after 1610 especially, have survived their original court presentations not as descriptions of multi-dimensional productions but as scripts whose texts Jonson alone configured. Accordingly, the verses of speech and song with their ideological and metaphorical content are, perhaps inadvertently, seen as constituting the form and identity of the masques themselves. This impression is reinforced by Jonson's deployment of page-space and is especially apparent in the manner in which he arranged two masques in the Folio pages of F1616: Prince Henry's *Oberon* and Queen Anna's *Love Freed*, neither masque having been printed before. The manner in which *Oberon* is reproduced on the Folio pages makes it seem, as it were, the weightier of the two. We recall that Jonson rather heavily annotated the first several pages, whereas the text of *Love Freed* is sparing of learned commentary and, in fact, of most "stage directions." Indeed, it is difficult to grasp, except from the title—"A Masque of her Maiesties"—that Queen Anna and her ladies were even the subjects of *Love Freed*. Instead, most present-day commentary seems to regard Prince Henry's masque as the major court event of the 1610-11 holiday season. But a closer look at the contemporary court situation will show that, notwithstanding Jonson's investment in the published text of *Oberon*, the performances of the two masques in their own time received almost equal attention—*Love Freed* perhaps more so, in fact, than *Oberon*.

Concluding speculations deal with the some possible reasons for Jonson's textual approach here and to other masques of the 1616 Folio.

THE SPACE OF CONTROVERSY IN THE *POETOMACHIA*
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In plays performed between 1599 and 1601, Jonson, Marston, and Dekker quarreled. Jonson's side of this controversy in part anticipates debates within the "public sphere" as characterized by Jurgen Habermas and Michael Warner. In *Every Man Out of His Humor* the extraordinary profusion of paratextual materials in the 1600 quarto implies in a readerly space one version of authority, while the choric "Grex" and quasi-Jonsonian presenter Macilente imply another on stage. Where one stands in one's judgments seems to depend on where one stands on the stage, but debate itself seems valued. In the initially-staged, suppressed ending, printed by Jonson as an appendix to the quartos, *EMO* turned to Queen Elizabeth to resolve its conflicts and by doing so seemed to retreat both from celebrating debate and from asserting the authority of the author. Jonson's subsequent salvos in the Poets' War both on stage and in print are less rich in strategies for creating and controlling debate than *EMO*. *Revels* and *Poetaster* treat Criticus and Horace, the onstage representations of Jonson, with little or no irony. The judgments from the margins of the stage by the Grex now become midstage pronouncements from authorial characters who are always right. Royal authority in these two later plays ratifies Criticus and Horace; Jonson seems less interested in creating a community that can judge with distinction than in celebrating the distinction of his own judgments. Having in *EMO* imagined a theatrical and reading public of a kind that would be recognizable to Jurgen Habermas and Michael Warner, Jonson rapidly retreated to a vision of art that subordinated debate to authority. Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment* doesn't seem interested in thinking about whether or not an audience can "judge with distinction," though it mocks Jonson in the figure of Brabant Senior. For Dekker in *Satiromastix*, taking the *Poetomachia* seriously is a sign of humorous obsession. Similarly, treating the printing of a play as an elevation of status is itself a joke. To the extent that the Poets' War is an episode in the development of a public sphere for readers of plays, Jonson fights that war alone, within himself.

BARTHOLOMEW FAIR AND THE PERFORMATIVITY OF SPACE
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Bartholomew Fair begins with a debate about spatial representation. According to the Stage-keeper, the performance so little resembles the annual fair in Smithfield that "you were e'en as good go to Virginia" as expect to find a trace of the fair within the Hope Theater. But the Scrivener counters this assertion, observing that the playhouse, in "being as dirty as

Smithfield and as stinking every whit,” feels very much like the space of Bartholomew Fair. In its efforts to evoke the feeling of Smithfield, Jonson’s play draws upon the Scrivener’s suggestion that perception can reveal the nature of a particular location. Most notably, Bartholomew Cokes and Zeal-of-the-land Busy rely upon sensation to navigate the strange topography of Smithfield, and their absorption in the fair’s sensory delight radically alters the space around them. Like the atoms of the Lucretian universe, which shape the cosmos through continual swerving, the characters of *Bartholomew Fair* transform Smithfield through their collective movement. By figuring Smithfield as a site in which individuals and ideologies repeatedly collide with one another, the play reconceptualizes space as a domain that stems from those interactions rather than anticipating and creating them. In this way, *Bartholomew Fair* stages what I call the performativity of space, in which perception, memory, and affective thought gradually transform the material contours of an environment.

MNEMONIC SPACE IN BEN JONSON’S POETICS
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In this paper I examine the relationship between the art of memory and early modern theater. The art – or rather arts – of memory constitute one of the five parts of classical rhetoric and describe practical rules for both memorization and retrieval. It instructs the practitioner to ekphrastically translate textual material for memorization into visual images, which are then “placed” in an imagined location – a house, a garden, a colonnade, etc. By imaginatively walking through each place in sequence, the practitioner can recall images – and thus memorized material – in perfect order. The art of memory serves as a heuristic through which Jonson conceptualizes the space of the stage as coextensive with the space of the page: the art of memory provides Jonson with a model of theatrical space premised on the logic of embodied sensation.

In the *Discoveries*, Jonson adapts the rules for designing memory places or loci to the rules for constructing the “plot” or “fable” of a poem. He compares the invention of Fables to the construction of architectural edifices. But what appears to be a straightforward analogy between architecture and poetry is actually an adaptation of memory edifices to the structure of dramatic poetry. If we select a location too big for its contents, he explains, the images placed there will be too small and utterly indistinct to the mind’s eye, just as a mnemonic location that is too small will make the images appear so big that the “eye stickes upon every part” – it “oppreth the eyes, and exceeds the Memory.” Jonson adapts the principles of

mnemonic places to the architecture, so to speak, of dramatic poetry because it is through the art of memory that Jonson accommodates page to stage.

COCKLE-SHELLS AND CHICKEN'S FEATHERS: JONSON'S
BARTHOLOMEW FAIR, THE LORD MAYOR'S SHOW, AND RE-
INTERPRETING CITY-SPACE
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In his 1614 masterpiece, *Bartholomew Fair*, Ben Jonson re-created an urban place as a unique new comic space. Mesmerized by this innovation, critics nonetheless have disagreed on the precise significance of what Jonson maps with his London fair. In this paper I argue that we must see Jonson's play as explicitly skewering another urban phenomenon in the period — the Lord Mayor's Show. By the early 1610's, the city's annual paean to itself had become rich territory for writers of city comedy, some of whom, notably Thomas Middleton, simultaneously wrote pageantry and acid assessments of the same London world. Jonson had his own Janus-like relationship with official London, his 1604 entry pageantry contrasting provocatively with what Angela Stock reads as his satiric rendering of corrupt aldermen and the Lord Mayor's Show in *Eastward Ho!* (1605). With the Fair, also occurring annually and temporarily shaping urban space and practices, Jonson found an ideal site for once again assaying the city as produced by the ostentatious and increasingly mercantilist Lord Mayor's Show. Lawrence Manley describes city pageantry and its symbolic spaces as, "occasion for all manner of reflection on boundaries and transitions, opportunities for symbolizing the relation between outside and inside, chaos and order...trade and politics and the city." Alongside such freighted space and meaningful boundaries we get Jonson's Fair, an aggressively proletarian space, lacking in symbolism but dense with raw commerce and strategy. In the fair's urban space and practices and its literalizing of pageantry's elaborate glossing of commerce, "Bartholomew Fair," satirically re-visions the Lord Mayor's Show, creating the equally transformative space of a fair that will catalyze only opportunisms, both comical and cynical, and stage nothing more or less than a public commodity.

"THE HOUSE IS MINE HERE": BEN JONSON, INDIVIDUALS, AND PLACE
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In the phenomenological theory of space and place, best articulated by Yi-Fu Tuan, Edward Casey, J.E. Malpas, and Michel de Certeau, an individual's experiences inscribe a space (or

an undifferentiated area) and make it a place; that place and those experiences contribute to an individual's identity. By walking from England to Scotland in 1618 and (unknowingly) enacting de Certeau's theory of place, Ben Jonson experienced place in a way unlike most of his theatrical contemporaries. Even before his cross-country journey on foot, Jonson uniquely extended the experience of places to his audiences, specifying locations and integrating the settings of some plays with the theaters in which they were performed. Although Jonson's works have been extensively analyzed in terms of this engagement with place, we often disregard the fact that Jonson's attitude towards the contribution of place to an individual's identity shifts from his early to later works. While Jonson suggests in his early works that physical place is essential to a character's identity, Jonson lessens the importance of place in his later works, in which physical place is significant but not as central to an individual's identity. Jonson's changing view of place's contribution to an individual's identity reflects the massive displacement of the English population during his lifetime and the way that many provincial English moved to London and acquired new physical and social places.

TAKING LIBERTIES: THE INFLUENCE OF THE ARCHITECTURAL AND
IDEOLOGICAL SPACE OF THE HOPE THEATRE ON JONSON'S
DRAMATURGY
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The performance of *Bartholomew Fair* at the Hope Theatre in 1614 was the play's first and only recorded public performance in Jonson's lifetime, and the playtext still bears the stamp of this theatrical debut. Using the spatial theories of de Certeau and Lefebvre, I suggest that Jonson takes advantage of the liminal spaces of his performance venue, the ideologically ambiguous space of the Liberty that contained it, as well as his play's fictive setting (the Fair itself), to pass comment on the more ideologically solid and austere environment of the City of London. I also argue that in some ways this first performance can be read as 'proto-site-specific,' inasmuch as the play relies on the particularities of its environment to achieve Jonson's aim: to exhort his audience into a more sophisticated 'reading' of the play's action, a reading that he hoped would, in turn, affect their reading of the real urban space outside the playhouse.

The Jonsonian 'third way' between represented and representational spaces (Lefebvre, Mardock) takes advantage of the heterogeneous environment of the playhouse and elides together the heterotopian environments of Fair and Liberty to invite a correspondingly unstable interpretive response from its audience. This experiential division is enforced in the space of the stage and auditorium, with the playwright's use of inductive techniques, staging

and direct address—which frequently privileges some groups of spectators, to the detriment of others—helping to enforce divisions within the audience. The interpretive openness of Jonson’s spatial practice becomes in effect a microcosm for the vast number of spatial practices performed by the inhabitants of the real city beyond the Hope’s walls. However, in his emphasis on ‘understanders’ rather than passive spectators the playwright provides his audience with the cognitive tools to be the actors rather than the acted-upon in the dog-eat-dog environment of London’s urban space, and it is within the triangulation between text, playhouse and suburban environment of the play’s first performance that this effect is most pronounced.

THE PARADOXES OF SPACE, GENDER AND GENRE IN *VOLPONE* AND *EPICOENE*

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My essay explores the paradoxes of space, gender and genre in *Volpone*. It argues that Venice has its own spatial signature, deriving from its geographical location as a city on land and on water, a city of the Occident and the Orient, a place in-between. In the words of Andreas Mahler (1999), this ‘paradoxical ambiguity’ of space constitutes the ‘signature of the Venetian’. This paradoxical ambiguity and elusiveness can be found in literary and non-literary representations of Venice from the early modern period into postmodernity (ibid., 30), into whose linguistic and semiotic structure it is deeply inscribed: Venice is not only their object of representation, the signature of the Venetian is also the principle of their meaning-making. I will discuss how this performative production of ‘Venice’ is enacted through the figures and plot, spatial organisation, genre and metadramatic scenes of *Volpone*, with a specific focus on questions of gender since it is here that the paradoxical ambiguity of the signature of the Venetian emerges most explicitly.

INFINITE RICHES IN A LITTLE ROOM: SPACE, MOBILITY, AND BEN JONSON’S *EPIGRAMS*

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Ben Jonson was part of a wide culture of epigrammatic poetry in early modern England. In the larger project of which this is a part I argue that epigrams in sixteenth-century English satire—including those by Thomas More, John Heywood, John Davies, and John Harington—work in very different ways to create a dialectical poetic form, one in which

sometimes violently differing cultural energies are brought together. This paper will explore the uniqueness of Jonson's epigrams—which he called “the ripest of my studies”—by considering them in their various spatial deployments, some produced by Jonson himself, and some by others in their uses of his poetry. Perhaps the most important of those is the space of the epigram itself—what gets enclosed in that small form, and what composes its shape? Jonson famously sought to use epigrams to “feign a commonwealth,” where he both mirrored and reconstituted the spaces around him. As part of that community-defining project, Jonson writes epigrams of both satire and praise, which helps create their collective and polyphonic space. Epigrams also help define the boundaries of a self, and more than his fellow epigrammatists Jonson incorporates classical voices in his poems as part of his particular humanism, as a step in defining different versions of the self. Epigrams also have a material space, and I will consider the differences in spatial deployments of the poems in Jonson's tightly controlled 1616 *Works* and later verse miscellanies, both manuscript and print; in these later appearances the epigrams are wildly re-spaced.

Lots of spaces here! I won't be able to talk about all of them, but I will survey these categories, guided by the poems' recurrent concern with and creation of mobility: the capture of movement in different spaces.

JONSON'S CONTROL OF THE STAGE DOORS, FROM THE
BLACKFRIARS TO THE GLOBE
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Throughout the raucous quarrel that opens *The Alchemist*, Face and Doll Common hiss at Subtle to keep his voice down, with Doll demanding “Will you have/The neighbors hear you?” in one of her first lines. From its opening moments, then, the play invites its audience to imagine the world just outside the walls of Lovewit's house. Recent criticism has been especially attentive to the analogies Jonson crafted between that house and the Blackfriars theater in which the play is presumed to have been performed. This paper will move from the space of the stage itself to the off-stage spaces not visible to the audience. Aiming to convey a sense both of the bustling city outside the theater's walls and of Subtle's imagined laboratory further inside the house, Jonson cast the stage doors in especially important roles. The standard architecture of period theaters included two doors flanking the curtained discovery space on the back wall of the stage, and as nearly every scene of *The Alchemist* takes place in the front room of Lovewit's house, the doors could easily be assigned consistent positions, with one leading out to the street, and the other leading in to the

tiring house where Subtle, Face, and Doll keep the costumes and props of their con. This staging, with its creative use of a key shared feature of the Blackfriars and the Globe, shows Jonson's intimate awareness of the King's Men's theatrical situation in 1610.

BEN JONSON'S "PITEOUSLY COSTIVE" COMIC BODIES
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Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* is known for its tightly contained comic structure. Though the plot unfolds in a frenetic series of arrivals, intrusions, and interruptions, the precision of the narrative structure evidences what psychoanalytic criticism tends to read as Jonson's anal retentive authorial mastery. *The Alchemist*'s fixation on bodily waste has been considered both as a matter of the author's individual relation to waste, and, as Bruce Bohrer suggests, as a "culturally paradigmatic" preoccupation with bodily waste as the disposal of waste became increasingly intrusive in the rapidly-growing London of the early 17th century. This paper examines the play through the lens of the psychoanalytic drive, and, more specifically, what Alenka Zupančič describes in *The Odd One In* as the "incessant and irresistible, all-consuming movement" of comedy. I build on already-existing scholarly work on Jonson's leaky, grotesque bodies to explore how the movement of waste through the body as well as within the spaces of the play constructs the comedy in the endless repetitions of the death drive. As Face, Subtle, and Doll tirelessly "gull" hopeful customers who seek them out in pursuit of their own appetites for material gain, the incessant movement of consumption onstage serves to suspend the impossible satisfaction of desire. This analysis views the "all-consuming" appetites that drive *The Alchemist*'s characters as the central comic mechanism of the play. I argue that the play anatomizes a distinctively Jonsonian comic structure at the intersection of the grotesque body and the comedic space.

"GIV[ING] PLACE": CONSTITUTIVE MOVEMENT IN THE JACOBEAN MASQUE
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That Jonson's masques function politically has long been recognized. Pioneering work by Stephen Orgel, Roy Strong, and Jonathan Goldberg revealed that Jonson's poetics, supported by spectacle, asserted monarchical dominance. Recent studies have complicated this account by identifying dissenting voices and decentralizing influences, leaving us with a more ambiguous masque whose deceptively simple structure permits exploration of political conflict in diverse sites and venues throughout England. These studies all concern themselves

with what masques articulate; far less is known about *how* they do so. Reading sections of the 1611 *Oberon: The Faery Prince* in relation to eyewitness accounts, I argue that Jonson instrumentalizes synchronized movement. In this, I turn the residual, New Historicist focus on poetic and visual semiotics in a less examined, kinesthetic direction. Seventeenth-century dance, like military close drill—both of which Jonson understood experientially—is the kind of repetitive, synchronized movement proven to bind social groups through shared, sometimes ecstatic, pleasure. The formal structure of dance may also add, like contemporary traditions of beating the bounds or clipping the church, to what humanist geographers like Yi Fu Tuan and Doreen Massey tell us are the deeply embodied, narrativized ways people distinguish “place” from “space.” Ultimately, I am interested in the sense that despite *Oberon*’s aesthetic aspiration to re-make “Arthur’s Chair” as the providential seat of Stuart monarchy, Jonson’s extended musing on, and thematization of, collective place-making *techniques* inadvertently contribute to the disconnection of sovereignty from particular royal bodies.

“WE ARE ALL BLOWN UP!” JONSON’S EXPLODING PLAYHOUSE
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In *Sylva Silvarum*, Sir Francis Bacon analyses the immaterial matter that playgoers would ingest while attending an early modern theatrical performance: visible forms ‘[a]lmost like Odours; save that they are more Incorporeall’, and audible ‘Percussions or Impressions made upon the Aire’ (K2v). The percussive impact of the air upon auditors is especially intriguing: as Carolyn Sale claims in a brief commentary on this passage, Bacon’s model arguably attributes a propulsive force to the illusions staged within the playhouse (‘Eating Air, Feeling Smells’, 152). Thus, when Bacon then reports that ‘simple Aire, being preternaturally attenuated by Heate, will make it self Roome, and breake and blowe up that which resisteth it’ (B4v), his words may hint at the potentially explosive nature of the theatrical sphere. The connection that Bacon posits, between expansive hot air and dramatic propulsion, is intriguing in relation to the drama of Ben Jonson: Jonson stages explosions, to striking effect, in his comedies *The Alchemist* and *The Staple of News*. On the one hand, such explosive episodes may be a commentary on the blustering or deceitful characters that fill Jonson’s plays with empty boasts and false illusions, in an extension of Jonson’s long-standing interest in humoral theory: *Poetaster* provides an interesting comparison in this regard, with its focus on purging a drama(tist) bloated with words. Yet Jonson’s use of explosions also seems to imply an understanding of drama itself as a propulsive aerial force. Simultaneously collapsing and blowing up the sphere of theatrical illusion, such staged detonations

potentially complicate Jonson's well-known adherence to the spatially- and temporally-orientated parameters of dramatic performance. In this paper, then, I will explore the theatrical and spatial significance of explosions within Jonson's drama, focusing on *The Alchemist* and *The Staple of News*.

JONSON, SHAKESPEARE, PRINT, COIN
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Ben Jonson's descriptions of the superiority of literary to playhouse audiences have conditioned us to regard him as the proponent of print. Conversely, the absence of explicit appeals to readers in Shakespeare's quartos has suggested a Shakespeare indifferent to his plays' printing, wholly absorbed in what David Kastan has called their on-stage publication. Yet recent scholars have demonstrated that for Shakespeare as for Jonson, print played a crucial role in bringing imaginative work into public view. In the works of both playwrights, printing became a metaphor for various kinds of creativity. Both authors made imaginative associations between printing and another means of mass production, coining. Shakespeare and Jonson used printing and coinage metaphors to express their differing ideas about verbal and literary propagation, about the general circulation of words. Their distinct uses of these metaphors show that, despite the conventional image of Jonson as a literary playwright, Jonson was in fact less comfortable than his rival with the promiscuous dissemination of original work that both print stall and playhouse provided.