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# The Authorship of "Fair Friend, 'tis true, your beauties move"

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The evidence available to us regarding the authorship of "Fair Friend, 'tis true, your beauties move" has apparently left scholarship at a standstill.[1] The crux of the issue is summed up by the final opinions of William Dinsmore Briggs, writing in 1914, and of William Dighton, the editor of *The Poems of Sidney Godolphin* (1931).[2] In Briggs' view, the inclusion of the poem in *The Underwood* is "very strong evidence" (42) that it was written by Ben Jonson, and he concludes his argument by asserting that "[i]t is clear that the balance of evidence is much in Jonson's favor" (43). Dighton, on the other hand, concludes his note on the poem with this comment: "The inclusion of this poem in the Harleian manuscript as a poem of Godolphin's, and the fact that it does not form a part of the poem with which it is combined in the *Underwoods*, makes it more than probable that Godolphin was the author" (75). In the face of indecisive scholarly evidence, arguments over authorship must inevitably be based on subject matter, on style, or both.[3] The following argument is concerned with both, though very briefly with subject matter. It will be shown that although "Fair Friend" is Jonsonian, it is also Donnean, and that it contains distinctly un-Jonsonian traits. A careful stylistic analysis thus argues very strongly that the poem was written by Sidney Godolphin. First, then, why might we characterize "Fair Friend" as Jonsonian, and second, what are the details of style that amount to substantial evidence supporting Godolphin's claim?

The subject matter is perhaps the poem's most obvious Jonsonian quality. "Fair Friend" is an unconventional love poem: the speaker is engaged in tactfully but firmly denying that he loves romantically the lady to whom he speaks, and in so doing makes astute observations on the nature of love and, indeed, on the nature of his love, as a friend, for the lady. The task before the poet, the careful handling of a difficult moral situation, would have appealed to Jonson. He certainly handles his rejection by another superlatively in "My

Picture Left in Scotland," which, like "An Elegy" (discussed below) and, perhaps, "Drink to me, onely, with thine eyes,"[4] is also an unconventional love poem. Moreover, it is characteristic of Jonson to be concerned with definition, and "Fair Friend" is concerned with definition, primarily in the particular (the relationship between the speaker and the subject), but also in the general (the central exposition on the words *respect* and *love*). The subject matter, then, may be understood as Jonsonian in that it is the type of thing Jonson might well have written about. But by no means may it be concluded from the subject matter that Jonson was the author of "Fair Friend."

To understand what is Jonsonian about the style of the poem we may consider what is Jonsonian about a better love poem that was certainly written by Jonson, "An Elegy" (*Underwood* XXII), which contains ample evidence of what F. R. Leavis calls, in reference to "Fair Friend," Jonson's "native good sense" and "impersonal urbanity and poise" (24). However, the quality of feeling is also passionate,[5] although, to quote from "Fair Friend," if it "Be not intense in the degree,/ 'Tis of the purest kind." In diction, figure, and rhythm, Jonson combined the plain and eloquent styles, or, to put it another way, modified his primary moral concerns with the language of praise and even of the courtly style.[6] He thus eluded the weaknesses of both the moral tradition (a ponderous didacticism) and the eloquent (an ornate frivolity). Concerned mainly with tone, Yvor Winters describes the poem in *Forms of Discovery* (1967) as "a fusion of two kinds of poetry, the song and the didactic poem" (66), and this explains exactly how the poem works.[7] But the poem also represents the consummation of the two major traditions—the plain and the eloquent—available at the end of the sixteenth century. The poem would have been impossible without either tradition, and it is hard to imagine that it could have been written by anyone but Jonson. Winters' word "fusion" is well chosen, for the traditions drawn upon by Jonson form an alloy as strong as that of virtue and beauty in the woman addressed. "An Elegy" gives voice to a kind of quiet passion common in Jonson's love poetry and peculiarly appropriate in this poem, which is unusual in being addressed to one the speaker loves as a friend, one whose virtue he greatly admires and would have kindled in his true love. Thus the subject matter—the moral problems peculiar to the situation—may be seen as Jonsonian, as may what has been said so far about the poem's style.

The poem exhibits two other related traits—one a specific quality of style, the other having to do with the purpose of style—that might also be described as Jonsonian. The first is simply the rational structure: line by line,

stanza by stanza, an argument is laid out, without repetition or divergence, or superfluousness in detail. This structure may be seen by noting the governing influence of the first line of each of the poem's three three-stanza units.[8] These units are not differentiated like the premises and conclusion of a syllogism (the structure is rational but looser that the syllogism), and they do join to make a unified whole. The three units are, nevertheless, discernible upon close inspection. Related to this is the second Jonsonian trait. The style of the poem (including the rational structure, the lucidity of the syntax, and the combination of the plain and the eloquent styles, which involves diction, rhythm, and the meaningful use of figures) is employed to one end: that of making a precise statement about the nature of the relationship the speaker has with both the woman addressed and the woman he loves. That is, the poem, like many of Jonson's best poems, makes a definitive statement, and the concern for definitiveness is apparent in what are sometimes minute stylistic details. Consider, for instance, the emphasis Jonson manages to place on virtue in line 4, "Yet is't your vertue now I raise." The word "raise" is used adroitly: Jonson is going to "bring up" or address her virtue; he is also going to hold it up for praise. Like "raise," the first syllable of "vertue" receives a wholly appropriate metrical emphasis, and this is ingeniously managed. It would have received much emphasis had Jonson not contrived the very slight pause we ought to make in pronouncing the second word of the line, "is't." But making this pause forces an extra burden of meaning—meaning that does not slight the goodness of beauty—on "vertue." The basic, denotative meaning of the line would not have been impaired had Jonson chosen the more usual *'tis;* the nuance of feeling, however, is destroyed by substituting *'tis,* and the full burden of meaning in Jonson's line is thereby impaired. The nuance of feeling created by this minute stylistic detail testifies to the fineness of Jonson's ear, and to the comprehensiveness of his understanding of reality, of the nature of the relationship between beauty and virtue.

Like "An Elegy," "Fair Friend" is an unconventional love poem; it is not an expression of love but of respect, and of how these two terms differ. As Leavis says, the "second, fourth and sixth stanzas . . . might have come from a courtly Caroline; the others could not." But the "fifth and seventh might . . . be reasonably attributed" not "to a poet of our time" but to a poet of the seventeenth century "who had read Donne intelligently" (24), the matter and style of the stanzas distinctly belonging to that century. Moreover, this poet is far less likely to have been Ben Jonson than to have been a younger poet. For although it is Jonsonian and a remarkable piece of work, the poem

contains un-Jonsonian traits. Leavis is surely right in noticing Caroline, Donnean, and Jonsonian qualities; the poem, in fact, was most likely written by a Caroline poet with an admirable appreciation of Donne and, especially, Jonson. What now must be attempted is to determine what exactly is Caroline and what Donnean about the style of the poem, and, more to the point, what is Jonsonian about it, and what is not.

Seeing what makes it a Caroline poem is, in a sense, a simple matter: it is Caroline in its indebtedness to both Donne and Jonson, and, paradoxically, in its un-Jonsonianness. The influence of Donne is discernible in the personal quality and structure of the argument. Like Jonson, the poet is interested in making a definitive statement about a human situation. But the personal emphasis and the distinctions drawn between *love* and *respect* throughout most of the poem (from stanza 2 through 6) are reminiscent of Donne's sort of reasoning and lack Jonson's classical brevity. This is not to say that the poem might without loss be reduced to a two-line epigram; it is rather that the exploration of the speaker's feelings is carried out in a somewhat tentative manner that has an affinity with the explorations, which often slide into the cleverness, even the playfulness, of the "metaphysical school"[9] and is distinct from the more serious argumentative procedure of Jonson. When Jonson says at the end of stanza 1 of "An Elegy," "Yet is't your vertue now I raise," he is embarking upon a carefully structured argument that will run the length of the poem. Like Jonson's argument, that in "Fair Friend" is rational, but much more loosely so, the poet, in explaining his feelings, meandering from one stanza-length treatment of the subject to another.

The word *meandering is* not meant to depreciate the poem but to distinguish the poet's procedure from the forward movement of "An Elegy." Jonson's rational procedure is clearly marked by grammar (*"Though* Beautie . . . / *Yet* is't . . ."; "*Wherein* you triumph yet: *because* "; "*But* who should lesse . . ."; *etc.)*. The rational structure of "Fair Friend," on the other hand, is both less obvious and more simple. For, despite the prevalence of the word *love* throughout the poem, *respect is* the word that dominates the argument and provides its very structure. "Respect" in stanza 1 is modified as "flame" in stanza 2; thereafter (in lines 8, 9, 13, 15, and *17) respect is* represented by the pronoun *it* (twice contracted with *is*), until *respect is* reintroduced in the penultimate stanza. That is, we move from "respect" to the gracious qualification "flame," and this conjunction provides the subject until stanza 6, which relieves the sustained treatment of the speaker's respect and acts as a kind of peroration. After stanza 6 the poet has but to bring about closure,

as he does strongly by reintroducing *respect*, the most important word in the poem. Thus we have a series of statements explaining the speaker's feelings, usually in negative terms ("I neither love, nor yet am free"; "It little wants of love, but paine"; "'Tis not a passions first accesse"), followed by stanza 6:

'Tis either Fancie, or 'tis Fate,
To love you more then I;
I love you at your beauties rate,
Lesse were an Injurie.

Here the poet qualifies his denials of love: "I love you," he says, "insofar as your beauties"—we ought to read the word in the poem as a plural possessive—"merit love." This qualification, like the treatment of *respect* in the previous stanzas, is more like Donne than Jonson. It is a qualification of the sort found in "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning":

Our two souls, therefore, which are one
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to aery thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two . . . . (84)

"If our souls be two, they are two in just this way . . . ." Stanza 6 of "Fair Friend" has a similar rhetorical effect; it illustrates the poet's sensitivity to the kind of concession and reasonableness for which Donne is noted. Much of the appeal of Donne's love poems is intellectual: Donne characteristically makes the reader feel that the mind capable of such subtle distinctions can itself be erotically stimulating. This, of course, is not at all the conclusion that the speaker of "Fair Friend" would desire or expect from the lady he addresses, but the distinctions he makes, especially the concession made in stanza 6, are persuasive in a Donne-like way. Also, the concession comes at just the right time; one more stanza expounding the speaker's respect would probably be one too many. Further, its persuasiveness is strengthened by a Jonsonian grace, which is most distinctly felt in "Lesse were an Injurie."

The poem, then, clearly has a rational structure, and the respect-flame-it conjunction is proof of structural integrity. This integrity, however, does not

suggest Jonson's hand, for—despite what has been said about the looseness of "An Elegy"—the structure is looser than we might expect from Jonson. The looseness is apparent in the lack of subordination; the pronoun "it" is, to the poet's credit, unobtrusively used, but its use as the subject of stanzas 3, 4, and 5 tugs at whatever inclinations we may have to call the poem Jonson's. Jonson would almost certainly have chosen to subordinate. Another way of seeing the structure of the poem as un-Jonsonian is to recognise that although "Fair Friend" has structural integrity, that integrity is somewhat tenuous. The poet's procedure is to blame for this, insofar as the tenuousness is blameworthy. A poem, like "An Elegy," whose structure is unqualifiably integral is one whose parts are both immovable and unremovable. Stanzas 3 to 5 of "Fair Friend," however, may be read in any order without damaging either the sense or the feeling of the passage. Moreover, stanzas 2 through 7 are not essential links in the argument. Of course, it is not desirable, given the occasion of the poem, that one notice the structure; there could be no feeling of, "Now the next step in my argument denying that I love you is . . . ." Still, a firmer structure might have been achieved, at least by Jonson. Although each of these stanzas is of interest in itself, and together they provide a certain cumulative force, any one might be dropped from the poem without causing significant structural damage. Nothing of the sort, of course, could be said of "An Elegy."

Stylistically, "Fair Friend" has two basically Jonsonian traits. The poem is Jonsonian in its concern for definition, for the distinction between *respect* and *love*, and, more importantly, the proper use of these terms in a particular human situation. The poem explores these terms; from its first two words to its concluding rhetorical question, it tactfully and definitively sets the "bounds or limits" of the relationship between the speaker and subject and makes a "precise statement of the essential nature" of that relationship.[11] Stanza by stanza, impressive definitions of the speaker's feelings accumulate, and this accumulation amounts to a loose rational argument. A brief look at each of the first lines of stanzas 2 to 8 gives us some understanding of the extent to which the poet is concerned with definition. But, again, what is most important is that this concern is intrinsic to the relationship unfolded, and does not deteriorate into a witty exercise that distracts attention from that relationship. The poem claims our attention mainly because of its Jonsonian attentiveness to a particular situation, and concomitant with that attentiveness is a deep concern for definition. The result is an impressive handling of the terms *respect* and *love* .

This Jonsonian attentiveness is, naturally, embodied in the style. Consider, for instance, stanza 1, probably the best in the poem:

Fair Friend, 'tis true, your beauties move
My heart to a respect:
Too little to be paid with love,
Too great for your neglect.

The introduction of the poem's central abstractions *respect* and *love* is distinguished by a dexterous structure, metre and rhythm. The balanced structure of lines 3 and 4 ("Too little . . . ,/ Too great . . .") contributes greatly to the judiciousness that is felt to be behind the judgement. Perhaps more impressive than this are the metre and rhythm. The form is a cross-rhymed, four-line stanza of alternating iambic tetrameter and trimeter lines. In such a form, the trimeter lines can be used to increase emphasis, and, in this poem, they are perhaps best used for this purpose in stanza 1. Line 1, whose caesuras help give the sense of a reasoning mind capable of concession (here, in a Jonsonian rather than Donnean way) and thus of judiciousness, is metrically regular and rhythmically fairly even—that is, each of the four feet has about the same degree of difference between the unaccented and accented syllables. Feeling is increased in line 2 partly because of what is said (the speaker's heart is moved), but also because of the brevity of the line and the modulation in the metre. For although the line is regular, the second foot is barely distinguished as an iamb, and this places considerable emphasis on the second syllable of the important word, "respect"; likewise, enjambment with line 1 places emphasis on "heart." A similar rhythmic effect is achieved in lines 3 and 4, the second foot of each line being a lighter iamb than the others. Line 4 by itself or in a different context might be read more evenly than it should be here; the syllables of the second foot are only slightly differentiated because the subject's neglect is not distinguished from that of another. The effect of the rhythm of lines 3 and 4 is to stress the key words "paid," "love," "great," and "neglect." Therefore structure, metre and rhythm contribute to meaning, and the meaning is clinched by the "respect"/"neglect" rhyme, though one might wish the rhyme reversed, which would emphasise to a greater extent the more important "respect." In stanza 2, and throughout the rest of the poem, the sense of a reasoning mind continues, though the reasoning takes on a Donnean rather than Jonsonian air.

The second Jonsonian trait, the combination of the plain and the eloquent styles, is perhaps self-evident after what has been said about "An Elegy." The diction of "Fair Friend," as well as the tone, is informed by each of the two dominating abstractions, *respect* and *love*. *Respect*, more than *love*, informs

the moral language and tone that most mark the poem, which is not surprising, given the respect-flame-it conjunction. This conjunction is a good sign as to how the poem works: the modification from "respect" to "flame" points to the combination of styles. Like *respect,* however, *love is* also a moral word, and this qualifies the influence of the eloquent style, or the courtliness of the poem, for here the morality of love is vital to the argument. But the connotations of *love* are informed by the eloquent style, which gives rise to the diction (from "beauties move/ My heart" in stanza 1, to "so faire a sight" and "delight" in stanza 8) and the figures (the "flame" of stanza 2, "Loves calmest State" in 4, and the "unstamp'd Gold" of 7) that sweeten the argument. The sweetness, though, is not distracting, because the language has, in Jonsonian fashion, receded into almost pure abstraction.[12] This does not weaken but strengthen the argument. Hence, we are not at first likely to notice the link between "flame" in stanza 2 and "paine" in stanza 3, nor the figures of value (anticipated by "price" in stanza 3) and, more specifically, the alchemical metaphor, that link stanzas 5 to 7: "It is like love to truth reduc'd,/ All the false values gone"; "I love you at your beauties rate"; and

> Like unstamp'd Gold, I weigh each grace,
> So that you may collect
> Th'intrinsique value of your face
> Safely from my respect.

In this way the plain style exerts its influence, as it were, on the eloquence. In fact, the presence of the plain style, or the moral quality of the poem, is so obvious it hardly needs illustration; in every stanza the poet is occupied with explaining that he loves the lady to whom he speaks as a friend, not as a lover. As the modification of "respect" by "flame" suggests, the quality of the respect he feels is very close to but not identical with what a lover feels, and the careful, judicious definition of these feelings is obviously moral. What there is of the eloquent style in the poem—and it is not nearly as prevalent or as impressive as in "An Elegy"—is thereby used in the service of an essentially moral cause. The poem, after all, is an attempt to state precisely the nature of a human relationship, and may even be a form of direct reply, which may be gathered from "'tis true" in line 1: rather than as more or less meaningless filler, it might well be taken literally, as a Jonsonian concession to something the lady has just argued. Like "An Elegy," "Fair Friend" would not have been possible without either of the two main traditions, the plain and

the eloquent. The purity of their combination is evident in the difficulty of recognising the combination. There is greater feeling in "An Elegy," and this may in part be because it has a purer combination, or fusion, of styles. But it is a greater poem, perhaps in subject matter, certainly in style. However, the subject matter of "Fair Friend," as well as its similarity to "An Elegy," is sufficient to make one wonder if, in the hands of Jonson, the style might not have been greater, if, perhaps, there might not have resulted a greater fusion of styles. How this might have been achieved probably only a Jonson could say. Still, the poem is Jonsonian—in its combination of styles as much as in its subject matter and its preoccupation with definition.

Although he hesitatingly gives "the balance of evidence" to Jonson, Briggs notes that among the evidence favouring Godolphin are flaws in the poem: "It should be said too that the poem exhibits certain imperfections of phrasing and metre quite like those that we observe in other pieces of his . . ." (43). It is not easy to see what Briggs means by "imperfections of phrasing." There are a number of possible flaws that may have derived from the demands of rhyme. He probably means not simple inversions but, perhaps, the little shift in terms in stanza 7 (from the general "each grace" to the more specific "face"). He may even have in mind the compact syntax of "for, who dare move/ Reward for his delight?", though it would be severe of him to criticise a poet for compactness, and perhaps even the dangling modification of "Like unstamp'd Gold, I weigh each grace." He may also mean the slight lack of social grace one is likely to feel in "you may collect/ Th'intrinsique value of your face" (although it is a considerable compliment the speaker delivers, his manner of speaking here would not please some). One is only likely to feel this, however, if the poem is taken as a form of rejection. But this is not how the poem should be taken, as we can gather from stanza 1, in which "neglect" functions as an objective genitive ("my neglect of you"), but also as a subjective genitive ("your neglect of me"). Line 3, then, means "Too little to be paid with love by you," as well as ". . . by me." Likewise, the first line of the last stanza, "And this respect would merit love," implies both "I don't love you" and "You don't have to love me." Ambiguity in poetry is not in itself a virtue, and ambiguity may not have been intended by the "Fair Friend" poet. If not, then he has outdone himself, for ambiguity in this case raises a somewhat unusual rejection poem to a remarkable one in which the speaker attempts to define a *continuing* relationship with his female friend. If the ambiguity was intended, then the poem is even more like "An Elegy" in that it too is a testimony to private life in the seventeenth century; both poems deal

with complicated, subtle personal relations; both extend beyond the bounds of their particulars to general statements about human experience. Again, if the ambiguity was unintended, then stanzas 6 and 7 are somewhat deficient in tone. The different audience, morally and emotionally speaking, that the ambiguity implies dispels this deficiency. In any case, the ambiguity exists, and the poem is considerably better because of it.

The metrical imperfections that Briggs refers to are undoubtedly those in lines 12 and 20, which are tetrameters instead of trimeters. Jonson may at times have been guilty of similar imperfections, but they are certainly not typical of him. In fact, none of the three tetrameter-trimeter poems Jonson is known to have written—*F* 9 ("Drink to me, onely, with thine eyes"), *U* 3 ("The Musical strife; In a Pastoral Dialogue"), and *U* 4 ("Oh doe not wanton with those eyes")—exhibits similar imperfections, and one of them ("Drink to me, onely") is among the best of his lyrics. Lines 12 and 20 of "Fair Friend" may not illustrate the kind of metrical sin that vexed Jonson about Donne's poetry—"Done, for not keeping of accent, deserved hanging" (Herford & Simpson I, 133)—but they do contain metrical transgressions that he was very unlikely to have committed. But Godolphin's slim volume of poems (at most thirty in all, including three translations and two Latin epigrams) frequently exhibits imperfections of phrasing and metre. In fact, both of these imperfections may be found in one of the two tetrameter-trimeter poems he certainly wrote, "Constancye," and one of them (awkward syntax) may be found in the other, "Noe more unto my thoughts appeare."

The diction of "Fair Friend" is strikingly like that of Godolphin's other poems, and the similarity is not simply a quality generally shared by other Caroline poets; it appears as a distinctive feature. The recurrence of particular words and usages in various poems in some measure typifies Godolphin's style and argues strongly for his being identified as the author of "Fair Friend." These words include *disdain, sense, beauties, passion, merit, access, flame,* and *pain* (once, as in "Fair Friend," as a rhyme for *disdain*[13]). Also, a word already mentioned, and which is seemingly insignificant but actually of some importance in this poem, is the contraction *'tis*. Jonson used the word a total of seventy-five times in his poems, as many as three times in a space of fifty-six lines (*F* 13), and four times in ninety-six lines (*U* 13) and in ninety-eight lines (*E* 133).[14] The word occurs five times in the thirty-two lines of "Fair Friend" (and in two other instances the formulation is uncontracted); only once does Jonson use the word this often in a single poem, and that is in a space of 485 lines of *Horace, of the Art of Poetrie*. The point

is, five times in a thirty-two line poem is a lot of *'tis*'s, and too many, one should think, for such a conscious stylist as Jonson, who, as we have seen, had the acuity to reject the word in favour of the inverted but, for the circumstances, more useful *is't* in line 4 of "An Elegy."

There is a third and final comment to be made about the diction of "Fair Friend." If the poem was written by Jonson, it contains an oddity. In all of Godolphin's poems there are at least thirty-one words that Jonson did not use in *his* poems.[15] Thirty-one words (there may be more) from a corpus of twenty-eight English poems is a significant number, but the oddity is that six of these occur in "Fair Friend." There are four words in the poem that Jonson used only once (*multiply, calmest, victory, and fond*), all of which are used by Godolphin on at least one other occasion, and of the six Jonson never used at all (*intense, reduced, induced, imagination, collect,* and *intrinsic*), Godolphin used three on at least one other occasion: *intense, imagination,* and *collect.* The sum effect of the diction of "Fair Friend" alone is to leave one reasonably certain that Godolphin was its author.

Briggs, Herford and Simpson, and Ian Donaldson all point to "Noe more unto my thoughts appeare" as being similar in style to "Fair Friend"; Donaldson also points to "Or love mee lesse, or love mee more."[16] To these we might add "Constancye," "'Tis affection but dissembled," "fayre shadow stay, may I forever see," "To the tune of, In fayth I cannot keepe my fathers sheepe," and "Replye," all except the last (which is a reply to Waller's "Of Love") also similar to "Fair Friend" in theme insofar as they are about unrequited love and "Fair Friend" is an avowal of respect instead of love. As Briggs himself says, "the poem is so much like other work of [Godolphin's] that we experience no difficulty in thinking him as its author." But Briggs encounters a problem that may possibly be resolved by a bit of reasonable speculation. Having recognised the claims of the Harleian MS. and of style in favour of Godolphin, he concludes,

> [s]o far as I know there is no other evidence bearing on the question. A decision is difficult to come to. If the poem is Godolphin's, how did it get among Jonson's papers? . . . The only association of their names lies in the fact that both occur in Suckling's *Session of the Poets* and that Wood . . . says that Godolphin was 'much respected' by Jonson. Nor is the piece of such distinguished merit that we can fancy Jonson as particularly desirous of obtaining a copy. It is clear that the balance of evidence is much in Jonson's favor. (43)

Dighton argues that Godolphin's "contribution to *Jonsonius Virbius* ["The *Muses* fairest *light* in no darke time"] and the mention of his name in Falkland's *Eclogue on Ben Jonson* are sufficient evidence that he must . . . have known Jonson, and we can be sure that Godolphin was one of the 'tribe of Ben'" (xviii). This seems reasonable enough, though it is not at all clear that Godolphin was actually sealed of the tribe.[17] And the question Briggs asks might be answered in a number of ways, perhaps the most appealing answer being ascertained by asking a slightly different question than Briggs': How did that *version* of the poem get among Jonson's papers?

It is all but certain that we shall never know for sure the answer to this question. But a possible and reasonable answer might be reached by considering the evidence provided by the two versions of the poem, that of *The Underwood*, and that of Harleian MS. 6917. For each of the six variants in *The Underwood* version is a small improvement on a very good poem[18]; each is indicative of a poet's re-writing or tinkering; collectively they point to careful revision. The answer to Briggs' primary question, "Did Jonson write *Underwoods* xl?" (41) is almost certainly not. But it may very well be that he had a hand in it, that Godolphin showed his poem to Father Ben and the master touched it up. This would reasonably explain the differences between the Harleian MS. and the version found in the 1640 Folio.

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## Notes

[1] William Gifford published "Fair Friend" in his 1816 edition of *The Works of Ben Jonson* (London: Bickers and Son) and appended this note: "This little piece, which is not without merit, is carelessly thrown in towards the conclusion of the old folio, where it is united to 'A New-year's Gift to king Charles!'" (vol. VIII 367). George Saintsbury published the poem in *Minor Poets of the Caroline Period* (vol. II, Oxford: Clarendon, 1906) as belonging to Sidney Godolphin (c. 1610-1643). The case for Jonson's authorship rests on the fact that the poem was apparently found amongst his papers after his death and published by Sir Kenelm Digby in the Folio of 1640. The case for Godolphin's authorship rests on the fact that the only known manuscript version (Harleian 6917) is attributed to Godolphin, as are other poems in the same manuscript. Quotations from the poem in this discussion come from *U* LXXX as printed by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson in *Ben Jonson* (vol. VIII), Oxford: Clarendon, 1947.

[2] See Briggs' "Did Jonson write *Underwoods* xl?" in *Anglia* xxxix (1915), 41-44, and Dighton's *The Poems of Sidney Godolphin*, Preface by John Drinkwater, Oxford: Clarendon, 1931.

[3] Perhaps unaware of the poem's disputed authorship, F. R. Leavis in *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936) speaks of the poem as Jonson's, though he astutely responds to the Caroline quality of some of its stanzas. Herford and Simpson (1952) go further than Leavis with the Caroline quality, claiming that "[t]he deliberately touched antithesis of this poem is unlike Jonson's work. And it matches such work of Godolphin's as his 'Noe more unto my thoughts appear,/ at least appear less fair"' (XI 101-02). Writing in 1952, F. W. Bradbrook ("Ben Jonson's Poetry," reprinted in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature: From Donne to Marvell*, vol. 3, ed. Boris Ford. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960, 131-41) decides in favour of Jonson as the author and echoes Leavis when he says that the poem "has a weight and dignity characteristically Jonsonian" (138). In a note to the Oxford Authors *Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985), Ian Donaldson offers this final remark: "The stylistic evidence in fact favours Godolphin: cf. 'Or love me less, or love me more', and 'No more unto my thoughts appear"' (734). As we will argue, it is very likely that Briggs was wrong to conclude, albeit somewhat hesitatingly, in favour of Jonson's authorship; that Dighton, Herford and Simpson, and Donaldson point to the truth in inclining toward Godolphin; but also that Leavis and Bradbrook were right in responding to the poem as "characteristically Jonsonian."

[4] "Drink to me, onely, with thine eyes" is unconventional if Jonson intends in 11. 7-8 ("But might I of Jove's nectar sup,/ I would not change for thine") to express his preference for Jove's nectar over Celia's kisses.

[5] See Wesley Trimpi's chapter, "'The Passionate Plainness,'" in *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1962.

[6] The moral analysis is perhaps most clearly seen in stanza 3, but even here it is modified by the tone of praise. The courtliness, of course, is strongest in stanzas 4 through 8, but the language and the figurative development in these stanzas do not detract from the argument. The hyperbolic praise is informed by the careful exposition, in the first three stanzas, of beauty and virtue, and of how these abstractions, embodied in the woman addressed, relate to the poem's central abstraction, love.

[7] Winters' discussion of "An Elegy" ("Though beauty be the mark of praise") has largely informed the present one. It is not only essential to the study of the poem but of considerable value, as a model of critical reading, to the student of poetry. See *Forms of Discovery: Critical & Historical Essays on the Forms of the Short Poem in English*, Denver: Alan Swallow, 1967, 64-67.

[8] Stanza 1 is self-contained, line 1—"Though Beautie be the Marke of praise"—having its sense completed by the independent clause that forms the last line of the stanza, "Yet is't your vertue now I raise." But this line is connected by apposition to stanza 2, beginning, "A vertue, like Allay, so gone," and ending, "This subjects you to love of one." And the first word of this last line serves as the antecedent for the relative pronoun beginning stanza 3: "Wherein you triumph yet . . . ." The second three-stanza unit is linked to the first by the conjunction *but*: "But

who should lesse expect from you." The subject of this and of the next two stanzas is not, however, as in the first three, the beauty and virtue of the lady, and how these relate to love, but the presence in her of "Love," and the rearing and maintenance of Love's temples by her. In other words, the subject of this three-stanza unit is the realisation of a particular virtue or good, love, in the woman addressed. The third three-stanza unit is also linked to its antecedent by a conjunction: "And you are he: the Deitie." This unit would appear merely to be part of the previous one, but the emphatic statement of identity in the first line distinguishes the last three stanzas from what has come before: now the lady is not just referred to as the sole sponsor of Love, but as the "Deitie" himself. Furthermore, in these last three stanzas there is a shift in purpose, or, better, a clarification of the poem's purpose. The speaker's main purpose is not, as in the first two units, to praise her of whom he sings (though he does, of course, do that), but to ask something of her: "I," we are told, "Have sung this Hymne, and here intreat/ One sparke of your Diviner heat/ To light upon a Love of mine." Thus, as is typical of Jonson's poems of praise, the praise and the central purpose of the poem justify one another: the praise justifies his knowing that the lady has the qualities required by the one he loves; and his request for help is justified by his full appreciation, evident in the sincere praise (hyperbolic praise may be sincere), of the qualities present in her. This stanza leads to the request in the last one:

> Which if it kindle not, but scant
> Appeare, and that to shortest view,
> Yet give me leave t<o>'adore in you
> What I, in her, am grieved to want.

The possibilty of virtue's scant appearance in the beloved is not due to any failing in the source of the spark, but in the sufficiency of the fuel the speaker desires kindled. The woman addressed is still praised, and praise is still crucial to the feeling and the argument. In these last stanzas, however, the poem's primary purpose has finally been revealed, and, to this extent, the praise is revealed as subservient to that purpose. This last unit is the most personal in the poem (despite the figure of the "Deitie" and the "faithful troope"), which in part accounts for the heightened intensity in the last lines.

[9] See even a brilliant poem like Donne's "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning," and, especially, Marvell's "The Definition of Love."

[10] See *John Donne: The Complete English Poems*, ed. A. J. Smith, Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1986.

[11] The quotations come from the *OED's* first and fourth definitions of *definition*, respectively.

[12] This echoes Winters in his discussion of the language of "An Elegy" in *Forms of Discovery*, 67.

[13] Another Caroline poet, Thomas Carew, uses the same rhyme in "Mediocritie in love rejected," in which the line "Give me more love, or more disdain" is echoed by Godolphin's "Or love mee lesse, or love mee more." See Carew, *The Poems of Thomas Carew with His Masque 'Coelum Britannicum,'* ed. Rhodes Dunlap, Oxford: Clarendon, 1949, 12-13.

[14] See Mario A. DiCesare and Ephim Fogel's A *Concordance to the Poems of Ben Jonson* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell UP, 1978) for a list of the 73 lines in which the word appears. Steven L. Bates and Sidney D. Orr's concordance of the same name (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1978) does not provide a list for this particular word.

[15] Here are the 31 as they appear in *The Poems of Sidney Godolphin:* indigence, recompense, imprecate, diffusive, desolation, comply, calcine, comprest, impart, resolves, plantation, intentive, impatient, millions, defuse, propitious, incessant, immearc't, spacious, incenst, incite, calmenesse, asswage, intense, reduced, induced, imagination, collect, intrinsique, tincture, transparent. It is interesting that 19 of these words are not used by Donne either, and that the origins of the origins of the 31 demonstrate that Jonson was not, of course, alone in much latinizing our tongue.

[16] See note 1.

[17] Godolphin is not universally recognised as one of the Sons. Kathryn Anderson McEuen, for instance, does not even mention him in her book, *Classical Influence upon the Tribe of Ben: A Study of Classical Elements in the Non-Dramatic Poetry of Ben Jonson and His Circle* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1939).

[18] The first variant, "Fair Friend," for "Madam" in the MS., is better in two ways: first, it initiates the interest in definition that runs throughout the poem; second, both "fair" and "friend" pay the auditor perfectly conceived compliments, whereas "madam" does not. The second variant comes in line 10, "beautie takes" instead of "beauties take," and is better because it is the speaker's "sense" that is affected, and "beauties" would appeal to more than his "sense." "Beauties," it should be pointed out, follows from the use of the word in line 1; however, there it is sanctioned in part by its allowing the near rhyme of "move"/"love," and, more importantly, because it is more than physical beauty that moves his heart to respect. The third variant, "price" for "prize," is preferable because the soft *c* sounds better than the *z* in conjunction with the *s* in "disdaine," and is perhaps more easily pronounced. "Price" is also preferable because it has the virtue of simply meaning "cost," whereas "prize" has the danger of possibly suggesting competitiveness to the lady, which is not what the speaker would wish, and also that the speaker thinks rather well of himself. The fourth variant gives us "My thoughts, too, feele the influence" in line 12, instead of "My thoughts feele th'influence." The metre in the line from the MS is, at best, forced, whereas that of *The Underwood* line is perfectly regular; moreover, *The Underwood* line is superior in feeling because of the simple inclusion of the Jonsonian "too" and the caesuras that accompany it. True, this results in a tetrameter rather than the expected trimeter line, but this is by far the

lesser of the two evils. The fifth variant, "would" for "could" in line 29, is better because it gives the sense of, "*Of course* this respect would merit love. . . ." This subtle difference pays a more satisfactory tribute to the presence of respect in love. And the sixth variant, the subjunctive "dare" instead of the indicative "dares" in line 31, is preferable because the subjunctive carries with it the possibility of choices.