Fact and Fiction in Ben Jonson's Epideictic Poetry

Jongsook Lee
(Department of English)

1

Understanding Jonson's poetry requires particular attention to his divided loyalties to two distinct ideas of poetry. In *Discoveries* and elsewhere, he espouses the Aristotelian doctrine that poetry is generically fiction, writing that poetry is "an Art of imitation, or faining," and that the poet "fayneth and formeth a fable, and writes things like Truth. For, the Fable and Fiction is (as it were) the forme and Soule of any Poeticall worke, or *Poem*" (*Discoveries*, *H&S* 8:635).[1] Yet, for the tragic plots of his two Roman plays—*Sejanus* and *Catiline*—Jonson depended on the authority of verifiable historical facts, or, as he calls it, the "truth of Argument."[2] Jonson's oscillation between the two ideas of poetry—poetry as fictive representation and poetry as factual representation—is most evident in his epideictic poetry.[3] Some tension between fact and fiction is inherent

1) Jonson professes similar ideas in his prefaces and addresses to the reader. In the second prologue to *Epicoene or The Silent Woman*, for example, he summarizes the doctrine in the same terms: "*Poet* never credit gain'd / By writing truths, but things (like truths) well fain'd" (*H&S* 5:164.9-10). All quotations of Jonson's poems are taken from C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson's edition, vol. 8, and cited parenthetically in the text. References to other works by Jonson are identified by title of work, the abbreviation *H&S*, volume, and page numbers.

2) See the address "To the Reader" prefixed to *Sejanus* (*H&S* 4:350-51). Joseph Allen Bryant, Jr., in "The Significance of Ben Jonson's First Requirement for Tragedy: 'Truth of Argument,'" finds a link between Jonson's idea of history and his advocacy of the historically verifiable as the object of mimesis: Jonson conceives of history as a branch of moral philosophy that delights and instructs with the true examples of the past. In *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, Bryant argues, Jonson tries to import history into poetry. But Jonson's unusually strict adherence to the verifiable in his tragedies seems to show a partiality to fact for fact's sake. His close association with a group of prominent "new historians" and antiquarians like William Camden, John Selden, Henry Savile, and Sir Robert Cotton is suggestive in that connection. They emphasized, and practiced as far as they could, "historical method"—faithful reconstruction and analysis of the past on the basis of the verifiable. For discussions of Tudor historiography and its interaction with poetry, see Herschel Baker, *The Race of Time: Three Lectures on Renaissance Historiography*; F.J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*; and Louis B. Wright, "The Elizabethan Middle-Class Taste for History."

3) Arthur Marotti's distinction of the "Apollonian" and the "Dionysian" sides of Jonson ("All

in the genre of epideictic poetry, which takes its root in history, bnt in some of Jonson's poems of praise the generic tension becomes an explicit concern: he constantly emphasizes his honesty in praising but at the same time admits that he has created highly idealized images of human nature. The conflict between his alternating impulses toward fact and fiction is made transparent and finally becomes a part of the poem's signification. In some of his other poems of praise, Jonson attempts to develop textual strategies that would accommodate his two impulses: he strives to create a vivid impression of factuality and particularity for his idealized and generalized images of human nature.

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Dreaming the ultimate dream of a Renaissance Humanist, Jonson said to Drummond of Hawthornden that "he heth a minde to be a churchman, & so he might have favour to make one Sermon to the King, he careth not what y^{r} after sould befall him, for he would not flatter though he saw Death" (*Conversations*, *H&S* 1:141.330-33). Fidelity to fact; martyrlike integrity in speech. They are precisely the qualities that he represents himself to have in his poems of praise. Indeed, one of the most forceful devices of suasion he uses in his poetry is his self-characterization as an honest man. In an epistle to Katherine, Lady Aubigny, the wife of one of his most bounteous patrons (*Forest* XIII), Jonson portrays himself as a solitary lover of truth and virtue, who for that love is persecuted by the "turning world" (64) mostly populated with those who buy and sell praises for gold. He speaks of the difficulty of praising in a world where persons worthy of praise are as rare as honest praisers:

> '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[o]' expect, they dare deride.
> So both the prais'd, and praisers suffer: Yet,

About Jonson's Poetry") is useful in understanding Jonson's divided loyaltics to two different ideas of poetry. Marotti observes that the genesis of Jonson's art is not in his "Horatian pose of sanity and moderation" but in his urge to vent and transform his "Dionysian" private vision into "Apollonian" forms of art (210). This explains in part his profound concern with gaps between facts and the fictions he has made of those facts. The greater the gaps become, the more insistent his protestations of the factuality of his fictions become.

For others ill, ought none their good forget.
I, therefore, who profess my selfe in love
With every virtue, wheresoere it move,
And howsoever; as I am at fewd
With sinne and vice, though with a throne endew'd;
.....
I, *Madame*, am become your praiser. (1-10, 21)

Honest praising in circumstances such as these lines describe is a sure sign of virtue, which he shares with the person he praises. And appropriately, Lady Aubigny is praised in the poem for her constancy, which keeps her "farre from the maze of custome, error, strife" (60).[4] His self-characterization as an honest praiser is in turn validated by the dignified simplicity and the urbane yet earnest tone of the language used in his praise, which Wesley Trimpi has identified as characteristic of Jonsonian "plain style." By creating the impression of one talking to a friend not only intimately and candidly but also with discernment, the language Jonson uses renders his praise more credible and his advice more persuasive (191-238).[5]

But, the epideictic poet cannot entirely escape the common censure of "flattery" by insisting on his moral integrity. The very nature of the world he claims he defies makes it virtually impossible for him to describe things as they are. Jonson too admits that he has not always been faithful to facts: dedicating the *Epigrammes* to William Herbert, Third Earl of Pembroke, he says that

> if I have praised, unfortunately, any one, that doth not deserve; or, if all answere not, in all numbers, the pictures I have made of them: I hope it will be forgiven me, that they are no ill pieces, though they be not like the persons. (21-25)

Some of his poems of praise are not "like the persons" but "pictures" he has made of them, not facts but deliberate fiction made out of the facts. And since they are not factual representations, they should not be judged by their likeness to "the persons" or their strict fidelity to facts. They should be judged, he suggests, by his skill in shaping poetic fiction.

In "To My Muse" (*Epigrammes* LXV), his strongest self-rebuke for fabricating fictions, Jonson shows his awareness of the perilous resemblance of poetic fiction to deception

4) For an examination of the mirror image in this poem as an expression for the mutually reflective relationship between text, reader, and poet, see William E. Cain, "Mirrors, Intentions, and Texts in Ben Jonson."

5) Wesley Trimpi, *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style.*

and flattery. In an outburst of apparent self-disgust, he says to his muse:

> Away, and leave me, thou thing most abhord,
> That hast betray'd me to a worthlesse lord;
> Made me commit most fierce idolatrie
> To a great image through thy luxurie.
> .....
> With me thou leav'st an happier *Muse* then thee,
> And which thou brought'st me, welcome povertie;
> Shee shall instruct my after-thoughts to write
> Things manly, and not smelling parasite. (1-4, 11-14)

But a justification of poetic fiction and its dangerous power to turn a "worthlesse lord" into "a great image" soon follows. He says to his about-to-be banished muse:

> But I repent me: Stay. Who e're is rais'd
> For worth he has not, He is tax'd, not prais'd. (15-16)

Jonson's poetic fiction is different from lies or flattery. Since he has praised the lord for what he must be, not for what he is, his overpraise is a covert "taxing," not flattery. With this claim, as William E. Cain observes, the "crisis in reference" revealed in the first four lines of the poem, when the poet acknowledges a disjunction between his language of praise and the man he praises, is resolved: "the poet's rhetoric may fail to apply truly to the man that he praises, but this no longer suggests a crisis in reference. Instead, the failure in reference exposes and censures the undeserving man; even when the poet's praise fails to refer accurately, it still serves to measure worth by calling attention to the distinction between praise and merit. While the poet's praise may fail to find a proper referent, it succeeds in revealing the man who does not deserve such praise" (47).[6] Implicit in the claim is the idea that deviations from historical/biographical facts can be justified insofar as they serve the end of moral edification.

Of course, the justification is conventional in that it diverts one's attention to the criterion of moral utility from that of fidelity to factual truth. Sidney uses the same argument in his *Defence of Poetry*. And Erasmus offers the same apology for his eulogies of princes: he declares that "no other way of correcting a prince is so efficacious as presenting, in the guise of flattery, the pattern of a really good prince" (Lewalski 18).[7]

6) William E. Cain, "The Place of the Poet in Jonson's 'To Penshurst' and 'To My Muse.'"
7) Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum Erasmi*, ed. P. S. Allen, 1:397, qtd. in Barbara K. Lewalski, *Donne's "Anniversaries" and the Poetry of Praise: The Creation of a Symbolic Mode*, 18. In

The educative function of fiction (in this case, overpraise), relies heavily on the ambiguous dynamic of the relation between fact and fiction. To the person overpraised, the undeserved praise will be a form of admonition; receiving such praise will be for him an occasion for self-reflection, and possibly for self-reformation. For the audience in general, the "great image" of a lord will function as a form of instruction. It will assure them that there *is* a pattern of virtue in this world and will inspire them to emulate and imitate the pattern. Fiction, then, will have historical significance for both audiences. What is offered as a covert exhortation, or what is believed (if only in part) by the audiences, not what has happened, will become the basis for future action, the historical determinant. The poet can indeed reform the "worthlesse lord" into "a great image." In this sense fiction works as fact, and becomes fact. But obviously the success of this educational scheme depends not on the poet or his aim in (over)praising but on the audiences. Only when the audiences reform themselves in conformity with the praise, will the overpraise cease to be a lie. Only the audiences can turn a lie into a moral lesson, and fiction into fact.

In this reproach to his muse, one might detect some ambivalence in Jonson's attitude toward fiction. The very fact that he reminds the reader of the disparity between the actual person and the artistic representation of him or her bespeaks some uneasiness about fiction. It reveals the same kind of suspicion of fiction that Sidney tried to dispel in his *Defence*, and that William Nelson diagnoses as "a persistent reluctance to accept the artistic composition of verities as equivalent to the representation of verity, even such inadequate representation as lies within the power of a historian" (114).[8] In the first fourteen lines of the poem, the distinction between falsehood and the element of fiction that inevitabley enters a poem of any kind is blurred. For Jonson, whatever fiction there

Dryden and the Tradition of Panegyric, describing the panegyric tradition in the Renaissance, James D. Garrison distinguishes two themes (of "restoration" and "limitation") and two audiences (of "the king" and "the people") of panegyric narrowly defined as *laus regis* (61-63).

8) William Nelson, *Fact or Fiction: The Dilemma of the Renaissance Storyteller*. Baxter Hathaway, in *The Age of Criticism: The Late Renaissance in Italy*, recognizes the same attitude in Italian Renaissance literary theorists: he says that most of those who emphasized the factuality of poetic imitation "accepted a naive position that truth belongs certainly to the domain of actual particular fact and only dubiously does it apply to rational constructs" (161). Indeed, much of the effort to justify imaginative literature, or poetic fiction, was devoted to answering the charge that fiction is a lie and the poet a liar. See Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism*, 159-66; Joel Elias Spingarn, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*, 3-23; and Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 669-71.

is in his poems of praise is either an "unfortunate" error in his judgment, or his muse's act of betrayal. Poetry, like Sirens' music, lures him to a shoal of moral destruction. The moral efficacy of fiction, which for Sidney is the triumph of poetry, is offered by Jonson to the audience, but above all to himself, as a justification. The same attitude appears again in his "Epistle to Master John Selden" (*Underwood* XIV). Promising Selden a just appreciation of his book, Jonson says,

> I confesse (as every Muse hath err'd,
> And mine not least) I have too oft preferr'd
> Men past their termes, and prais'd some names too much,
> But 'twas with purpose to have made them such. (19-22)

Nevertheless, this apology is nothing if not a valediction to fictional elements in his praise. Immediately after, these lines follow:

> Since, being deceiv'd, I turne a sharper eye
> Upon my selfe, and aske to whom? and why?
> And what I write? And vexe it many dayes
> Before men get a verse: much lesse a Praise;
> So that my Reader is assur'd, I now
> Meane what I speake: and still will keepe that Vow. (23-28)

His overpraise failed to perform its expected educative function. Hence the reassertion of the value of factual truth and of the due care and patience of epideictic composition. The reader is reassured that there will be an exact correspondence between what he says and what he means. There will be no exhortation in the guise of flattery. And the reader is more likely than otherwise to give credence to the poet's "Vow," because it is accompanied with a frank admission of past errors and an affirmation (in lines 23-26) that praise is an act of judgment: writing a poem of praise involves a close scrutiny not only of the addressee's merit but also of the poet's motive in praising.

The open admission that some of his praises were in part fiction is used here as a means to assure the reader of his honesty in praising, that is, the factuality of his poem. And this juxtaposition of an admission of fictionality and an assertion of fidelity to factual truth is Jonson's characteristic modification of Renaissance defenses of poetic fiction.

Factual representation and artistic representation had been sharply distinguished by Sir Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poetry*, itself in part a response to the notion that truth is truth of fact, an idea which is responsible for the association of fiction with falsehood.

Sidney accordingly contests the idea by differentiating between lies and fiction, between lying as deception and lying as asserting something other than factual truth; as he says of the poet, "though he recounts things not true, yet because he telleth them not for true, he lieth not. . . . so think I none so simple would say that Aesop lied in the tales of his beasts; for who thinks that Aesop writ it for actually true were well worthy to have his name chronicled among the beasts he writeth of" (102-3).

Sidney's main defense of poetic fiction is built upon that differentiation. He claims that, although fiction is not factual truth, it nevertheless is truth in some profound sense. In order to prove the superiority of the truth of fiction over the truth of fact, he sets poetry against history, arguing that history's very adherence to facts undermines its power to lead men to "well-doing," the "ending end" of any kind of learning. The historian, "so tied . . . to the particular truth of things," is unable to reveal "the general reason of things" (85). And "bound to tell things as things were," he must give us examples of dubious moral value (88). He must show human nature with all its inconsistencies, and the world with all its horrors. Thus "the historian, being captived to the truth of a foolish world, is many times a terror from well-doing and an encouragement to unbridled wickedness" (90). The poet, by contrast, may invent a "golden" world, which is free from all the ambiguities and contradictions of the "brazen" world of the historian, and in which virtue always triumphs. He "ever setteth virtue so out in her best colours, making Fortune her well-waiting handmaid, that one must needs be enamoured of her," and "of the contrary part, if evil men come to the stage, they ever go out . . . so manacled as they little animate folks to follow them" (90).[9]

Sidney's sharp distinction between factual truth and poetic truth, and his subsequent dismissal of the former as inferior to the latter in its moral efficacy, represent one of the two defenses of poetic fiction available to Jonson and his contemporaries. Indeed, if fiction is inseparably associated with falsehood, the poet has two alternatives to free himself from the charge of lying. Sidney's justification is one. The other course is by way of insisting that what is called fiction is no fiction at all, but a true report of things as they are. As we have seen, Jonson uses both justifications, sometimes juxtaposing them.

9) See Nelson's *Fact or Fiction*; and Barish's introduction to the Yale *Sejanus*. In real life, Sidney was well aware of the moral and political utility of history. Indeed, he was a historian of a sort himself under the guidance of Hubert Languet. For a discussion of Sidney's idea of history, see Elizabeth Story Donno, "Old Mouse-eaten Records: History in Sidney's *Apology*"; and F.J. Levy, "Sir Philip Sidney and the Idea of History."

By using both, he professes simultaneous allegiance to history and poetry, or to the truth of fact and the moral utility of fiction. In other words, he has it both ways: although he normally stresses the truth of his praise, he will nevertheless use the justification of fiction as morally useful whenever the problem of overpraise cannot be overlooked.

The genre of epideictic poetry itself, which typically thrives on the interaction between fact and fiction, necessitates such a dual allegiance. Literary theorists since Plato, as O. B. Hardison notes, emphasized the genre's reliance on history. They agreed with Menander and the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* that since epideictic poetry is about actual events and/or actual persons it should be based on historical facts about the person praised, such as the goods of nature, fortune, and character. But the historical facts must be contained in a form of praise; facts must be shaped into a fictive form. And the evolution of Renaissance epideictics, which Jonson's poetry embodies and inevitably modifies, can be traced along the course it took to break away from the "straight-jacket" (in Hardison's word) of factual truth as the basis of poetry and to readmit fiction as a legitimate element of poetry (Hardison 43-60).[10]

There are of course practical reasons for the epideictic poet to seek a harmony between fact and fiction. The common charge leveled against the epideictic poet is that his praise is flattery. When the poet writes about contemporary events and living people, he is patently vulnerable to the charge of lying, fawning eloquence, mercenary flattery, and servility. The same poetic fiction that the epideictic poet uses as a means of instruction and admonishment may be received by the reader as a piece of flattery or a guise of extortion. Jonson's own case abundantly tells us what penalties an epideictic poet has to pay. With all the protestations of integrity, he was not able to free himself from the charge of mercenary motives in his epideictic composition. In 1680, writing of Jonson's success in the "trade" of versing, Isaac Walton cast a dark glance at Jonson's probity as a praiser and satirist. He reports that Jonson received "100[li] a yeare from the king, also a pention from the Cittie, and the like from many of the nobilitie, and som of the

10) O. B. Hardison, *The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Idea of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice*. On the other hand, in his "Epideictic and Epic in the Renaissance," Brian Vickers describes the problem as a consequence of the Renaissance dismissal of the factual representation as inferior to the poetic: "Plato's acceptance of epideictic depended on its being true, praising gods or men who deserved to be praised, and one of the defenses of panegyric has always been that it was based on fact. Yet fact was now the province of history, and the fiction of poetry was often confused by its opponent as lies. How to reconcile the supposedly factual content of epideictic with its poetic of fictive mode was a problem not all Renaissance theorists solved" (513).

gentry. W^ch was well pay'd for love or fere of his raling in verse, or prose, or boeth" (*H&S* 1:181). Another penalty came from another direction. The topical allusions included in epideictic poems could all too easily irritate the "Jacobethan" court's touchy sensitivity as buried criticism. And perhaps no one would have known the danger better than Jonson, who had more than once landed in prison on charges of libel.[11]

The epideictic poet's task to turn history into poetry, then, requires a skillful balancing between fact and fiction. And the person who sets out to write on contemporary events and living persons needs must learn what facts would appropriately be included and what should be suppressed. In the Renaissance, as the age's numerous poems of fulsome praise amply testify, the balance more often than not tilts to fiction, perhaps for the obvious reason that patterns of virtue are usually hard to find in real life. The Renaissance epideictic poet had every reason to emphasize the truth and moral value of fiction and in the same breath to insist on the integrity of his praise.

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How to adhere to facts in praising, which includes by nature and of necessity a certain amount of idealization, and how to reconcile the conflicting demands of fact and fiction in the poems themselves, are the problems the epideictic poet has to deal with. O. B. Hardison notes that one of the solutions to the epideictic poet's problems was the theory of *pictura*, "the poetic form of exemplary narrative" (54): "The two concepts of historical narrative and example of virtue or vice meet in *pictura*. They are present because *pictura* has the two epideictic functions of imitating an individual and creating a pattern that will arouse emulation or abhorrence" (Hardison 56). Making patterns of vice and virtue out of a veritable chaos of already constituted events, as Hardison rightly observes, inevitably involves a process of idealization. The epideictic poet creates his *pictura* by stressing some events and witholding others, or by altering some and inventing others.

Whatever his protestations about his honesty in praising, the basic method of Jonson's epideictic poetry is that of *pictura* with all its idealizing tendencies. Through *pictura* Jonson strives to mediate between a factual representation of his subject—portraying the very person—and a more idealized or ennobled representation. But the idealizing impulse is by far the stronger of the two. And the attempt to achieve a factual representation

11) In 1597, Jonson was imprisoned for his share in the lost comedy of *The Isle of Dogs*,

becomes in practice an attempt to maintain an impression of factual truth.[12]

The playfully hyperbolic praise of Penshurst estate illustrates the method Jonson uses to create an ideal picture out of real things without entirely taking leave of factual truth. The following lines show an obvious tendency toward idealization (*Forest* II, "To Penshurst"):

> 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 runne into thy net.
> And pikes, now weary their owne kind to eat,
> As loth, the second draught, or cast to stay,
> Officiously, at first, themselves betray.
> Bright eeles, that emulate them, and leape on land
> Before the fisher, or into his hand. (29-38)

Raymond Wiillams has complained that the base stuff of this rarified picture is the gore and grease that stocks the real-life diningtable (Williams 30).[13] One does not have to agree with him to say that the "painted" partridge willing to be killed, and the "officious" fish leaping into the fisher's hand are not quite like such game in real life. By describing them as willing to perform their offices in the natural order as food for men, Jonson turns the real partridge around Penshurst and the real fish in Medway into emblems of the concord between men and nature, and the real Penshurst estate into a *pictura* of ideal society.

But Jonson insists on the factual basis of this idealized picture.[14] As the fish leap

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which had been denounced to the Privy Council as a "lewd plai," containing "very seditious & sclandrous matter" (*H&S* 1:217-18). For *Sejanus*, performed in 1603, Jonson was cited before the Privy Council on charges of treason (*H&S* 1:36-37). And in 1604, Jonson voluntarily imprisoned himself for his share in *Eastward Ho*, which contained some satire on the Scots, including a caricature of James I himself (*H&S* 1:38).

12) Because *pictura* is a verbal picture, its use as a device to unite the actual and the ideal, the particular and the generic, can be compared to that of Renaissance *impresses* and hieroglyphs, which were profoundly literary. They externalize particular qualities of a particular person, according to D. J. Gordon in his "Roles and Mysteries," but establish at the same time a "role," representative of persons in similar conditions, "capable of being related to a body of relevant abstractions" (18).

13) Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*.

14) In "The Place of the Poet in Jonson," Cain argues that "To Penshurst" is not simply a "mystification" of an economic system as Williams takes the poem to be. It betrays "the poet's ambivalent feelings" towards the system and his own place as a poet-praiser in it es-

from the particular river Medway, this ideal natural order is localized: it has the name of Penshurst. It calls the reader's attention to its identity as Penshurst, a particular place situated in a particular region and inhabited by particular people. Moreover, it is something that Jonson hmself can directly experience. With men and natural beings heightened and idealized to a mythic dimension, there appears in the poem Jonson's corpulent self, fraught with memories of the harsh reality beyond his ideal Penshurst. Jonson praises Penshurst

> Where comes no guest, but is allow'd to eate,
> Without his feare, and of thy lords own meate:
> Where the same beere, and bread, and self-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 men tells my cups; nor, standing by,
> A waiter, doth my gluttony envy:
> But gives me what I call, and lets me eate. (61-69)

By representing himself as a direct beneficiary of the ideal natural order at Penshurst, Jonson not only praises the estate but gives his praise the sanction of an observed and experienced fact.

In thus idealizing Penshurst, Jonson conveys an impression of factuality and tries to communicate conviction by presenting the virtue of Penshrst as his personal experience. This dual commitment to fact and fiction is responsible, I think, for the specificity of his praise, which Barbara K. Lewalski identifies as Jonson's contribution to the evolution of the English poety of praise tradition. In *Donne's "Anniversaries" and the Poetry of Praise*, she maintains that "Ben Jonson elevated to new poetic heights this conception of praise as involving a stance of forthright, judicious honesty and precise definition of the topic of virtue in terms of specific qualities and actions," and his poetry signals the trend "toward more orderly structure and more analytic development in the poem of

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pecially through a tactic of negation. By enumerating the things that Penshurst is not, Jonson praises the economic system of the Penshurst community but at the same time reveals its less idealistic aspects. Cain's suggestion that this idealistic poem records Jonson's realistic perception of the negative sides of Penshurst is similar in substance to Don E. Wayne's more recent assertion of the poem's subversive potential. In his *Penshurst: The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History*, Wayne argues hat the text of the poem registers social contradictions in Jacobean England in a way that "enables alternative forms of praxis in the wider social sphere to be perceived as possible" (130).

compliment" (36).[15] She cites as an example the epigram "To Thomas Lord Chancelor [Egerton]" (*Epigrammes* LXXIIII):

> Whil'st thy weigh'd judgements, EGERTON, I heare,
> And know thee, then, a judge, not of one yeare;
> Whil'st I behold thee live with purest hands;
> That no affection in thy voyce commands;
> That still th'art present to the better cause;
> And no lesse wise, than skillful in the lawes;
> Whil'st thou art certaine to thy words, once gone,
> As is thy conscience, which is alwayes one:
> The Virgin, long-since fled from earth, I see,
> T[o] our times return'd, hath made her heaven in thee.

The poem does indeed define "the topic of virtue in terms of specific qualities and actions" of the person praised. Most appropriately for praise of a Lord Chancellor, it concentrates on Egerton's integrity and conscientiousness.

So far Lewalski's formulation of Jonson's method in praise accurately describes the poem. But, perhaps because her main interest in this book is in Donne's epideictic method, she leaves it unremarked that the final effect of Jonson's specificity in praising an actual person is not a realistic description of the person but a highly idealized representation. Indeed, from associating a person with a specific moral quality it is only a short distance to representing the person as an embodiment of that specific moral quality. In that sense, Jonson's method of setting "the topic of virtue in terms of specific qualities" is more similar to than different from what Lewalski describes as Donne's "symbolic mode" in *Anniversaries*, a mode of idealization that turns an actual person into an "incarnation of virtue, or goodness, or divinity" (Lewalski 46).

Jonson's Egerton in this poem is not the historical Egerton but an ideal judge created out of that historical judge. Egerton embodies in himself all the attributes of an ideal judge -impartiality in judgment, wisdom and skill in the laws, and integrity in speech. And by the end of the poem, when Jonson identifies Egerton with Astraea the goddess of law and justice, Egerton the particular judge is made into the universal idea of justice, a virtual as well as virtuous personification. Here Jonson reverses the usual procedure for creating a personification: instead of fleshing out a preconceived moral concept, he first

15) Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Donne's "Annversaries" and the Poetry of Praise: The Creation of a Symbolic Mode.*

associates an actual person with a moral ideal and then permeates that person with specific attributes of that ideal till he becomes the ideal itself. The process of creating an ideal actual, of filling an actual person with attributes of a moral ideal, is literally the action of the poem "On Lucy Countesse of Bedford" (*Epigrammes* LXXVI), another of Lewalski's examples. The poem tells its own story:

This morning, timely rapt with holy fire,
I thought to forme unto my zealous *Muse*,
What kinde of creature I could most desire,
To honour, serve, and love; as *Poets* use.
I meant to make her faire, and free, and wise,
Of greatest bloud, and yet more good then great;
I meant the day-starre should not brighter rise,
Nor lend like influence from his lucent seat.
I meant shee should be curteous, facile, sweet,
Hating that solemne vice of greatnesse, pride;
I meant each softest vertue, there should meet,
Fit in that softer bosome to reside.
Only a learned, and a manly soule
I propos'd her; that should, with even powers,
The rock, the spindle, and the sheeres controule
Of destinie, and spin her owne free houres.
Such when I meant to faine, and wish'd to see,
My *Muse* bad, *Bedford* write, and that was shee.

Endowed with moral qualities, specified and catalogued, the actual woman Lucy Bedford becomes an embodiment of ideal womanhood. The actual is turned into an ideal, but still retains the name Lucy Bedford. If there is a gap between the actual and the ideal, it can be seen only by those who know the actual woman praised and idealized by Jonson.

Indeed, the major rhetorical device used in these two epigrams, as in "To Penshurst," is hyperbole, but it is a hyperbole constructed to conceal its own status as a hyperbole. In "To Penshurst," hyperbole undercuts the processs of idealization, even while activating it, because the trope operates precisely upon the transparent difference between fact and its exaggeration. The idealizing tendency, far from seeming to disappear, is so exaggerated that the reader is made aware of its presence. And when it is recognized by the reader as such, as it certainly is in the passage on the officious fish and partridge, it inevitably becomes self-referential, declaring the fundamental fictiveness of the picture it creates. But in the epigram to Egerton, the gap between the person and the moral

quality personified by the person, far from being laid bare, is made to disappear. The personification of justice is simply presented as Egerton, and the identity of Egerton the historical figure is insisted on: "Egerton" is called into the text of the poem itself, and his existence is attested by the poet, who insists that he knows Egerton, the then and now judge, and by the testimony of his highest senses: "Whil'st . . . I heare / And know thee. . . / Whil'st I behold thee. . . / I see . . . [the Virgin] in thee."

Hyperbole in this epigram to Egerton works like what J. B. Leishman calls Shakespeare's "un-Platonic hyperbole."[16] In Jonson's idealized picture of Egerton, as in Shakespeare's idealized image of his fair friend, the distinction between actual and ideal no longer remains. Like Shakespeare's friend, Jonson's Egerton is presented not as a reminder of a Platonic idea but himself as "*the* archetype, pattern, idea, or ideal" (Leishman 163). But Jonson's insistence on the factuality of his hyperbolical praise sould alert us to the basic difference between Jonson and Shakespeare in their epideictic use of hyperbole. Shakespeare, Leishman observes, uses "un-Platonic hyperbole" not as a rhetorical device but as the only possible expression of what his friend means to him. If he is right, and I think he is, the gap between fact and its hyperbolical representation would become a problem for the poet only when the hyperbole fails to express what he has to express. Where the expressive power of the hyperbole is the issue, its factual truth need not be insisted on. That Jonson insists on the factual truth of his hyperboles suggests that he is dealing with a problem different from what might have been Shakespeare's.[17] His is not of how to represent an ideal actual person that he believes to exist, but how to convince the reader of the existence of that ideal actual person. He has to use hyperbole without revealing its idealizing tendency actively at work.

In Jonson's double process of idealizing and creating an impression of factual truth, the poet—what he says he has experienced—plays a crucial role. Neither the historical fact that "To Penshurst" was composed when Sir Robert Sidney was in one of his worst financial embarrassments and when English rural society as a whole was experiencing structural changes, nor the fact that to some of his contemporaries Egerton, the Viscount Brackley, was "Break-law," has made its way into the poems to render them factually

16) J. B. Leishman, "Shakespeare's 'un-Platonic Hyperbole," in *Themes and Variations on Shakespeare's Sonnets.*

17) In Sonnet 17, Shakespeare says that the posterity might think his praise of his friend a mere hyperbole. But this concern itself is used as a form of praise, a strategy to persuade the friend of the need to procreate, and an expression of his love of his friend.

true.[18] It is only the testimony of the poet that gives a name and locality to what would otherwise be an imaginative construct: Jonson's Penshurst is a picture of an ideal society, but is presented as an actual place, Penshurst, just as his Egerton is an embodiment of justice without ceasing to be called Egerton. This impression of factual truth created by the articulate presence of the poet in the poem points to another major strategy Jonson uses to reconcile fact and fiction in his poems of praise. In the praise of Robert, Earl of Salisbury (*Epigrammes* LXIII), Jonson diverts the reader's attention from the idealizing process. He asks:

> Who can consider thy right courses run,
> With what thy vertue on the times hath won,
> And not thy fortune; who can cleerely see
> The judgment of the king so shine in thee;
> And that thou seek'st reward of thy each act,
> Not from the publike voyce, but private fact;
> Who can behold all envie so declin'd
> By constant suffering of thy equall mind;
> And can to these be silent, *Salisburie*,
> Without his, thine, and all times injurie?
> Curst be his *Muse*, that could lye dumbe, or hid
> To so true worth, though thou thy selfe forbid.

As Richard C. Newton observes, in the rhetorical question the poet rejects Salisbury's outer reality ("fortune" and "publike voyce"), but emphasizes his inner reality ("vertue" and "private fact"), as the basis of his praise.[19] But the poet does not explain what Salisbury's "vertue" and "private fact" really are. In the concluding couplet he merely asserts that his praise is freely given in spite of the objection of the person praised, and given for the sake of truth. In this praise Salisbury's virtue is not reproduced but indicated: *res gesta* gives way to the voice of praise. He praises Salisbury not by describing his virtue but by claiming his knowledge of it, not by emphasizing desert but by announcing his decision to praise it. The center of the poem's attention becomes the praiser as much as the person praised, and the whole poem is made into a commentary on the act of praising as much as an act of praise.

This strategy of diverting the reader's attention from the idealizing process by denying

18) For a detailed account of Sir Robert Sidney's domestic affairs, see J. C. A. Rathmell, "Jonson, Lord Lisle, and Penshurst." For information of Egerton's life, consult *DNB*.

19) Richard C. Newton, "'Ben./Jonson': The Poet in the Poems."

the need to idealize, and by shifting the focus of the poem from the person praised to the person(a) praising, has its corollary in the most significant of the modifications Jonson has brought to the traditional genre of epideictic poetry, the identification of the praised and the praiser, one of the "paths" that Jonson meant unto the praise of Shakespeare. In "To the Memory of My Beloved The Author Mr. William Shakespeare and What He Left Us," Jonson invests Shakespeare with the qualities he most prizes in an artist and in himself: he gives "art" to a poet whose lack of art he censures elsewhere: "Yet must I not give Nature all: Thy Art, / My gentle *Shakespeare*, must enjoy a part" (*Ungathered Verse* XXVI, 55-56).[20]

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20) Jonson said to Drummond that Shakespeare wanted art (*H&S* 1:133, 50). And in *Discoveries* he proclaimed that Shakespeare should have blotted a thousand lines (*H&S* 8:538).

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〈국문요약〉

영국 르네상스 시 연구 · 시와 역사

이 종 숙

르네상스 시대의 문학이론가들이 가장 커다란 관심을 보였던 문제는 사실과 허구, 또는, 현실세계와 문학이 이루는 세계간의 관계였다. 그들은 문학이 현실세계의 모습을 왜곡하여 보여준다는 공격에 대항하여, 문학적 허구란 현실세계를 그대로 모사한 것이 아니라 그의 이상화된 묘사라고 주장하는 한편, 문학이란 현실세계를 이상화하였다는 의미에서는 허구이지만, 사실 그 자체를 충실히 기록한다고 네세우는 역사보다 현실세계의 참된 모습을 더 잘 보여주며 따라서 더 커다란 교화적 힘을 지니게 된다고 강조하였다. 그러나 이러한 이론은 역사적 진실과 문학적 진실을 그 어느 때보다도 날카롭게 구별하면서도, 문학을 허구이면서도 사실인 어떤 것, 시이면서도 동시에 역사인 어떤 것으로 규정하고 있다. 문학과 현실세계의 관계에 대한 이처럼 애매한 규정은 문학작품 속에서 어떻게 사실과 허구의 긴장관계를 해소할 것인가라는 실제적인 의문을 필연적으로 불러 일으킬 수 밖에 없었다. 다시 말하여, 현실세계와 문학이 이루는 세계간의 관계에 대한 르네상스의 이론은 그 시대의 시인으로 하여금 사실을 허구 속에 담는 것이 어떻게 가능할 것인가라는 문제에 어떤 형태로든 대답하도록 만들었다는 이야기이다.

벤 존슨의 찬미시는 다음 몇 가지 이유때문에 앞서 말한 르네상스 시이론이 제기한 문제와 그에 대한 가능한 해결책을 연구하기 위하여서는 거의 실험실적인 조건을 갖추고 있다. 첫째, 그가 활약했던 시대가 영국 역사상 가장 중요한 변동기에 속하였던 만큼 역사적 현실이 문학행위에 미치는 압력 또한 극대화된 상태였으리라는 가정을 할 수 있으며, 두째, 존슨 자신의 문학관이 사회와 문학간의 역학관계가 항상 의식의 표면에 머무를 것을 요구하는 성격을 지니고 있고, 또, 셋째로는, 그가 쓴 시들이 대부분 실존하는 인물이나 실제 사건에 관한 것이기 때문이다. 찬미시에서 존슨은 사실과 문학간의 긴장관계를 시를 통한 예찬이라는 문제로 바꾸어 놓고 있는데, 이 글은 존슨이 어떠한 표현 또는 찬미 전략을 사용하여 어떻게 사실을 시 속에 담을 것인가, 또는 사실을 찬미 속에 담을 것인가라는 문제를 해결하려 하는지를 구체적으로 살피는 데에 그 촛점을 두고 있다.

몇 몇 찬미시에서 존슨은 자신의 찬미가 어디까지나 사실에 근거한 것임을 주장함과 동시에, 자신의 찬미 역시 허구성으로부터 자유롭지 못함을 인정하고 있다 (e.g. "To My Muse," "An Epistle to Master John Seldon"). 이러한 얼핏보아 상호배제적인 발언은 작품의 발생과 텍스트 자체에 내재되어 있는 사실과 허구간의 긴장관계를 전면에 노출하여, 그

긴장을 시가 의미하는 바의 일부로 만드는 효과를 갖는다. 그러나, 또 다른 찬미시들에서 존슨은 자신의 허구적인 찬미가 이기적인 목적에서가 아니라 교화적인 의도에서 나왔음을 강조하는 것으로 문제를 해결하려할 뿐 아니라, 일련의 표현 또는 찬미전략을 통하여 해결하려 하고있다. 이를테면, 대부분의 찬미시에서 존슨이 사용하고 있는 수법으로 시인 자신이 직접 찬미 대상자에게 말하는 시형식을 이용한다거나, "To Penshurst"에서 처럼 스스로를 시속에 등장하는 한 인물로 만든다거나, "On Lucy Countesse of Bedford"나 "To Thomas Lord Chancelor [Egerton]," 또는 "To Penshurst"에서처럼, 자신의 과잉칭찬을 적나라한 과장법을 사용하여 행함으로써 오히려 그 허구성을 명백하게 드러낸다든지, 또는 "To Robert, Earl of Salisbury"에서 처럼, 찬미 대상보다는 찬미행위 그 자체에 관심을 집중함으로써 자신의 찬미시가 실제로 담고있는 고도로 이상화된 인간의 모습에 사실성과 특정성의 인상을 부여하려 하고 있다. 이러한 표현 또는 찬미전략들은 셰익스피어의 죽음에 부친 시에서 죽은 찬미대상과 찬미자인 스스로를 동일시하는 데에서도 드러나듯, 존슨의 작품 전반을 가로지르는 자기반영적 성격을 보여주고 있다. 또 존슨이 그런 여러가지 방법을 사용하여 해결하려 노력하고 있는 찬미자로서의 딜레마는 강한 리얼리스트적 성향을 지닌 휴머니스트 시인이 맞닥뜨려야 했던 보다 포괄적인 문제, 즉, 이상세계를 추구하면서도 사실세계를 떠나지 않는 것이 어떻게 가능할 것인가라는 문제의 파라다임이기도 하다.

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