From directions to descriptions: Reading the theatrical *Nebentext* in Ben Jonson's *Workes* as an authorial outlet

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how certain dramatists in early modern England and in Spain, specifically Ben Jonson and Miguel de Cervantes (with much more emphasis on the former), pursued authority over texts by claiming as their own a new realm which had not been available—or, more accurately, as prominently available—to playwrights before: the stage directions in printed plays. The way both these playwrights and/or their publishers dealt with the transcription of stage directions provides perhaps the clearest example of a theatrical convention translated into the realm of readership.

KEYWORDS: William Shakespeare; Ben Jonson; Lope de Vega; Miguel de Cervantes; stage directions.

De indicaciones a descripciones: la lectura del *Nebentext* teatral en las *Workes* de Ben Jonson como expresión autorial

RESUMEN: Este artículo analiza cómo ciertos dramaturgos en las Inglaterra y España del Renacimiento, especialmente Ben Jonson (y en menor medida también Miguel de Cervantes), buscaron establecer su posición autorial sobre sus textos de una manera no disponible hasta ese momento (o al menos no tan claramente disponible) para escritores de teatro: en las acotaciones escénicas de las versiones impresas de sus obras. La manera en la que ambos dramaturgos y/o sus impresores manejaron la transcripción de acotaciones es un gran ejemplo de ciertas costumbres del mundo actoral adaptadas para un público lector.

PALABRAS CLAVE: William Shakespeare; Ben Jonson; Lope de Vega; Miguel de Cervantes; acotaciones.

De indicações a descrições: ler o *Nebentext* teatral em *Workes* de Ben Jonson como expressão autoral[*]

RESUMO: Este artigo explora de que forma certos dramaturgos em Inglaterra e na Espanha do Renascimento, especificamente Ben Jonson e Miguel de Cervantes (com maior ênfase no primeiro), procuraram estabelecer uma posição autoral sobre os seus textos ao reclamarem para si uma área que anteriormente não estava disponível—ou, de forma mais correta, não tão claramente disponível—para dramaturgos: as didascálias de peças impressas. A forma como estes dois dramaturgos e/ou os seus editores lidaram com a transcrição de didascálias fornece-nos talvez o mais claro exemplo de uma convenção teatral traduzida para um público leitor.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: William Shakespeare; Ben Jonson; Lope de Vega; Miguel de Cervantes; didascálias.

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[*] Translation into Portuguese by Miguel Ramalhete.

The early modern era was a period in history during which theater and literature did not necessarily enjoy the metonymic relationship they often do today. A playbook was understood to be a transcription of a theatrical performance. R. B. McKerrow best explains the logic behind this position when he says that an Elizabethan play manuscript "was not a literary document at all. It was merely the substance, or rather the bare bones, of a performance on the stage, intended to be interpreted by actors skilled in their craft, who would have no difficulty in reading it as it was meant to be read" (1931, 266). Only after the play was performed and published, John Jowett points out, could the comprehension of playtexts evolve from being considered strictly dramatic texts into becoming literary texts as well: "we now usually understand that Shakespeare plays *originated* as (primarily) dramatic texts and *became* (primarily) literary texts. Hence, even in our literary readings, we find it appropriate to recuperate an understanding of the script's dramatic aspect" (2007, 148–49).

In an attempt to travel back in time in order to understand better the original circumstances of play production, one of the most commonly considered subjects of analysis is the early modern notion of authorship. Many people were involved in putting on a single commercial theater performance. The same was the case when composing a play. There were the plotters who wrote the skeleton of the play; then the playwright (or playwrights, as they were often hired in numbers) gave textual flesh to the skeleton; if necessary, ancillary artists would write specialized material (for example musicians and their songs); and stage functionaries would often add performance-specific notes such as the stage directions. Even before arriving at the printing house, in which some manipulation could also be expected (whether accidental, incidental or on purpose), in England writing drama was understood to be a collaborative process (Stern 2009, 1–7). As much as any other artistic manifestation, an early modern playbook was the product of the period's social and cultural energy in circulation. For this reason, the question of the authorship of plays has always been very present in early modern literary scholarship, even if originally its purpose was to peel off the non-Shakespearean layers in the plays.

Considering all the people who intervened in the process of making theater, as well as the complex notions of copyright of the

period (Rose 1993; Loewenstein 2002), it was difficult for a single agent to claim authority and authorship over the staged play. Logically, the playbook, if understood as a post-script record of the performance, could not offer any more channels through which the playwright(s) could assert his (their) voice. However, early modern playwrights seemed to have been aware that a play could have an existence beyond ephemeral performance: the inclusion of explanatory paratext, added passages that had not been performed before (or so many printers claim), or plays that were quite obviously never meant to be taken to the stage. Clearly, the concept of drama as something beyond just scripted performance was slowly gaining ground in the early modern consciousness, and therefore the profession of dramatist was at a crossroads between being a commercial playwright and a dramatic author.[1]

Here the term "drama" is intentionally used to contrast with "theater." The dramatic work, unlike the theatrical text, allowed one or more playmakers to assert their voices over the rest and claim authorship over the product. In a sense, the page was a better locus wherein to exert one's individual authority than the much more collaborative stage. However, there were very few playwrights directly involved in the publication process of their own plays, and consequently only few seem to have taken advantage of this possibility. Without a doubt, the most conspicuous dramatist, demanding full and unquestionable recognition of his distinctive voice, was England's Ben Jonson. It is well known that Jonson was heavily invested in the printing of his work so as to allow as little external intrusion as possible. For instance, after being hired as *one* of the playwrights to give shape to the plot of *Sejanus* (a plot he himself had written), when the play was to be released commercially in print in 1605 he rewrote the passages written by other play-patchers to make the final work "unmistakably his own" (Dutton 1983, 54; Stern 2009, 25–27). Later, in 1616, Jonson commissioned and supervised

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[1] Linda McJannet postulates that "the rhetoric of title pages and prefaces suggests that the Elizabethans deemed playscripts from the theater as adequate and appropriate for the lay reader" (1999, 25). One very clear example of how a playtext could be prepared for the reader comes from Spain's Juan de la Cueva and the publication of his collected works: the second edition (1588) provides *argumentos* (brief summaries, similar to the English plots described by Tiffany Stern in 2009, 8–35) for each play and act that the first edition (1582) did not, very probably the author or publisher's effort to make the new release more reader-friendly.

the publication of a folio compilation of many of his texts, dramatic and non-dramatic, with which he managed to fashion himself as both a stage playwright at the service of a theater entrepreneur and a page author defending his writing as individual art.

In varying degrees most critics agree that, through his *Workes*, Jonson "broke with the traditional practice which transferred the ownership of the plays to the company as if their real 'authors' were the directors of the companies and not the playwrights" (Chartier 1999, 53–54). Nora Johnson calls to mind that "his productions, even for 'the loathed stage', were, he famously insisted, recuperable as high literature, as works, while the contributions of less distinguished playwrights remained popular entertainment, unworthy of a court poet and learned author" (2003, 54). By actively taking control and unifying all the domains of textual artistry under a single authority, the playwright slowly raised his status from being a hired artisan of the playground to being a literary author of dramatic texts.[2] This article explores the slow yet visible transformation that took place in the profession of the playwright as a consequence of the rise in popularity of the printed playbook. It also argues that Jonson enhanced his authority over his texts by claiming for his own a new realm which had not been available (or, more accurately, as prominently available) to playwrights before: the stage directions in printed plays. In particular, it focuses on the way Jonson dealt with the transcription of stage directions, as providing perhaps the clearest example of a theatrical convention translated into the realm of literature.

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[2] As Richard Barbour indicates, the idea of the author Jonson fashioned for himself with the *Workes* was still one of an artisan of words; however, unlike the labor of the playwright, Jonson's self-fashioning as a dramatic author allowed him to present his work as the product of a single independent individual. "Developing arguments by Stallybrass and White," Barbour writes, "that Jonson negotiated 'an emergent place for authorship at a distance both from the aristocracy and the plebeians,' and Haynes, that Jonson tenaciously 'stuck to a middle-class identity,' I want to propose that artisanal pride in the craft of poetry was crucial to that negotiation of a middle space. To see poetic making as labor and to valorize that labor, helped Jonson to define himself against a courtly ethos of easeful mastery and find his way to an independent poetic identity" (1998, 505).

In *Das literarische Kunstwerk* ([*The Literary Work of Art*], 1931), Roman Ingarden distinguishes between two types of texts that can be found in a dramatic piece: the *Haupttext*, or main text, and the *Nebentext*, which translates into English as "adjacent text" (1972, 208–22). More recently, Manfred Pfister also discusses the coexistence of two types of textual layers in the dramatic work: "One layer comprises the spoken dialogue that takes place between the dramatic figures, whilst the other refers to the verbal text segments that are not reproduced in the spoken form" (1988, 13–14). Pfister's "secondary text" level coincides with Ingarden's *Nebentext*, those "features that distinguish drama from a genre such as prose fiction", as Margaret Jane Kidnie explains, "the most important being stage directions" (2000, 460).[3]

Stage directions are unique types of textual information exclusive to, and to a certain extent defining of, the theatrical genre. They are the non-verbal complementary elements that, when put together with the lines of the characters, complete the picture and permit lay readers to *see* as well as *hear* what is happening. The more self-sufficient the *Haupttext* is, by means of deictic references and other forms of description, the fewer stage directions are needed; the barer the *Haupttext* is, the richer the *Nebentext* must be in order to guarantee a minimum standard of clarity. Despite the essential weight they carry in a theatrical text, stage directions until the Renaissance were not as important as we consider them nowadays. In fact, in ancient Greek and Roman drama almost all non-verbal action that takes place on stage is implied in the dialogue and consequently there are very few surviving instances of *Nebentext* (McJannet 1999, 9). By Shakespeare's time, stage directions were minimal and minimalistic, but had nevertheless become indispensable. The studies on stage directions in early modern English drama carried out by Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson (who co-wrote their seminal *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580–1642*) claim that the nebentextual stage directions are transcriptions of a specific dialect common to all theater practitioners—the "theatrical vocabulary," Dessen terms it—and that

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[3] Pfister goes on to list the different forms of secondary texts, which include "the title of the play, the inscriptions, dedications and prefaces, the dramatis personae, announcements of act and scene, stage-directions, whether applicable to scenery or action, and the identification of the speaker of a particular speech" (1988, 14).

"in reading one of the early printed texts of a Shakespeare play, we enter in the middle of a conversation—a discourse in a language we only partly understand—between a dramatist and his actor-colleagues" (1995, 5; Ichikawa 2013, 17–25). This idea of lay readers "eavesdropping" on a jargon-ridden dialogue among playhouse professionals fits in well with Grace Ioppolo's (2006) theory that theatrical manuscripts were written and rewritten by playwrights working in close quarters with acting companies, which recently received substantial support from Paul Werstine's (2012) reappraisal of New Bibliography's ideas that underlined most of twentieth-century early modern manuscript studies; and Tiffany Stern's (2009) work on the paper trail of the early modern English playhouse also allows for such a scenario.

A brief summary of the research carried out so far on the "theatrical vocabulary" of early modern stage directions in printed playbooks is that they are, for the most part, brief and unadorned. An entry would be marked with "*Enter [character]*," perhaps with a short tag addressing the place from where the characters emerge or in which fashion they do so. Exits appear in identical style, sometimes using the Latin "*exeunt*" instead of the vernacular for when a group leaves, a trace of the dying preference for using Latin as the traditional *Nebentext* language. Since indicators of action, gesture and special effects were rare, the codification was not completely uniform, but that in no way prompted a lengthier and more elaborate diction than that found in other directions. In short, the logical tendency is to think that in the early modern era the writers of the performance instructions—they are for the most part written in an imperative tone—were not the same writing the stage poetry. Even in those cases in which an unusual or idiosyncratic use of certain words or expressions may suggest that the playwright himself was writing his own stage directions, these are still written in the dialect specific to stage professionals.

This is not only found in English public theater: in Golden Age Spain the practice of codifying stage directions for commercial performances was exactly the same. Victor Dixon, writing from the point of view of seventeenth-century *autor de comedias* Manuel Vallejo, summarizes it best:

> The golden rule our *poetas* stick to is that, when preparing a manuscript such as this one [supposedly the playhouse copy for the

first performance of Lope's *El castigo sin venganza*], they do not add anything other than the words we actors will end up reciting. […] Sometimes—although not always—the playwright will mark the entrances and exits of characters. Maybe he will add directions regarding props, wardrobe and accessories, the positions and blocking of the actors, their nuances and gestures. Some other times he finds a clever way of presenting some of these things without actually saying them. […] But in most cases he will add nothing at all, not simply because he trusts us players, but because he knows we will always find a way to make the text work and the audience understand it. (Dixon 1989, 56 [my translation])

Perhaps Dixon wrote this passage with the 1631 autograph manuscript of *El castigo sin venganza* currently located in the Boston Public Library (Ms. D.174.19) in mind. This authorial foul copy of Lope's late tragedy, full of blotted lines and metric aids there only for the benefit of the *poeta*, also contains a fair number of stage directions. The considerable number of surviving autograph manuscripts of Golden Age Spanish plays suggests that playwrights in Lope's age may have been more involved in writing the *Nebentext* than Dixon suggests; and, in the light of such evidence, hypotheses regarding playwriting practices in early modern England's theatrical culture may also warrant reconsidering.[4] Lope's *acotaciones*, as stage directions are known in Spanish, are not marginal (here meant both literally and figuratively) afterthoughts inserted into the manuscript during a playhouse rehearsal: Lope writes them as part of the main text, heralded in the margins with a cross and separated from the characters' dialogue by long horizontal lines (the convention of the time), yet clearly an integral part of the playwright's storytelling sequence. Despite being the author, Lope does not take advantage of his position and keeps his *acotaciones* within conventional expectations. As Dixon explains, they are not elaborate or literary notes, and for the most part limit themselves to providing information needed to understand and/or stage the play. Lope writes these stage directions in the Spanish equivalent of Dessen and Thomson's "theatrical language." The stage directions in the first printed editions of the *El castigo sin venganza* appear exactly as Lope

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[4] For further research regarding Spanish Golden Age theater manuscripts, see the online database project *Manos Teatrales* [http://www.manos.net] led by Margaret Greer and Alejandro García-Reidy (further reading on the *Manos* project in Greer 2009, 262–66; 2012). My thanks to Margaret Greer and Alejandro García-Reidy for all the help and guidance with this field.

handwrote them himself. In fact, had this manuscript not been conserved properly, we might have thought that it was some stage hand or *amanuense* writing Lope's uninspiring *acotaciones* (Vega 1634; Vega 1635, 91r–113v).

That said, one cannot honestly portray the style of stage directions in early modern drama as completely bare, static or stagnant. As alluded to above, at the brink of becoming considered "high literature," the *Nebentext* of the early English playbook also adapted to favor of its new form of consumption. McJannet's research on the evolutionary process of stage directions shows that the Elizabethan stage direction were at a transitional point between being openly self-conscious of its role as a theatrical instrument and being somewhat more literary and part of the fictive world, without trying to shatter the illusion altogether:

> Whether textually or theatrically aware, self-conscious directions address their interpreters from a position outside the world of the play. They address themselves directly to their interpreters as readers of "words," "lines," or other textual elements, or as producers of a play concerned with theatrical illusion and the time and space of performance. Self-effacing directions, on the other hand, though still clearly distinct from the dialogue, do not address their interpreters directly; they operate within the theatrical illusion and the fictive world of the play. […] The practice of any theatrical community is rarely purely one or the other, but, in general, stage directions in English plays move from self-consciousness in the medieval period to relative self-effacement in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, particularly in plays for the professional London theaters. (McJannet 1999, 111–12)

It is difficult to see this transformation of the self-conscious into the self-effacing stage directions of a Shakespeare or a Marlowe play.[5]

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[5] In large part this has to do with the fact that the stage directions in the works of these playwrights are thought to have been written by a different playhouse agent. It would make no sense to begin a discussion about literary self-effacement in the performance notes of stage practitioners who had no ulterior motive in writing anything beyond the essential for the preparation of the show. However, Grace Ioppolo's study of the surviving autograph manuscripts of early modern English playwrights (2006, 157–62) suggests that the stage directions written by the playwrights themselves did in fact have a different quality from those written by playhouse personnel, even if "self-effacing" may not be the right word; she points out that many of the authorial stage directions contain mistakes and show inattention to staging details, signals of "a composing author at work, not primarily concerned about such details in the throes of composition and thus slightly and momentarily confused about who is, and is not, on

On the other hand, the conversion of the *Nebentext* in the printed *Workes* of Ben Jonson, a self-proclaimed author and descendant of the great poets of Antiquity, from the jargon of the professional playmakers into a less technical style for the benefit of the lay reader is much more visible.[6] The juxtaposed study of the quarto versions of Jonson's plays and their folio counterparts helps highlight certain aspects of this transition of styles, especially since any observations made are underlined by the prevailing narrative of Jonson's having been highly invested in the arrangement and printing of his 1616 compilation.

One aspect that all the plays in the folio have in common is that the *Nebentext* differs significantly from the ancillary text in their earlier quarto versions. Starting with the act and scene indicators (and even the paratextual prologue), which Jonson translated from the Latin "*actus*," "*scena*" and "*prologus*" into the vernacular, these modifications seem to be aimed at distancing the *Workes* from the "theatrical vocabulary" and the conventions associated with the playhouse. Much more significant is the different treatment given to stage directions. Many of the original quarto editions contain no stage directions, as is the case of *Volpone*. A possible explanation for the lack of performance indicators is that the copy of the play submitted to the printer had not been used for rehearsals, during which the theater professionals (often in accordance or with the help of the playwright [McJannet 1999, 9–23]) agreed on the final blocking and staging; this practice would thus highlight the collaborative effort that was playmaking already in its primal kinetic form. Alternatively, one can read the frequent lack of stage directions in Jonson's quartos as the playwright's effort to differentiate the play he wrote from the performance he—along with others—scripted by

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stage." For example, the manuscript stage directions for the dumb shows in Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent* are syntactically more fleshed out than the average Jacobean bare-boned dumb show description. While the two surviving manuscripts of the play are not in Middleton's own hand (they are scribal copies, presumably commissioned as a gift for an aristocratic patron), Ioppolo explains that they should be considered "authoritative texts because of their overwhelming agreement in spelling, diction, directions, character names, and speech prefixes, their evident dependence on Middleton's unique spelling and scribal practices" (2007, 1056–61).

[6] Many scholars have previously noted the uniqueness of Ben Jonson's stage directions, for which Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson reserve a lengthy aside in the introduction of their dictionary (2001, xii–xiii).

presenting the text in the fashion of the early humanist editions of the classics.[7] However, for the folio version of the play Jonson inserted descriptions of the characters' actions. For instance, in the second scene of the first act the margin of the page read "*One knocks without*" (1616, 454), signaling the first of many visitors Volpone would receive that day; there is no such direction in the quarto edition (1607, B3v). The same happens later on when Celia "*at the windo' throwes downe her handkerchiefe*" (1616, 471), an action that goes unremarked in the 1607 text (E2v), making it seem as if she had silently turned down Volpone's petition of her favor. The same can be said of the rest of the play, and a few others as well; other quarto versions of Jonson's plays lacking stage directions that later appeared in the folio are *Sejanus* (1605), *Catiline* (1611) and *The Alchemist* (1612).

Other Jonson quartos, for instance the 1602 *Poetaster* edition, do have stage directions, but these are written in the conventional fashion of the directions described by Dessen's notion of "theatrical vocabulary." Limited almost exclusively to entrances and exits, the *Nebentext* of the *Poetaster* quarto has every indication of having been designed by or with the stage practitioners—and only the stage practitioners—in mind. The folio text replaces most of the plain exit markers with more elaborate versions of the same thing. For instance, in the first scene of the second act Jonson changed Albius' continuous *Exit*s (1602, C2–C2v) for a more elegant "*He is still going in and out*" (1616, 288). At a later point, a plain and conventional "*Exeunt*" (1602, F3) is substituted by "*They with-draw to make them-selues ready*" (1616, 306), providing more detail and nuance to aid the reader to follow the action better. In many other cases the original playhouse directions are simply removed altogether without any form of replacement, reinforcing the hypothesis that Jonson thought impersonal theatrical *Nebentext* was not worth becoming part of his literary monument. Two other of his earlier quartos, *Every Man In his Humour* (1601) and *Cynthia's Revels* (1601) underwent similar alterations when revisited for the preparation of the 1616 folio.

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[7] Revels editors Brian Parker and David Bevington take for granted that the quarto edition of *Volpone* "was set up from a fair copy prepared by Jonson himself, with no theatrical influences; and, like some previous Jonson quartos, it has been consciously modelled on the format of the early humanist editions of the Latin dramatists Plautus and Terence, with massed entries at the beginning of each scene and few indications of when characters are to exit" (1999, 24).

The oddity among the quarto-turned-folio plays is the earliest of them all, *Every Man Out of his Humour* (1600). This edition seems quite clearly to have been a version of the performance script that Jonson later adapted for the medium of print, and which already hinted at some of his extra-theatrical aspirations. The title page warns the reader that this text contains "more than hath been Publickely Spoken or Acted" (1600, A), a quite common marketing strategy for printed playbooks at the time. Although there is a lingering presence of theatrical practice in this edition, a lot of the stage is lost in the play's translation to the page. For example, the convention of writing the directions in a pseudo-imperative tone is still quite strong, although one can see an obvious attempt on Jonson's behalf to prosify the *Nebentext* and make it more reader-friendly. The folio's taking the next step by adding new directions—its "*He leaps from whispring with the boy*" towards the beginning of the second act (1616, 102) cannot be traced to the quarto—is one of such several instances. Even more interesting is that Jonson took his time to convert the pseudo-imperative orders for the players into narrative descriptions for the reader. He replaces the original "*Enter Carolo Buffone, with a Boy*" one finds in the prologue (1600, Cv) with "*He enters with a Boy, and wine*" (1616, 88). Again, early in the first act Jonson changes another conventional entrance like "*Enter a Hine to Sordido with a Paper*" (1600, D3) into "*The Hine enters with a paper*", and so on (1616, 96).

These examples, especially the last one, suggest that one cannot doubt Jonson's desire to include this form of text as part of his pursuit of something new. Even though for the most part stage directions "are, more than any other part of a playbook, written by theatre practitioners, or at least with them in mind" (Stern 2009, 227), I believe that Jonson clearly ended up taking over and writing (or re-writing) them himself for the benefit of the reader of his playbook. Moreover, he did so in such a personal, distinct way that they can and should be understood as part of the Jonson literary corpus, no longer a remnant of the theatrical event, but lines written specifically by the playwright and thus retaining authorial integrity. Indeed, in the folio—whose printing arrangement confined the stage directions to the margins of the main text—he is very visually taking over a space of the theatrical script that was not expected to be part of the playwright's domain, or at least not in his voice. He went a step further than simply "refashioning his play for a reader", in Dessen

and Thomson's words (2001, ix). As the case of *Every Man Out of his Humour* shows, Jonson made a conscious effort to alter the default "theatrical language" directions into something different, less self-evident and more self-effacing, something he thought—or knew—worked better with his intended readership. But even if the purpose behind introducing his authority into the *Nebentext* may never be completely known to us—Holger Schott Syme's idea that Jonson was trying to find "a way of making the book a theater", instead of making the theatrical transcript a book, is quite enticing (2008, 144)—we can still delve quite freely into the possible sources from which Jonson took inspiration to make such changes. The final section of this article explores a possible influence of Jonson's career as a writer of court masques on the way he ended up dealing with the *Nebentext* of his commercial plays.

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In the latter half of the twentieth century, Golden Age Spanish scholarship took a much stronger interest in the previously neglected dramatic works of Miguel de Cervantes. The author of novels and novellas was finally acknowledged as a playwright of note, even if his theater had been met by his contemporaries with mild disinterest at best. In 1615, capitalizing on the success of his narrative works, Cervantes released a volume containing eight plays and eight *entremeses* in what has been interpreted as "an extreme response against what he thought was an injustice" done to his dramatic oeuvre (Profeti 1999, 60–64 [my translation]). They are profoundly un-Lopean, which may explain why they were not successful with the crowds flocking day in and out to *comedia nueva* shows. One of the aspects most critics immediately noted was that the stage directions in this collection were quite unlike the typical *acotaciones* of most plays in this period. They were longer and more fleshed out—more narrative, one could say—than the brief and uninteresting directions that were the norm in the *comedias* of the time. In the quest to provide a reason for such unusual notations, John Varey turned to other Cervantine works as a possible source of inspiration: the author "seems to confound the art of writing plays and the art of writing novels" (as cited in Profeti 1999, 62 [my

translation]).[8] Whether through logic or simply due to the well-deserved omnipresence of *Don Quijote* in everything written by Cervantes, Varey puts forth the notion of the author's skillset flowing seamlessly from one written genre into another. This theory, though difficult to prove, is too commonsensical to be dismissed for lack of evidence. I would suggest that something similar may have happened with Ben Jonson, who was a commercial playwright, writer of pageants and court masques, and wrote texts in a variety of fields. The fact that both commercial plays and court masques belong to the same dramatic genre renders the hypothesis of a transference of styles from one textual form to the other even more plausible.

When Jonson began his career as a playwright in the late sixteenth century, there was no single way of presenting stage directions in a printed playbook. "Consistency is the exception, not the rule", Jowett reminds us (2007, 149). However, there was a big difference in the treatment of the *Nebentext* of a commercial playbook and that of one of the other main forms of scripted performance: the masque. A masque, or mask, was "a spectacular kind of indoor performance combining poetic drama, music, dance, song, lavish costume, and costly stage effects, which was favoured by European royalty in the 16th and early 17th centuries" (Baldick 2004, 148), and Jonson was the preeminent writer of masques for the court of James I. The 1616 folio compilation of his dramatic and poetic writings included nineteen masques, the final 122 pages of the 1015-page volume, a clear sign of how crucial they were to his body of work. These masques paid much attention and placed much emphasis on the elaboration of the *Nebentext*. Here is an extract from *The Masque of Blackness*, first performed by Queen Anne and her entourage at Whitehall in 1605 and considered to be one of Jonson's earliest masques, if not the first:

the Moone *was discouered in the vpper part of the house, triumphant in a* Siluer *throne, made in figure of a* Pyramis*. Her garments White, and* Siluer*, the dressing of her head antique, & crown'd with a* Luminarie*, or Sphere of light: which striking on the clouds, and heightned with* Siluer*, reflected as naturall clouds do by the splendor of the* Moone*. The* Heauen*, about her, was vaulted with blew silke, and set with Starres of*

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[8] Agustín de la Granja also discusses Cervantes' long and atypical stage directions in the *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses* collection (1989, 106–109).

> Siluer, *which had in them their seuerall lights burning. The suddaine sight of which, made* Niger *to interrupt* Oceanvs, *with this present passion.* (Jonson 1608, B3)

It is obvious that this style of stage direction, which is not particularly remarkable either in style or in length compared to the rest of the masque's *Nebentext*, has little or nothing to do with the average directions in a popular theater playbook, and at no point in his career does Jonson try to transfer it from one medium to the other. If anything, more of the speech-based popular playwriting made it into his masques than the other way around. Marijke Rijsberman points out that the early masques "tend to rely on gestural, as opposed to verbal, signification to a far greater degree […] and it is the gesture which is given the function of bridging the gap between the masque and its context" (1987, 224); eventually, although words "never over-balanced their fellow-ingredients, music, dance, and spectacle", Jonson's masques did become progressively more speech heavy (Adams 2001, xiv). But from the perspective of the *Nebentext*, especially in the added or altered stage directions of the folio, much can be said about how his experience as a masque writer influenced the presentation of his commercial plays in print. Moreover, seeing the significant register shift between the stage directions of the pre-1616 quartos and their folio counterparts, it is probable that Jonson purposefully rewrote the *Nebentext* for the Folio in the light of his masque-writing (and publishing) experience as he prepared the texts for his upcoming and more reader-oriented compilation.

One of the main differences between the *Nebentext* of the masques and the "theatrical language" stage directions of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays is their grammatical mood and tense. The verb of a conventional direction is written in the present tense, and although technically it is in the indicative mood, the sharp bluntness of the grammar makes it sound as if it were an order (indeed, a direction) for the actor to follow. What is more, the directions in Jonson's printed versions of the masques appear in the past tense indicative, as if he were describing a past event instead of pre-establishing the blocking of his plays for theater professionals.[9] Even though he does

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[9] One possible explanation for this grammatical shift is that masques often were not written for stage professionals, but for aristocratic amateur performers (Butler 2012a; 2012b). One means of testing this hypothesis would be to contrast practice in court

not go as far as to write them in the past tense, this stylistic or conceptual approach to *Nebentext*, which converts the orders of behind-the-scenes professionals into a narrative tone, is one Jonson would carry over from the masques to the folio. The margins of the *Workes* describe the actions as if they were to happen in some (factual or hypothetical) performance instead of placing explicit demands on the *Kopfkino* [mental picture] of the reader. It would be, therefore, much more appropriate to talk about "stage descriptions" than "stage directions" when discussing this dimension of the Jonsonian *Nebentext*.[10]

With this conversion into a narrative tone comes an inevitable syntactical change in the way of writing *Nebentext*. This is best illustrated by the alterations of the stage directions of *Every Man Out*, going from the "verb + subject" structure of the quarto into the "subject + verb" of the folio. One can interpret this change as a

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theaters throughout the rest of Europe. To prolong the Anglo-Spanish comparison, let us briefly consider the masque-like play of *Querer por solo querer*, written by Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza, first performed in 1622 by the Queen's ladies-in-waiting to honor her birthday (and later on by a professional acting company as well) and published in 1629. The 1629 text mixes *acotaciones* similar to directions in a commercial *comedia* along with narrative descriptions written in the past tense typical of court plays *Nebentext* (Shergold 1967, 270–72). We do not know whether the performance script the ladies-in-waiting received was different from that of the professional *comediantes*, and if that is the case we do not know which of the two the printer of the 1629 version used. However, the discordance in tense use may suggest that the text was partly (or incompletely) modified with the readership of the printed publication in mind. Another text worth analyzing is *La gloria de Niquea* by the Conde de Villamediana and also performed in 1622, this time to honor the young King Philip IV's birthday. The amount of both structural and stylistic similarities between this court *invención* and Jonson's masques may be due, as Gareth A. Davies points out, to Villamediana's father having been the ambassador in London in the early seventeenth century, when the English poet was putting on and publishing his first court spectacles and which he could have seen performed (1995, 59). More on this Spanish masque, in addition to Felipe B. Pedraza's edition of the play (Tassis y Peralta 1991), in Chaves Montoya (1991) and Miñana (2000).

[10] To support this alternative nomenclature, I lean on the study of the discordant quarto versions of some early modern plays thought to have been reconstructed from memory, such as the 1597 quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*. While the dialogue text of this "bad" quarto is imperfect in comparison to the more authoritative 1599 quarto and the subsequent 1623 *First Folio* texts, the stage directions are longer and more substantial. Indeed, they read as descriptions of a performance, instead of the conventional brief orders of the "theatrical vocabulary" directions, because in a way they *were* descriptions. For this reason, among others, this quarto is often referred to as "more theatrical" than the "more literary" 1599 text (Belsey 2014, 87–98; Weis 2012, 94–115).

simple rearrangement of linguistic units in order to make his directions appear to be more reader-friendly. However, Jonson shows his willingness to turn stage directions into more complex linguistic and pseudo-poetic structures, not just marginal annotations. Progressively, especially in the playbooks published after the *Workes*, Jonson adds more new elements and nuances rarely seen before in the syntax of sparse playhouse directives, such as coordinated, juxtaposed or subordinated clauses. The 1631 quarto of *Bartholomew Fair*, which maintains the folio's layout of leaving ample margins for the *Nebentext*, is home to some of the most developed syntax in Jonson's stage descriptions, such as the following examples:

> Edgworth *gets vp to him, and tickles him in the eare with a straw twice to draw his hand out of his pocket.* (Jonson 1631, 44)

> Cokes *falls a scrambling whilest they runne away with his things.* (1631, 54)

> *Here they continue their game of* vapours, *which is nonsense. Everyman to oppose the last man that spoke: whether it concern'd him, or no.* (1631, 59)

> *As they open the stockes,* Waspe *puts his shooe on his hand, and slips it in for his leege.* (1631, 67)

> Quarlous *in the habit of a madman is mistaken by* M[ts] Pure-craft. (1631, 70)

These five instances of *Nebentext* demonstrate the extensive arsenal of Jonson's experiments with syntax for his marginal notes. While they are nowhere close in length and complexity to the descriptions of the printed masques, they no longer belong to the same category as the conventional stage directions, if only visually. These stage descriptions go far beyond simply being longer and more prose-like than the "theatrical language" directions. Jonson adds different content and purpose to his *Nebentext*: the result is that it often interprets and/or judges the actions the characters carry out. In the first example, the stage description explains the reader the purpose behind Edgworth's tickling Nightingale's ear: to make him draw his hand out of his pocket. In the third instance, the reader is informed that the game of vapors is utter nonsense, in case this was not sufficiently clear. The last note explains Dame Purecraft's confusion.

There is a voice behind the *Nebentext*, a narrator of sorts, digesting and nuancing the non-verbal codes associated with the theatrical experience for the lay reader. Jonson, the author himself, is present in the experience of reading, making sure we arrive at a safe port after navigating the text. This is what he had hitherto done only in masques, perhaps simply due to conventional expectations. But, this article suggests, Jonson was to discover the aptness for the printed medium of this convention and have his voice increasingly appear in the stage directions of his commercial plays as well, a voice one could expect to find only in the *Haupttext* in that period of time. Unluckily for us, for the most part Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists did not exercise this new option of personalization. Ben Jonson, however, found in them a new outlet for his irrepressible drive to become the first "author" in English literature. He turned the *Nebentext* into a sort of *Haupttext* by reminding his readership that the margins of the page were still within the limits of his domain. The process, as portrayed here, was slow and called little attention to itself. But it was nonetheless the first step taken in what would become a tradition of highly personalized and authoritative stage directions in the body of western dramatic literature.

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