

# **Women, Nature, and Ben**

An Ecofeminist Critique of Ben Jonson's Poetry

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*"Say, are not women truly, then,  
Styled but the shadows of us men?"*

*-- Ben Jonson*

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## Introduction

A strictly feminist reading of Ben Jonson's poetry would do well to be labeled as nothing worse than tedious. Jonson consistently disparages women and praises men throughout his verse. A conservative poet writing in a time characterized by a patriarchy far more strict than today, Jonson naturally tends to place women beneath men in the social hierarchy. But simply echoing social, patriarchal attitudes towards women is not enough for Jonson.

Jonson blatantly attacks women throughout his verse for their lack of strength, intelligence, and, most importantly, virtue. As Douglas Lanier points out, feminist criticism of Jonson has been scant because "Jonson's is a misogyny so conventional and overt that it has made him on matters of gender politics a figure relatively easy to shrug off as uninteresting" (18). Feminist criticism of Jonson, alone, lacks depth of insight -- the answers are so blatantly obvious, little examination of his verse is required.

Jonson's misogyny, however, becomes far more interesting when it is viewed in conjunction with his treatment of nature. Throughout his verse, Jonson applies much of the same rhetoric to women as he does to nature, drawing stark parallels between the two that are indicative of the larger, cultural linking of both women and nature that was occurring in the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century.

Examining such parallels between the treatment of women and nature is the realm of the ecofeminist critic. Ecofeminism, a critical perspective which embraces the union of feminist and ecological concerns, encompasses a wide array of strategies: from liberal to radical, practical to theoretical, historical to cultural. Each of these wide-ranging perspectives share one thing in common: that by examining the similarities between the domination of women and nature, we can perhaps gain some of the understanding necessary to end the oppression of both. Ecofeminist literary critic Patrick Murphy

argues that patriarchal views of women and nature have led to and validated "a two-pronged rape and domination of the earth and the women who live on it" (87). Murphy and other ecofeminists argue that ecofeminist readings of literature help shed light on how this twin domination has developed and been perpetuated.

One area of primary concern to ecofeminists has been the seventeenth century, the heyday of the Scientific Revolution, when the domination of women and nature were most strongly and permanently associated. Accordingly, ecofeminist criticism of the literature of that century can illuminate the domination of both women and nature that continues into the present.

The early seventeenth century is clearly a period of a dramatic transition in the dominant social paradigm, moving from an organic medieval world to a mechanistic modern order. Illustrating the scope of this change, Douglas Bush writes that "in 1600 the educated Englishman's mind and world were more than half medieval; by 1660 they were more than half modern" (1). The tensions between medieval and modern in shaping a new world view are clearly dialectic: the old-guard ideas of the past clashing with the vanguard ideas of the future -- a dialect which would eventually result in the synthesis of the modern world view. In "A Survey of Literature from Donne to Marvell," R. G. Cox describes the intellectual tension of the period, insisting that "it cannot be claimed that homogeneity is one of the main characteristics of the period. Even more than most, it deserves to be called an age of transition; here, if anywhere, medieval touches modern in all spheres of life and thought" (in Ford, p. 52). Such a transition, necessarily, played itself out in all aspects of seventeenth-century society.

One of the major battlegrounds for this dialectical battle between the medieval and the modern, not surprisingly, was the literature of the period. In describing how the conflict between these competing worldviews' stance towards nature developed in the literature of the era, ecofeminist scholar Carolyn Merchant argues that changing rhetoric towards nature justified an increasingly oppressive human attitude:

the Renaissance image of the nurturing earth still carried with it subtle ethical controls and restraints. Such imagery found in a culture's literature can play a normative role within the culture. Controlling images operate as ethical restraints or ethical sanctions --as subtle "oughts" or "ought-nots." Thus as the descriptive metaphors and images of nature change, a behavioral restraint can be changed into a sanction. Such a change in the image and description of nature occurred during the course of the Scientific Revolution" (Earthcare, 78-79).

As with most previously held notions of the medieval world, the ideal of the human relationship with nature also underwent transformation from an organic to a mechanic model--a transformation which can be tracked in the literature of the era.

Jonson's work definitively symbolizes this transition. As an Elizabethan poet with a strong affinity for the classical tradition, Jonson's poetry works as a bridge between the medieval and the modern. Bush points out this characteristic of Jonson's poetry, writing that Jonson brought a sense of the classic to contemporary English society:

Jonson, the first great English theorist and practitioner of neoclassicism, the first really direct, learned, deliberate, and single-hearted heir of antiquity, gave poetry a new charter through his dynamic assimilation of the main tradition of the past. (107-108).

This focus on the classical traditions of the past, however, in no way isolated Jonson from the changes going on in his contemporary society.

Instead, Jonson served as a bridge between the old and the new, his verse ripe for the dialectical battle between the two. Cox explains how Jonson's classical tendencies blend with the new ideas of the seventeenth century:

Jonson's classicism was in no sense an escape from the contemporary world; in reaching after an ideal civilization he did not lose touch with the interests of the life around him and a vigorous native idiom (in Ford, 60).

Jonson's attempt to bring the classical into the contemporary was his attempt to improve his society; the notion that the tradition of antiquity would improve Elizabethan society is a theme Jonson consistently employs. In "Inviting a Friend to Supper," for example, Jonson entices his companion to a feast as a ploy to introduce discussion of the classics:

Yet shall you have, to rectify your palate,  
 An olive, capers, or some better salad  
 Ushering the mutton; with a short-legged hen,  
 If we can get her, full of eggs, and then  
 Lemons and wine for sauce; to these a coney  
 Is not to be despaired of, for our money;  
 And though fowl, now, be scarce, there are clerks,  
 The sky not falling, think we may have larks.  
 I'll tell you of more, and lie, so you will come:  
 Of partridge, pheasant, woodcock, of which some  
 May yet be there; and godwit, if we can,  
 Knat, rail, and ruff too. Howsoe'er, my man  
 Shall read a piece of Vergil, Tacitus,  
 Livy, or of some better book to us,  
 Of which we'll speak our minds, amidst our meat....  
 (9-23).

By not forgetting the temporal joys of a contemporary British feast, Jonson attempts to introduce the timeless joys of the great authors of antiquity. With this classical tradition

informed by contemporary society, Jonson's verse represents a microcosm of the rest of seventeenth-century society; it is a place where medieval and modern meet.

As a representation of the larger struggle between these two world views, Jonson's verse also provides valuable insight into the changing images surrounding women and nature. But an ecofeminist critique of Jonson is relevant for more than just the fact that a key clash of ideas occurs in his verse. The seventeenth-century's transformation from medieval to modern may have occurred relatively quickly (in 60 years, according to Bush) on the surface-level of history, but in reality the transition was much slower. Cox explains that "the transformation was of course gradual. In spite of obvious continuity, certain signs of change appear about the beginning of the [seventeenth] century.... The early years of the seventeenth century show an increase in scepticism, introspection, self-consciousness, and self-criticism. The specifically literary signs are a growing emphasis on satire and realism, a deeper and more inward apprehension of tragedy, and an acuter analysis of human moods and experiences" (in Ford, p. 53-54). In order for these changes to appear, however, they had to be developing underneath the surface for some time.

Looking for these cultural changes underneath the century's surface is where Jonson's nature as a poet becomes particularly valuable for insightful analysis. Jonson was a social conservative. Unlike Francis Bacon who, as seventeenth-century scholar Basil Willey puts it, "had the ability, and the singular good fortune, to be the *buccinator novi temporis* in England," Jonson was far from an advocate of the developing modern project (32). Bacon pushed the modern, scientific world view in his works such as The New Atlantis, Novum Organum, and The Masculine Birth of Time; Jonson, through embracing a classic perspective that was rapidly being discredited by the new scientific order, was a hold out against it, harkening to the traditions of the past.

Despite his resistance to the Scientific Revolution, however, Jonson tended to use many of the same images of women and nature used by Bacon and other advocates of modernism. Images of women as soft like nature, disorderly like nature, and pliant like

nature exist in tandem in both the rhetoric of the Scientific Revolution and Jonson's verse. Since Jonson's verse was profoundly conservative, these parallels are extremely telling. Not only do they shed light on the patriarchal nature of a society that was rapidly connecting women and nature together in a metaphor of twin domination, but they also illuminate the deep-rootedness of the misogynist rhetoric so readily accepted and applied at even before the turn of the seventeenth century.

## Chapter I: The Ecofeminist Perspective

Ecofeminism, as an environmental philosophy, encompasses many different fields of knowledge. From political activists to political theorists, from liberals to socialists, scientists to historians, ecofeminist scholars believe there is, at any number of levels, a deep connection between women and nature and that in that connection lies the key to the oppression of both. Ecofeminism, according to Merchant in the preface to her book Earthcare, is the study of "both history and practice [revealing] the positive, negative and problematic ways in which both women and nature have been constructed over time by science and culture" (XVII). Although such a study can take many forms, from studies paralleling the economic status of women and nature to investigations of the relative political power of both, a literary critique from an ecofeminist perspective, in particular, benefits from the cultural-theory school of ecofeminism.

In order to examine Jonson's verse from ecofeminism's cultural perspective, it is first necessary to define such a critique. The first aspect of the ecofeminist critique focuses on the historical connections between women and nature. From the Gaia to Eve to Isis, deities associated most closely with nature have been women. Western cosmology before the scientific revolution placed both women and nature below men in the natural order of the universe, with women only a mere step above the natural world. But the parallels between the status of women and nature are incredibly powerful and in no way relegated to the past. In the preface to The Death of Nature, Merchant describes these continuing interrelations of women and nature:

their ancient interconnections have been dramatized [recently] by the simultaneity of two recent social movements--women's liberation, symbolized in its controversial infancy by Betty Friedan's Feminine Mystique (1963), and the ecology movement,

which built up during the 1960s and finally captured national attention of Earth Day, 1970 (XV).

The strong cultural associations of women and nature have endured throughout history; indeed, with the advent of ecofeminism itself as a relatively recent theoretical perspective, the association remains strong today.

These connections between women and nature are long-standing and undeniable, but they perhaps are most powerful (with respect to the actual domination of women and nature) in the tumultuous changes of the seventeenth century. The Scientific Revolution precipitated a massive paradigm shift, for as Karen Warren argues in "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism,"

it was then that an older world order characterized by cooperation between humans and nature was replaced by a reductionist, "mechanized world view of modern science," which sanctioned the exploitation of nature . . . and the subordination of women (257).

The Scientific Revolution radically altered our view of the world, emphasizing domination of both women and nature.

These forms of domination, however, were not separated. Rather, the domination of women and nature were linked in a variety of ways. In her article "The Death of Nature," Carolyn Merchant attributes the primary source of this link to Francis Bacon, who used "female imagery [as] a tool in adapting scientific knowledge and method to a new form of human power over nature" (272). Essentially, Bacon developed a rhetoric which translated traditional forms of medieval misogyny into discourse about nature, consequently transforming the way the new, scientific mind thought about nature from a nurturing world to one to be exploited and dominated.

The historical use of female imagery in rhetorical connection with nature extended beyond Bacon, however. Such a connection was dominant in seventeenth century rhetoric. By focusing on the patriarchal conception of women as weak, timid,

inferior, and devious, Merchant argues in her article that "the new image of nature as a female . . . legitimated the exploitation of natural resources" (276). Nature was fast turning into a commodity for exploitation, a process which even further removed the natural from the human.

This alienation of nature from human culture created a self-perpetuating cycle which further diminished the status of women. If nature is turned into a commodity and women are closely associated with nature, then at least at a symbolic level, women are commodified as well. Merchant explains in The Death of Nature how this cycle, which concurrently devalued both the status of nature, was created:

Nature-culture dualism is a key factor in Western civilization's advance at the expense of nature. As the unifying bonds of the older hierarchical cosmos were severed, European culture increasingly set itself above and apart from all that was symbolized in nature. . . .

In Early modern Europe, the assumption of a nature-culture dichotomy was used as a justification for keeping women in their place in the established hierarchical order of nature, where they were placed below the men of their status group (143-44).

A vicious circle was thus created; as new rhetoric emphasized parallels in traditional negative views of both women and nature, each was devalued because of their intimate cultural symbolic connections. Through this process, the connection of women and nature legitimized the domination of both.

Such a connection was not entirely "new," however. The roots of the connection between women and nature stem back to the classical tradition, which is full of goddesses tied to nature: Gaia, Athena, Ceres, and Persephone, to name a few. The "new image of nature as female" that Merchant speaks about points more to the way that the connection was used in seventeenth-century society rather than the connection itself. Explaining

Merchant's complex interpretation of the seventeenth-century's "new" connection of women and nature, Eric Todd Smith points out that the era was a time of the rhetorical intensification of pre-existing misogyny:

Of course, this [new view] did not eliminate the traditional portrayal of nature as female; continuing portrayals took advantage of and fomented an already prevalent misogynistic discourse, making the need to control nature seem all the more urgent and familiar (1).

As Smith makes clear, the "newness" of the seventeenth-century conception of the women/nature connection was entirely through the process that they were connected; the two were linked together with urgency, invigorating the drive to dominate both.

Examining such historical connections constitutes the first area of an ecofeminist critique. These historical connections are broadened into the larger ecofeminist critique when embedded within an examination of a particular society's conceptual connections between women and nature. Warren notes that, in Western culture, women and nature are conceptually connected:

whatever is historically associated with emotion, body, nature, and women is regarded as inferior to that which is [historically] associated with reason, mind, culture, human [i.e., male] and men (257).

Through these associations, women and nature are further linked, and the justification for the domination of both is entrenched.

The process which creates these associations, according to Warren, is the use of patriarchal "oppressive conceptual frameworks." Such frameworks are patriarchal, rather than simply misogynist, since they consist of the fabric of conceptual connections that the members of a society unwillingly accept through a process of socialization. They are the notions that we learn unknowingly. Warren outlines three distinct aspects of these

frameworks. The first is "value hierarchical thinking," a thought process which views the world in vertical order, placing higher value on what is placed above something else: thought over emotion, reason over emotion, men over women, and men over nature (322).

The next feature of the patriarchal ideology is the manifestation of value dualisms--the creation of disjunctive word pairs which symbolize cultural attitudes. In Feminist Theories for Dramatic Criticism, Gayle Austin explains the process by which such conceptually reductive pairs work. She argues that these disjunctive word pairs are structured to praise one word and diminish the value of the other:

The differences between men and women are in fact conceptualized in terms of metaphorically associated binary oppositions [such as] "nature/culture," "self-interest/social good," and "domestic domain/public domain," in each of which female is associated with the former and male with the latter (41-42).

Each of these word pairs is placed on a vertical hierarchy, the first or "feminine" word inferior to the "masculine" word. By placing one idea over another and granting superiority to that idea, the value of the other concept in the dualism is greatly diminished. Diminishing each of the concepts supposedly associated with the feminine makes it an easy step to diminish females. Accordingly, dualisms act as a necessary step between oppressive thought and oppressive actions. Such dualisms are thus integral to the oppressive male world view.

The final component of the masculine framework involves the "logic of domination." This logic attempts to justify the oppression of what the value hierarchies and dualisms have already deemed inferior. Accordingly, the logic of domination becomes the logical extension of the oppressive conceptual framework's preliminary features; the logic of domination necessitates action in the form of subordination.

Evidence of such logic of domination is found in Bacon's The Masculine Birth of Time, where Bacon describes his views on the existence of nature:

nature existed in three states--at liberty, in error, or in bondage.

She is either free and follows her ordinary course of development as in the heavens, in the animal and vegetable creation, and in the general array of the universe; or she is driven out of her ordinary course by the perverseness, insolence, and forwardness of matter and violence of impediments, as in the case of monsters; or lastly, she is put in constraint, molded and made as it were new by art and the hand of man; as in things artificial (in Merchant, Earthcare, p. 82).

Ignoring the second of the three possibilities (since, representing only the rarest instances of abomination, it bears little relevance to Bacon's views of nature in general), Bacon clearly uses a logic of domination to call for action. By relying on the woman/man, disorder/order, and nature/culture dualisms, Bacon justifies the "constraint" of nature, making an active call for men to subdue the natural world through logic of domination.

The method employed by the logic of domination, according to Warren, typically revolves around two assumptions: first, that the dominator possesses something that the subjected lacks; and, second, that this "superiority" justifies oppression (322-23). The logic of domination, then, serves to justify fulfilling the supposed deficiencies illustrated in the value hierarchies and dualisms that support such logic, creating a full-fledged ideology of masculine oppression--Warren's "oppressive conceptual framework."

In addition to the conceptual and historical links between the domination of women and nature are the symbolic links between the two forms of subjection. The primary source of such symbolic connections lies in the use of language. Women are often associated (now, as in the seventeenth century) with language used to describe the natural world, specifically animals--they are referred to as "cows," "bitches," "foxes," and "pussycats" among others. Nature, likewise, is often described with feminized, sexual

language. For instance, soil is "fertile," wilderness is "virgin." Even the most dominant metaphor for nature is feminine-- Mother Earth.

## Chapter II: Historical Connections

Jonson's poetry provides a unique representation of the seventeenth-century linking of the domination of women and nature in each of the manners outlined by the ecofeminist critique: historical, conceptual, and symbolic. In order to understand the role that Jonson's poetry plays in illustrating the historical connections, an examination of the function, purpose, and style of Jonson and his protégés, the Cavalier poets, is necessary.

Jonson and his cohorts were hardly a revolutionary corps of poets out to change the world. Rather, they were a group of poets who, as Hugh Maclean argues, "indicate the social attitudes and actions befitting a 'ruling class'" (497). Jonson's poetry, however, goes beyond simply illustrating the attitudes of the ruling class. His verse also, according to Earl Miner, "affords one kind of testimony to the cohesive civilization behind the work" (465). Jonson's poetry, then, serves as a window into the deeply held ideals and beliefs of seventeenth-century England.

This historical window is opened by the content of the verse of Jonson and other Cavalier poets. As will be seen later, the particular treatment of the content lies in the realm of conceptual and symbolic connections between the domination of women and nature. The subjects entreated by these poets are hardly weighty dissertations on changing society. On the contrary, Robin Skelton argues that the verse of the Cavalier poets was concerned with matters more trivial:

the minor pleasures and sadness of life in such a way as to impress us with a sense of ordinary day-to-day humanity, busy about its affairs, and, on the whole, enjoying them very much (222).

This attention to the minor details of life is the essential nature of Jonson's poetry which allows his verse to be examined for the societal connection of women and nature in a metaphor justifying the domination of both.

The nature of Jonson's verse, since it is grounded in a reflection of the more mundane, deeply rooted aspects of his culture, should reflect the social attitudes towards women and nature of his time. These attitudes, as previously described, were both bent on domination. An essential focus of this attitude, as Richard Tarnas puts it, was "encouraging man's [sic] sense of being the knowing subject against the object of nature" (241). This view, of course, had its origins in the biblical command for men to dominate nature, but the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had added an entirely new twist to the old, oppressive tradition.

That twist came with the newfound sense of urgency with which misogynist rhetoric was applied to nature. Merchant argues in "The Death of Nature" that "as the economy became modernized and the Scientific Revolution proceeded, the dominion metaphor spread beyond the religious sphere and assumed ascendancy in the social and political spheres as well" (271). At a time when new technologies were rapidly enhancing *man's* ability to exploit the earth for natural resources, it is no surprise that a traditionally religious notion gained preeminence in other areas as well; the Judeo-Christian pipe-dream of dominion over nature was, for the first time, becoming a tangible possibility.

The ascendancy of the twin domination, as Merchant points out, had its roots in the modernization of the seventeenth-century European economy. Technological advancements stemming from the Scientific Revolution were transforming England from a rural, extremely labor-intensive agricultural economy into a more urbanized, industrial one. As English society moved from the countryside to the city, culture became less connected with nature and, at the same time, economically relied on intense exploitation

of natural resources. The net result was a dramatically changed relationship with the natural world.

The last half of the sixteenth-century carried with it dramatic inflation, according to Oxford scholar Christopher Hill, "the general price level [of commodities increasing] four or five times" (11). The result of these inflationary pressures, according to Hill, was "a considerable industrial expansion" (15). This growth of industry, naturally, occurred in the cities, creating an exodus of capital from rural areas to urban centers. Douglas Bush underscores the importance of this capital flight, pointing out that "while the nobility, gentry and yeomen were, in their several ways, attached to the land, much of the new money was concentrated in the towns" (12). England was starting down the path of industrialization and urbanization.

Despite this urban growth, however, England in Jonson's era was still primarily rural and agricultural. The land still dominated English life. Explaining the continuing dominance of the rural despite urban pressures, Marjorie Cox writes that England was slow to convert wholly to an urban lifestyle:

despite its urban aspects, English society was rooted in the land.

The rhythms of society corresponded with those of agriculture, the long vacations of universities and law courts coinciding with harvest time (in Ford, 29).

England may have retained the rural as the center of its society, but that retention did not come without change in the nature of the English countryside.

A century of famine and inflation, concurrent with the inevitable rise of capitalism, led to the necessary rise of frugality in agricultural practices. The increased need for frugality, according to Hill, eventually led to human beings viewing nature through an objectified lens:

the safest road to prosperity lay through careful attention to profit and loss, book-keeping, watching markets, checking and shortening leases, racking rents, through avoidance of unnecessary extravagance (12).

Human relations with the land were becoming less and less based on being in tune with the rhythms of nature; instead, they were focusing on a set of objective, human constructions being imposed upon the land in the name of profit.

In addition to the rising business sense dominating human/land interactions, new technologies were also rapidly transforming the human relationship with nature. In 1587, William Harrison marveled at the way new technologies were changing agriculture:

it is a world to see, moreover, how divers men, being bent to building and having a delectable vein in spending of their goods by that trade, do daily imagine new devices of their own to guide their workmen withal, and those more curious and excellent always than the former (277).

These technological innovations served to transform the relationship between human beings and nature in two ways: first, in the actual physical process by which humans extracted their resources from nature and, second, by dramatically altering nature itself.

Of the two, the second is most important. Obviously, every new technology served to separate human beings further from nature. A new system of plowing, for example, that decreased the amount of labor necessary to work the soil would increase the physical distance necessary between the operator of the tool and nature itself. With that increase in distance came a decrease in intimacy, hastening an already growing emotional and spiritual chasm between human beings and the natural world. As a cumulative process of improving technologies, as Harrison spoke of, this distancing of humans from nature slowly objectified nature.

The objectification of nature, so central to the rhetoric advocating domination, is the process in which human beings and nature are separated from each other to the extent that humans are fully free to act towards nature as they wish. This process begins by alienating humans from their traditional closeness with nature. Once that distance is accomplished, nature ceases to become a living, active partner in the human experience and instead becomes a passive object upon which humans can carry out their desires.

The way in which land could actually be transformed by human technologies contributed even further to this objectification. One of the most dramatic transformations of the land came through the advent of technologies which allowed the draining of the once dominant fens, turning them into arable soil. Harrison describes the process of draining the fens in the late sixteenth century:

whereby it cometh to pass also that great plenty of water cometh between the new loose sward and the old hard earth that, being drawn away by ditching and drains (a thing soon done, if our countrymen were painful in that behalf), might soon leave a dry soul to the great lucre and advantage of the owner (284).

Harrison's praise for the relatively new ability of draining fens for its advantage illustrates the importance of this technology to English agriculture, a change which M. Cox describes as "the most impressive innovation" in sixteenth-century agriculture (16).

The draining of the fens is merely one example of how technology was transforming the land. Technologies in industry required massive amounts of wood fuel for support, which, in turn, led to the rapid depletion of native forests. Merchant explains in Earthcare that the change from a medieval to modern economy precipitated a change in the resources used by human beings:

whereas the medieval economy had been based on organic and renewable energy sources--wood, water, wind and animal muscle--the emerging capitalist economy was based on nonrenewable energy--coal--and the inorganic metals--iron, copper, silver, gold, tin and mercury--the refining and processing of which ultimately depended on and further depleted the forests (79).

As technology created new energy sources (which produced the large amounts of energy necessary to fuel the rise of capitalism), it in no way decreased the need for wood as a fuel source which put even greater pressures on the forests.

These pressures led to an even greater transformation of the English countryside. Hill describes how economic pressures in the sixteenth-century led to the massive deforestation of the English countryside:

the combined effects of the sixteenth-century increase in fuel consumption, the needs of the navy, the importunity of courtiers and the demand for cultivatable land had led to the clearance of forests in the Cotswolds, the Chilterns, the Severn valley, Devon, Wiltshire, Warwickshire (15).

Forests were being depleted, along with the draining of fens, turning large amounts of once "unusable" land into farmland. Aside from the obvious and immediate ecological effects of such transformations, humankind's confidence in its ability to objectify nature was growing.

In addition to transforming nature, technological innovations were also transforming the role of women in English society. As technology slowly decreased the amount of labor needed in the field, the need for women's labor consequently decreased as well. Women moved from the field to the home, which had been traditionally viewed as the man's domain (and would be for centuries after). If women were not viewed as full equals in the field, they were even less so in the home. In the field, women would labor

beside men, doing the same tasks; in the home, however, women were reduced to mere servants to their men. The same technology that transformed the land demoted women to an even lesser status. Improvements in technology, according to Merchant in The Death of Nature, served to remove women from the work force and confine them in the home:

[Women] would soon submit to the controls of the experimental method and technological advance, and . . . women would gradually lose their roles as active partners in economic life, becoming passive dependents in both production and reproduction.

Under subsistence agriculture, the wives of yeomen and husbanders had participated fully in the family farm sharing operation, the profits of which benefited and were shared by the whole family. But as yeomen became wealthy agricultural improvers and market farmers . . . their wives withdrew from active participation in daily farm work (p.149-151).

Women, in moving out of active economic life, not only saw their status in society decrease, but also became seen as passive--an attribute, which we shall see later, that was essential in justifying oppression. Technology had ushered in countless changes in the structure of the early modern society.

While these changes, the heart of the massive paradigm shift known as the modern project, form the historical background in which Jonson was writing, their manifestations in his verse cannot be fully understood without examining the modern project's most outspoken advocate: Francis Bacon. As a superb rhetorician, Bacon advocated the advancement of technology and domination of nature by using images common in English society. England certainly had other advocates of the modern project, but, as Bush puts it, none carried with them the force of the "Baconian pulpit under the Baconian sounding board" (275).

One of the strongest tools of Bacon's arsenal for advancing science was the rhetorical link between the domination of women with the domination of nature. Merchant outlines Bacon's rhetorical tactics and their heavy reliance symbols which simultaneously degraded women and nature:

female imagery became a tool in adapting scientific knowledge and method to a new form of human power over nature . . . .This method, so readily applicable when nature is denoted by the female gender, degraded and made possible the exploitation of the natural environment (80-81).

Bacon's drive to promote the advancement of science for the benefit of mankind relied heavily on the use of an overtly misogynistic discourse.

Bacon's misogyny begins with the very premise he sets forth in justifying mankind's quest to dominate nature--a twist on the story of the Fall, turning the story from a parable denouncing the pursuit of knowledge to a moral advocating the same pursuit. Medieval theology generally held the Fall to be a prescription against probing into nature's secret's; the apple did, after all, come from the Tree of Knowledge. Bacon, however, turned this medieval notion on its head. Arguing instead that by probing into nature's secrets, mankind's lost "dominion over creation" could be restored, Bacon asserted that "the narrow limits of man's dominion over the universe" could once again reach "to their promised bounds" (in Merchant, 83). While such a transformation of the biblical story may seem like a powerful call to improve the human condition, the underlying message is riddled with misogyny.

But Bacon's misogyny is in no way limited to merely using the story of the Fall in sanctioning the rape of the Earth. Continually using metaphors associated with the feminine to describe the earth, Bacon neatly intertwines women and nature into one symbol. He sees the "new men of science" as the "searchers and spies of nature" out to discover "in the womb of nature many secrets of excellent use having no affinity or

parallelism with anything that is now known" (in Merchant, 81). Bacon brought a new dimension to old misogynistic attitudes, linking them together with old anti-nature attitudes into a new, growing ideology that helped transform the way people interact with nature.

This new ideology began to crowd out and eventually replace the prevailing organic ideology towards nature. Merchant describes the medieval ideology that was being undermined and replaced in Jonson's time, writing that

for sixteenth-century Europeans the root metaphor binding together the self, society and the cosmos was that of an organism . . . .Central to the organic theory was the identification of nature, especially the earth, with a nurturing mother: a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe. But another opposing image of nature as female was also prevalent: wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts and general chaos. Both were identified with the female sex (76-77).

Of these two opposing images, the second began its rise to prevalence in the Scientific Revolution, gaining strength from economic and technological revolutions, as well as with the rhetoric of Bacon.

The second view's rise to power was not immediate; the organic view held on with considerable strength--but it could not last for long. Merchant argues that the more organic view of nature could not hold out against the technological tide of the scientific revolution:

while the organic framework was for many centuries sufficiently integrative to override commercial development and technological innovation, the acceleration of economic change throughout western Europe began to undermine the organic unity of the cosmos and society

. . . .By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the tension between the technological development in the world of action and the controlling organic images of the world of the mind had become too great. The old world view was incompatible with the new activities (80).

It was this dialectical, ideological tension between the old and the new, grounded in the economic and technological realities of the time, which provided the historical backdrop for Jonson's verse.

## Chapter 3: Conceptual Connections

Such connections are reinforced as one moves from the historical connections of the domination of women and nature to the conceptual connections found within Jonson's verse itself. The method by which these conceptions are made, of course, is through an oppressive conceptual framework. This framework, it is important to note, is not one of Jonson's creation; rather, Jonson employs the dominant, oppressive paradigm already in place.

The first aspect of such frameworks, the high value placed on hierarchical thinking, is an essential part of Jonson's verse. As much of Jonson's verse is complimentary in nature, he praises certain concepts and condemns others. This praise necessarily employs hierarchical thinking, valuing one idea to the detriment of another. One aspect of Jonson's praise which clearly illustrates his misogynistic tendencies is pointed out by James Bierster in "Gender and Style in Seventeenth-Century Verse":

Manliness is clearly a term of praise Jonson would not relinquish, but one which he wants to preserve against what he sees as the contemporary decadence of mere roughness. Its opposite--poetry by and for women--is merely smooth or musical, with little form or intellectual fiber. 'Women-poets,' according to Jonson, are 'Creame-bowle, or but puddle deep' (509).

In distinguishing between masculine and feminine forms of poetry, Jonson places manliness "above" femininity in a hierarchical scheme.

Evidence of such placement comes from his poem "On Lucy, Countess of Bedford," where Jonson, in praising a woman, finds that he has first to attribute masculine aspects to her before she can receive his praise, writing "I meant each softest

virtue there should meet, / Fit in that softer bosom to reside / Only a learned and a manly soul / I purposed her" (9, 11-14). Jonson must transform Lucy into, as Lanier puts it, "an honorary man" since "even if it means doing a little shuffling of the sexes, Jonson insists upon speaking man to man" (20). Further evidence of Jonson's clear hierarchical preference of the masculine to the feminine comes from the very title of another of his poems praising a woman, *An Elegy on the Lady Jane Pawlet, Marchion [ess] of Winton*. A beautiful elegy, praising the life of Jane Pawlet, this poem welcomes the death of a friend who suffered much in life. But before Jonson can fully extol Pawlet's virtues, he must first hide her gender behind a set of brackets. Jonson's preference of masculinity to femininity clearly illustrates his hierarchical positioning of values.

Beyond such thinking, oppressive conceptual frameworks also require the use of value dualisms, which Jonson also employs. Beyond the masculine/feminine distinction previously discussed, Jonson uses numerous other oppositional word pairs in his poetry--each with its own hierarchy of value in place. Among the dichotomies Jonson uses are country/court, praise/blame, ideal/reality and sickness/health.

One of Jonson's poems, "To Sickness," portrays two of these dichotomies at once: sickness/health and women/men. Jonson writes "Why, Disease, dost thou molest/Ladies, and of them the best? / . . . Pray thee, feed contented, then,/Sickness, only on us men" (29-20: 1-2, 13-14). In relegating women to the realm of disease and then asking disease to attack men instead, Jonson establishes a pair of dualisms that, while in this instance not misogynist, carry with them the implication that women are weaker than men.

In another poem, "An Epigram. To the Small-Pox," Jonson reinforces this connection of women and disease as matched pairs on the "lesser" side of a dichotomy:

Envious and foul disease, could there not be  
 One beauty in an age, and free from thee?  
 What did she worth thy spite? Were there not store  
 Of those that set by their false faces more

Than this did by her true? She never sought

Quarrel with Nature . . . . (171, 1-6).

In this verse, Jonson ties together three concepts which all occupy the "lesser" side of a value dualism: a woman, nature (whom the woman would not quarrel with, although the man certainly does) and disease. Accordingly, the connections fall into a similar pattern as "To Sickness." Using the same dichotomies with the same value judgments implied, Jonson, in setting up these dichotomies, is reflecting the view of women as frail and less able to cope with disease--consequently assuming the superiority of masculine strength.

Masculinity would serve as a better target for disease, according to Jonson, since femininity is so susceptible to sickness; disease, therefore, is something foreign to men. Women, as more prone to illness, are consequently closer to nature. Sickness is, after all, a natural process. Therefore, since sickness is, in Jonson's view, so closely tied with femininity, the feminine is opposed to the masculine just as sickness is opposed to health. Women are unable to endure the natural process of illness, while men, being outside of the process itself, can endure disease. In his chivalrous offer to Sickness to attack only men and let the ladies go free, Jonson is asserting masculine superiority over both women and nature through the use of dichotomies. In each of these dichotomies, Jonson relies on value hierarchical thinking to determine the superiority of one concept and gender over the other.

Jonson creates these dichotomies by defining the world in terms of what it is not. In "Much Ado About Nothing: The Content of Jonson's Forest," Catherine Bates proposes that using the simple word "not" gives the reader a more vivid picture of what "is":

however conventionalized they may be, such comparisons work, at the simplest level, by defining things (people, emotions, places) in contradistinction with what they are not. Difference is the primary mechanism for saying what things are (25).

Using the negative to describe the positive, Jonson often provides readers with such backhanded descriptions of what he wants them to see. Jonson admires the country house Penshurst for what it is not, praising it by attacking the newer, fashionable architecture of more recently built houses. He begins "Epode" by asserting that "not to know vice at all . . . is virtue." By defining the world in terms of what it is not, Jonson continually employs oppositional word pairs that imply a definite lack in the "inferior" concept.

The notion that something lacks in the inferior ideas is the base of the third component of oppressive conceptual frameworks, the logic of domination. Although Jonson often reflects the ideas at the base of the logic of domination, he never fully employs such a logic. To do so would be demanding action be taken against women and nature, but Jonson, because of the conservative social nature of his verse, reflects the social paradigm and does not make an active call for domination. Instead, Jonson reflects domination more subtly by reinforcing pre-existing notions of dominion. A clear illustration of Jonson's tendency to reflect such notions can be seen in the domination fantasy of "To Penshurst," a poem which illustrates clearly all three aspects of the conceptual connections between women and nature.

"Penshurst" is an invaluable poem in examining Jonson's views of nature. As one of many of Jonson's commendatory verses designed to praise or condemn, "Penshurst" focuses on what Jonson wishes to value in nature. John McDiarmid writes that Jonson's commendatory poems are essential speech acts and, because of that, convey social evaluations of the object of the poem to the reader:

[Jonson's poems are] primarily linguistic acts. They are comments "on" or "to" someone. [in this case, *something*]. [They aim] to capture or essentialize a character-- sometimes, implicitly, to reduce an object to its true dimensions (1737).

The main thrust of the commendatory poem, then, is to make offer the reader the poet's value judgment on the subject in question. The significant difference with "Penshurst,"

as opposed to other of Jonson's commendatory verses, is that this poem is a comment on the character of an estate--a comment about its natural setting. In "Addressing the House: Jonson's Ideology at Penshurst," Thomas Marshall explains that Jonson is concerned in this poem with evaluating a natural setting rather than a person:

plainly, Jonson wishes to celebrate something at the place that does not exactly pertain to its master. The place is not simply a metonym for Robert Sidney, whom the poem removes from the center of attention: he is first alluded to only midway through; he is the subject of a verb only near the end, and then not by name (66).

Jonson focuses on the place itself in this poem, a departure from his usual preoccupation with people. Clearly, then, Jonson intends the poem to commend Penshurst for its ideal natural setting.

The image of nature emerging from this poem is one of an ordered nature, serving human needs. While Jonson does not openly advocate a Baconian form of domination in "Penshurst," the poem presents the ideal fantasy of a dominated nature. By attributing willing attitudes to the animals as they freely give themselves up for consumption, Jonson glorifies the submissiveness of nature to its human masters:

Thy copse, too, named of Gamage, thou hast there,  
That never fails to serve the seasoned deer  
When thou wouldst feast, or exercise thy friends.

.....

The painted partridge lies in every field,  
And, for they mess, is willing to be killed.  
And if the high-swol'n Medway fail thy dish,  
Thou hast thy ponds, that pay thee tribute fish,  
Fat, aged carps, that run into thy net,

And pikes, now weary their own kind to eat,  
 As loath the second draught or cast to stay,  
 Officiously at first themselves betray  
 Bright eels that emulate them, and leap on land  
 Before the fisher, or into his hand (21-22: 19-36)

This image of nature is one that seems quite contradictor. Nature is obviously not existing for itself, there is no overt sense of man forcing nature to give itself freely to man's desires-- "Penshurst" is an utopian vision of interaction of a subjugated nature, existing for the purpose of serving mankind.

This contradiction has made "Penshurst" the target for much ecological criticism. Defenders of Jonson have argued that "Penshurst" presents a harmonious, ecological utopia, claiming that Jonson is valuing the interdependence of humans and nature. For example, G. R. Hibbard tries to explain away this contradictory depiction of the natural world, arguing such a vision is typical of seventeenth-century country house poems:

Man and this ordered nature are interdependent; each sustains the other and without the other would degenerate into mere savagery. The fish and fowl eager for the honour of furnishing the table of the Sidneys are only silly when detached from the poem to which they belong. Within the poem they have their place as the consciousness . . . of a humanized nature (165).

Hibbard asserts that there is no image of domination whatsoever, only ecological harmony. Taking Hibbard's assertion a step further, John McDiarmid argues that Penshurst is a shining example of ecological consciousness:

human life is benign because it stands within what men have recently learned to call an ecosystem: a web of connections between elements that feed and feed off one another and through interaction perpetuate one another's well-being (1739).

In their defense of Jonson, both Hibbard and McDiarmid make a plausible argument for an ecological sensitivity to Jonson's verse.

Such readings of "Penshurst," however, are overly sympathetic to Jonson's depiction of human interaction with nature. A look behind the verse reveals an entirely different attitude. John Stephens and Ruth Waterhouse argue that "*the* primary literary distinction is that between *story* and *discourse*, or, to put it in somewhat simplistic terms, the distinction between *what* the text depicts and *how* it depicts it"(7). While the surface *story* of "Penshurst" may depict a seemingly benign ecological vision, the *discourse* of the verse reveals the components of the conceptual linking of women and nature in a metaphor of domination. The image that emerges from the actual discourse of the verse is that, as Raymond Williams notes, "this natural order is simply and decisively on its way to the table" (30). Every one of the animals is freely offering itself up for human consumption--as a sacrifice; the creatures get nothing in return. There is no interdependence to the order of nature.

The method Jonson uses to describe Penshurst eliminates interdependence first by breaking the estate into its component parts. First, Jonson speaks of Penshurst's woods, with "walks for health, as well as sport" (9). Next, he speaks of the "Mount, to which the dryads do resort," which is valued for its giant trees to picnic under. The copse of Gamage provides a place to hunt deer; the area around the river a place to keep livestock. Such separation continues until line 46, where Jonson finally leaves the country and enters the walls of the house itself. Each part of the estate served its own unique purpose, separate from the purpose of the whole.

The compartmentalization of the estate is an image that lies clearly in the transition between the organic and mechanistic view of nature. Merchant, in Earthcare, underscores this reading, arguing that the mechanical world of the scientific revolution tended to break the holistic ecology into component parts:

in the organic world view, order meant the function of each part within the larger whole, as determined by its nature. . . . In the mechanical world, order was redefined to mean the predictable behavior of each part within a rationally determined system of laws (85).

There is no question that nature in Penshurst is ordered, but the exact nature of the order lies somewhere in between these two competing conceptions. While certainly Jonson depicts each part of the estate as functioning within the "larger whole" of Penshurst, each part also acts with "predictable behavior"--the copse of Gamage, for example, "never fails to serve thee seasoned deer." Jonson, breaking the estate down into its component parts and assigning separate values to each part, is valuing a nature that is no longer organic, but on the way to becoming mechanistic.

One nature is broken into components, Jonson easily proclaims what is worthy of praise according to the values assigned through hierarchical thinking. To do so, the verse necessarily relies on the use of value-laden dualisms, the first of which is leisure/work. The leisurely life at Penshurst is illustrated by Jonson's observation that the land provides so much with almost no work at all. Obviously, the fisher who has fish willingly jumping into his lap is not working hard. Even inanimate nature is willing to give itself up to human desire, as Jonson suggests that "and though thy walls be of the country stone, / They're reared with no man's ruin, no man's groan" (22, 46-47).

This lack of a need for work was an essential part of the developing view of nature in light of the new technologies of the scientific revolution. Thomas D. Marshall explains that "this sense of ease is neither absolute nor does it mark a prelapsarian state of existence, but it is rather an attribute of a well-ordered domain" (69). Edenic, prelapsarian images clearly belong in the realm of the budding images of the rising mechanistic world-view; the promise of an easing of work is a part of the promise to reclaim Eden, since work in the seventeenth century was commonly viewed as a direct

consequence of the Fall. As technology made human interaction with nature easier, according to the theory, more results could be produced with less effort. In "Penshurst" that ease of effort is taken to its logical extreme; nature is valued for the lack of effort required to extract resources from it, cementing a dichotomy between leisure and work.

That lack of effort applies only to men, however, in the patriarchal paradigm of the seventeenth century. The culmination of this extraction of resources from nature without work is a huge feast, but the women had to work for the feast, and they were rewarded for their work. Jonson writes "what praise was heaped / On thy good lady then! who therein reaped / the just reward of her high huswifery" (23, 83-85). In the huge celebrations at Penshurst, the men enjoy themselves while women and nature do all the work, connecting both in Jonson's fantasy--and, consequently, employing the man/women dualism essential to value-hierarchical thinking.

In addition to employing the dualisms of leisure/work and men/women, Jonson creates yet another dualism, that of culture/nature through the structure of the poem itself. Catherine Bates points out how this dichotomy is manifested in the organization of "Penshurst," existing in the order by which Jonson leads us through the estate:

the poet escorts us from the "lower land" through "middle grounds," to an orchard and flower garden and, finally, to within the walls of the house of itself: a centripetal journey which assures us that the poet's movement is from a cold, inhospitable outside toward the sunny warmth of wished-for patronage (26).

As the poem progresses, Jonson's description moves inevitably from the natural to the cultural; in the end, all of the descriptions of "nature" are put to use within the culture of the house itself, which is where the true value of the well-ordered estate lies. Culture and nature are put in opposition, and nature is subservient, valued only for its contribution to the warm feast of culture within the walls of the house itself.

After connecting women and nature through the use of value-hierarchical thinking and dualism, the next necessary link is to tie these assessments into a logic of domination. Jonson, as a conservative, never fully employs such a logic; the vigorous application of such logic was undertaken by the likes of Bacon. Regardless, "Penshurst" subtly alludes to a logic of domination because of the way it depicts a utopian vision of nature. This fantasy is nothing short of an idealized vision of the domination of nature and women.

By having nature and women wholly accept their place, as the bearers of the burden of the men's enjoyment, the poem envisions a realm in which women and nature are so thoroughly submissive that men do not have to work for their enjoyments--they "rightly" receive them from women and nature. Such a fantasy epitomizes the seventeenth-century view of women and nature as, according to Eric Todd Smith, "pliant servants to humanity" (1), humanity, of course, only referring to men.

Further evidence of a logic of domination stems from the passivity Jonson indirectly assigns to the natural world. The technique Jonson uses to achieve this effect is inverted: items in the natural world are not passive objects of a verb; they are the subjects of active verbs. Human beings instead are the passive recipients of nature's bounty, and it is in this passivity that Jonson assumes the superiority of the human to the natural.

The passivity of nature carries with it a sense that nature is not sensitive to its future, but merely resigned to its inferiority. The pike in the ponds, "weary of their own kind to eat,/as loath the second draught or cast to stay" (34-35) recognize the superiority of man to pike and, thus, are impatient to give in to this superior force. Likewise, the "fat, aged carps that run into thy net," and the "painted partridge" is "willing to be killed." In each of these instances, animals in the natural world are resigned, willfully, to their death at the hands of human beings.

Such resignation from the natural world is a far cry from the vibrant pursuit of life, the instinct to survive that characterizes nature outside of Jonson's idealized fantasy.

This resignation of nature is indicative of the seventeenth-century's changing views towards nature. In order for advocates of science and technology to break down the ethical constraints of the organic view, nature had to become passive. "As long as the earth was considered alive and sensitive," argues Merchant, "it could be considered a breach of human ethical behavior to carry out destructive acts against it." (78). While the earth is certainly still alive in Jonson's utopia, nature's implied passivity removes sensitivity from natural life. The loss of that sensitivity opens up room for the logic of domination to take effect.

Again, Jonson never truly employs that logic himself. His verse is a passive window into seventeenth-century ideas; it is not a call to action. Jonson's poetry does, however, work from the oppressive conceptual framework, employing value hierarchical thinking and dualisms as well as a subtle logic of domination, binding women and nature together as inferior objects destined for domination.

## Chapter IV: Symbolic Connections

Adding to the strong historical and conceptual connections of the domination of women and nature in Jonson's work are the symbolic connections. These connections lie in the language Jonson employs throughout his verse. Jonson depicts women and nature in similar terms, binding the two together. For example, in his poem "Here she was wont to go, and here! and here!," Jonson inextricably ties the feminine to the earthy:

Here she was wont to go, and here! and here!  
 Just where those daisies, pinks and violets grow;  
 The world may find the spring by following her,  
 For other print her airy steps ne'er left;  
 Her treading would not bend a blade of grass,  
 Or shake the downy blow-ball from his stalk!  
 But like the soft west wind she shot along,  
 And where she went the flowers took thickest root,  
 As she had sowed 'em with her odorous foot (93).

The woman in this poem is at one with nature, her movement has no effect on nature whatsoever. Men, on the other hand, possess the ability to transform nature and accordingly could never tread on the earth "like the soft west wind."

In tying women and nature together by emphasizing their interconnectedness, Jonson employs a peculiar tenderness to his verse, a tenderness that it would be hard to imagine him using to depict his hardy, masculine contemporaries. In "Epithamalion: Or, A Song," Jonson describes the marriage of Mr. Heirome Weston to the Lady Frances Stuart. In this poem, little description or attention is given the man; Frances occupies Jonson's attention. In his lengthy descriptions of Frances, Jonson clearly values her for

her closeness to nature, much in the same way he values the women in "Here she was wont to go. And here! And here!:"

With what full hands, and in how plenteous showers  
 Have they bedewed the earth, where she doth tread,  
 As if her airy steps did spring the flowers,  
 And all the ground were garden, where she led! (64-68).

The same imagery is used to connect the women in the poem with nature, but this poem makes an even deeper symbolic connection Frances and the land she occupies.

Throughout the entire poem, Jonson continually pines towards what is going to happen on the wedding night, even ending by writing that "night, and the sheets will show / the longing couple, all that elder lovers know (91-92). Sex is a predominant theme of the poem. With Frances at the focal point and the man found only in the periphery of the description, Jonson places value on Frances and sex equally and, in doing so, equates them both with nature, furthering the symbolic link.

Sex, sexuality, and reproduction is a major thematic link in which women and nature are bound together throughout Jonson's poetry. The epigram "On Groin," for example, depicts an image of women interconnected (and even, to some extent, interchangeable) with the land: "Groin, come of age, his state sold out of hand / For his whore: Groin doth still occupy his land" (80). Not only has the male groin exchanged land in the form of state for a piece of "land" between the legs of a woman, the tone employed by Jonson is one of utter contempt: towards Groin, the whore, and the land. This contempt towards Groin, however, is only for the way he deals with the woman and with the land, making the latter two, by implication, the main target of his scorn.

From this focus on women and nature as sexual objects intimately connected with natural objects, Jonson takes the symbolic link to the next logical step: reproduction. In "An Epigram to the Queen, then Lying in," Jonson praises Queen Mary for the birth of Charles, the next king of England. Jonson writes "Hail Mary, full of honours, to my

queen, the mother of our prince . . . / Then Hail to Mary! Spring/of so much safety to the realm, and king" (208). As we have already seen, Jonson ties women and nature together through the use of the images of spring and sprouting flowers. Here, the flower is the heir to the throne, but the image has much the same thematic content as a natural image.

Another poem to Mary furthers this reproductive connection between women and nature. In "An Ode, or Song, by All the Muses," Jonson more directly ties Mary and the birth of Charles to nature. "Sweet happy Mary," Jonson writes, "all / The people do her call! And this womb divine! So fruitful and so fair, / Hath brought the land an heir!" (210). Jonson's verse here is reminiscent of the emerging view of the land as a womb; because "fruitful and fair" were words often ascribed to Nature's "womb," phrases ripe with a sexual imagery that connected women to nature in the process of reproduction.

Another way in which the poem "Here she was wont to go, and here! and here!" symbolically links women in nature is that it depicts women as flighty and inconsistent, a recurring theme throughout Jonson's verse. Jonson's views on this matter again reflect the broader seventeenth-century view of women as inconsistent. Perhaps the best example of this conception of women is the Baconian maxim that "you have but to follow and as it were hound nature in her wanderings, and you will be able when you like to lead and drive her afterward to the same place" (in Merchant, Earthcare, 168). Nature, and consequently woman, looked inconstant and ever-changing to the seventeenth-century eye.

Jonson describes women in the same manner, so much in fact, that he is compelled to write "Another, in Defence of their Inconstancy: A Song," a poem written from the perspective of a woman defending her gender's changing nature. Using a woman as the speaker, Jonson writes, "we were not bred to sit on stools, / Our proper virtue is to range" (53, 3-4). Obviously, since the woman speaking the poem is defending women's inconstancy, the question of whether or not women are inconsistent is never

asked. Significantly, Jonson's decision to abandon any semblance of rhyme in the poem "Here She Was Wont to Go," underscores this same sense of inconstancy.

Having portrayed women as inconsistent is not enough for Jonson. With this assumption, Jonson examines the inevitable implications of inconsistency on the fundamental relationship between men and women. Taking this misogynistic discourse a step further, in "A Satirical Shrub," Jonson questions the ability for a man to value even the friendship of a woman:

A woman's friendship! God whom I trust in,  
 Forgive me this one foolish deadly sin;  
 Amongst my many other, that I may  
 No more, I am sorry for so fond cause, say  
 At fifty years, almost, to value it  
 That ne'er was known to last above a fit! (!57)

This depiction of women in this poem mirrors the view of nature as untrustworthy, prone to fits of anger, that, according to Merchant, was becoming the predominant image of nature in the seventeenth-century ideology.

The inconstancy theme, and its necessary link to the inconsistencies of nature, is carried further in Jonson's song "If I freely may discover." In this song, Jonson sets forth an image of the ideal woman as subject to whims, but controllable by a man:

She should be allowed her passions,  
 So they were but used as fashions;  
 Sometimes forward, and then frowning,  
 Sometimes sickish, and then swooning,  
 Every fit with change still crowning.  
 Purely jealous I would have her;  
 Then only constant when I crave her,  
 'Tis a virtue should not save her... (91, 13-17)

Aside from the overtly misogynistic idea of "allowing" a woman her passions, Jonson describes the ideal woman as ever inconstant; she is only constant by his bidding, when he "craves" her. In this verse, Jonson reflects the seventeenth-century view of nature as inconstant, but susceptible to man's influence by using the same image to idealize women.

In addition to focusing on the inconstancy of women and nature, another common symbolic link between women and nature stems from Jonson's treatment of death. This symbolic linking of women and nature is perhaps best illustrated in Jonson's poem "On My First Daughter." In mourning the loss of his young daughter, Jonson describes how her "grave partakes the fleshly birth; which cover lightly, gentle earth!" (7, 11-12). At face value, nothing is particularly striking about the use of such language. When placed in contradistinction with Jonson's poem about the loss of his son, however, the symbolic tie of women and nature becomes clear.

Jonson describes his son's death in a much less intimate tone, without the soft tenderness he uses towards his daughter's eulogy. In "On My First Son," Jonson makes no reference to "gentle earth." In fact, he consoles himself by asking "Will man lament the state he should envy? / To have so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage, / And, if no other misery, yet age?" (8, 1). His son, in death, was able to transcend the horrors of the physical world, just as the masculine is above the natural. His daughter, however, being tied so closely to the world, cannot transcend the natural, so Jonson offers her the consolation of the "gentle earth." The reason for not viewing the connections of son and daughter with the earth is obvious on the surface; as a male, his son does not possess an intrinsic connection with earth.

But there is a far more subtle connection as well, a connection which illustrates the symbolic value attached to women and nature. Jonson describes his girl as "the daughter of their [the Jonsons'] youth" (7, 2); his son, however, was the "child of [his] right hand, and joy" (8, 1). The image of the girl in the poem is one of a soft, delicate

creature that needs comfort in death. Jonson's son, however, is more of a monument in his death, "Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry," a monument of strength and endurance. The language used to describe the separate deaths of his children symbolically reinforces the value judgments placed on the masculine/feminine dichotomy.

Women's link to nature through death is given further treatment in "An Elegy on the Lady Jane Pawlet, Marchion [ess] of Winton." Speaking of the deceased Lady, Jonson writes that "now, through circumfused light, she looks/On nature's secrets, there, as her own books" (233, 70-71). In these lines, Jonson symbolically connects women and nature together, reinforcing that connection by once again relying on the image of "secrecy," a potent image in the dual domination metaphor.

These links of women to nature through death, however, are forged by the extrapolating images of intrinsic unity onto both women and nature. In poem 9 of Eupheme, written on the death of Lady Venetia Digby, Jonson directly ties women and nature together as being symbolically the same:

A sorrow in me, fit to wait to her!  
 O! had I seen her laid out a fair course,  
 By death, on earth, I should have had remorse  
 On nature, for her: who did let her lie,  
 And saw that portion of herself die. (241, 9-14)

In this verse, nature has seen a part of herself—a woman—die. Thus, woman and nature are, symbolically, one in the same.

The significance in the linking of women and nature with death is simple. The desensitizing of nature necessary to lift the ethical constraints against harming Mother Earth. Once earth is symbolically associated with death rather than life, the organic world view collapses and there is no longer a close human connection with nature. Jonson's statement in the third line "on earth, I should have had remorse" is representative of this transition. While he should have had remorse, he clearly didn't--he could not feel

sorry for nature, even though he believed that nature had lost part of itself in the death of Venetia, as well. Nature has been associated with death, and that association allows an absence of feeling which moves earth away from the organic to the objectified.

This symbolic judgment is furthered in Jonson's poem "Song: That Women Are But Men's Shadows." In it, Jonson links women to the shadow, natural prisoner of the masculine sun:

Follow a shadow, it still flies you;  
 Seem to fly it, it will pursue;  
 So court a mistress, she denies you;  
 Let her alone, she will court you.  
 Say, are not women truly, then,  
 Styled but the shadows of us men?  
 At morn, and even, shades are longest;  
 At noon, they are short or none;  
 So men at weakest, they are strongest,  
 But grant us perfect, they're not known.  
 Say, are not women truly, then,  
 Styled but the shadows of us men? (29).

Through the use of classical argumentation in syllogisms, Jonson equates women with the natural world of the shadow. They are in tune with the cycles of the day, yet susceptible to domination by men. If men are careful to watch how they act, they have the ability to render the "shadows" ineffective or nonexistent. By symbolically tying nature and women, Jonson illustrates the attitude that both can be dominated. After all, describing something as a shadow diminishes its value.

Because of his conservative orientation as a poet, Jonson serves to illustrate the historical, conceptual, and symbolic linking of the domination of women and nature. The seventeenth-century was the time when this link was augmented and solidified. Because

of its conservative nature, the verse of Jonson serves to illuminate the dominant social paradigm of the time. What emerges is a patriarchal, often openly misogynist worldview which labeled both women and nature as inferior and, accordingly, objects prime for subjugation.

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