

## A Royalist View of Parliament in 1642

Thomas Salusbury, "son and heir of sir Hen. Salesbury bart. was born [March 6, 1612] of an antient and genteel family of his name living at Leweni near Denbigh in Denbighshire" (Wood 55). His mother, Hester, was the daughter of Sir Thomas Myddleton of Chirk, and his father, Henry, the son of Sir John Salusbury of Lleweni and Ursula, an illegitimate daughter of Henry Stanley, fourth Earl of Derby, and Jane Halsall of Knowlsey (Brown 113).

In 1623, Thomas' father, Henry, composed a congratulatory poem which affirmed:

You that joyntly with undaunted paynes,  
Vowtsafed to chawnte to us thease noble straynes.  
How much you merrytt by it is not sedd,  
Butt you have pleased the lyving, loved the deadd:  
Raysede from the woambe of Earth a ritcher myne  
Then Curteys cowlde with all his Castleyne -  
Assotiatts they dydd but digg for gowlde,  
But you for treasure mutch moare manifolde.  
(f. 140)<sup>1</sup>

The verse is hardly distinguished; it remains pedestrian despite the rather laboured effort to create a mining metaphor, but the context makes it remarkable. It is addressed "To my good freandes Mr. John Hemings and Henry Condall" and congratulates them on their successful editorial labours in compiling the First Folio of 1623. It is in no way surprising that Sir Henry Salusbury should have been friendly with two of Shakespeare's fellow actors, for Henry's father, Sir John, was the addressee of "The Phoenix and The Turtle," which Shakespeare contributed to Chester's *Loves Martyr*, the gratulatory volume produced to honour the awarding of a knighthood to John in 1601. There is no evidence to suggest any direct personal relationship between the Salusbury family and Shakespeare, but on the other hand there is considerable reason to believe that both Marston and Jonson

were familiar with their affairs. It is to Jonson that Sir John Salusbury's grandson, Sir Thomas, turns for a literary mentor.

Sir Thomas Salusbury was educated at Jesus, Oxford, and in 1631 was admitted to the Middle Temple; his youth had been almost wholly spent in London, since he was brought up in the home of Sir Thomas Myddleton. He behaved like many students then and since, for becoming somewhat disenchanted with the law, he began a casual literary career, contributing verses in 1632 to his "worthy good Friend" James Hayward's translation of G.F. Biondi's *Eromena or Love and Revenge*. In July of the same year, however, this incipient entry into the London literary scene was abruptly cut short by his father's sudden death. From this time on he was compelled to content himself with occasional visits to London while he struggled to hold on to debt-ridden estates in Denbighshire. When Ben Jonson died in 1637, Thomas was not among those invited to contribute to the memorial volume *Jonsonus Virbius*, but nonetheless he regarded himself as one of the 'children' of 'Father Ben.' This sense of affiliation provides a suitable point of entry into the concerns of Thomas Salusbury's own writings.

As far as Jonson was concerned there was a definite standard of conduct to which a man must approximate before he could hope for 'adoption' as one of his 'sons'; it is detailed in "An Epistle Answering to One that Asked to be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben":

Men that are safe, and sure, in all they doe,  
Care not what trials they are put unto;  
They meet the fire, the Test, as Martyrs would;  
And though Opinion stampe them not, are gold. (1-4)

Jonson rejects the quarrelsome, the ignorant, the glutton, the lecher, the fair-weather friend, the libellous satirist, the statesman who promotes politics before principles; and in their place he demands a man in whose friendship there is no vacillation; rather it is "square, well-tagde [well-knit] and permanent" (64). The qualifications for admission to the tribe of Ben were, then, based upon ethical rather than aesthetic criteria, and the prerequisite of poetic excellence was moral uprightness: a poet's works were an outer reflection of his inner qualities as a man. To be adopted as a son one must first be accepted as a friend with all this implied in terms of behaviour and taste: it was Jonson's version of the Renaissance ideal of noble friendship.

Not all of Jonson's friends were 'sons'; there were, however, no 'sons' recognised by Jonson who were not also friends. He describes the required convolution of 'sonship' with 'friendship' in "Epigram LXIX, To a Friend, and Sonne," 1-6:

Sonne, and my Friend, I had not call'd you so  
 To mee; or beene the same to you; if show,  
 Profit, or Chance had made us: But I know  
 What, by that name, wee each to other owe,  
 Freedome, and Truth: with love from those begot:  
 Wise-crafts, on which the flatterer ventures not.

For Jonson friendship was not, necessarily, permanent; a man remained a friend only so long as he continued to behave in a manner of which Jonson approved — witness “To my old Faithfull Servant and (by his Continu'd Vertue) my loving Friend, Richard Brome.” In theory, at least, Jonson's ‘sons,’ and also his ‘friends,’ were always on probation, and approval could be withdrawn at any time. Brome appears to be a case in point. Early in 1629 Jonson's most recent play, *The New Inn*, failed at the Blackfriars because, according to Ben,

it was never acted, but most negligently play'd by some, the King's Servants. And more squeamishly beheld, and censured by others, the King's Subjects (Title page).

Very soon afterwards Brome's *The Lovesick Maid* enjoyed considerable success when acted by the same company with a similar audience. Jonson and Brome quarrelled; it seems probable that the latter lost his status as ‘friend’ and therefore as ‘son.’ Jonson's stringent criteria to determine who, at any given moment, his ‘sons’ were, and the general notion of who belonged to the Tribe by virtue of being a literary follower did not necessarily coincide. True ‘sonship’ depended on the seemingly volatile way in which he conferred or withdrew the honour of his friendship. But his precise concepts became blurred in practice, not least because once acclaimed, a ‘friend’ or ‘son’ might well continue to use the title, even if subsequently disavowed. Since the expression of Jonson's approval was the best ‘review’ a young writer could hope for, membership in the Tribe was a prized achievement. So valuable indeed did this accolade from Jonson become that forged credentials of ‘sonship’ appeared in the year of Ben's death in Thomas Jordan's *Poeticall Varieties*, 1637.

Altogether there were very few whom Jonson himself openly acknowledged as acolytes, and these tended to be dramatists rather than poets: he accepts Brome, Rutter, and Thomas May, greeted as a friend, on the evidence of his translation of Lucan, (Herford 8:395); Thomas Randolph was tacitly accepted, for Jonson made no known rebuttal of his poem of thanks for his appointment as a ‘son’ (Thorn-Drury 40-2); Henry Morison and Lucius Cary were accepted as ‘friends’ (Herford 8:242-7), and the latter acknowledged Jonson as literary mentor; others had a more ambiguous status, like Sir Robert

Aytoun, who "loved him dearly" (Herford 1:163). On the evidence of Jonson's public acknowledgement alone, only Brome, Rutter and probably May qualify for the Tribe, but even their position was dependent upon day to day conduct and the evidence supplied from publication to publication. Jonson's concept of the Tribe appears, then, to have been almost equivalent to a developing body of criticism expressing approval of certain specific works by specific individuals, and tending to fuse aesthetic considerations with his assessment of a man's moral character. Ben deliberately conflates his ideal of friendship with the pragmatic question of literary discipleship.

Jonson admitted that his critical discipline of friendship and sonship was difficult and demanding. Replying to an anonymous friend who had questioned it, he declared,

It is an Acte of Tyranye, not Love,  
 in Course of ffrindshipp, wholie to reprove:  
 And fflaterye, with ffrindes humors: still to move.  
 ffrom each of which, I labor to (be) ffree,  
 yett, yf with eythers vyce, I tainted bee,  
 ffgive it as my ffraylte, and not mee.  
 ("An Epistle to a Friend," 18-23.)

To apply moral principles to one's friends is always a delicate matter. Absolute impartiality is hardly possible; nor was that, in fact, quite what Jonson sought. The true friend must labour to be neither indifferent to personal considerations nor indiscriminately swayed by attachment. His criticism is to be compounded of sympathetic understanding and honest discrimination; it requires, too, that the critic be aware of his own shortcomings. As the last couplet hints, the operation of the critical sensibility is in essence analogous to, perhaps indeed identical with, the workings of a Christian conscience. The true critic and the true friend cannot, therefore, be either casually indulgent or academic and aloof. To Jonson, criticism, which engages men in a subtle and strenuous labour of self-discipline and self-discovery, is a fundamentally magnanimous and humanizing activity.

Many of his contemporaries seem to have misunderstood Jonson's guiding principles, and (like many later critics) they interpreted membership of the Tribe more loosely than he intended. Jonson attempted to make the title 'son of Ben' an index to the highest qualities of personal and poetic excellence, but when others gave the accolade they often meant something far more tenuous. Any writer in whose work there were habits of thought or style — particularly the mannerism of invoking the classical past — reminiscent of Jonson, was likely to be dubbed a 'son' in the popular imagination. As a result Jonson's discipline of sonship and friendship was progressively diluted until the

designation 'of the Tribe of Ben' became synonymous with 'School of Jonson.'

Despite Jonson's onerous and often whimsical conditions, however, there were some who were self-elected to the Tribe; the most famous of these is Robert Herrick, who positively canonised Ben:

When I a Verse shall make,  
 Know I have praid thee,  
 For old *Religions* sake,  
 Saint *Ben*, to aide me.

.....

Candles Ile give to thee,  
 And a new Altar;  
 And thou Saint *Ben*, shalt be  
 Writ in my *Psalter*.

("His Prayer to Ben Jonson," 1-10: Martin 212-3)

Another was Thomas Salusbury. Since the poem has not previously been printed, I cite it in full:

An Elegie meant upon the death of Ben Johnson.

Shall I alone spare paper?, in an age  
 When everie pen sheds inke, to swell a page  
 In Johnsons Elegies: And ore his herse  
 (A sorrow worthie of him) dropp their verse,  
 As plentie as the cheaper moisture falls  
 From duller braines at common funeralls,  
 His death inspiring richer witts, and more  
 Then all the Auncient Hero's lives before  
 Were Theme unto; the Spirit of Poetrie  
 Like the Prophetique, keepes not companie  
 With the departed Soule in's flight; but falls  
 On those, whome Heaven to the succession calls.  
 And as the Tisbites, that from Jordans side  
 Mounted in's flaminge Charriott, did abide  
 And cleave unto Elisha; Thine doth rest  
 Not upon one, but manie are possesst  
 'Mongst whome my selfe, though but like one of those  
 The Prophetts children, that in Zeale arose,  
 And climb'd the hills, as if in hope t'have found  
 By the advantage of the higher ground  
 Theyre Father soar'd to Heaven; as much in vaine,  
 I find is my employment, whilst I straine  
 My feeble Muse, to reach thy worth, and find  
 Out language fitt to Character thy mind;  
 Or thy immortall gloryes to reherse  
 In deathles number, such as was thy verse.  
 I might as well by contemplation make  
 My grosse emprissned soule to overtake  
 Thy free enlarged Spiritt, and expresse  
 Thy not to bee conceived blessednes;

This were to doe like thee, whose onelie penn  
Wrote things unutt'rable by other men.

Salusbury was moved to declare his disagreement with the prevailing assumption that one single individual was Ben's inheritor. His realization that with Jonson's death the mantle had fallen not on one but on many, was more accurate and more critically astute than most contemporary reaction. Salusbury's assumption of part of the task of sustaining what he understands to be the Jonsonian "spirit of poetry" is, therefore, not to be taken lightly.

He would hardly have quarrelled with Herrick's view of Jonson as an "ancient" who "guides," "commands" almost; nor would he have objected to his use of religious language to express his sense of Ben's "immortal glories." But where Herrick somewhat whimsically celebrates a private, almost cloistered devotion to the "Saint," Salusbury in a far more earnest, zealous tone invokes the Old Testament history of Elijah. He hails in Jonson the great prophet of a nation, whose mantle, the "Spiritt of Poetrie," has fallen not on one man as it did on Elisha, but on the unnamed company of the "prophetts children," himself among them.

There is no clear evidence that Thomas was often in Jonson's company, although given Ben's connection with his grandfather, it is not impossible, especially since he spent most of his youth in London, and was often there in later years. He certainly conceived of himself poetically as a son of Ben and he identified himself wholeheartedly with a continuing prophetic-poetic tradition. There is no vanity in Salusbury's claim; he frankly recognizes his own limitations as a poet and admits that he can scarcely aspire to the heights of Ben's muse.

Thomas Salusbury sees poetry as a sacred vocation, not to be taken lightly even by lesser talents like himself:

Prophets of old and Poets had one name  
The Spirit that inspired them was the same.  
(*"To Sir W. Vaughan,"* 47-8.)

Like his "Father" Ben, Thomas was sadly convinced that the present age had seen the eclipse of true poetry. Instead of offering verse as hymns of praise to the Creator too many contemporary poets,

... to complie with loose delights of youth,  
... make that now the language of untruith  
which heretofore spoke Oracles.  
(*"To Sir W. Vaughan,"* 19-24.)

Poetry which, as Jonson taught, should be the province of learned and sober men, is shrunk to a mere pastime for fashionable parasites infected with a secularising hedonism.

The concern with which Thomas regarded his status as one of the Jonsonian inheritors cannot be denied. The most obvious application of his 'high seriousness' towards poetry is found in the political plays which he produced on the eve of the Civil War. One of the two full-length plays that he attempted is incomplete, but it reveals clear signs of the mounting tension between King and Parliament. This play, *The Pilgrimage*,<sup>2</sup> opens with an attack by one of the heroines, Isabella, on the instigators of religious wars who

... fill the gaping furrows with their goare  
 Yet unprovok't by any grounded quarrell,  
 Revenge, or claime of one anothers right,  
 Or hope of any gaine attending victorie,  
 Save onely th'emptie name of conqueror.  
 (1.3: f.243.)

Two scenes later the other leading female protagonist, the Duchess of Savoy, who has undertaken a pilgrimage because of her infatuation with Isabella's brother (whom she has not yet seen), expresses her pangs of guilt in a similar broadside against religious hypocrisy,

May I delude my husband, mock the saints,  
 Counterfeit sicknes and recoverie  
 By miracle, faigne vowes and pilgrimages,  
 And cloath my shamefull and abhord designes  
 In a religious habit, and yet not sin?  
 (1.3: f.243)

This is surely a commentary on the current state of England; Thomas is fulfilling his self-selected role as poet-moralist in the Jonsonian mold. The attitude towards religious fanaticism apparent throughout the play is, however, best summed up by the words of the First Friar at the shrine of St. James of Compostella:

'Tis scisme and superstition that doe runne  
 Soe fast after blind teachers, whose hott zeale  
 Setts fire on Kingdomes.  
 Patience and perseverance goe to heaven  
 By easie journeys, through uneasie wayes;  
 It is noe poast roade to bee ridd in hast,  
 Men travell soonest thither on their knees.  
 (2.3: f. 264v)

These sentiments, although here uttered by a Catholic priest, would have been an accurate reflection of the feelings of most moderate households during this time of political crisis; the play in fact utilises its

European Catholic context to effect a commentary on the English political scene.

Thomas was consistent both as a poet and as a politician. Suddenly in June 1642 he rode from Lleweni to York to pledge his allegiance to Charles I, a demonstration of loyalty that was to gain him command as Colonel-in-Chief of the largest regiment of foot in the Royalist army. His Cavalier political sympathies are clearly shown in a letter written to his sister:

“Though all Israell should goe aside, yet I and my household will serve the Lord, which I cannot doe truly unles I serve his anoynted allsoe. ... if all the men of the earth were of another opinion, in this I am resolved to live and die” (f. 251).

Charles could hardly ask for a more explicit declaration of loyalty than this. Thomas concludes the letter of June 1642 to his sister Ursula by assuring her that “the firme basis of my resolution are religion and peace, and my addresses to the Court have not beene out of vanitie or ostentation to make large offers, for I have made none, nor out of fashion but conscience ...” (f. 253). Jonson would certainly have approved of these self-effacing principles espoused by his self-elected disciple.

Thomas had been busy producing a number of plays, masques and entertainments in the four years preceeding his dramatic ride to York and all of these, in one way or another, comment on the deepening political crisis. It was probably in 1639 that Thomas was appointed one of the deputy-lieutenants for Denbighshire (Calendar 256); this led to close contact with the Lord Lieutenant for North Wales, James Stanley Lord Strange (later seventh Earl of Derby). Thomas became a familiar visitor to their house at Knowsley and here on Twelfth Night 1641 a Masque was performed of his composition. The Derby family were considerable literary patrons and intermittently supported their own dramatic company. To be asked to provide an entertainment for such a family was no mean achievement.

Thomas claims that his masque was ‘designed and written in six howres space’; the invention owes a great deal to Middleton and Rowley’s *Inner Temple Masque* or *Masque of Heroes* of 1618/19. The central device — the departure of Christmas, the reading of his will, and the coming of the New Year — plainly comes from that source. It is, however, very much tailored to the Knowsley household, members of which, both men and women, played the characters of the months of the New Year. Like Jonson, Salusbury makes dialogue and not scenic design the essential vehicle of his meaning; much of the pleasure of the piece lies in the intimate allusions which would have been intelligible to the members of the household. He also appealed to the likely appre-



hensions and sympathies of the audience. The masque deliberately focusses attention on the fear that the passing of Christmas may be permanent, for Parliament was already seriously considering its abolition as a festival:

Strange feares distract mee, lest I prove the last  
Of all my race here, least my poore successours,  
With all theyre troopes of hollidayes, bee bannasht  
For ever ... (56-9)

There is, however, a note of spirited defiance in the speeches of this Christmas:

... let them throw dirt in my face, and spend  
All their whole stock of scorne and nickenames on  
mee:  
Christide instead of Christmas, or what else  
Their braine sicke fancies please ..." (61-4)

The same note is struck in the prophetic speech of August, who roundly asserts that if need be an army "will be raised as a guard for the whole Realme" to secure its stability and happiness. This *Masque at Knowsley* has its full measure of fun and revelry, but it was also an appeal to traditional values and an affirmation of what would soon come to be indentified as Cavalier loyalties.

Thomas Salusbury's most bitter denunciation of the Parliamentary cause is to be found in his last piece for the stage. This is *The Citizen and his Wife*, a drama-cum-masque, which virtually develops into a one-act satiric comedy. It seeks to promote loyalty to the King by presenting the Parliamentary cause as a vulgar and insane insurrection:

... O the revered print of Mr. Pym's buttocks, and the place where all those worthie members stand soe stiffe for the good of the Common wealth, would make a man fresh as youth again. (l. 35-7)

So the Citizen, eulogising the members, inadvertently exposes the cant and moral turpitude of his 'party'. The petty bickering between him and his wife; the latter's covert lasciviousness; the actual disorder of the City through which they conduct the audience; and the final collapse of reason in a parade of Bedlam lunatics (among them one who "lost his sences to heare a Cobler preach and Cry, 'Noe bishops!'" 2.94-5) make colourful propaganda. The indictment of London and its 'Puritan' activists as the root of rebellion strikes a major chord in Royalist polemic of the early 1640s, and Salusbury's adroit mixture of bawdy, parody and magisterial reflection is a familiar strategem of

Cavalier propagandists. The play is a vigorous and frequently eloquent exposé of a collective insanity:

Madnes is a disease o'th'mind, when by some accident  
 Disturbed fancie wrought beyond itt's bounds  
 Corrupts the judgement takes the Crowne from Reason  
 And suffers every Rebell passion sway  
 Untill the Members rise against the head  
 And beate themselves to ruine ....  
 (2.13-18)

The cure is, of course, a return to the old values of King and country; Thomas still desperately hopes that armed conflict might somehow be avoided and the old harmony be found again:

Musique maintains the motion of the Spheares,  
 A harmony that keeps the heavens in order  
 From falling backe to Chaos, and the Elements  
 From their old jarres, they would runne madd without  
 it,  
 And where all discords and all passions cease  
 There will bee Musique and eternall peace.  
 (2.173-8)

Miraculous resolutions are all very plausible on the stage, but by 1642 such dreams had been overtaken by events. On September 27, Parliament sent for him as a delinquent, and instructions were issued to "prepare an Impeachment of High Treason against *Sir Thomas Salusbury*, for actually levying Forces against the King and Parliament, and marching in the Head of those Forces against the Parliament" (*Journals* 2:783).

Thomas Salusbury took part in the battle of Edgehill on October 23, and also in Rupert's attack on Brentford on November 12 (*Gardiner* 1:50). Only six months later he was mortally wounded. He died in July 1643 aged 31.

#### NOTES

1. All quotations from the poems and plays of the Salusburies of Lleweni are taken from National Library of Wales Ms. 5390D. This unique copy of the poems, plays and masques of Sir Thomas Salusbury also contains poems by his father and grandfather.
2. Neither this nor any other play in the Salusbury canon is given a title in the manuscript; the titles are mine.

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