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### Ben Jonson's Prefatory Criticism and the Right to Interpretation

Ben Jonson's use of print technology to establish the author's right to interpretation is well documented. While he was not the first to introduce critical and explanatory prefatory material to his texts, he was the first to take full advantage of the opportunities the material offered. Jonson understood that no matter how eloquent his verse, the final interpretation rested in the minds of the readers. Since he was the creator of the text, it was his voice that spoke – hence the authorial voice - and therefore it was imperative to him that each reader reached the right conclusion. By forming their own interpretations, the readers effectively neutralized his voice. Jonson also feared that the untutored readers would also unjustly compare his works to those of other contemporary writers. By misunderstanding the text, they misunderstood him as well. Although Jonson knew that he could not force the reader to a given interpretation, his prefatory material shows that he attempted to do just that. Time and time again, Ben Jonson consistently used criticism in his prefatory material in order to control the interpretation of the text by mocking inexperienced readers and shoving them in the direction he wanted them to go. He did this in order to ensure that not only the text, but also he himself would be fully appreciated.