

*On My First Daughter*²

Here lies, to each her parents' ruth,
 Mary, the daughter of their youth;
 Yet, all heaven's gifts being heaven's due,
 It makes the father less to rue.

- 5 At six months' end she parted hence
 With safety of her innocence;³
 Whose soul heaven's Queen (whose name she bears),
 In comfort of her mother's tears,
 Hath placed amongst her virgin train;
 10 Where, while that severed doth remain,⁴
 This grave partakes the fleshly birth;⁵
 Which cover lightly, gentle earth.

—1616

*On My First Son*⁶

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy;⁷
 My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy.
 Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
 Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.

- 5 Oh, could I lose all father now! For why⁸
 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?
 Rest in soft peace, and, asked, say here doth lie
 10 Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry;
 For whose sake, henceforth, all his vows be such,
 As what he loves may never like too much.

—1616

² Mary Jonson, probably born after 1598, died at 6 months.

³ *With safety of* without damage to (*OED* safety 1c).

⁴ *that* the soul, disassociated from the body.

⁵ *while that... fleshly birth* i.e. until the Resurrection, the grave has its share of the body.

⁶ Jonson's son Benjamin died in 1611.

⁷ "Benjamin," the name of Jacob's youngest son (*Genesis* 35:18), means son of the right hand; sitting to the right has been traditionally associated with honour (*OED* 2c).

⁸ *lose all father* that is, all parental sentiment.

Alan Rudrum, Joseph Black, et al.,
 ed., The Broadview Anthology
 of Seventeenth-Century Verse
 and Prose (Peterborough:
 Broadview, 2000)