

A Celebration of Charis: I. His Excuse for Loving

By Ben Jonson

Let it not your wonder move,
Less your laughter, that I love.
Though I now write fifty years,
I have had, and have, my peers;
Poets, though divine, are men,
Some have lov'd as old again.
And it is not always face,
Clothes, or fortune, gives the grace;
Or the feature, or the youth.
But the language and the truth,
With the ardour and the passion,
Gives the lover weight and fashion.
If you then will read the story,
First prepare you to be sorry
That you never knew till now
Either whom to love or how;
But be glad, as soon with me,
When you know that this is she
Of whose beauty it was sung;
She shall make the old man young,
Keep the middle age at stay,
And let nothing high decay,
Till she be the reason why
All the world for love may die.



Ben Jonson's "Song to Celia" is known to millions as "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes." Jonson was educated at the prestigious Westminster School in London. He took up acting, and by 1597 he was writing original plays. Jonson's first widely acclaimed play, *Every Man in His Humour*, included William Shakespeare in its cast.

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