

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910459946103321
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Titolo	Ben Jonson and the art of secrecy // William W.E. Slights
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Toronto, [Ontario] ; ; Buffalo, [New York] ; ; London, [England] : , : University of Toronto Press, , 1994 ©1994
ISBN	1-4426-2352-7
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (252 p.)
Collana	Heritage
Disciplina	822/.3
Soggetti	Secrecy in literature Politics and literature - Great Britain - History - 17th century Literature and society - England - History - 17th century Communication in literature Conspiracies in literature Conversation in literature Dialogue Electronic books.
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Acknowledgments -- Note on Texts -- Introduction -- 1. Secret Places in Renaissance Drama -- 2. Mystifying the Tyrant and Enforcing the Text: Impossible Combinations in Sejanus -- 3. The Play of Conspiracies in Volpone -- 4. Private Lies, Public Notice: Epicoene and Theatrical Deception -- 5. The New Face of Secrecy in The Alchemist -- 6. Catiline's Conspiracy and the Problem of Containment -- 7. State-Decipherers and Politique Picklockes: Interpretation as Self-Replication in Bartholomew Fair -- Conclusion -- Notes -- Works Cited -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	Secrets accomplish their cultural work by distinguishing the knowable from the (at least temporarily) unknowable, those who know from those who don't. Within these distinctions resides an enormous power that Ben Jonson (1572-1637) both deplored and exploited in his art of making plays. Conspiracies and intrigues are the driving force of

Jonson's dramatic universe. Focusing on *Sejanus, His Fall*; *Volpone, or the Fox*; *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*; *The Alchemist*; *Catiline, His Conspiracy*, and *Bartholomew Fair*, William Slights places Jonson within the context of the secrecy-ridden culture of the court of King James I and provides illuminating readings of his best-known plays. Slights draws on the sociology of secrecy, the history of censorship, and the theory of hermeneutics to investigate secrecy, intrigue, and conspiracy as aspects of Jonsonian dramatic form, contemporary court/city/church politics, and textual interpretation. He argues that the tension between concealment and revelation in the plays affords a model for the poise that sustained Jonson in the intricately linked worlds of royal court and commercial theatre and that made him a pivotal figure in the cultural history of early modern England. Equally rejecting the position that Jonson was a renegade subverter of the *arcana imperii* and that he was a thorough-going court apologist, Slights finds that the playwright redraws the lines between private and public discourse for his own and subsequent ages.

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