

# Leeds Studies in English

**Article:**

Walt Taylor, 'Arabic Words in Ben Jonson', *Leeds Studies in English*, 3 (1934), 44-50

**Permanent URL:**

[https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=134456&silos\\_library=GEN01](https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=134456&silos_library=GEN01)



*Leeds Studies in English*  
School of English  
University of Leeds  
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

## ARABIC WORDS IN BEN JONSON.

Ben Jonson's *Complete Plays* have been read in the Everyman edition ed. F. E. Schelling (London, 1928 reprint, 2 vols.), and the rest of his works in *The Works of Ben Jonson* ed. W. Gifford (London, 1816, 9 vols.); but the references given have been checked from the Folios of 1616 and 1640. In our list the figure in brackets after the word indicates the number of times the word is used, if more than once. The date after the word is that of its first use by Jonson, and the date in brackets is that of its first recorded use in English if there is a use recorded previous to that of Jonson's. I have taken 1637 as the last possible date for those words which occur for the first time in posthumous publications. An asterisk in front of the word indicates that the word (in one form or another) was used by Chaucer.

\*alchemist (9) 1599 (1514) [alchemister c. 1386].

alchemy (7) 1605 (1362).

Alchindus [=Alkindy] c. 1621 [In Latin 1141].

\*Alcoran 1637 (1366).

? alcoreas *pl.* 1616 [Not in O.E.D.]

*The Devil is an Ass* IV, 1 (iv)=Schelling II, 323, l. 11.

? cf. Span. *alcorza* 'small round tart' or 'cake of sweet-meats' from Ar. *al-qurça*, 'the lozenge.'<sup>1</sup>

\*alembek [=alembic] (3) 1605 (c. 1374).

alfarez [=alferes] 1531 (1591).

algebra [=bone-setting] 1610 (1541).

\*alkali 1610 (c. 1386).

\*alma-cantara [=almucantera] 1625 (c. 1391).

\*almanac(k) (17) 1598 (c. 1391).

almojavana [=a kind of cheese fritter] 1616 [Not in O.E.D.]

*The Devil is an Ass* IV, iv=Schelling II, 323, l. 10.

from Span. *almojabana* from Ar. *al-mojabanah* from *jibn* 'cheese'—Dozy-Engelmann, p. 172.

<sup>1</sup> Eguilaz s.v. *ALCORZA* quotes the recipe, which includes sugar, musk, amber, powdered pearl and red coral.

almuten 1625 [O.E.D. records a use by Fletcher at the same date].

*The Staple of News*, Schelling II, 373, l. 23.

aludel 1510 (1559).

? alvagada 1616 [Not in O.E.D.]

*The Devil is an Ass* IV, i (iv) = Schelling II, 320, l. 5.

? cf. Span. *albaya*lde, Pg. *alvaiada* 'ceruse' from Ar. *al-baiyâd*—Dozy-Engelmann, p. 70; and Eguilaz s.v. ALBAYALDE.

\* amalgam *vb.* 1610 (c. 1386).

amalgama *sb.* (2) 1610 (1471).

amber, ambre (8) 1599 (1398).

ambergris(e) (2) 1626 (1481-90).

antimasque (25) 1616 (1613), and *antic-masque* 1622; *antick-masque* 1622; *anti-mask* 1609 [Not in O.E.D.]

*The Masque of Queens*, Gifford VII, 117.

antimony 1605 (1477).

apricot, apricock (5) 1598 (1551).

arsenal (2) 1605 (1506).

\* arsenic (3) 1610 (c. 1386).

artichoke (4) 1598 (1531).

assassinate *vb.* 1605 [O.E.D. does not record before 1618.]

*Volpone* III, iv = Schelling I, 441, l. 2.

assassinate *sb.* (2) 1609 (1600).

athanor (2) 1610 (1471).

\* Averroes 1637 (?)

\* Avicen [= Avicenna] 1637 (?)

azoch [= azoth] 1610 (1477).

\* azure (3) 1609 (c. 1325).

\* Barbary 1625 (c. 1300).

Barbican c. 1633 (c. 1300; as name of street in London, 1632).

benjamin (2) 1600 (1580) [*benzoin* 1558].

bezoar 1599 (1477).

buckram (3) c. 1633 (1222).

buzzard (4) 1598 (c. 1300).

\* cable (4) 1599 (c. 1205).

- caliver 1609 (1568).  
 caper [=the spice] 1616 (c. 1382).  
 candied (in *sugar candied*) (2) 1600 (1592) [*candy* 1420].  
 caract [=carat] (9) 1598 (1552).  
 ? carravicin 1616 [?=caraway (1440)] [Not in O.E.D.]  
     *The Devil is an Ass* IV, iv=Schelling II, 320, l. 24  
     (*carrnuacins* in 1640).  
 \*check 1616 (c. 1314).  
 checker'd 1609 (1486).  
 chemical *adj* 1605 (1576).  
 chequed [=chequered] c. 1625 (c. 1460).  
 'Chequer [=Exchequer] 1637 (c. 1300).  
 chequin (5) 1605 (1583).  
 chibrit [=sulphur] 1610 [O.E.D. records only *kibrit*, 1706].  
     *The Alchemist* II, iii=Schelling II, 28, l. 8.  
 chimia 1625 [Not in O.E.D.]  
     *The Staple of News* III (Third Intermeane)=Schelling II,  
     396, l. 12.  
     from med. L. (*al-*)*chimia*, from Ar. *al-kîmiâ*.  
 chymist 1625 (1562).  
 ciphers (4) 1605 (1533) [Never in sense 'O' (1399).]  
 civet (4) 1599 (1532), and *civet-wit* 1600.  
 cohobation (2) 1610 (1605).  
 cordovan 1637 (1591) [see p. 50].  
 crimson 1610 (c. 1400).  
 damask (9) 1610 (c. 1250).  
 decipher (4) 1599 (1545), and *decyphered* (5) 1599.  
 deciphering (2) 1599 (1552).  
 decypherer (2) 1599 (1587).  
 \*elixir (11) 1600 (c. 1386).  
 frieze (2) 1604 (1563).  
 \*fustian (6) 1599 (c. 1200).  
 Geber 1616 (?).  
 genii *pl.* 1637 (1590).  
 guittara 1621.  
     *The Gipsies Metamorphosed*, Gifford VII, 373, l. 20.  
     through Ar. from Gk. *κίθára*.

- \*hazard (2I) 1603 (c. 1300).  
 hazardous 1625 (1580).  
 heautarit [=quicksilver] 1610 [Not in O.E.D.; in Mayhew and Skeat's *Tudor and Stuart Words*.]  
*The Alchemist* II, iii=Schelling II, 28, l. 8.  
 Hyleg 1625 [O.E.D. records a use by Beaumont and Fletcher at the same date.]  
*The Staple of News*, Schelling II, 407, l. 19.  
 jennet, gennet (2) 1605 (1463).  
 jessamine [=jasmine] (2) 1616 (1548).  
 julep, julap (3) 1603 (c. 1400).  
 kemia 1610 [Not in O.E.D.]  
*The Alchemist* II, iii=Schelling II, 25, l. 40.  
 lackey (4) 1600 (1529).  
 lemon, limon (3) 1605 (c. 1400).  
 \*limbeck, lembec (2) 1610 (c. 1350).  
 \*lute (7) 1609 (1361-2), also *lute-string*.  
 magazine (2) 1600 (1583).  
 \*Mahomet 1599 (c. 1380).  
 Mamaluchi *pl.* [=Mamelukes] 1605 (1511).  
 \*mammet 1610 (c. 1205).  
 marchesite [=marcasite] 1610 (1471).  
 marchpane (3) 1600 (c. 1494).  
 mask, masque *sb.* (6) 1601 (1534); also *un-mask vb.* 1600 (1586).  
 masked (3) 1600 [O.E.D. does not record before 1637, and then quotes from Jonson a passage which might be referred to 1629.]  
*Cynthia's Revels* V, xi=Schelling I, 229, l. 22.  
 masking *adj.* 1600 (1546).  
 masque (76) 1600 (1514); also *masqued* (2) 1600.  
 masquer (35) 1608 (1580, *masker* 1548).  
 Masquerado (personified) 1616 (*masquerade* 1587).  
*Love Restored*, Gifford VII, 213, l. 2.  
 masquing *sb.* and *adj.* (5) 1616 (1546 and 1577).  
 moscadini 1600.  
*Cynthia's Revels* V, iv=Schelling I, 213, l. 10.

- moscadelli 1605 (1554/5) [In O.E.D. *sv. muscatel.*]  
 mummia 1601 (c. 1400).  
 muscadel (2) 1605 (c. 1400).  
 musk (4) 1599 (1398); also *musk-cat* 1600 (1551); *musk-cod*  
 1599; *musk-melon* 1605 (1573); *musk-worm* 1600.  
 \*myrrh 1616 (c. 825).  
 nanfa [in *aqua nanfa*] 1616 [Not in O.E.D.; possibly an  
 abbreviated form of *nenuphar* (1425).]  
*The Devil is an Ass* IV, iv=Schelling II, 323, l. 13.  
 nard (2) 1600 (971).  
 orange (5) 1599 (13—).  
 \*popinjay 1599 (c. 1310).  
 \*Rabian [=Arabian] 1637 [Not in O.E.D. (*Arabian* 1391).]  
*A Tale of a Tub* IV, i=Schelling II, 613, l. 19.  
 \*Rasis [=Rhazes] 1637 (?); and once *Rasi*, supposedly in  
 error.  
 ream 1637 (c. 1392).  
 \*ribibe 1616 (c. 1386).  
 \*rosaker [=realgar] 1598 (1592) [*Realgar* c. 1400; *resalgar*  
 c. 1386]  
 \*saffron (2) 1605 (1200); *saffron'd* c. 1621 (1303).  
*Saracen* c. 1610 (c. 893).  
 sarsnet 1610 (1463).  
 sericon 1610 (15—).  
 sesama 1600 (c. 1440).  
 spikenard (2) 1600 (c. 1350) [See *nard*].  
 \*sugar (3) 1600 (1289-90); *sugar-chest* 1605.  
 \*sugared (2) 1600 (c. 1374).  
 syrup (3) 1599 (1392-3).  
 \*tabor, taber (9) 1614 (c. 1290).  
 taborer c. 1621 (c. 1400).  
 tabouring-sticke c. 1621 [Not in O.E.D.]  
*The Gipsies Metamorphosed*=Gifford VII, 405, l. 18.  
 tabret 1637 (c. 1464).  
 \*taffata [=taffeta] (8) 1599 (1373); *tuff-taffata* (3) 1600  
 (1572).

talc (3) 1610 (1601).

\*tartar (2) 1610 (c. 1386); *sal-tartar* 1610.

tennis (2) 1600 (c. 1440) [See p. 50]; *tennis-court-keeper* 1637.

timburine (2) 1637 (1579).

truchman [=dragoman] (3) 1600 (1485).

turmerick 1600 (1538).

tutie [=tutty] 1600 (c. 1400).

\*zenith 1601 (c. 1387).

zernich [=zarnich] 1610.

*The Alchemist* II, iii=Schelling II, 28, l. 8.

zuccarino 1616 [In O.E.D. s.v. *zucarine* (c. 1425).]

\*zucche [=sugar] 1616 (1289-90).

Derivations for the above words, showing how they came into English from or through Arabic, are to be found in the compiler's *Etymological List of Arabic Words in English* (Giza, 1934), obtainable from Messrs. Blackwell of Oxford.

From the above list it is seen that the words used by Jonson at the earliest recorded date in English were *alcorea*, *almojavana*, *almuten*, *alvagada*, *anti-mask*, (to) *assassinate*, the form *carravicin*, *chibrit*, *chimia*, *guitar*, *heautarit*, *Hyleg*, *kemia*, *masked*, *moscadini*, *nanfa*, the form *Rabian*, *taboring-stick*, and *zernich*—a large number when it is considered that we are dealing with only a small part of his vocabulary.

It is seen from the above list that about a third of the words are connected with the scientific knowledge of Jonson's time; and it is noteworthy that the technical vocabulary of *The Alchemist* is taken largely from Chaucer's *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*.<sup>1</sup> The other two-thirds of the words deal with a variety of things—stuffs, foods, spices, fruits, musical instruments, etc. There are six proper names of persons and six other proper names. All the words are substantives except a few verbal and

<sup>1</sup> For the rest he seems to follow the vocabulary of Sir George Ripley's *The Compound of Alchemie* (1471, first printed 1591) and of Thomas Norton's *Ordinal of Alchimy* (1477, first English edition 1652 in Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum*, first Latin edition 1618: Jonson may have known the work in manuscript). Mr. E. J. Holmyard, the latest editor of Norton's *Ordinal*, dates it c. 1420, and we should perhaps read 'c. 1420' in place of '1477' as the earliest occurrence of *antimony*, *azoch*, *bezoar*.

adjectival formations from substantives already current—'enfranchised' is Jonson's word<sup>2</sup>—in English.

I include the word *tennis* in the above list to draw attention to the fact that an Arabic etymology is to be suggested for it in the new edition of Webster's *International Dictionary*, in which the Arabic loan-words have been carefully revised by Professor P. K. Hitti of Princeton.

*Cordovan* is included as an Arabic semantic value in English. It was the excellence of Arab craftsmen which made Cordovan leather famous throughout Europe, and so gave us this word, and also *cordwainer* (1100).

*Almanac* is included because it is derived from Spanish Arabic, though the word does not go back to classical Arabic.

Two other oriental words in Jonson are worthy of note: the star-name *Alchochoden* (1625), not in O.E.D., but recorded *s.v.* *Alchoroden* in Mayhew and Skeat's *Glossary of Tudor and Stuart Words*, derived from Persian, though it may have been brought to Europe by Arab astrologers; and *chiaus* [=military or police sergeant] (1610), a Turkish word, of which the Arabic form *shaweesh* is perhaps better known to modern readers.

It would appear from the above investigation that the works of Jonson have not yet been sufficiently carefully read for lexicographical purposes.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps they will be so read when the Jonson canon is established in the complete critical edition by C. H. Herford and P. Simpson (Oxford, 10 vols., of which vols. I-IV have been issued since 1925).

WALT. TAYLOR

<sup>2</sup> *Enfranchise* in this sense is not recorded in O.E.D. before 1668, though it had been used by Richard Mulcaster in his *Elementarie* (1582), as had been the derivatives *enfranchiser*, *enfranchisement*, also unrecorded in this sense in O.E.D.

<sup>3</sup> For example the following words, not of Arabic origin, are unrecorded in O.E.D.:—*mantecada* 1616 (*The Devil is an Ass* IV, i (iv)=Schelling II, 323, l. 10). *cf.* *manteca* (1660), for which see Simonet (*Glosario de voces ibéricas y latinas usadas entre los mozárabes*, Madrid 1888) *s.v.* *Mantheca*. *mustaccioli* 1616 (*The Devil is an Ass* IV, i (iv)=Schelling II, 323, l. 11)=Ital. *mostacciolo* 'spiced cake.'

But it may be that these words, which were never naturalised in English, were omitted of set purpose.