Jonson's Beard and Shakespeare's Purge: *Hamlet, Parnassus,* and the Poet's War

Steve Roth
steve@steve-roth.com

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IN THE CHRISTMAS SEASON OF 1601/1602, probably at New Year's (Leishman 24–26, and note to ll. 1065–72), students of St. John's College, Cambridge presented an entertainment to their compatriots in the college's great hall: *The Return from Pernassus, Or the Scourge of Simony.* (This its published title; in manuscript it's *The Progresse to Parnassus*.) It was the final work in a trilogy presented at St. John's Christmas-season celebrations starting in 1598/1599 or 1599/1600. (I will refer to it here as *Parnassus* or *II Returne,* and to its prequels as *Pilgrimage* and *I Returne.*) A thorough *drama a clef* depicting and parodying the London literary scene, *Parnassus* is best known among Shakespeareans for its on-stage depiction of Chamberlain's Men Richard Burbage and William Kempe (by those names), and for its repeated references to William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and other dramatists and literateurs of the day—both their persons and their works. Despite energetic speculations over many decades, it's not known if the plays were by a single author or multiple, or who he or they may have been.

One passage of Kempe's from the play has always attracted the most attention (1766–1773; emphasis added):

> Few of the university men pen plaies well, they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphoses, and talk too much of Proserpina & Juppiter. Why heres our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down, I and Ben Jonson too. And *that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow, he brought up Horace giving the Poets a pill, but our fellow Shakespeare hath given him a purge that made him beray his credit.*[1]

There has been much discussion of that pill, purge, and bewrayal, and their relation to the 1598–1601 "poet's war" or *poetomachia* (so-styled by Thomas Dekker in his "To the World," prepended to *Satiro-mastix* in the 1602 quarto). That contention concluded with *Satiro-mastix* and Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*—both composed and produced in 1601 (spring or probably fall), registered in Nov and Dec 1601, respectively, and both published in 1602.[2]

To encapsulate the critical thinking about *Parnassus'*s pill, purge, and bewrayal:

All commenters agree that the pill refers to a scene in Jonson's *Poetaster*, in which Horace (figuring Jonson) gives Crispinus (figuring John Marston) a pill that causes him to vomit up a whole lexicon of identifiably Marston-esque verbiage (v.iii.498–564).

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1. References to *Parnassus* are to the Leishman edition. Shakespeare quotations and line references are to the 1986 modernized Oxford text, from the 2005 *Complete Works* (Wells et al). *Poetaster* and *Satiro-mastix* references are to Penniman (1913). For all other quotations I have sought to use texts that are available online, except when it is necessary to reference a particular printed edition with no online reproduction. For secondary sources of evidence and analysis, credit for findings is attributed to the originators wherever possible; later theorizations are not cited unless they contribute additional findings.

2. For detailed discussions of the poetomachian chronology, see Bednarz 2001, 9, and the thorough and cogent discussion in his Chronological Appendix, 265–276. Also Roth 2002b.

Various have averred[3] that Shakespeare's purge of Jonson was delivered in *Satiro-mastix* (which also figures Jonson as Horace, and "untrusses" him), played by the Chamberlain's Men at the Globe probably in the fall of 1601—the theory being that the *Parnassus* author simply conflated Shakespeare with his company. While plausible, this is unsatisfying for obvious reasons: 1. Shakespeare doesn't administer the purge; his company does. 2. As Bednarz (2001, 22) points out, there is no purge. "Horace is never literally purged in *Satiro-mastix*. He is 'untrussed' (or stripped bare), threatened with whipping, and crowned with nettles." He adds in a footnote [283], "Horace/Jonson is threatened with a purge, but none is given."

Bednarz and his predecessors (eg Fleay, Smeaton, Small, Elton, Potts) have argued that the purge was administered in *Troilus and Cressida*—that Ajax ("a jakes") is at least partially a purgative sendup of Jonson. Bednarz has argued this most convincingly, in a much larger context of Shakespeare's engagement throughout the poetomachia, in multiple plays.

Brooke (383–86) is singular, I believe, in suggesting that the purge was administered in *Hamlet*—though he suggests it happened in now-lost lines from a production acted at the University of Cambridge (per *Hamlet*'s Q1 title page). He suggests that the lines were intentionally omitted from Q2 of 1604 because of "Restraint by Authority"—as Jonson's Apologetical Dialogue was omitted from the 1602 quarto of *Poetaster* (it's included in the 1616 folio version), and as the "little eyases" reference to the poetomachia (2.2.338-363) was (in Brooke's view) omitted from Q2 *Hamlet* of 1604. The lost lines were omitted from F1 *Hamlet*, he believes—despite the inclusion of the eyases passage—out of deference to Jonson, who was a dominant dramatic *éminence grise* by 1623, and was contributing a fulsome eulogy of Shakespeare to the volume.

Jonson's self-bewrayal has been little discussed, but Roth (2002b) has argued that it occurred in the ill-tempered "Apologetical Dialogue," added to *Poetaster* after its first playings. The dialogue is absent from the 1602 quarto edition, and an appended "To the reader" explains that it was "restrained by authority." A different "To the reader" in the 1616 folio (which does include the dialogue) gives us our name for the dialogue, and says it "was only once spoken upon the stage." That edition's dedication to Richard Martin gives thanks for Martin's defense of Jonson in legal proceedings apparently brought against him for presenting the dialogue: "...this peece...for whose innocence, as for the Authors, you were once a noble and timely undertaker, to the greatest Justice of this kindome...which so much ignorance, and malice of the times, then conspir'd to have supprest." That Jonson himself spoke the dialogue on stage is suggested in the 1602 quarto's "To the Reader" (emphasis added): "thinke charitably of what thou has read, till thou maist *heare him speake what hee hath written*." (Penniman 167) Jonson represented himself as a character in his own *poetomachian* works multiple times—as Asper in *Every Man Out of his Humour* (1599, Chamberlain's), Criticus/Crites (Q/F) in *Cynthia's Revels* (1600, Children of the Chapel), and Horace in *Poetaster* (1601, Children of the Chapel). The Apologetical Dialogue is the only instance in which the character is "Author."

The theories about *Troilus* as the site of the purge have much merit which I won't essay to impugn here. (The armed prologues in both *Poetaster* and *Troilus* constitute especially convincing evidence.) The purge could have been administered in more than one play. But I would like to suggest an explanation that may serve to crowd out or supplement that position: that Shakespeare administered his purge of Jonson in *Hamlet*—and *pace* Brooke, in *Hamlet* as we know it.

Dating *Hamlet*

This suggestion is supported, firstly, by the chronology. *Poetaster* was presented by the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriar's before 25 September, 1601. *Satiromastix* was completed after 14 August and played before 24 October (Bednarz 2001 272) — first by the Paul's Boys, then by the Chamberlains' Men at the Globe. (This sequence is attested by Tucca's "Epilogus"; see note 13.) According to almost all

3. Examples include: Chambers, *E.S.* 4:40; Honan, P. *Shakespeare: A Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 278; Shelling, F. E. *The complete plays of Ben Jonson*, London: J.M. Dent and New York: E.P. Dutton, 1910, p. 6 (available online at bibliomania.com/0/6/238/1090/13807/6/frameset.html).

editors and commentators, *Hamlet* was presented largely in its extant form in the months immediately following.

Fleay, Penniman, Small, Chambers, Wilson, Honigman, Jenkins, Hibbard, Edwards, (Gary) Taylor, Ioppolo, Thompson & Taylor, and Bednarz, among many others, all agree that *Hamlet*'s F1-only "eyrie of children, little eyases" passage (2.2.340; also Q1's "humour of children" adumbration) refers to the poetomachian contentions that culminated with *Poetaster* and *Satiromastix*, and that that passage, at least, was composed in the Fall of 1601. Despite much other suggestive evidence, none of it sets a definitive *terminus post quem* prior to this date for the first performances of the Shakesperean *Hamlet* as we know it in F, Q2, and portions of Q1.[4]

The consensus on the eyases passage has been questioned by Rosalyn Knutson (1995), who suggests the passage was composed between 1606 and 1608. To condense her positive argument for those dates (21): "If…[three speculative surmises are all true,]…it is plausible…" The argument is far from definitive. Bednarz 2021 strongly challenges the late dating, claiming that Knutson's linchpin interpretations of "innovation" and "tyrannical" in the eyases passage are mispised. The autumn 1601 date for the passage remains decidedly plausible, and most still think it is the most plausible.

Further support for this dating arises in Gonzago's "full thirty times" speech, which so obviously draws on *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, revived by The Admiral's Men in August, 1601. Two other passages in *Hamlet* echo the *True Tragedy of Richard III,* which the Admiral's may have had in production at the same time. (All discussed at more length below.)

Sohmer (1996, supported by Roth 2002a) has suggested even more specific dating for the internal action in *Hamlet* (and perhaps even a date for its 1601 season opening), based on calendrical evidence: the ghost's four appearances on the ramparts are identified with the nights of Friday 30 October through Monday 2 November 1601—the Feast of Marcellus, All Hallows Eve, All Saints', and All Souls'. The latter three are all deeply associated with ghostly appearances, and remembrance of the dead. *Viz:* the ghost's "Remember me," thrice echoed by Hamlet. That dating also sets up a telling conjunction between the King's murder and the death of Shakespeare's father John just under two months prior ("But two months dead, nay not so much, not two" 1.2.138). Multiple editors (most recently Thompson and Taylor [36]) have found intuitive appeal in the coincidence of Shakespeare's father's death, the litany of half a dozen dead fathers in *Hamlet*, and *Hamlet*'s final composition date.

That coincidence, the scholarly consensus on the eyries/eyases passage, and that passage's "inside-baseball" commentary on the *poetomachia* that culminated in late 1601 (which was then commented upon in *Parnassus* at the turn of the year), plus the *Alphonsus* and *True Tragedie* allusions, all position the play's final composition at the very culmination, and in the very thick of, the poetomachia's intensely rivalrous self-commentary on Elizathethan theater and drama—in the Fall of 1601. The present discussion both relies on and further supports that dating, demonstrating responses in *Hamlet* to tragic and poetomachian material and events prior to October/November, 1601—often immediately prior.

A Poetomachian *Hamlet*?

Hamlet delivers a dense, complex, very funny web of topical, theater-insider allusions that extends well beyond the eyases passage, encompassing the whole, central "players" portion of the play. According to Rosencranz in that "eyases" passage, and both Jonson ("Author") and Histrio in *Poetaster,* such railleries at least contributed to a play's commercial success in those poetomachian days. In Josiah Penniman's words (1897, 105):

4. Regarding Q1, Macdonald P. Jackson has examined "the scattered passages that are textually almost identical with their counterparts in Q2 and read like mature Shakespearean verse." (91 lines: ll. 2.110–25, 2.155–64 + 166–69, 4.15–32, 5.8b–18, 5.41–53, 7.31–51, and 7.340–48 in the modernized Thompson/Taylor Arden 3 Q1 text.) Multiple stylistic analyses convincingly support the dating of those passages' composition to the turn of the century.

> "Jonson states [in the Apologetical Dialogue to *Poetaster*] that these satirical plays were profitable to the writers. The plays 'gave them meat' and 'got them clothes,' and this was their end in writing them. Histrio says (III. 1) that the reason for hiring Demetrius (Dekker) to bring in Horace (Jonson) and his gallants in a play [*Satiro-mastix*] is that 'it will get us a huge deal of money . . . and we have need on't."

This is not to suggest (as Brooke does, unwisely), that The Chamberlain's Men were driven to provincial touring by competition from the boys' companies. Brooke is on firmer ground when he says:

> "Commercially speaking, plays like 'Cynthia's Revels' and 'The Poetaster' can hardly have been very formidable rivals to such notable successes as 'Henry V,' 'Julius Caesar,' and 'Hamlet,' even when we make the greatest possible allowance for the current topical interest of the former. The Blackfriars Theatre also was relatively small, and appears to have been open only one night a week."

For his latter point, Brooke cites Wallace (1908, 104–107), who offers his own translation of passages from the diary of Frederic Gerschow, who attended a performance of the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars on Saturday, 18 September, 1602. Of the boys he says, "it is required of them to act a play every week." Of equal interest here: the price of admittance was "as much as eight shillings of our [Wallace: Pomeranian] coinage [Wallace: *ca. 12 d.*]". The most expensive gallery seats at the Globe went for half that amount: six pence.

Add to all this: Richard Burbage was landlord to Nathaniel Giles and Henry Evans and their Children of the Chapel Royal at Blackfriar's. And the Chamberlain's took up Dekker's *Satiro-Mastix* from Paul's Boys, playing it at the Globe. Both suggest rather friendly rivalry.

So yes, the boy's companies were, once a week, drawing away some of the Chamberlain's most profitable customers—the six-penny tenants of the galleries—and given the higher entrance fee, even more of those customers' playgoing budgets. These were also the Globe's best-educated, highest-status customers, in an age when status very much mattered. And they were the bloggers and tweeters (and book buyers) of their day, commonplacing choice phrases in their "tables" and (mis)quoting them to others (see, for instance, Gullio in *I Returne,* and Judicio in *II Returne*), and including them in published literary miscellanies like *Belvedere.* (*Parnassus* 1.2 consists almost entirely of two wits discussing that work.) But this is insufficient to suggest that the Chamberlain's were forced into provincial touring like the players in *Hamlet.* The "estimation" that Hamlet asks Rosencrantz about was more about the good opinions of worthies and wits like Hamlet and his fellow playgoers of "the City"—the "many wearing Rapiers"—than about enterprise-threatening commercial competition.

The imagery of the players plodding about the provinces has a target, but it is not the Chamberlain's Men. Rather, it's a direct taking-up of similar language and imagery from *Satiro-mastix* — language explicitly directed at Horace/Jonson and his time with the Pembroke's Men. It's among many parodic allusions in *Hamlet* to tragedies, especially revenge tragedies, and particularly to tragedies of companies (Pembroke's, Admiral's) that Jonson had a hand in as an up-and-coming actor, script doctor, and playwright. *Hamlet* delivers an extended send-up of Jonson's "tragic flaws" from the preceding months and years. And it does so at the very culmination of the poetomachia.

A Filthy Whining Ghost

Hamlet's (self-)referential commentary did not emerge in a vacuum, of course. Over the preceding decade—from the late-1580s era of *The Spanish Tragedy* and the presumed *ur-Hamlet* to the time of the Shakespearean *Hamlet*'s first playings at the turn of the century—Elizabethan theater became increasingly self-aware and metadramatic or metatheatrical (or to employ an unfortunately common academic redundancy, "self-reflexive"). The rise of comical satire, and the poetomachia itself, rather epitomize

this.[5] In particular, even while revenge tragedies continued as a successful genre, at the turn of the century they were navigating very different cultural territory. The "tragic clichés…of the late 1580s and 1590s tragedy—ambitious tyrants, narrating choruses…and ghosts," and "its characteristic style: sensational, over-blown (with its howling choruses and shrieking ghosts), and laden with the flashes, bangs and smoke of special effects" (Smith 2010, 88)—were regular objects of ridicule.

That raillery can be scented even as early as Thomas Nashe's 1589 "whole Hamlets, I should say handfulls of tragical speaches" (McKerrow 1905, 315), but at least by 1596 it was being expressed unequivocally and in reference to the ghost in *Hamlet*, in Thomas Lodge's 1596 treatise, *Wit's Miserie and the World's Madness*: "the ghost which cried so miserably at the Theatre, like an oyster-wife, 'Hamlet, revenge.'" (Lodge 1596, 56) The trope arises explicitly in the induction to Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (1600); one of the boy players inveighs against another: "the ghosts of some three or four plays departed a dozen years since, have been seen walking on your stage here; take heed boy, if your house be haunted with such hobgoblins, 'twill fright away all your spectators quickly." (Herford and Simpson Vol. 4.) And it achieves something of an apotheosis in the prominently positioned induction to the anonymous *A Warning for Fair Women* (Chamberlain's Men; stationer's register and printed 1599),[6] where a personified "Comedy" asserts that "Tragedy" rather tiringly and predictably depicts (Farmer 2)[7]:

> How some damned tyrant, to obtain a crown,
> Stabs, hangs, empoisons, smothers, cutteth throats;
> And then a Chorus too comes howling in,
> And tells us of the worrying of a cat;
> Then of a filthy whining ghost,
> Lapped in some foul sheet, or a leather pelch,
> Comes screaming like a pig half-sticked,
> And cries 'Vindicat! Revenge, revenge!'
> With that a little rosin flasheth forth,
> Like smoke out of a tobacco pipe, or a boy's squib;
> Then Comes in two or three like to drovers,
> With tailors' bodkins, stabbing one another[.]

Shakespeare himself takes part in that tragic-ridicule tradition via Hamlet's panegyric for the play from which the tragic Hecuba speech is drawn—a speech (about Pyrrhus revenging his father's murder) that is thoroughly Senecan in its description rather than depiction of bloody deeds of the ancients (2.2.437–48):

> I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was
> never acted, or, if it was, not above once; for the play,

5. Gregory Semenza sees *The Spanish Tragedy* as seminal in this development: "it establishes a dramatic mode consistent with the increasing epistemological indeterminacy of post-Reformation European thought and, in the process, establishes its most basic tool – theatrical self-awareness and/or self-scrutiny – as the basis of the early modern, and perhaps the modern, theatrical experience."

6. This play's depiction of a woman who'd murdered her husband confessing in response to a dramatic portrayal of her act—in a play that contains three dumb shows—may have been the proximate impetus for the mousetrap in *Hamlet*, though other similar accounts were in circulation, both contemporary and ancient.

7. This passage might serve as an example of the parodic view emerging earlier; some editors believe on rather tenuous grounds that it was composed as early as 1588-1590. But we know from the title page of its 1599 edition (stationers' register: 17 Nov, 1599) that it had been "lately diuerse times acted by the right Honorable, the Lord Chamberlaine his Seruantes." The induction's ridicule of old-fashioned staginess rather undercuts the primary evidence for an earlier composition date: the play's use of old-fashioned "structure of the blank verse, the introduction of allegorical personages, the chorus and elaborate dumb-show before each act." (Hopkinson 1893, xiv) It is one of those allegorical personages, in fact ("Comedy"), who delivers the tirade against such musty stuff.

> I remember, pleased not the million. 'Twas caviare to the general. But it was - as I received it, and others whose judgements in such matters cried in the top of mine - an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember one said there was no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affectation, but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine.

The play was "set down with as much modesty as cunning"? "No sallets [seasoning] in the lines to make the matter savory"? "No matter in the phrase"? "As wholesome as sweet"? "Very much more handsome than fine"? Given this staccato of ironically lefthanded praise (at best), it seems safer to view this "caviar to the general" passage as a cleverly framed parody of Hamlet and his fellow playgoing wits ("others, whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine"), and their elitist, old-fashioned views on playwriting—a parody written by an inveterately populist playwright.

The youthful E. K. Chambers can stand as proxy for others who have come to this view. In his own edition of the play (1895, 151) he suggests: "perhaps we must not confuse Shakespeare with Hamlet; the actor-playwright…may be gently satirizing the point of view of the university and court wit and scholar."[8] Or perhaps not so gently: *Parnassus*'s Kempe likewise demeans such wits, and by comparison to Shakespeare: "few of the university men pen plaies well," he says, but "heres our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down" (1766, 1769).

Hamlet's constant invocation of and commentary on increasingly dated dramatic styles, especially tragical ones, almost begs its audience of Elizabethan playgoers to look back on that tragic tradition, including *Hamlet'*s own earlier incarnations (and the ghost's), and the poetomachian contentions that commented upon it—especially on examplars from the immediately preceding months and years, and notably on exemplars in which Jonson was involved.

The ghost's injunction on the ramparts is not just a call to Hamlet; it's a call to playgoers at the Globe: "Remember me."

The Croaking Raven Doth Bellow for Revenge

The notion that *Hamlet* makes fun of old-fashioned tragic plays, players, playing companies, and playing styles is far from new.[9] A prominent representative example is J. D. Wilson's argument in Appendix C of *What Happens in Hamlet* (1951) that the players—with their neo-Senecan Hecuba speech, dumb show, stagey acting, and patches of purple poetry—are among other things a takeoff on Henslowe and Alleyn's Admiral's Men, their repertoire, and even on Alleyn himself.[10]

According to Wilson, Rosencrantz's description of the players as "tragedians of the city" points to the Admiral's Men, whose main stock included Marlowe's tragedies and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy,* and whose leading actor, Alleyn, was famous almost solely as a tragedian. Citing Chambers (1923, II: 297, with his five supporting examples), he asserts that that Hamlet's "When Roscius was an actor in Rome"

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8. Marchette Chute (227) expresses a similar view.

9. Thorndike (1902) provides an admirably complete catalog of *Hamlet*'s relationships to earlier Elizabethan revenge tragedies.

10. Tom Rutter's *Shakespeare and the Admirals Men: Reading across Repertories on the London Stage, 1594–1600* offers many examples of the complex and multidirectional awareness and cross-influences between Shakespeare and Admirals Men dramatists in the years preceding the first playings of *Hamlet* as we know it. The book does not include a section on tragedies, however, and *Hamlet* is only mentioned a few times in passing.

would immediately bring to mind Alleyn: "'Roscius' was the title almost universally conferred at that time upon Alleyn."

William Armstrong has challenged this characterization of Alleyn's acting, and the assertion that *Hamlet* and Hamlet comment upon it. He points out that the "Roscius" moniker was as frequently applied to Burbage, as well as Shakespeare, Tarleton, and others, and points to praise for Alleyn's acting by notables who also express notable distaste for hand-sawing and such: Nashe in 1593, Jonson in 1614 and 1616, and Webster in 1612. But with the exception of the Nashe snippet, these encomia are all from later years; Alleyn's style could have changed with an emerging preference for more naturalistic acting. And in any case Armstrong's Roscius contention doesn't address Wilson's other point: that Alleyn was known almost purely as a tragic actor.

Andrew Gurr has refuted Armstrong's arguments based on earlier contemporaneous mentions, concluding that "two distinct kinds of acting did exist among the adult companies in the early seventeenth century." He assigns the more restrained and naturalistic (or sophisticated) style to Shakespeare's company, the more bombastic and stylized to Alleyn and the Lord Admiral's Men. And Armstrong (84) himself makes an important distinction: "a parody of certain phrases is not necessarily a parody of the style of the actor that may have delivered them." Even if Armstrong is right that Alleyn is not a specific target, Wilson is also surely right that *Hamlet* takes aim at playwrights, passages and plays, and rival playing companies who owned those plays—notably the Chamberlains' chief commercial rivals, The Admiral's Men.

Bednarz (2001, 226) is also certainly correct in echoing the scholarly consensus: "Hercules and his load too" (2.2.362–3) being carried away by the boys clearly relates the players to the Chamberlain's Men at the Globe, not the Admiral's. But Shakespeare was perfectly capable of glancing in two (or more) directions at once.

Alphonsus

We can see that targeting of the Admiral's in another, little-discussed *Hamlet* parallel to an Admiral's Men's play. A. C. Bradley (409) points out that Gonzago's opening "Full thirtie times" lines (3.2.148 ff):

> Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round
> Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbed ground,
> And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen
> About the world have times twelve thirties been
> Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands
> Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

Closely mimic lines from Robert Greene's *Alphonsus King of Aragon* (Dyce 42-43):

> Thrice ten times Phoebus with his golden beams
> Hath compassed the circle of the sky,
> Thrice ten times Ceres hath her workmen hir'd,
> And fill'd her barns with fruitful crops of corn,
> Since first in priesthood I did lead my life.

Shakespeare further frames this passage as old-fashioned by converting *Alphonsus'* blank verse to rhyming couplets.

This echo is not so surprising. This 1587 play was published in 1599, and the Admiral's Men quite possibly revived it in August, 1601. Following Greg, Chambers equates it with the "Mahomet" in Henslowe's papers, because "In iv. I Mahomet speaks out of a brazen head" (III 327), and a 10 March, 1598 inventory of Admiral's property includes "owld Mahametes head." On 2 and 4 August, 1601, we find Henslowe (in three entries) paying for "A parell," "mackynge of diuers things," and "mackynge of

crownes & other things for mahewmet." And on 22 August, 1601, he paid forty shillings via Alleyn "for the Boocke of mahemett.". (Foakes, 178, 180, 319.)

Alphonsus' triggering conflict is the usurpation of the crown of Aragon by the king's murderous younger brother—displacing his nephew and grandnephew. Both want revenge and to reclaim the crown. Here Carinus, exiled son of the murdered king, is in conversation with his son Alphonsus. Alphonsus chides his father for inaction, quoting his father's own words back to him (Dyce 9):

> Next to *Alphonsus* should my father come,
> For to possesse the Diadem by right
> Of *Aragon,* but that the wicked wretch,
> His yonger brother, with aspiring mind,
> By secret treason robd him of his life,
> And me his sonne, of that which was my due.
> …
> The ravening bird could never plague me worse;
> For ever since my mind hath troubled been
> Which way I might revenge this traitorous fact,
> And that recover which is ours by right.

Notably, as in *Hamlet*, the usurper gains the crown "by secret treason." This is singular to *Alphonsus* and *Hamlet*; in every previous revenge tragedy, Elizabethan or classical (and in Shakespeare's Belleforest source for *Hamlet*), the fact of the inciting murder is publicly known—though not necessarily (e.g. *Spanish Tragedy*) the culprit (Roth 2004).

So here in *Hamlet* we have the Gonzago duke/king's "Full thirtie times" passage, obtrusively and multiply framed as old-fashioned, adapted from a speech in a play about a usurping uncle and younger brother, and secret murderer, that had been published in 1599 and delivered in earnest by the Admiral's Men just months before. And the speech being cribbed was written by Greene, who in *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592, republished 1596) had ridiculed Shakespeare ("Shake-scene") for his tragically overblown tragedy (his writing or his acting or both): "he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you." The "thirtie times" passage serves as a complex and telling, if decidedly posthumous, reply to that ridicule. (Greene died in 1592.)

Ben Jonson and The Admiral's Men

So *Hamlet* repeatedly makes allusion to Admiral's tragic properties and playing styles. But what about Jonson? In commenting upon the line in the eyases passage—"the boys' company's do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession" (2.2.351–2)—Steevens is probably not far wrong in saying, "I should have been very much surprised if I had *not* found Ben Jonson among the writers here alluded to." (IX 268) But there are further and more specific references to Jonson as actor and author outside the eyases passage.

Our records of Jonson's pre-*Hamlet* career connect him to Henslowe companies and their tragic productions at several turns—as an actor, script doctor, and author. I'll begin, as Jonson apparently did, with Jonson the actor. Fredson Bowers (1937, 392–406) points out only somewhat reductively that everything we know about Jonson's acting career comes from three sources:

- Henslowe's record of July 28, 1597 of a £4 loan to "Bengemen Johnson player," and the receipt on the same day of 3s 9d "of Bengemenes Johnsones Share." (Foakes, 238, 52.)

• Aubrey's anecdote that Jonson "acted and wrote, but both ill, at the Green Curtaine, a kind of nursery or obscure playhouse, somewhere in the suburbes (I thinke towards Shoreditch or Clarkenwell)—from J. Greenhill." (Clark 1898, 12)[11]

• The main source, "references in Thomas Dekker's *Satiro-Mastix*" to Horace/Jonson as a traveling player.

Bowers fails to note another source: a privy council letter of 15 August 1597 pertaining to *Isle of Dogs* (Jonson and Nashe, played by Pembroke's Men at the Swan before 28 July) cites Jonson as being "not only an actor but a maker of parte of the said plaie" (Chambers 1923 iv 323).

The 15 August privy council letter tells us that Jonson was an actor and author with Pembroke's during its run for Francis Langley at the Swan, beginning late February 1597 and ending 28 July with the inhibition on the theaters in response to *Isle of Dogs* (Chambers 1923 II 132). Henslowe's 28 July entry also confirms Jonson as a player at that time. It may be only coincidence that on that day of the inhibition, we also find Jonson treating with Henslowe for a "share." (The 3s 9d could perhaps just be partial repayment for the 5s loan Henslowe had made him on 5 January.) Five other Pembroke's men (some of whom were former Admiral's men) made sharing convenants with Henslow over ensuing months, and the company started playing with the Admiral's at the Rose on 11 October (Foakes 60), when Henslowe got a new license (and Langley didn't). For a couple of months we find Henslowe combining receipts from Pembroke's and Admiral's, and paying for multiple plays ("books") for use by both companies (Foakes 71–72). By 1 December, he was no longer referring to them as separate companies. (Records of Pembroke peformances do continue, however, including even one in London at the Rose 28/29 October, 1600. REED.)

Jonson's time as a traveling player may have been during the 28 July to 11 October inhibition; Pembroke's was paid for at least one provincial performance in that period, in Bristol, between 28 August and 10 September (£2 payment). But two other uncertainly-dated performances are recorded 1596–1597, in Oxford and Bath, plus six in 1598 (all after 25 June). So Jonson's sojourn could have been before or after Pembroke's 1597 run at the Swan, or both. (REED)

Whatever the precise dates, it's in Tucca's assaults on Horace-cum-Jonson in *Satiro-mastix* that we get a picture of what Jonson's sojourn with Pembroke's was like, and the roles he took. They point repeatedly to the most prominent of 1590s revenge tragedies — *Spanish Tragedy* — which is also most prominently related to *Hamlet*.

The Spanish Tragedy

The parallels and connections between *Hamlet* and *The Spanish Tragedy* are too ubiquitous and have been too widely discussed to require lengthy catalogue here. The play's connections with Jonson, however, do merit detailing. As imparted in Tucca's raillery at Horace in *Satiro-Mastix*:

> "I ha seene thy shoulders lapt in a Plaiers old cast Cloake, like a Slie knave as thou art: and when thou ranst mad for the death of Horatio : thou borrowedst a gowne of Roscius the Stager, (that honest Nicodemus) and sentst it home lowsie, didst not?" (I.ii.434-440)
>
> "Goe by Ieronimo, goe by;" (I.ii.461)

11. Aubrey is typically amusing here in his handling of facts. Here's the full (and unlike Bowers', accurate) quotation from *Brief Lives*: "Then he came over into England, and acted and wrote at *The Green curtaine* but both ill, a kind of nursery or obscure Play house, somewhere in the Suburbes (I thinke towards Shoreditch, or Clarkenwell)." To quote Miles' *Life* of Jonson (p. 27): "The only theatre adjacent to Clerkenwell was the Red Bull, famous for its horrible 'tear-throat' style of acting, while the Curtain is in Shoreditch." (The Red Bull did not open until about 1605, long after Jonson switched from acting to playwriting.) Aubrey changes the color and conflates them into the "Green curtaine."

> "that same tiranicall-tongu'd rag-a-muffin Horace." (II.i.5)
>
> "thou putst up a supplication to be a poore jorneyman player, and hadst beene still so, but that thou couldst not set a good face upon't: thou hast forgot how thou amblest (in leather pilch) by a play-wagon, in the high way, and took'st mad Ieronimoes part, to get service among the mimickes: and, when the Stagerites banisht thee into the Ile of Dogs, thou turn'dst ban-dog (villanous Guy) & ever since bitest, therefore I aske if th'ast been at Parris-garden, because thou hast such a good mouth." (IV.i.158-169)
>
> "Dost roare bulchin? dost roare? th'ast a good rouncivall voice to cry Lanthorne and Candle-light." (IV.iii.89-91)

Tucca's "took'st mad Ieronimoes part, to get service among the mimickes" and "thou ranst mad for the death of Horatio" tell us that Jonson played Hieronimo in *Spanish Tragedy*, even that it was his first acting role with the company. A provincial tour with Pembroke's would explain his taking a lead role his first time out; Pembroke's could not have played *Spanish Tragedy* in London — it was an Admiral's property — and one could hardly imagine a noverint player replacing Alleyn in the lead role for the Admiral's on the Rose stage.

Spanish Tragedy ("Jeronymo" and similar in Henslowe's diaries) was revived by the Admiral's on 7 Jan 1597, and played a dozen times over the next two weeks (Foakes, 51–58). Henslowe's "ne" (new) notation on the 7 Jan 1597 *Spanish Tragedy* entry suggests to both Bowers (395) and Chambers (1923, III 396), following Greg, that the play underwent substantial revision at that time. (Foakes [55] says the "ne" designating a new play was "erased at some time" prior to Malone noting the erasure in 1821.) Multiple scholars have suggested (Cairncross, xxi–xxiv) that Jonson made those changes, and even that those changes constitute the "additions" found in the 1602 quarto edition. His role in that revision gains more likelihood given that he was in dealings with Henslowe on 5 January 1597, and we find Henslowe paying Jonson for additions to the play on 25 Sept. 1601 and 22 June 1602 (Foakes 238, 182, 203).

Dido and Aeneas

Wilson (1951 303) points to another reference in *Hamlet* to an Admiral's tragic property, saying "there can be little doubt that the [Hecuba] speech [Hamlet] quotes had some connection with the lost *Dido and Aeneas.*" Chambers disagrees: In his Arden *Hamlet* edition (1895), he devotes a long note (150–51) to the connection between the *Hamlet* speech and a different Dido/Aeneas play: Marlowe and Nashe's earlier and extant *Dido Queen of Carthage* (ca. 1591-93; printed 1594). He reprints the relevant Marlowe passage in Appendix E (197–98), and says the lines, "which [*Hamlet*] imitates," "were obviously meant to challenge comparison" with *Hamlet*'s Hecuba speech. He adds in *Elizabethan Stage* (1923, iii 427) that "There is nothing to connect [Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido Queen of Carthage*] with the Admiral's *Dido and Aeneas* of 1598."

Wilson, however (1971 184), accurately points out that "apart from one striking parallel [ll. 476-78]," the Hecuba speech "seems to owe nothing at all" to the Marlowe/Nashe version. That parallel (2.2.476–7):

> But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
> Th' unnerved father falls.

Compare Marlowe:

> Which he disdaining whiskt his sword about,
> And with the wind thereof the King fell downe:

However, even that one parallel is actually missing in the published text. The linchpin, "wind," is an editorial emendation. The quarto prints "wound." The emendation originates in Collier (1831, III 226),

who in one of the more amusing justifications I've read for an emendation, admits that he made it *because* it echoes *Hamlet:* "Here I have substituted *wind* for *wound* (as it stands in the old copy), in conformity, probably (i.e. certainly), with the author's meaning, and with the following corresponding lines in *Hamlet*." Chambers, Wilson, and even Bowers in his Marlowe edition (1973, I 23), where his textual collation reveals the emendation, inexplicably reproduce Collier's fancy.

So aside from the general subject, the *Hamlet* Hecuba speech shows no relationship to Marlowe's mighty lines. (It's worth noting by contrast Shakespeare's similar usage, penned in the same years as *Hamlet* and in similar Trojan setting, in *Troilus and Cressida*: "the fanne and winde of your faire sword" [5.3.41], along with *Hamlet's* "fanned and winnowed opinions." [5.2.153]) The chronology supports this non-connection: The Marlowe/Nashe play doesn't rear its head in extant records following its 1594 publication. *Dido and Aeneas* was played by the Admiral's Men in January 1598 (Foakes, 86).

Chambers (1923, iii 374), noting that Jonson received £1 (Foakes 73, 85) from Henslowe on Dec. 3, 1597 "upon a boocke wch he showed the plotte unto the company which he promysed to dd [deliver] unto the company at crysmas next," says it's "possible that this was *Dido and Aeneas*, produced by the Admiral's on 8 Jan. 1598"—though he thinks it "more likely that *Dido and Aeneas* was taken over from Pembroke's repertory." I would only add that both could be true; Jonson was paid to revise the old Pembroke property for revival.

If the Hecuba speech is playing on any actual play, the most likely candidate is (Jonson's revision of?) *Dido and Aeneas*, and possibly Jonson's acting therein.

Richard III

Wilson (1971 204, following Simpson 658) also points out that Hamlet's line to the Lucianus player—"come, 'the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge'" (3.2.241–2; internal quotes here are the Oxford editors' additions)—is an obvious riff on a line from the anonymous old *True Tragedy of Richard III*: "The screeking Raven sits croking for revenge." It's worth printing that whole passage, as it rather epitomizes the class of old-fashioned tragedy that *Hamlet* is responding to throughout. "Revenge" is repeated sixteen times in seventeen lines (Brazil 1880–1896).

Meethinkes their ghoasts comes gaping for revenge,
Whom I have slaine in reaching for a Crowne.
Clarence complaines, and crieth for revenge.
My Nephues bloods, Revenge, revenge, doth crie,
The headlesse Peeres comes preasing for revenge,
And every one cries, let the tyrant die.
The Sunne, by day shines hotely for revenge.
The Moone by night eclipseth for revenge.
The stars are turnd to Comets for revenge,
The Planets change their coursies for revenge.
The birds sign not, but sorrow for revenge.
The silly lambs sit bleating for revenge.
The screeking Raven sits croking for revenge.
Whole heads of beasts come bellowing for revenge.
And all, yea all the world I thinke,
Cries for revenge, and nothing but revenge.
But to conclude, I have deserved revenge.

It's not surprising to find this play—about revenge against a younger brother who supplanted and murdered his nephew to usurp the crown—rearing its head in *Hamlet.* Further evidence that the play

might have been in Shakespeare's mind is the similarity between Claudius's contrition speech (3.3.36–72) and Richard's in *True Tragedy* (Brazil 1402–23):

> The goale is got, and golden Crowne is wonne,
> And well deservest thou to weare the fame,
> That ventured hast thy bodie and thy soule,
> But what bootes Richard, now the Diademe
> Or kingdome got, by murther of his friends,
> My fearefull shadow that still followes me,
> Hath sommond me before the severe judge,
> My conscience witnesse of the blood I spilt,
> Accuseth me as guiltie of the fact,
> The fact, a damned judgement craves,
> Whereas impartiall justice hath codemned.
> Meethinkes the Crowne which I before did weare,
> Inchast with Pearle and costly Diamonds,
> Is turned now into a fatall wreathe,
> Of fiery flames, and ever burning starres,
> And raging fiends hath past their ugly shapes,
> In studient lakes, adrest to tend on me,
> If it be thus, what wilt thou do in this extremetie?
> Nay what canst thou do to purge thee of they guilt?
> Even repent, crave mercie for thy damned fact,
> Appeale for mercy to thy righteous God,
> Ha repent, not I, crave mercy they that list.
> My God is none of mine.

As in *Hamlet*, the speech depicts a murderous usurper agonizing about being judged in heaven, then giving up on his repentance. The strict verbal parallels between the speeches lie in rather predictable usages, given the subject matter—kingdom, murder, judge/justice/judgment, blood, guilt, crown, repent, and mercy. But the stolen diadem appears in Hamlet's "A cutpurse of the empire and the rule, That from a shelf the precious diadem stole" (3.4.89–90), and a pearl ("union") in a crown—a quite singular trope—figures rather prominently in *Hamlet*'s final scene.

True Tragedie (composed sometime between 1585 and 1592) was entered in the stationer's register 19 June 1594, and printed the same year. There's no further explicit sign of it prior to *Hamlet*. But on 22 June, 1602, we find Henslowe paying (already noted re: *The Spanish Tragedy*): "unto Bengemy Johnsone…in earneste of a boocke called Richard Crockbacke & for new adicyons for Jeronymo the some of x^{ll}" (Foakes, 203). This leads Wilson (1951 303) to think that *True Tragedy* "may have belonged to the repertory of the Admiral's Men," and that *Crookback* was a revision of that play. This would help explain why Shakespeare brought such an old play to mind (in two separate passages), seven years after its publication. Since Jonson had already received two pounds for *ST* additions the preceding 25 Sep, 1601, and with ten pounds (a reasonable-to-good paycheck for a whole new play) being paid out for those additions plus *Crookback,* both Chambers (1923, ii 179) and Wilson (1951, 302) believe that *Crookback* was largely complete by July of 1602.

Jonson was widely (self-) reputed to be a slow writer, as evidenced in *Parnassus, Satiro-mastix,* both the induction and the Apologetical Dialogue to *Poetaster,* and at least two postumous elegies, among others. So it's possible that he already had *True Tragedi*e in hand in the fall of 1601—when Shakespeare was turning to his revision of *Hamlet.* (This group of playwrights at least sometimes knew what their competitor-compatriots were working on. A close-at-hand example is Jonson and Dekker's mutual awareness of, and proleptic responses to, their rivals' *Poetaster* and *Satiro-mastix* in that spring, summer, and fall of 1601.)

Among Our Best for Tragedy

Jonson was involved in other revenge tragedies for the Admiral's in these years as well; Henslowe paid him for work on *Page of Plymouth* (with Dekker, August/September, 1599; Foakes, 123) and *King Robert II of Scotland* (with Chettle, Dekker, "& other Jentellman," [Chambers, *E. S.* iii 428, presumes Marston], Sept. 1599; Foakes 124). Schleiner (34), also associates the "plotte" that Henslowe paid Jonson 20s for on 3 Dec 1597 (Foakes 73, 85) with the "playe boocke & ij ectes of a tragedie of Bengemenes plotte" for which Chapman received three pounds on 23 October 1598 (Foakes 100). (*Pace* Chambers 1923 167, 169.) In any case, there was *some* tragic plot by Jonson prior to October 1598, suggesting more than just rewrite work.

Given all this tragic work by Jonson over the period, two things stand out as odd—both in relation to that work, and in relation to each other: In Meres' 1598 *Palladis Tamia*, Jonson is included along with Shakespeare as one of "our best for Tragedie." But we know of no single-author tragedies by Jonson before *Sejanus* in 1603. None were included in his 1616 *Workes,* which he curated so carefully.

There seem to be two possible explanations: Either Meres is referring to rewrite work by Jonson, which seems unlikely, or Jonson authored or coauthored early tragedies like those discussed above, which were never mentioned or published, or have not survived, with his name attached. This suggests that Jonson was not proud of those early tragic efforts—either the script-doctor work or the presumed plays. Says Robert Evans (97–98), "…perhaps Jonson, dissatisfied with the work [*Richard Crookback*], withdrew it from posterity's judgment…. Despite his early reputation as a competent writer of tragedies, and despite surviving records of his other works in this genre, *Sejanus* and *Catiline* are the only two tragedies he chose to print."

Many of Jonson's own statements support this. In his posthumously published *Discoveries*, for instance, he refers to "the *Tamerlanes*, and *Tamer-chams* of the late Age, which had nothing in them but the *scenicall* strutting, and furious vociferation, to warrant them to the ignorante gapers." (Herford and Simpson VIII 587). Stern (107–110) provides a nice catalog of disdainful references in Jonson's plays to public theaters' "heavens" and "hells" and their associated spectacle, especially in tragedies. We find the elderly Jonson conveniently failing to acknowledge the tragic transgressions of his own blown youth. Given Jonson's famously thin skin and the dramatic culture of raillery here at the height of the *poetomachia*, this makes Jonson's tragic work an especially apt target for Shakespeare's allusions.

In *Hamlet,* we see a parody of all the bombastic tragedy Jonson had been (abashedly) involved in over preceding years, as both actor and author, and for which he had been satirized in *Satiro-mastix*, by the Chamberlain's Men, on the Globe stage, only months before.

Com'st Thou to Beard Me in Denmark?

Given Jonson's tragic history and his role in the poetomachia, and *pace* Wilson—who imagines the first player figured as Alleyn—it may be more reasonable to imagine the first player (in part) figured as Jonson. Jonson had been figured quite explicitly on London stages in at least half dozen plays over preceding years, including multiple times by the Chamberlain's (notably in *Satiro-mastix*), and including multiple instances in Jonson's his own plays: as Asper in *Every Man Out* (1599, Chamberlain's), Criticus/Crites (Q/F) in *Cynthia's Revels* (1600, Children of the Chapel), and Horace in *Poetaster* (1601, Children of the Chapel). It would have been extremely easy and in keeping with the theatrical times for the Shakespeare and the Chamberlain's to continue and expand on that apparently profitable tradition. Even a simple costume accoutrement might have served to make the identification obvious. And the means were to hand: *some* Chamberlain's actor had played Horace-cum-Jonson in *Satiromastix* in the months immediately preceding.

Figuring Jonson as a travelling player repeats and continues the image of Jonson/Horace from *Satiro-mastix*, ambling "(in leather pilch) by a play-wagon, in the high way." Now consider Hamlet's opening welcome to the players (2.2.425–27):

Welcome, good friends. - O, my old
friend! Thy face is valanced[12] since I saw thee last.
Com'st thou to beard me in Denmark?

Compare this "bearding" to Tucca's sharper jibes at Jonson's skimpy beard in *Satiro-mastix*:

> "thou thin-bearded Hermaphrodite", "thou has such a terrible mouth, that thy beard's afraide to peepe out" (I.ii.289)

> "heere's the sweet visage of Horace; looke perboylde-face, looke; *Horace* had a trim long-beard, and a reasonable good face for a Poet." (V.ii.250-54)

We find another probable reference to Jonson's scanty beard in *Mucedorus*—c. 1590, with an edition "newly set forth" in 1598 and another in 1606. (It is extant in at least seventeen editions up to 1700, more than any other Elizabethan play.) "Envy" tells "Comedie":

This scrambling Raven, with his needie Beard
Will I whet on to write a Comedie

D. H. Craig (1990, 101) says "The writer must be referring to Jonson…and to Jonson's early satirical plays." The passage, which goes on to refer to the writer's troubles with "Magistrates"—presumably referencing *Isle of Dogs,* the Apologetical Dialogue to *Poetaster,* and/or *Eastward Ho!*—does not appear until the 1610 edition, but its composition date is uncertain.

Jonson himself seems to have been amused enough by a "companion's" proleptic epitaph to have recited it to Drummond (36):

Here lies honest Ben,
That had not a beard on his chen

All our portraits of Jonson show him with an acceptable beard, but portraits were often embellished, and they're all of an older Jonson. It's worth noting that the Chapel boys who Jonson wrote for used fake beards, often to comedic effect (Southern, 2009)—notably in Marston's *Antonia and Mellida* (1599) and *Antonia's Revenge* (1600), both of which have myriad parallels to *Hamlet* (the directions of influence are uncertain).

If the first player figures Jonson, we have here Burbage as Hamlet bearding Jonson for growing a beard since we "saw him last" (in *Satiro-mastix*), and asking, "have you come to beard me in *our own play*?" (*i.e. not* in a play picked up from Paul's Boys; rather, "in a play by our own playwright"). The joke would be even richer if in addition to playing "the Ghost in his own Hamlet" (Rowe, 1709, for what that attestation is worth), Shakespeare also doubled the part of the first player. (Oldys' 1832 report of an account from Shakespeare's brother—that he saw Shakespeare playing old Adam in *As You Like It*—supports the possiblity that Shakespeare played older men's parts.) We'd see a bearded player/Shakespeare *qua* Jonson being bearded by Hamlet/Burbage about his scanty beard. Metatheatricality, indeed.

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12. F1 prints val-/anct, Q2 valiant, Q1 vallanced. Every modern edition prints "valenced" with the interpretation of draped hence bearded. This is addressed to Hamlet's "old friend" the first player, not to the boy who plays women's parts. (Hamlet turns to him next with "what my young Lady...your Ladyship is nearer to heauen than when I saw you last.")

To put him to his purgation

Hamlet strikes a distinctly "humourous" and Jonsonian note after the mousetrap—and glances at Jonson's purge of Marston/Crispinus' choler in *Poetaster*—when Guildenstern informs him that the king is "marvelous distemp'rd...with choler." (3.2.286–94)

> GUILDENSTERN The King, sir -
> HAMLET Ay, sir, what of him?
> GUILDENSTERN Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.
> HAMLET With drink, sir?
> GUILDENSTERN No, my lord, rather with choler.
> HAMLET Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to his doctor, for for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

The irony, if this suggestion is correct, is that Shakespeare in this whole players section is delivering exactly that purge. With Jonson figured as the player playing the king, we can find here Hamlet "mistaking" which king Guildenstern is referring to, just as he "mistakes" the cause of the king's distemper. To paraphrase: "for me to put the choleric Jonson to his purgation—to parody him further—would just make him more choleric."

Tucca egged Jonson on to further choler in exactly such manner in his *Satiro-mastix* epilogue to the audience (Penniman 394–5) written specifically for the Globe after the play's first playings by the Paul's Boys:[13] "if you set your hands and seals to this [clap for this play], Horace will write against it, and you may have more sport." Jonson did indeed plunge into more choler, provide more sport (which *Parnassus* later makes sport of), and "beray his credit" by replying in his Apologetical Dialogue to *Poetaster* (Roth 2002b).

We can find a few other jokes emerging if the first player is seen as (in part) a sendup of Jonson:

When Hamlet is giving his extended advice on acting, received with such admirable restraint by the first player, the player replies, "I hope we have reform'd that indifferently with us, sir." Here we have Jonson acknowledging that he's reformed his old-fashioned tragedizing…but only "indifferently."

If Jonson was involved in rewriting the Admiral's (lost) *Dido and Aeneas*, and Shakespeare did draw on that play for the Hecuba speech, we have an old-fashioned twist on Jonson's own words from that apprentice rewrite, coming from his own personified mouth.

It's tempting to suggest that Jonson had a hand in an Alphonsus rewrite as well, and influenced *Hamlet*'s "full thirtie times" speech, as it serves to explain Hamlet's "Wormwood, wormwood" comment in the midst of that speech—an interjection that goes unexplained by almost every editor,[14] In *Satiro-*

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13. Tucca's "gentle-folkes (that walke I'the galleries)," "two pence a piece," and "two penny tenants" all tell us that we're hearing an epilogue presented at the Globe. His "when once (in an assembly of friers) I railde…" tells us that the Paul's Boys performance of *Satiro-mastix* happened prior. This in turn tells us that the published text came from the Globe, and that it was revised—at least by adding this epilogue—after it was played by the boys.

14. "Wormwood, Wormwood" is the F1 reading. The only gloss in the hamletworks.org variorum explaining this line's import is Andrews' (1993) somewhat satisfying paraphrase: "that's the bitter truth." No other cited editor has offered an explanation. (Two most diligent annotators—Furness and Jenkins—don't even footnote it.) The line (with the speech prefix: "*Ham.* That's wormwood") is printed marginally in Q2, adjacent to Baptista's "None wed the second, but who kild the first"—the only such instance of a marginally printed speech in that edition (or any press variants of that edition). It may be insignificant. Collier, in his 1843 edition, suggests that "The object might be to save room in the printing." But that surmise is deleted in his 1858 edition. No other editor cited in the *Hamletworks* commentary or textual notes, or that I'm aware of, has essayed an opinion on the meaning or import of this marginality.

mastix (II.ii.76-7) Horace/Jonson prophesies to himself, "Horace thy Poesie wormwood wreathes shall weare." Hamlet's tossed-off line nicely fulfills that prophecy.

Likewise, Hamlet's "Pox, leave thy damnable faces and begin" (3.2.240–241) is doubly ironic in reference to a practice Jonson the actor was apparently known for, as revealed in two *Satiro-Mastix* passages: Tucca's "heere's thee coppy of thy countenance, by this will I learn to make a number of villanous faces" (v.ii.293–295), and the oath Horace is required to take: "you shall not sit in a Gallery, when your Comedies and Enterludes haue entred their Actions, and there make vile and bad faces at euerie lyne" (v.ii.340–342). Hamlet accuses the player (Jonson) of this, even as Hamlet is himself doing that exact thing, catcalling as his own "dozen or sixteen lines" (2.2.543) are being played. (This "damnable faces" line immediately precedes Hamlet's "croaking raven" line playing on *True Tragedie of Richard III*.)

This humorous treatment of Jonson by Shakespeare and the Chamberlain's Men makes sense in light of Jonson's relationship to that company. In 1598 he moved from Henslowe's factory to write *Every Man in His Humour* for the Chamberlain's Men (with Shakespeare in the cast), and *Every Man Out* in 1599. So the Chamberlain's were the vehicle for his first "breakout," single-author plays, which he chose to include in his *Workes*. Starting in 1600, though, pursuing his ambition for more genteel audiences, he abandoned them for the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars. He used that venue to rail at his former cohorts, notably in *Poetaster*. As Jonson *qua* "Author" admits in the Apologetical Dialogue, "Now for the Players, it is true, I tax'd 'hem." (Penniman 167.)

Parnassus Without the Prince?

There is one telling fact arguing against the conclusion that *Parnassus'*s purge happens in *Hamlet*. I find in *Parnassus* not a single allusion to *Hamlet.*[15] Nor, in their notes, do Smeaton, Arber, or Leishman, the play's primary editors—despite their magisterial cataloguing of allusions, antecedents, and parallels. Given *Hamlet*'s irresistible appeal to commenters going back at least to Nashe's 1589 reference, one would expect to find some scent or scintilla of *Hamlet* in *Parnassus*.

But we don't find any reference to *Troilus and Cressida* therein, either. (*Troilus* being the other most likely site for *Parnassus*'s purge.) In fact I can't find any reference, in the text or the editors' notes, to any then-unpublished play. The *Parnassus* author's knowledge of drama from the public stages seems to have been limited purely to dramatic literature, in fact largely to poetic miscellanies and commonplace books, and to gossip. Most of *Parnassus*'s second scene is devoted to two wits' gossiping about the recently published (1601) miscellany *Belvedere*, quoting snippets and snatches from that miscellany, and commenting on those snatches' authors.

The contempt expressed for public plays and players by characters throughout *Parnassus* may well reflect the *Parnassus* author's own Cantabrigian disdain. There are suggestions that he might have seen *Poetaster* and/or *Satiro-mastix* when they were played "privately" by the Chapel and Paul's boys, *e.g.* Kempe's "lusty humorous poets, you must untrusse" (1799), which Leishman says is "almost certainly an allusion" to *Satiro-Mastix*, not printed until 1602.[16] But I can find no indication that he had ever attended

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15. One possible exception: the Recorder in *Parnassus* says that a commoner-turned-gentleman's "mawe must be Capon crambd each day" (1173), which is reminsicent of Q1 *Hamlet*'s "the chameleon's dish, not capon-crammed" (1950). But it's not really so singular; "capon" turns up with variants of "cram" fairly frequently around this period in searches of Early English Books Online.

16 *Troilus*'s two 1609 quarto verions make it impossible to know where the *Parnassus* author might have seen the play. The "Quarto a" title page claims publication "As it was acted by the Kings Maiesties seruants at the Globe." That claim is absent on the title page of the amended Quarto b, which includes an additional leaf containing a preface, "A never writer, to an ever reader," which proclaims, "you have here a new play, never stal'd with the Stage, never clapper-clawed with the palmes of the vulgar." Peter Alexander (1928) examines the publication details, and suggests the play was (first) performed at, or even comissioned by, one of the inns of court. That theory is supported by Elton and Arlidge, both 2000.

public plays. The adulation Gullio expresses for Shakespeare in *Returne I* (perhaps by a different author than *II Return*) names the sonnets, *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*, plus *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III*. All of those works (excepting the sonnets, which were circulating in manuscript and were widely spoken of) had been in print for years when the *Returnes* were written, and were part of the general impression we find of Shakespeare among literateurs during the 1590s, as a "honey-tongued" and even frivolous writer of love poetry.

The *Parnassus* author appears to be quite similar to his characters Gullio and Amoretto—exquisitely sensitive to the literary fashions, rumors, and received opinions of the day, and an avid consumer of commonplace books like *Belvedere*, but largely ignorant of public plays. The university wits'preference for page over stage is embodied by Philomusus in his interchange with Kempe (1796-97): "Indeed M. *Kempe* you are very famous, but that's as well for works in print as your parts in que."

The *Parnassus* author could easily have heard of the "purge" from others; we need have no expectation that he actually saw it being administered—that he ever saw *Hamlet,* or *Troilus and Cressida* for that matter.

Jonson's Response to the 'Purge'

The chronology described here positions *Hamlet* as the culminating and concluding play in the *poetomachia.* No further plays entered that fray in ensuing months or years. Nevertheless, Jonson was not content to let matters lie. He composed the Apologetical Dialogue to *Poetaster*, presented it himself on stage as personified "Author," and suffered the legal consequences thereof (Roth 2002b).

Hamlet prophesies, upon hearing of the players' arrival, that "the King shall be welcome; his majesty shall have tribute of me. … the Humorous Man shall end his part in peace." (2.2.321–25). But Jonson doesn't seem to have taken the references to his tragical work as tribute, judging by the passage in the Apologetical Dialogue that many commenters have seen as referring to Shakespeare:[17]

> Onely amongst them, I am sorry for
> Some better natures, by the rest so drawne,
> To run in that vile line. (137–39)

Jonson apparently viewed all that bearding as more of a purge. And the *Parnassus* author thought likewise—or at least represented William Kempe as thinking likewise. As "Author" (and speaker) of the Apologetical Dialogue's choleric response, Jonson does, in Kempe's words, "beray his [own] credit." Whether Jonson is responding to a "purge" in *Hamlet, Troilus*, both, another, or none at all, the humorous man does not end his part in peace.

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17. Bednarz 2001, 236–38 demonstrates that only two of the Chamberlain's Men go untaxed in *Poetaster*: Shakespeare and William Sly.

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