

THE ALCHEMIST THROUGH THE AGES

An investigation of the stage
history of Ben Jonson's play

by

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ABSTRACT

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This study was made to trace the stage history of The Alchemist and to see what effect theatrical productions can have in developing critical awareness of Jonson's dramatic skill in this popular play. Therefore an attempt has been made to record all performances by major companies between 1610 and 1970 with cast lists and other pertinent information about scenery, stage action and properties.

The second part of the thesis provides a detailed analysis of four specific productions considered in light of their prompt books, details of acting and production, and overall critical reception. Garrick's adaption, which dominated the stage during the eighteenth century, reflected the genius of its producer but also demonstrated the skill with which Jonson balanced the plot. Garrick featured the part of Drugger, one of the minor gulls, but Jonson's plot structure remained intact as the ridiculing of human greed and stupidity continued to be the dominant characteristic. William Poel's production, on the other hand, emphasized the rapid plot development by use of a pseudo-Elizabethan stage, and he laid heavy stress on the elocution proving that the

alchemical jargon was an essential element of the play and should not be cut because audiences could not understand it. The Ashland production (1961) also demonstrated the effectiveness of the pseudo-Elizabethan stage in presenting the fast moving comic action. It emphasized the farcical nature of the play and the repertory casting revealed the skill with which Jonson balanced his characters. The Old Vic production (1962), directed by Tyrone Guthrie, assumed that Jonson had to be modernized to be understood by contemporary audiences, but his tampering with the text distorted and weakened the play in a number of ways.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, an attempt has been made to provide an analysis of The Alchemist based on insights provided by the preceding material in an effort to show that literary criticism of a play is often closely linked with theatrical experience. The complex interweaving of subplot with subplot, the finely etched characters, the colourful language, the important themes--all are as theatrically effective today as they were in 1610. The stage history of The Alchemist demonstrates that it is one of Ben Jonson's most popular plays, and the reasons are visibly evident upon investigation of some of the theatrical productions.

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CHAPTER ONE

STAGE HISTORY OF THE ALCHEMIST, 1610-1970

A. INTRODUCTION

Although a vast increase of scholarly interest in Ben Jonson is evident in the twentieth century there has been very little attempt to follow the trend in Shakespearean studies where the contributions of theatrical history and tradition have thrown much light on Shakespeare's artistic method. By investigating the effect of Jonson's language and imagery in the theatre, where text, actor and audience are drawn together to create and experience the phenomenon which is known as drama, one might reach conclusions as to the reasons for the fluctuating public acceptance of Jonson as a dramatic artist--reasons which might affect our appraisal of his work today. Therefore the following study reviews the major productions of The Alchemist from its first production in Jacobean London to the recent production by the National Theatre Company in Stratford, Ontario and investigates the changes occurring in text and presentation, the critical reaction to the productions, and finally draws some tentative conclusions as to how these productions have affected our reaction to Jonson's play.

"Why is drama studied without reference to theatrical qualities?" is one of the questions that prompted this study of the stage history of The Alchemist. Since drama is a unique form of literature in which the actor is required to present the work, it seems reasonable that an investigation of performances will reveal facets of the drama unavailable to a student who is restricted to the text and scholarly criticism. And since interpretations change with different social attitudes, a key to Jonson's genius may be found in discovering when his plays were popular and why, what characters or incidents received most attention, and what changes were made. In sifting through the wealth of material in such authorities as Chambers,¹ Bentley,² Noyes,³ and Herford and Simpson,⁴ it is evident that Jonson would have been the greatest Elizabethan dramatist known today if the plays of William Shakespeare had not survived, but it is only in the twentieth century, through the critical edition of his works by Herford and Simpson, that Jonson has rightfully claimed his share of the academic spotlight focused on Elizabethan and Stuart drama.

Modern critics generally concede that to consider drama simply from the point of view of literature is to miss many of its inherent values, and that theatrical performances lead to a fuller understanding. But it is an accepted fact that no theatrical production can possibly recreate a play

without imposing a point of view that may distort the literary creation. The original stage and the original audience for which The Alchemist was written no longer exist, and the aim of producers, from Garrick to Guthrie, has been to present the play in a manner that will create for their contemporary audience the best effects they can, and these effects have in many cases differed from that which Jonson intended for his own audience. "In the theatre" according to John Russell Brown "everything is subject to revaluation, every time a play is performed; this is the nature of the medium."⁵

Despite such revaluations one can consider many productions as offering new insights into the play. To do this one must separate the theatrical tastes and practices of the time from what is known of the original text, so as to distinguish what has been distorted and what has been enhanced. Only then can one consider the play as a dramatic poem with elements of permanence that distinguish all works of art, those elements that make the play as relevant to us today as it was to Jacobean audiences, that make it, as Jonson said of Shakespeare "Not of an age, but for all time."

There are several reasons why there have been few stage histories of Jonson's plays. One important reason is the fact that there have been few professional productions of his plays in the twentieth century and therefore critics have not been attracted to the theatrical aspects of his

drama. But perhaps the root cause goes back to Jonson himself. He wrote his plays to fit a critical doctrine he himself had laid down, so it was natural to investigate his plays using literary rather than theatrical criteria. Whereas Shakespeare wrote his plays to be acted, and cared little about the published texts, Jonson conscientiously wrote with one eye on the literary product. This does not mean that Jonson neglected the theatrical elements, but his emphasis was placed on the text. For this reason, insufficient attention was given to the theatrical effects of his plays.

Nevertheless several works deal specifically with the stage history of The Alchemist, and some editions include brief accounts of performances, but no one has investigated the effect of productions of the play on scholarly appreciation. Herford and Simpson (IX, 223-240) lists most of the performances with casts, but provides little critical comment, and their summary of twentieth century productions gives as much weight to university productions as to professional ones, which is unfortunate because professional productions have much more effect on critical appreciation and tend to be more effectively unified. R.G. Noyes in Ben Jonson on the English Stage, 1660-1776, provides detailed comments from The Jonson Allusion Book, but this excellent account is limited by the self-imposed dates and the date of publication (1935), while A.C. Sprague's summary,⁶ although providing a concise summary

of the play's stage history, is marred by several inaccuracies and is highly selective. The best account is the introductory section to F.L. Bergmann's master's thesis⁷ which provides an excellent synopsis of the stage history. His analysis of Garrick's production is very clear as is his discussion of the prompt book and the critical reports of Garrick's acting. The only fault lies in his making statements without giving proof or examples from the text, although upon investigation one finds that his observations are generally correct.

All of the above sources have been invaluable in providing material for my thesis and my aim is to provide still more information about performances and to come to an extended understanding of the play.

B. STUART AND COMMONWEALTH PERIOD, 1610-1660

The early stage history of The Alchemist is difficult to trace. On 3 October 1610 it was entered in the Stationers' Register by Walter Burre as a comedy written by Ben Jonson and a quarto edition was printed in 1612.⁸ It was also printed in the 1616 Fôlio of Jonson's Works, where the title page gave the following information.

THE ALCHEMIST. / A Comoedie. / Acted in the yeere 1610.
By the / Kings Maiesties Seruants. / The Author B.I. /
Lvcret. / petere inde coronam, / Vnde prius nulli
velarant tempore muja. / (rule) / London, / Printed
by William Stansby / (rule)-M.DC. XVI. 9

Therefore, although the exact date of its first performance is uncertain, it was probably produced in 1610, and since the theatres were closed from 12 July to 29 November 1610 because of the plague,¹⁰ the play probably was produced in the first half of the year.¹¹

This conjecture is substantiated by Geoffrey Tillotson's discovery of a letter in the Fulman Papers at Corpus Christi College, Oxford.¹² Dated September 1610, this letter is a copy of Henry Jackson's Latin correspondence made by William Fulman and it gives definite proof that The Alchemist and Shakespeare's Othello were produced at Oxford in September 1610. The King's men frequently made short provincial tours during the autumn to escape the plague in London and in 1610 they played at Dover, Oxford and Shrewsbury from July 12 to early in December.¹³ Since it is unlikely that a new play such as The Alchemist would have first been performed on a provincial tour it is probable that the play was originally performed in London before the theatres were closed.¹⁴

Jackson's letter exhibits great hostility to the performance: "non contenti Alcumistas perstringere ipsas sanctas Scriptas foedissime violarint." This is the sort of comment which might account for Robert Herrick's lines, written after Jonson's death:

that monstrous sin
 Of deep and arrant ignorance came in
 Such ignorance as theirs was who once hiss'd
 At thy unequall'd play, the Alchemist.

--Hesperides (1648).¹⁵

Where the play was first performed is open to conjecture. Besides the information that it was performed in Oxford during the summer provincial tour of 1610, no definite facts exist. In 1610 the King's Men were acting at the Globe and the Blackfriars, so it is likely The Alchemist was produced at both theatres. However G.E. Bentley's assertion that numerous allusions show clearly that it was written for the Blackfriars¹⁶ has been generally accepted by modern critics,¹⁷ although Herford and Simpson maintain that it was first performed at the Globe.¹⁸

At the end of the folio text (1616), Jonson lists the "principal Comedians" who acted in the first production. The exact distribution of parts is not known, but the cast given below has generally been accepted.¹⁹

Richard Burbage	-	Face
John Lowine	-	Mammon
Henry Condell	-	Surly
Alexander Cooke	-	Ananias
Robert Armin	-	Drugger
John Heminge	-	Subtle
William Ostler	-	Lovewit
John Underwood	-	Dapper
Nicholas Tooley	-	Tribulation
William Ecclestone	-	Kastril

This casting is partly conjecture, although based on contemporary reports and comparison with other parts played by the actors. When Burbage died in 1619 for instance, Joseph Taylor was hired specifically to play Burbage's roles, and according to James Wright in Historia Histrionica (1699) "acted Hamlet incomparably well, Jago, Truewit in The Silent Woman and Face in The Alchymist."²⁰ Wright also says "Lowin used to Act, with mighty Applause, Falstaffe, Morose, Volpone and Mammon. . . ." ²¹ It is probable that Robert Armin, played Drugger. This would give added meaning to the lines,

[Face:] Hast thou no credit with the players?

[Drugger:] Yes, sir, did you never see me play the foole?

(IV. vii. 68-69)

for Armin was the "fool" of the King's Men. It has been argued that Alexander Cooke played Dol Common,²² since he frequently played female roles, but he probably took the part of the petulant Puritan Ananias in 1610, for he was too old to play to role of a buxom prostitute.

The play was revived at court during the Christmas season of 1612/13 and again on 1 January 1622/23. On 1 December 1631 the play was given at Blackfriars in accordance with an agreement made between the King's Men and Sir Henry Herbert who was to receive the receipts for "too days in the yeare, the one in summer, the other in winter, to bee taken out of the second daye of a revived playe at my own

choyse."²³ The total receipts were fifteen pounds, five shillings, which was about average for a winter performance. Of this, Herbert received thirteen pounds.²⁴ The Alchemist must have been a popular play since it is to be assumed that Sir Henry Herbert would choose plays which would provide him with a handsome profit.

The final recorded performances in London before the theatres were closed by the Puritans were on 21 January 1639 when a certain Ann Merricke wrote that she wished she could have seen "The Alchymist, which I heare this tearme is revived," and on 18 May 1639 when Sir Humphrey Mildmay saw the play when his seat cost him five shillings.²⁵

The popularity of the play in the Jacobean period is attested to by the fact that it was revived at court several times, and references made in contemporary accounts, although small in number, are highly laudatory.²⁶ According to Nielson it was frequently produced until the close of the theatres and played a substantial role in ridding London of fake alchemists.²⁷

During the Commonwealth, the play was kept alive by the strolling players in the form of a droll called "The Imperick" which was later collected by Francis Kirkman in The Wits; or, Sport upon Sport (1672). This droll was made up of three scenes from The Alchemist, (I, iii; II, v and vi), two of which involved Abel Drugger and one featuring Ananias. The argument is given as "Under the nation of his knowledge

in Chymistrie, he cheats a Grocer and a Precisian," and except for a few transitional phrases, the text is the same as in Jonson's Works. This droll emphasized the comic possibilities inherent in Jonson's characterization of the silly tobaconist, and foreshadows Garrick's adaption which made the play into a comic farce dominated by the foolish gullibility of Drugger.

The Alchemist was performed during the Commonwealth period in Dublin, at the only pre-Restoration theatre built outside of London. A prologue was written for the performances by James Shirley who arrived in Dublin in 1636 and stayed till 1640,²⁸ but since the Werburgh Street Theatre was not built until 1637²⁹ the play must have been produced between then and 1640, when the prologue was published.³⁰ Shirley's prologue is full of praise for Jonson's play as the opening lines illustrate:

The Alchemist, a play for strength of wit
 And true art, made to shame what hath been writ
 In former ages; I accept no worth
 Of what or Greek or Latins have brought forth;
 Is now to be presented to your ear
 For which I wish each man were a Muse here,
 To know, and in his soul be fit to be
 Judge of this masterpiece of comedy.

Poems (1646), ed. Gifford, VI,
 490-491.

C. RESTORATION 1660-1770

In the Restoration period The Alchemist became very popular, and was one of the first plays to be revived after Charles II's return. By 1663 it had established itself as one of the principal stock plays of the King's Players, and many Restoration actors gained reputations by acting in the play. Major Mohun as Face, Walter Clun as Subtle, John Lacy as Ananias and Mrs. Katherine Corey as Dol Common--all became known by the roles they took in Jonson's play.

In 1660 two dramatic companies were formed in London: the Duke's Company, centered around the bright young star Thomas Betterton, and the King's Players run by Thomas Killigrew and mainly made up of older, more experienced actors. It was this company, headed by Micheal Mohun, Charles Hart and Nicholas Butt, that revived the old Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas, among which Jonson's played a major part.³¹ The intense rivalry between these two companies dominated the London scene until 1682 when the King's Players absorbed their rivals to form the United Company, and for the next thirteen years this company provided the only professional stage for dramatic presentations in London.

The Alchemist was an immediate hit with the Restoration audience. Although it is difficult to date the first revival, a performance was given in late 1660 by the King's Company, according to an extant prologue that was undoubtedly

published in 1660. This prologue is the first definite record we have of a performance after the Restoration, and deserves to be quoted in full, since it reveals the reasons for the play's popularity during the late seventeenth century:

PROLOGUE

To The

REVIV'D

ALCHEMIST.

The Alchemist; Fire, breeding Gold, our Theme:
Here must no Melancholie be, nor Flegm.
Young Ben, not Old, writ this, when in his Prime,
Solid in Judgment, and in Wit sublime.

The Sisters, who at Thespian Springs their Blood
Cool with fresh Streams, All, in a Merry Mood,
Their wat'ry Cups, and Pittances declin'd,
At Bread-street's Mer-maid with our Poet din'd:
Where, what they Drank, or who plaid most the Rig,
Fame modestly conceals: but He grew big
Of this pris'd Issue; when a Fovial Maid,
His Brows besprinkling with Canarie, said.

Pregnant by Us, produce no Mortal Birth;
Thy active Soul, quitting the sordid Earth,
Shall 'amongst Heav'ns glitt'ring Hieroglyphicks trade,
And Pegasus, our winged Sumpter, jade,
Who from Parnassus never brought to Greece,
Nor Romane Stage, so rare a Master-piece.
This Story, true of false, may well be spar's;
The Actors are in question, not the Bard:
How they shall humour their oft-varied Parts,
To get your Money, Company, and Hearts,
Since all Tradition, and like Helps are lost.

Reading our Bill new pasted on the Post,
Grave Stagers both, one, to the other said,
The Alchemist? What! are the Fellows mad?
Who shall Doll Common Act? Their tender Tibs
Have neither Lungs, nor Confidence, nor Ribs.

Who Face, and Subtle? Parts, all Air, and Fire:
They, whom the Authour did Himself inspire,
Taught, Line by Line, each Tittle, Accent, Word,
Ne're reach'd His Height; all after, more absurd,
Shadows of fainter Shadows, wheresoe're
A Fox he pencil'd, copied out a Bear

Encouragement for young Beginners small:
 Yet howsoe're we'll venture; have at All.
 Bold Ignorance (they say) falls seldome short
 In Camp, the Countrey, City, or the Court.

Arm'd with the Influence of your fair Aspects,
 Our Selves we'll conquer, and our own Defects.
 A thousand Eyes dart raies into our Hearts,
 Would make Stones speak, and Stocks play well their Parts:
 Some few Malignant Beams we need not fear,
 Where shines such Glory in so bright a Sphere.³²

The Prologue, extant in a broadside in the Worcester College Library, was originally attributed to Davenant, but it is unlikely that the manager of a rival company would have written a prologue for his competition. However it is a vigorous poetic advertisement for Jonson's masterpiece. The opening couplets introduce the subject and reassure the audience that this is not one of Jonson's "dotages." The prologue then goes on to ask who shall act Jonson's vigorous characters. Listing Dol Common first is an obvious attempt to exploit the innovation adopted by the Restoration theatres of having women play female roles.

A probable cast can be reconstructed from the list supplied by Downs:³³ Face - Mohum; Mammon - Cartwright; Surly - Burt; Ananias - Lacy; Wholesome - Bateman; Dame Pliant - Mrs. Rutter. Downes lists Wintersel as Subtle but Clun probably acted the part until his death in August 1664.³⁴

The first dated performance is 22 June 1661, when Pepys saw the play at the King's Theatre in Vere Street. He thought it "a most incomparable play"³⁵ and went to see it.

again on 14 August. There was also a performance on 16 December 1661, by which time Mrs. Corey was playing Dol Common³⁶ and Mrs. Rutter was playing Dame Pliant.³⁷ The following year Dr. Edward Brown went to the New Theatre in Lincolns Inne Fields where he paid 2s. 6d to see The Alchymist produced by the "K. P." (King's Players).³⁸ On 13 February 1662 the play was seen by Jacques Thierry and Will Schiellinks,³⁹ while John Ward records a performance in September of the same year. His diary entry reads as follows:

I saw Ben Johnsons play called the Alchymist acted in which 2 parts were acted wel, the Doctor and the puritan, the later incomparably att the play house which is the Kings betwixt Lincolns Inne fields and Vere street. (Folger MS, V.a. 292).⁴⁰

According to A.L.D. Kennedy-Skipton,⁴¹ the diary entry, although not dated, was probably written before September 1662 and on closer examination⁴² suggests that the entry was made between 1 and 25 September, 1662. He accepts Downes cast for attributing the parts of the Doctor (Subtle) to Wintersel and that of the Puritan, which he identifies as Tribulation to Bateman. However it is probable that Clun played the role of Subtle since his name appears in documents pertaining to the King's Company at that time.⁴³ The identification of the Puritan as Tribulation is also probably in error, since the role of Ananias is much more likely to catch the eye of

the spectator.⁴⁴ Therefore it is probable that it was John Lacy who inspired Ward's comment, especially since the role was one of his best.

Pepys records other performances of The Alchemist for 3 August 1664 and 17 April 1669. The first entry records the death of Walter Clun:

Clune, one of their [King's Players] best actors was, the last night, going out of town (after he had acted the Alchymyst, wherein was one of his best parts that he acts) to his country-house, set upon and murdered. . . . The house will have a great miss of him.

Dairy, 4 August 1664.⁴⁵

The second entry confirms the last prediction, for when Pepys saw the play again he remarked, "it is still a good play . . . but I do miss Clun for the Doctor."⁴⁶ This revival, and others on 12 November 1674 and 26 October 1675 were command performances which the King attended, and the company received 10 for each performance.⁴⁷

No other performance was recorded until the beginning of the eighteenth century, although the play was well known by contemporary writers. For instance, Aphra Behn, in reply to a harsh criticism of her play The Dutch Lover (1673) defends herself by attacking current theatrical tastes which considered Jonson as the ideal playwright. She says:

I have seen a man the most severe of Johnson's Sect, sit with his Hat remov'd less than a hair's breadth from one sullen posture for almost three hours at The Alchymist; who at that excellent Play of Harry the Fourth (which yet I hope is far enough from Farce) hath very hardly kept his Doublet whole.

The Works of Aphra Behn, I, 224⁴⁸

D. EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY 1700-1743

According to William van Lennep, The Alchemist was revived at Drury Lane in 1700 by Christopher Rich.⁴⁹ Volpone and Epiceone were also revived, and according to the author of A Comparison between the Two Stages (1702),⁵⁰ all three had lain unacted for twenty years. This statement, at least as far as The Alchemist is concerned, seems to be correct, for Gerald Langbaine does not mention the play in his book, An Account of the English Dramatick Poets (1691).

The first performances of The Alchemist for which there are records in the eighteenth century were on 27 March and 1 April 1701, when Lady Morley saw the play at Drury Lane. No cast is given but it is possible Colley Cibber played Subtle.⁵¹ The following year it was produced by Betterton's Company on 9 October "at the New Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields,"⁵² the first time the play was attempted by players not connected with Drury Lane.⁵³

After this revival there were several lapses in the acting of The Alchemist, but from 1721 until 1776 there were only eight seasons without a performance. In 1709 the first acting quarto of the play was published and the play was performed seven times at Drury Lane,⁵⁴ with the following cast:

Subtle	- Colly Cibber	Ananias	- Benjamin Johnson
Face	- George Powell	Tribulation	- George Pack
Mammon	- Richard Estcourt	Lovewit	- John Bickerstaff
Surly	- John Mills	Kastril	- William Bullock
Drugger	- William Pinkethman	Dame Pliant	- Mrs. Cox
Dapper	- Henry Norris	Dol Common	- Mrs. Saunders

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To have six performances in three months the play must have been very popular, a fact indicated by Colly Cibber's choice of it for his benefit which netted him 1 ls. 1/2d.⁵⁶ A special epilogue was written and delivered at that performance (26 March 1709) by Cibber himself. The final performance on 11 May was well reviewed by Richard Steele in The Tatler:

This Evening The Alchymist was play'd. This Comedy is an Example of Ben's extensive Genius and Penetration into the Passions and Follies of Mankind. The Scene in the Fourth Act, where all the cheated People oppose the Man that would open their Eyes, has something in it so inimitably excellent, that it is certainly as great a Masterpiece as has ever appear'd by any Hand. The Author's great Address in showing Coveteousness, the Motive of the Actions of the Puritan, the Epicure, the Gamster, and the Trader; and all their Endeavours, how differently soever they seem to tend, center only in that one Point of Gain, shows he has to a great Perfection that Discernment of Spirit, which constitutes a Genius for Comedy. 57

During the 1709-1710 season, several players revolted against Rich's management at Drury Lane and performed at the Haymarket where The Alchemist was presented twice⁵⁸ with a modified cast. Wilks played Face while Dogget played Dapper. The second performance was Will Pinkethman's benefit.⁵⁹ The following season the players returned to Drury Lane where the play was performed on 10 February and 6 April, 1711 with the same cast as in 1709. The 1711-1712 season saw two more

performances on 11 December 1711 and 19 February 1712 but there were no more until 22 December 1713. No cast is given for this performance, but with the death of Richard Estcourt in 1712 there must have been a modified cast. The play then disappeared from the boards until it was given at Drury Lane "Not Acted these Ten Years,"⁶⁰ By Royal Command" on 25 October 1721 when the Prince and Princess were present. The most interesting feature of this revival is the epilogue written especially for the occasion.

An Epilogue spoke to a Play Call'd the Alchymist.

Old Surly Ben, to Night hath let us know,
 That in this Isle a Plenteous Crop did Grow
 Of Knaves and Fools, a Hundred Years ago:
Chymists Bawds, Gamesters & a Numerous Train
 Of humble Rogues, Content with moderate Gain,
 The Poet had liv'd to see this Age
 Had brought Sublimier Villains on y^e Stage;
 Our Knaves Sin higher Now then those of Old,
Kingdoms, not Private Men, are Bought & Sold,
 Witness the South-sea Project, which hath shown
 How far Phylosophers may be out done
 By Modern S. . . m n that hav'e found y^e Stone.
 Well might it take its Title from the Main,
 That Rose so swift and Sunk so soon again;
 Fools have been always Bit by artfull Lyes,
 But here the Cautious were deceiv'd & wise,
 And Yet, in these Flagitious Monstrous Times,
 The Knves detected Triumph in their Crimes,
 Wallow in Wealth, have all things at Command,
 And Brave the Vengeance of an Injur'd Land;
 Well! since wee've Learn'd Experience at our Cost,
 Let us preserve the Remnant not yet Lost,
 Though L w, from France, be landed on the Coast,
 By Sober Arts Aspire to Guiltless Fame,
 And Prove that Virtue's not an Empty Name.⁶¹

The play ran three consecutive nights and was played again on 22 November. From this epilogue, the reasons for the popular-

ity of the revival can easily be ascertained. Public resentment against financial speculators, especially those connected with the French Mississippi Company and the South Sea failure, was still quite strong. Added to this, the celebrated John Law,⁶² founder of the Mississippi scheme, had just arrived back in London and was present at the opening performance on 25 October.⁶³

The cast had many new faces, as can be seen from a comparison with the cast of 1709.

Subtle	- Colly Cibber	Ananias	- Ben Johnson
Face	- John Mills	Tribulation	- Benjamin Griffin
Mammon	- John Harper	Lovewit	- Shepard
Surly	- Wilks, Jr.	Kastril	- Josias Miller
Drugger	- W. Pinketham	Dame Pliant	- Mrs. Markham
Dapper	- Henry Norris	Dol Common	- Mrs. Wetherilt

However this cast remained stable for some time, as Robert Noyes point out.⁶⁴ The only major change was the appearance of Theophilus Cibber in the role of Drugger, a part he played from 1731 till 1746 when the success of David Garrick forced him to relinquish the role.

From 1721 till 1747 when the play became a vehicle for Garrick's Abel Drugger, Jonson's play was acted in every season except three,⁶⁵ reaching a peak of eight performances in the 1733-1734 season.⁶⁶ Its popularity and success can be measured by the number of times it was chosen by the actors for their benefits. An account of the comedy during this period is given by Thomas Davies:

Colly Cibber I have seen act Subtle with great art; the elder Mills at the same time played Face with much shrewd spirit and ready impudence. The two Palmers have successively acted Face with much archness and solid characteristic bronze. Ben Griffin and Ben Johnson[sic] were much admired for their just representation of the canting puritanical preacher and his solemn deacon the botcher; there was an effected softness in the former which was finely contrasted by the fanatical fury of the other--Griffens features seemed ready to be relaxed into a smile, while the stiff muscles and fierce eye of the other admitted of no suppleness of compliance. . . .

I have never seen an adequate representer of Sir Epicure [Mammon], from Harper down to Love. The first seemed to have been taught by one who had juster conceptions of what was to be done in the part than the player could execute. 67

The popularity of the play is indicated by the famous Dr. Arbuthnot:

I therefore refer my Reader to the celebrated Comedy called the Alchymist, which opens with a high Quarrel between Face and Subtle, wherein the latter sells the other two Bargains almost in a Breath I purposely forbear to quote this choice Passage, that I may the more excite my Reader's Curiosity, to be present at the Representation of the Play, which I doubt not, upon the Hint I have here given, will be frequently called for before the End of the Season; as soon as the Curtain rises, otherwise he will be disappointed of his Expectation. 68

On 15 September 1735, the play "was performed to a crowded Audience with universal Applause," and had to be repeated the following evening for those "who could not get Places Yesterday."⁶⁹ About this time there were a few changes in the cast. On 6 April 1736 Mrs. Pritchard first appeared as Dol Common, a part she played intermittently until 1768.⁷⁰ In 1737 Macklin assumed the role of Face and William Havard took Surly, while Kastril fell to Woodward

and Dapper to Yates in the next two seasons, and in 1742 Edward Berry took over the role of Mammon.

E. GARRICK ERA, 1743-1776

On Monday 21 March, 1743 a new era in the stage history of The Alchemist was ushered in. At a benefit performance for Charles Macklin, David Garrick acted Abel Drugger for the first time at Drury Lane⁷¹ with an experienced supporting cast; Macklin playing Face, Mills playing Subtle and Mrs. Macklin playing Dol. There was a minor incident even before the performance began, as the Daily Advertiser announced:

As Mr. Macklin has reason to believe that several of his tickets are counterfeited, and will be offer'd for sale in the streets and passages leading to the theatre, he begs leave to give this publick caution of the fraud; and humbly desires that Gentlemen and Ladies who have taken places, to send for Tickets to the Theatre or to Mr. Macklin at his house in Bow Street. 72

From the time Garrick first appeared in the part of Abel Drugger until his retirement in 1776, The Alchemist was presented in all but five seasons. During that time Garrick played Drugger ninety two times, and the fact that the play was not offered by the rival company at Covent Garden during this period indicates that no one dared attempt to match Garrick's performance.

In his first two seasons Garrick shared the role with Theophilus Cibber and Collins, but when he became joint manager of Drury Lane in 1747 the role was reserved for him, the only exceptions being the two performances by Thomas Weston while Garrick was on his European tour in 1763-1764.⁷³ Garrick considered Drugger one of his best parts,⁷⁴ and so closely was he identified with the role that Samuel Foote planned to write a burlesque play titled The Drugger's Jubilee.⁷⁵

During the Garrick era, Drury Lane operated on the repertory system, which meant that when a play was revived few changes of cast were necessary. Between 1747 and 1776 Garrick played Drugger every time except when he was on his European tour; John Palmer was Face from 1755 till 1769 and Packer played Lovewit from 1759 till 1776. Most of the other roles were the exclusive property of one or two actors throughout the whole period. However, only Mrs. Bennett remained from the original 1743 cast by the time Garrick made his European Tour in 1763. Mills gave up acting Subtle in 1749, when the part fell to Bridges. In 1753 Burton took on the role and, except for several performances by Woodward,⁷⁶ played the part until 1772.

The play earned handsome profits. Three performances in the 1775-1776 season grossed 713 lls. 6d.⁷⁷ A single

performance on 20 March 1753 grossed £ 330 and during the 1755-1756 season when it was performed eight times it earned £ 1350. The success, however, can best be judged from the fact that it remained a stock play at the Drury Lane Theatre throughout the thirty-three years that Garrick acted there, and during that time served as the mainpiece for sixteen benefit performances, a mark of its popularity with actors and audiences alike.⁷⁸

F. LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AND NINETEENTH CENTURY, 1776-1899

After Garrick's retirement in 1776, the play was performed in a shortened version on March 21, 1782 and in April 1787.⁷⁹ However, a poor imitation prose version by Francis Gentleman, called The Tobacconist continued to be popular. This farce was based on Jonson's characterization of Abel Drugger, but has little dramatic value being little more than a vehicle for the actor taking the part of the titular hero to exhibit his skill in comic business. Originally written for Thomas Weston who had been so successful as Abel Drugger in Jonson's play while Garrick was in Europe in 1764, it was first performed in 1770. It was probably this farce that Mr. Kipling was referring to in 1788, when he spoke the Epilogue "riding on an ass,"⁸⁰ and it is probably the alteration that

Edmund Kean performed in May, 1815 which Hazlett praised so eloquently.⁸¹

Robert Noyes summarizes the plot of The Tobacconist,⁸² and dismisses the play by quoting a contemporary review from The London Evening Post. "To analyze [sic] this piece particularly, would be soiling the pen of criticism, as it was nothing more than an incoherent mixture of obsolete humour and low buffoonery."⁸³ However the play proved quite popular, being acted fifteen times between 1770 and 1775, two of which were benefit performances.⁸⁴

In 1773, Gentleman wrote The Pantheonites which has as its main character the grandson of Abel Drugger. Obviously written to capitalize on Weston's association with the past of Drugger, the farce was not a success and was performed only four times.⁸⁵

Between 1815 and 1899 there is no record of any performance, although the play was still held in high regard by the literary fraternity of the age. In fact, Charles Dickens thought of producing the play in 1848, with himself as Mammon, but only got as far as two or three rehearsals.⁸⁶ The reasons for the play's absence during this period is to be found by looking at the audience, for the nineteenth century theatre goers who frequented Drury Lane and Covent Gardens did not have the same tastes as the audience of Garrick's age. In an age of Romanticism and sensibility,

Jonson's caustic, vigorous drama, if not without merit, was at least without music. As William Hazlitt phrased it, Jonson's genius "resembles the grub more than the butterfly, plods and grovels on, wants wings to wanton in the idle summer's air, and catch the golden light of poetry."⁸⁷ Not only was the interest centered on poetry, but the school of criticism that emphasized characterization held full sway, and Jonson's figures were insignificant compared with the immortal gallery of characters created by Shakespeare.

Jonson's play also did not fit the taste of the general public. Its peculiar brand of realism was not appreciated, partly because the interest in alchemy, astrology and Puritanism had become antiquated. But the main reason the play fell into disrepute was the language, which to the Victorians was highly offensive as well as unintelligible. The oaths, not to mention the sexual fantasies of Sir Epicure Mammon, would have seared the ears of the genteel Victorians, while the characters--the whore, the procurer, the sexual fanatic--would have held little interest for an audience who preferred sentimental drawing-room dramas. The Victorian attitude towards the play is reflected in the comments of A.W. Ward, who, while praising the play condemns it for its immorality, maintaining that Jonson "was guilty of a palpable error of omission in allowing one of the conspirators [Face] to escape with impunity,"⁸⁸ and Schlegel's opinion that of all Jonson's

plays "there is hardly one which, as it stands, would please on the stage in the present day"⁸⁹ was universally accepted.⁹⁰

G. TWENTIETH CENTURY 1899-1970

On 24 February, 1899⁹¹ the modern era of the stage history of The Alchemist was initiated by the Elizabethan Stage Society.⁹² Produced by William Poel at Apothecaries' Hall, Blackfriars, The Alchemist was presented on a pseudo-Elizabethan stage from the quarto text of 1612. Although the critic from The Athenean complained that the play was "deficient in almost everything that makes a great play" he ended by saying that the performance was "unique as it was interesting," and he gave special mention to the diction which was "as a rule, good--better even than is often heard on the regular stage."⁹³ Poel also revived the play, again for the Elizabethan Stage Society, on the 11 and 12 July, 1902 at the Imperial Theatre, Westminster and on 4 August 1902 took the play to Cambridge⁹⁴ where it was performed in the New Theatre under the auspices of the Vice Chancellor, Dr. Ward. As usual, the play was given in Elizabethan costume, but the cast was slightly different from that of the London production.

The Marlowe Society produced the play in March 1914⁹⁵ at Cambridge. They used futuristic settings and there was special Italian music, but the major complaint of the critics was the over-zealous pruning of the text. The reviewer for The Cambridge Magazine posed the rhetorical question "when will it be possible to play our national drama from the text? [A] few cuts were undoubtedly desirable, but it does not do to be unnecessarily squeamish in a realistic picture of low life in the metropolis."⁹⁶

The Birmingham Repertory Company gave an outstanding revival on 8 April, 1916,⁹⁷ with Felix Aylmer playing Subtle. In March 1923, the Phoenix Society revived the play at the Regent Theatre, King's Cross. Directed by Montague Summers and produced by Allen Wade, the play was an outstanding success. The critic of The Times considered it one of the Society's best productions and drew attention to the "unusually even balance" of the characters. Martin Armstrong, although admiring the performance of "the greatest farce of the greatest English farce-writer,"⁹⁸ followed in the footsteps of T.S. Eliot by drawing attention to the characterization which he believed was "two-dimensional," and to the verse which he dismissed as "versified prose."⁹⁹

In August 1932, The Alchemist was performed at the Malvern Festival with an outstanding cast, headed by Ralph Richardson as Face and Cedric Hardwicke as Druggier.

In March 1935,¹⁰⁰ the play was performed at the Embassy Theatre, London directed by Olga Katzin,¹⁰¹ moving to Princes Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue in April. The production received mixed reviews but the consummate roguery of Hugh Miller as Subtle and the verse speaking ability of Bruce Winston as Mammon were universally praised, and all reviewers thought the production highly entertaining.

The Old Vic Company, directed by Tyrone Guthrie, performed a modern dress version at the Playhouse in Liverpool during the 1944-1945 season, and the York Citizen's Theatre produced the play at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith for a short run in August 1945.¹⁰² In 1947 the Old Vic Company revived The Alchemist at the New Theatre, St. Martin's Lane with George Relph as Subtle, Ralph Richardson as Face and Alec Guinness as Druggier.¹⁰³ Directed by John Burrell, "the play was acted as a kind of harlequinade, swift and vigorous, but with a boisterousness hardly suited to Jonson."¹⁰⁴ However the major fault lay in the eighteenth century costumes which were incongruous with Jonson's topical setting. A programme note explained that the play's "comment on life can apply to any period not excluding our own, so prone to gambling, black-marketing, astrology, spiritualism, psycho-analysis and other fields where charlatans practise cunningly, illegally, prosperously and often amusingly" but this does not excuse putting Jonson's seventeenth-century characters into eighteenth-century costumes, especially when Dame

Pliant's allusion to the Spaniards and the Armada¹⁰⁵ dates the play so specifically. Alec Guinness' Druggier was played with Cockney shyness that was both comic and touching, while Peter Copley's hysterical zeal as Ananias also caught the critics' eye. George Relph made a glorious alchemist and the rest of the cast fitted in well. The play drew full houses in spite of snow and ice that temporarily halted rehearsals for the next production.

In December, 1952 Dennis Carey directed the play for the Bristol Old Vic at the Theatre Royal. This production was "a rapid series of swiftly established, vivid impressions" and John Neville's cunning Face received excellent reviews. The reviewer in The Stage gives a vivid pennail sketch of the performers

. . . the dancing, black wisp with a chuckle like crackling paper that James Cairncross makes of Subtle; the Cockney cunning of John Neville's Face; Robert Cartland puffed out with plum-coloured velvet and cutting an absurd caper as Sir Epicure Mammon; the "smock rampant" Pauline Jameson makes of Doll Common; and the palsied crow--or a spectra from St. Trinian's cupboard, if you like--that Peter Nicholls conjures out of the sable-clad Anaias. 106

In late 1962, the Old Vic revived the play again, this time modernized by Tyrone Guthrie who had earlier directed it at the Liverpool Old Vic. There was much adverse comment about Guthrie's giving the play a contemporary setting, especially since the costuming ranged over a wide spectrum of periods.

According to Ivor Brown, the play was so thoroughly altered that Jonson would scarcely have recognized it, but "it was vastly amusing in its audacious way."¹⁰⁷ Guthrie inserted modern jokes, and changed anachronistic and obscure references, but in doing so he emphasised the oddness and quaintness of what was happening. Ivor Brown summarizes the production with the remark that "an admirer of Jonson's mordant exposure of imposters and simpletons they prey upon could say that Guthrie had played with his author and not presented him."¹⁰⁸

The first recorded American performance of The Alchemist was given by the Fortune Players in June 1931 at the New School for Social Research.¹⁰⁹ Directed by Olga Katzin, the production was acted with gusto, while the small auditorium and flat stage created an intimacy impossible on the typical Broadway stage. In May 1948, the New York City Center Theatre Company revived the play but it was not well received.¹¹⁰ The play was compressed into two acts and an original prologue added in the belief that Jonson's exposition needed clarification. There were also some drastic textual cuts while the role of Tribulation was rewritten as that of a parson.

In August 1961, three performances were given by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Association at Ashland, Oregon, on the outdoor pseudo-Elizabethan stage. Hugh Evans' Drugger, a mixture of inability and devoted affabil-

ity, again showed why Garrick was so successful in the part, as the gullible tobacconist quickly gained the sympathy and interest of the audiences.

On 14 September 1964, Stephen Porter directed a revival at the Gate Theatre, New York. Stage business dominated the play, but John Heffernan as the charlatan doctor gave a sterling performance and Philip Minor's fully-fleshed Mammon relished every imaginative detail in his speeches.¹¹¹

The Lincoln Center presented The Alchemist in the Vivian Beaumont Theatre, New York, on 13 October, 1966,¹¹² but reviews were generally unenthusiastic. In emphasizing farce at the expense of Jonson's comedy, Jules Irving may have overcome the shortcomings of his cast but in doing so he cheapened Jonson's subtle art. The only part praised by the critics was that of Lovewit who emerged as Jonson's moral arbitrator. Played by Philip Bosco this usually unrewarding part demonstrated the force of Jonson's characterization. Irving followed Tyrone Guthrie's example by casting an actress as Tribulation Wholesome, an unfortunate abnormality, and his choice for other parts left much to be desired.

In the twentieth century there have also been several outstanding minor productions in Great Britain and North America, minor in status, though frequently not in quality. On 9 and 10 December 1927, Birkbeck College gave a performance

with a prologue written by J.H. Lobban.¹¹³ The students of Kirkland House, Harvard University performed the play on 12 November 1934 under the direction of Dr. Huntingdon Brown, who acted Ananias.¹¹⁴ The Durham College's Dramatic Society presented The Alchemist on 2 December 1938 with Dr. Clifford Leech as producer and the Wadham College Dramatic Society gave two performances on 19 and 25 May 1946.¹¹⁵ In 1949, the Cambridge Amateur Dramatic Company produced the play with John Barton as Subtle and Tony Robertson as Face. In the autumn of 1956 there was a production at the University of Colorado, directed by Jack Crouch, and Stephen Porter directed a revival at Princeton in 1962.¹¹⁶ On 18 January 1965 the Meadow Players performed the play at the Playhouse Oxford with Judi Dench as Dol, John Turner as Face and Alan MacNaughton as Subtle. It was directed by Frank Hauser.

The play has also been adapted for radio and television. On 29 January, 1951 the B.B.C. Home Service broadcast a radio version of the play, adapted by Frank Hauser and produced by Donald McWhinnie. Cecil Trouser played Subtle, Donald Wolfitt Face and Betty Bascomb was Dol Common. Leighton Lucas composed and directed special music. A television production was broadcast from the B.B.C.'s Midland Studios on 29 May 1961. In 1960 Robert B. Loper staged The Alchemist for the Actor's Workshop in San Francisco, a production later televised over KQED television in the Bay city.

A twentieth century adaption by Eric Linklater called The Mortimer Touch (1950) has received some success. Originally performed at the Edinburgh Festival in 1950, it was revived at the Duke of York's Theatre on 30 April, 1952 and a television adaptation as seen on B.B.C. on 19 August 1962.¹¹⁷

From the above listings it can be seen that Ben Jonson's Alchemist is gradually gaining again in popularity. In fact even as I write this, The Young Vic Company is preparing to bring The Alchemist to Canada and there was a production in Chichester England in 1970. The current interest is a result of the trend to satire in theatre but interest is also due to the fact that the play is fun to watch and in an age of wars, pollution and automation the emotional catharsism of entertainment is not to be sneered at. For too long Jonson has been primarily the concern of the critic and the literary purist, and only now are his talents as a popular dramatist being given their true consideration.

CHAPTER TWO

INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTIONS OF THE ALCHEMIST

A. INTRODUCTION

No critic has seriously challenged Coleridge's assumption that The Alchemist is one of the three finest plots in literature¹ but few critics have praised it in terms of its theatrical qualities. Yet the stage history of the play proves that The Alchemist is a theatrical masterpiece as it has inevitably been popular when produced, and it is by far the best example of Jonson's dramatic genius since it comes closest to achieving Jonson's ideal of uniting education and entertainment in dramatic form. According to L.C. Knights "The Alchemist . . . is a morality play on the lusts of covetousness and licentiousness,"² an opinion Alan Dessen agrees with.³ But Brian Gibbons sees the play as a type of ironic exemplum in which the triumverate of rogues are exposed, forced to confess and made to return to the straight and narrow path of crime⁴ which seems to agree with J.B. Bamborough's contention that in The Alchemist, "Jonson has begun to lose sight of his sterner moral purpose."⁵ These critics emphasize the moral purpose behind Jonson's play.

Another group of critics praise the play because of its satire. According to Robert Reed, The Alchemist is "the most masterful satire on blind credulity ever written by an English playwright,"⁶ an opinion shared by Alvin Kernan.⁷ Felix Schelling said the play was an attack upon "a specific class of sharpers,"⁸ but this narrow view of the play is very restrictive. Although no-one can deny that the play is a satire on the pretentiousness, affectations and foibles of seventeenth century London, one would miss a great deal if they considered this the only purpose Jonson had. For satire, after all, is simply a term applied to the artist's method. Satire is used to fulfill Jonson's desire to shatter and reform. The contemporary fads such as alchemy and Puritanism, affected manners and dress, are but a slight importance compared with the main satire targets--man's gullibility and greed. Some critics maintain that the ending holds little hope of moral regeneration, and in the world of the play this is true, but as Jonson points out in the argument, at the end of the performance "all in fume are gone."⁹ However the conclusions to be drawn by the audience are what really matters, and here the aim to delight and profit is left up to the audience--the dramatist can do no more.

Considered as a work of art, The Alchemist is a remarkable blend of Horatian satire with moral comedy, classic form with native material. It is impressive because

of the way in which the simple theme of man's greed has been fleshed out into a variety of images connected with, but not bound, by the central theme. Yet the images play a minor role compared with the plot that seems to move in ever tightening circles to its inevitable end.

In the theatre however the play is bound to be interpreted with emphasis on some specific aspect. Different productions have often stressed different aspects of the play and an examination of what happens to it in several productions reveals the theatrical tastes of different periods in history and throws interesting light on the skill with which Jonson constructed the play as social satire, comedy and dramatic entertainment.

B. EARLY PRODUCTIONS, 1610-1743

In the Jacobean period, the audiences were probably attracted by the play's realistic treatment of seventeenth-century London life with its scheming knaves, rising middle class and hypocritical puritans. The satire aimed at alchemy, practised by such men as Dr. John Dee and Edward Kelly, would have appealed in an age in which scientific investigations were often equaled with black magic, and the exposure and ridiculing of the Puritans would have been enjoyed by

many. The Elizabethan stage would have facilitated a brisk pace for the comedy, while the conspirators' frequent disguises could easily have been costumed on that type of stage. The metaphorical aspect of Jonson's comic world would have been better understood by an audience attuned to the poetic use of language, especially since they were conditioned to the conventions of the Elizabethan stage which implied that the stage was a microcosm of the world.

The success of the play in the Restoration was probably due in part to the satire of the Anabaptists,⁹ because even as late as 1683 the authorities were suppressing the Anabaptist preachers.¹⁰ The opportunities inherent in the female roles of Dol Common and Dame Pliant also were a factor in The Alchemist's popularity at a time when women playing female roles was still novel on the London stage.¹¹ Finally the bawdy language and comic wooing scenes would have delighted Restoration audiences that were rediscovering the enjoyment of risqué comedy after sixteen years of Puritan suppression.

In the process of doing research for The Jacobean and Caroline Stage G.E. Bentley came to the conclusion that during the Restoration Jonson was mentioned at least as often as Shakespeare.¹² Although The Alchemist only ranked third in the number of allusions to Jonsonian plays,¹³ it received far more specific praise, and Dol Common was the most frequently mentioned Jonsonian character.¹⁴ However it is difficult to accept Bentley's statement that "Jonson, and not

Shakespeare, was the dramatist of the seventeenth century."¹⁵ Reputation and popularity must not be confused. Although acclaimed by the critical public of the seventeenth century as the greatest English dramatist, Jonson was not as popular in the theatre, as more Shakespearean plays were produced than Jonson's in the period 1660-1700.

It is interesting to note that most of the allusions refer to Jonson's ability to follow pseudo classic rules in his drama. The classical traditions of France were evident in the refined tastes of the Restoration theatre public and Jonson's plays fitted the bill better than Shakespeare's. But the allusions to Jonson's characters are more revealing. Dol, Face and Subtle are frequently mentioned and so is Ananias, but Mammon and Drugger receive no attention. The conclusion is obvious. The Restoration productions emphasized the conspirators and the gulling of the Puritans while the poetic flights of Mammon and the simple gullibility of Drugger were neglected. The emphasis was on the plot which was manipulated by the conspirators, who therefore naturally became the dramatic focus.

On the other hand, in the early eighteenth century, the activities of Subtle became the focal point of the play and Colly Cibber's portrayal of Jonson's charlatan was very popular. The supporting gulls were merely pawns in the deceptive game played by the conspirators, although they were individualized to emphasize man's ridiculous greed.¹⁶

In the 1720's the play's success seems to have been based on the satire of commerce implicit in Jonson's play.¹⁷ At that time, London was still recovering from the effect of the South Sea Bubble in which thousands of innocent stockholders had been defrauded of their investment because of their erroneous beliefs in the extravagant riches of South American Trade. This financial skuldruggery had several similarities with the fantastical claims attributed by Subtle and Face to the philosopher's stone and resembled the gulling of credulous people by the mischievous trio. The commercial implications of their compact is evident where Jonson informs us that:

A cheater and his punque ...
L eaving their narrow practise, were become
C os'ners at large: and, onely wanting some
H ouse to set vp, with him they here contract,
E ach for a share, and all begin to act.
M uch company they draw, and much abuse,
I n casting figures, telling fortunes, newes,
S elling of flyes, flat bawdry, with the stone:
T il it, and they, and all in fume are gone.

Argument, ll. 5-12

Such words as "practise," "House to set vp," "contract," "share," "company," and "selling" underline the commercial character of their venture, and the opening scene continues the economic tone. Face reminds Subtle that it is he who attracts the "customers" so that Subtle can practise his

"trades"; it is his "credit" that furnishes the "coales." Dol reminds her warring partners of their business obligations (I.i. 131-136) and manages to persuade Subtle to "labour, kindly, in the commune worke" (I.i. 156). Later, when Surley comes to them disguised as a Spaniard, Face and Subtle agree to forget their quarrel over who will marry Dame Pliant and decide to risk her in a truly commercial venture by having her serve their immediate needs. According to Face "All our venter/Now lies vpon't The credit of our house too is engag'd It is the common cause" (IV.iii. 65-76). Although Subtle is reluctant to give up his share in such valuable property he eventually lets his commercial spirit overrule his carnal instincts.

The financial skulduggery contributes greatly to the theme of greed that permeates the dramatic action. Subtle and his confederates set up their 'business' and do a thriving trade until Lovewit returns home and claims the lion's share of their profit. The comic justice of the play thereby becomes evident, for Subtle, who has preyed on the hypocrisy, greed and stupidity of the gulls, is in turn humiliated by Lovewit. Lovewit's greed, combined with intelligence, is an even stronger weapon than Subtle's. But Face, unlike Mosca in Volpone, is willing to take a moderate return for his risks and therefore survives in this world of dog eat dog. As the performances of the early eighteenth century show, the play contains themes that are relevant in times of economic instability.

Up to 1721, all indications are that the play was performed primarily as a satiric comedy whose principal target was man's greed and gullibility. Although some productions emphasized the intrigue of the rogues while others emphasized the gullibility of the dupes, the principal object was satire. But the Commonwealth droll The Imperick suggested a different aspect inherent in Jonson's drama. This was the element of farce which provides another dramatic impetus in Jonson's comedy. But it was not until the eighteenth century that this element began to play a dominant role in theatrical productions of the play. Theophilus Cibber precipitated the change when he took the role of Drugger in 1731. His "absurb grimace and ridiculous tricks" anticipated the farcical interpretation which was to reach full development in Garrick's portrayal. Although Cibber's acting was inferior to Garrick's,¹⁸ even the contemporary critic, Samuel Foote, recognized Cibber's contribution to the play:

. . . cast your Eye on the Abel Drugger of G. and the Abel Drugger of C. I call the simple, composed, grave Deportment of the former Comic and the squint ey'd grinning Grimace of the later Comical. The first obtains your Applause, by persuading you that he is the real Man. The latter indeed opens your Eyes, and gives you to understand that he is but personating the Tobacco-Boy: But then to atone for the Loss of the Deception, you are ready to split with Laughter, at the ridiculous Variations of his Muscles. 19

From the time of its first appearance in 1610, The Alchemist had caused no great stir and although it appeared

frequently as a stock play after the Restoration, it never had a long run. But with Garrick, a new era in the stage history of The Alchemist began

C. DAVID GARRICK'S PRODUCTIONS, 1743-1776

Garrick acted the role of Abel Drugger for the first time in London on 21 March 1743 in a benefit performance for Mr. Macklin, and although the performance did not create quite the same sensation as did his debut as Richard III on 19 October 1741, it began the era of greatest popularity in the stage history of The Alchemist. From 1743 to 1776 the play had a brilliant record, appearing in all but five seasons, and Garrick was so domineering in the part of Drugger that no one else dared try to challenge him. Except for two performances by ~~Thomas G. Weston~~ while Garrick was on his European tour,²¹ the part remained the private property of Garrick from 1747 to his retirement in 1776. No other company attempted to stage the play during this period, because no other actor felt capable of matching Garrick's popularity in the role of Abel Drugger.²²

Garrick brought his own inimitable style to Jonson's play. According to Thomas Davies;

Mr. Garrick's easy and familiar style in speaking and acting first threw the critics into some hesitation concerning the novelty as well as the property of his manner. They had long been accustomed to an elevation of the voice, with a sudden mechanical depression of its tones, calculated to excite admiration and to entrap applause. To the just modulation of the words, and concurring expression of the features from the genuine workings of nature, they had been strangers, at least for some time. . . . 23

That this natural style of acting proved very successful in Jonson's play is proved by the famous anecdote related by Doctor Johnson concerning a Lichfield tradesman who had been urged by Peter Garrick to witness a performance by his famous brother. The tradesman saw David Garrick perform Abel Drugger and was not impressed, saying on his return: "Well, by God! Mr. Garrick, though he is your brother, he is one of the shabbiest, meanest, most pitiful hounds I ever saw in the whole course of my life."²⁴ This story illustrates Garrick's ability to invest a role with his whole body and soul so that he seemed to become the character he was acting. He could play heroic figures or low comedians equally well and frequently alternated roles in tragedy and comedy to demonstrate his versatility. After seeing Garrick act Abel one evening and Richard III the next, the famous painter Hogarth was forced to say "you are in your element when you are begrimed with dirt, or up to your elbows in blood."²⁵ The picture of Garrick as Abel Drugger with his tousled wig and crumpled smock is a striking interpretation of Jonson's simple, horribly natural tobacconist.

The adapted text used by Garrick has been preserved in Bell's British Theatre.²⁶ The title page reads as follows:

The / ALCHYMIST. / A comedy. / As altered from Ben Jonson. / Distinguishing also the / Variations of the Theatre, / as performed at the / Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane. / Regulated from the Prompt Book, / by Permission of the Managers, / by Mr. Hopkins, Prompter. / . . . MDCCLXXVII

Since this text is regulated from the promptbook at Drury Lane less than one year after Garrick's last performance in the play, it is probably the version he used, especially since a picture entitled "Mr. Garrick in the Character of Abel Drugger" appears opposite the title page.

The Advertisement on the next page informs the reader "that it was impracticable to give the original intire [sic], without greatly embarrassing the reader" so "Such lines as could be restored (though omitted on the Stage) are printed with inverted commas, those in Italics are added in the presentation." However, the advertisement is not wholly correct when it says lines added for the stage presentation will be in italics. There are several lines in italics that are already in Jonson's text,²⁷ and others not in italics have been added by Garrick.²⁸ The prompt book follows Jonson's arrangement of scenes but scene divisions are not always indicated,²⁹ and there are many changes in spelling and punctuation to make the text conform to

eighteenth century stage and publishing practices. The long "f" is used throughout Garrick's text but there is a general modernizing of spelling. For instance "businessse" becomes "business." Contractions are made consistent with eighteenth century usage; "and't" becomes "an't." Each new speech is begun on a new type line. Brackets are not used consistently and punctuation probably represents stage practice for it certainly does not follow Jonson's text. Stage directions are added but are mainly restricted to exits and entrances.³⁰

Fredrick Bergmann has listed and classified most of the changes Garrick made in his adaption of the play.³¹ Some of the omissions were a result of eighteenth century theatrical tastes which demanded a purer kind of language and a faster moving comedy. To accomplish this, Garrick cut nearly a third of Jonson's text, eliminating single words, single lines and less frequently entire speeches,³² but always exercising the utmost care in preserving the continuity of Jonson's plot. Coarse wording, obscure allusions and phrases that might be religiously offending were neatly abolished and less interesting parts were cut in the unrelenting pursuit of a shorter playing time.

Other changes resulted from eighteenth century stage practices. For example, the final cue of Act Three was omitted, so that the effect of Subtle's climatic speech that immediately precedes it was not undercut. On the Elizabethan

stage the cue was necessary to provide transition from Act Three to Act Four, but on the eighteenth-century stage such verbal curtains were unnecessary.

To improve an actor's exit, Garrick sometimes introduced new business. For instance, in Jonson's text, I.ii closes with Face's instruction to Dapper to "put on a cleane shirt: You doe not know / What grace her Grace may doe you in cleane linnen." (I.ii. 174-175). To this, Garrick adds

Dap.	Hum -- buz.	Exit.
Fac.	Hum -- buz.	Exit.

(p. 18)

Earlier in the scene Subtle had given Dapper instructions to "cry hum, / Thrice and then buz, as often" (I.ii. 169-170), in preparation for his visit with the Queen of the Fairies. Here this silly instruction is being followed, for as Dapper leaves the stage he begins his practicing. The comic cincher however is that when Dapper has gone, Face leaves the stage mimicing him.

Moving now to a consideration of more substantive changes, it is clear from an examination of the text that Garrick changed the play so as to emphasize the role of Drugger.³³ Other roles were drastically pared and incidents not connected with Drugger considerably shortened. For instance, the opening quarrel between Face and Subtle is cut by some thirty eight lines,³⁴ while some twenty five are

pared from the discussion between Face, Subtle and Dapper concerning the latter's chances at gaming. The Dapper subplot is further reduced by the omission of Dapper's interview with Dol (dressed as Queen of the Fairies) in V.iv.

The Anabaptist plot is also heavily cut, with III.i. and III.ii. being severely abbreviated. According to Bergmann,³⁵ most of the cuts in this area were because Puritanism no longer held any interest for theatre-goers, but some lines were dealt with purely on religious grounds. For example, the exchange between Ananias and Tribulation (III.i. 7-14) is omitted because it casts aspersions on all religious sects that believe the end justifies the means, and in the eighteenth century missionary cults were busily at work in many British Colonies.

The emphasis on Drugger necessitated Garrick's omission of Drugger's final line as it appears in Jonson's text. This anticlimatic entrance and exit would have destroyed the appeal of Garrick's portrayal, for Drugger merely enters claiming that he is not an Anabaptist before being driven off the stage by Lovewit. Such an episode would reduce Drugger to the stature of a mere dupe.

Garrick's additions also contribute to the emphasis placed on Drugger. I.ii. ends³⁶ with an exchange between Dapper and Face, leaving Subtle alone on stage. In Jonson's text the next scene opens as Drugger enters without a word and he does not speak until Subtle questions him. Garrick

therefore interpolates the line. "Within: I will see the Doctor" (p. 18) which prepares the audience for Druggier's entrance, while adding a note of insistence to Druggier's otherwise meek dialogue with Subtle, conversation in which the alchemist takes all the initiative. The next change also adds depth to Druggier's character. In answer to Subtle's question "Free of the Grocers?" Jonson has Druggier answer "I, and't please you" (I.iii. 5), thereby emphasizing the foolish tobacconist's fear and respect of the learned Doctor. Garrick, while not neglecting this aspect of Druggier's character, chooses to emphasize Druggier's middle class pride, so he changes the druggist's reply to "Yes, I'm free of the Grocers" (p. 19). Other additions also keep the spotlight on Druggier. Face's description of Abel as an honest fellow (I.iii. 21-32) is broken up by two interjections by Druggier defending his honour as a tobaccoman, and a repetition by Druggier of Face's last remark "No, I am no Goldsmith" (p. 19). Druggier's reluctance to part with his money is comically emphasized by a one line prose addition. To Jonson's simple admission by Druggier that "Yes, I have a portague, I ha' kept this halfe yeere" (I.iii. 87) Garrick adds the aside "And I would fain keep it half a year longer" (p. 21). When Face offers to give Druggier's money to the Doctor, (I.iii. 88-89) Druggier in his misery helplessly replies "Will ye?" (p. 21), an alteration which shows that Druggier's miserliness has been supplanted by his avarice and that he has been

completely taken in by Face's argument.

Sometimes Garrick interpolated lines to facilitate stage business in which Drugger is involved. When Face asks "Why, this is strange! Is't not, honest NAB?", Garrick has Drugger answer "Yes, very strange" (p. 20). Then Subtle says:

There is a ship now, coming from Ormus,
That shall yeeld him such a commoditie
Of drugs--Come hither Abel;
This is the west, and this the south.

(p. 20)³⁷

The first two and a half lines are addressed to Face, but to indicate that Subtle is now addressing Drugger, Garrick inserts the line "Come hither Abel." Another example occurs in II.iii., as Subtle casts Drugger's horoscope:

A townsman, born in Tourus, gives the bull,
Or the bull's head. In Aries, the ram,
A poor device. Come hither, Abel.
No, I will have his name
Formed in some mystic character. . . .

(p. 40)

Here, as previously, the interpolated line draws Drugger into the dramatic spotlight, and suggests some stage movement.

Drugger is often given one line queries or silly remarks to emphasis his stupidity. Two examples from II.vi. illustrate the point.

Face. H'is busie with his spirits; but wee'll upon him.
Drug. Where are they? Fac. Hush!
Sub. How now! What mates? What biards ha' we here?

(p. 40)

Snb. [sic] . . . That may result upon the party owns it:
 Thus -----
 Drug. I don't understand it
 Fac. Nab!
 Sub. He shall have a bell, that's Abel.
 Drug. And so it is.

(p. 40)

Later, Drugger interrupts Face's speech three times with short questions: "Is he?" "Has he?" and "Will he?" (p. 42). This tends to break up Face's monologue, shifting the dramatic focus from the speaker to the listener so that Garrick would have ample opportunity to exhibit his stage business.

Much of the new stage business was introduced to establish the character of Drugger more effectively before the audience, and to give greater freedom to Garrick's ability to farcically portray the gullible tobacconist. For example, when Face suggests that the foolish merchant send a hogshead of his wares to the Doctor (II.vi, p. 42), Drugger runs off-stage, only to be forcibly returned by Face. This gave Garrick an excellent opportunity to display his comic talents, while showing Drugger's blind obedience to Face's suggestions. Another example can be found in Face's account of Drugger's visit to a tavern. Face says Drugger "has no head / To bear any wine" (III.iv. 115-116). Here Garrick inserted a comment by Drugger "No, I have no head" (p. 52) which, if accompanied by an appropriate gesture, was bound to cause gales of laughter.

The explosion in the alchemist's laboratory was well known in Garrick's time even to provincial audiences. This is evident from the allusion found in the prologue for the opening of the Bristol Theatre in 1766, where Garrick recalls Subtle's attempts to find the philosopher's stone:

But in projection comes the dreadful stroke
 The glasses burst, and all is bounce and smoke!
 Tho' doubtful still our fate--I bite my thumbs
 And my heart fails me,--when projection comes.³⁸

A vivid description of Drugger's actions as he accidentally drops a urinal while the other characters are speaking (I.iii.) is left by Garrick himself in his An Essay on Acting: "When Abel Drugger has broke the Urinal, he is mentally absorb'd with the different Ideas of the invaluable Price of Urinal, and the Punishment that may be inflicted in consequence of a Curiosity."³⁹

Garrick was adept at adding stage business not found in Jonson's text. Not only was there the incident of the urinal described above, but there was the famous boxing match in which Drugger routed Surly. According to a letter printed in the London Evening Post, Drugger "stripped off his clothes, rubbed his hands, clenched his fists, and threw himself into all the attitudes of a modern Broughtonian bruiser."⁴⁰ And the effect was not merely illusionary. George Lichtenberg, a German traveller who was also an enthusiastic theatregoer, assures us that Garrick was very strong and amazingly dextrous:

"In the scene from The Alchemist where he [Garrick] boxes, he runs about and skips from one neat leg to the other with such admirable lightness that one would dare swear that he was floating on air."⁴¹

Garrick's additional stage business was not always appreciated by the critics.⁴²

If Mr. Garrick has any particular defect as a comedian, 'tis barely this, and from which few actors are exempt; namely an occasional compliance with the viciated taste of too many of the audience in introducing the outré, for the sake of a laugh, where the author never intended it. The first is that of boxing in Abel Drugger. This character, as drawn by Johnson, is that of a most credulous, timid, pusilanimous wretch; the Broughtoman attitudes into which Mr. Garrick throws himself, are utterly inconsistent with the part; and consequently the weakness of those who are pleased with, and applaud it, is obviously manifest.⁴³

This review is echoed by "Rusticus Theatricus" who attended a performance on 6 February, 1770:

The character of Abel Drugger I look upon, as drawn by the celebrated Ben Johnson, to be that of a credulous, timid, pusilanimous wretch, one who, by the most miserable economy, has scrapped together a little money. . . .⁴⁴

Garrick's distorted interpretation of Jonson's original creation was attributed by the critic to Garrick's attempt to accommodate his powers to the vicious palate of the rabble, for the sake of raising the momentary roar of vulgar applause.

But Garrick's alterations enhanced the dramatic effectiveness of Jonson's plot and although over one thousand lines were cut, the original dramatic structure was not damaged.

Noyes considered the alteration "on the whole, dramatically more compact"⁴⁵ and Fredrick Bergmann concluded that Garrick's production may "in some ways be considered a better playing comedy and one much better suited to the theatergoer witnessing it a century and a half after its original performance."⁴⁶ Garrick himself praised The Alchemist for its "admirably constructed plot" and made special reference to the fourth act which he considered "perhaps one of the finest Contrivance in the English Drama."⁴⁷ But in the final analysis one must conclude that Garrick distorted the comic framework of Jonson's play by making Drugger the central figure. By omitting much of the fifth act Garrick loses Jonson's perspective that life is a game in which moral virtues can be tempered with human cunning to provide a golden mean. By reducing the other gulls to mere shadows of their former greatness, Garrick loses the variety of Jonson's comment on man's avarice and much of the satire is lost. On the other hand, Garrick's changes spotlight the farcical elements inherent in Jonson's play--the moments that make the play entertaining. The utter stupidity of Drugger, his naivety, his complete faith in the Doctor as he is being tricked out of everything is farce at its best. But the implicit criticism of human nature in Jonson's creation is overshadowed by Garrick's stage actions which were aimed at entertaining, not educating, the audience. Garrick proved that the play could be extremely popular and highly profitable and in the process provided a depth to

Jonson's *Drugger* that was bound to raise some profound questions about human nature, but his adaption is in many respects not Jonson's play. His *Drugger*, like the tramp in Charlie Chaplin's films, is funny because he is unaffected by the buffetting received at the hands of a cruel world. Jonson, on the other hand, wanted to show man's foolishness in the hopes that it would encourage selfawareness, not just entertainment which is the probable effect of Garrick's work.

D. WILLIAM POEL'S PRODUCTIONS, 1899-1902

From Garrick's retirement in 1776 to Edmund Kean's performance in 1815 The Alchemist remained on the boards in an adulterated form, but from 1815 to 1899 no record of any production has been found. Although Jonson's plays remained popular among literary scholars, they did not conform to Victorian theatrical tastes,⁴⁸ so they were not produced. But early in the twentieth century there was renewed interest in Jonson, and The Alchemist again drew special attention.

The modern stage history of The Alchemist began with a nineteenth century production by the Elizabethan Stage Society under the direction of William Poel. This society and its predecessor, The Elizabethan Reading Society, attempted

to produce the Elizabethan dramatists' plays in their original texts, hoping to obtain a closer relationship to the authors' original intentions which were often obscure in nineteenth century productions. Most of the plays produced were Shakespearean, but a wide selection of other Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists had their plays read and performed. These revivals led to a renewed interest in the plays and in Elizabethan methods of production which the Stage Society attempted to reproduce.

The Alchemist was performed on the 24 and 25 February, 1899 and received an interesting reaction. The critics, for instance, enjoyed the production but attacked the play. According to the critic for The Times:

The Alchemist is probably the best of Jonson's dramas, but the best is not very good. One or two of the scenes are cleverly managed, and the denouncement is ingeniously worked out, but the action as a whole lacks variety. The scenes seem at times almost to repeat each other, and the intrigue develops rather slowly. 49

This attack on the play's structure shows a lack of understanding of Jonson's technique, for as Robert Knoll has pointed out, redundancy is not synonymous with lack of variety. Knoll says The Alchemist "is a series of redundant comic incidents . . . independent of one another . . . each contributing a share to a central startling incident,"⁵⁰ and convincingly shows that the apparent lack of variety is a myth, for Jonson deliberately used the technique of "duplication" to provide

more opportunities for comparison and contrast. Knoll states that as "each new situation is introduced, its protagonist appears more corrupt than those previously introduced."⁵¹ Although on the surface the plot elements appear complex, they are in reality quite straightforward. As Knoll says:

Jonson uses a single technique throughour: First an introduction, then an interval of neglect, finally the gulling. This duplication of action is a triumph of dramatic artifice, but it is not complicated. A simple situation is repeated five times. 52

Despite the criticism his production received, Poel showed understanding of the play by using a psuedo-Elizabethan platform stage which allowed the action to flow quickly and fluently. The comings and goings of the characters are effective on the platform stage, as it emphasizes the unity of place since all the action takes place in or just outside Lovewit's house. This setting is an integral part of Jonson's comic world, for the alchemist's lair implies a greater world of which it is but a microcosm. The comic world of The Alchemist is selfcontained and perfect--a micronism of society which is not so much the reflection of the world of ordinary experience as one in which the ordinary experience is seen in a peculiar light. Confined within the four walls of Lovewit's house, the world undergoes a change. That the implications of what happens in the play are not confined to Lovewit's house is evident in Dol's comment "Haue yet, some care of me, o' your republique" (I.i. 110). In

presenting the activities of the central trio of characters as they trade on the inherent greed and folly that lurk in all men, Jonson is able to comment didactically on the real world while operating in a world of fantasy.⁵³

Poel was the first person to demonstrate the advantages of Elizabethan staging, to insist that its speed and continuity were far more important than carloads of elaborate scenery which took the emphasis away from the actors. Simple properties, suggestive costumes and good acting brought the play to life:

As a play it lost nothing by the extreme simplicity with which it was mounted. . . . On a small stage, before a background of tapestry, the actors performed their parts while a prompter, seated unblushingly before the footlights . . . knocked loudly upon the floor with a stick on the frequent occasions when some one [sic] was supposed to be knocking at the door. 54

Bernard Shaw correctly saw the powerful impact of Poel's method of production, and called it "an artistic rather than literal presentation of Elizabethan conditions, the result being . . . that the picture of the past was really a picture of the future."⁵⁵ Few twentieth-century productions of Elizabethan plays have not been influenced by Poel's theories of Elizabethan staging, and even modern plays are adapting some of the Elizabethan techniques.

The Times' critic asserted that Jonson was not a dramatist by nature and that his plays were not good because

of their satirical elements, while The Atheneum critic enjoyed the satirical elements but lamented the lack of morality.

While admirable as a satire and unsurpassed as a picture of manners, it is, however, deficient in almost everything that makes a good play. It has scarcely a character that is not contemptible; it paints a world of rogues and fools without a redeeming trait; not ray of honesty steals into its plot, not one touch of love or affection redeems or elevates piece or character
 56

This critic, however thought the production was "interesting," and he pointed out that Poel had taken great care with the dialogue, saying "that the elocution was, as a rule, good--better even than is often heard on the regular stage."⁵⁷ To Poel, the presentation of dialogue was the most important part of Elizabethan drama and he championed the theory that an actor should accent only the key words when delivering his speeches. He took great care to orchestrate the voices of his actors, for he believed that the "atmosphere . . . of Elizabethan drama is created through the voice."⁵⁸ According to Robert Speaight, who was taught by Poel, the mechanics of this style were "not a labourious following of iambics, nor a mere rhetorical or lyrical self-indulgence, but a reproduction--not in the least realistic--of the rhythms and emphasis of natural speech."⁵⁹ But it is impossible to know exactly how this method of speaking affected the acting since the promptbook used by Poel is unavailable and no recordings

of the production exist. What he did to the text is also open to conjecture. According to Speaight, Poel remained faithful to the quarto text of 1612,⁶⁰ but although Poel laid great stress on fidelity to the original text, he has been credited with some of the most notorious butchery ever perpetuated in the guise of preparing a play for production.⁶¹ But his belief that theatrical productions should be based on standard stage texts that are "the joint work of scholars and actors"⁶² has generally been accepted, although he himself often neglected his own rule.⁶³ Yet in spite of major cuts resulting from his suppression of Elizabethan bawdy, the finished result was closer to the original author's text than those used by Poel's contemporary directors.

In summation then, the early twentieth century brought about a renewal of interest in Elizabethan stage conditions, thanks to the researches of such people as Sir Edmond Chambers and W.J. Lawrence. But it took the practical application of such principles by Poel and his disciples--Granville-Barker, Martin Harvey, Craig and Reinhart--to make the ideas of the scholar palatable to theatrical audiences. Even though Poel's ideas were not totally accepted, the main principles he insisted upon--a full text, continuity of action, permanent settings--have reestablished the original intimacy between the actor and audience. What A.C. Darling said of Poel's work with Shakespeare applies to almost all of his productions, including The Alchemist:

He gave Shakespeare back to the stage. It was his bold action, in cutting away from Shakespeare's text the monstrous incrustations of three centuries of interpolation, emendation and traditional stage "business" that first made critics and managers alike realize that Shakespeare did not need assistance--that he was a practical playwright who, given a theatre something like his own, could hold the stage by his own virtuosity. 64

Poel's production made the critics aware of the structural quality of The Alchemist by emphasizing the repetitive pattern of each subplot. The use of the platform stage helped this awareness for it allowed the swift acceleration of the incidents that is the hallmark of the play, reaching a climax with the explosion in Subtle's laboratory. In Act Four all the dupes rush on stage and confront Subtle until it looks as if the game is up, but Face ingeniously parries their threats, only to be confronted with the return of Lovewit. In Act Five the dupes again enter on each others heels to claim their goods, only to be repelled by Lovewit. The variety of exits and lack of scenery changes allows this rapid action to progress quickly and fluently, and heightens the comic effect.

The second important aspect of Poel's production was that he used the original quarto text⁶⁵ and thereby restored Jonson's original emphasis on the spoken language. The care with which Poel cast the play reflected the concern he had for the poetry of Jonson's lines which united an extensive knowledge of ancient literature with the colloquial erudition of early seventeenth century London charlatans. As Poel's

programme notes admit, "to be a thoroughly appreciative admirer of Ben Jonson, one should be at once steeped in the classics and well versed in the plays and ephemeral pamphlets of the Jacobean age."⁶⁶

E. ASHLAND PRODUCTION, 1961

The 1961 Ashland production, like Poel's, was a pseudo-Elizabethan production utilizing the world famous outdoor theatre which is a replica of the Fortune Theatre of Elizabethan London. But whereas Poel used Elizabethan stage practices to satisfy his private theory of Elizabethan drama, which emphasized dramatic organization of voices, the Ashland production used Elizabethan techniques to emphasize the farcical nature of play. Fluidity of motion, comic stage tricks, elaborate stage effects--all contributed to a production primarily aimed at entertaining the audience.⁶⁷

Another aspect of Jonson's art brought out by the Ashland production was the superb balancing of characters. Each individual character was thrown into sharpest relief by comparison with another. To begin with, a balance was maintained between the group of conspirators (Subtle, Face and Dol) and their victims. But within these broad groupings characters acted as foils for each other.⁶⁸ At the start

Subtle and Face seemed to be almost identical, but as the play progressed Face was seen to be infinitely more flexible in adapting himself to specific situations and gradually assumed command. Face was shown to be a wit; Subtle merely a con artist. Likewise the two dupes, Dapper and Drugger, were similar in their desires, but whereas one was a simpleton, the other was merely a fool. These two, in turn, contrasted with the "heroic humours" of Mammon and Tribulation, which were developed in detail. Mammon's sensual visions were as fantastic as Tribulation's fanatical delusions about Puritanism, yet both characters were shown to be hypocritical and highly ridiculous.

These comparisons and contrasts between characters were expanded and developed as the play progressed until a rich, complex series of foils were evident. The relationship between friends--between Subtle and Face, Surly and Mammon, Ananias and Tribulation--became a obvious part of the structure. The comparison between the women--Dol, the hardworking pert city-whoree and Dame Pliant, the pliable rich country widow--was exaggerated for comic effect, then there was the contrast between Drugger, Surly and Lovewit, all of whom aspired to the rich widow. And finally there were Surly and Lovewit who both claimed the right to establish some kind of moral order. It was upon this relationship that the structural balance of morality stood, for Surly, the humour character,

was shown to be insufficient in dispensing comic justice, for he was easily subdued by the shrewd knaves. Lovewit, on the other hand, was presented as an urbane natural man of the world, an ideal figure to expose and judge the follies of man.

This structuring of characters was maintained in the Ashland production by the repertory system, where no one actor 'stars,' a system that was operating in Jonson's time also, and, although in Jonson's time such figures as Burbage and Armin dominated the stage, there is ample evidence that, when necessary, they submerged their theatrical talents for the good of the company or play. The Alchemist has ten good parts, no one or two dominate. Therefore an overall balance is desirable, for without it the characterization becomes distorted.

The Ashland production used the Croft Classics edition of The Alchemist as the basis for their prompt book. Few additions were made, and there were only a few substitutions of individual words to clarify meaning. However there was extensive cutting. Most cuts involved alchemical and topical allusions, although others eliminated redundant exposition. There was no cutting on moral or religious grounds; in fact, if the newspaper reviews can be trusted, the actors emphasized the bawdy jokes and insinuations with obvious relish.

Since alchemical terminology is not easily understood by modern audiences, it is not surprising that some of the rogues' learned jargon was cut, although in this production, the cutting in no way impaired Jonson's satirical attack on alchemical canting. In II.i., for instance, out of 104 lines,⁶⁹ a total of 24 lines were cut--19 of which contain alchemical terms. However in the first five scenes, most of the cuts involve excessive exposition or descriptions. Of 56 1/2 lines cut, 30 were of this type. For instance, Mammon's elaborate speech about the healing power of the elixer was reduced to the first three lines. Similarly, Face's exposé of Subtle's origin (I.i. 25-31) was cut to a mere two lines, and this tended to obliterate the rich wealth of description with which Jonson carefully delineated his major characters.

Contemporary allusions, an integral part of Jonson's topical satire, are difficult and sometimes impossible to comprehend; therefore they often fell to the director's blue pencil. It is understandable that such references to the "tricesimo tertio / of HARRY the eight" (I.i. 112-113) or to "The spirits of dead HOLLAND, living ISAAC" (I.ii. 109) were cut, but it is difficult to defend the omission of Dol's fear of the executioner (I.i. 170-174) just because a modern audience does not know what a "Don Provost" is. On the other hand, the text was often emended in order to clarify obscure terms, or to improve meaning. For instance, "Myrobalane" (IV.ii. 42) was changed to "sugar plum,"

"scrupulous bones" (III.ii. 78) to "moral scruples."

Additions were even slighter than emendations of the text. One line was given to Drugger to emphasize the foolish simplicity of the little tobacconist. Subtle's elaborate explanation of Drugger's name, based on hilarious association of ideas that connects symbols with letters, is far too subtle for the simpleminded store-keeper, but the conclusion that "There's Drugger, Abel Drugger" promoted the excited tobacconist to chime in with the line "Drugger, my name, Drugger." This drew the dramatic focus back on to Drugger, so that the actor could exhibit, through the look of blissful stupidity, that Drugger is taken hook, line and sinker by his own foolish confidence in the rogue's ingenious fabrication. The only other addition clarified the situation when Surly appeared dressed as a Spaniard, for the rogues' insults addressed right in front of Surly could seem ridiculous, unless the audience understood that the rogues did not realize that this so-called Spaniard understood every word spoken. Therefore Face's warning "Peace Subtle" (IV,iii. 22) was followed by Subtle's answer, "'Tis no matter. He knows no English." This clarified the irony of the situation, for the audience knows that Surly understands every word of what is being spoken.

In cutting the play, Brubaker, the director, eliminated 256 1/2 lines from Jonson's original 3,059. The longest

cuts occurred in Acts Two and Three, the smallest number in Act Five. Brubaker's aim was to eliminate obscure and redundant material but to remain true to Jonson's texts in all essentials. The cutting was done skilfully and in no way interfered with the plot, in fact the paring resulted in a heightening of the suspense. The nearest the cutting came to distorting Jonson's original aim was the omission of six lines in V.iv. where Face promises to help Lovewit to secure the rich widow in exchange for clemency. This obvious bribe throws Lovewit's later actions into question, compromising his position as a fit moral judge. By omitting Face's lines, Brubaker emphasizes Lovewit's role as a judge, setting him up as a Justice Clements figure without the reservation that Jonson had suggested as to Lovewit's self-interest. However the omission did not impare the subtle hint of Jeremy's influence over Lovewit, although it did tend to whiten Lovewit's motives.

Another example of tampering with Jonson's characterization occurs in II.i. where lines 10-14 were cut. These lines contain reference to Surly's previous career as a pander, and by cutting them Brubaker expertly removed the suggestion of hypocrisy that Jonson clearly exploits in Surly's violent reaction to the discovery that Subtle and Face are running a bawdy house. Surly's credibility as a moral spokesman loses much of its value when one realizes that he himself had previously made a profitable living at that old and ancient profession.

As far as the acting was concerned, the prompt book provided little information beyond exits and entrances. General blocking of scenes was indicated but nothing of a significant nature. However, from the newspaper reviews it is obvious that the actors used every theatrical trick in the book to emphasize the farcical nature of the play. They "took pratfalls, walked into walls, did double takes, leered at bosoms, made off color puns, and gestured and postured with rougish abandon."⁷⁰ Especially effective was Nagle Jackson as Face who, according to Lenora Offord, was "as nearly perfect as one can imagine. . . . , nobody on earth can make a bawdy point more deftly than he, and his pantomime extends even to his feet, which stay in character and make their own comment."⁷¹ However the other parts were also well performed, and the overall balance was an achievement of the production.

Stage settings were kept to a minimum and were primarily located within the inner stage. However hand props, smoking vials, swords, even commercial plans for Druggier's shop were expertly utilized to enhance the farcical nature of the play. Particularly effective was the explosion in Subtle's laboratory (IV.v. 55). According to one reviewer "it must have been dreamed up by a madman, but it was sensational. In clouds of smoke and a blasting sound, diagrams fell off the wall, furniture overturned, ornaments teetered and swayed and actors were thrown to the stage by the force of a perfectly executed explosion."⁷²

The production was a success. It pleased the critics and was extremely popular with the public. In fact it was the first play in the twenty-one year history of the Oregon Shakespearean Festival to be completely sold out before it opened. During three performances, 3,641 persons paid to see it. This demonstrates once again that Jonsonian drama is good entertaining theatre, and disproves the scholars who equate Jonson with the deadening blight of classical learning.

F. TYRONE GUTHRIE'S PRODUCTION, 1962

Sir Tyrone Guthrie's production at the Old Vic (1962) took a completely different approach than that at Ashland. Guthrie made extensive changes in Jonson's play in a misguided attempt to relate "the play more closely to . . . everyday experience, so that it can be more easily taken as a slice of life than a slice of literature."⁷³ He cut a great amount of verse, substituted modern idioms for obscure phrases, and attired his characters in modern dress (which included everything from Edwardian dinner jackets to mod leather jackets). As Bamber Gascoigne pointed out⁷⁴ such changes, while retaining the structure of Jonson's drama, played merry havoc with the details. In making the play more "realistic" Guthrie

lost the realism that Jonson himself had built in. Although Guthrie's production was a theatrical success, its popularity depended not so much on Jonson's drama but on Guthrie's resourceful comic direction.

The scene was set in Gloucester Road, which was in a state of repair at the time, and Lovewit's house could be approached only by walking across a plank that spanned a hole in front of the main doorway. Each character was introduced by the manner in which he walked the plank, and Guthrie did not stop there. Dominating the set was a curving set of stairs with a banister, which was effectually used by Dol when she made her first entrance. Frequent changes of costume accented the various disguises assumed by the characters, and Guthrie's insertion of modern jokes frequently brought the house down. But such treatment did not do justice to Jonson's play, for it wrenched the play from its seventeenth century setting, without increasing the so-called 'reality' that Guthrie thought was lacking.

Many of Guthrie's cuts affected the characterization for most of the coarser details about characters were completely eliminated. For instance, the negative qualities of Surly's character (II.i. 8-23), (II.i. 43-44) were cut.⁷⁵ These changes speeded up the dramatic action at the expense of detailed descriptive characterization which is full of obscure allusions, but it unfortunately also eliminated Jonson's carefully placed exposition that alerts the audience

to Surly's shady past, and prepares us for his hypocritical reaction to the activities of Face and Subtle. Surly's insistence that he is loath to be gulled (II.iii. 263) was also cut, and much of his mimicking of alchemical language (II.iii. 282-288), aimed at demonstrating to his gullible friend the danger of being taken in by high sounding phrases, was also eliminated.

In Guthrie's adaption, Surly's disguise took a different form. Jonson had his cynic dressed up as:

A noble Count, a Don of Spaine . . .
 Who is come hether, priuate, for his conscience,
 And brought munition with him, six great slopps,
 Bigger than three Dutch hoighs, besides round trunkes,
 Furnish'd with pistolets and pieces of eight.

III.iii. 10-15

This Guthrie completely changed. In 1962, Surly disguised himself as "a millionare from South America . . . coming in strick private for his conscience, bringing munitions, travellers checks and is heir to the largest gold mine in Peru" (p. 54). These changes are insignificant as far as plot is concerned, but Jonson's satire directed at the affectation of manners and dress,⁷⁶ (which in this case is particularly aimed at the Stuart affectation of Spanish manners) is completely negated. However Surly's supposed South American heritage accounts for his inability to understand English (p. 76), and allows the conspirators to have fun at his expense. Face introduces the disguised Surly

as "South American Joe," which prompts Subtle to say "You mean speedy Gonzales" (p. 76). Later Face insults Surly by calling him an "American fiend" (p. 93) instead of "a proud Spanish fiend" (IV.vii. 57) which removes Jonson's satire on Spanish manners.⁷⁷ Due to this change in disguise, Surly's monologue (II.iii. 299-312) in which he tells the audience of his plan to trap the conspirators by donning the Spanish disguise, is cut.

The coarser aspects of Face's character are toned down. In prompting Dol's seduction of Mammon, Face's opening direction--"To him, Dol, suckle him." (IV.i. 32)--is cut, leaving the more polite "This is the noble knight / I told your ladyship" (p. 68). This change eliminates the bawdy aspect of the relationship between Dol and Mammon as envisioned by Face, a revision substantiated by the omission of all Face's asides during the initial stages of Mammon's wooing (IV.i. 38-64). These asides were meant by Jonson to bring Mammon's romantic hyperbole into proper perspective, to reveal Face's coarse nature and to form a comic commentary on the actions presented. In line with this change, Surly's earlier description of Face's reputation as the leading bawd in London (II.iii. 310-311) had been omitted, depriving us of a vivid picture of Face's more lurid pursuits.⁷⁸ Subtle's character is also altered. Having been outmanoevered by Face, Subtle is forced to relinquish his interest in Dame Pliant, which he had maintained in spite of an offer from

Face to buy his interest for 500 pounds (p. 76). In making the widow a whore Subtle reveals his vindictive nature since he sees such an action as a means of depriving Face of the opportunity of enjoying the widow. (IV.iii. 101-104).

Guthrie cuts this material, leaving the impression that Subtle, like Face, is sacrificing his interest in Dol Common for the good of the confederacy.

Guthrie also cuts passages in which Subtle employs his knowledge of chiromancy; for example, the forecast that Dame Pliant's suitor will be a Spanish soldier of fortune (IV.ii. 44-47) and the description of Subtle's metaphorical role in the play (IV.i. 85-95) is also ruthlessly eliminated. This last cut, in which Subtle is "a divine instructor" capable of extracting "the soul of things" is ironic in context, because Subtle is anything but "divine" and his aim "to teach dull nature / What her owne forces are" is a comic violation of the laws of decorum by which Jonson operates. In cutting such passages Guthrie loses important insights about the roles of Jonson's characters, weakens the thematic structure of the play and reduces Jonson's work to the level of farce.

Small but vital changes in characterization result from Guthrie's attempts at modernization. For instance, instead of coming to London "To learn the fashion" (II.vi. 38), Dame Pliant comes "to see the shops" (p. 44), with her brother, instead of being "a gentleman, newly warme in his

land" (II.vi. 57) is "heir to a fortune in wool in Bradford," making not "three," but "ten" thousand pounds a year." The fact that Kastril has come up to London "To learn to guarel and live by his wits" (II.vi. 61) is completely irrevelent as far as Guthrie was concerned,⁷⁹ and the line is omitted. Instead of being "the angrie boy, the heire,/ That faine would quarrell (III.iii. 82-83), Kastrel is "the poultry cousin, up for the sights of London" (p. 56) who would like to own and know how to use a 'flick knife.' The satire of dueling terms (III.iii. 17-99) is omitted, as is Face's skilful enticing of Kastril's avaricious nature. Instead, Guthrie inserts the following prosaic dialogue:

Kastril: To teach a fellow how to
 Face: Yes Sir, what?
 Kastril: Well, for one thing, I'd like to have a flick
 knife.
 Face: Quite right. No gentleman in town but has his
 flick knife.
 Kastril: But will the doctor teach me how to use it?
 Face: He will do more, Sir. He'll stick it
 Why Nab here known him.

(p. 57)

The most serious cut however is Mammon's exquisite speech describing the cullinary delights he would taste if he was in command of the philosopher's stone (IV.i. 158-169). This gem of verse has been singled out time and time again by modern critics⁸⁰ as the best example of Jonson's poetic genius. Yet Guthrie cuts it. In doing so he robs the play of its finest poetry and reduces Mammon's flights of imagination to an almost pedestrian level.

Also omitted is Mammon's defence of Face against Subtle's charge that Face was responsible for luring Mammon into wickedness (IV.v. 42-51). This cut has two effects. To begin with we lose the dramatic irony of the situation, because the audience knows that Face deliberately played upon Mammon's sexual aspirations by setting up the meeting between Mammon and Dol. More important however is the loss of Mammon's respectability, for in defending Face he exposes his own base nature. This aspect of his character prepares the audience for Mammon's final resolve in Act Five to "goe mount a turnep-cart and preach" (V.v. 81), for this is where he really belongs.

The comic effectiveness of the Puritans is also blunted by Guthrie's tampering with the text. When Subtle and Ananias have their sharp exchange about Christmas (III.ii. 43-45) Guthrie adds a further two lines. Tribulation, who is trying to appease Subtle says, "Do not mind him, sir. I do command thee, spirit of zeal. . . ." to which Ananias answers, "But trouble to peace within him. Pray you sir, go on." (p. 49) This accomplishes nothing except making Tribulation a more authoritative figure. Guthrie cuts all of III.ii. 48-83, 86-103 losing Jonson's biting satire directed at Puritans implicit in Ananias' hilarious outburst against bells. It is likely Guthrie considered such satire archaic, but it remains a necessary element in the total picture Jonson presents of the Anabaptists.

Guthrie seems to omit much of Jonson's comedy. For instance, all Face's asides during the scene in which he tries to convince that Dapper's cries are but the cries of spirits are cut and this reduces the scene to a futile attempt by Face to deceive his master. The anxiety of Face's "Our clark within, that I forgot" (V.iii. 63), his realization that Dapper's gag "is melted / and he sets out the throte" (V.iii. 66-67), his completion of Dapper's "I am almost stifled --" with "Would you were altogether" (V.iii. 67-68)--all is lost. These cuts frequently interfere with Jonson's rich dramatic irony. Subtle's address to Mammon (II.iii. 5-23) is an excellent example. Guthrie cuts lines 5-8, 12, 14-18, eliminating several important points. First, Subtle's ironic questioning of Mammon's "importune and carnall appetite" is a subtle means of foreshadowing the trick with which the conspirators trap the sensual knight. Second, Subtle's pretence that his work has cost long hours and taken a great deal of patience is full of dramatic irony, since the audience know the whole scheme is a figment of Subtle's imagination. Third, Subtle's plea to heaven to bear witness to his "publique" motives recalls the religious undercurrent in the play when one realized that what Subtle is saying is a downright lie.

Another dramatic irony occurs when Mammon and Surly approach Lovewit, whom Face has managed to convince that the house is haunted and the neighbors mad. Face says in an

aside "Nothing's more wretched, then a guiltie conscience" (V.ii. 47). Now this is commically ironic. It is not a guilty conscience that makes Face uneasy but a fear of being exposed and punished. However Guthrie cuts this line. He also cuts Surly's exclamation--"This's a new Face?" (V.iii. 21) thereby losing one of the richest dramatic ironies in the play, for Surly is unable to relate the clean shaven Jeremy with the captain bawd whom he is seeking, even though he senses a relationship between this knave and his quarry.

Some of Guthrie's cuts are completely inconsistent. Although he cuts much of the alchemical jargon, the argument between Surly and Subtle, in which they debate the merits of hatching eggs in a furnace (II.iii. 126-170), is kept practically intact. The intricate elements of this argument are too obscure to be followed closely yet the final verse paragraph (II.iii. 171-176), in which Jonson's conclusion is presented, is completely omitted. The passage is worth quoting because it epitomises Jonson's dramatic image:

Art can beget bees, hornets, beetles, waspes,
 Out of the carcasses, and dung of creatures;
 Yea, scorpions, of an herbe, being ritely plac'd.
 And these are living creatures, far more perfect,
 And excellent, then mettables.

II.iii. 171-176

Here Jonson makes an important point: Art can create living animals out of decaying natural substance, or expressed another way, art can create something more perfect in its own way than nature itself. Yet the creatures Subtle names are

insects that thrive on decay, just as Subtle and his confederates thrive, through their art, on the decay and corruption they find in society. Omission of such passages degrades Jonson's rich metaphorical patterns.⁸¹

Guthrie often inserted short interjections which served several purposes. They reveal that there was an interaction between the characters, not always evident when one read a set speech. More importantly, they reveal facts of character. When Drugger interrupts Face with the simple word of agreement "yes" (p. 60), we realize he is completely under the influence of Face's rhetoric, able to be swayed at the slightest word of the master trickster. Or when Face offers to give compensation if Subtle allows him to pursue Dame Pliant unhindered, Subtle is quick to ask "How much," to which Face replies "500 pounds" (p. 76). This gives concrete terms to Subtle's interest in Dame Pliant, for we know what he is rejecting in the only terms that mean anything to him--money. Interjections are also used for comic emphasis. When Surly arrives, disguised as a millionaire, Face announces this arrival with the line "The dago is come." To emphasize the derogatory appellation, Guthrie has Subtle ask "What?", forcing Face to reply "The dago." (p. 74), and then Guthrie goes on to explain the dramatically obvious point that the visit must be kept secret, by having Face explain that Surly is "At the back. No one must know that he's come here" (p. 74).

When Ananias explodes into a rage at the cost of Subtle's experiments, saying other alchemists have produced the philosopher's stone from a mere egg, Subtle repeats "an egg" (II.iv. 70, p. 42) as if questioning the authenticity of Ananias' story. Yet when one recalls that in the previous scene Subtle had lectured Surly on how the Egyptians hatched eggs in a furnace, the repeated line becomes very ironic. The technique of repeated lines nearly always brings a laugh. Another example occurs when Subtle asks Ananias "What's your name?" Guthrie has Ananias repeat "My name?" forcing Subtle to reply "Yes" and then Ananias finally answers "My name is Ananias" (p. 42).

Guthrie's use of short interjections is very effective, but it often results in changes of characterization. When Dapper interrupts Face's explanation of the lawyer's desires, he acquires a forwardness not evident in Jonson's characterization, thereby highlighting his greed rather than his gullibility. Yet Dapper's repetition of the line "Sir, I'll not be ungrateful" (I.ii. 114) reinforces his humble gullibility, as does his interjection "very sorry" (p. 14) later in the same scene. Similarly Surly's cynicism is made more evident when he interrupts Subtle's assurance to Mammon:

Sub: Well, son
 All that I can convince him in, is this--
 Surly: Mm!
 (Sub) The WORK IS DONE, bright sol is in his robe
 Surly: Ha!
 (Sub) We have the medicine of the triple soul,
 The glorified spirit
 Surly: Prayer

[(II.iii. 113-117), p. 28]⁸²

Some additions result in clarification of the dramatic situation. When Dol breaks out into her frenzied quoting from the religious writers, Jonson has Mammon exclaim in despair "What shall I do?" (IV.v. 12). Guthrie adds the words "She's in her fit" (p. 84), which tells the audience why Dol is scheming in case they have not realized it themselves. Guthrie then proceeds to cut most of Dol's babblings, which would be meaningless to a modern audience. Similarly, when Face returns without having met Surly, he says "Yond' caustive cheater / never came on" (III.iii. 2-3). Since it is not clear who Face is referring to, Guthrie inserts "Surly" after "cheater," which clarifies the reference.⁸³

Some changes strengthen the relevance of the play. When Dol announces the return of Lovewit, Subtle turns on Face with the charge "You said he would not come, / While there dyed one a weeke, within the liberties" (IV.vii. 115-116). This Guthrie changes to "You said he would not come, / While there died 10 a week of the flu" (p. 96).

This emendation serves several purposes. It increases the number of deaths to a more significant figure and identifies the cause of them, which is only implied in Jonson's lines. Added to that, by changing "within the liberties" to "of the flu" Guthrie eliminates an Elizabethan reference to a place which would hold no significance for modern audiences and modernizes the reference by making the cause of the deaths a twentieth century illness.

The discussion between Dapper and Face concerning what coins are to be paid to the servants of the fairy queen (III.iv. 141-148) is cut, since it mentions currency unfamiliar to twentieth century audiences. In its place, Guthrie inserts the following:

Dapper: Shall I see her grace
 Face: See her and kiss her too. Have you got the
 20 pounds for her graces' servants.
 Dapper: Here
 (Music)
 Face: 'Tis the (fancy) of fairy
 (p. 61)

In this case, the lines inserted provide the same basic material as Jonson's, without the Stuart details that would be obscure to modern audiences. Similarly, instead of following the Stuart practice of drawing lots to see who will have Dame Pliant, Subtle and Face "toss for her" (p. 72).

Instead of being seduced "behind the hanging" (IV. iv. 41) Dame Pliant will be kissed and ruffled "beneath the bed clothes" and will have "three ladies maids, (a) butler and a footman" and six cars at her service (p. 81). Instead of "Hieronimo's cloake, and hat" (V.iv. 68), Drugger brings Face "a Spanish fancy dress" (p. 109). These emendations were made in an attempt to make the play comprehensible to twentieth century audiences and in many ways they were successful, but the question is "Was it necessary?" Maybe a "flu epidemic" would hold more meaning to a pollution

conscious Londoner in 1962 than the "plague," and Face being threatened by Subtle's "brimming chamber pot" is much more comical than his being threatened by a "vial," but are such changes required? It is doubtful.

To summarize, Guthrie's alterations have several effects on characterization. To begin with, the occupations and desires of the gulls are made more relevant to the twentieth century, Surly for instance, disguises himself as a Peruvian millionaire instead of a Spaniard. This makes him much better bait for the money hunting conspirators. Kastril becomes an heir to a fortune in wool instead of land and no longer has the urge to learn to quarrel. The central conspirators become tricksters rather than immoral manipulators. Their upbringing in the stews of London is minimized, as are their more bawdy pursuits. Finally the characters become more static comic types because Guthrie has eliminated many of the details necessary to appreciate the human qualities of Jonson's characters.

In conclusion, one must evaluate the effectiveness of Guthrie's production. Undoubtedly it was a success theatrically because the audiences enjoyed it and critics praised it, but in many ways it was not Jonson's play that was being presented--it was Guthrie's adaption of Jonson's play. The same charge could be laid at Garrick's door, but whereas Garrick's version brought new insights to bear on the character of Druggier, Guthrie's adaption had no such

redeeming virtue. In his misguided attempts to relate "the play more closely to our everyday experience"⁸⁴ Guthrie disturbs Jonson's metaphorical fabric and blunts Jonson's satire. He changes the characters so that they become pawns in the comic action. By introducing twentieth century idioms he loses the peculiar flavour of seventeenth century London that Jonson has so carefully presented, without enhancing the universality of Jonson's themes. The midas touch that Mammon seeks is as evident to the audience of Jonson's play as it is to those viewing Guthrie's adaptation--for the universality is not "dated" by the play's seventeenth century setting.

Guthrie's assertion that a modern audience would be unable to appreciate Jonson's text because they lack knowledge of Jacobean slang is ridiculous, although one would not quarrel with the fact that some of the technical jargon is unnecessary. Also a case can be made for changing a few words when the meaning is obscure, if the poetry would not suffer from the change, but Guthrie's adaption goes far beyond this, bringing the play down to the level of farce, rather than making it "the most masterful satire on blind credulity ever written by an English playwright."⁸⁵

CHAPTER THREE

A SUMMARY OF CRITICAL INSIGHTS PROVIDED BY AN EXAMINATION OF THE STAGE HISTORY OF THE ALCHEMIST

Having given a record of stage productions of The Alchemist and commented on the effect of the most important ones on our appreciation, it is now time to evaluate what such research contributes to understanding Jonson's art. The most important fact to emerge is that when The Alchemist has been performed it has frequently been a success. The reasons for its popularity are not hard to find. It has a plot which, although simply constructed, is so carefully manipulated that its surface simplicity quickly radiates into an intricate pattern of balancing and contrasting components. Its characters are distinctive for they are based on the human characterizations of greed and gullibility and although they have similar motives they differ in so many details that they emerge as unique individuals. The theme is man's self-destructive desire to make money, but it is pursued with such comic relish that it never tends to become moralistic. So the total dramatic effectiveness of Jonson's comedy lies in its delicate balance between plot and character, its moral and entertainment values.

Jonson balances his characters well. No one figure dominates the action but each plays a unique and important function. The plot revolves around the conspirators. Subtle, the titular hero is a master swindler who can change his style to fit any situation. Face, the enterprising servant, manipulates the gulls and indirectly leads "the venter tripartite." Dol is the mediating force holding the conspirators together but also playing a major role in deceiving the gulls. These three characters dominate the action but there would be no action without the gulls. Each gull is finely etched. Dapper, the lawyer's clerk, who wants "a familiar / To rifle with, at horses, and winne cups" (I.i. 192-193) is a perfect contrast for Drugger, the simple tobacconist, who wants nothing more than to be successful at business. The puzzling question as to how Garrick transformed Drugger's minor part into a major comic role is not difficult to understand when one has read the reviews of Garrick's performance or those of Cecil Hardwicke and Alec Guinness. For the puny tobacconist is a delicate mixture of the comic and pathetic element in man, that handled correctly touches the human spirit.

Then there is Mammon, perhaps the greatest fool in Jacobean comedy. As Thayer puts it, Mammon "knows all and understands nothing."¹ His sensual dreams of golden wealth and erotic delight are expressed in poetry equalled only by the raptures of Volpone to Celia. When reading The Alchemist,

one is deeply impressed by Mammon's presence. Many critics² are dazzled by the brilliance of Sir Epicure Mammon, for instance, John Palmer says: "No single episode in our comic literature, outside the plays of Shakespeare, outshines the presentation and discomfiture of Sir Epicure Mammon. That huge glistening figure of greed is unforgettable. . . ." ³

But the impression Mammon makes on the literary critics is not borne out in stage productions. John Lowin was praised for his acting of the role before the Commonwealth, but during the Restoration and eighteenth century the part receives scant mention. However in the twentieth century a few actors have been able to convey the brilliance of Jonson's character, ^{although} _^ Bruce Winston was praised for his portrayal in 1935, particularly for his ability to project the poetry of Jonson's verse over the colloquial dialogue of the conspirators and Robert Cartland "puffed out with plum-coloured velvet and cutting an absurd caper" ⁴ was impressive in the 1952 Bristol Old Vic production, but Mammon's role is not often theatrically dazzling.

Balanced against Mammon is his companion, the sceptic Surly. He serves as a brilliant foil to Mammon, and his cynical comments provide a dramatic contrast to Mammon's praise of the philosopher's stone. Surly reveals all he discovers about the tricksters, only to find himself in turn humiliated by the very people he is trying to expose.

Surly, although he is not a spokesman for Jonson, is a keen detector of trickery and is not afraid to express his opinion. Having heard Mammon's exaggerated claims about alchemy and then having seen the two 'alchemists' in action, he freely expresses his opinion:

I'll believe
That ALCHEMY is a pretty kind of game
Somewhat like tricks o' the cards, to cheat a man.

II.ii. 179-181

Later spying Dol, he immediately lets everyone know his opinion. "'Hart, this is a bawdy house!" (II.iii. 226). His function is to warn the audience not to be carried away from the facts, either by Mammon's flights of fancy or the well executed mumbo-jumbo of Subtle and Face. His comments, though cynical, are amusing and not scurrilous or savage, for one is bound to laugh at his witty asides. For instance, when Mammon says "In eight and twenty dayes, / I'll make an old man of fourscore, a childe," Surly wittily remarks "no doubt, he's that alreadie" (II.i. 52-54).

Another pair of balanced characters is the hypocritical religious fanatics, Ananias and Tribulation. During the early stage history of The Alchemist the satire leveled at these two figures and their hypocrisy was a major reason for the play's success. Although one would not completely agree with Montague Summers' statement that "the episodes in which the two Puritans . . . appear have always been accounted

from the stage point of view the richest scenes in an admirable play,"⁵ it is true that there are excellent acting possibilities in the parts. Few theatrical critics have reviewed a production without commenting on the comedy of Ananias' Puritanical greed.⁶

Finally there is Lovewit, the deus ex machina who appears in Act Five to dissolve "the venter tripartite" and re-establish law and order. Lovewit is the reconciling spirit that reasserts a semblance of normality to the comic world in which normal moral values are held in abeyance until the action is nearly over. In spite of all its faults, the Lincoln Center production in 1966 made this point clear. Played by Philip Bosco, Lovewit took hold of the final act, dominating it with an air of authority that showed that he was Jonson's moral arbitrator, like Justice Clements in Every Man in his Humour and Ambler in The Devil is an Ass. Bosco proved that Lovewit was a force to be reckoned with, which gives credence to Face's volta-face. As Herford and Simpson aptly phrase it: "Any dramatic exposure of alchemy was bound to satirize its dupes; and with Jonson it was equally as inevitable that the dupes should be sent off, and the rogues exposed, by a more knowing spirit."⁷

Some critics have questioned the morality of Lovewit's actions but in doing so they fail to realize the satire that Jonson has included in the characterization. Lovewit is the figure of authority who dispenses comic

justice at the end of the play. As such he exposes the truth and, unlike Surly,⁸ has the authority of his position as master of the house to punish the conspiritors and gulls alike. Although he does not punish Face, he does put him in his rightful place. Lovewit, true to his name, forgives his wily servant, for he not only admires Face's wit but he profits quite handily in the bargain. Now this conclusion, if not moral, is certainly convincing--far more convincing than the superficial, highly ironical application of justice that ends Volpone. But even in The Alchemist the faults and follies of the dupes, hypocrits and tricksters are exposed, judged and ridiculed in the conventional fashion. It is only in the action of letting Face go scot free that Jonson has been criticized, yet that is completely in keeping with his earlier plays where he makes the point that in an acquisitive society the comic Machiavel is bound to thrive as long as man's follies continue to flourish. Although the follies of the dupes are exposed there is no assurance that they have been corrected. If Face was punished severely, some other Machiavel would emerge to exploit their weaknesses. It is better to have Face survive, because at least he recognizes the ultimate law of Lovewit.

Lovewit is not the perfectly moral man but his worldliness makes him a fit judge of human society. The Lincoln Center production projected the authoritative aspect of Lovewit's character till it dominated the scene; Lovewit,

and he alone, symbolized "normal society" and when he remarked to his servant "I will be rul'd by thee in any thing, Jeremie" (V.v. 143) one realized he was being ironic for he, and he alone, directed what was to be done and what was not to be done.

The Ashland production also established Lovewit as the moral authority but chose to undercut it by playing Lovewit's last remark "I will be rul'd by thee in any thing, Jeremie" (V.v. 143) straight, leaving the impression that Face, not Lovewit, controls the action. This, in my view, is a distortion of Jonson's comic perspective and therefore dramatically incorrect.

Over the centuries the emphasis of directors has shifted back and forth between the dupes and dupers, often with interesting results. Henry Jackson's hostility in 1610 was directed at the profanity put into the mouths of the Puritans,⁹ but during the period the emphasis seems to have been on the triumverate of rogues since most allusions to the play in the Caroline period involve them. The dupes became preeminent in the Restoration, but Dol receives special emphasis and the Puritans are the major gulls. But in 1731 Theophilus Cibber began to play Drugger, and the role began to assume extra importance until Garrick made it into the star role. This action had been foreshadowed as early as the 1640's when the droll The Imperick had, as its foundation, the Drugger scenes from Jonson's play.

In the twentieth century the dupes and dupers have been better balanced and no one dupe has been dominant. This reflects the attitude that the effect of the play is a result of the interaction between the characters rather than a dramatic confrontation. In The Alchemist all the characters (with the possible exception of Surly and Dame Pliant) are motivated by greed, but they are all unique individuals, each with his own peculiar variety of covetousness. The love of money is a common human reality which Jonson expresses in none too gentle tones, but no one figure is exposed to extra satire. The dupers motivate the action, but the play is kept in balance by the value given to the smaller parts which, though insignificant in themselves, are indispensable to Jonson's overall dramatic pattern.

Since the play requires swift action, with each scene following with split second timing, a permanent multilevel setting with several doors lends itself to such a performance. The 1947 Old Vic production, for instance, was praised for its precision-like action, which owed a great deal to Morris Kestelman's Augustan set which abounded in doors and queer coigns, allowing the actors to bring each scene to a close with a bang as they slammed the doors when leaving. At the outset, one could see the street outside Lovewit's house, the garden gate, and the privy in which Dapper was imprisoned, and (by the mere removal of the facade of the house) a stair-

case, hall, study and the Alchemist's laboratory (with stuffed crocodile and retorts) within. Such a composite setting allowed ideal freedom of movement, especially in the opening quarrel scene.¹⁰

The New York City Theatre production (1948) also used a permanent set showing three rooms and a staircase which provided at least seven exits plus a balcony and rooftop. According to the review in the Commonweal, the "set contributed more than fifty percent of the amusement of the action"¹¹ since the stage business is an affair of doors and crannies with a dupe securely hidden beyond each one. Even Tyrone Guthrie's production (1962) employed a permanent set with several entrances.¹² The point being made is that an Elizabethan stage, or one designed using the same principles, is a great asset in Jonson's play in order to facilitate the multitude of comings and goings.

The play must move along at a brisk pace. The Elizabethan stage facilitated a brisk pace by its relative plasticity and simplicity which supplied many places for entrance and exit from the playing area. Even in the eighteenth century, Garrick altered the text to speed up exits and entrances,¹³ and modern productions have been noted for their imaginative manipulation of the playing area to facilitate the constant entrances and exits that produce so much of the suspense in the play. The Ashland production was praised for its fast pace which resulted from the use

of the psuedo-Elizabethan stage and the dramatic knowledge that speeding things up in drama often creates comedy.

Elizabethan costuming is also necessary for a good production, as Jonson uses contemporary seventeenth century costumes very effectively in The Alchemist. The three conspiritors don a variety of disguises to trick their victims. Face for instance appears in a captain's uniform to snare Dapper and Drugger, but in front of Mammon he wears the workaday clothes of an alchemist's drudge. Dol appears in the guise of a lady to impress Mammon and later dresses like the Queen of the Fairies to deceive Dapper. Subtle, the master of disguise, is clothed in velvet cap and gown for Drugger, yet doffs a more appropriate working costume as an alchemist to deceive Mammon. On the other hand, when the Puritans arrive he is garbed in a rich gown. Disguise in Jonson's drama is an indispensable means of representing the twin follies of imposture and gullibility, and much of Jonson's stage craft is lost if one does not follow his costuming strictly.

Critics have censored Jonson's extravagant use of alchemical language because it is difficult to understand and basically unnecessary to the advancement of plot. But they misinterpret the purpose of the jargon and fail to understand the rich effect it has on the total atmosphere of the play. Stuart theatre patrons no more understood

the intricacies of the alchemical jargon than we do today, although they probably had a firmer understanding of the principles and claims of alchemy than modern audiences. But the use of such language is essential to the trio's attempts to cheat the credulous out of their money. Each aspect of the alchemist's art--his ability to make gold, his ability to make the 'stone,' "the elixir of life" with its fabulous medical properties--is revealed in his language, and Jonson has manipulated the jargon to suit his dramatic purpose, using the actual language of sixteenth century alchemists.¹⁴

The virtuosity of this high-sounding nonsense is to be admired and although judicial trimming, such as in the Ashland production, is warranted, wholesale cuts deprive the play of much of its flavour and satire. Unfortunately both the Old Vic production (1962) and the Lincoln Center production (1966) drastically cut Jonson's text in a misguided attempt to make the play more intelligible to modern audiences but in doing so they destroyed the scientific metaphor upon which Jonson builds his comedy. The Alchemist is a drama in which the scientific authority of alchemy is used to explore human nature, and for too long have critics and producers allowed the technical jargon of alchemy to obscure the fact that Jonson is primarily a man of the theatre who uses the alchemical metaphor dramatically. As with the humours in his earlier plays, he has seized upon a scientific idiom as a means of projecting his ideas of man and society.

As can be seen from the preceding chapters the stage history of The Alchemist has been highly colourful. It has invariably been a popular play even when it was not performed, for its structural simplicity and ageless theme strike respondent chords in most audiences and readers. But through three centuries the theatrical reception to the play has varied. Even though most critics have praised the play, they have praised it for different reasons, all of which should influence our reception of the play today. The theatrical productions have provided further dimensions from which we can evaluate Jonson's art, for it must be stressed that the drama is even more exciting when seen on the stage than it is when read in the study.

The art of The Alchemist is not its exposure of seventeenth century con games but its comic evaluation of man's greed and gullibility. However to understand its merits one must go far beyond a superficial reading of mere plot elements or even character development; one must relate the figurative language, the artistic use of sound and even the stage action to appreciate the entire dramatic structure. That is why the Ashland production with its relatively untampered text, balanced acting company and pseudo-Elizabethan stage conditions came closest to an ideal presentation of Jonson, at least for a twentieth century audience, since an original production with its emphasis on anti-Spanish satire

and a boy playing the part of Dol Common would not please a modern audience. Nor would a late seventeenth century production, which probably highlighted the bigotry of the Puritans. Garrick's production with its emphasis on farce might be popular today but hardly does merit to Jonson's artistic purpose. William Poel made a valiant attempt to rekindle Jonson's original drama but his productions were hampered by his eccentricity and by a still evident Victorian morality that resulted in several disastrous cuttings of lines. Modern producers, such as Tyrone Guthrie and Jules Irving, tended to emphasize the external qualities of the drama at the expense of Jonson's poetry. But all these productions prove that The Alchemist is good theatre, for in spite of different interpretations the universality of Jonson's exposé of human follies is both entertaining and morally educational. The strength of Jonson's stagecraft lies in his tightly constructed plot, careful characterization--but above all, in the strength of the spoken word, as he states in "prologue for the stage" which prefaces The Staple of News:

Would you were come to heare, not see a Play.
Though we his actors must provide for those,
Who are our guests, here, in the way of shewes,
The maker hath not so; he'ld have you wise,
Much rather by your ears, than by your eyes.

The Alchemist does not quite fit this ideal, because stage effects undoubtably enhance Jonson's dramatic verse, but combined, the eye and the ear of a member of a theatrical audience can be much better educated than the eye and the ear of a mere reader. The theatre brings The Alchemist to life and the combined richness of theatrical experience gained from various productions has brought added depth to Jonson's drama.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE.

¹E.K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923). Cited hereafter as Chambers.

²G.E. Bentley, Shakespeare and Jonson: Their Reputations in the Seventeenth Century Compared, 2 vols. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1945).

³R.G. Noyes, Ben Jonson on the English Stage, 1660-1776, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1935).

⁴C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, Ben Jonson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1952). All quotations from Ben Jonson's plays are from this edition (unless otherwise noted), although the upright and ligatures are modernized. Citation of Herford and Simpson notes and commentary are documented as follows: H&S, V, 112, where the volume number is in Roman numerals and the page references in Arabic.

⁵"Theatrical Element of Shakespeare Criticism," Reinterpretations of Elizabethan Drama, ed. Norman Rankin, (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969), p. 182.

⁶A.C. Sprague, "The Alchemist on the Stage," Theatre Notebook 17 (1962/1963): 46-47.

⁷F.L. Bergmann, "David Garrick: Producer. A study of Garrick's Alteration of Non-Shakespearean Plays" (George Washington Univ., 1953), pp. 52-72.

⁸Arber, Transcript of the Stationers' Register (1875-1877; rpt. New York: Peter Smith, 1955), III, 445.

⁹Reproduced in H&S, V. 285.

¹⁰F.P. Wilson, The Plague in Shakespeare's London (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 20-22.

¹¹Chambers, III, 371: Herford and Simpson originally thought the play was written a few weeks before the registration (H&S, II, 87) but finally agreed with Chambers' conclusion that the play was written and produced in the spring of 1610.

¹²Times Literary Supplement, 20 July 1933, p. 494.

¹³J.T. Murray, English Dramatic Companies (New York: Russel & Russel, 1963) I, 150-51. Murray later says the King's Men were at Oxford in August 1610 (I, 184).

¹⁴Since Othello was performed at the Globe in April 1610 and both Othello and The Alchemist were taken on tour in September, it is logical to assume that The Alchemist was also performed at the Globe before the theatres were closed.

¹⁵Quoted by G.E. Bentley in Shakespeare and Jonson, I, 113.

¹⁶"Shakespeare and the Blackfriars Theatre," Shakespeare Survey 1 (1948), 44.

¹⁷F.W. Mares (ed.), The Alchemist (London: Methuen, 1967) p. xlvi; M. Summers, The Playhouse of Pepys (1935; rpt New York: Humanities, 1964), p. 29.

¹⁸H&S, IX, 223 & II, 100.

¹⁹See H&S, IX, 226; T.W. Baldwin The Organization and Personal of the Shakespearean Company (Princeton, 1927), pp. lxii-lxiii. However, a 1616 edition of Jonson's Folio investigated by James A. Riddle, Shakespeare Studies 5 (1969: 285-298, has the following cast written by at least two early hands.

Face	Nathan Field	Surly	Henry Condell
Subtle	Richard Burbage	Ananian	Nick Tooly
Dol	Richard Birch	Sastrel	Will Eggestone
Dapper	John Underwood		

²⁰Quoted by Bentley, Shakespeare and Jonson, II, 14.

²¹Shakespeare and Jonson, II, 14.

²²See introduction to the play in the Mermaid Series - The Best Plays of Ben Jonson, B. Nicholson and C.H. Herford (eds.), (London, n.d.), III, 275.

²³Joseph Quincy Adams, ed., The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert (New Haven, 1917), p. 43.

²⁴G.E. Bently, Shakespeare and Jonson, II, 52 gives the figure for total receipts, while the second figure is quoted by Herford and Simpson (H&S, IX, 225).

²⁵G.E. Bently, "The Records of Sir Humphrey Mildman," The Jacobean and Caroline Stage, II (Oxford, Clarendon, 1941) 678.

²⁶J.F. Bradley and J.Q. Adams (eds.), The Jonson Allusion Book (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1922).

²⁷William A. Nielson (ed.), The Chief Elizabethan Dramatists, (Boston, 1911), p. 835.

²⁸Arthur Huntington Nason, James Shirley: Dramatist, (New York: 1915), pp. 91, 117.

²⁹William Smith Clarke, The Early Irish Stage (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955). H&S gives the opening date as 1635, but this is contradicted by La Taurette Stockwell in Dublin Theatres and Theatre Customs 1637-1820 (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 2.

³⁰William Smith Clarke lists performance of The Alchemist in Dublin in 1637/38 and circa 1670/84 but gives no definite sources.

³¹Downes lists fifteen 'Principal Old Stock Plays' as being acted during the early years of the Restoration at the Theatre Royal; three by Shakespeare, three by Jonson (Epicoe, Volpone and The Alchemist), seven by Beaumont and Fletcher and two by Dryden. He also gives a list of old plays which "were Acted now and then," which included six more Jonsonian plays. See Roscius Anglicanus, ed. M. Summers, (London: [1929]), pp. 3-8, 17.

³²Oxford Bibliographical Society, Proceedings and Papers (Oxford, 1927), I, 281-282. Quoted by Noyes, Ben Jonson, pp. 105-06. H&S, IX, 227-228 also quotes the prologue, although there are a few minor textual differences, and it is reprinted in Wiley, Rare Prologues and Epilogues (London: Allen and Unwin, 1940), pp. 16-17.

³³Roscuis Anglicanus, pp. 4-5. See also M. Summers "Mrs. Cory: Pepys 'Doll Common,'" Essays in Petto (Freeport, New York: Library Press, 1967), p. 119.

³⁴See below; p. 14.

³⁵J.Q. Adams, The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert, p. 117.

³⁶Pepys nicknamed Mrs. Cory "Dol Common," an obvious compliment to her acting in Jonson's play and tells us of an incident in which she deeply offended Lady Harvey by her acting of Sempronia in Jonson's Cataline, wherein she imitated the courtly lady. According to Pepys, Lady Harvey "got my Lord Chamberlain, her kinsman, to imprison Doll; when my Lady Castlemayne made the King to release her, and to order her to act it again, worse than ever, the other day, where the King himself was: and since it was acted again and my Lady Harvey provided people to hiss at her and fling oranges at her." It seems that Mrs. Corey was a Dol Common in her own right. See M. Summers' article "Mrs. Corey: Pepys' Doll Common" in Essays in Petto, pp. 111-132.

³⁷Downes, Roscuis Anglicanus, p. 4.

³⁸British Museum M.S. Sloane 1900. Quoted by G.E. Bentley in Shakespeare and Jonson, II, p. 119.

³⁹Seaton, Literary Relationship, pp. 333, 335. Quoted by William van Lennep, The London Stage, 1660-1700 (Carbondale: Southern Univ. Press, 1960), I, 47. Further references to this standard work will be cited as London Stage, I, 47 where the part number will be in Roman numerals and the page number in Arabic numbers.

⁴⁰A.L.D. Kennedy-Skipton, "John Ward and Restoration Drama," Shakespeare Quarterly 11 (1960): 494.

⁴¹Kennedy-Skipton, p. 494.

⁴²A.L.D. Kennedy-Skipton, "A Footnote to 'John Ward and Restoration Drama,'" Shakespeare Quarterly 12 (1961): 353.

⁴³London Stage, I, 54. Pepys also considered it to be one of Clun's best parts; see Diary (London: Dent, 1953), 4 August 1664 and 17 August 1669.

⁴⁴See Montague Summers, "The Alchemist at Oxford," Times Literary Supplement, 7 September 1933, p. 593. A portrait of Lacy as Ananias is produced in London Stage, I, 65.

⁴⁵For another account of Clun's murder see An Elegy Upon the most Execrable Murther of Mr. Clun (1664) which is reprinted in A Little Ark, ed. G. Thorn - Drury (London: Dobell, 1921), pp. 30-31.

⁴⁶Diary, 18 August, 1669.

⁴⁷These performances are listed in royal warrents L.C. 5/12, p. 17; L.C. 5/141, p. 116; L.C. 5/141, p. 359 and are quoted by Allardyce Nicoll in A History of Restoration Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1923), pp. 307-08, 315. Also quoted in A. Nicoll's A History of English Drama 1660-1900, I (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1952), 344-45.

⁴⁸Quoted by Noyes, Ben Jonson, p. 110. Also quoted by M. Summers in The Playhouse of Pepys, (1935; rpt. New York: Humanities Press, 1964), p. 278.

⁴⁹The London Stage, I, 776.

⁵⁰Ed. S.B. Wells, 1942, p. 26.

⁵¹Noyes reconstructs a possible cast from the Drury Lane actors of 1709: Subtle - Colley Cibber; Face - George Powell; Dapper - Henry Norris; Drugger - William Pinkethman; Surly - John Mills; Kastril - Christopher Bullock; Ananias - Benjamin Johnson and Dol Common was probably played by Mrs. Rogers. The other parts cannot be assigned. Noyes, Ben Jonson, p. 110.

⁵²The Daily Courant, 8 October, 1702. Quoted by H&S, IX, 229.

⁵³Two performances in 1740 (10 and 31 December) at Covent Garden, while Theophilus Cibber was connected with that company are the only other occasions The Alchemist

⁵³ (continued) was performed by players not connected with the fortunes of Drury Lane. The two performances in 1710 and five in 1733-1734 season, all at the Haymarket, were a result of actors' revolts against the management at Drury Lane.

⁵⁴ 19, 21, 22, 28 February; 26 March; 4 April; 11 May. A. Nicholl, A History of English Drama, II, 130, also says there were seven performances but does not give dates or exact sources.

⁵⁵ This is the cast given by H&S, IX, 229. It utilizes the bills in The Daily Courant and the cast given in the acting quarto of the play. It also corrects Montague Summers' misconception that "In February 1709 there seems to have been a curious revival . . . when Dol Common was omitted," a fallacy resulting from relying on the newspaper advertisements. See Noyes, Ben Jonson, p. 111.

⁵⁶ London Stage, II, 188.

⁵⁷ No. 14 (ed.) G.A. Aitken, I [1898], 125-126.

⁵⁸ 14 and 23 January, 1710.

⁵⁹ London Stage, II, 268.

⁶⁰ Actually only eight years.

⁶¹ Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, Division I, Satires, II, 587-588; The Weekly Journal; or, British Gazetteer, December 16, 1721; [Richardson Pack], The Lives of Miltiades and Cimon, With Poems on several Occasions, 1725, pp. 48-50; The Gentleman's Magazine, XCV (1825), part i, 100-102. Quoted by Noyes, Ben Jonson, p. 117.

⁶² Scottish financier and speculator, John Law engineered the famous Mississippi scheme which was intended to raise money for France, but which collapsed in 1720 forcing Law to leave France secretly. Earlier in his life Law had killed a man in a duel and had been forced to flee to Amsterdam. He died in 1729 in Venice, a poor and neglected man. See DNB, XI, 674.

⁶³The Whitehall Evening Post, October 26, 1721.
Quoted by Noyes, Ben Jonson, p. 118.

⁶⁴Johnson and Griffen continued in their parts until 1740, Harper in his till 1739. Mills played Face until 1737, Cibber played Subtle till 1733. Miller continued as Kastril until 1726, and resumed playing the part from 1733 till 1738. Mrs. Markham played Dame Pliant until 1726 when she was succeeded by Mrs. Butler, while Mrs. Wetherilt continued playing Dol Common until 1732. Noyes, Ben Jonson, p. 119.

⁶⁵1722-1723, 1724-1725, 1725-1726.

⁶⁶A revolt by some Drury Lane players, led by Theophilus Cibber resulted in five performances of The Alchemist being performed at the Haymarket.

⁶⁷Dramatic Miscellanies, II, 108-109. Quoted by Noyes, Ben Jonson, pp. 119-120.

⁶⁸The Miscellaneous Works of the Late Dr. Arbuthnot, Glasgow, 1751, II, 166-167. Quoted by Noyes, Ben Jonson, pp. 120-121.

⁶⁹The London Daily Post and General Advertiser, September 16, 1735. Quoted in London Stage, III, 511.

⁷⁰See Noyes, Ben Jonson, pp. 123-24.

⁷¹Garrick had previously played Abel Drugger during his Irish tour. This first performance was on Friday June 25, 1742. See Carola Oman, David Garrick (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), p. 54.

⁷²Quoted in London Stage, III, 1042.

⁷³Kalman Burnim, David Garrick: Director (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1961), p. 23. Burnim says there were three performances in which Garrick did not play Drugger in this period, but does not give dates.

⁷⁴Garrick, The Letters of David Garrick ed. by David M. Little and George M. Karol, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), II, #393.

⁷⁵Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research
7 (Nov. 1968), 49.

⁷⁶1755 to 1758.

⁷⁷Treasurer's Account Books in Folger Shakespeare Library; quoted by Bergmann, "David Garrick," p. 56.

⁷⁸Quoted by Bergmann, "David Garrick," pp. 54-55. Figures agree with those quoted in London Stage, III & IV.

⁷⁹Noyes, Ben Jonson, p. 170 gives the casts.

⁸⁰J.L. Hodgkinson and Rex Pogson, The Early Manchester Theatre (London: Anthony Blond, 1960), pp. 124, 178.

⁸¹See his review in Examiner, May 28, 1815. Also see Noyes, Ben Jonson, pp. 170-171.

⁸²Ben Jonson, p. 155. An even more detailed analysis, including a comparison with Garrick's performance in Jonson's play, is given by Richard J. Dirks in "Garrick and Gentleman: Two Interpretations of Abel Drugger," RECTR, 7 (1968): 48-55.

⁸³Noyes, Ben Jonson, p. 156.

⁸⁴21 April 1772 and 17 April 1773.

⁸⁵Dirks, "Garrick and Gentleman," RECTR, 7 (1968): 51.

⁸⁶See John Forster, The Life of Dickens, 3 vols. [1872-74], ed. T.W.T. Ley (London: Chapman and Hall, 1928), II, 19.

⁸⁷Lectures on the English Comic Writers (London: 1819), p. 71.

⁸⁸History of English Dramatic Literature, to the Death of Queen Anne, (1899; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1966), II, 368.

⁸⁹August Wilhelm Schlegel, A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Poetry, trans. John Black (London, 1846), p. 465.

⁹⁰See Townsend, Apologie for Bartholomew Fair (New York: M.L.A., 1947), pp. 15-17.

⁹¹Cast is given in H&S, IX, 236-237.

⁹²According to A.C. Sprague, "The Alchemist on the Stage," Theatre Notes, 17 (1962-63): 46, the play was given on 18 February, 1899, but no records exist of a performance on that date. The play was performed on 24 and 25 February, 1899 however.

⁹³March 4, 1899.

⁹⁴Cambridge Chronicle and University Journal, August 8, 1902. Cambridge Express, August 9, 1902. [Gives cast].

⁹⁵5, 6, 7 and 9 March, 1914; H&S, IX, 237 gives cast.

⁹⁶Saturday, March 7, 1914.

⁹⁷A.C. Sprague, Theatre Notes 17 (1962-63): 46 gives 18 April as the date; H&S, IX, p. 237 gives full cast.

⁹⁸Spectator, March 24, 1923, p. 513.

⁹⁹Spectator, March 24, 1923, p. 513.

¹⁰⁰A.C. Sprague, Theatre Notes 17 (1962-63): 47 incorrectly dates this performance in 1934.

¹⁰¹Olga Katzin had previously directed the play in New York in 1931.

¹⁰²Mares, ed. The Alchemist, p. lxx.

¹⁰³Full cast given in H&S, IX, 238.

¹⁰⁴H&S, IX, 238. Peter Fleming, using the same vocabulary reaches a different conclusion, saying the play was "a kind of harlequinade, swift but full of lasting verities, seamy and sardonic but essentially gay. The Spectator, January 24, 1947, p. 108.

105^a "Never sin' eighty-eight could I adibe 'hem
And that was some three yeare afore I was borne, in
truth." IV.iv. 29-30.

106 Quoted by A. Williamson, The Bristol Old Vic,
(London: Miller, 1957), p. 117.

107 What is a Play? (London: Macdonald, 1964), p.
139.

108 Brown, What is a play?, p. 139

109 Francis Fergusson, "A Month of the Theatre,"
Bookman 73 (August 1931): 632.

110 George Jean Nathan, The Theatre Yearbook, 1948-
1949, (New York: Knopf, 1949), pp. 12-14.

111 Newsweek, September 28, 1964, p. 91.

112 Henry Hewes, "O, for a Philosopher's Stone!"
Saturday Review, October 29, 1966, p. 49.

113 H&S, IX, 238.

114 H&S, IX, 238.

115 H&S, IX, 238. Gives partial cast.

116 Philological Quarterly, 41 (Jan. 1962): 188.

117 F.H. Mares (ed.), The Alchemist, p. lxxii.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

¹Samual Taylor Coleridge, The Complete Works of Samual Taylor Coleridge, W.G.T. Shedd, ed., (New York: Harper, 1854), 6, 426. The other two works Coleridge included were Oedipus Tyrannos and Tom Jones.

²L.C. Knights, Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson, (London: Methuen, 1937), p. 208.

³Alan Dessen, Jonson's Moral Comedy, (Northwestern Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 111-129.

⁴Brian Gibbons, Jacobean City Comedy, (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1968), pp. 169-78.

⁵J.B. Bamborough, Ben Jonson, (London: Hutchinson Univ., 1970), p. 101.

⁶Robert Reed, The Occult on the Tudor and Stuart Stage, (Boston: Christopher, 1965), p. 138.

⁷Alvin Kernan, The Cankered Muse, (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1959), p. 141.

⁸Felix Schelling, Elizabethan Drama 1558-1642, (London: Constable, 1908), I, 531.

⁹For excellent discussion of Jonson's treatment of the Anabaptists see William Holden, Anti Puritan Satire; 1572-1642, (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1954), pp. 133-137; Montague Summers, "The Alchemist at Oxford," TLS, 7 September, 1933, p. 593; Maurice Hussey, "Ananias the Deacon: A Study of Religion in The Alchemist," English, 9 (1953): 207-212.

¹⁰M. Summers, The Playhouse of Pepys, (New York: Humanities, 1964), p. 121.

¹¹For instance, around 1673 there was many contempory allusions to the tantrams of Dol Common; see G.E. Bentley, Shakespeare and Jonson: Their Reputations in the Seventeenth Century Compared, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1945) II, 158.

¹²Bentley, Shakespeare and Jonson, I, 139.

¹³Ibid., p. 109. Cataline ranked first, Volpone second.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 124-125. Bentley believes the reason for this was that Dol Common had become a common term applied to any prostitute (See OED, III, 589). A more obvious reason would be the popularity of Mrs. Corey who acted the role so successfully, and the fact that it is the best female role in the Jonson canon.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁶See Richard Steele's review of the 1709 production quoted above, p. 17.

¹⁷Partridge, The Broken Compass, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958), pp. 143-144.

¹⁸See Thomas Davies, Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick (London: 1780), pp. 54-55; and F.L. Bergmann, "David Garrick: Producer. A Study of Garrick's Alteration of Non-Shakespearean Plays," Diss. George Washington Univ., 1953, pp. 55-56.

¹⁹The Roman and English Comedy Consider'd and Compared (London: 1747), pp. 38-39. Quoted by Bergmann, "David Garrick," p. 67.

²⁰Actually Garrick first acted the role during his Dublin tour of 1742. See Oman, David Garrick, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), p. 54.

²¹In the 1763-1764 season.

²²Unlike Garrick's other popular role, Richard III, which was constantly played in other theatres by rival actors such as Quin, Ryan, and Sheridan.

²³Thomas Davies, Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, II, 67.

²⁴Quoted by Carola Oman, David Garrick, pp. 63-64.

²⁵Quoted by Margared Barton, Garrick, (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 56.

²⁶Quotations from Garrick's promptbook are quoted from the text printed in Bell's British Theatre,¹⁷ (London: John Bell, 1777), and are referred to by page number. The long "f" has been modernized. Quotations from Jonson's text are taken from Herford and Simpson, Ben Jonson, Vol. V, and are referred to by standard form, i.e. (IV.i. 26).

²⁷For example, I.iv. 23-24.

²⁸For example, Drugger's repetition of Face's line, "No, I am a goldsmith," p. 19.

²⁹See below, p.47, for discussion of the transition from I.ii. to I.iii.

³⁰One exception occurs in the first scene: the line in Jonson's text is "Svd. Who's that? one rings. To the windo', Dol." (AS, i.1, 180). There is no stage direction in the Folio, but the promptbook adds "One Knocks" after the preceding line and alters the quoted line to "Sub. Who's that? [Knocks] To the window," p. 12.

³¹"David Garrick: Producer," pp. 52-72.

³²The largest cut occurs in IV.iv. and extends for 69 1/2 lines.

³³This charge is also made by Noyes, Ben Jonson, p. 144, although Bergmann does not agree (see Bergmann, "David Garrick: Producer," p. 60). However there is no doubt that the changes Garrick made emphasized the role of the foolish tobacconist and whether this was deliberately planned by Garrick is immaterial to the fact that the play's popularity in Garrick's time was dependent on the role of Drugger, although Garrick's changes in no way interred Jonson's subtle development of plot.

³⁴For a detailed analysis of Garrick's handling of this scene, see B.A.P. van Dam, "The Promptbook Text of The Alchemist and its Important Lesson," Neophilologus, 19 (1934): 210-211.

³⁵"David Garrick: Producer," p. 61.

³⁶Garrick's text indicates no scene change here. See below, p. 46.

³⁷Underlined words indicate Garrick's additions.

³⁸Mary E. Knapp, Prologues and Epilogues of the Eighteenth Century, (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1961), p. 46.

³⁹Garrick, An Essay on Acting, (London, 1744), pp. 6-7. For more detail see below, p. .

⁴⁰London Evening Post 10-13 February, 1770. Also see Universal Museum, I (Jan. 1762): 46; London Chronicle, 31 December, 1768.

⁴¹"Letters from England," Lichtenberg's Visits to England as Described in His Letters and Diaries, ed. Margaret L. Mare and W.H. Quarrell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), p. 7.

⁴²Universal Museum I (January, 1762): 46 criticises the urinal stage business.

⁴³Theatrical Review, 1 February, 1763. Quoted by Noyes, Ben Jonson, pp. 139-140.

⁴⁴London Evening Post, 10-13 February, 1770.

⁴⁵Ben Jonson, p. 146.

⁴⁶"David Garrick: Producer," p. 59.

⁴⁷The London Chronicle, 5-8 March, 1757.

⁴⁸See above, pp. 24-26.

⁴⁹The Times, 25 February, 1899, p. 14.

⁵⁰Robert Knoll, Ben Jonson's Plays: An Introduction (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska, 1964), p. 118.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 118.

⁵²Ibid., p. 121.

⁵³In many ways this follows the Aristophanic method of Old Comedy, which presented a clearly understandable symbolic reality in a world turned upside down by the logical extension of human faults. See Coburn Gum, The Aristophanic Comedies of Ben Jonson, (Paris: Moulton, 1969).

⁵⁴The Times, 25 February, 1899, p. 14.

⁵⁵The Saturday Review, 11 July, 1896.

⁵⁶The Atheneum, 4 March, 1899, p. 283.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸William Poel, Monthly Letters, (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1929), p. 93. For details of Poel's theory, see Glyn Kelsall's interview with Robert Speaight in The Stage, 14 March, 1946 and Lewis Casson, The Shakespeare Pictorial Occasional Papers, Nov.-Dec., 1945.

⁵⁹Robert Speaight, "A Memory of William Poel," Drama Survey, 3, (1964): 501.

⁶⁰Robert Speaight, William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival (London: Heinman, 1954), p. 142.

⁶¹Robert Speaight, "A Memory of William Poel," Drama Survey 3 (1964): 500-506, and C. Glick, "William Poel: His Theories and Influence," Shakespeare Quarterly, 15 (1964): 15-25.

⁶²William Poel, Shakespeare in the Theatre, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1913), p. 60.

⁶³One minute he says "If an actor wishes to interpret the play intelligently, he must shut his eyes to all that has taken place on the stage since the poet's time, turning to the text and trusting to that alone for inspiration" (Shakespeare in the Theatre, p. 60), while the next he is tampering with the text to suit his own critical theories. For an example, see C. Glick, "William Poel: His Theories and Influence," Shakespeare Quarterly 15, (1964): 15-25.

⁶⁴ Poel's obituary in The Daily Telegraph, 14 December, 1934.

⁶⁵ Although the actual promptbook was unable to be located, it was Poel's customary practice to use the earliest printed version of the play.

⁶⁶ Programme Notes for the 1899 production.

⁶⁷ See below p. 67.

⁶⁸ Paul Goodman, "The Alchemist: Comic Intrigue" in Ben Jonson: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Jonas Barish (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 106-120 indicated the structure is based on a patterning of characters, where each individual figure complements and contrasts with several others.

⁶⁹ All line counts according to Herford and Simpson. Ben Jonson, Vol. V, pp. 273-408.

⁷⁰ Medford Mail Tribune, 22 August, 1961.

⁷¹ Ashland Daily Tidings, 22 August, 1961.

⁷² Medford Mail Tribune, 22 August, 1961.

⁷³ Bamber Gascoigne, "All that Glisters," The Spectator, 7 December, 1962, p. 895.

⁷⁴ Tyrone Guthrie, "Programme Notes."

⁷⁵ This cut was also made in the Ashland production. The effect gained is one of making Surly appear as a moral commentator without the perspective of his motives that Jonson carefully presents by interference. Surly's attempts to expose the gullers is not motivated by moral indignation as much as it is by envy at seeing someone more successful than he was.

⁷⁶ See I.i. 64-65 for another example.

⁷⁷The satire against the Spaniards would have been very popular in the Stuart times when the average Englishman was still very antagonistic towards his rivals from Spain, in spite of James I's friendly relations with the Spanish court. For further satire directed at the Spaniards that Guthrie also cut, see (IV.iv. 7-15) and (IV.vii. 50-55).

⁷⁸Subtle's character is also cleansed by omitting I.i. 38-42 & I.iv. 2-5.

⁷⁹This is obvious when one investigates Guthrie's cuts at (IV.ii. 15-33) which involves a short lesson in the art of quarreling given by Subtle. Instead, Subtle says:
 "Welcome, the captain tells me of your wish. Take this, I'll show you shortly how to use it" (p. 73)
 and places a flick knife into Katril's grasp. But no further action develops from the scene.

⁸⁰See L.C. Knights, Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson (1937; rpt. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1962), pp. 174-175.

⁸¹Another example occurs when Dol enters upon Mammon's line "He would have made our common" (II.iii. 210). Guthrie cuts this, losing the rich dramatic impact of the word "common" just as Dol is first seen by Mammon.

⁸²See p. 29 (II.iii. 159) for another example.

⁸³Other example p. 34.

⁸⁴"Programme Notes."

⁸⁵R.R. Reed, The Occult on the Tudor and Stuart Stage, (Boston: Christopher, 1965), p. 138.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

¹Thayer, Ben Jonson: Studies in the Plays, (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1963), p. 13.

²See L.C. Knights, Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson, (1937,; rpt. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1962), p. 208.

³J. Palmer, Ben Jonson (London: Routledge, 1934), p. 189.

⁴Quoted by Williamson, The Bristol Old Vic, (London: Miller, 1957), p. 117.

⁵Summers, "The Alchemist at Oxford," TLS 7, September 1933, p. 593.

⁶Theatre Notebook 17, (1962-1963): 46-47.

⁷H&S, II, p. 96.

⁸Surly exposes the truth quite effectively but he is incapable and morally unsuitable to punish the culprits because he lacks the moral characteristics of clemency, manliness and worldliness necessary to be a good judge of moral characters.

⁹Geoffrey Tillotson, "Othello and The Alchemist at Oxford in 1610," TLS, 20 July, 1933, p. 494.

¹⁰Williamson, Old Vic Drama, (London: Macmillan, 1949), p. 204.

¹¹21 May 1948, p. 139.

¹²See above p. 69.

¹³Bergmann, "David Garrick: Producer. A Study of Garrick's Alteration of Non-Shakespearean Plays," Diss. George Washington, 1953, p. 63.

¹⁴A thorough study of books on alchemy such as M.P. Crossland, Historical Studies in the Language of Chemistry, (London: Heinemann, 1962); E.H. Duncan, "Jonson's The Alchemist and the Literature of Alchemy," PMLA, 61, (1946): 699-710; H. Patcher, Paracelsus: Magic into Science, (New York: Schuman, 1951) and John Read, The Alchemist in Life, Literature and Art, (London: Nelson, 1947) reveals the accuracy of Subtle's hocus pocus and the authenticity of the alchemical details employed by Jonson.

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