The Faerie Queene as Satirical Intertext for *The Alchemist*

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Abstract

Building on Rachel Hile's important study *Spenserian Satire: A Tradition of Indirection*, which largely focuses on Spenser's shorter poems in *The Complaints*, this essay calls attention to the satirical dimension of his longest poem *The Faerie Queene*. Intertextual connections between *The Faerie Queene* and *The Alchemist* reveal how Jonson read Spenser as inspiration for satire, parody, and comedy. In *The Alchemist* Jonson appropriates Spenser's Gloriana, the Faerie Queene; the Wandering Wood in Book I; and Braggadocchio, Mammon, and the Castle of Alma in Book II of *The Faerie Queene* for satirical ends. In his city comedy Jonson borrows these figures and episodes from *The Faerie Queene* to satirize the aristocracy, greed for wealth, hedonism, environmental pollution, social mobility, and the misuse of language. Jonson's extensive annotations in his copy of the 1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene and Complaints*, which denote how he responded to Spenser around 1617 and afterwards, further illuminate how he imitated him in writing by 1610 when *The Alchemist* was first performed. Like Jonson, Spenser's early readers through to 1660 appropriated *The Faerie Queene* to satirize political leaders and existing religious institutions in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Reader reception of Spenser's works in the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline eras contributes to his afterlife as biting satirist not only for *Mother Hubberds Tale* in *The Complaints* but also for *The Faerie Queene*.

Building on Rachel Hile's important study *Spenserian Satire: A Tradition of Indirection*, which largely focuses on Spenser's shorter poems in *The Complaints*, this essay calls attention to the satirical dimension of his longest poem *The Faerie Queene*.[1] Intertextual connections between *The Faerie Queene* and *The Alchemist* reveal how Jonson read Spenser as inspiration for satire, parody, and comedy.[2] In *The Alchemist* Jonson appropriates Spenser's Gloriana, the Faerie Queene; the Wandering Wood in Book I; and Braggadocchio, Mammon, and the Castle of Alma in Book II of *The Faerie Queene* for satirical ends. Several critics have noted that, when the prostitute Doll Common in *The Alchemist* disguises herself as the Fairy Queen to dupe the clerk Dapper into believing she is his wealthy aunt, she parodies Spenser's Gloriana.[3] Less widely observed links between *The Faerie Queene* and *The Alchemist* include the fact that Spenser's covetous Mammon in *The Faerie Queene* and Jonson's greedy Sir Epicure Mammon in *The Alchemist* have a similar name. In addition, the windbags Braggadocchio in *The Faerie Queene* and Sir Epicure Mammon in *The Alchemist* are inflated with self-importance and satirize those who seek high-ranking positions or hedonistic pleasures through illicit means.[4] Both Spenser's Mammon episode and Jonson's *The Alchemist* satirize polluting fires, mining, and alchemy. In *The Alchemist* Jonson reconstructs Spenser's Castle of Alma besieged by the figure Maleger, whose name means badly sick or diseased, into Master Lovewit's townhouse in London during an outbreak of the plague. The sickness of Mammonism, which threatens the health of the body politic, is a satirical target in *The Alchemist*.

In his city comedy Jonson appropriates *The Faerie Queene* to satirize aristocrats, delusions of godlike power, greed for wealth, hedonism, environmental pollution, social mobility, and the misuse of language. Jonson uses the dark labyrinth of Error in the Wandering Wood in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* to satirize Puritans and pseudoscientists for their pompous, obfuscating rhetoric and maddening jargon. Jonson's extensive annotations in his copy of the 1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene and Complaints*, which denote how he responded to the Braggadocchio, Mammon, and the Castle of Alma episodes in Book II around 1617 and

afterwards, further illuminate how he imitated Spenser in writing by 1610 when *The Alchemist* was first performed.[5] Like Jonson, Spenser's early readers through to 1660 appropriated *The Faerie Queene* to satirize political leaders and existing religious institutions in seventeenth-century England. Reader reception of *The Faerie Queene* during the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline eras ultimately reveals how Spenser's longest work was interpreted and appropriated as biting satire.

1. Braggadoccio

Spenser's Braggadocchio in Book II of *The Faerie Queene* satirizes vainglorious social climbers and inspires features of Jonson's satirical figures Sir Epicure Mammon, Surly, Dapper, and Kastril in *The Alchemist*. Spenser's opening description of Braggadocchio in Book II, canto iii of *The Faerie Queene*—an episode that Jonson annotated in great detail in his copy of the 1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene and Complaints*—provides an intertextual basis for these multiple characters in *The Alchemist*:

> The whyles a losell wandring by the way,
> One that to bountie neuer cast his mynd,
> Ne thought of honour euer did assay
> His baser brest, but in his *kestrell kind*
> A *pleasing vaine of glory* he did fynd,
> To which his flowing toung, and troublous spright
> Gaue him great ayd, and made him more inclynd:
> He that braue steed there finding ready dight,
> Purloynd both steed and speare, and ran away full light.
>
> Now gan his hart all swell in iollity,
> And of him selfe great hope and help conceiu'd
> That *puffed vp with smoke of vanity,* [...]
> (II.iii.4, 5.1-3; my emphases)

In the 1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene* Jonson wrote in the margins of this first stanza introducing Braggadocchio: "<Descr.> of a base and <vai>ne glorious man" (Riddell and Stewart 167). Similar to Spenser's

Braggadocchio, who is "puffed vp with smoke of vanity" (II.iii.5.3), Jonson's Sir Epicure Mammon is a braggart, a windbag, and vain. In keeping with Braggadocchio, who struts like a "Peacocke" with "painted plumes" (II.iii.6.4), Sir Epicure Mammon imagines acquiring the godlike powers of the alchemical stone so that eunuchs at court will fan him with plumes of ostrich tails:

> […] they shall fan me with ten ostrich tails
> Apiece, made in *a plume to gather wind*.
> We will be brave, *Puff*, now we ha' the med'cine.
> (II.ii.69-71; my emphases)

Further intertextual connections between Spenser's description of Braggadocchio as "puffed vp with smoke of vanity" and Jonson's *The Alchemist* include when Sir Epicure Mammon refers to Surly as "Puff" in a city comedy pervaded by alchemical smoke, and when Face calls Dapper a "puffin," meaning he is "puffed up with vanity or pride" (II.ii.71; III.v.55; *OED* "puffin, *n.*^{2}", †4.; Jonson 649n15). Spenser tags Braggadocchio as one of "kestrell kynd," a small hawk widely noted for its ability to sustain its "same place in the air with its head to the wind" (*OED* "kestrel" *n.*," 1.a.). The "kestrell" figuration in the Braggadocchio episode of *The Faerie Queene* parallels the character Kastril in *The Alchemist*. Jonson's Kastril plays an angry boy who ultimately peddles his sister, the widow Dame Pliant, to the master of the house, Lovewit.

Spenser's Braggadocchio episodes involving themes of alchemy, counterfeiting, and deception in Books III and IV of *The Faerie Queene* shape Jonson's common thieves Face, Subtle, and Doll Common in a satirical plot aimed at greedy and gullible aristocrats in *The Alchemist*. In Book III of *The Faerie Queene* a Witch creates a false Florimel "with fine Mercury," an alchemical ingredient, and fashions her "yellow lockes" from "golden wyre" (III.viii.6.6, 7.5-7; see Schuler 13). In Books III and IV Braggadocchio, a "counterfeit" knight, competes for the hand of "counterfet" false Florimel (III.viii.5.5, V.iii.39.1). When the thief and counterfeiter Face addresses the alchemist Subtle, he advertises their

gullible client Dapper as "No cheating Clim-o'the-Cloughs or Claribels" (I.ii.46). Jonson's choice of the name Claribel is an intertextual connection with Spenser's "lewd" knight "Claribell" from whom Spenser's Braggadocchio defends false Florimel in Book IV of *The Faerie Queene* (IV.ix.20.8). Like Spenser's Sir Claribell, one of six knights who fight for false Florimel, Dapper is among many customers at Lovewit's townhouse who compete for the prostitute Doll Common.[6] Parallel to Spenser's false Florimel in Books III and IV of *The Faerie Queene*, Doll Common deceives onlookers by impersonating the Fairy Queen.

2. Mammon

Intertextual connections between Spenser's Mammon episode in Book II, canto vii of *The Faerie Queene* and Jonson's *Alchemist* satirize greed for wealth.[7] In Book II of *The Faerie Queene* the poet refers to Spanish voyages to "th'Indian *Peru*" for plundering gold mines there (II.Proem 2.6). When Jonson's Sir Epicure Mammon first enters the alchemist's house, he exclaims to Surly,

> Come on, sir. Now you set your foot on shore
> In *novo orbe*. Here's the rich Peru,
> And there within, sir, are the golden mines,
> Great Solomon's Ophir! (II.i.1-4)

Spenser imagines the Cave of Mammon as a mine where the greedy fiend is surrounded by "Great heapes of gold, that neuer could be spent," some of which has been beaten and smelt "into great *Ingowes*, and to *wedges square*" (II.vii. 5.2, 6; my emphasis). Spenser's "*Ingowes*" is a variant form of the word '*ingot*,' which is suggestive of the Elizabethan term 'Incas' well-known for their city of gold, El Dorado (see Hamilton's note on line 6, Spenser 213). Sir Epicure Mammon brags to Surly about the wealth Subtle's alchemy will bring, "This day thou shalt have *ingots*" (II.ii.7; my emphasis). Later, Surly says to Sir Epicure Mammon, when the three thieves disappear with his fine metals, "where be your

andirons now? And your brass pots, / That should ha'been golden flagons and *great wedges*?" (V.iii.6-7). Jonson's phrase golden "*great wedges*" is strikingly similar not only to Spenser's "*wedges square*" made of gold in the Mammon episode but also to Marlowe's "wedge of gold," which refers to Barabas's riches in *The Jew of Malta* (1.1.9), and Shakespeare's "wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl" in Clarence's dream of the classical underworld in *Richard III* (I.iv.26).[8] However, Jonson's use of the word "*ingots*," which is found only in Spenser's Mammon episode as the linguistic variation "*Ingowes*" and is missing in both *The Jew of Malta* and *Richard III*, highly suggests that *The Faerie Queene* is an intertext for *The Alchemist*.[9] Both Spenser's "Ingowes" and Jonson's "ingots" are set in satirical contexts satirizing Mammonism.

Spenser in the Mammon episode and Jonson in *The Alchemist* satirize the environmental hazards of mining, burning coal, and alchemy.[10] These two works similarly refer to exploited, dark-skinned natives who labored in gold mines in the New World.[11] Spenser's Mammon has a smoke-tanned face, sooty head and beard, and "cole-blacke hands" (II.vii.3.6-8). Spenser's "black fiendes" smelting gold in the Mammon episode parallel Jonson's soot-covered alchemist Subtle, whom Face calls "black boy" (II.vii.41.9).[12] Face also calls Subtle a "collier," meaning a coal miner, and a "sooty, smoky-bearded compeer" (I.i.90; IV.vi.41). In keeping with medieval and Renaissance actors, who blackened their faces with soot, Subtle's face is coated with coal dust (IV.vi.41; see Deák 222). Subtle's blackface serves as one of his many profitable disguises as a thief and conman. Conversing with Spenser's Mammon, Guyon criticizes mining during the Iron Age as a violation of Nature: "Then gan a cursed hand the quiet wombe / Of his great Grandmother with steele to wound, / And the hid treasures in her sacred tombe, / With Sacriledge to dig" (II.vii.17.1-4). Guyon's comment about mining wounding Mother Earth is indirectly satirical. By contrast to Guyon, Sir Epicure Mammon could not care less about the environmental damage his rich mines will cause when he plans to "purchase Devonshire and Cornwall / And make them perfect Indies!" (II.i.35-36). This hedonist envisions using the alchemical stone to transform tin

and copper extracted from these mines into gold (see Jonson 590n36). Like Spenser and his implied critique of the ecological destructiveness of mining in the Mammon episode, Jonson in *The Alchemist* exhibits environmental awareness of the damage caused by alchemy when Face says to Subtle, "Why, now, you smoky persecutor of nature! / Now do you see that something's to be done / Beside your beech-coal and your cor'sive waters," referring to the polluting charcoal and acids used in alchemy (I.iii.101-03).

Parallel figuration related to a mythical garden and tempting fruit in Mammon's cave in Book II of *The Faerie Queene* and *The Alchemist* satirizes the unsatisfying desire for gold. Spenser's Mammon tempts Guyon with "golden apples," which "feede his eye" but not his body, from his infernal garden of Hesperides (II.vii.54.1; 4.8). Similarly, Sir Epicure Mammon imagines how he will use the environmentally toxic, alchemical stone to attain golden apples from "th'Hesperian garden" (II.i.101). Jonson most likely read the Mammon episode of *The Faerie Queene* with prior knowledge of the widely circulated *Mythologiae* of Conti, who interprets Mammon's golden apples as symbols of wealth that tempt the soul without nourishing the body (see Spenser 222n54). In reply to Sir Epicure Mammon's flattery of Doll, "Methinks you do resemble / One o'the Austriac princes," Face's aside, "Her father was an Irish costermonger" links Doll's father with a street peddler of apples (IV.i.55-57). In keeping with Spenser's Mammon, who tempts Guyon with his gold hoard, golden apples, and his daughter Philotime, Subtle and Face hoard Sir Epicure Mammon's fine metals in the basement of Lovewit's townhouse and use the prostitute Doll Common, whose father sold apples, to seduce their gullible customers. Both Spenser's Philotime, who is sitting with "soueraine maiestye" on her "throne," and Jonson's Doll Common disguised as the Fairy Queen parody Gloriana in *The Faerie Queene* (II.vii.44.5, 48.2; see MacLachlan 542; and Quitslund 336).

In *The Alchemist* Jonson imitates and parodies Spenser's Mammon episode in a comic vein to satirize lust for money and ambitions for social

mobility. Mammon's gold hoard, which Guyon knows he has accumulated "from rightfull owner by vnrighteous lott," resembles Subtle and Face's accumulation of "brass and pewter" conned from Sir Epicure Mammon (*The Faerie Queene* II.vii.19.4). Like Spenser's Mammon, who hides his stolen treasure in the underworld, Jonson's thieves stash their booty "under ground" in a "cellar" (*The Alchemist* I.i.84; IV.vii.127). Acting as Guyon's tour guide through the infernal labyrinth, Mammon

> Thence forward he him ledd, and shortly brought
> Vnto another rowme, whose dore forthright,
> To him did open, as it had beene taught:
> Therein an *hundred raunges* weren pight
> And *hundred fournaces* all burning bright;
> By euery fournace many feendes did byde,
> *Deformed creatures*, horrible in sight,
> And euery feend his busie paines applyde,
> *To melt the golden metall, ready to be tryde*.
>
> *One with great bellowes gathered filling ayre,*
> *And with forst wind the fewell did inflame*;
> Another did the dying bronds repayre
> With yron tongs, and sprinckled ofte the same
> With liquid waues, fiers *Vulcans* rage to tame,
> Who maystring them, renewd his former heat;
> Some scumd the drosse, that from the metall came.
> Some stird the molten owre with ladles great;
> And euery one did swincke, and euery one did sweat.
> (35-36; my emphases)

Jonson's Subtle and his alchemical "furnace" parody Spenser's Mammon and his smelting of gold (IV.v.59).[13] As the assistant to the alchemist Subtle, Face bears the comic nickname "Lungs" that associates him with the "great bellowes" Mammon's laborers use to inflame his "hundred fournaces […] To melt the golden metall." In contrast to Spenser's unnamed miners or slaves that he calls "deformed creatures" in Mammon's underworld, Jonson gives his alchemist and his assistant multiple names: Subtle, Face, Lungs, Ulen Spiegel, and Jeremy the Butler.[14] Unlike Spenser's mythological cave of Mammon set in faraway Hades,

Jonson's realistic portrayal of common thieves and their base of operations in Master's Lovewit's house in London adds immediacy to his biting satire of greedy aristocrats and social mobility among all ranks.

3. Castle of Alma

Jonson appropriates Spenser's Castle of Alma under attack by Maleger to satirize the disease of Mammonism afflicting the body politic in *The Alchemist*. Like Spenser and his naming of the Castle of Alma, Jonson designates Subtle's alchemical equipment as "*turris circulatorius*," meaning "a castle or fort" (III.ii.3; see Jonson 630n3). In addition, Surly refers to Lovewit's townhouse as a "citadel," and Kastril describes it as a "castle" (IV.vi.9; V.iii.36). Face's phrase "our Doll, our castle, our Cinque Port," or five ports of entry, recalls Alma with her five senses as castle fortifications besieged by Maleger (III.iii.18). Doll, whom Subtle summons "to the window" and who a neighbor reports to Lovewit upon his return was "seen / In a velvet gown at the window," acts as sentry for his castle-like house by watching with her two eyes for approaching customers (I.i.180; V.ii.23-24). Similarly, Alma's Castle is guarded by "two goodly Beacons, set in watches stead" (II.ix.46.3). In Jonson's 1617 copy of *The Faerie Queene and Complaints* he glosses these two "Beacons" as "the Eyes" (Riddell and Stewart 178). In keeping with Spenser's Maleger, whose assault upon the Castle of Alma exposes the vulnerability of the physical body to illness, Surly's attempted battery upon Doll Common represented as a fortress uncovers Face and Subtle's fraudulent, alchemical plot and satirizes the plague of Mammonism.

Jonson transforms Spenser's Castle of Alma into Lovewit's pleasure palace to satirize the self-deluding potential of the imagination in the comic pursuit of godlike power and wealth. Spenser's body allegory of the Castle of Alma provides a rich intertext for *The Alchemist*. In Alma's kitchen analogous to the stomach a "huge great payre of bellowes" is cooling the "caudron" upon "a mightie furnace" (II.ix.30.4-6). In the

1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene and Complaints* Jonson annotates this huge bellows in the Castle of Alma episode as "The Lunges" (Riddell and Stewart 178). The bellows for the furnace in the Castle of Alma provides Jonson with further inspiration for Face's nickname "Lungs." In Alma's watchtower analogous to the mind "idle thoughtes and fantasies" make one appear "mad or foolish" (II.ix.51.6, 52.7). In *The Alchemist* Sir Epicure Mammon similarly exhibits self-deluding flights of fancy. In the 1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene* Jonson annotates "Phantesey" as "the several imaginati<ons> which flott in our phanse<y>" (Riddell and Stewart 179). A cultural distrust of the imagination links the Castle of Alma and *The Alchemist*.[15] In the Castle of Alma waste is removed through "the backgate" where it is "auoided quite, and throwne out *priuily*" (II.ix.32.7, 9; my emphasis). Parallel to Spenser's comic pun on a privy in the Castle of Alma episode, Master Lovewit's urban house turned brothel includes a "privy" where Dapper is stashed with gingerbread as a gag in his mouth (III.v.79).[16] Gingerbread melting in Dapper's mouth in this privy is particularly comic and scatological (V.iii.66). Later, Doll as "Madam Suppository" is pushed out "the back side" of Lovewit's townhouse, using a "sheet to save" her "velvet gown" (V.v.13; V.iv.133-34).[17] Likewise, Jonson annotates Alma's "backgate" as "fundam" in his copy of the 1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene* (Riddell and Stewart 177). Jonson appropriates the Castle of Alma episode as inspiration for comedy as well as satire in *The Alchemist*.

4. The Wandering Wood

In *The Alchemist* Jonson emphasizes the importance of plain and clear diction by appropriating Spenser's Wandering Wood of Error in *The Faerie Queene* to satirize the misuse of language by pleasure-seeking aristocrats, Puritans, and pseudoscientists (I.i.11.4).[18] Surly, who is skeptical of alchemy, exclaims in response to Subtle's alchemical jargon, "What a brave language here is! Next to canting!" (II.iii.42). As an

aside to Subtle's "And the philosopher's vinegar?", he pronounces, "We shall have a salad" (II.iii.100-01). Alchemists did in fact compare the mixing of alchemical elements to a salad (Jonson 606n101). Jonson satirizes tracts by the Puritan Hugh Broughton when Subtle and Face claim that Doll has "gone mad with studying Broughton's works"; he also mocks pseudoscientific treatises on quarrelling that treated dueling as a mathematical science (II.iii.238; III.iv.25-41). Vowing to expose that Subtle's alchemy is based on pseudoscience, Surly ventures

> […] to find
> The subtleties of this *dark labyrinth*.
> Which, if I do discover, dear Sir Mammon,
> You'll give your poor friend leave, though no philosopher,
> To laugh. (II.iii.307-11; my emphasis)

Though alchemists commonly used the metaphor of a labyrinth to represent the search for the alchemical stone, Surly's emphasis upon its darkness is suggestive of Jonson's careful reading of Spenser's episode of the Wandering Wood. Spenser describes this place as a "labyrinth […] that heauens light did hide" (I.i.7.5, 11.4). Jonson labels this opening episode in Spenser's epic romance as "Errour" in his 1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene and Complaints* (Jonson 615n308; Riddell and Stewart 164). In *The Alchemist* Jonson appropriates Spenser's Wandering Wood to satirize alchemical language that leads to self-delusions of grandeur rather than wealth.

5. The Fairy Queen

In *The Alchemist* Doll Common's impersonation of the Fairy Queen parodies Spenser's Gloriana, mocks Spain, and satirizes the aristocracy. Spenser's use of fairy caught the attention of two of his earliest readers—Gabriel Harvey, who refers to Spenser's "elvish Queen" and "hobgoblin," and Nashe, whose persona Pierce Penniless describes Spenser as a "Fairy Singer" in *Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Diuell* (1592;

see Woodcock 1; Harvey 628; Nashe 1: 244). The analogy Jonson establishes between the prostitute Doll's plan to gull Surly, who disguises himself as a Spanish Don, and Elizabeth I's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 makes a mockery of aristocrats in Spain and England. Jonson invokes this famous military battle when Doll asks Face in jest, "Say, Lord General, how fares our camp?," the opening line of Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (III.iii.33; see Kyd I.i.2). Dame Pliant's remark, "never sin' eighty-eight could I abide" a Spaniard reminds audiences of Elizabeth I's defeat of the Spanish Armada and vilifies Spain (IV.iv.29). Jonson further satirizes the aristocracy when Sir Epicure Mammon says to quean Doll, "when thy name is mentioned, / Queens may look pale" (IV.i.143-44). Audiences at a performance of *The Alchemist* most likely heard Jonson's pun on "quean" in keeping with Chaucer's "queynte" and much later Marvell's "quaint honour" (Chaucer, "The Miller's Tale" 3276; Marvell "To His Coy Mistress" 29). Subtle's command to Dapper that he "kiss" Doll's "departing part" in hopes of gaining "twelve thousand acres of Fairyland" provides another satirical intertext between *The Faerie Queene* and *The Alchemist* (V.iv.55, 57). In keeping with Spenser's satirical figure Braggadocchio through which the poet mocks ambitious Elizabethan courtiers, Jonson's Dapper and his zealous desire for social advancement satirize those who aspire to rise in rank through the acquisition of titles, land, and new money.[19]

6. Satirical Appropriations of *The Faerie Queene*

Not only Gloriana, the Wandering Wood, Braggadocchio, Mammon, and the Castle of Alma but also Duessa, the Blatant Beast, and the Giant with the Scales in *The Faerie Queene* inspired the creation of satires, parodies, and comedies among Spenser's seventeenth-century readers. A Catholic loyalist, poet Anthony Copley wrote the satirical *A Fig for Fortune* (1596), a parody of *The Faerie Queene* that satirizes the Anglican Church by depicting it as Duessa (see Heffner 46-47). Thomas Dekker

refers to "*Braggadochio-vices*" in his masque *A Strange Horse-Race* (1613) and thereby parodies Spenser's Braggadocchio and his vice of horse thievery in *The Faerie Queene* (Heffner 130).[20] Jonson and his contemporaries appropriated figures throughout *The Faerie Queene* as inspiration for satirizing contemporary political and religious personages. In *Conversations with William Drummond* (1619) Jonson writes, "by the Blating Beast the Puritans were understood, by the false Duessa the Q. of Scotts" (Heffner 154). In the anonymous allegory *The Faerie Leveller* (1648), a work subtitled "*A lively representation of our times,*" "*Arthegall Prince of justice*" is "King Charles," "*Talus his Executioner with his yron flayle*" represents "the Kings forces," and "*The Gyant Leveller*" is "Oliver Cromwell" (Heffner 223-24). In *A Short Discourse on the English Stage* (1664) Richard Flecknoe says, "Beaumont and Fletcher […] err'd against Decorum, seldom representing a valiant man without somewhat of the Braggadoccio, nor an honorable woman without somewhat of Doll Common in her" (Heffner 255). Here Flecknoe remembers comedies by Beaumont and Fletcher in intertextual dialogue with Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Jonson's *The Alchemist*. Flecknoe satirizes bragging soldiers and apparently chaste women by associating them with Braggadocchio and Doll Common. Beyond Jonson in *The Alchemist*, reader reception of Spenser's works throughout the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline eras contributes to his afterlife as biting satirist not only for *Mother Hubberds Tale* in *The Complaints* but also for *The Faerie Queene*.

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NOTES

[1]This essay emerged out of a seminar on "Pleasure and Interpretation in Shakespeare and Spenser" directed by Joe Moshenska and Leah J. Whittington at the Shakespeare Association of America in 2019. I am grateful to Judith Anderson for her encouragement, and to Jacob Brewer at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Jennifer Urbanek at Tulane University for their thoughtful commentary on earlier versions of this project and their assistance preparing this essay for publication.

Hile asserts that "Spenser's epic did not influence satirical poetry of the time period as clearly and as significantly as did others of his works" (64). She devotes her attention to Spenser's shorter poems in *The Complaints* like *Mother Hubberds Tale*. Unlike Hile, I argue that Jonson drew extensively upon *The Faerie Queene* for his satirical play *The Alchemist*. A voracious reader, Jonson must have encountered *The Faerie Queene*, which circulated widely in print in 1590, 1596, and 1609, before *The Alchemist* was first performed in 1610. Although the 1591 volume of Spenser's *Complaints* was withdrawn from sale, Dutton says that, "[g]iven its notoriety, it seems inconceivable that Jonson did not know of *Mother Hubberds Tale*, at least in general terms" (350-51).

[2]My broad use of the term *intertext* spans influence, imitation, parody, and allusion. Such intertextual connections can be thematic, linguistic, historical, or cultural. Though some intertextual relationships are intentional, others are unintentional (see Anderson 1-4). Anderson says that, "while authorial agency and linguistic free play are opposing binaries in the abstract, in practice they coexist interestingly, elusively, and indefinitely" (2). Rose, who defines parody as "comic quotation, imitation, or transformation," discusses Bakhtin's conception of parody as "'a double-voice' form" in which intertextual voices are "separated by a distance" (Rose 6, 126-27; Bakhtin 166).

My definition of satire is in keeping with that of Jones, who says that "satire is distinctive for its overt engagement […] with its historical context" and "criticizes the contemporary world" (1255).

[3]Those who note Jonson's invoking of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* when Doll Common impersonates the Fairy Queen are Mebane (122); McManus (203); Buccola (118); and Bull (219). Bull says that *The Alchemist* illustrates Jonson's "familiarity with (and even affection for) romance, that has, in the past been obscured by an emphasis on his knowledge of Classical literature" (208). He examines how Jonson "is actively parodying" medieval faerie romance in *The Alchemist* (222). His consideration of *The Faerie Queene* in relation to *The Alchemist*, however, is limited to episodes involving Dapper and Doll Common disguised as the Fairy Queen.

[4]Blissett briefly mentions Spenser's Mammon in relation to Jonson's Sir Epicure Mammon (330). McCabe, who calls Jonson "one of Spenser's acutest readers," observes that both Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* and Jonson in *The Alchemist* comment on the distorting power of mirrors (16). Spenser the poet remarks that a "glasse […] can blynd / The wisest sight, to thinke gold that is bras" (VI.Proem 5.6-7), whereas Sir Epicure Mammon boasts that he will have his "glasses, / Cut in more subtill angles, to disperse, / And multiply the figures, as I walke" (II.ii.45-47).

[5]See Riddell and Stewart's Appendix A entitled "Jonson's Annotations and Representative Marks to the 1617 Spenser Folio" for his marginalia in response to the Braggadocchio, Mammon, and Castle of Alma episodes (167, 172-79). Jonson's 1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene and Complaints* exists today in the private collection of Mr. Getty KBE in London (Riddell and Stewart xii). In Robert Evans's analysis of Jonson's reading habits he says that Jonson's copy of Spenser's 1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene and Complaints* enriches "our understanding of Jonson's attitudes toward

Spenser, especially in the latter stage of Jonson's career, when he was himself reportedly at work on a heroic poem" (255). Like Evans, Nicholson discusses Jonson as a reader of Spenser in terms of his annotations of the 1617 Folio of *The Faerie Queene and Complaints* (126-28). My examination of *The Faerie Queene* as an intertext for *The Alchemist*, by contrast, illustrates how Jonson was reading Spenser by 1610 and most likely by 1596 or earlier.

[6]Holland and Sherman remark that the figure "Claribel" to whom Face compares Dapper in I.ii.45 "is in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, 4.9 (and the poem's title might just anticipate the plot of duping Dapper with the Queen of the Fairies)" (Jonson 576n). This is Holland and Sherman's only reference to the impact of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* on *The Alchemist*.

[7]Watson notes that in *The Alchemist* "Lovewit's house is full of popular literature," including "Spenser's adult fairy tales" (123, 114); he implicitly compares Sir Epicure Mammon, "alluding to Broughton's *Concent of Scripture*," to Redcrosse Knight when he says that "Doll spits back at him her own mad concoction of that and other literature, as if she were Spenser's Dragon of Error vomiting theological tracts on a similarly erroneous knight" (125). Donaldson associates the Puritan Ananias's phrase "this cave of cos'nage" in *The Alchemist* with "a Spenserian 'cave of cos'nage'" (78).

[8]In *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession* Cheney examines extensive parallels between Spenser's Mammon episode and Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (see 78). He then compares *The Jew of Malta* and *The Alchemist* in terms of character, situation, imagery, and Jonson's borrowings of specific words and phrases from Marlowe. His argument implies that Spenser's Mammon episode influences Jonson's *Alchemist*, but he does not explore intertextual connections between these two works explicitly. In *English Authorship and the Early Modern Sublime* Cheney briefly discusses "the Spenserian matrix of *The Alchemist*" as central to "the working of the plot" with respect to Doll Common's impersonation of the Fairy Queen and Sir Epicure Mammon's parodic quest for the sublime (247). For intertextual connections between Spenser's Mammon episode and Shakespeare's *Richard III*, see Brooks (149-50).

[9]Zurcher illustrates how Nashe in his satire *Pierce Penilesse*, published in 1592, drew the attention of early modern readers to Spenser's Mammon episode in Book II of the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene* (137-39). Jonson's professional connection with Nashe as collaborator on *The Isle of Dogs* first performed in 1597 suggests that he, too, was familiar with Spenser's Mammon episode before the first performance of *The Alchemist* in 1610.

[10]Boehrer credits Jonson with "a mode of proto-ecological awareness" for recognizing that urban progress in London has a "backside" and has made it "a city rich in shit" (165, 170). Ross says that "Subtle acts like a colonist: he invades a foreign culture—middle-class, mainstream London—enlists a native informant—Face—and proceeds to mine the new land for its treasures" (449).

[11]Read says that Spenser's Mammon episode parodies Spanish acquisition of gold in the New World (211-12). Racial markings of Mammon's laborers as "blacke

fiendes" (II.vii.41.9) lead Kasey Evans to offer a New World reading of the Mammon episode (55).

[12]Holland and Sherman note that the phrase "black boy" most likely refers to Subtle with his sooty appearance as an alchemist but could also refer to Surly impersonating a Spaniard in III.iii.8 (Jonson 637n).

[13]A few critics have connected Spenser's Mammon with alchemy. Quitslund describes Mammon as "a charlatan, a confidence man, something like an alchemist" (349). Landreth admits, "Mammon is not an alchemist—the operations depicted in his furnace are worked on ore, not on dung or lead—but he shares this understanding, so flattering to himself, of gold as a worldly perfection whose substance transcends any form" (72). Schuler says in relation to Spenser's Mammon that counterfeiters who pretended to transform base metals into gold were "a common target of satire and ridicule, as in Jonson's *Alchemist*" (12).

[14]Leo remarks that "Spenser refuses to tell us more about the inner life of Mammon's laborers" (219).

[15]See Clark for a discussion of early modern perceptions of the unreliability of the imagination (45).

[16]Robert Evans, who says that Spenser's "writings were not notoriously funny," overlooks Spenser's penchant for comedy (138). Hill, by contrast, observes that Spenser has "a credible sense of inane, unregenerate comedy—a sense of comedy which brings Braggadocchio to life" (319).

[17]On the scatological structure of Jonson's play, see Moran (8). On the excretion of Dapper as "a piece of shit," see Paster (159-60).

[18]Dessen says that in *The Alchemist* Jonson, like Spenser, "has explored the same theme, man's vulnerability to error and self-deception" (129-30). For Jonson's annotations of Spenser's episode of Error, see Riddell and Stewart (164).

[19]Nohrnberg identifies the fox and ape in *Mother Hubberds Tale* as Lord William Cecil Burghley; Jehan de Simier, who was the Duke of Alençon's confidant and envoy for his proposed marriage to Queen Elizabeth I; and Robert Cecil, Burghley's hunchbacked son. He parallels Spenser's fox and ape with the upstarts Braggadocchio and Trompart in *The Faerie Queene* (see Nohrnberg 83, 92).

[20]In Richard Niccols's *The Beggars Ape* (1627), a court satire in imitation of *Mother Hubberds Tale* (1591), "boasting Bragadochioes" seeks "to clime / To places of such high credit" (Heffner 92).

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