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BEN JONSON IN BEN JONSON'S PLAYS

by James E. Savage

BEN JONSON WAS NEVER able to leave himself altogether out of his plays, though, after the early comedies, he speaks largely in the prefatory matter, or with the voices of many of his *dramatis personae*. Beginning with *Every Man in His Humour*, however, there is in the early comedies a single character of majestic proportions, who is the principal dispenser of rewards and punishments, and the chief repository of right opinion. He is scholar, soldier, poet, critic, censor of morals and manners. One has only to leaf through the pages of *Timber, or Conversations with Drummond*, or of the introductory matter to the plays, to see that Jonson strongly felt himself to be indeed scholar, soldier, poet, critic, censor of morals and manners.

It is my purpose in this paper to examine the careers of these characters who reflect the personality of Jonson himself in the plays *Every Man in His Humour*, *Every Man out of His Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster*.¹ I wish to show how each does

¹Since *Every Man in His Humour* is not the earliest of Jonson's known plays perhaps *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Case Is Altered* should be mentioned. *A Tale of a Tub* may have existed in some form at a very early date, but in all likelihood the one thing in which Ben speaks directly for himself is the attack on Inigo Jones (Herford and Simpson, III, 77-92, *passim*). This is clearly an interpolation, probably of a later date in his career. Similarly, in *The Case Is Altered*, the attack on Anthony Munday as Antonio Balladino (Herford and Simpson, III, 106-107), and the attack on pseudo-critics dragged in by Valentine (Herford and Simpson, III, 136-137), are probably interpolations made some little time after original composition. Perhaps anticipatory of the later exploits of Doctor Clement and his successors, however, is the Olympian ratification of fates by Maximilian, for a total of nine characters:

Max. Well, I will now swear the case is altered. Lady fare you well, I will subdue my affections. Maddam (as for you) you are a profest virgin, and I will be silent. My honorable Lord *Ferneze*, it shall

manifest the qualities on which Jonson prided himself; how each is useful to Jonson in the management of the action; and how each has major choric function as the chief custodian of right opinion, though he may not be a convenient vehicle for the expression of the truly comic.

That these characters have some kinship with Ben himself is suggested by his remark to Drummond that "he had many quarrells with Marston beat him and took his Pistol from him, wrote his Poetaster on him."² That the idea of having himself as a character in one of his own plays is not unacceptable to him is suggested by his further word to Drummond that "he heth a Pastorall intituled the May Lord, his own name is Alkin Ethra." Whether or not the *May Lord* and *The Sad Shepherd* are the same, it is worth noting that in the latter play there is a character "Alkin," the "Sage."³

Jonson's own Captain Tucca, borrowed for *Satiromastix* by Dekker, in the following passage makes a useful identification:

No you staru'd rascal, thou't bite off mine eares
then, you must haue three or foure suites of names,
when like a lowsie Pediculous vermin th'ast but
one suit to thy backe: you must be call'd *Asper*,
and *Criticus*, and *Horace*, thy tyle's longer a read-
ing then the Stile a the big Turkes: *Asper*, *Criti-
cus*, *Quintus*, *Horatius*, *Flaccus*.⁴

Dekker himself, in his *To the World*, prefixed to *Satiromastix*, in a most thorny piece of prose, denies the presence of Jonson in *Every Man in His Humour*:

*I meete one, and he runnes full Butt at me with his
Satires hornes, for that in vntrussing Horace, I did
onely whip his fortunes, and condition of life,*

become you at this time not be frugall, but bounteous, and open handed, your fortune hath been so to you. Lord *Chamount*, you are now no stranger, you must be welcome, you haue a faire, amiable and splendi[di]us Lady: but signior *Paulo*, signior *Camillo*, I know you valiant; be louing. Lady I must be better knowne to you. Signiors for you, I passe you not: though I let you passe; for in truth I passe not of you. Louers to your nuptials, Lordings to your dances. March faire al, for a faire March, is worth a kings ransome.

(Herford and Simpson, III, 189, 190, 55-67)

²C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, editors, *Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), I, 140. This edition will be the source of all passages taken from *Every Man in His Humour*. The text quoted will be that of the Quarto of 1601.

³*Ibid.*, VII, 7.

⁴*The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), I, 325.

*where the more noble Reprehension had bin of his mindes Deformitie, whose greatnes if his Criticall Lynx had with as narrow eyes, obseru'd in himselfe, as it did little spots vpon others: without all disputation, Horace would not haue left Horace out of Euery man in's Hvmour.*⁵

Dekker is correct, of course, in assuming that Jonson did not make "His mindes Deformitie" an object of his attack in *Every Man in His Humour*. It is my contention, however, that there is in the play a character of the Asper-Criticus-Horace type, a dispenser of justice and a custodian of right opinion, Doctor Clement. It is the careers of Clement, Asper, of *Every Man out of His Humour*, Criticus, of *Cynthia's Revels*, and Horace, of *Poetaster*, that I wish to trace.⁶

The first major appearance, therefore, of what I shall call the Horace-character as spokesman for, and with many of the characteristics of, Ben himself occurs in the first quarto of *Every Man in His Humour*. The Doctor Clement of the quarto is altogether a more distinguished man than Justice Clement of the folio of 1616. He is introduced by this exchange:

Lo. iu. Doctor Clement, what's he? I haue heard much speech of him.

Pros. Why, doest thou not know him? he is the Gonfaloniere of the state here, an excellent rare ciuilian, and a great scholler, but the onely mad

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁶It is not my intention to say that Clement, Asper, Criticus, Horace are intended literally to represent Jonson himself, except perhaps in the case of Horace. The opinions of students of Jonson's work are not markedly at variance with my own. R. A. Small, in *The Stage-Quarrel Between Ben Jonson and the So-Called Poetasters* (Breslau: Verlag von H. & H. Marcus, 1899), pp. 27-28, says, "In *Every Man out of his Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels*, and the *Poetaster*, Jonson has left us a three-fold presentation of himself under the names of Asper, Crites (called Criticus in the quarto edition of *Cynthia's Revels* and in Dekker's *Satiromastix*), and Horace. There is no question that all three were meant for him." Herford and Simpson (I, 347) say that Asper and Crites "speak Jonson's mind if they do not reflect his person"; that Horace is "less like Jonson than Asper and Crites" (I, 422); they say also, however, that Jonson did not represent himself in *Every Man in His Humour*. E. K. Chambers, in *Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1923), III, 364, 365, doubts that Jonson would have praised himself as highly as he praises Criticus and states that Horace is Jonson himself. Ralph W. Berringer, in "Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* and the War of the Theaters" (*PQ*, XII, 1-22) says "that, in *Satiromastix*, a good part of Dekker's satire is devoted to pointing out and mocking this early habit of Jonson's of setting up a character annoyingly like himself as a quasi-hero. . . . The emphasis . . . is upon the identity of Horace, the idealized self-portrait of Jonson, and Criticus" (p. 11). Many other statements could be cited, but their tenor would be essentially that of those I have quoted.

merry olde fellow in Europe: I shewed him you the other day.

Lo. ii. Oh I remember him now; Good faith, and he hath a very strange presence me thinkes, it shewes as if he stooode out of the ranke from other men. I haue heard many of his iests in Padua: they say he will commit a man for taking the wall of his horse.

Pros. I or wearing his cloake of one shoulder, or anything indeede, if it come in the way of his humor.

(III, ii, 45-57)

Two elements of some interest in this description do not appear in the corresponding passage in the folio, the titles of "Doctor" and "Gonfaloniere."

On almost all occasions when he is addressed in the play, Clement is "Master Doctor." One is reminded of the "Doctor" who points out the lessons of *Everyman*; of Faustus, with his almost boundless knowledge; of the doctors in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*; of the Doctors Bellario and "Bathazar" of *The Merchant of Venice*.

Not only, however, is the Doctor a learned man, a scholar, but he is also "the *Gonfaloniere* of the state here." This is indeed an exalted title, with connotations at once religious, civil, and military: "The head of the Signoria in the Florentine republic"; "the champion of the Church in its quarrels with the Emperor."⁷

In addition to the qualities noted, Doctor Clement is a poet in his own right, offering to enter into competition with Matheo in verses "in honor of the Gods," or, failing that "height of stile," "a steppe or two lower then." He is a critic also, for he concurs in Lorenzo junior's impassioned defense of poetry, "Blessed aeternall, and most true deiune." But, while agreeing that "Nothing can more adorne humanitie," he also notes that

election is now gouerned altogether by the influence of humor, which instead of those holy flames that should direct and light the soule to eternitie, hurles foorth nothing but smooke and congested

⁷Alfred Hoore, *An Italian Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925).

vapours, that strifle her vp, & bereaue her of al
sight & motion.

(V, iii, 344-348)

Finally Doctor Clement, though a most severe judge of mistaken humour in poet or gull, has his own humour: he dons his armor to greet a "soldier"; he competes with a "poet" in the making of verses "extempore"; and in honor of the wit of Musco, he clothes that rascal in his own robes for the evening's mirth. He is not, however, like most of his associates in the play a humours character. His "affects, his spirits, and his powers" do not all "runne one way." His humour is little more than a whim of secondary importance in the full life of the man pictured in the passage quoted.

Doctor Clement's usefulness to the playwright in *Every Man in His Humour* is enormous in the conduct of the plot; his pronouncements terminate, with reward, or punishment, or reconciliation, all lines of action. His value is equally great in the choric function, the stating of right opinion, the establishing of significance in the light of normal human conduct. Though the follies of a Stephano, a Bobadillo or a Matheo manifest themselves abundantly, Jonson deliberately uses Doctor Clement at the end of the play to summarize and evaluate these follies. The lack of foundation of the jealous humours of Cob and Tib, of Thorello and Biancha, is made manifest only through the skillful questioning of Doctor Clement. It is through his careful analysis that Matheo's plagiarism is exposed; that the senior Lorenzo's contempt for poetry is overcome; that Lorenzo junior's eulogies are tempered.

A far more important task than the establishing of right opinion is the utterance of the truly comic, the flash of insight which sets in perspective many elements of character, of circumstance, of wit and ignorance in conflict. This high privilege is accorded to several of the characters in *Every Man in His Humour*, particularly Lorenzo junior, Guilliano and Musco. Yet, again, the summary statements are reserved for Doctor Clement. Having donned his armor to receive the "soldier" Bobadillo, when he learns of Bobadillo's cowardice, he hits the true comic note with "here take my armour quickly, twill make him swoone I feare." Or, when he orders the burning of Matheo's stolen "Conceit," he can achieve the choric comment without either invective or moralizing: "Conceite, fetch me a couple of torches, sirha, I may see the conceite: quickly! its very darke!"

In *Every Man out of His Humour* there is a far more complex manifestation of these characteristics of Jonson himself, reaching full definition only in the union of Asper and Macilente. The formal introduction of Asper, the Presenter, though well known, should perhaps be repeated:

He is of an ingenuous and free spirit, eager and constant in reproofe, without feare controuling the worlds abuses; One, whome no seruile hope of Gaine, or frostie apprehension of Daunger, can make to be a Parasite, either to Time, Place, or Opinion.

(A3^r, 2-5)⁸

This is a man of whom it might be said, as of Doctor Clement, "it shewes as if he stode out of the ranke from other men."

It is this Asper who knows what the humours are:

As when some one peculiar qualitie
Doth so possesse a man, that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers
In their confluions all to runne one way,
This may be truly said to be a Humor.

(B2^r, 114-118)

It is he who has written the play with two sorts of spectators in mind. The first are those of the "Apish, or Phantasticke straine," whom he would "giue them pils to purge." The other is the attentive auditors,

Such as will joine their profit with their pleasure,
And come to feed their vnderstanding parts.

(B4^r, 215-217)

Then, says Asper:

Ile melt my braine into invention,
Coine new conceits, and hang my richest words
As polisht jewels in their bounteous eares.

(B4^r, 220-222)

By way of implementing this promise Asper will "goe To turn Actor, and a Humorist." The actor he becomes is Macilente, soldier, scholar, traveller, who "has oile and Fire in his pen." While Macilente does not have formally assigned to him the official judicial

⁸The text used for *Every Man out of His Humour* is that of the Quarto of 1600 as reproduced in *The Malone Society Reprints*, (R. P. Wilson and W. W. Greg, eds. *Every Man out of His Humour*, Oxford University Press, 1920). This and the passages immediately following are from the preliminary matter.

position of a Doctor Clement, it is he who metes out judgments and punishments, as his successors Criticus and Horace will do.

Macilente then is Asper—with a humour—envy. It is, however, an envy not altogether blame-worthy, for it is directed only toward those things which are truly desirable and are possessed unworthily by the objects of envy. He is, however, as Doctor Clement was not, a full-fledged humours character, for his envy “doth draw All his affects, his spirits, and his powers In their confluents, all to runne one way.” The movement of *Every Man out of His Humour* is essentially the purgation of the humour of Macilente by the process of removing the meat it feeds on. Through his manipulations are purged successively the humours of Sir Puntarvolo, Saviolina, Shift and Sogliardo, Buffone, Fungoso, Deliro and Fallace. Whether Fastidius Briske is cured is doubtful, but he is certainly punished.

With the dismissal of Fastidius, Macilente feels a change:

Now is my soule at peace,
I am as emptie of all Envie now,
As they of Merit to be envied at,
My Humour (like a flame) no longer lasts
Than it hath stufte to feed it, and their vertue,
Being now rak't vp in embers of their Follie,
Affords no ampler Subject to my Spirit;
I am so farre from malicing their states,
That I begin to pittie 'hem.

(R2^r, 4333-4341)

His envy purged, Macilente is once more Asper:

Wel, Gentlemē, I should haue
gone in, and return'd to you as I was *Asper* at the
first: but (by reason the Shift would haue been
somewhat long, and we are loth to draw your
Patience any farder) wee'le intreat you to imagine
it.

(R2^r, 4463-4467)⁹

In *Every Man out of His Humour* the more serious choric functions have, to some extent, been performed *a priori* by Asper in introductory matter. But in the play itself, while some invective is entrusted to Carlo Buffone, and some technical explanations to

⁹This passage is from the “*Catastrophe*,” of the first playing, which “many seem'd not to relish,” since Elizabeth is represented as present in person, and taking part in the cure of Macilente's envy. The substituted ending has a similar passage beginning “and now with *Asper's* tongue (Though not his shape).”

Mitis and Cordatus as "Grex," it is to Macilente that the definition and evaluation of the humour—the folly—is given. His language is that of satire, and frequently it becomes direct invective. Sogliardo is the "Mushrompe" gentleman, a "dustie Turfe," a "clod"; Sordido is "a pretious filthy damned rogue/ That fats himselfe with expectation/ Of rotten weather, and vnseason'd howers"; Fungoso is a "painted Iay with such a deale of outside"; to Delirio he can wish "Now Horne vpon Horne pursue thee, thous blind egregious Dotard."

Macilente can poison Sir Puntarvolo's dog; he can hold the constable at bay while Sir Puntarvolo seals up Buffone's beard with wax; he can mock Fastidius Briske imprisoned for the "riot" which he himself fashioned; he can say to Fallace in the presence of her disillusioned husband Delirio "gi' him not the head, though you gi' him the horns."

But it is only after he has been purged of his envy and has again become Asper that he can speak in a vein approaching the comic: after having begged the audience for a "*Plaudite*," he says "why, you may (in time) make lean *Macilente* as fat as *Sir John Fallstaffe*."

The Criticus of *Cynthia's Revels* has most of the essential qualities of Doctor Clement and of Asper-Macilente. Though not a soldier, "For his valour, tis such, that he dares as little to offer an Iniury as receiue one." He is a "scholler," in the opinion of Amorphous "a triuiall fellow, too meane, too coarse for you to conuerse with." He "smels all Lamp-oyle," and he wears "a piece of *Serge*, or *Perpetuana*." As poet, in the opinion of Anaides "he does nothing but stab." Arete several times calls attention to his "invention"; the masque, which provides the resolution of all problems, and which has the approval of Cynthia herself, is his. As did Doctor Clement and Asper, he stands out above the rank of common men:

A creature of a more perfect
and diuine temper; One, in whom the *Humors* &
Elements are peaceably met, without aemulation
of Precedencie: he is neither to fantastickly
Melancholy; too slowly *Phlegmatick*, too lightly
Sanguine, or too rashly *Chloerick*, but in al, so
composd and order'd; as it is cleare, Nature was
about some full worke, she did more then make a
man when she made him.

(II, iii, D^{4v}, E1^r)¹⁰

¹⁰All quotations are from the first quarto: *The Fountain of Self-Love. Or Cynthia's Revels*. Written by Ben: Jonson, For Walter Burre, 1601.

The words are those of Mercury himself. The purgation of the humour of envy which we saw in Asper-Macilente remains effective: in fact the balance of his nature is such that no humour can obtain a foothold.

The function of Criticus in *Cynthia's Revels* is in one sense less than that of Asper-Macilente. For Macilente almost without conscious intent achieves such an effect that he and the other characters are purged of their follies and returned to themselves. It is through him almost singlehanded, that the playwright's goals are achieved. On the other hand, the ultimate achievement of Criticus is greater, for he achieves not a purgation, but a complete reversal of character in the courtiers in *Cynthia's Revels*. He has, also, the distinction of being the worthy instrument of Mercury, of Cynthia, and of Arete, and of being the accepted suitor of Arete.

Though Jonson says in his Prologue that *Cynthia's Revels* has "*Words about Action: Matter, about wordes,*" there is an action of sorts. It is the announced assault by Cupid on the court of Cynthia, on the occasion of her revels; this action of Cupid is thwarted by Mercury, first by fostering the qualities of the Fountain of Self-Love, and then by his sponsorship of, and his conduct in, the masque at the end of the play. Criticus is the author of this masque. The suggestion that it be written comes from Cynthia, through Arete; it is Arete who insists that the performers be Hedon, Anaides, Amorphus, Asotus, the "male Deformities," and their female counterparts, Philautia, Phantaste, Moria, and Gelaia. It is to Mercury principally that Criticus prays that, as formerly in Mercury's service, his invention may thrive. The happy "invention," however, of having each of the victims of self-love play his opposite (*e. g.* Anaides, "*the impudent*" plays "good audactie") is his own; it is also his invention that Cupid plays his opposite, "Anteros," while Mercury plays only in his identity as a page.

Doctor Clement was a dispenser of justice by function of his office; Asper-Macilente dispensed not justice, but rather mercy, purgation, and he did it in an entirely unofficial capacity, and he was himself a subject of his own purgation. Criticus is also a dispenser of justice, but not by virtue of his own authority. The power is delegated by Cynthia to Arete, by Arete to Criticus. The cure of the "deformities" was effected by the mere fact that a consequence of the masque Cynthia took note of them. The punishment, the singing of the Palinode while visiting the "*weeping*

crösse," and the visit to the "Well of Knowledge, *Helicon*," is devised and imposed by Criticus.

Criticus shares the choric function along the way with Mercury, with Cupid, and with Arete, but it is chiefly to him that the formal indictment of folly is given. At the end of Act I, in a set speech of forty-four lines, Criticus though having particular reference to Asotus and Amorphus, in what is almost a choral ode, generalizes on the follies of the courtiers:

O vanity,
How are thy painted beauties doated on,
By light, and emptie Ideots?
.
"While fooles are pittied, they wax fat, and prowde.
(C4'-C4", D1')

Again in the third scene of Act III, in a set piece, Criticus shrugs off the detractions of "poore pittious Gallants":

So they be ill men,
If they spake worse, twere better: for of such
To be disprais'd, is the most perfect praise.
.
Their Enuy's like an Arrow, shot vpright,
That in the fall endangers their owne heads
(F1', F2')

In the following scene (III, iv), with Arete, he further anathematizes the courtiers, men and women: Hedon, the "proud, and spangled Sir," "scarce can eate for registring himself"; Anaides, "some subtill *Proteus*, . . . One that dares/ Doe deeds worthy the Hurdle, or the Wheele,/ To be thought some body"; the ladies, "A sixth times worse Confusion then the Rest," "such *Cob-web* stuffe,/ As would enforce the commonst sense abhorre/ Th'*Arachnean* workers."

Examples might be multiplied, but the foregoing passages are sufficient to show that it is to Criticus that Jonson gives much of the function essential in all plays, of setting abnormal conduct against the normal, of pointing out the distinction between wise conduct and foolish. His task is made easy in this play because the follies are set up, not primarily as humours, but as allegory, and are set in contrast to the absolute perfections of Arete and Cynthia.

Cynthia's Revels has more of the truly comic than has *Every Man out of His Humour*, but to Criticus himself is given little but

satirical invective. Early in the play (I, iv) this exchange has something beyond the merely satirical:

Amo. *Lucian* is absurde, he knew nothing: I will beleue my owne Trauels, before all the *Lucians* of *Europe*; he doth feed you with fictions, and leasings.

Crit. Indeed (I thinke) next a Traueller he do's prettily well.

(I, iv, Cl^v)

And in those scenes of the Folio, which do not appear in the Quarto (V, i-v), Crites (Criticus) takes part in the courtiers games, assuming a role appropriate to that proposed by Mercury:

Well, I haue a plot vpon these prizers, for which I must presently find out CRITES, and with his assistance, pursue it to a high straine of laughter, or MERCVRIE hath lost of his mettall.

(IV, v, 148-151)¹¹

Envy was an evil that must be purged from Asper-Macilente; Criticus had none himself, and envy is not possible among the victims of the Fountain of Self Love. Envy, however, does play an important part in *Poetaster*, but it lies in the detractors of Horace, not in Horace. In fact he rebukes Caesar himself for imputing it to him:

And for my Soule, it is as free, as *Caesars*:
For, what I knowe is due, I'll giue to all.
"He that detracts, or eniues vertuous Merit,
"Is still the couetous, and the ignorant spirit.

(V, i, K2^r)¹²

Horace has the other qualities that we have seen in his predecessors. While not specifically a soldier, his reputation is such as to change Captain Tucca's threats to fair greetings when Horace passes over the stage: "my good *Poet*; my *Prophet*; my Noble *Horace*." Even his "vntrusser" Crispinus concedes his valor:

PYRG. I, but Master; take heed how you giue this out, *Horace* is a Man of the Sword.

¹¹Herford and Simpson, *op. cit.*, IV, 130.

¹²All quotations are from the first quarto: *Poetaster or the Arraignment*; Composed, by Ben. Ionsou. for M. L., 1602.

CRISP. 'Tis true, introth: they say, hee's
valiant.

(IV, vii, 12^r)

Horace is also a man of letters, as were his predecessors. Doctor Clement was an amateur of poetry; Asper-Macilente a satirist; Criticus is the author of the masque, a man of "invention." Horace, however, is one among many honored poets, second only to Virgil himself, honored of Moecenas and Caesar. The appurtenances of the earlier scholars are not so observable in Horace, the smell of lamp oil, the leanness, the serge. He is, however, considered by Caesar worthy to analyze the spirit and learning of Virgil. Criticus of *Cynthia's Revels* is rather wistfully in search of friends at court and is frankly seeking for Cynthia's favor. Horace, on the other hand, is the object of the envy of Demetrius largely because of his associations:

Virg. Demaund, what cause they had to
maligne *Horace*.

Demet. In troth, no great cause, not I; I must
confesse: but that he kept better companie (for
the most part) then I: and that better men lou'd
him, then lou'd me: and that his writings thriu'd
better then mine, and were better lik't & grac't:
Nothing else.

(V, iii, M2^r)

In fact Horace, sure of his friends, takes almost equal pride in the nature and number of his enemies:

Enuie me still; so long as *Virgill* loues me.

.....
I would not wish but such as you should spight them.

(V, iii, M2^r, M2^r)

Like his predecessors, too, is Horace in the authority he wields Doctor Clement exercised it by virtue of his position; Asper-Macilente assumed moral, though not civic, authority; that of Horace is delegated by Caesar and Virgil. His authority extends, however, only to the Poetasters. Other judgements, against Captain Tucca, against Asinus Lupus, the earlier banishment of Ovid, are reserved to Caesar himself.

This analysis of the successive characterizations of the Horace-character shows a sort of evolution of two sorts: (1) through the

humors, to a position of lofty balance, above the lesser men who are subject to them; (2) from a position of civic authority, through one of power as satirist and scholar, to one of intellectual authority as critic, prophet, poet.

Analogous to the evolution in personal traits are the shifts in functions of the Horace-character. We have already noted that the disposition of the fates of almost all the characters lay in the hands of Doctor Clement; that Macilente insofar as he invented the machinery of purgation of the humours, carried a similar responsibility. We have noted also that Criticus was not the instigator, nor the principal mover in the action of *Cynthia's Revels*, but was rather the agent through whom Mercury, Cynthia and Arete fended off the attack of Cupid. In *Poetaster* also he is an agent, but only for that portion of the action which involves the Poetasters themselves.

Though Jonson says that he wrote *Poetaster* on Marston, the play is far more than a personal attack on a personal enemy. It is, in fact, almost an apology for poetry, using like Sidney's *Apology*, the idea of right use and abuse. Many levels of analysis appear, from the blatant and self-seeking abuse of Tucca, Ovid Senior and Asinus Lupus to the near divine judgement of Virgil.

At the lowest level of those who, as "poets" abuse poetry, is Crispinus. While Caesar, Virgil, Mecoenas, Tibullus and Gallus all have epithets for Crispinus, the essential comment on this "Hydra of discourse" is reserved for Horace, in the pills which purge Crispinus of the "terrible, windy words." Demetrius, the "dresser of plays," is perhaps a trifle higher in the scale of "poets" than Crispinus, and the essential comment is again that of Horace:

Rather, such speckled creatures, as thy selfe,
Should be aschew'd and shund: such, as will bite
And gnaw their absent Friends, not cure their Fame;
Catch at the loosest Laughters, and affect
To be thought Iesters; such, as can devise
Things neuer seene, or heard, t'impayre mens Names.

(V, iii, MI')

Next in order is the group of courtier-poets, Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid. All these have mistresses, but only Propertius and Ovid find the final purpose of poetry in service to their mistresses. Upon the death of Cynthia, Horace is the disapproving reporter of the news that Propertius has immured himself in the tomb with

her. Ovid is banished by Caesar—"for thy violent wronge,/ In soothing the declin'd Affections/ Of my base daughter." Gallus, Tibullus and Ovid are scathingly rebuked by Caesar for their part in the "Heavenly Banquet," even though both Horace and Mecoenas intercede for them. Horace's comment on the "Heavenly Banquet" places it, however, in the proper perspective:

innocent Mirth,
And harmelesse pleasures, bred, of noble wit.
(IV, vii, I2')

Caesar himself reconsiders, and pardons Gallus and Tibullus, applauded by Mecoenas and Horace.

Though all these court-poets are to some extent proteges of Mecoenas, it is with Horace that Mecoenas, as patron, is most associated. There is in the quarto no considered statement of the nature of Horace's poetry. Yet to Horace himself is given the statement which measures his work:

Enuie me still; so long as *Virgill* loues me,
Gallus, *Tibullus*, and the best-best *Caesar*,
My deare *Mecoenas*; while these, with many more
(Whose names I wisely slip) shall think me worthy
Their honour'd, and ador'd Society,
And read, and loue, prooue, and applaud by *Poemes*;
I would not wish but such as you should spight them.
(V, iii, M2^v-M3')

Seated at Caesar's right hand, "Romes Honour," Virgil, is clearly at the highest level of the poets in *Poetaster*. Before his arrival to occupy the seat of honor, there is a sort of critical seminar among Caesar, Mecoenas, Tibullus, Gallus and Horace. Horace as "the poorest,/ And likeliest to enuie, or to detract," is invited to speak first. Horace, after rebuking Caesar for imputing envy to a "knowing spirit," is given the two principal speeches in commendation of Virgil. The second of these, in response to Caesar's question "what thinks, Materiall *Horace*, of his learning," is cleverly designed, not only as right opinion of Virgil, but indirectly of Horace:

His Learning labours not the Schoole-like *Glosse*,
That most consists in *Ecchoing Wordes*, and *Termes*,
.....
But a direct, and *Analyticke* Summe
Of all the worth and first effectes of *Artes*,

And for his *Poesie*, 'tis so ramm'd with Life,
 That it shall gather strength of Life, with being;
 And liue heereafter, more admir'd, then now.
 (V, i, K2')

The character and function of Horace deny him, in *Poetaster*, participation in most of the lighter scenes. He hits the comic note occasionally in his first encounter with Crispinus:

Crisp. Troth no; but I could wish thou didst know vs, Horace; we are a *Scholer*, I assure thee.

Hor. A *Scholer* Sir? I shall be couetous of your faire knowledge.

(III, i, D2')

He can strike it with Asnius Lupus toward the end of the play:

Lupus. An *Asse*? Good still! That's I, too. I am the *Asse*. You meane me by the *Asse*.

Mecoenas. Pray thee, leaue braying then.

Hor. If you will needs take it, I cannot with Modestie giue it from you.

(V, iii, L1')

But his is not a part of this magnificent fooling associated with the heavenly banquet:

Crisp. O yes, and extold your perfections to the heauens.

Chl. Now in sincerity, they be the finest kind of men, that euer I knew; *Poets*? Could not one get the Emperour to make my husband a *Poet*, thinke you?

Crisp. No Ladie, 'tis Loue, and Beauty make *Poets*: & since you like *Poets* so well, your Loue, and Beauties shall make me a *Poet*.

(II, ii, C4')

Nor does Horace have a part in this exchange:

Chlöe. *Mercury*? that's a *Poet*? is't?

Gall. No, Ladie; but somewhat enclying that way: hee is a Herald at Armes.

Chloe. A Herald at Armes? good: and *Mercury*? pretty: he ha's to doe with *Venus*, too?

Tibull. A little, with her face, Ladie; or so.
(III, iii, G4')

In these four towering figures, Doctor Clement, Asper-Macilente, Criticus and Horace, all conceived to some extent in the image of Ben himself, we have seen a highly profitable apprenticeship for the poet. We have seen him happily seize on the humours as dramatic material in Doctor Clement and others in *Every Man in His Humour*; we have seen him make their purgation in Macilente and his victims almost the entire content of *Every Man out of His Humour*; we have Criticus by definition placed far above any humour in *Cynthia's Revels*, and the humours themselves of the other characters pushed so far as to become almost allegorical qualities. In *Poetaster* we have seen in such people as Captain Tucca, Chloe, and possibly even Horace himself a return to the happier humours climate of *Every Man in His Humour*, but only in conjunction with more weighty material and action.

Through the career of this Horace-character, Jonson has learned a lesson of equal importance with reference to the action. Doctor Clement, as a repository for civil authority, could adjudge all matters for all characters. Macilente, without visible authority, could make himself judge, in matters of manners and morals, for all his victims. Criticus could, through his powers as poet, exercise delegated authority, again in matters of manners and morals. Horace, also with delegated authority, could pronounce judgements only in those realms in which he was qualified as poet and critic. Jonson has learned that neither a Clement nor a Horace can carry the entire action of a comedy.

As the careers of these men show the development of Jonson in the choice of his materials and the organization of his actions, so too they have demonstrated a maturing in what I have called the choric aspects of his art. From gentle, and essentially comic ridicule in *Every Man in His Humour*, Jonson passed to the heavily satiric invective of *Every Man out of His Humour*. In *Cynthia's Revels*, Criticus retained the satire and the invective, but was capable of lighter touches on occasion. In *Poetaster*, there is much more of the truly comic, and its use is much more widely distributed among the characters; invective is much less prominent, and the satire of Horace is directed largely at the unhappy poetasters.

After *Poetaster*, Doctor Clement, Asper, Criticus and Horace are gone, but their functions remain, in the hands of lesser men. Humours will continue to be punished, as that of Morose in *Epicoene*, but by the skillfully concerted action of all characters, rather than by the diligent intent of one. Or they will be purged as was that of Justice Overdoo, by the mere observation of the consequences of his own folly. Critical judgements on the nature and function of poetry will continue, but in passages addressed "To the Readers," as in *Sejanus*, or in the "Prologue," as in *Epicoene*. There will continue to be custodians of right opinion, but they will be lesser men, such as Arruntius and Lepidus of *Sejanus*, or Peni Canter of *The Staple of News*. The custody of the action will not be entrusted to a Macilente, but it will be managed by Jonson himself, in such magnificent interweavings of action and motive as *Epicoene* and *The Alchemist*.

Of these towering figures who wield so much authority in act and idea, Horace is the last. They were certainly unwieldy as a major device for conducting the action; their chief weapon was direct invective or massive satire; their responsibilities were too weighty for them to indulge in much comment of a truly comic sort. Their arrogance created detractors, not without cause, for Ben himself. Perhaps it was these considerations which led Jonson to the momentous, if short-lived, decision announced in the "apologeticall Dialogue" ("only once spoken upon the stage") which is appended in the folio to *Poetaster*:

And, since the *Comick* Muse
Hath prou'd so ominous to me, I will trie
If Tragoedie haue a more kind aspect.
(Herford and Simpson, IV, 324, 222-224)