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THE CARNIVALESQUE IN BEN JONSON'S THREE CITY COMEDIES : *VOLPONE, THE ALCHEMIST* AND *BARTHOLOMEW FAIR*

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Abstract

The Carnivalesque in Ben Jonson's Three City Comedies:

Volpone, The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair

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The idea of carnival is explored in *Rabelais and His World,* in which Bakhtin shows that the carnival was an officially sanctioned period in which all dogmas and doctrines, as well as the forms and ideologies of the dominant culture could temporarily be overturned. This resulted in activities that could be seen as profane and heretical, such as the parodies of religious rituals, or treasonous and socially subversive, such as the parodies of kingship, inversions of master-servant roles, and the like. Moreover, the phenomenon of carnival allowed the merging of categories that are kept separate by the ideologies of a certain culture: the serious and the ridiculous, the sacred and the profane, life and death, rulers and the ruled, and so on. According to Bakhtin, the advantage of carnival was that it reminded of the attributes of the dominant culture, the characteristics of the people at large, the divisions in the culture, of class distinctions, and of value judgments and differences. Bakhtin considers carnival as an actual socio-cultural phenomenon. In Bakhtin's analysis of carnival, symbolic polarities of high and low, official and unofficial, grotesque and classical are deformed and reconstructed.

Ben Jonson's comedies deal with the symbolic extremities of the exalted and the base. In his comedies Jonson plumbs the depths of social classification, taking his characters from the lower strata of the underworld, as well as from the higher

stratum of the body politic: the advocates, masters, doctors, etc. Thus, Jonson comments on the political and the social changes in the first half of the seventeenth century. In his plays the `licensed release' of carnival is experienced, which is a kind of protest against the established order. Yet, the carnival Jonson depicts in his comedies is also intended to preserve and strengthen the established order. It is a form of social control of the low by the high. Although the world seems to be turned upside down and the roles change during the carnival, in fact the rulers who were chosen and crowned reaffirm the status quo. Therefore, the carnival spirit in Ben Jonson's comedies is a vehicle for social protest, but at the same time the method for disciplining that protest.

Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque is highly significant in discussing the socio-cultural and political content of Ben Jonson's comedies. His theory helps one see Jonson's comedies in an especially wide perspective. This dissertation aims to link Bakhtin's discovery of the importance of carnivalesque with Ben Jonson's three best known comedies: *Volpone, The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*.

Özet

Ben Jonson'ın Üç Şehir Komedisindeki

Karnaval Özellikleri

Gül Kurtuluş

İngiliz Edebiyatı Doktora Tezi

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Karnaval düşüncesi Bakhtin'in *Rabelais and His World* adlı kitabında incelenmiş ve karnaval resmi olarak belirlenmiş bir zaman dilimi olarak tanımlanmıştır. Bakhtin eserinde, bu belirli devrede bütün dogmaların ve öğretilerin, baskın kültürün yerleştirdiği tüm kalıp ve ideolojilerin geçici olarak altüst edilebileceğini göstermiştir. Bu tür bir anlayış ya dini törenlerin gülünç hale sokulması gibi dine karşı saygısızlıkla sonuçlanmaktadır, ya da krallık makamıyla dalga geçilmesi, efendi uşak rollerinin tersine dönmesi ve benzeri olaylarla devlete ihanet niteliğinde toplumsal düzenin yıkılıp bozulması gibi faaliyetlerle sonuçlanmaktadır. Bundan başka, karnaval, belirli bir kültürün ideolojileri doğrultusunda ayrı tutulan komik veya komik olmayan, kutsal veya kutsal olmayan, ölüm veya yaşam, yönetenler veya yönetilenler ve buna benzer grupların birbirine karışıp birleşmesine olanak tanır. Bakhtin'e göre, karnavalın avantajı, baskın kültürün niteliklerini, çoğunluktaki insanların özelliklerini, kültür içindeki bölünmeleri, sınıf farklarını, değişik değer yargılarını ve değer yargılarındaki farklılaşmaları akla getirmesi ve hatırda tutmaya yardımcı olmasıdır. Bakhtin, karnavalı gerçek bir sosyo-kültürel olay olarak benimser. Bakhtin'in karnaval incelemesinde yüksektekiyle alçaktaki, resmi olarak kabul görenle görmeyen, garip ve gülünç olanla ideal olan arasındaki simgesel zıtlıklar çarpıtılıp tekrar biçimlendirilebilir.

Ben Jonson'in komedilerinde de toplumda yüksek makamlarda olanlarla aşağıda olanların simgesel sınırları ele alınmıştır. Jonson komedilerinde sosyal sınıflandırmanın boyutlarını incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Karakterler hem lağımcılar ve yeraltı dünyasında yaşayanlar gibi toplumda alt sınıfı oluşturan insanları hem de avukatlar, zengin efendiler, doktorlar gibi üst sınıfa ait kişileri temsil ederler. Böylece, Jonson eserlerinde onyedinci yüzyılın ilk yarısında toplumda gelişen politik ve toplumsal değişimleri yorumlamıştır. Onun oyunlarında karnavalın hoşgörülen rahatlığı temsil edilmiştir, ki bu yerleşik düzene karşı bir çeşit isyandır. Ancak yine de Jonson'ın komedilerinde betimlediği karnaval, yerleşik düzeni korumayı ve hatta güçlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu, alttakilerin üst sınıftakiler tarafından toplumsal olarak kontrol edilme biçimidir. Karnaval süresince dünya tersine dönmüş ve roller değişmiş gibi görünse de aslında seçilen ve başa geçirilenler varolan durumu tekrar sağlamlaştırır. Dolayısıyla Ben Jonson'ın komedilerinde karnaval ruhu sosyal isyan için bir araçtır; fakat aynı zamanda bu isyanı dizginleyen, disiplin altına alan bir yöntemdir.

Bakhtin'in karnaval düşüncesi Ben Jonson'in komedilerindeki sosyo-kültürel ve politik içeriğin incelenmesinde büyük önem taşır. Bakhtin'in kuramı Jonson'ın komedilerine olağandışı bir bakış açısı getirilmesine olanak sağlar. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Bakhtin'in karnavalın önemini ortaya çıkaran buluşuyla Ben Jonson'ın önde gelen üç komedisini bağdaştırmaktır.

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INTRODUCTION

Laughter as a Stratagem: Carnival and Its Sociopathology in Jonson's Age

The cultural categories of high and low, whether in the social or aesthetic domain, are never entirely separable. The human body, psychic forms, geographical space and social order, art and literature, are all fixed/determined/contained within interrelating and dependent binary oppositions, hierarchies of difference: high and low.[1] It is possible to examine these interlinked and mutually dependent hierarchies in terms of literary and cultural history. In this study, such an analysis will be inevitable.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theories encompass and push beyond the opposition between structural and sociolinguistic views of literary language. Moreover, since literary structuralism and deconstruction ultimately belong to the same discussion, Bakhtin's theories simultaneously encompass and push beyond them, too. In other words, Bakhtin's work prefigured both structuralist and deconstructionist views of the language of literature, but crucially placed them both in a sociolinguistic framework which makes them responsive to an historical and thoroughly social comprehension of literature.

deconstructionist views of the language of literature, but crucially placed them both in a sociolinguistic framework which makes them responsive to an historical and thoroughly social comprehension of literature.

Bakhtin's first book, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* reveals the polyphonic characteristics of Dostoevsky's novels. In this study, Bakhtin claims that it is impossible to reduce "the idea" of the novel to the "author's voice" or to any one particular viewpoint. Bakthin's work belongs to the second phase in the development of the Russian Formalist school, the structuralist phase. Mikhail Bakhtin's book about the Renaissance background to one of France's most celebrated authors, *Rabelais and His World*, is considered a masterpiece, both by experts in the subject and by those who are interested in literary theory and methodology.

Rabelais and His World is a new stage in Bakhtin's creative development. The book is concerned with semiotic operation. The author investigates and compares different sign systems such as verbal, pictorial and gestural. The seventeenth century French writer Rabelais' important fictional narrative, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* is presented in the richest context of medieval and Renaissance

cultures, in this work. Bakhtin treats them as systems of multiform signs. The critic's aim in such a study is to find a common denominator of these signs, in other words to discover their general code. The dominant characteristic for all systems mentioned above is the liberation afforded by "laughter." Its manifestation is the various forms of folk rites and festivities, which is called "carnival" by Bakhtin. "In this way Rabelais' art proves to be oriented toward the folk culture of the marketplace of the Middle Ages and Renaissance."[2] According to Bakhtin, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* is an "encyclopedia of folk culture"[3] and it is as such that Bakhtin analyses it, finding in Rabelais an exposition of his own main concern: popular culture, its images and its world view as opposed to the official culture.

The status of popular festive forms within literature is of central importance in discussing the *carnivalesque* features of Ben Jonson's city comedies. The ludic, liberating spirit of carnival is one which can be viewed throughout literary history, from Aristophanes to contemporary writers. Whenever there is social satire or a protest against the political and economic malaises of a period, one can talk about the existence of the carnivalesque; at least the usage of one or

two features of it in a work of art. Ben Jonson's three satirical comedies, products of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period, demonstrate all the characteristics of carnival with great clarity. The reason for finding the best examples of Bakhtin's theory of carnivalesque more eminently in the Renaissance Age than in other ages is that a new stage is opened after the decline of scholasticism, and the reflections of this progress on people appear in the writings of the writers of the period. The more humanistic ideas of decorum, birth of a new man (as reflected in *Hamlet*), the revolutionary view of man as a paragon, God's most precious creature -- a celebration of human status and stature which was not even thought of in Medieval times -- and flourishing of Humanism itself are received with enthusiasm and ambivalence. This new spirit finds life not only in the English Renaissance, but all over Europe. The undeniable effect of the development of popular culture on literature, and thus on the social life of nations is as evident as it is today. This impact is best demonstrated by the irruption of the carnivalesque into "high art" (with all the caveats that must accompany the usage of such a term when referring to an age which made less of a distinction between "high art" and literary "entertainment" than is found today). For

Bakhtin, in order for popular carnival to become politically effective it must enter the institution of literature. In *Rabelais and His World* he argues that it is only in literature that popular festive forms can achieve the "self-awareness" necessary for effective protest. Jonson makes use of the popular festive forms in his plays and (with hindsight) can be seen to exemplify and justify Bakhtin's idea of literature being the appropriate medium for the popular forms. In the popular festive forms what seems to be highly significant is the juxtaposition of "official" and "non-official" modes of communication.

The "carnivalesque" works, according to Bakhtin's definition, by utilizing marginal motifs, themes and generic forms drawn from a clandestine tradition of subversive medieval popular culture, an "occult" tradition linked to a more overt, and very specific, festive practice and to the significance of the body in medieval and Renaissance culture. Carnival is both an accumulation and a codification of past usages, an accretion of current and past social conflicts, given new meaning, a bricolage of the changing paradigms of ideological life. Carnival as a term denotes an amalgam of rituals, games, symbols and various carnal excesses which together constitute

an alternative 'social space' for freedom, abundance and equality. However, other than being a mere amalgamation of festive events, carnival is a "syncretic pageantry of a ritualistic sort" [4] which expresses a general world outlook:

> Carnival is an eminent attitude toward the world which belonged to the entire folk ... in bygone millennia. It is an attitude toward the world which liberates from fear, brings the world close down to man and man close down to his fellow man (all is drawn into the zone of liberated familiar contact), and with its joy of change and its jolly relativity, counteracts the gloomy, one-sided official seriousness which is born of fear, is dogmatic and inimical to evolution and change, and seeks to absolutize the given conditions of existence and the social order. The carnival attitude liberated man from precisely this sort of seriousness. [5]

Thus, carnival brings together "high culture" and "low culture." It breaks the boundaries between classes, as well as the oppositions within a unique group. People are deprived of their manacles and carnival provides time and space to them for liberation and makes

laughter the common denominator of all the opposing forces. It is often difficult to arrive at an all-inclusive definition of carnival, as it constitutes a complicated interconnection of an organic whole. Eccentricity, which can be explained as an almost "existential" refusal to accept the constraints of fixed social roles, is an important feature of carnival. Roles change and a topsy-turvy state of the world is experienced during the carnival period. This situation leads to the free and spontaneous combination of formerly self-enclosed and fixed categories:

> [Carnival] strives to encompass and unite within itself both poles of evolution or both members of an antithesis: birth-death, youth-age, top-bottom, face-backside, praise-abuse, affirmation-negation, the tragical - the comical, etc... It could be expressed thus: opposites meet, look at one another, are reflected in one another, know and understand one another.[6]

The idea of the opposition between the "official culture," meaning the culture of the establishment, those in power, which is serious, dogmatic and fixed, and the "popular culture" which is

defined by its openness, instability, changeability and egalitarian nature can be traced in Jonson's satirical comedies. Official culture itself can, of course, be debased, *either* through ossification or by suffocation in the dense web of ignoble, brutish pettiness and corruption which spawns tyranny through the venality and servility of human ambition. Bakhtin elaborates on the notion of carnival, a period during which the dogmas and doctrines, as well as the forms and ideologies of the dominant culture are temporarily overturned. If the popular culture is taken as the main concern and its images and its world view are examined in opposition to the official culture it will be seen that the folk culture offers another mode of perceiving and communicating human experience than does the official culture. By using its images and its language, by examining and reflecting on the language of the marketplace, one can step outside the patterns of thought and codes of behaviour that official culture imposes upon its members.

Of carnival Bakhtin says "its wide popular character, its radicalism and freedom, soberness and materiality were transferred from an almost elemental condition to a state of artistic awareness and purposefulness. In other words, medieval laughter became at the

Renaissance stage of its development the expression of a new, free and historical consciousness."[7] In order to express such a consciousness, an acknowledgment of history *as history*, linear, sequential, teleological, and receptive to analysis, is required. One way of ensuing such an acknowledgment is through the dissemination of, and reorganizing of culture around, *texts*. The Renaissance marked the final emergence of medieval Europe from its temporary regression to a semi-oral culture; after Gutenberg, there was to be no return to a textless, non-literary, ahistorical society.[8] Another important trait of carnivalesque genres is the concept of time, which is characterized by a heightened consciousness of the relativity of history. Bakhtin thinks that:

> Rabelais builds an extraordinarily impressive image of historical becoming within the category of laughter... History acts fundamentally and goes through many phases when it carries obsolete forms of life into the grave. The last phase of the universal historic form is its comedy... This is necessary in order that mankind could say a gay farewell to its past.[9]

By entering the language of folk culture, and making the heritage of history less monolithic, one can escape from official dogmatism. However, Bakhtin explains any engagement with folk culture (turning to the language and images of folk culture) *not* as a simple positioning of oneself outside official culture in order to observe and understand it better, but as something more dynamic, and ultimately more combative. Once escaped from the control of the official culture, one can strive towards the undoing of the official culture's influence on people and the undermining and shattering of that very culture itself. All three of Jonson's plays analysed here present an extraordinary variety of corrupt energies controlled within an intricate ethical and aesthetic structure and are almost prurient in their scathing denunciation of the status quo. This in itself does not make the plays themselves shocking or disturbing, at least artistically -- despite the didacticism and social satire which mark Jonson's comedies as truly modern, they still observe classical rules: those of the (comparatively) recently rediscovered Aristotle.[10] However, Jonson was well aware of literature's power both to preserve (and thereby safeguard the most precious elements of his culture) and to attack the fraudulent or inimical developments in society -- Sejanus'

men who act against the intellectual sarcasm of Cordus, and "Give order, that his books be burnt" (Act III, line 471) before judgment is even passed, are particularly reprehensible, in their "brainless diligence."[11](Act III, line 472) A *text* can disrupt such an animalistic, slavish devotion to absurd and evil duty -- and for this is "knowledge made a capital offence."[12](Act IV, line 137) These are not the lines of a man entirely secure in his position; Jonson is no smug court poetaster, but a man aware that the exposition of truth (however ludic in its presentation) can bring as many dangers as rewards. Official approval and opprobrium can be entirely arbitrary – ironically, this knife-edge of critical approval is *also* carnivalesque (with its arbitrary and mutable rules), yet a competitive and carnivorous form of carnival which the carnivalesque mode seeks to defuse. Saturnalia alone can prevent Saturn from devouring his more artistic children.

Richard Dutton poses a question which highlights the nature and function of dramatic censorship in Elizabethan and early Stuart England. He asks "the niggling question" to which he finds no satisfactory answer: "How was it that Jonson, of all English Renaissance dramatists the one who most often fell foul of

authorities, came within a heart-beat of becoming Master of the Revels, a post that would have acquired him to regulate and censor the works of his fellow dramatists?"[13] After writing *The Isle of Dogs* in collaboration with Thomas Nashe, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, which were followed by *Poetaster, Sejanus, Eastward Ho!, Epicoene and The Devil is an Ass* he was the target of an official displeasure. Only after *The Gypsies Metamorphos'd*, a masque which delighted the King very much, he was granted the Mastership of the Revels. "The implication is that Jonson became more conformist, more a creature of the court, as he stopped writing (1616) for the public theaters about which he was so ambivalent."[14] Jonson's situation exemplifies the sources of authority and the function of censorship particularly in the Jacobean and Caroline periods.

Opposition to the mores and ethical constraints of the official culture has always been fraught with danger: the dissident, the one who *refuses,* runs the risk of being marginalised, or even demonised -- official culture has it within its power to suppress such "deviance" and subsume it under the pejorative heading of madness, as Michel Foucault has pointed out.[15] The Elizabethan and Jacobean writers put no emphasis on subjective psychology. What mattered for them

was merely the social framework. There were no conceptual tools and vocabulary to express the psychological aspects of the human being familiar since Freud, and, more importantly, no desire among the writers to initiate such investigation for its own sake. During this period the science of medicine was broadening sufficiently to allow a limited acknowledgment of the role of psychology in ensuring well-being, but this acknowledgment was found only among a certain well-educated class.[16] Furthermore, it was by no means a systematic diagnostic tool, merely one means among many of restoring individuals to health (and to their proper position in society!) 'Psychology', of course, was not even called by that name, and the study was neither scientific nor systematic, but frequently semi-spiritual in nature. An overwhelming interest in psychology is one of the characteristics of the modern world, not the Renaissance. "James I was learned in theology, not psychology."[17] Divine philosophy was the favourite subject of Jonson's day. "One can assert the pre-eminence of psychology in modern times in the face of the fact that throughout his career Ben Jonson harped on a theory of humours."[18] Jonson was interested in humours as expressions of moral and social

types; he made observations about man's moral, but not psychological nature.

Jonson's characters stand for the degeneration (or deformity) of the times, which the playwright declares he will "anatomise in every nerve and sinew":

> But deeds, and language, such as men do use:
> And persons, such as Comedy would choose,
> When she would show an Image of the times,
> And sport with human follies, not with crimes.
> Except, we make 'hem such by loving still
> Our popular errors, when we know they're ill.[19]
>
> (Prologue, 21-26)

The medical metaphor is entirely appropriate, given the state of Renaissance science and biology: The problematic characters are represented by Jonson in terms of having an excessive humour. The pre-Socratic physician Hippocrates reasoned that health could only be maintained or, in case of illness, restored, by the balance of four humours, which correspond to the elements of water, earth, fire and air and their individual qualities moist, dry, hot and cold. This theory was extended in terms of psychology to explain character

types: phlegmatic (lazy), choleric (emotional), sanguine (sensual), and melancholic (brooding). Those who have suppressed a portion of their personality traits in favour of the overdevelopment of some other aspect fall into the category of the pathological. C.S. Lewis in his study of the medieval world view (which he acknowledges as lasting, in certain respects, beyond the Renaissance) *The Discarded Image* mentions the four contraries which the human body, i.e., "microcosm" contains. The portion in which the humours are blended differs from one man to another, and constitutes his "complexio" or "temperamentum", his combination or mixture.[20] Lewis refers to the usage of the term "temper" in modern English, and explains that "to lose one's temper" and "to show one's temper" are synonymous expressions. If you have a good "temperamentum" you may momentarily lose it when you are angry. a man who is often angry has a bad "temperamentum" or is "ill- tempered."[21] Among those humours, Melancholy was given especial recognition and many books were written on it: "because of their sedentary life, it was the favorite disease of scholars, and so got a lot of attention. And the age was interested in taking man apart, in finding out what makes him tick."[22] The melancholy man, withdrawn from the world,

presented an obvious case for analysis, a suitable case for treatment. Melancholy was more prevalent (or more apparent) in the early seventeenth century than at any other time, and so it received considerable attention. Among the four contraries, melancholy meant neurotic in the Middle Ages, but the sense of the word had changed by the sixteenth century and begun to mean sad, reflective, thoughtful and introverted, as it is in Robert Burton's analysis, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

"A lively interest in the workings of the mind and the combination of humours in the individual was fashionable amongst the intellectuals of the day. In the early years of the malcontent made his appearance on the stage; the theme proved popular and was exploited by Chapman, Marston, Shakespeare, Webster and Tourneur."[23] Robert Burton "anatomise(s) this humour of melancholy, through all its parts and species, as it is an habit, or an ordinary disease, and that philosophically, medicinally, to shew the causes, symptoms and several cures of it, that it may be the better avoided; moved thereunto for the generality of it, and to do good, it being a disease so frequent ... as few there are that feel not the smart of it,"[24] in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. He *dubbed himself*

"Democritus Junior," the successor to the original "laughing philosopher": someone who proffered a cure for melancholy, not merely its anatomist, or diagnostician, but its opponent. Melancholy gave the tone to a number of tragedies produced in the early years of the seventeenth century and provided a background for comedy. It had its picturesque features, it was easy to recognize, and at the same time it was important enough (that is, seen as harmful enough) to justify serious study. The source of the modern word "humour" meaning "comic" can be traced back to the literary treatment of Jonsonian characters who are so dominated by one humour, to the exclusion of others that they evoke laughter. The portrayal of an inflexible choleric or phlegmatic type under certain conditions causes comic situations.

So much for melancholy. What of laughter itself? Is it only a *response* to comedy, or the attitude of mind necessary for the production and appreciation of humour? Is laughter innocent, or knowing? If melancholy, or choler, or phlegmatism can all be termed harmful excesses of "humours", can humour (in the modern sense) too be excessive, leading to madness? To answer these questions, a brief comparison of Bakhtin with another great European historian of

ideas, Michel Foucault, may be useful. The two men share certain concerns, a fact which facilitates an analytical comparison of some of their ideas: "Both deal with language and discourse in relation to ideological and literary phenomena; and both investigate various forms of aberration with regard to individual and collective consciousness."[25] Bakhtin explores the role of laughter and carnival in *Rabelais and His World.* In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault discusses not only the social history of madness but also its relation to discourse and creativity. Thus, one critic's focal point is laughter, while the other's is madness, both being related to human discourse and verbal art.

When Jonson's comedies are considered it will be seen they too illustrate both Bakhtin and Foucault's contentions, with that laughter which is the peal of silence and the language of madness, and the madness which is the comic punishment of ignorant presumption. As Patterson asserts, "literature is the laughing word that seeks a resolution of madness."[26] Jonson's plays are a fine example of such literature -- they provide the portal through which we glimpse the revelation of (the Jacobean) madness.

The sort of laughter Bakhtin defines in his book is not the kind that comes when people feel free to laugh. On the contrary, it is required, in order to set people free. Bakhtin calls it "carnival laughter" and explains:

> It is first of all, a festive laughter. Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated "comic" event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed to all and everyone, including the carnival's participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. Such is the laughter of carnival.[27]

While elaborating on the second trait of the people's festive laughter, Bakhtin emphasizes the fact that this festive laughter is also directed at those who laugh. People cannot exclude themselves from the wholeness of the world, according to Bakhtin: they are incomplete, they also die, and are revived and renewed. "This is one of the essential differences of the people's festive laughter from the pure satire of modern times."[28] He defines the satirist as someone whose

laughter is negative and therefore, someone who places himself above the object of his mockery: he is opposed to what he criticizes. In the case of the satirist, the wholeness of the world's comic aspect is destroyed, and thus what appears comic becomes a private reaction, as is the case with Jonson, often commemorated primarily as a vituperative satirist. Yet, he never puts himself above his subject; on the contrary he seems to admit that he himself is one of the members of the community who exist in a system which is the direct forerunner of Industrial Capitalism. Jonson utilizes the characteristic of laughter which lifts the barriers and opens the way to freedom. The barrier he overcomes by laughter is the divided state, the corruption and psychological restriction resulting from the economic and socio-cultural situation of Jacobean England. While describing the Renaissance attitude toward laughter, Bakhtin writes,

> The Renaissance conception of laughter can be roughly described as follows: Laughter has a deep philosophical meaning, it is one of the essential forms of the truth concerning the world as a whole, concerning history and man; it is a peculiar point of view relative to the world; the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more)

> profoundly than when seen from the serious standpoint. Therefore, laughter is just as admissible in great literature, posing universal problems, as seriousness. Certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter.[29]

This, indeed, is one of the fundamental aspects of the world accessible only to laughter: the inside, the underside, or the other side. If "contradiction," as Foucault argues, "functions throughout discourse, as the principle of its own historicity"[30] laughter is central to the implosions of contradiction. It pursues truth in the form of disparity, in time out of joint; it seeks knowledge not through assimilation but through interaction. Arruntius in *Sejanus* says "Laugh, fathers, laugh: have you no spleens about you?" (Act III, line 112) That this rebuke comes during the melancholy denouement of a play devoted to showing the rancour and spite of triumphalist tyranny (no matter who triumphs!) is ample indication of Jonson's peculiar mixture of pessimism and galvanising spirit. The laughter may be mordant, even morbid, but it offers hope of dialogue. Above all, it is dynamic, confrontational -- and a means, be it through satire, to synthesis. The same kind of protest against

the established order is experienced during the profane and heretical activities of the carnival. The parodies of kingship, inversions of master-servant roles, the merging of the serious and the ridiculous, the sacred and the profane, life and death, the rulers and the ruled and the like form the main features of carnival. Yet, paradoxically, it is also intended to reanimate, preserve, and strengthen the orderly life of society, reestablishing harmony.

Carnival is explained by Bakhtin both as a populist utopian vision of the world seen from below and as a festive critique, through the inversion of the "high" culture:

> As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrates temporary liberation from the prevailing truth of the established order; it marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions.[31]

In Jonson's city comedies the 'licensed release' of carnival is experienced. During the officially sanctioned period, a topsy- turvy inversion/subversion of the established order is observed. Jonson's characters are drawn perfectly to illustrate the potential of such an inversion, since they form a wide range of diversity from the lower

stratum to the higher. The characters participate in the carnival, which allows the merging of the categories that are kept separate by the norms of a certain culture. People are shaped and distinguished, and act according to a group of principles. Bakhtin makes a classification as "high culture" and "low culture." One of the distinguishing factors is people's attitude towards laughter. The crucial point determines people's outlook, their way of living, even their language. Carnivalesque images unite various contradictory events and images into a more complex unity, which underlies the inevitability of change and transformation. Perhaps the most useful characteristic of carnival for this dissertation is the "profanation," i.e., "the blasphemic degrading of the official world-view through the parodization of sacred texts and rituals, the inversion of received social categories, and so on."[32] Carnival transgresses the usual norms and rules that govern and direct social life in a society. It represents life upside down or the topsy-turvy world. This underscores the crucial importance of carnival laughter which is highly ambivalent and is directed towards the profanation of higher authority:

> Laughter is specific ethical attitude toward reality, but is untranslatable in logical language; it is a specific means of constructing an artistic image, plot or genre. The ambivalent laughter of carnival possessed enormous creative, genre-forming power. This laughter could seize and capture a phenomenon in the process of change and transition and could fix both poles of evolution within a phenomenon in their continuous, creative, renewing changeability... : death is foreseen in birth and birth in death, defeat in victory and victory in defeat, discrowning in coronation, etc. Carnival laughter does not allow any one of these elements of change to be absolutized or grow stiff and cold in one-sided seriousness.[33]

Jonson's comic satires demonstrate his great success in portraying a wide variety of character types, in a carnivalesque milieu. This is not to say, however, that they are ahistorical. Perhaps Jonson is less universal than Shakespeare, but that is part of his *particular* appeal. The *carnival* in his plays may be eternal, but not ever-present: it *irrupts* discretely (and discreetly!) in a very specific

time and place. The social and economic changes that affected England, during the successive reigns of Elizabeth and James dominated the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and had a disturbing effect on the social life of both the poor and the rich. The rise in prices, together with a high inflation rate and unequal distribution of money, led to illegal practices. Bribery was rampant at court; Jonson, obsessed by the political power of money, sees such corruption as universal and eternal -- and so inserts it in *Sejanus*, where men eagerly pay "fify sestercia" (Act I, line 183) for a "tribune's place," (Act I, line 182) thus dragging themselves into the orbit (and sphere of influence) of the "wolf-turned men" (Act III, line 251) with sufficient money to suborn the previously "good-dull-noble lookers on." (Act III, line 16) Money lending became a frequent practice which meant flourishing business for usurers but, in turn, ruined the lives of a lot of people. Unemployment rose. Thus, during Jonson's time the underworld was an important sector of society, giving rise to further social and moral disease. Vagabonds, highwaymen, thieves, beggars, prostitutes, pickpockets and "conycatchers"[34] constituted a class of their own in English society. The changing social, economic and political conditions of

people living in Jacobean England are reflected in Jonson's comedies. As a result of the emergence of the sense of spiritual emptiness or fear, a tendency grew among Jacobean playwrights to hold more closely to the evidence of the senses and of practical experience. Jonson, like other Jacobean playwrights, tends to limit his themes to the social, rather than philosophical: he examines the non-spiritual world of man, and man's relation with others. His comedies, however, serve to reveal the double life of the age, the outer life of event and action, and the inner of reflection and thought. Jonson's satirical city comedies, *Volpone, The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*, which capture the primary concern among his other satirical comedies, demonstrate the playwright's aim of writing comic satires with a wide variety of character types, in the carnivalesque manner.

More generally, the mood of the drama from the early Jacobean period appears to pass through three stages, each reflecting the reaction, preoccupation or attitude to the problems of contemporary man. The first phase, referred to as the Elizabethan Age Proper is characterized by both its own humanist elation, and a faith in such vitality, its worship of the glorious processes of life and the

possibility of an enrichment of mind. This optimism and generosity are best exemplified in Shakespeare's comedies and romances. Shakespeare's redemptive comedy does not return, at the end, to the old established modes of behaviour or to that stability of society and individuals which was disrupted during the play's passage. Rather, the possibilities of bringing forth a new and greater good are explored. His characters learn from their experiences, and can both speculate on new courses of action and new ways of life, and put them into action. All the tricks, confusions and misadventures which have befallen the protagonists change them irrevocably. They come to a fuller understanding of themselves and the world, and the audience shares in this progressive, adventurous sympathetic discovery. They adapt and learn, and the audience applauds the changes in their universe.

Yet another movement sets in with the sense of proto-deist cynicism which later becomes an important characteristic of the Jacobeans. The technique by which the Jacobeans developed their theater is as peculiar to them as is their choice of theme and their mood, and in many cases with a high degree of originality. Whereas humanism and love of life survived in Elizabethan writing, Jacobean

writers noted the futility of man's achievement. The plays that follow this trend end with the defeat of aspiration itself. After the turn of the century the mood of spiritual despair was reinforced by the disillusionment that spread through political and social life with the death of Elizabeth, the accession of James, the influence of his court and the instability of the first years of his reign. Jacobean drama, on the threshold of its growth, inherited -- for both public and private men -- a sense of impending fate. Jonson's comedies form a group reflecting this mood in an anarchic, yet not amoral, form - that is to say, the carnivalesque.

Jonson's comedies have overt and specific social reference: The connection with the economic basis of society can be traced, and would have been quite apparent to his seventeenth century audience. However, his main concern is to make the audience think about social morality. Jonson attacks usurers, monopolists and patentees, but as one would expect he shows no interest in the workings of legitimate credit transactions in a capitalist economy. Jonson's art is related to the popular tradition of individual and social morality. While dealing with these issues Jonson presents degraded but defiant types: drunkards, cutpurses, hypocrites, misers, mountebanks --

those whose *modi vivendi* are not sanctioned by society, but who thrive despite the official culture's disapproval. Examples can be found abundantly in *Volpone, The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*. Jonson satirizes the foibles of his characters, while accusing his audience of the same sins. Nobody is truly innocent in Jonsonian satire. Jonson's didacticism is directed at everyone -- characters and audience alike. That being the case, can carnival repair the breach which he discerns? Can it heal the divisions in society caused by unequal distribution of wealth? Can it, by accusation and exhortation, cure its participants and spectators of gross material longing? Does it really achieve the Bakhtinian criterion of reestablishing harmony? The answers to these questions are intended to be found in this study. There is an immediate reference to intellectual and political movements, and the significant figures of contemporary life in these plays. The satire on usurers, the profiteers and the newly rich, on social ambition and the greed for money can be illustrated abundantly. However, Jonson is no polemicist or partisan: the social situation and interests that are pointed out are not taken from one class only.

This dissertation will address the way in which Jonson tends to plumb the depths of social classification, and how he criticizes the economic and political situation of the Jacobean period through a variety of themes. Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque will be a highly significant piece of conceptual apparatus in discussing the socio-cultural and political content of Ben Jonson's comedies. This study will be devoted to an interpretation of Ben Jonson's satirical comedies in the light of the notion of the carnivalesque, advanced by Bakhtin.

CHAPTER I

Civic Disorder and Incivility: the Breakdown of the Humanist Worldview in Jonson's Three City Comedies

A great deal of Jonson's reputation rests on his contribution to the genre of "city comedies," which emerged in the early seventeenth century. His polarized attitudes toward the city, his mixture of celebration and accusation, can be examined in his best-known plays *Volpone, The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair.* Harry Levin has noted in *Playboys and Killjoys* that the concept of city comedy as a genre "has been most pertinently invoked within the context of Elizabethan drama, where the redolence of local color needs to be sharply distinguished from the atmosphere of what Ben Jonson termed 'some fustian country'"[1]. The regular audiences, the aficionados of such a genre, would be composed of city-dwellers, who expected it to mirror the circumstances of their lives. This expectation reaffirms the notion of *mimesis* and determines what is to be reflected in city comedies is custom, typical behaviour and quotidian existence. Jonson's satirical

comedies provide a looking-glass for London and England, as his spokesman Asper announces his aim in the Induction to *Every Man Out of His Humour:*

> Well, I will scourge those apes;
> And to these courteous eyes oppose a mirror,
> As large as is the stage whereon we act:
> Where they shall see the time's deformity
> Anatomiz'd in every nerve and sinew,
> With constant courage and contempt of fear.[2]
>
> (Lines 117-122)

Jonson tries to give a panoramic view of society, but remains resolutely critical and determined to use such a mirror to put on public display. *Volpone*, written earlier than both *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*, takes Venice as the scene. The two other plays have London as their settings. However, in all these plays, Jonson satirizes urban venality; he deals directly with nascent capitalism and an ethical system perverted by greed. "In its most basic terms, city comedy means drama set in a city or city place -- shop, store, tavern -- dedicated to the matters of finance and/or commodity exchange; either legal or illegal."[3] In his depiction of Jacobean London, Jonson includes the temporal,

spatial and cultural aspects of the abstract city, and fulminates against all of them. Jonson's wry joke about the "extreme" badness of London is best expressed in the Prologue of *The Alchemist:*

> Our scene is London, 'cause we would have known,
>
> No country's mirth is better than our own.
>
> No clime breeds better matter, for your whore,
>
> Bawd, squire, impostor, many persons more,
>
> Whose manners, now call'd humours, feed the stage.[4]
>
> (lines 5-9)

London becomes an ideal place to write about for Jonson as a satirist. Jonson's ironic, sardonic boast about London conveys a contemporary opinion of London's situation. By taking Doll (a whore), Subtle (a pseudo-scientist), and Face (an unfaithful servant) as the three main characters, Jonson can indict peoples' mercantilism and changing moral attitudes in general. The city of London is filled with such types, and indeed depends on them. There is no honour among these thieves, only constant bickering attempts to undercut any pretentions towards a higher moral ground. If there is no hypocrisy here, there is no generosity either. Doll's only means of reasoning with Face and Subtle is the carping diatribe of a fishwife, factually correct, but resonating

with resentment towards anyone who proclaims himself better than his (and her) swinish fellows:

Doll: [To Face] You will accuse him? You will bring him in
Within the statute? Who shall take your word?
A whoreson, upstart, apocryphal captain,
Whom not a puritan in Blackfriars will trust
So much, as for a feather! [To Subtle] And you, too,
Will give the cause, forsooth? You will insult,
And claim a primacy in the divisions?
You must be chief? As if you, only, had
The powder to project with, and the work
Were not begun out of equality?

(I, i, 125-134)

"The abundance and prosperity attributed in the entertainments to exemplary government has in London bred better matter for whores and rogues."[5] Instead of a society being proud of its well-being, the society depicted here ironically contemplates its viciousness, aware of its moral shortcomings, yet content to castigate or bemoan them (and even then with a certain degree of self-congratulation) rather than remedy them:

Face: 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,

Your crosslets, crucibles, and cucurbites?

You must have stuff, brought home to you, to work on!

And yet, you think, I am at no expense,

In searching out these veins, and following 'em,

Then trying 'em out. 'For God, my intelligence,

Costs me more money, than my share of comes to,

In these rare works.

(I, iii, 100-109)

Jonson also insists on the social realism of *The Alchemist* by setting the play "here, in the Friars" (I, i, 17). Jonson refers to Blackfriars, the area of London between Ludgate Hill and the Thames, so called because of a Dominican monastery established there in 1221. However, it should be noted that the action both in *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* takes place inside. The unity of place is followed till the court scenes, In Act V, scenes ix and x, in *Volpone*. Most of the time Volpone's house provides the setting for the characters to appear and disappear, the same kind of pattern can also be observed in *The Alchemist,* where the action takes place in Lovewit's manor.

Such insistence on treating only what the familiar activities or incidents of the city provide, functions both symbolically as mimesis, *and* an abnegation of authorial control or responsibility. It is a kind of assertion that the city, rather than the playwright, is ultimately responsible for its praise or blame. Jonson's "comedies offer a polar image of urban society in the sway of natural law as predatory appetite."[6] Since the portrait of urban life is so negative, in the city comedies Jonson finds it essential to be very precise with the time and place of the action. He had moved on from histories like *Sejanus*. It is not by chance that the characters are Venetian people, in *Volpone*. Venice was famous as the most affluent, acquisitive, glittering and corrupt city of Renaissance Europe. The play emphasizes the preoccupation with affluence and acquisitiveness and Venice best exposes such feelings as a setting.

Jonson's comedies present a sardonic image of urban society that accepts the predatory appetite as the natural law. In such a city, the idea of community means that each character defines place only in terms of his self-interest. The members of this community have ties not to each other, but only a direct tie of interest and survival to the city itself.

> Civic order in such a city is fixed; however, instead of the benevolent circle of reciprocities the satiric city regulates the lives of its citizens through a ruthless and competitive predatory cycle that gives every rogue his gull, dooms every guller to be gulled himself, values intellectual cunning over moral integrity, and rewards noone.[7]

The exposure and exposition of patterns of predatory behaviour turns Jonson's comedies into a summary judgment of urban society. It must be noted here that this "universal city" bears hardly any relation to any *theoretical* conception of what a city should be. Lewis Mumford's entertaining essay "Utopia, The City and The Machine" traces the development of both *real* urban communities from the civilisation of Mesopotamia to the present day, and their theoretical models, from Plato, through St. Augustine, to Sir Thomas More and Francis Bacon (as near contemporaries of Jonson) and beyond. He finds an almost Hobbesian imperative behind the creation of the city, veiled in religious terms through the divine right of Kings, the founders of ordered, literate, but theocratic and tyrannical, communities:

> This cosmic orientation, these mythic-religious claims, this royal preemption of the powers and functions of the community are what transformed the mere village ot town into a city: something "out of this world," the home of a god. Much of the contents of the city – houses, shrines, storage bins, ditches, irrigation works – was already in existence in smaller communities: but though these utilities were necessary antecedents of the city, the city itself was transmogrified into an ideal form – a glimpse of eternal order, a visible heaven on earth, a seat of the life abundant – in other words, utopia.[8]

The price to be paid for citizenship of such a community is obviously heavy – and obviously one not even *acknowledged*, let alone paid, by Jonson's rogues. His cities lack the "myth of kingship", however absolute a monarch his actual patron, James I, tried to be. Furthermore, Jonson's comedies, in their carnivalesque mode, overturn another myth that Mumford posits as a precondition for urban life: that of the community (or commonwealth) as *machine*.[9] Where Mumford sees only voluntary submission in the notion of citizenship, Jonson shows anarchic individualism. If his cities are machines, then they are either

running down or about to explode. Mumford has an explanation for the rise of the community Jonson pictures:

> During the last millennium, the growth of voluntary forms of association, in synagogue, church, guild, university, and the self-governing city, undermined the unconditional, over-riding exercise of "sovereignty" necessary to assemble the Invisible machine. Until the sixteenth century, then, when Church and State reunited, in England, France, and Spain, and later in Prussia, as an all-embracing sources of sovereign power, the chief conditions for extending the Invisible Machine were lacking. Even the political ideal of total control, as expressed by absolute monarchs like Henry VIII, Philip II, and Louis XIV, and various Italian Dukes, was for some centuries contested by vigorous democratic counter-movements. In its ancient and no longer viable form, kingship by divine right was defeated: but the idea of absolute power and absolute control re-entered the scene as soon as the other components of the Invisible Machine had been translated into more practical modern equivalents and

> re-assembled. This last stage was not reached until our own generation.[10]

In fact, he sees the "modern" city as one in which technology has supplanted both the myth of Kingship and the myth of the Machine – a technolgy which only existed in Francis Bacon's imagination during Jonson's age. Jonson's city comedies then, portray a world closer to village communities than to any idealised commonwealth, despite the veneer of sophistication that his locales possess. This is surely carnivalesque: less teleological than eternal, Jonson's communities have a direct link to the bacchanalia in less formalised communities of rural antiquity – for all that there is *nothing* pastoral about them!

It is hardly surprising, then, that in the absence of Platonic, Aristotelian, Augustinian, Morean or Baconian stipulations on what a city should be, that a *fair* may function as a Jonsonian city in miniature. Its temporary nature, and lack of centralised authority, are less important than its human life – it is a machine of sorts, but one devoted to hilarity, not purposive teleology. It is also mercantile, and competitive. It embraces all the strata of society. It *suppresses* many of the more sober conceptions of human existence, the better to faciliate

expression of basic human urges. As such, it is even *more* carnivalesque than any city could be.

Jonson makes the impersonal operations of the predatory cycle believable by creating an urban atmosphere in which aggressive individualism has become an accepted behavioral norm. In Jonson's city comedies, the urban community has a common world-view. The degenerate community accepts ruthless self- interest as governing human behavior. In *Bartholomew Fair,* for instance, each man is like his neighbor in being his neighbor's enemy.

The plays' satires on greed and social disintegration can be seen as a response to the economic and political conditions of Jacobean England. Jonson's concern is mainly on the social environment of the characters, as well as the manners, customs and moral values that govern the community. By financial necessity, as well as by dramatic definition, "every charlatan must have a gull."[11] In Jonsonian city comedy we find a mutated corollary to the "ignorant country bumpkin:"[12] A character may have spent all his life in the city, and still be susceptible to the charlatan's incredible tales. Both in *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* the scoundrels engage the interest of the audience more than the victims. In *The Alchemist*, Face and Subtle convince a

host of credulous city dwellers of the possibility -- rather, the certainty -- of the philosopher's stone, the Queen of Fairies, and many other fantastic, supernatural exoticisms. As each new situation is introduced, its respective protagonist, the new visitor, appears more corrupt than those previously witnessed, and introduces a more profound moral problem. Various gulls are met in an ascending order of moral depravity. Dapper, the first applicant for Face's illicit assistance, wants only to win at gambling, and even then with the condition that no worthy man is hurt. Drugger, the second client, wants to attract customers by trickery. Sir Epicure Mammon, the third visitor, aspires to unlimited power to corrupt the world and all its people. Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome, Puritans, bring in the property of the orphans to be transformed to gold, which shows that they are already corrupted; they are the greatest hypocrites.[13] Though their gulls are greedy, it is mainly through the charlatans' own efforts, the persuasiveness of their rhetoric, that Jonson's two tricksters are able to transform tales of the most outrageous order into believable stories. Gullible but relatively innocent customers become great losers.

Similar to Face and Subtle, in *Volpone,* Volpone and Mosca make a group of legacy-hunters believe that each one of them will be the

possible heir of Volpone's wealth. This time, however, the tricksters do not depend only on persuasiveness of their rhetoric. Their role-playing ability, their quickness in disguising themselves, their costumes and their situation, help them to deceive their gulls easily. Indeed, all of the tricksters sell *themselves*, rather than any actual object. Jonson provided a neat definition of his charlatan figure in the introductory description of Fastidious Brisk in *Every Man Out of His Humour*:

> He will borrow another man's horse to praise, and backs Him as his own. Or, for a need, on foot can post Himself into credit with his merchant only with the jingle of his spur and the jerk of his wand.[14]

Jonson's gulls express willingness to believe in the unbelievable. Dapper wants to come in contact with the mythical Queen of Fairy so badly that he abandons all hold on rational process; likewise the other skeptical Puritans, Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome let gullibility and wish-fulfillment reveries triumph over discrimination. Sir Epicure Mammon's overwhelming endorsement of Face and Subtle's alchemical abilities is analogous to the faith which Corvino, Corbaccio and Voltore place in Mosca's plots. All the characters are possessed by a desperate need to believe. "The absence of spirituality creates a vacuum which

credulity fills quickly."[15] Jonson condemns his gulls for failing to acknowledge traditional morality in their scramble for an ideological justification of their desire for advancement.

Both *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* see rapid changing of character and disguise. Whenever a new gull arrives on stage, Face, Subtle and Doll Common metamorphose into new personae. When the announcement of the arrival of a gull is sounded, plans are discussed in a hurried manner, and the house quickly becomes a different place, full of new devices and deceptions. This behaviour and the concomitant situations obtain in *Volpone*, too. Mosca and Volpone adapt themselves to new situations whenever a new visitor arrives. Jonson makes use of the theme of disguise very successfully in both plays. The charlatans of *The Alchemist* Face, Subtle and Doll Common disguise themselves when profit is a factor. The householder Lovewit is a representative of bureaucracy, rather than a fine study of a private citizen. He and his house function as a reminder of the enfeebled system with which the charlatans have to contend, and which allows them plenty of scope and opportunity for their schemes. In a recent study, Robert Watson points out the "correspondence between Lovewit's house and the theaters of Elizabethan London."[16] When Lovewit finally restores some sense of

order to the stage with his unexpected return, in *The Alchemist*, the scene which the trio has constructed suddenly, and as if in a theater, almost magically disappears.

However, when Lovewit comes home, Face is sure to continue in his old habits. Such characters are immune to change. Life is not growth for Jonson's characters. For them, life is a game, and if someone knows the rules (or knows how to cheat!) he can win. Neither Volpone nor Face has been shrewd enough yet. When Volpone is thrown into prison it is obvious that he is not done with scheming. Jonson's gullible characters do not provoke/inspire sympathy in the reader. The plays evoke the critical laughter of the people who can think and judge, as well. Part of the hilarity that *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* produce comes from the short-sighted, almost solipsistic (or autistic) individualism of the characters and the simplicity of their world. The humourous effect is sometimes achieved through the chief figures, who by outwitting the less astute characters cause the emergence of comic situations. At other times, we laugh at the seemingly witty chief character's futile effort to manipulate the situation according to his own profit. The mystery of life, the expression of human vitality is not the subject of these plays. Jonson is

not generous; he does not celebrate the diversity of humanity as does Shakespeare (let alone Chaucer or even Boccaccio.) It is perverse human behaviour, human folly that Jonson depicts.[17] "Central to the carnival images are the rogue, the clown, and the fool -- those who, outside the context of carnival, might be declared mad."[18] In *The Dialogic Imagination* Bakhtin asserts that "essential to these figures, is a distinctive feature that is as well a privilege -- the right to be 'other' in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available."[19] Bakhtin defines the carnival laughter as the laughter of all people, it embraces and includes all the people. Jonson's comedies evoke the same kind of laughter: it is both gay and triumphant, but at the same time mocking and derisive -- and it excludes (or spares) nobody. Everybody becomes the loser in the end, and this too is a cause for mirth. It is unlikely, however, that this mirth was merely an expression of self-congratulation (even that pious kind now familiarly prefixed by the platitude "There but for the Grace of God go I"): the audience, participants in that bounded carnival which is the catharsis of dramatic spectacle, are just as likely to fall from grace as Jonson's protagonists, and it would be an obtuse spectator indeed who did not realize this.

Jonson exploits the audience's position of external superiority, and he allows the audience to share in the knowledge of the deceivers who populate his plays. He allows them to watch victims walk into the traps which they have, as often as not laid for themselves, and the pleasure gained from this is the moral at the end. His comedies do not involve the basic opposition between good and bad, but they involve an opposition between cleverness and foolishness. Jonson's plays are also rooted in intellectual values and it is an intellectual pragmatic sympathy which is extended to the tricksters in whose schemes the audience is invited to share. A happy ending or relief is not anticipated for the endangered dupes. Noone is immune either to personal *peripeteia* or to the satire that attends it. Everyone has the capacity, not to reach for the stars, but to fall back to the gutter - that is the only kind of fellowship of man the audience or reader can expect to find in Jonson. This does not make his plays unrelentingly grim, but they are leavened, not by inspiring portrayals of noble aspiration, but rueful *memories* of the delights of carnival.

CHAPTER II

The Dumb God's Eloquence: the Role of Materialism in *Volpone*

In *Volpone* Jonson gives a series of studies of characters who are mostly types, grotesques rather than finely-drawn portraits of individuality. Themes, too, are limited: the play stands on three foundations: gold, disease, and transformation.

Jonson takes Venice as the setting, a deliberate choice, since Venice was recognized for its carnival, in the sixteenth century. Jonson's Jacobean audience, when not confronted with contemporary London (as in *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*), needed at least a modern society. *Sejanus* is an exception, and that works only as a malign, cynical counterpoint to Shakespeare's more violent histories. Indeed, *Volpone* has something in common with *Sejanus*, at least as far as Jonson's audience, suspicious of anything too Italianate (or ultramontane), was concerned. So "Jonson translates ancient Rome into modern Italy, the classic setting for sensational evil-doing in Jacobean drama. Venice was the exact location for Jonson's purpose: a city based on trade and money-making." [1] Then he roots this in the actual

practices of his own historical period. Cicero says "Comedy is a copy of life, a mirror of custom, a representation of truth,"[2] a definition which is applicable to *Volpone*. He criticizes both the seductive side of materialism and those who yield to such seduction. Jonson indicates the social disharmony at the heart of Jacobean England, which was then growing rapidly into an international trade center. This economic growth gave opportunists, usurers, exploiters and profiteers a chance to take advantage of the current situation.[3] Volpone's words about his new religion and Mammon, which have the peculiarities of a revolutionary -- indeed, heretical -- set of concepts, imply a direct causal link between his behaviour, attitudes of mind and those of the society which has (in)formed him. As his own High Priest, he invents the rules and the procedure of this new religion and applies them to the gulls who are its adherents/acolytes/neophytes. However, these rules are not new: they already tacitly obtain in Jacobean society.

Departing from his avowed intention of portraying *only* that which actually *happens*, Jonson turns artistic license to a moralistic end. Through Volpone, he castigates -- and with the creativity that dramatic license affords him, penalizes -- those who become financiers and opportunists as a result of the development of the capitalist

enterprise in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The changes in economic life increase a tendency towards "luxury and ostentation, to alchemy, the gulling of young heirs, fortune hunting and usury."[4] By punishing Volpone, who is the grotesque, only semi-human (and semi-vulpine, as his name suggests), representative of excessive greed and avarice, as well as the other characters who are dehumanized, represented as they are by avaricious birds -- The Raven, the Crow and the Vulture -- Jonson fulfills his moral duty. First, he weaves a social framework of a group of types that can either be found in society or be a part of a personality trait. Then he provides a cautionary *reductio ad absurdum*, delineating their downfall: a prurient prognosis.

In *Volpone* the disease that turns men into beasts is the lust for gold and Jonson reflects this bestial reduction in the characters of Volpone and Mosca. Jonson castigates the essentially anti-social, anti-humanistic, selfishness of individual follies and pretensions through Volpone and Mosca. They live not in the anthropocentric, humanistic world, which retained currency even after the hypotheses of Copernicus, Bruno and even, slightly after Jonson's time, Galileo, but in a gold-centered universe, which is presented in the first scene. For them, gold replaces all moral, ethical and social values. The motivating

force of the play, the desire for gold, is presented in terms of religious imagery by Jonson. This inversion of established order is far more serious -- and blasphemous -- than any dissimulation that Jonson's tricksters may indulge in. "Volpone constructs his new religion, his new history, his new society and his new man."[5] If Sejanus speaks the truth when he says "What excellent fools/Religion makes of men" (V, lines 69-70) then how much more foolish, in its monomania, is Volpone's heresy? While describing this new cosmos Volpone uses religious terminology such as "shrine", "saint", "celestial", "sacred", "blessed", and "relic". This language, disturbingly inappropriate, may be less risible than Sejanus' Tribuni, political/conventional religious "ceremony" and prayer: "Be all profane far hence; fly, fly, far off: / Be absent far. Far hence be all profane." (Act V, lines 171-172) However, its very gravity marks something akin to genuine psychosis: when compared to Sejanus, Volpone is less of a cynical sceptical Machiavelli, and more of an alarmingly *sincere* anti-Savonarola. He dedicates his life to gold just as a monk would faithfully do to God. The play opens with Volpone ordering Mosca to open the curtain that hides piles of gold. This private ritual resembles any religious ceremony where an image of God is put on an altar to be worshipped by His followers:

Good morning to the day; and next my gold!

Open the shrine that I may see my saint.

(I, i, 1-2)

The ritual, during which Volpone chants praises to his "saint" and kisses "with adoration" the relics of "sacred treasure" (I, i, 11-12), is the natural consequence of as total inversion of moral values and the replacement of God by Mammon. Volpone's language and imprecations reinforce his admiration of, and devotion to, "material wealth," expressed in the manner of a philosopher and psychologist. He describes his feelings as someone who achieves at one stroke all the goals for which man in the past has struggled confusedly and painfully, and is still struggling:

Thou art virtue, fame,

Honour, and all things else. Who can get thee,

He shall be noble, valiant, honest, wise -

(I, i, 25-27)

He subsumes all the desirable aspects of life under this heading. What makes Volpone's opening speech difficult, as well as entertaining, is the range of language and ideas which Jonson has put together. Volpone's hymn, addressed to his god, makes verbal allusions to

theological and scientific concepts, to alchemy and mythology, to literature and the Bible. Volpone's language translates his moral attitudes into exaggerated symbolic statement, and implies that this avaricious man whose delight lies in wealth has turned gold into his god. The whole play is centered on the theme of transformation of man from humanity to sinister beastliness as a result of the effect of materialism. Jonson tries to show the process of dissolution that the society undergoes as a result of the avarice of characters driven by the desire for gold. For him, contemporary society has lost its values, as men have given in to greed and materialism. The language exemplifies the *reversal* of the supposed social, moral and religious values of the age. This speech is not only a taut summation of Volpone's own obsessive monomania, but by extension a satire upon the true attitudes of those nascent capitalists who are turning England's supposedly meritocratic/timocratic political system into plutocracy.[6] His celebration of wealth and his inevitable downfall, brought about by such overreaching chrysophilia constitutes the core of the action of the play.

Three apparently respectable characters, Voltore, Corbaccio and Corvino, make frequent visits to Volpone's house showing a fake concern for the supposedly sick Volpone, but in reality longing only for

his death, so that they may inherit his fortune. Unaware of the plans of the others, each becomes a fool whose follies can be turned to profit by Volpone. With the help of his servant Mosca, Volpone makes them individually believe that Mosca is in collaboration with them and the fortune will be theirs in the end. The mutually exclusive plots developed by the covetous characters are controlled by Volpone and his helper Mosca. It is Volpone who chooses Voltore, Corbaccio and Corvino as the possible candidates for his legacy. Volpone, who determines the rules of the game, also chooses the players and his idea of multiplying his fortune brings together the other gold seekers. Volpone's house becomes the meeting point of the voracious characters, and his schemes on how to become richer serve as a catalyst to bring all their separate plans together.

The room of Volpone, where life is given over to wanton voluptuousness, willfulness, and cunning reflects Volpone's insatiability. In spite of Jonson's paucity of stage-directions, it is clear that the bedroom with the huge bed, the furnitures and decoration dominates the whole scene, which is another sign of importance given to voluptuousness by the chief character. It is also a sign of Volpone's solipsism: despite his delight in interacting with others in order to trick

them, he does *not* acknowledge the autonomy of his fellow human beings. What Bakhtin says of the idea may also be said of truth: "The idea lives not in one person's isolated individual consciousness -- if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live ... only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationship with other ideas, with the ideas of others."[7] Throughout *Volpone* Jonson signposts the eponymous "hero's" moral worthlessness, his love of luxury, his perversity in allowing gold to usurp the positions of natural sources of life and goodness like the sun, or human contact:

> Volpone: O thou son of Sol,
>
> But brighter than thy father, let me kiss,
>
> With adoration, thee and every relic
>
> Of sacred treasure in this blessed room.
>
> Well did wise poets by thy glorious name
>
> Title that age which they would have the best,
>
> Thou being the best of things, and far transcending
>
> All style of joy in children, parents, friends,
>
> Or any other waking dream on earth.
>
> (I, i, 10-18)

Jonson's criticism focuses on the characters' excessive interest in material wealth, which is imposed on them by the capitalist system. The powerful economic forces that are at work influence everybody, especially those living in the city. The significance of this effect lies in the quality of individual lives. Volpone's addiction to ostentation is a good example to this. In his seemingly humble house he lives as if he is a king, attended by fawning courtiers no less corrupt than he.

Bakhtin in his carnival theory makes a distinction between "high culture" and "low culture." His theory puts forth the idea that people are shaped and distinguished, and act according to a group of principles imposed on them by the particular culture that they belong to. He uses the terms "official culture" instead of "high culture" and "popular culture" instead of "low culture" interchangeably. The ideas of the "official culture," meaning the culture of the establishment, which is serious, dogmatic and fixed, and the "popular culture" which is characterized by openness, instability, mutability and egalitarianism can be traced in Jonson's satirical comedies. In *Volpone*, Volpone is presented as the Magnifico; Voltore, an advocate; Corbaccio, an old gentleman; and Corvino, a merchant. These four important characters belong and act according to the principles of the "official culture."

They are supposed to be responsible, "pillars of the community." However, since carnival is a period during which the dogmas and doctrines as well as the forms and ideologies of the dominant culture may be temporarily overturned, the above listed characters, too, start acting according to their own benefits. Corvino, who offers his wife; Corbaccio, who disinherits his son; and Voltore, who dishonours his profession all ignore the requirements of their own culture. Volpone as the owner of the house and the huge wealth that is exposed at the very beginning of the play is depicted as the rich schemer, who devotes all his ingenuity to becoming richer. He later adopts/assumes the role of a mountebank, another popular profession of the period.

Jonson makes use of all the popular professions of the age. Mosca, the parasite, exemplifies the usual master-servant relationship that existed in Jacobean society. Yet, his slyness and wisdom differentiates him from other servants; since he profits from these qualities and takes his rightful place in carnival as well as in the capitalist system. Surviving in such a society, requires primarily that one be an individual, secondly that one be a social, non-spiritual animal. Apart from Voltore, Corvino and Corbaccio, who act according to their instincts, as animals do, Jonson introduces Nano, Androgyno

and Castrone, half human half animal, monster-like creatures, in order to symbolize the atmosphere of the age. They are "marginal" figures in the play, carnivalesque characters who overtly represent the sterility, deformity and monstrosity ("deviance" in Foucaultian terms, or decadence in more straightforward historicist analysis) that exist not only in society, but also in individual relations. These characters, however, are ironically *less* dangerous than the other characters of the play. Their monstrosity is overt, and restricted to the physical realm of appearance; it is neither surreptitious nor psycho-social. Voltore, the advocate acts dishonestly, which contradicts the principles of that profession. Corvino, the merchant, sells his own wife in order to become Volpone's heir thus perverting the ethics of his own trade, and reducing all human relations to mercantile exchange -- the underlying malaise of the age, and the theme of the play, in microcosm. The depiction of such characters who eagerly part with the things that are so dear to them show money's attractiveness for those who are the progeny, the *product* of capitalism. Jonson directs his criticism at courts and the people who act illegally and dishonestly. As Bakhtin points out, the clown and the fool come to the aid of the writer in

meeting the task of exposing "all that is vulgar and falsely stereotyped in human relationships." [8]

Jonsonian comedy is characterized by its immediacy and concentration on the manners, habits and morals of man as a primarily social, non-poetic and non-spiritual animal. Unlike the beast fable, where animals act like human beings, in *Volpone* the human beings behave like animals. Jonson creates a peculiar world which is inhabited by people driven, like animals and sometimes like men, by their instincts, but more blindly and ruinously than animals. "The three rapacious characters, Voltore, Corbaccio and Corvino represent the Vulture, the Crow and the Raven that roost on the same perch, following the demands of the capitalist system. The capitalist society in which these characters live "demands *individualism* as the creed of the commercial classes," [9] which is portrayed by the mutually contradictory plots of the voracious characters. The idea of "sauve qui pent" individualism can be cynically summed up in the saying "the bigger the rogue the more likely he is to succeed", which becomes the motto of the play. The separate plans of Corvino, who is willing to prostitute his wife; Corbaccio, who disinherits his son; and Voltore, who dishonours his profession indicate that they are willing not only to peculate, but to

sacrifice things which are (or should be) precious to them, to be Volpone's heir. The prominent characters compete with each other to meet the requirements of the capitalist system, and theory gives way to practice: Legacy- hunting, adventure and opportunism are the legitimate alternatives to legal practices of heritage, in the general rush after wealth.

Although there are all sorts of classes, degrees and gradation in any culture, it is striking that the extremes of high and low have a special and often powerful symbolic charge. Jonson comments on the enormous differences between economic status and morality brought about by current rapid economic, political and social changes, activities that are subsumed under the phenomenon of carnival by Bakhtin.

The capitalistic system does not reward everybody. The dumb god, as Volpone terms gold, at the beginning of *Volpone*, does not fulfil its "promise" (or, rather, the expectations Volpone has of it):

> Dear Saint,
>
> Riches, the dumb god that giv'st all men tongues,
>
> That canst do nought, and yet mak'st men do all things.[10]
>
> (I, i, 21-23)

"All things", it would appear, refer only to the iniquities and follies which gold inspires, and the depths to which it drags people.The effect of excessive pride and vanity is first seen on Volpone, the major trickster. Volpone's pursuit of materialistic gain has made him not only an individualist, but courageous, witty and cunning as well. He represents the comic vitality of Jonson's craftsmanship. Volpone, for his own amusement (and of course, as far as Jonson is concerned, for that of the audience), as much as for the purpose of material gain, devises a scheme of gulling the people who hope to become his heir when he dies. One of his overriding characteristics, his love of gold for its own sake, has already been observed. However, he is also defined by his fondness for acting. Although the stage directions are few, it is clear that Volpone is a consummate actor, delighting in the details of make-up and costume. His excitement when he hears the first knock at the door does not prevent him from the complete preparation of his disguise as a sick old man:

> Fetch me my gown,
> My furs, and night-caps; say my coach is changing,
> And let him entertain himself awhile
> Without in the gallery.
>
> (I, ii, 84-87)

Within a very few minutes Volpone gets ready for his first visitor, Voltore. Everything is placed under control by him and Mosca, and as Corbaccio and Corvino follow Voltore, one by one, Volpone's fake illness takes different shapes related to the visitor's expectations, since they expect Volpone's death "each greedy minute." His first appearance as a sick man easily deceives Voltore, as he puts on all kinds of symptoms:

> Now, my feigned cough, my phytisic, and my gout
> My apoplexy, palsy, and catarrhs,
> Help, with your forced functions, this my posture,
> Wherein, this three year, I have milked their hopes.
>
> (I, ii, 126-129)

The characters are depicted in a world where all men are profiting from one another, "milking each others' hopes." They are all driven by the pursuit of money, which is the common disease shared by all of them. Volpone exploits the would-be exploiters throughout the play. His energy, intelligence, and determination to attain more gold makes him one of the most memorable characters in seventeenth century drama. However, the very dynamism of his covetousness prepares his tragi-comic end.

Volpone, as the chief opportunist, plays a clever and subtle game of letting fools and knaves hang themselves with their own rope. The master and his henchman prepare a nefarious plan for those opportunists who reveal themselves to be dupes (as do the planners themselves, in the end!). Volpone's inventiveness is matched by Mosca's never-ending energy and slyness. Like Volpone, Mosca is also motivated by Pride and Vanity, the chief deadly sins. He is the counterpart of his master and he completes Volpone not only physically -- when Volpone lies on his fake death-bed, Mosca behaves as his eyes and mouth --, but also verbally. The opening scene introduces Mosca and Volpone together as they complement each other. It is not uncommon in Jonson's plays to discover that the missing part of a character's personality is represented by a different character. Volpone's subtle but outrageous, fantastic plans are complemented by Mosca's practicality and dynamism. They do, however, share a lust for riches: Volpone's speech on wealth is broken by Mosca's words which portray his own materialism as well as his toadyism:

> Riches are in fortune
>
> A greater good than wisdom is in nature.
>
> (I, i, 28-29)

In *Volpone* the invaluable gift of thinking, given to human beings by God, is replaced by prosperity attained through material wealth. The acquisition of gold, taking advantage of everything and everybody for material gain, putting one's benefits above others', is the malaise of the age. The characters' rejection of the ethics and morals of the previously accepted norms is presented, mostly by underlying the negative effects of capitalism on the individual.

In such a nakedly individualistic society, it is only to be expected that Volpone and Mosca do not quite work in tandem. Although they seem to be working towards the same aim of gulling the opportunists, Volpone makes use of Mosca's practicality, on one hand, and Mosca tries to get as much benefit from Volpone's wealth as he can, on the other. The relationship is one of temporary mutual advantage, rather than loyalty. Volpone's crafty manoeuvres are relished by Mosca, and Mosca seems to be present for the good of his master, but he acts for his own benefit. He cunningly flatters Volpone, since he wants his own share from Volpone's huge wealth. Mosca's utterance about his master's fake bounty exemplifies the range of Jonsonian irony. In reality, Volpone is not generous as Mosca's false words reveal.

You are not like the thresher that doth stand

With a huge flail, watching a heap of corn,

And, hungry, dares not taste the smallest grain,

But feed on mallows and such bitter herbs; ...

You know the use of riches, and dare give now

From that bright heap, to me, your poor observer.

(I, i, 53-56, 62-63)

Mosca's definition of Volpone as a generous man does not define Volpone truly, nor is it intended to. Indeed, Volpone *is* like the thresher who stands with a huge flail in his hand, watching a heap of corn; and who, although hungry, dares not put a grain in his mouth. Volpone is so miserly that he plans only to add more to his wealth, rather than using it, let alone sharing it with the people around him. Mosca is the nearest person to Volpone, he knows what Volpone is fond of and speaks so as to please Volpone. Volpone calls Mosca "parasite," (I, i, 67) a term which pertains directly to Mosca's name and also exposes the relationship between the two characters. Volpone knows that Mosca depends on him, but in fact, the relationship is more one of symbiosis: Mosca does not merely benefit by obtaining nourishment and shelter, at the expense and to the detriment of his host, but in fact is a great help to Volpone not only while putting Volpone's plans into action, but also as an intermediary in a more domestic sphere --

between Volpone and Nano, Androgyno, and Castrone. These representatives of deformity, sterility and monstrosity are presented in Act I through a short play "invented" by Mosca. Mosca very easily cheers Volpone up, sometimes with the help of Nano, Androgyno and Castrone, often by finding the right words at the right moments:

Volpone: Now, very, very pretty! Mosca, this
Was thy invention?

Mosca : If it please my patron.
Not else.

Volpone: It doth, good Mosca.

Mosca : Then it was, sir.

(I, ii, 63-68)

Mosca is prepared to show a flagrant disregard for truth and fidelity to objective reality, in order to please Volpone. He makes a very true comment about himself by saying that he can "change a visor, swifter than thought" (III, i, 29), i.e., he is very talented in changing the mask of his expression, according to changing situations. He finds the best excuses at the appropriate moments and with his never-ending energy and slyness escapes from the hardest troubles. The banter between the master and his servant exemplifies the symbiotic relationship between them. Mosca lives as a parasite, a "caterpillar" in Shakespearean terms

(*Richard II*), and he does or says the things that flatter Volpone in order to keep his advantageous position; Volpone, on the other hand, needs and procures Mosca's abilities as his secret-agent and organizer. Mosca organizes the visits of the avaricious characters to Volpone's house and ensures that none of them meets the others in Volpone's room. Mosca's slyness and creativity in fashioning excuses to send the previous visitor out when the next appears at the door adds to the comic effect of the play. When Corbaccio arrives before Voltore leaves, Mosca manoeuvres and sends Voltore away with the hope of being Volpone's heir, as he does to all the other candidates:

> When will you have your inventory brought, sir?
> Or see a copy of the will? - Anon -
> I'll bring 'em to you, sir. Away, be gone,
> Put business i' your face.
>
> (I, iii, 75-78)

Volpone, as the chief manipulator, uses all his resources for becoming richer; and he does not hesitate to act as a mountebank, another carnivalesque character, in order to achieve his aim of seeing the celestial Celia, Corvino's wife.

> Gentlemen, if I had but time to discourse to you the miraculous effects of this my oil, surnamed Oglio del Scoto;

with the countless catalogue of those I have cured of the aforesaid, and many more diseases; the patents and privileges of all the princes and commonwealths of Christendom; or but the depositions of those that appeared on my part, before the signory of the Sanita and most learned College of Physicians, where I was authorized, upon notice taken of the admirable virtues of my medicaments and mine own excellency in matter of rare and unknown secrets,...

(II, i, 255-264)

The demands of the capitalist system motivate all the characters except for Bonario and Celia who are introduced solely to counterbalance the hypocrisy that appears in the society. Since Jonson is not interested in human goodness, the wronged wife Celia, and the stalwart young man Bonario are unrealized figures in the comedy. They are ciphers, dull, flat, one- dimensional and boring. Yet, the appearance of these two virtuous characters makes it easier for Jonson to point out the reversal of traditional, religious and moral values of society. In *Sejanus*, Agrippina says "Virtue's forces / Show ever noblest in conspicuous courses" (Act II, lines 456-457) but this itself does not guarantee such forces victory, as he suggests. Volpone's attempted rape of Celia is

disturbing, and deliberately, so. His cruelty and inhumanity cannot be sanctioned by his ingenuity, and nor can Corvino's procuration of his own wife be looked at without a recognition of the wickedness of such behaviour. Volpone's words while trying to convince Celia to be his mistress are reminiscent of an ordinary man who is controlled by his sexual desires, rather than a rich upper class man, who would act and think according to the codes of the official culture:

> Volpone: Think me cold,
>
> Frozen, and impotent, and so report me?
>
> That I had Nestor's hernia thou woulst think.
>
> I do degenerate and abuse my nation
>
> To play with opportunity thus long;
>
> I should have done the act, and then have parleyed.
>
> Yield, or I'll force thee.
>
> (III, vii, 260-265)

Volpone is also a play within a play. The theme of disguise is at the core of the play, and is addressed *twice*, in complementary plots. Although Sir Politic Would-be, Peregrine and Lady Would-be form the sub-plot of the play, they are indispensable since they represent a parody of the characters of the main plot. Sir Politic Would-be and his

wife represent the chattering parrots that the first syllable of "Politic" recalls; Peregrine, on the other hand, belongs to the tradition of the "beast fable," as the pilgrim falcon. The Would-be's are introduced as early as the close of the first act through the dialogue between Mosca and Volpone. Mosca's elaborate praises of Celia are in contrast to his statements about Lady Would-be. Mosca's words about both women serve to initiate the contrast between the characters that will continue throughout the play.

> Sir, this knight
> Had not his name for nothing; he is politic,
> And knows, howe'er his wife affect strange airs,
> She hath not yet the face to be honest.
> But had she Signior Corvino's wife's face.
>
> (I, iv, 103-107)

Sir Politic and Lady Would-be not only chatter, as parrots habitually do, but mimic as well. This seemingly unimportant point about parrots enables us to find some similarities (and differences) between the characters of the main plot and the sub-plot. Sir Politic and Lady Would-be caricature the characters of the main plot. Sir Politic parodies Volpone. As his name implies he is the would-be statesman, whereas Volpone is a born politician, whose plans succeed almost on every

occasion. Like Volpone, Sir Politic's thoughts and speeches concentrate on materialism, and he leads the same ostentatious life style as Volpone -- another elaborate example of the relationship between the main plot and the sub-plot. Both Volpone and Sir Politic are fond of luxury and ostentation, however Sir Politic has not got the crafty mind of Volpone. Sir Politic lacks Volpone's subtlety and guile. Sir Politic's plans about how to become rich do not progress, yet he continues to annotate the things he buys and spends money on, in his diary, which exposes his miserly attitude:

> Sir Politic: ... This is my diary,
>
> Wherein I note my actions of the day.
>
> Peregrine: Pray you lets see, sir ...
>
> A rat had gnawn my spur leathers; notwithstanding,
>
> I went and bought two toothpicks, whereof one
>
> I burst immediately, in a discourse
>
> With a Dutch merchant ...
>
> From him I went and paid a moccenigo
>
> For piercing my silk stockings ...
>
> (IV, i, 133-141)

This scene is a grotesque, burlesque, indeed carnivalesque, parody of the dialogue between Mosca and Volpone where Mosca

alludes, through insincere litotes, to his master's tightfistedness. Sir Politic's speech makes clear his wish for having the assistance of a trusty henchman, like Peregrine, to help him in his money-making projects. He implies that Peregrine is the right person to undertake this, as Mosca is for Volpone. Peregrine contents himself with asking questions and trying to learn the details of problems, unlike Mosca who indulges himself in the events not only as a henchman, but also as a plotter in his own right.

The arrival of Lady Would-be at Volpone's house provides a further contrast, very different as it is from Celia's arrival. Lady Would-be's fussing over her dress, scolding the two women who are at her service, and so on, is rather different from Celia's guileless arrival at Volpone's house, offered up to Volpone by her husband without any awareness or connivance on her part. Lady Would-be's interest in cosmetics and the way she puts on make-up shows her anxiety to hide the rotten inside, as the painted surface covers putridity. It signifies an attachment to outer appearances rather than the deeper meanings of life and truth. The discrepancy between appearance and reality (and the inevitable exposure of such) is of course at the heart of the carnival. It is not Celia, but Lady Would-be who needs the effect of the powder which Volpone offers as a mountebank. Celia's beauty reveals the

beauty of her soul, her innocence and morality. She yearns for lightning to strike her face, since she thinks that it is because of her face that she has to satisfy Volpone's lust. Corvino, out of his jealousy, calls Celia "Lady Vanity," (II, v, 21) which suits Lady Would-be better.

Like Sir Politic, Lady Would-be talks mostly about disease and cure. Lady Would-be's remedies for Volpone's sickness are just as illogical as Sir Politic's idea of protecting Venice from plague by employing onions against infections on ships before they enter the harbor.

> Sir Politic: ... First, I bring in your ship 'twixt two
> brick walls-
> But those the state shall venture. On the one
> I strain me a fair tarpaulin, and in that
> I stick my onions, cut in halves; the other
> Is full of loopholes, out at which I thrust
> The noses of my bellows; ...
> Now, sir, your onion, which doth naturally
> Attract th'infection and your bellows blowing
> The air upon him, will show instantly
> By his changed colour if there be contagion,
> (IV, i, 114-123)

Sir Politic and his wife's ill-thought out obsession with disease and cure serves to reinforce one's awareness of the corresponding moral sickness of the capitalist society.

Volpone's fake illness -- as he pretends to be ill whenever a new visitor arrives -- develops into a real one when Lady Would-be's incredibly long and nonsensical oratory does not come to an end in spite of all his efforts. Only Mosca can stop this talking machine, to rescue his master. Lady Would-be leaves upon Mosca's news about her husband's gondola trip "with the most cunning courtesan of Venice" (III, v, 20). Mosca's plan of exciting jealousy, already played on Corvino, works once again. As she goes, Lady Would-be leaves "a cap of her own work" (III, v, 15) which provides a highly ridiculous contrast to presents given to Volpone, by Corvino, Corbaccio and Voltore. The scene where Volpone has to stand Lady Would-be's never-ending conversation serves as a comic echo of the scene between Volpone and Celia. The heavenly beauty and innocence of Celia becomes more heavenly, when compared to Lady Would-be's greed and lechery.

Jonson uses colloquial language in *Volpone,* which reflects the worldly outlook of the principal characters. The coarse, humourous language of the characters exposes their intentions and aims as limited

and controlled by Pride and Vanity. By using its images and language, by examining and observing the "popular" culture and its members, Jonson juxtaposes the patterns of thought and codes of behaviour of both the "official" and "popular culture." Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* explains the utilization of folk culture, that is to say, turning to the language and images of folk culture as a means of expression, not as a simple strategy for positioning one self outside official culture in order to observe and understand it better but as a more dynamic tactic of subversion. Once escaped from the control of the official culture, one can strive towards undermining the official culture's pervasive and restrictive influence, and ultimately shattering that very culture itself.

The same kind of deviation from the codes of behaviour and language of the official culture and a protest against the establishment order is experienced during the profane and heretical activities of the carnival. The parodies of kingship -- as can be observed in Volpone's intentions --, inversions of master-servant roles -- as Mosca acts like Volpone from time to time --, the merging of the serious and the ridiculous -- as Jonson's approach to his material, since he takes a very serious subject, but handles it in a comic way --, the juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane, the rulers and rules and the like form the main features of carnival.

Although the world seems to be turned upside down and the roles change during the carnival, the rulers who were chosen and crowned reaffirm the status quo. The same kind of inversion of the world is observed in *Volpone,* but order is reestablished at the end. The opportunists are punished, by law and Jonson, as a didactic playwright, draws a moralistic conclusion from this. In the end, the creators of the game, Volpone and Mosca, take their places among the losers. Like all the rapacious characters who present an imbalance or deficit or superfluity (the excess of one of the humours in the body) Volpone and Mosca are also subject to punishment. Jonson sees the danger of people who deny their human nature and reason, and who are so much in love with themselves or their objects of obsession that they have lost touch with the real world and with their responsibilities as human beings. Under the effect of gold fever the characters lose their capacity for emotional relationships. That is how they become non-spiritual animals. The theme of showing the imbalance in the characters as a result of overdevelopment of one of the aspects of the personality is directed through a kind of illness from which the characters suffer. The ones who are under the effect of this illness, which can be termed "gold fever," use any means to reach the same aim: being Volpone's heir.

This rush after wealth makes the characters more and more greedy, progressively depriving them of their humane feelings.

Only the city's self-regulation saves Venice from the two rogues whose vitality, wit and greed threaten to turn the order of the city upside down. That order itself, however, is far from harmonious. The Scrutino merely pronounces judgment on Volpone's and Mosca's intrigue that has already run its course:

Avocatori I: Now, you begin,

When crimes are done and past, and to be punish'd,

To thinke that your crimes are: away with them.

Let all, that see these vices thus rewarded,

Take heart, and love to study 'them.

(V, xii, 146-150)

In one sense, the courtroom of the Scrutineo demonstrates the triumph of public over private and the triumph of the city over the house which is constructed dangerously by its greedy owner within the large city. Yet, the city is no better than the outsize house in practicing the operations of ideal justice. Venice has institutions, as do all the cities, that are supposed to govern civic life; but, the corrupt and greedy Venetian justices lack the moral integrity, like the

representatives of the 'private culture', in Bakthinian terms. Jonson presents the moral denouement in the final act:

> Mischiefes feed
>
> Like beasts, till they be fat, and then they bleed.
>
> (V, xii, 150-51)

Volpone's final remarks, regretful (if not necessarily penitent), stand in stark contrast to the speech with which he opens the play. The confession of a rueful man serves the didactic purpose of the playwright, even if it be only a lamentation of the disastrous outcome of his schemes (an *argumentum ad crumenam* as it were -- a pragmatic recognition of his *mistakes* rather than an acknowledgment of his *sins*). This peripeteia does not curb the rhetoric of a once-ambitious man, but Volpone's language is now used to express yearning for nothing more than mercy:

> Now, though the fox be punished by the laws,
>
> He yet doth hope there is no suff'ring due
>
> For any fact which he hath done 'gainst you.
>
> (V, xii, 153-155)

The reader or audience may now place Volpone's exaggerated discourse at the beginning of the play in context, noting the discrepancy between Volpone's intentions and his end. His struggle to earn more wealth by

gulling people leads him to destruction in the end. Under the effect of this fever, this mania for gold, he loses his reputation and public standing. Wealth has made him neither a noble and valiant nor an honest and wise man; thus, in ignominious poverty, he has nothing left.

He has participated in carnival, but never really entered into the spirit of it, being too ambitious. Ambition has no place in carnival, where any rise in status must be taken as provisional, and a corresponding fall should be accepted with good grace. Only at the end, it seems, does Volpone realise this. He has been the dupe not only of his "dumb god", in all its eloquence, but also of carnival – the butt of that topsy-turvy state he himself has engineered.

CHAPTER III

Intercalary Days: Temporary License for Face, Subtle and Doll in *The Alchemist*

The Prologue to *The Alchemist* declares the play's aim to be the exposure of the 'manners' and 'follies' of the time in order to 'better' its audience:

> Though this pen
> Did never aim to grieve, but better men,
> Howe'er the age he lives in doth endure
> The vices that she breeds, above their cure.
> But, when the wholesome remedies are sweet,
> And, in their working, gain and profit meet,
> He hopes to find no spirit so much diseas'd,
> But will, with such fair correctives, be pleas'd.
>
> (Lines 11-18)

The assumptions in the Prologue are optimistic, although the end of the play can be seen as pessimistic and cynical. The Prologue, as a statement of intent, is at once both more public than the events contained within the play's fictional framework, and a better indication

of Jonson's personal attitude than any of the characters' speeches. Jonson addresses the audience in this part and exposes the accepted critical view of comedy of the time: it holds human folly up to ridicule, and therefore people learn to avoid the things that they laugh at through gain and profit meet. Just as the play's language avoids euphemism, so the "message" turns out to be rather less than utopian or Panglossian. The dramatic events which reveal Jonson's satirical approach to the manners of the age -- what he calls the natural follies -- show a discrepancy with the prologue's stated aims. Is the discrepancy between the prologue's stated aims and the events in the play intentional? Is it purely due to dramatic custom, that Jonson writes his prologue thus, or is it because of the censorship applied to the plays in the reigns of Elizabeth and James? It promulgates a view of the corrigibility of society quite at variance with the counter-example provided by the dramatic events. "Vice is [presented] as a kind of disease which even in advanced cases is capable of cure."[1] Symbolically the total disappearance of order, and the departure from a normal, healthy moral state (in the individual or in society), as portrayed in *The Alchemist,* reflect Jonson's cynicism. In Jonson's dramatic world, the presence of evil stems from the presence (and perversion) of idealism. This degeneration is presented in Jonson's comedies as a new social

norm rather than a deviation from it: it is portrayed as a milieu in which all must survive, thereby blurring distinctions between genuine ingrained vice and pragmatic, politic strategies for survival.

Jonson as a dramatist not only aims to restore abnormality to normality, but also wishes to do so without hurting anybody. He provides no punishments for villainy here, as he does in *Volpone,* and offers no overt condemnation, but he obliges the audience to recognize, in their appreciation of his accuracy of satire, how strong is people's potentiality for vice and folly. In *Timber, Or Discoveries* Jonson depicts himself as a thoughtful, reflective writer who has separated himself from the decayed social world plagued by "the disease of talking." [2] Not only in *Timber, Or Discoveries*, but also in his plays, he maintains that he tries to distance himself from the hypocrisy and greed that engulf the culture to which Jonson reluctantly belongs. He describes his purpose in following Horace's formula as an aesthetic one: not only exposing vice in the hope that people will reform themselves, "but, to draw forth out of the best, and choosiest flowers, with the Bee, and turne all into Honey, worke it into one relish, and savour: Make our Imitation sweet." [3] He claims himself to be like a fastidious bee that sips flavour from the classical models. As the last two lines of the Prologue suggest, the diagnosis of the problem and its cure will be

effected without even the recognition of the patients that they were ever suffering from maladies to be cured:

> They are so natural follies, but so shown,
>
> As even the doers may see, and yet not own.
>
> (Prologue, 23-24)

While enjoying the play, the audience can mask their public recognition behind the applause which need only betoken enjoyment of the play's entertainment value, but at the same time they will recognize that Jonson ridicules their own follies.

Jonson's insistence on the moral responsibility of the writer is a useful corroborative to Sir Philip Sidney's definition of comedy; in his *An Apology For Poetry,* Sidney expressed vigorous disapproval of comedy that sought only to provoke laughter rather than use comic characters for didactic purposes:

> Comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life, which [the playwright] presenteth in the most ridiculous and scornful sort that may be; so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one.[4]

This definition applies Horatian formulae to comic theory. Sidney concurs, with Horace's *Art of Poetry,* that art should 'delight and teach.' *Volpone, The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair,* all show Jonson,

too, "rejecting comedy that [solely] aims to stir mean affections and provoke for the most part to laughter." [5] No matter what the audience's motives were for attending the play, Jonson has his own agenda.

The city of London is presented as a locus of uncertainty, and thus fascination for the characters as much as the audience. On one hand the audience is unsure as to what will happen next, on the other the characters are in pursuit of the vast opportunities provided by the city. Jonson's deliberate choice of London as the setting is explained in the Prologue since "No clime breeds better matter, for your whore, / Bawd, squire, impostor, many persons more." (lines 8-9) Only in such a cosmopolitan city setting can such a variety of characters come together. The prostitute, the alchemist, the housekeeper, the knight, (as well as the gamester, the tobacconist and the churchmen) are made suitable metaphors (or metonyms) through which Jonson can portray the mores of urban and political life. As they produce new forms of regulation and prohibition governing their own bodies, they deviate from the natural orders of the city. New boundaries between high and low, between rich and poor are simultaneously established and at the same time transgressed. Contradictory responses are produced among the people who belong to separate classes, since their desires for a superior position govern their whole life and make them neglect their

social responsibilities. They speculate upon methods of getting rich quickly and attaining their goals following the shortest way, and that is why they return obsessively to what the city can offer them.

The satire on venality forms one thematic link between *Volpone, The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*. The dramatic language, the discourse of characters disparate in their geographical setting, sociocultural milieux and personal background is another common feature shared by the three plays. Jonson's dramatic diction, as Jonas Barish points out, has "explosiveness," is "abrupt, staccato and sharp."[6] The characters in *The Alchemist* speak in disconnected phrases indicative of the unbalanced overflow of their "humours," or the disturbance in their mental processes. They make use of the colloquial, an appropriate tone for any city comedy whether by Jonson or not. This roots their discourse in a milieu familiar to the audience, while allowing Jonson an opportunity to make his characters' obsessional delusions all the more apparent. Their language *conceals* nothing: as Surly says, while listening to Subtle's argument about the alchemical process, "What a brave language here is, next to canting!" (II, iii, 42) It is also, of course, all the funnier for this. The opening lines of *The Alchemist,* cacophonous and obscene, are typical of this usage of scabrous slang:[7]

Face : Believe't, I will.

Subtle: Thy wort. I fart at thee.

Doll : Ha' you your wits? Why gentlemen! For love --

Face : Sirrah, I'll strip you --

Subtle: What to do? Lick figs out at my --

Face : Rogue, rogue, out of all your sleights.

(I, i, 1-6)

Doll Common's shrewish rebuke has more in common with the highly realistic dialogue of Shakespeare's highly personable rogues and lowlife, or indeed, characters in modern plays than with earlier *didactic* drama (even the coarse badinage of medieval miracle plays). However, the humour is not entirely verbal. The paucity of stage directions should not be taken as a sign of lack of interest on Jonson's part, in the dynamics of his plays: there is much room for comedy in Doll Common's bustling between Face and Subtle as they shout furiously at each other, and such slapstick is obviously intentional.

In trying to stop the quarrel between them, Doll calls Face and Subtle 'Gentlemen', 'Sovereign', 'General,' and for her pains is called a bitch:

Subtle: Cheater.

Face : Bawd.

Subtle: Cow-herd.

Face : Conjuror.

Subtle: Cutpurse.

Face : Witch.

Doll : O me!

We are ruin'd! Lost! Ha' you no more regard

To your reputations? Where is your judgment? 'Slight,

Have yet some care of me, o'your republic --

Face : Away this brach.

(I, i, 106-112)

The relationship between the three tricksters depends upon their mutual advantage. When Doll becomes angry Face and Subtle are for her, an 'abominable pair of stinkards,' 'snarling dog-bolt,' and 'perpetual curs.' When they reach concord Doll Common is elevated to Doll Proper:

Face: For which, at supper, thou shalt sit in triumph,

And not be styl'd Doll Common, but Doll Proper,

Doll Singular: the longest cut, at night,

Shall draw thee for this Doll Particular.

(I, i, 176-79)

The alliance between the scoundrels, Face and Subtle is depicted as a precarious one and much more overtly so than the apparent hierarchy obtaining between Volpone and Mosca. The play is given dramatic tension by the quarrels between the two. From the beginning it is obvious that they will turn on each other at the first opportunity. During the course of the play the opposition between their mutual repulsion, and the attraction necessary to work together, is repeated.

The structural freedom of the expositions of the three plays by Jonson is notable. The openings which serve the playwright's poetic purpose directly and economically show the highly individualistic method by Jonson. *Volpone*, with its great freedom of method in its opening for its simplicity and economy of structure stands apart. It opens with the main character's long soliloquy. The poetic opening of Volpone is followed by a dialogue with Mosca still concentrated on the limited theme of materialism and the main character's personality. The domination of mood is instilled with the theatrical effect of the change and consequently the acceleration of the acts follow. The dialogue of pure invective at the very beginning of *The Alchemist*, on the other hand emphasizes the part of intrigue in the whole play. The exposition of *The Alchemist* reveals the characters' wide interest in alchemy as a metonym for the gullibility and credibility of the Jacobean people.

The long first scene makes the intrigue practically plausible by revealing that Face's master, Lovewit, is away in the country, giving the rogues license to do what they will. Descriptions of Lovewit's house suggest that, as in *Volpone*, the two rogues Face and Subtle, accompanied by Doll Common this time, create a theater within the theater and a microcosmic city/culture within the city. In the absence of the head of the household, the social hierarchy falls apart. Even rules of decorum are flouted, and the house becomes a locus of anarchy. In carnivalesque terms, these are "Intercalary Days," when the normal rules of society are suspended. *The Alchemist* is a work of fiction, a diversion, an entertainment, a machine for suppressing daily life -- thus it is *understood* that here, as in festivals, this inversion of the social hierarchy and this absence of prohibition, are both temporary, and pose no real threat to the established order. Thus, the carnival and the chaos can be enjoyed for what they are -- a "safety valve" which allows license to Lords of Misrule for a limited time, the better that they might accommodate themselves to recognition of the role they must play in the rest of the year.

Sarah Beckwith refers to the Durkheimian function of rites: the "symbolic means through which men worship their own society, in their own mutual dependency." [8] In Bakhtinian terms the grotesque

characters come together as if in a carnival, a term which is used for a "bewildering constellation of rituals, games, symbols, and various carnal excesses which together constitute an alternative 'social space' of freedom, abundance, and equality."[9] Laughter has an 'indissoluble and essential relation to the realm of freedom, a notion which is directly applicable to Jonson's city comedies. During such times of topsy-turvy in social order "life [comes] out of its usual, legalized and consecrated furrows and [enters] the sphere of utopian freedom."[10] In its increased fantastic nature and utopian radicalism this freedom enables all the characters to disguise themselves in every way and do whatever they want, during the sanctioned period.

The highly significant usage of the unities of time and place by Jonson has clear relevance to one of the common traits of carnivalesque genres. The period of misrule and inversion of the expected modes of behaviour brings a heightened appreciation of the limited duration of any given time and the relativity of history itself: "Time itself abuses and praises, beats and decorates, kills and gives birth; this time is simultaneously ironic and gay, it is the "playing boy" of Heraclitus, who wields supreme power in the universe."[11] Jonson applies the unities of time and place with greater exactness in *The Alchemist* than he does in *Volpone* and *Bartholomew Fair*. Since there

are no lapses of time indicated between the scenes within the acts, there is a clear evidence of continuity in the action. Lovewit's house, used to fulfill the deceitful plans of Face and Subtle, will thus, for a limited time be used as an alchemical laboratory in which all the characters will be shown in pursuit of the satisfaction of their greed. They have a "safety net". They are certain of restoring everything to its proper position when the time comes:

Subtle: Who's that? One rings. To the window, Doll. Pray heav'n.

The master do not trouble us, this quarter.

Face : O, fear not him. While there dies one a week
O'the plague, he is safe from thinking toward London.
Beside, he's busy at his hop-yards, now:
I had a letter from him. If he do,
He'll send such word, for airing of the house,
As you shall have sufficient time, to quit it.

(I, i, 180-187)

In *The Alchemist*, Lovewit's manor provides a setting comparable to Volpone's bedchamber. Sir Epicure Mammon's fantasy of Lovewit's house as a rich, luxurious, dream-like and exotic port not only illustrates the importance given to materialism and capitalism, but also

exemplifies Jonson's art in dramatic verse. "The language and the forms of syntax it takes are always appropriate to character and situation and the blank verse has great variety and rhythmic vitality." [12]

Mammon: Come on, sir. Now, you set your foot on shore
In *novo orbe*; here is the rich Peru:
And there within, sir, are the golden mines,
Great Solomon's Ophir! He was sailing to't
Three years, but we have reach'd it in ten months.
This is the day, wherein, to all my friends,
I will pronounce the happy word 'be rich.'
(II, i, 1-7)

In *The Alchemist*, as in *Volpone* and *Bartholomew Fair*, the class differences and the change in social life are articulated through the body of the city, through the separations and interpenetrations of the respectable classes and through the depiction of Lovewit's house and laboratory.

The laboratory -- rendered all the more occult by the fact that it is never seen -- is the wellspring of all the unorthodox activities in *The Alchemist*. As F.H. Mares defines in the introduction of the 1986 edition of the play, it is the dream factory, the most potent instrument of delusion. Its presence and location are firmly established early in the

play, as is Volpone's room. Jonson makes both the laboratory and Volpone's room the symbol of human greed and credulity. However, Volpone's room, filled with the heap of treasure, remains his secure chamber till his defeat in the courtroom, in the final judgment scene. At the end of *The Alchemist* when all the illusions are gone, and the dupes, still avaricious, come back to see what things of value they can pick out of the ruins, all that remains is dirt, rubbish, and obscenities.

Jacobean people wrote more about alchemy than writers of any other age. Accordingly, Jonson makes use of this particular popular theme for the sake of correcting the wrongs going on in society. As Norman O. Brown has noted, the perception that "the sublimation of base matter into gold is the folly of alchemy and the folly of alchemy's pseudosecular heir, modern capitalism," may be attributed to Jonson. As Brown asserts, Jonson saw that alchemy was "the last effort of Western man to produce a modern science based on an erotic scene of reality."[13] Alchemy, like 'the theory of humours', was one of the accepted beliefs of the age. Alchemy has basically two analogous goals: the means to make gold from base metals, and a universal medicine or elixir that would confer health, and even immortality. But in a wider sense, alchemy was a scientific investigation that sought to understand and to harness the principles of nature for the benefit of man. In its

widest sense, because of its association with religion, the occult and philosophy, it sought to explain man's relation to the cosmos.[14]

Why should England in the seventeenth century in particular have witnessed an upsurge in fascination (whether approving or condemnatory) concerning alchemy? Dissatisfaction with his present situation is the characteristic of man in all ages; in the seventeenth century, at least one material cause may be posited: the development and acceleration of capitalist enterprise. Under the nascent capitalistic system, a great many Jacobean people, either disadvantaged and powerless, or newly accustomed to upward mobility felt all the more keenly the three causes that have excited the discontent of humanity, as defined by Charles Mackay: causes such as death, toil, and ignorance of the future. In *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, Mackay summarizes the three causes as "the doom of man upon this sphere, and for which he shews his antipathy by his love of life, his longing for abundance, and his craving curiosity to pierce the secrets of the days to come."[15] The first has led many people to imagine that they can find means to avoid death, or at least to prolong existence. From this sprang the search for the *elixir vitae*, or the water of life, which led many people in England to pretend to have found it and many more to believe in it. Man's never-ending longing for abundance

provoked the search for the philosopher's stone, in other words, it drove people to attempt to create their own wealth by changing all metals into gold. From man's curiosity to know his future sprang the beginnings of the pseudo-science of astrology (and eventually, the more rational field of astronomy). Thus the emergence of false philosophers, wilful cheats, and above all alchemists who encouraged and preyed on the credulity of man was portrayed on the mid-seventeenth century English stage.

Jonson considered the alchemists to be charlatans, as his epigram "To Alchemist" makes clear:

> If all you boast of your great art be true,
> Sure, willing poverty lives most in you.[16]

Like the modern day racing tipster and company promoter, the alchemist is peddling a get-rich-quick scheme -- but one which has conspicuously failed in his own case. Subtle refers to the zodiac; the planet which ruled the zodiac would be the lord of the horoscope. Mercury as the god of tradesmen, but at the same time the god of thieves would attract Drugger. Subtle tells Drugger that he will be very successful and that he deserves to be treated with respect, thus Subtle poses civic dignity on Drugger, during his character-reading and fortune-telling from the physiognomy:

The thumb, in chiromancy, we give Venus;

The forefinger to Jove; the midst to Saturn;

The ring to Sol; the least, to Mercury,

Who was the lord, sir, of his horoscope,

His house of life being Libra, which foreshow'd,

He should be a merchant, and should trade with balance.

(I, iii, 51-56)

Jonson rails against alchemy, defining it as "an art that abuses nature," as well as repeating the charges of cozening and cheating. As Peter Bement claims, "alchemy itself is a metaphor for the way in which the confidence trick 'changes the species of things.'"[17] Since an education in the humanist tradition, itself barely free of Ptolemaic and Aristotelian scholasticism, was unlikely to prove the philosophic basis of alchemical theory, faith in alchemy, for Jonson, cannot be disparaged as anachronistic ignorance. Instead, it becomes a potent metaphor (or synecdoche) for human gullibility. Surly, in Act II, scene iii, compares the artificial hatching of eggs in an incubator with the 'artificial' hatching of gold from baser metals in a furnace. Surly's own irreverence regarding the solemn mysteries of alchemy is emphasized by the use of the 'aside' convention, which makes the play all the wittier and more febrile:

Subtle: Ha' you set the oil of *Luna* in *Kemia*?

Face : Yes, sir.

Subtle: And the philosopher's vinegar?

Face : Ay.

Surly : (Aside) We shall have a salad.

(II, iii, 98-102)

Surly's function in the play is to present the audience with commentary from a superior vantage point. "He not only emphasizes the victims' foolishness but also exposes the limits of the rogues' knowledge and suggests a standard judgment that transcends their blinkered sharpness."[18] Surly realizes that Subtle is cozening Sir Epicure Mammon and compares Subtle to a polecat ferret driving the rabbit -- Sir Epicure -- into the hay, since his tricks are so obvious: "O, this ferret is rank as any polecat." (II, iii, 80)

Subtle refers to Face's sophistry which exemplifies the Jacobeans desire to deceive others for their own benefit, following the teachings of the earliest glimmerings of the capitalistic system.

Subtle: I know y'were one could keep

The butt'ry-hatch still locked and keep the chippings,

Sell the dole beer to aqua-vitae men,

The which, together with your Christmas vails

At post and pair, your letting out of counters,

Made you a pretty stock, some twenty marks,

And gave you credit, to conserve with cobwebs

Here, since your mistress' death hath broke up house.

(I, i, 51-59)

A similar kind of relationship to that of Volpone and Mosca is obtained between Face and Subtle; each completing the other. Jonson makes use of the power relations (master and servant, teacher and acolyte, and clown and zany) in *The Alchemist*, once again. The characters act according to the teachings of a machinery of commerce not so different than modern capitalism. On the surface the two seem to support each other, but they work for their own benefits:

Face: When all your alchemy and your algebra,

Your minerals, vegetals and animals,

Your conjuring, coz'ning and your dozen of trades,

Could not relieve your corpse with so much linen

Would make you tinder, but to see a fire;

I ga' you count'nance, credit for your coals,

Your stills, your glasses, your materials,

Built you a furnace, drew you customers,

Advanc'd all your black arts; lent you beside,

A house to practice in.

(I, i, 38-47)

Face's explanation carries overtones of his self-sacrifice, but actually he works for his own aim. The quarrel, as Doll calls "faction," between Face and Subtle is stopped by Doll, who acts as the go-between and advises them to "work close, and friendly," no matter how different are their ideals.

The other characters of the *The Alchemist* are drawn from a cross-section of Jacobean society quite familiar to its audience and can be seen as a representation of the decline of the 'common weal' and all its 'estates.' Sir Epicure Mammon, for example, belongs to the estate of knighthood, its ideals of faith, self-discipline and service undermined by the pursuit of money. His profoundly insincere projection of philanthropic schemes well exemplifies the decaying of social obligation in an upper class which paid lip service to Christian and courtly values, but which was motivated by greed. Tribulation and Ananias, the representatives of the church, eagerly abandon religious principle for money. They promote not social stability but political revolution. Dapper, a clerk, proposes to abandon his respectable profession for the

pursuit of riches at the gambling table. Drugger is a classic case of post-feudal "upward mobility": he intends to circumvent the merchant's normal course of advancement through the livery of his company by marrying into the landed gentry. Kastril, the landed gentleman is, meanwhile, contemplating the sale of his land to finance a career as a city gallant. There is no doubt that these characters represent the abandonment of long extant mores regarding the behaviour appropriate to each social class and profession, and this shift in attitudes is linked (either as the symptom or -- metaphorically -- the cause) to the endemic corruption of the age. However, despite the gulls' folly, there is still something dynamic about them.

The relation of social mobility to further excessive desires emerges with great clarity, with all the characters' common ideal of attaining wealth and position (as in Kastril's case). Jonson refers not only to correspondences between the hierarchies found in society, but also the relation between the universe and the body. The Renaissance of "the great chain of being" which links all things from God down to the lowest inanimate matter echo Jonson's view of maintaining the order of the whole society. Everything is fixed in a complex web of relationship to everything else. Processes and relationships can be seen as analogues of other processes and relationships. The play takes a complex, ironic

and often ambiguous view of urban life, combining traditional strategies of satire with a sense of excitement at the new men, and the new kinds of power, operating in the amoral world of the city. It is based on the mockery of folly as the credulousness of each victim is exploited, and the play ends with their being tricked one by one giving their wealth or possessions for illusory gains, to find themselves poorer but perhaps wiser at the end. The audience, on the other hand witnesses their punishments and learns through their situations (follies).

In the fourth act, Doll assumes the role of a mad woman, which she plays magnificently. Having totally internalized the business ethic, she easily slips into disguise and starts acting, in her fit of talking:

Doll : For after Alexander's death -

Mammon: Good lady -

Doll : That Perdicas, and Antigonus, were slain,

The two that stood, Seleuc' and Ptolemy -

Mammon: Madam.

Doll : Make up the two legs, and the fourth Beast.

That was Gog-north, and Egypt-south, which after

Was call'd Gog Iron-leg, and South Iron-leg -

Mammon: Lady -

(IV, v, 1-7)

T.C. YÜKSEKÖĞRETİM KURULU
DOKÜMANTASYON MERKEZİ

Foucault defines madness as having as "many faces as the world has characters, ambitions and necessary illusions."[19] Doll in this scene exemplifies the "madness of vain presumption" as Foucault refers to it, since in this case the mad person has a delusive attachment that enables him to grant him all the qualities, all the virtues he lacks. While referring to the four generals -- Perdicas, Antigonus, Seleucus and Ptolemy -- of Alexander the Great, Doll uses respectable language and her speech is rife with allusions to the religious ideal of the original Christian community.

Throughout the play, puns on religious terminology continuously draw attention to the ways in which proto-capitalism debases and contaminates religious discourses. In the second act, Subtle calls the Puritan deacon Ananias his Anabaptist, waiting for his visit to Subtle's dream world:

Subtle: What, more gudgeons!

Doll, scout, scout; stay, Face, you must go to the door.

'Pray God, it be my Anabaptist.

(II, iv, 18-20)

Subtle enjoys gulling this representative of "the holy brethren / Of Amsterdam, the exil'd saints.":

Subtle: This fellow is sent, from one negotiates with me
About the stone, too; for the holy brethren
Of Amsterdam, the exil'd saints: that hope
To raise their discipline by it.

(II, iv, 28-31)

With a new tune, new gesture, but old language Subtle invents a new intrigue to put himself above Ananias, and thus to make Ananias admire him:

Subtle : Who are you?
Ananias: A faithful brother, if it please you.
Subtle : What is that?
A Lullianist? A Ripley? Filius Artis?
Can you sublime and dulcify? Calcine?
Know you the sapor pontic? Sapor styptic?
Or what is homogene, or heterogene?
Ananias: I understand no heathen language, truly.
Subtle : Heathen, you Knipper Doling?

(II, v, 6-14)

He accuses Ananias of being a follower of Knipper Doling who was one of the leaders of the Anabaptist rising in Munster, in 1534, as Ananias

does not understand Hebrew words mixed with the alchemical jargon. Finally, at the end of the scene, when he discovers his name, Subtle gets rid of Ananias, since in the Bible, in Acts, V.I-II Ananias tried to cheat the Apostles:

Subtle: Out, the varlet
That cozen'ed the Apostles! Hence away,
Flee, Mischief; had your holy consistory
No name to send me, of another sound,
Than wicked Ananias?

(II, v, 73-77)

Subtle wants Ananias to "send [his] Elders / Hither, to make atonement for [him]. (II, v, 77-78) Tribulation Wholesome, the hypocritical Puritan pastor appears in the third act with the accompaniment of Ananias, and believes that Subtle's work can be used "Against the menstruous cloth, and rag of Rome" (III, i, 33):

Tribulation: When as the work is done, the stone is made
This heat of his may turn into a zeal,
And stand up for the beauteous discipline,
Against the menstruous cloth, and rag of Rome.

(III, i, 30-33)

Tribulation's speech is filled with catchphrases of Puritanism. By using the phrase "rag of Rome" he refers to puritans satirically compared to a female garment, as Rome is the "Scarlet Woman" of Revelation, xvii. Another obvious anti-Catholic reference is Ananias' objection to Subtle's use of the term "Christmas," correcting him by saying he should use "Christ- tide," instead. (III, ii, 43-44)

When Subtle advises Tribulation and Ananias that they must use tunes and bells to deceive people as the Church does Ananias resists once more by playing a pun on the words tune and bell: "Bells are profane: a tune may be religious." (III, ii, 61) Finally he overtly expresses his idea related to Alchemical and non-Puritan religious discourses:

Ananias : I hate traditions:

I do not trust them -

Tribulation: Peace.

Ananias : They are Popish, all.

(III, ii, 107-110)

"The attack, here, like the one on the official grounds of divorce in Act V, scene iii of *Epicoene,* is brought to bear on orthodoxy itself." [20]

There is disparity between what people are and what they say they are in the newly established community of *The Alchemist*. Dissimulation, constant hypocrisy, the presentation of oneself as other than one is, is the device used frequently, by Jonson. Disguise is a comic preserve; it is not only a means of continued safety but also a new power of knowledge and comment for those who act according to the rules of plutocracy. Dissimulation is linked with disguise as an additional weapon in the armory of raffish characters who take part in a machinery of commerce not so very different than modern capitalism. It is a force of perversion and malignance (and the way in which disguise and ceremonial dress is linked with sexual activity, first in *Volpone* then in *The Alchemist*. Unmasking is received as a celebratory act by the audience, in both plays. When a Jonsonian rogue reveals how he has duped his victim, and thus unmasks his victim as a pompous or foolish gull, the discomfort and misfortune of the victim is a source of mirth and profit for the rogue and the audience, alike. The audience sides with the dupers, not wishing to align themselves with the cause of those duped and outwitted.

The servant, the quack, and the prostitute become the Captain, the Doctor, and the Lord's sister, or a priest and the Queen of Fairy. A

similar tendency to use disguise as a dramatic artifice in *Volpone* is seen in *The Alchemist*. Volpone's excessive interest in costume and make-up especially when he pretends to be a sick man on his death bed has a parallel to the tricksters changing clothes for each of the six intrigues. Subtle appears as a fortune teller to Drugger, as a "priest of Faery" to Dapper, in the gown of an "innocent father" to Sir Epicure, and in street clothing to the Puritans. Doll dresses as a Great Lady for Sir Epicure Mammon and as "the Queen of Faery" for Dapper. Face is "Captain" to Dapper, Drugger and Surly; he is "Lungs" or "Ulen" to Sir Epicure; he is a servant to Ananias and Kastril, and finally he is Jeremy the butler to Lovewit. By the use of disguise the tricksters keep the intrigues separate from each other. Sir Epicure Mammon, on his way to 'novo orbe' initiates Surly into 'a new world' full of wealth, luxury and fascination and promises him to be "spectatissimi," a respected title of rank in Italian. These high titles which are the tags of the people belonging to the private culture are counterpointed with abusive ones.

As in *Volpone* Jonson uses the dramatic technique of duplication in *The Alchemist*. After the first scene where tension is given by the quarrels of Face, Subtle and Doll the play takes the shape of a group of

circles whirling within each other in an increasing pace. In successive scenes Dapper, Drugger, Sir Epicure Mammon, accompanied by Surly, Tribulation and Ananias, and finally Kastril with his sister, Dame Pliant are introduced. A single kind of dramatic conflict is repeated with numerous customers. Although the pattern of action is the same what makes the play's plot complex is the number of duplications. Face and Subtle are visited five times with five similar requests, by Dapper, Drugger, Sir Epicure Mammon (accompanied by Surly), Ananias (accompanied by Tribulation), and Kastril (accompanied by Dame Pliant). The parade of gulls continues successively in Acts I, II and III. First Dapper, who wants to gamble, appears in Act I, scene ii, and reappears in Act III, scene v; then it is as if he is forgotten till the end of the play. Even in his second appearance he only momentarily occupies the audience's attention. The case with Drugger, the tobacconist, is similar. After his introduction in Act I, scene iii, he is seen on the stage only in Act III, scene vi, promising to bring further customers, Kastril and Dame Pliant to the gullers. He never holds the center of attention again. Sir Epicure Mammon appears in Act II, scenes i, ii, iii, and repeats his aspirations only once in Act IV, scene i. Finally, in Act IV, scene v, he is gulled and dismissed. The Puritans

are introduced in Act II, scene v, and they are seen again in Act III, scenes i and ii. Until their brief appearance at the end of the fourth act they are dropped, in effect. Kastril, after his delayed introduction in Act III, scene iv appears twice in Act IV, scene ii, and in Act IV, scene iv this time accompanied by Dame Pliant, who stays passive till her disappearance in the same scene. Jonson uses the same technique both in *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*: "First the introduction [of the dupes], then an interval of neglect, and finally the gulling." [21] The scoundrels, meanwhile, like Volpone and Mosca, retain a dramatic stature unmatched by the victims. The gullible customers are handled separately by Face and Subtle and each case reaches its climax independently. Although the interest alternates among the three set of characters it is not the variation of the situation, but the ascending degree of gravity of the illegitimate desire that classifies the play as a different example of Jonson's dramatic artifice. The first set of characters aspire merely to be richer; Dapper is a clerk and wants to be a gambler, Drugger is a tobacco-man and wants to get rich quickly, and Sir Epicure Mammon wants to become wealthier than God. The second set of characters, the Puritans Tribulation and Ananias, however, are caricatured representatives of degeneracy in the religious domain of the

age. Kastril and his sister, the rich widow Dame Pliant constitute the third group. They complete Jonson's social criticism. Unlike the others who seek a swifter way to make money than can be found legitimately, Kastril wants to be taught to be a Roaring Boy. Jonson touches upon the economic insecurities of the Jacobean people, themselves undergoing the same sort of transformation in a changing world as is parodied in these cautionary satires upon a newly established capitalistic society: "As many city comedies end on a festive note, the return of Lovewit at the frenzied crescendo of *The Alchemist* appears to restore a healthier moral order to the world of the play." [22] Whereas *Volpone* ends with the severe punishment of the Venetian court, in *The Alchemist* the denounement consists only of Jonsonian cynicism, expressed by Face in a kind of theatrical "meta-confession":

Face: Gentlemen,

My part a little fell in this last scene,

Yet 't was decorum. And though I am clean

Got off, from Subtle, Surly, Mammon, Doll,

Hot Ananias, Dapper, Drugger, all

With whom I traded, yet I put myself

On you, that are my country: and this pelf,

Which I have got, if you do quit me, rests

To feast you often and invite new guests.

(V, v, 162-165)

Face's final address to the audience makes Jonson's criticism clear. His speech shows that Face is among the members of this community who make use of credibility. In the end he survives unpunished and thereby is closer in spirit to carnival than Volpone is: he takes his downfall as part of the game, and acknowledges the newly restored order and the place he occupies in it.

While Tribulation Wholesome and Ananias, angry at the "chemical cozener" for having taken advantage of their gullibility, search for the tricksters, Lovewit searches the interior of his house, which was a very busy establishment, recently, and says:

Here, I find

The empty walls, worse than I left 'em smoked,

A few cracked pots, and glasses, and a furnace.

(V, v, 38-40)

In the world of Jonson's dramatic imagination, a place which is transformed into phantasmagorical asylum (in two senses, as a haven

for deviant fancies, and as a chaotic bedlam) through the uncontrolled desire of enchanted wealth, is restored to its proper position , reintegrated with respectable society. The interval is over; laws previously suspended are reintroduced, making the spirit of carnival an object of safe, if slightly bemused, nostalgia. Society, in *The Alchemist* has been on an intoxicated spree (another kind of "chemical choice"!), and now has little more than a hangover (the dregs of its previous festivity) to show for it.

CHAPTER IV

Carnival's Unexpected Prizes: Jonson's Tender Attitude in *Bartholomew Fair*

Compared with the moral issues in *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, those in *Bartholomew Fair* are the mere follies of a fair instead of the absurd and terrible permutations of greed and lust. The play stands in a mimetic relation to the real Bartholomew fair; the colorful, complex and kaleidoscopic nature of a fair is transformed into a stage play. In the lines taken from "The Prologue to the King's Majesty" Jonson welcomes James I (and the audience) with the promise that he will experience or see a *fair*, rather than a play. The play consists of everything that a fair promises:

> Your Majesty is welcome to a Fair:
> Such place, such men, such language and such ware,
> You must expect: with these, the zealous noise
> Of your land's faction.[1]
>
> (Prologue, 1-4)

As Jonson announces everything is appropriate to the nature and atmosphere of a fair. As a part of his contract with the spectators, in "the Induction on the stage," Jonson asks his audience to expect no better than a fair will afford; what is probable in a fair is absolutely essential in a play about a fair:

> Scrivener: Instead of a little Davy, to take toll o' the bawds,
> the author doth promise a strutting Horse-courser,
> with a leer Drunkard, two or three to attend him,
> in as good equipage as you would wish. And then
> for Kindheart, the tooth-drawer, a fine oily Pig-woman
> with her Tapster to bid you welcome, and a consort of
> Roarers for music... A civil cutpurse *searchant.* A
> sweet Singer of new Ballads... If there be never a
> servant-monster i' the Fair, who can help it?
>
> (lines 119-129)

The author "is loth to make Nature afraid of his plays" (line 130) -- he holds fast to the mimetic principle, even when dealing with a low subject.

If *Bartholomew Fair* is taken as a sophisticated morality play it is seen that its theme is the vanity of human wishes. It is an urbane (if not

overtly urban!) comment on various kinds of folly into which men are likely to fall. Jonson follows his usual stratagems of making fun of human follies, exposing the hypocrisy of the age through the carnivalesque manner, and criticising city-dwellers' competitive capitalistic ideas (pursued with zeal and motivated by vanity). However, his tone here is milder - although he does invite some kind of moral judgment at the end of the play as his city comedies are didactic and corrective. The less trenchant satire of *Bartholomew Fair* seems to show Jonson moving away from the harsh penalty of the tricksters in *Volpone*, via the reestablishment of order in *The Alchemist*, with the unexpected return of Master Lovewit to his own house (Subtle and Face's quondam alchemy shop). Here, all the contradictory schemes and misprisions that set the characters at odds with one another are resolved through a *humanistic* acknowledgements of equality, rather than through corrective justice. In the conclusion Quarlous points out the general morality in his final address to Justice Overdo: "Remember you are but Adam, flesh and blood! You have your frailty, and invite us all to supper." (V, vi, 99-102) " Justice Overdo, by inviting the cast of *Bartholomew Fair* home to dinner, seems to set things aright through his financial and culinary provisions." [2]

The first performance of *Bartholomew Fair* was received enthusiastically by the public with the exclamation "O rare Ben Jonson,"[3] the words which appeared on his tombstone in Westminster Abbey more than twenty years later. The comedy was first praised because of its dramatic reputation but later it attracted the attention of social historians who give accounts of markets and public spectacles and draw on it generously. Jonson's detailed description of the goings-on in the Fair is so vivid that, as Herford and Simpson claim the comedy on the whole is "of an age, and not for all time."[4] Littlewit's opening speech, full of conceits, announces the importance of the day for the play:

> Littlewit: Here's Master Bartholomew Cokes, of Harrow o' th' Hill, i' th' county of Middlesex, esquire, takes forth his license to marry Mistress Grace Wellborn of the said place and county: and when does he take it forth? Today: The four and twentieth of August! Bartholomew day! Bartholomew upon Bartholomew! There's the device.
>
> (I, i, 3-8)

"*Bartholomew Fair* was held annually within the churchyard of the priory on St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24) from the twelfth century."[5] In Jonson's lifetime it lasted two weeks and was opened by the Lord Mayor of London. During its earlier stages it was a national market, primarily for cloth; but soon it became a notorious pleasure-fair as well. As the play itself makes clear, a court of pie-powders -- that is, a local, civil judiciary -- was held in it daily, in order to keep some kind of order. Jonson gives a panoramic view of Jacobean society in *Bartholomew Fair:* the fair is a microcosmic reflection of the wider, vain world. "The fair exposes a human world in an eternal situation, not a series of abstractions in a contrived predicament."[6] Peter Burke in *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* defines carnival in its widest, most general sense as embracing ritual spectacles such as fairs, popular feasts and wakes, processions and competitions.[7] Comic shows, mummery and dancing, open-air amusement with costumes and masks, giants, dwarfs, monsters, and trained animals also take place during the carnival. "It includes various genres of 'Billingsgate', by which Bakhtin designated curses, oaths, slang, humour, popular tricks and jokes, scatological forms, in fact all the "low" and "dirty" sorts of folk humour. Carnival is presented by Bakhtin as a world of topsy-turvy, of

heteroglot exuberance, of ceaseless overrunning and excess where all is mixed, hybrid, ritually degraded and defiled."[8] On the one hand carnival is a specific calendrical ritual, i.e., carnival proper which is controlled by laws, structures and institutions, briefly denied during the carnival's reign. On the other hand, carnival also refers to a mobile set of symbolic practices, images and discourses which are employed through social revolts and conflicts.

If the fair itself is the representation of the vain world, then the characters, whether they go to the fair as participants or are part of it, represent different aspects of vanity. As in other Jonsonian comedies, too, there are "social-climbing characters"[9] who utilize deception and fraud to advance themselves on the social ladder. Very often the trickery turns out to be self-deception:

> Littlewit dotes on his young wife Win; but in his delight in his own emotion, in his sentimentality, he is oblivious to her emotion. Justice Overdo, pleased with his own shrewdness and sense of responsibility, is blind to much surrounding him that needs correction and ends in the stocks. The Rabbi satisfying his appetites loses Dame Purecraft, the rich widow. Each defeated by his own vanity.[10]

Whatever their means are and whoever their victim is the greedy characters aspire to endure through upward mobility in society. The play consists of four central intrigues, each dealing with one kind of vanity. The first intrigue which deals with Adam Overdo's vain search for justice, is the most important, since it is concerned with the largest issue. Bartholomew Cokes' vain attempt to satisfy his appetite is the second one. Littlewit and the Vanity of Human Wit form the third and Zeal-of-the land Busy and the Vanity of Religious Certainty form the fourth intrigue. The play's comment on various kinds of folly and traps into which men are likely to fall reminds the audience of:

> Surely men of low degree are vanity, men of
> high degree are a lie;
> In the balances they will go up;
> They are together lighter than vanity.
>
> (Psalm 62,9)

The characters are presented as the inhabitants of a world where various groups temporarily merge and separate without communicating (since nobody listens to anybody else) and where disguises are easy, therefore the play is full of intrigues. Thus, all the characters are isolated by their zeal and excessive concern for their own wishes, in other words

they are isolated by their vanity. Jonson puts emphasis on individual choice and moral responsibility, that is, upon the role of individual avarice in the venal ills of society.

On St. Bartholomew's Day the Puritan John Littlewit and his pregnant wife, Win-the-Fight, accompanied by Dame Purecraft -- his mother-in-law -- and Rabbi Zeal of the Land Busy -- Purecraft's suitor and their reverend elder -- persuade themselves that they may righteously visit the worldly fair.

Busy : In the way of comfort to the weak, I will go, and eat. I will eat exceedingly, and prophesy; there may be a good use made of it, too, now I think on't: by the public eating of swine's flesh, to profess our hate and loathing of Judaism, whereof the brethen stand taxed. I will therefore eat, yea, I will eat exceedingly.

Littlewit : Good, i'faith, I will eat heartily too, because I will be no Jew; I could never away with that stiffnecked generation. And truly, I hope my little one will be like me, that cries for pig so, i'the mother's belly.

Busy : Very likely, exceedingly likely, very exceedingly likely.

(I, vi, 91-101)

Once there, they meet every variety of cut-purse, rogue, confidence man and rascal; and they meet other visitors like themselves. For two hours the stage is filled with side-shows and by-play. Yet, in spite of the variety of action the play has Jonson's customary symmetry and dramatic duplication.

Unlike the tricksters Mosca and Volpone, and Face and Subtle, Quarlous and Winwife both scheme and judge the schemers: the two of them plot to marry Grace Wellborne, Ward of Adam Overdo, or Dame Purecraft, the rich widow; and they identify themselves as observers, too. (II, v) Grace Wellborne says: "You are reasonable creatures, you have understanding and discourse." (IV, iii, 35-36) Throughout the play they guide the audience's judgments. Like an Attic chorus, they refer to Zeal of-the-Land Busy as a "notable hypocritical vermine," (I, iii, 135-136); they also persuade the audience not to think harshly of Cokes. Indeed, the demarcation between observer (or commentator) and protagonist does not really obtain here. In the milieu of the fair, noone

can remain unconvinced of the folly of others for long, as the following diatribe illustrates:

Littlewit: O! be civil, Master Numps.

Wasp: Why, say I have a humour not to be civil; how then? Who shall compel me? You?

Littlewit: Here is the box, now.

Wasp: Why a pox o' your box, once again: let your little wife stale in it, an' she will. Sir, I would have you to understand, and these gentlemen too, if they please –

Winwife: With all our hearts, Sir.

Wasp: That I have a charge. Gentlemen.

Littlewit: They do apprehend, Sir.

Wasp: Pardon me, sir, neither they nor you can apprehand me, yet. (You are an ass.) I have a young master, he is now upon his making and marring... His foolish schoolmasters have done nothing but run up and down the country with him, to beg puddings... he has learn'd nothing, but to sing catches, and repeat Rattle bladder rattle, and O, Madge. I dare not let him walk alone, for fear of learning vile tunes, which he will sing at supper, and in the sermon-times!

(I, iv, 56-75)

However, castigation of corruption in others can never be as dramatically satisfying as the anagnorisis and peripateia that attend discovery of corruption in oneself. Adam Overdo, the naive Justice of the Peace who has come to discover "enormities," ends in the stocks, punished for his arrogance; and Bartholomew Cokes, the heir from Harrow o' the Hill who will buy anything offered him, is robbed and made sport of. Cokes goes to the fair, appraises the world's offerings, yields to the frivolous and the tawdry. He is a comic representation of a young and naive man whose power of discrimination is tested on the way to wisdom:

> Nightingale: His soul is half-way out on's body, at the game.
>
> Edgworth : Talk of him to have a soul? 'Heart, if he
>
> > have any more than a thing given him instead of salt, only to keep him from stinking, I'll be hanged afore my time, presently: where should it be, trow? In his blood? He has not so much to'ard it in his whole body as will maintain a good flea; and if he take his course, he will not ha' so much land left as to rear a calf within this twelve month.
>
> > (IV, ii, 44; 53-59)

Although Edgworth claims that Cokes has no soul, till the end of the play he amuses the audience -- intelligent and sophisticated people -- who laugh as adults laugh at a child's enthusiasm and amusement in a particular game. As a simple materialist, he suffers from his passion for worldly goods. Till the last lines of the play the carnival amuses him and the audience sympathizes with him, since they are amused both at his delight and the carnival itself.

Win-the-Fight, Littlewit's pregnant wife, on the other hand is drawn to the Fair because of her gluttony, but before she leaves the place she yields to lechery. She illustrates the connection between gluttony and lechery. The relationship is exemplified more clearly in Ursula, the Pig-woman, who is identified as "the fleshly woman" by Zeal-of-the Land Busy:

> Only pig was not comprehended in my admonition, the rest were. For long hair, it is an ensign of pride, a banner, and the world is full of those banners, very full of banners. And bottle-ale is a drink of Satan's , a diet-drink of Satan's, devised to puff us up and make us swell in this latter age of vanity, as the smoke of tobacco to keep us in mist and error; but the fleshly woman (which you call

> Urs'la) is above all to be avoided, having the marks upon her, of the three enemies of man: the world, as being in the Fair; the devil, as being in the fire; and the flesh, as being herself.
>
> (III, vi, 26-36)

Symbolically she represents vice with her appearance, behaviour and language. Her language is abusive, she beats Mooncalf and others, and she gathers in herself "lechery, gluttony, thievery, duplicity and wantonness."[11]

Adam Overdo can be seen as Ursula's counterpart, since justice and reason is to Overdo, what flesh and evil is to Ursula. His position as a judge, a magistrate who is responsible for the restoration of order, makes him a man of power and he sees himself as absolute: "Cloud-like, I will break out in rain and hail, lightning and thunder, upon the head of enormity." (V, ii, 5-6) However, in the end -- as Bartholomew Cokes' man Wasp utters -- he realizes that "He that will correct another, must want fault in himself." (V, iv, 96) While striving for justice he encourages what he wants to correct.

Jonson's insistence on the depiction of the evils of avarice and venality is emphasized throughout the play. In *Discoveries* he expresses

his ideas related to these recurrent themes in the three plays under discussion:

> What petty things they are wee wonder at? like children, that esteem every trifle; and prefer a *Fairing* before their Fathers: what difference is between us, and them? But that we are dearer Fooles, Cockscombes, at a higher rate? They are pleas'd with Cockleshels, Whistles, Hobby-horses, and such like: wee with Statues, marble Pillars, Pictures, guilded Roofes, where under-neath is Lath, and Lyme; perhaps Lome. Yet, wee take pleasure in the lye, and are glad we can cousen our selves. Nor is it onely in our wals, and seelings; but all that we call hapinesse, is mere painting, and guilt: and all for money: What a thinne Membrane of honour that is? and how hath all true reputation falne, Since money began to have any? Yet, the great heard, the multitude; that in all other things are divided; in this alone conspire, and agree: To love money. They wish for it, they embrace it, they adore it; while yet it is possest with greater stirre, and torment, then it is gotten.[12]

Jonson summarizes his criticism of venality and excess in greedy characters' desire to consume, with a dichotomy comparing adult materialism with childish fascination -- a cockshell being no more or less than a marble pillar. The sickness at the heart of the ethical, moral and social manners of Jacobean society is exposed in the carnivalesque milieu of the real fair in *Bartholomew Fair*.

However, *Bartholomew Fair* is an affectionate play: Jonson still suggests that folly, self-deceit, self-aggrandizement, greed and stupidity, and even crime are enduring facts of life, but at least the audience can realize that one should learn to live with them in others as in oneself. Yet, even here, in this wry play, people are set and fixed in moulds of passion and obsession that do not alter. Only Overdo approaches the way in which Shakespeare's characters respond actively, positively and with lasting effect to their tribulations. The other characters of the play are true to Jonsonian type in that they suffer, react to circumstances and are put out of their original humours, but they do not learn anything vital about themselves and their follies. Nor does their view of the world expand sufficiently for them to propose new and happier modes of behaviour. Jonson's milder approach to such characters presented in an actual fair shows not only his skillful

depiction of various types and their zealous attitude, but also his strong belief in the potentiality of greatness of human folly.

The interrelationship between popular culture and class conflict is demonstrated during the carnival period. Carnivals, fairs, popular games and festivals reflect the long battle waged by the popular culture that believe in a particular custom against the State, ecclesiastical and bourgeois authorities. The symbolic reversal of the social order turns rituals into resistance whenever intervention by authority threatens the carnival's revels. Bakhtin's use of carnival centers the concept upon its double nature: Symbolic polarities of official and popular, grotesque and classical are mutually constructed and deformed in carnival. Bakhtin scrutinizes various forms of inverted relations between top and bottom 'a reversal of the hierarchy of top and bottom' in *Rabelais and His World*[13] which takes place during carnival. The carnival, the circus, the gypsy, the lumpenproletariat play a symbolic role in bourgeois culture. Bakhtin's use of the terms "classical" and "grotesque" refer to the definition of high/low culture. The grotesque body is emphasized as a mobile, split, multiple self, a subject of pleasure in processes of exchange.

On an allegorical level *Bartholomew Fair* represents the characters in a limbo, beset by the snares of worldly wishes and the accordance of moral responsibility. In addition to being a fascinating portrait of a particular place -- a marketplace and a fair, in a particular time -- Twenty-fourth of August, Bartholomew Day, the play is also the world complete with its snares, delights and defeats. When Zeal-of-the-Land Busy says, " the whole Fair is the shope of Satan!" (III, ii, 39-40) he means that the place offers more than a fair can; it is more than an actual fair is. "It is Vanity Fair." [14] In *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) John Bunyan defines the fair in the best-known episode of the book "Vanity Fair" as such:

> At this fair are all such merchandise sold, as houses, lands, trades, places, honors, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures, and delights of all sorts, as whores, bawds, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones and what not. [15]

This definition applies to Jonson's depiction of *Bartholomew Fair* as an allegory of worldliness and the corruption of the religious and moral life. The business of buying and selling is accompanied by all sorts of

diversions -- eating, drinking and other fleshly pleasures, as well as spectacles of strange animals, acrobats and other wonders:

Costermonger: Buy any pears, pears, fine, very fine pears!

Trash : Buy any ginger-bread, gilt ginger-bread!

Nightingale : Hey, now the Fair's a filling!

O, for a tune to startle
The birds o' the booths here billing
Yearly with old Saint Bartle!
The drunkards they are wading,
The punks and chapmen trading;
Who'd see the Fair without his lading?
Buy any ballads; new ballads?

Ursula : Fie upon't: who would wear out their
youth and prime thus, in roasting of pigs,
that had any cooler vocation? Hell's
a kind of cold cellar to't, a very fine
vault, o' my conscience!

(II, ii, 32-45)

The tumult and frenzy of the fair makes it a cornucopia, but even the gluttonous Ursula recognises the toll such industry takes on the cooks

who toil, in a most uncarnivalesque inferno, to maintain this garden of earthly delights.

While considering the connection between the fair and 'textualization', and the fair's representation in written texts, Bakhtin deals with two distinct models. In the first model, he assumes that the carnival, the fair and the literary texts of the Renaissance which he termed "carnivalesque" were actually "homologous" different versions or embodiments of a common folk humour and folk culture. The literary texts of the Renaissance bring together a number of diverse domains of symbolic action and discourse, as well as comic shows of the marketplace and comic verbal compositions. The interference of the fair into the literary text is explained by Bakhtin who emphasized the formation of the literary text in the context of popular cultural activities and languages. In the second model, by emphasizing the "dialogic" interrelation of different discourses Bakhtin points out the indispensable connection between the "real" fairs and written literary texts. In *Rabelais and His World* he shows how Rabelais brings the "high" languages of classical learning, medicine, theology and the court into relativizing dialogue with the low languages of the fair and the marketplace.

The language which lacks coherence, used by the characters in *Bartholomew Fair*, reflects the chaotic, valueless and corrupt nature of society, they live in. Jonson explains his views regarding the close relationship between language and society in *Discoveries*:

> There cannot be one colour of mind; an other of the wit. If the mind be staid, grave and compos'd, the wit is so; that vitiated, the other is blowne, and deflowr'd. Do wee not see, if the mind languish, the members are dull? Looke upon an effeminate person; his very gate can fesseth him. If a man be fiery, his motion is so: if angry, 'tis troubled, and violent. So that wee may conclude: Wheresoever, manners, and fashions are corrupted, Language is. It imitates the publicke riot. The excesse of Feasts, and apparell, are the notes of a sick State; and the wantonesse of language, of a sick mind.[16]

Jonson often finds himself unable to harmonize speech in a world he sees and presents as chaotic. The language of Jonson's London anticipates the language of autistic inhabitants of modern city. In the unstable, rapidly changing carnival world of *Bartholomew Fair*, each character pursues his own ends and speaks his own language, but what

is common in their language is the overuse of slang and cant, which stands for the low language of the fair and the marketplace. The characters use the street language of Jacobean London:

> Ursula: Hang'em, rotten, roguy cheaters, I hope to see 'em plagu'd one day (pox'd they are already, I am sure) with lean playhouse poultry, that has the bony rump sticking out like the ace of spades or the point of a partizan.
>
> (II, v, 95-99)

Ben Jonson's plays *Volpone, The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair* written in the early seventeenth century expose good examples both as an homology of the real "carnival", and as a mere thematic presentation of popular custom by an appropriative high culture. *Bartholomew Fair* having the peculiarities of the real fair demonstrates Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque in an overt manner.

CONCLUSION

Clio's Revels: Carnival's Persistent Interruptions in History

Although there are more than two levels in a culture and although there exists a variety of degrees and gradation within the culture, it is striking that the extremes of high and low, and their interaction (whether ludic or in earnest) have a special and very powerful symbolic charge. Jonson, living and writing during the last years of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, comments on political and social changes in his comedies through the depiction of the extremes of high and low within a society gone astray, or awry, or askew. His comedies deal with the symbolic extremities of the exalted and the base, which come out in activities defined by Bakthin as the phenomenon of carnival, or by Foucault as forms of "madness". In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault examines the close relationship between madness and liberty. He follows Cheyne's analysis of wealth, refined food, the abundance all the inhabitants enjoyed, the life of pleasure and ease the richest society led,

as the origin of nervous disorders. "Madness, 'more frequently in England than anywhere else,' is merely the penalty of the liberty that reigns there, and of the wealth universally enjoyed. Freedom of conscience entails more dangers than authority and despotism."[1] Jonson depicts such a society in *Volpone, The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*, the settings of which demonstrate the exuberance of the characters. Jonson's deliberate choice of Venice in the first play, then London in the latter ones serves this aim.

Ben Jonson's three best-known city comedies exemplify the mixing of popular culture and official culture, their modes of behaviour and patterns of language. By taking Venice and London -- paradigms of urban worldliness, then as now, and important less for their actual level of sophistication in the seventeenth century than for the place they occupied in the hearts and minds of Jonson's audience -- as settings Jonson is able to criticize the developing capitalist system while retaining a carnivalesque manner. The characters from the lower stratum merge with those from the higher stratum merge and they are presented in a world that seems to be turned upside down -- a "logical" enough outcome in an era of apparently unrestrained opportunity for the *nascent* bourgeoisie, especially in cities distrusted even by the citizens

of their respective countries/peninsulas for the social whirl of luxury and opportunism they presented to the world -- Jonson, in his comic satires not only deals with the formation of the hierarchies of high and low, but also delineates the processes through which the low troubles the high. The high/low opposition in each of four symbolic domains -- psychic forms, the human body, geographical space and the social order -- is a fundamental basis to mechanisms of ordering in Jonsonian comedies, just as Renaissance culture is a product of the combined symbolisms of those four domains. Transgressing the rules of hierarchy and order in one of the domains may have major consequences in the others, and may rupture the " The Great Frame of Being."

Carnival itself is *not,* of course, a specifically Renaissance concept. Classical bacchanalia, saturnalia and lupercalia all provide interesting precursors (or ancestors) to the kind of medieval carnival Bakhtin describes, and the spirit found within the festivities he describes, and those portrayed, *mutatis mutandis,* in Jonson's plays, obviously persists -- arguably up to the present day. An interesting eighteenth century reflection on the carnival comes from Johann Wolfgang Goethe. While visiting Rome in 1788, Goethe had the opportunity to witness a New Year carnival and he records this

experience in his *Italian Journey*.[2] Goethe begins by noting that the carnival is not an occasion of state, rather it is something that the people 'give themselves.' Beginning with a seemingly endless number of noisy and colorful processions, horse races, and impromptu concerts, the tolling of the city's church bells signal the advent of complete license. In the carnival everything is permissible: it is, he narrates, as if all existing differences between the social orders are temporarily obliterated. Members of all social strata mix, they joke and cavort in a mood of carefree abandon and 'universal good humour' and a tolerant acceptance of all acts of buffoonery and 'torrential merriment' take place. Young men and women, each dressed in the clothes of the opposite sex, interact in a scandalous and provocative manner. Mock officials parade through the crowd, accusing people of horrible crimes and threatening them with arrest and punishment, which only causes laughter among the people. An abundance of elaborate costumes, satirical masks, clowns and fools, musical instruments of every kind, giants and banners completes the scene. Public drunkenness and licentiousness are rife. Goethe concludes by saying that it is not altogether possible to translate carnival into words on the page; such a 'tumult of people, things and movements can only be experienced.'

Goethe's observation is important, since it summarizes the central features of carnival and the interrelationship between popular culture, history and the text. This new approach to the analysis of historical, cultural and literary examples through theoretical and philosophical concepts is set forth by Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and His World*. "In this study, Bakhtin focuses on the cultural dynamics of a particular historical moment -- the collapse of medievalism and the emergence of a more secularized, humanistic society -- particularly as reflected in the [writings] of Francois Rabelais, a figure who for Bakhtin epitomizes the spirit of Renaissance." [3] Taking Rabelais as an example of the French Renaissance, Bakhtin investigates the more than thousand years old development of popular culture. According to Bakhtin, the gradual development of popular culture is very significant in giving form to European literature and culture. The power of carnival to turn things upside down is facilitated by bringing about a reversal of the officially sanctioned precedent, the paradigmatic patterns of thought and codes of behaviour of the people who are the representatives of the dominant ideology, expressed through official and popular culture. Here the mixing of popular and official languages

which occurs in Jonson's texts brings an increased awareness of historicity and the difference between official and non-official cultures.

However, *awareness* of difference is not always a paregoric. A great deal of carnival's power to fascinate resides in its *temporary* nature: it thrives for a short while only. It *returns,* but cannot displace the quotidian order without becoming just as fixed and despotic. Thus even after a feast, there remain irreconcilable differences and a gulf between high and low. The occupants of those positions may change, but the hierarchy preserves itself. Although the world seems to be turned upside down and the roles change during the carnival, the rulers, who were chosen and crowned, specifically for that brief hiatus, reaffirm the status quo. Nothing changes in Jonson's plays: repetition or resumption is the order of the day in *The Alchemist*, as well as in *Volpone*. Jonson's characters do not change. If they have been gulled, they might realize that on this particular occasion they have been foolish, but, for the most part, they do not abandon their folly. Only at the end of *Bartholomew Fair* is there a suggestion that something lasting, true and helpful has been learned, as Overdo recognizes his follies and magnanimously invites his ridiculers home with him on equal terms. In *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* noone, including both the gullers

and the gulls learn or act upon newly learned codes of behaviour. The lack of sympathetic emotional discovery is felt in the audience too, which Jonson states in the Prologue to *The Alchemist*. The Jacobean people might recognize their own follies in these plays, but remain outside, intelligent lookers-on entertained and edified by characters who cannot grow or change. The plays lack any Shakespearean assurance that suffering may result in happiness or at least wisdom.

At the same time, the carnival spirit allows broad, coarse humor and satire which must not be ignored in any discussion of the socio-cultural and political situation of English drama and society in 1590s and 1620s. The characters' greed and avarice are shown through their language. Jonson tends to plumb the depths of social classification in a quickly changing society, the norms and accepted rules of which are under the threat of decadence, because of the people's excessive desire to move upwards in the social scale, their eagerness in believing the unbelievable and various ways of deceiving even the nearest person to themselves.

Volpone, the first play discussed in this dissertation, has numerous analogies to Bakhtin's definition of carnival. Jonson presents a wide variety of characters in *Volpone*, who form a range of diversity

from the lower stratum to the higher. Jonson demonstrates the variety that exists in society. It is not only the number of greedy types, and the way they are brought together, but also the way in which order is reestablished out of disorder that permit the play to be categorized as carnival. Volpone represents the higher stratum, together with the three rapacious characters, Voltore, Corvino and Corbaccio. Mosca is the representative of the ambitious, aspirant, lower stratum. Volpone's opening speech exemplifies his desire for more wealth and is a reversal form of religious oath which puts gold in a sacred place. His language, modes of behaviour and aspirations do not expose the peculiarities of the culture that he, in fact belongs to. Not only the people, who act according to their instinctive behaviours, but also Volpone's henchman, secret-sharer and planner becomes this greedy old man's victim. In the end of the play harmony is re-established by the punishments imposed on the rapacious characters by the Scrutino. Jonson's harsh criticism of the social and economic changes that take place in the seventeenth century Jacobean society, his aim of correcting the vices and follies of people and the severe punishment that he provides for those who deserve it show the playwright's close interest in depicting the current conditions of the country in a sanctioned period, in Bakhtin's terms.

In *The Alchemist* by using alchemy, one of the widely accepted beliefs of the age, Jonson once again directs his criticism of venality in the city of London. The appearance of various characters chosen from different sections of society, the frequent use of the comic device of disguise facilitates Jonson to show people's urge to cheat others, in their vain material pursuit. *The Alchemist* finds plenty to mock in the relationship between pseudo-scientific discourse, i.e., the discourses of the occult and alchemy, and the discourse of capitalism, as well as the discourse of organized religion. However, in the end the contradictions between the world-views espoused and advocated by the two systems of belief are not resolved: if there is any synthesis, it is one of uneasy coexistence rather than intellectual dispute, still less rapprochement. Jonson applies the unities of time and place with great precision in this play, which reminds of the licensed period of carnival. Everything is mixed up, and re-organized within the play's actual time of performance; with the return of the master to the house order is regained as if with the help of a magical power.

Bartholomew Fair, which reflects carnival's peculiarities in the most overt manner, demonstrates Jonson's extraordinary skill of picturing an actual fair with all its participants and wonders. The

unusual atmosphere of the fair full of eccentricities, abusive language, act of selling and buying, eating and drinking as if in a delirium and marginalised figures provides an alternative social space for the characters to act freely, and more than that to escape from the suppression of the authorities. Jonson follows a milder way of satirizing the follies of Jacobeans, or rather the potentiality of human folly in this third play. The reason for this can be the usage of the carnivalesque milieu, since the audience -- even as clever, sophisticated on-lookers -- cannot alienate themselves from the participants of the fair. Thus, they not only sympathize with them but also take lesson from of the exposure of follies.

Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque sheds a beam of light from a different angle on to Jonson's satirical city comedies and becomes an indispensable tool while discussing the socio-cultural and economic content of his plays. Jonson, in *Volpone, The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair* satirizes the religious, economic, social and legal practices of the period between the 1590s and 1620s. He addresses the tendency towards crime, immorality and irreligiosity. By presenting characters dominated/motivated by lust and greed, he tries to exemplify people's deviation from morality and common sense. He protests against

the current corruption of society and thus the carnival experienced in his satires stands in an analogous relation to society's inversion/perversion in a decadent age. The only assurance that Jonson offers in his three comedies is that the old, eccentric, and pompous will be (at least temporarily) defeated by the decorous and witty. He provides the audience with a pragmatic assertion, which affords much laughter and contemplation, but the satirist's mission of correcting people seems not to have been completed yet. The audience's only possible reaction, in carnivalesque spirit, is to prove that they do indeed have spleens about them: laughter is as much acknowledgement as release, and the onus of generosity is much on the spectator as on the author, even in a more redemptive comedy such as *Bartholomew Fair*. This may make Jonson a more curmudgeonly figure than one might expect from the English Renaissance, but it also makes him a true Master of Ceremonies amid all the revels, not all of them innocent or carefree, of carnival.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1] John Sturrock defines Structuralism as a local phenomenon which has taken root in a small number of intellectual disciplines: most influentially in linguistics, in social anthropology, in history, in literary studies, in film studies, in psychoanalysis, and in certain branches of philosophy. Two aspects of Structuralism are presented by Sturrock as a particular set of ideas applicable and an assertive intellectual movement aiming to persuade the other allegiances that its methods are the soundest and most inspiring in the study of language, history, literature and the like. He suggests that the readers should acquire literary understanding the way they once acquired linguistic understanding in order to achieve the level of readily intuition that will lead to a works themes. "And literary understanding can reasonably be seen as structure- dependent: the structures of literature determine not *what* we understand when we read but *how* we understand it." (John Sturrock, *Structuralism* [London: Paladin, 1986] 122).

[2] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (London: M.I.T Press, 1968) foreword, x.

[3] Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 58.

[4] Michael Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique : M.M. Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1992) 45.

[5] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. R.W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973) 133.

[6] Bakhtin, *Problem's of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 148.

[7] Bakthin, *Rabelais* 73.

[8] Clair Wills in her essay, "Upsetting the Public: Carnival, Hysteria and Women's Texts" claims that "the opening up of the carnivalesque is ultimately achieved through literature," an idea which is deduced from Bakhtin's emphasis on literature's power to communicate festive forms. The disruptive possibilities of hysteria and the "hysterical" text can be related to the particular relationship to time and history which Bakhtin describes as the sign of carnival festivity. "Carnivalesque time is aware of 'timeliness' and crisis in the version of history which it presents." For Bakhtin, carnivalesque time looks to the past and future as opposed to the present. Unlike the official feast in which the link with time has become formal, and change and moments of crisis are relegated to the past, popular festive forms harness the "timeliness" of past events in order to project a utopian time: "Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed." The social force of carnival which is seen by the presence of an "upside-down world" in the discourse of the hysteric is to be linked to the popular culture's attempt to redefine itself as being as powerful as the official culture. (See Clair Wills, "Upsetting the Public: Carnival, Hysteria and Women's Texts," *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, eds. Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd [Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989] 131-132).

[9] Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 435-436.

[10] Aristotle in *The Poetics* differentiates between the three kinds of poetry in terms of the kinds of "mimesis" or imitation they offer. All poetry, he argues, though it differs in terms of the form, content and manner of imitation, imitates men in action and these men are good, base, dishonest, i.e., either better or worse than ourselves. Thus, he explains the distinction between comedy and tragedy according to their purposes: the aim of comedy is to represent men as worse, that of tragedy as better, than in actual life. Men are naturally imitative, they enjoy imitating and learn by imitation. He points out that even the imitation of repulsive things, such as lower animals and corpses, can give us pleasure simply by its minute exactness.

[11] Herford and Simpson, ed. *Ben Jonson* 8 vols. (London: Oxford, Clarendon P, 1925) 4: 408.

[12] In *Sejanus* -- a deviant culture in which the multitude are capable only of self-interest and rapaciousness if they have any spirit, passive lazy brutishness if they have none -- they are keen to herd together against a common foe, but only *after* the yoke of tyranny has been lifted: while a tyrant is in power, they bleat, like Laco, "Would he would tell us whom he loves or hates That we might follow, without fear or doubt," (Act IV, lines 424- 425) and when that tyrant falls, they mob him with "furious diligence, for fear / Their bond-men should inform against their slackness." (Act V, lines 783-784) Noone wishes to be accused of deviance -- in the interests of self-preservation and an easy life, "The eager multitude (who never yet / Knew why to love, or hate, but only pleased / T'express

their rage of power," (Act V, lines 759-761) turn what should *be* carnival celebration into the opportunist tumult of King Mob.

[13] Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels* (London: Macmillan, 1991) 1.

[14] Robert E. Knoll, *Ben Jonson's Plays: An Introduction* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1964) 7.

[15] Further reference will be made to Foucaut later. For now, it is enough to note that such suppression is of course just as likely -- if not more so -- to occur in an age of decadence and uncertainty as in a period of tranquillity. Madness and irrationality, recently valorized and reinterpreted as natural Dionysiac impulses, were eschewed by people until the eighteenth century. With philosophers like Nietzsche and de Sade these subjects were reassessed, and incorporated overtly into the Western tradition. The Renaissance view, quite to the contrary, was that such impulses should be restrained.

[16] See L.C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1951) 7-8.

[17] Dutton, 2.

[18] Knoll 7.

[19] Ben Jonson, *Every Man In His Humour*, ed. Martin Seymour- Smith (London: New Mermaids, 1988) 7.

[20] C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 170.

[21] Lewis 170.

[22] Robert Burton, "The Anatomy of Melancholy," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams et al., 4th ed., 2 vols. (New York: Norton, 1979) 1: 1650.

[23] Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* 316.

[24] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: AMS P, 1973) 137-138.

[25] David Patterson, *Literature and Spirit: Essays on Bakhtin and His Contemporaries* (Kentucky: The UP of Kentucky, 1988) 5.

[26] Patterson 6.

[27] Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 11-12.

[28] Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 12

[29] Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 66.

[30] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1972) 151.

[31] Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 109.

[32] Gardiner 46.

[33] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 137.

[34] Gülsen Canlı, "The Underworld in Shakespeare's Time," *The Tenth All-Turkey English Literature Seminar Shakespeare and His Time Proceedings*, (Ankara: Meteksan, 1990) 33.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1] Harry Levin, *Playboys and Killjoys* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987) 155-156.

[2] Herford and Simpson, 3: 432.

[3] Douglas Bruster, "David Mamet and Ben Jonson: City Comedy Past and Present," *Modern Drama* 33.3 (1990): 345.

[4] Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, ed. F.H. Mares (London: Methuen and Co, 1986) 9. Further references to the text of *The Alchemist*, which will be made parenthetically, are to this edition.

[5] Gail Kern Paster, *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakeapeare* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1985) 150.

[6] Paster 152.

[7] Paster 152.

[8] Lewis Mumford "Utopia, The City and The Machine" in Frank E. Manuel, ed. *Utopias and Utopian Thought* (London: Souvenir P, 1966) 13.

[9] "The city that first impressed the image of utopia upon the mind was made possible only by another daring invention of kingship: the collective human machine, the platonic model of all later machines." (Mumford in Manuel 15.)

[10] Mumford in Manuel 20.

[11] Bruster 334.

[12] Bruster 335.

[13] There was an increasing rise of Puritanism in the seventeenth century, in England. The dissatisfaction with the religious affairs appeared and people seemed to be divided into two camps: Royalists and Puritans. English nationalism was a part of European reaction to the Catholic Church. The Puritans were on the side of revolution and they did not want to be governed by the church, anymore. They were called the non-conformists and were divided into a number of sects. No matter which sect they belong to -- the Grownists, the Presbyterians, the Bectists or the Quakers -- they were Puritans. Puritanism was an inclusive term which apply to all these sects. The Puritans wanted to purify Christianity by cutting off the rituals.

[14] Herford and Simpson, 3: 424.

[15] Bruster 335.

[16] Robert N. Watson, *Ben Jonson's Parodic Strategy: Literary Imperialism in the Comedies* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard UP, 1987) 113.

[17] One of the most outstanding feature of Jonson's comedies is his didactic purpose. The synthesis between Jonson's insistence on

moral responsibility and the dramatic convention of tragic resolution makes the main character's severe punishment at the end of the plays artistically and ethically inevitable. The scoundrels in the plays -- who represent the rebellious instincts in Renaissance terms, or the repressed feelings (as we would term them, with the benefit of post-Freudian hindsight), of the people who are controlled by the rules and regulations of society -- are depicted unsympathetically, in order to contribute to Jonson's didactic purpose. "According to Jonson, ending a play with a stinging moral message is the sacred duty of the playwright." (David Farley-Hills, *Jacobean Drama: A Critical Study of the Professional Drama, 1600-1625* [Houndmills: Macmillan, 1988] 32.) He thought of himself as a playwright writing with Horation aims. He expected his plays to be *dulce et utile*, pleasing and morally useful. His central conviction was that drama should be didactic, for the audience at least: interestingly Jonson's major *characters* do *not* learn from their experience.

[18] Patterson, 13.

[19] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981) 159.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1] Arnold P. Hincliffe, *Volpone: Text and Performance* (London: Macmillan, 1985) 19.

[2] Hincliffe 18.

[3] After all, Volpone lives in a society which is shown as being equally degenerate as the members of it. L. C. Knights reminds us of the relationship between literature and society, of the development of capitalist enterprise in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period in *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*. "The large amounts of gold and silver which came from the New World helped the rise of financiers and opportunists." The expenses of court life and the importance given to luxury in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, was not confined to the court only. Jonson creates a microcosm in the house of Volpone, and directs his criticism to the characters in *Volpone*, who are the representatives of contemporary men. That means the vitality of Jonson's plays draws on a popular source. Deceiving people, fooling and gulling them, taking their money without the intention of giving it back, legacy-hunting and

opportunism were the usual practices of the age, and people very easily adapted themselves to this new system, which was imposed on them as a result of the general rush after wealth. (L.C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* [London: Chatto and Windus, 1951] 25).

[4] Hincliffe 20.

[5] Alvin B. Kernan and Richard B. Young, eds., *Ben Jonson's Volpone or The Fox* (London: Yale UP, 1965) 1.

[6] This gold-centered world is a grotesque image of the materialistic culture of the Renaissance, and as will be seen, and as Alvin B. Kernan states in the Yale edition of the play, the Jonsonian satire achieves width by frequent reference to contemporary professions and practices: The courtiers who "ply it so for a place" at court; the usurers who coffin man alive for debt; the mill owners who grind "oil, corn. or men" into powder; the doctors who "kill with as much license as a judge"; the Puritans who sometimes "devour flesh, and sometimes one another"; the projectors -- i.e., entrepreneurs -- with such fantastic commercial schemes as "waterworks in perpetual motion." (Kernan and Young 6).

[7] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 87-88.

[8] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 162.

[9] Hinchliffe 20.

[10] Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. David Cook (Great Britain: Methuen and Co, 1986) 61. Further references to the text of *Volpone*, which will be made parenthetically, are to this edition.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1] David Farley-Hills, *The Comic in Renaissance Comedy* (London: Macmillan, 1981) 52.

[2] Herford and Simpson, 8: 572.

[3] Herford and Simpson, 8: 639.

[4] Sir Philip Sidney, "An Apology for Poetry," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams et al., 4th ed., 2 vols. (New York: Norton, 1979) 1:501.

[5] Herford and Simpson, 8: 643-644.

[6] Jonas A. Barish, ed. *Jonson: Volpone* (London: Macmillan, 1972) 12.

[7] Closely connected to folk laughter is the marketplace speech or "Billingsgate language." In *Rabelais and His World* Bakhtin suggests that folk culture is characterized by a system of speech patterns which is different from those of the church and the ruling classes. During carnival and major feast days this form penetrates into every level of society. It can be found in an oath or prayer which parodies and travesties ecclesiastical forms of address. Such

an abusive language can exemplify both extreme praise and exaggerated derision. For Bakhtin such colloquial oaths and profanities are a codified form of verbal protest, "a repudiation of officialdom through the violation of sanctioned verbal forms of expression." (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* 187-188.) Or, as Gardiner puts it,

> Abuses, curses, profanities, and improprieties are the unofficial elements of speech. They were and are still conceived as a breach of the established norms of verbal address, they refuse to conform to conventions, to etiquette, civility, respectability. These elements of freedom, if present insufficient numbers and with a precise intention, exercise a strong influence on the entire contents of speech, transferring to another sphere beyond the limits of conventional language. Such forms, liberated from, hierarchies, and prohibitions of established idiom, become themselves a peculiar argot and create a special collectivity, a group of people in familiar intercourse, who are frank and free in expressing themselves verbally. The marketplace crowd such a

collectivity, especially the festive, carnivalesque crowd at the fair. (Gardiner 50.)

[8] Sarah Beckwith, "Ritual, Church and Theatre," *Culture and History: 1350-1600*, ed. David Aers (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) 78.

[9] Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique* 45.

[10] Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 89.

[11] Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 435.

[12] Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, "Introduction," ed. F.H. Mares (London: Methuen and Co., 1986) xxvi.

[13] Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psycholoanalytical Meaning of History* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1985) 99.

[14] Many learned and clever men of Elizabethan and Jacobean England spent their time and energies in the pursuit of alchemy, as had intellectuals of the calibre of Roger Bacon before them. Dr. Dee and Edward Kelly were among those who very early manifested enthusiasm for the search of the philosopher's stone. "Dr. Dee studied alchemy, astrology, and magic, and thereby rendered himself obnoxious to the authorities at Cambridge." (Charles Mackay, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*

[Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1995] 171.) His assistant, Edward Kelly, like himself, was very much interested in the subject. This issue was also dear to the court: James I often applied to Dr. Dee to take his advice, as a fortune-teller and buy his books. John Dee died in 1608, two years before *The Alchemist* was performed. Tom Hayes in *The Birth of Popular Culture* explains the close relationship of Dr. Dee and Edward Kelley to Subtle and Face:

> One result of [the] mixture of occult and theological discourses is epitomized in the careers of John Dee and Edward Kelley, who presented themselves as geniuses capable of producing gold and talking to angels. In 1610, the year Jonson reconverted to Anglicanism, he used the careers of Dee and Kelley as models for two of the three main characters in *The Alchemist*. Disdain for Dee and Kelley was a result of popular opposition to the attempted revival of what Frances A. Yates has characterized as the outmoded "Tudor religious and chivalric imperialism" responsible for "the uneasiness of James' reign."

(Tom Hayes, *The Birth of Popular Culture: Ben Jonson, Maid Marian and Robin Hood* [Pennsylvania: Duquesne UP, 1992] 20.)

Describing the dominance of new forms of commercial activities in the economic history of the Elizabethan and early Stuart period, L.C. Knights says:

> 'Freedom' and 'progress' imply a wholesale moral judgment that can only hinder [a] kind of discrimination [in the Tudor period.] One should [not] substitute for the Whig view a nostalgic glorification of the more remote past, picturing the traditional order as an ideal harmony shattered by the assaults of a ruthless 'commercial spirit.' Relevant discrimination is not a simple or straightforward process. The traditional economic organization under Elizabeth affected the quality of individual lives inasmuch as it prescribed, or allowed, certain patterns of living, whilst excluding others, and fostered certain ideals or general moral attitudes. (L.C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* [London: Chatto and Windus, 1951] 89.)

[15] Charles Mackay 99.

[16] Herford and Simpson, 8: 29.

[17] Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* ed. F H. Mares (London: Methuen and Co, 1986) 13.

[18] Farley-Hills, *Comic in Renaissance* 73.

[19] Foucault, *Madness* 30.

[20] Hayes 25.

[21] Knoll 121.

[22] Bruster 337.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1] Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. E.A. Horsman (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1979) 3. Further references to the text of *Bartholomew Fair*, which will be made parenthetically, are to this edition.

[2] Bruster 337.

[3] Knoll 146.

[4] Herford and Simpson, 2: 145.

[5] Knoll 146.

[6] Knoll 154.

[7] Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: New York UP, 1978) 178-207.

[8] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (New York: Cornell UP, 1986) 8.

[9] Bruster 341.

[10] Knoll 151.

[11] Knoll 157.

[12] Herford and Simpson, 8: 607-608.

[13] Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 81.

[14] Knoll, 152.

[15] John Bunyan, "The Pilgrim's Progress," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams et al., 4th ed., 2 vols. (New York: Norton, 1979) 1: 1820.

[16] Herford and Simpson, 8: 592-3.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

[1] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (London: Routledge, 1992) 213.

[2] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Italian Journey, 1786-1788* (London: Penguin Books, 1970)

[3] Gardiner 45.

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