

Dr. Vandana Singh

P.G. Dept of English  
Maharaja's College

## Johnson's Use of Character Symbolism in Volpone

Johnson's satirical comedy 'Volpone' is built on a very simple

story; of a rich <sup>old</sup> man whose master-passion is gold and whose hobby is making fun of others. Being a childless widower many greedy people are after his money, and want to win his favour by showing false love and presenting to him Volpone gifts and other valuables. Volpone knows their motive behind their love and enjoys a violent laughter, by playing false tricks on them. These greedy people represent the whole social group that is gravely affected by the ~~passion~~ <sup>passion</sup> of avaricious <sup>for huge wealth</sup> ~~passion~~. Mosca plays Volpone's confidante and helps him to exploit the weakness of the Voltore, Corbaccio and Lovino, who are mean, greedy people. In the end however, the dupers as well as the duped reap the consequences of their foolishness, which is handled by Johnson's skilful plot weaving.

Johnson has granted all the characters of the play certain symbolisms on account of their mannerisms and they reveal the satiric attitude of the dramatist, <sup>also</sup> and the comic truth of the nature of Volpone and his clients, the legacy hunters, who are according to Volpone "Vulture, kite, raven and crow all my birds of prey."

The beginning of the play at once focusses our attention on the humour of Volpone, who has the heady quality of a fox. His worship of gold and his plan to increase it by receiving presents and gifts from his false friends, ~~constitute~~ <sup>over</sup> projects his clever and a master-planner brain. He plays a passive role, to Mosca, who carries out Volpone's plans exactly as desired and gets marvellously well done. The parasite is extremely resourceful and without him Volpone's plans would not have worked out. The artist in Volpone stands sterner than the money spinner. And he takes active pleasure in his <sup>deceitful</sup> ~~contrivances~~ <sup>practices</sup>, for his private satisfaction, rather than for any great gain.

Small name instantly my Vulture, Crow,  
Kavens, come flying hither, on the news,  
To peck for carion, my she-wolf, and all  
freedy, and full of expectations -

when his plans of flattery prosper, Valpone rewards "Asca for it."

In fact a common miser could never have laid himself open to  
being cheated by his own office, as does Valpone when he puts of Asca's  
name to the will, simply in order to enjoy the last drop of his  
triumph. He has no real attachment for wealth, and instead uses  
it to tempt the legacy-hunter. He makes them naked, nest-  
fallen and totally desperate till the end, but the tables are turned  
and the fox is trapped himself. But he begs for no mercy and  
rather takes it sportingly. His fault lies in his two weaknesses

① His weakness for the fair sex, where he wants to tempt Celia  
and use her for his carnal desires:

"Why droops my Celia?" WDC

There hast, in place of a base husband, found THBH

A worthy lover, use thy fortune well, WLFW

With security and pleasure" ... SP

He tempts her by giving the riches of his wealth and gold. And

② secondly his excessive love for ridiculing and satirizing the  
greed for gold. Rightly he points out, that gold can corrupt anybody,  
a lawyer, a jealous husband, an old crippled man, a faithful  
servant, and can purchase honour, modesty, shame, power  
and position. His pursuit of gold meets its defeat only in the

hands of Celia who is not ready to compromise her chastity at  
any cost. It is in these two aspects that she surpasses Asca  
in <sup>her</sup> villainy. She stands to be the contrast to

If there is any villain in the play it is Asca.

Helping Valpone carry out his plan, he himself is unable to  
keep himself away from greed of gold and, duped Valpone  
to gain his wealth. "Wly Fox,

Is out of his hole, and ere he shall re-enter

I will make him languish in his borrow'd ease!

... let his sport pay for't. This is call'd the Fox-trap?

However he too like his master is deprived of his life. He is an  
extra-ordinary parasite, yet we do appreciate him for his wit  
and ready <sup>brains</sup> mind. As to some critics he stands for V's evil genius.  
He becomes a representative and universal figure, at once both  
typical and yet something more than the average self-seeker.

Read: "But parasite or sub-parasite?"

Valore or the vulture is the senior most  
member of the notorious trio of the legacy-hunters, from the  
view point of the power of brain and elegance of tongue. Being a  
lawyer, he completely ignores his rank, for the greed of gold. He  
even has no sympathy for innocent Celia & Bonais and goes to  
any extent in the court, misusing his legal skills and  
rhetorical tongue for the sake of small or huge fees. His  
banishment in the end is indeed the best judgement  
that could be given to a such a villainous pleader. <sup>Through</sup> ~~Seeing~~

\* (being a villain himself, he falls prey to the ill-motives &  
ill-moves of Masca. He is abused of the fact and abuses  
of Masca in court.

Being duped  
by Masca  
he takes  
out his  
frustration on  
them in the  
court by  
abusing  
him  
(Masca).

that \* Out-stript thus, by a parasite; a slave,  
Would run on errands, and make legs for crumbs!  
Well, what I will do - "  $\phi^*$  =

Corbaccio and Corvino is another unnatural  
and hateful creature. For the greed of gold he disinherits his own  
son writing his will in favour of Valpone. He is an old man,  
suffering from gout & palsy and senses as Valpone's -  
crave. He suffers from two vices ① greed for Valpone's legacy  
and ② excessive love for a long life. Valpone's description  
description of his conduct and condition is remarkable,  
whose 'senses' have dulled, their 'seeing', 'hearing', 'eating'  
has failed him yet he wants his youth restored."

Corvino is the worst of the avarice-motivated

legacy hunters. At first he is a very jealous husband, anxiously guarding Celia's chastity. He is a man who is badly compromised by his wife appearing at a public window, to drop her handkerchief, and accuses her of ~~some~~ adultery in spite of her innocent pleadings. But ~~it is~~ this jealousy husband, for the greed, paid no heed to her request and forces her upon that ailment with magnificence. He even accuses her of being a whore in court. He is punished in the end like the other and in the end a little humanity strikes him and he pleads the court for an ~~everywhere~~ <sup>more</sup> punishment.

"And have mine eyes beat out with thinking fish  
Bruised fruit and rotten eggs - 'Tis well, I am glad  
I shall not see my shame yet."

Lady Politick and Sir Politick are made to seem ~~the~~ <sup>as the</sup> dramatic laughing stock for the readers.

Lady Politick who seems as Volpone's She-wolf seems a regular visitor to Volpone's house. She is unattractive as Valpone says, "Not new:

Some three hours hence - ...

... When I am high with mirth & wine! "

- She appears stupid, funny, vulgar, jealous, ridiculous & is used as a tool by Valpone & Mosca against Celia & Bonario. Sir Politick seems as a great fool, pretender, silly fellow, superstitious and a henpecked husband who is rightly humiliated by Pippine for our fun & laughter.

Celia and Bonario are the ~~two~~ only two virtuous characters in the play. Celia seems to be Jonson's Desdemona, tolerating her husband's tyranny, and begging for forgiveness of her husband's sins.

Corvino

Lady Politick was of the

la 2

Bonario

She firmly resists and challenges Volpone's sweet layned romantic arguments with her modesty & virtue. She rejects Volpone's temptation for a life of legendary love & luxury.

"Gods, these things might move a mind affected G S, T MA  
with such delights, but I whose innocence D I  
I all I can think wealthy, & with the enjoying  
And which, once lost I have not to lose beyond it."

Indeed she is a silhouette in the midst of the dark clouds  
thundering in the firmament of Jonson's comedy of humours,  
Volpone.

Bianco serves as Celia's champion. When Mosca  
tries to tempt him he says,

read " Nay, pray thee know thy way, and leave me;  
I would be loth to interchange discourse  
with such a mate as thou art."

He wishes to save Celia's virtue and expects no reward in  
return. And he protests to <sup>defends</sup> Celia against the false  
charges of murder & rape. The court does justice to these  
two characters in the end.

The drama is essentially a comedy, the  
characters are those of humour, mood or whimsicality  
have only a simple and outward personality significant  
on the stage only. Moreover they have no dimensions.

conclusion

- ① The depth of heart and mind is missing and they
- ② don't admit any change or growth and hence stay in  
the entire play, ~~staying~~ caught by Jonson and  
serving most ~~expressive~~ purpose for the dramatist's purpose.

Jonson's chief defect is that he presents his  
characters too consistently, which is due to the fact that he  
accepts human nature according to the conventional character  
isolation of Latin comedy and also acc. to the Elizabethan  
psychology.

where the matrix is his main life in his particular humour, this  
had led Jonson into another kind of exaggeration of caricature. He  
deceived himself when he said that he was replacing  
the 'stage monsters' by real men & women. He had inclination  
to notice only obvious individual peculiarities, & the  
violent actions of exceptional persons, and ignored the  
fundamental feelings common to mankind, and the feeling  
of love; <sup>and satisfaction</sup> so he never got near to Nature in the classical  
meaning of the word.

~~But the end of~~

~~x x~~