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The University of Oklahoma, Ph.D., 1972
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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

BEN JONSON: PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM AND CREATION

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

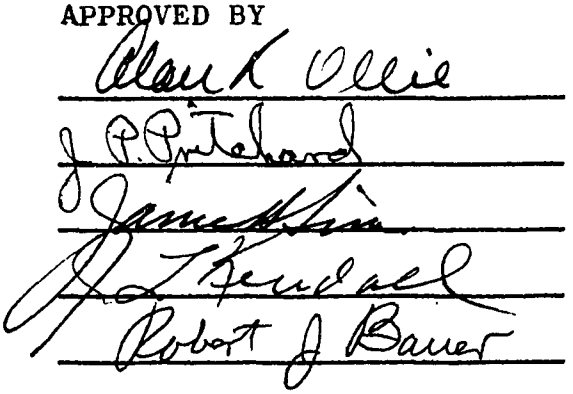
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1972

BEN JONSON: PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM AND CREATION

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PREFACE

The criticism which has collected around Ben Jonson has been suspicious of him both as a critic and as an original creator, unjustly so since he is one of the first English authors to be both an acute critic and a serious playwright, and since definitions of originality may differ according to the predilections of a particular age or the general orientation of a civilization. Efforts to defend him have concentrated on his peculiarly Elizabethan, as opposed to his classical, propensities. These critical opinions are indicative of a trend most apparent since the nineteenth century, which demands the factually prosaic or practical in matters of everyday actuality and approves avowals of spontaneity and originality in literature and art. A split has developed between fact and truth. That Jonson was able to incorporate the factual world in a vision of truth may be one cause for his unpopularity. His plays display a hyper-sensitivity to the external world and they are aggressively opposed to the reliance of the self solely on itself--a tendency begun by the Romantic Movement and still in vogue today.

Viewed in the critical context of his age, Jonson appears as one who illustrates one particular tradition of the mind--legitimate, coherent, and demanding--a tradition inherited from the Greeks, represented primarily by Aristotle, and subsequently a part of Renaissance culture: the rational, analytical tradition, which stands in opposition to the Christianized Platonic tradition of the poet as first of all a creator of ideal truths. This opposition is illuminated by an examination of the critical struggles of the age which involved coping with several key terms or ideas: "nature," "imitation," and "unity of action," the focal one being imitation. Conclusions by Renaissance critics hit two extremes: imitation as copying of earlier authors, and imitation as a function of the poet as a divinely inspired creator of ideal truths. In between these two extremes, there still hovered, in a mist, Aristotle's original statement that art was an imitation (not synonymous with copying) of life or nature, not necessarily idealized. Even when the critics used his phrase, they still ended with the dictum that art should purvey ideal truths, which generally meant idealized situations or characters. This, of course, could result in the overtly moralistic, and the playwrights' violation of this approach to morality gave critics of the drama more ammunition. Jonson stands firmly, and with "originality," in the middle kingdom with "we may improve, but not augment," a

distinction which Sidney, the other chief English critic, does not make. His plays show a distinct opposition to incorporating in nature models not found in nature or truths revealed from extraterrestrial sources. One improves by examining the specimens that exist, not by creating idealized ones, which might flatter an audience into thinking themselves of the same quality.

Jonson's attitudes towards the concepts of nature, imitation, and unity of action are revealed both in his criticism and in his plays. His artistic approach is revealed as one that conceived of form as a function of the rational mind and art as an endeavor of method, in practice as well as theory; like Aristotle he is analytical, empirical, worldly, and ethical, and like Aristotle he construes action as being a creative principle of the order of things. In addition to being concerned with art as truth, he is one of the first English writers to be explicitly concerned with art as form.

He is primarily concerned with comedy, with the "baser sort" of nature, or rather men "worse, or of the same kind," and unity of action is a major element of that technique by which he bestows artistic form on a world of unreason where no form is apparently possible: he creates a rationally comprehensible and coherent world view out of worldly unreason and the resulting chaos.

His plays from The Case is Altered through Every Man

in his Humour and Every Man out of his Humour to Volpone, The Alchemist and Bartholomew Fair illustrate his increasing mastery of form based on certain principles, the primary one being the classical principle of unity, arising from unity of action and its successful correlation with his idea of human nature, represented by the humours theory. In Jonson the classical ideal of unity in all things, including both the universe and art, becomes primarily an artistic principle used to reveal and explore the earthly chaos which violates this unity.

The Case is Altered illustrates how Jonson grapples with plot in the somewhat rudimentary sense of "summary of the action," a Renaissance critical phrase too often meaning a preliminary statement of events to govern the subsequent composition. Using plots not his own, Jonson struggles in this play with the thought and motive that will go with the actions. In the two "humours" plays which follow, Jonson creates characters more obviously on the basis of a guiding principle. In using the humours for comic purposes, he turns from the human condition's ideal possibilities to its contorted probabilities. At this stage, he may seem to focus on character more than action, particularly in Every Man out of his Humour, for in Every Man in his Humour he achieves an artistic balance between character and action not so evident in Every Man out of his Humour where he is exploring the emotional possibilities

of the humour theory. Nevertheless, in both these plays, there is evidence of Jonson's discerning and fulfilling the need not only for a principle of unity in character creation (humours theory) but also for a principle of construction to connect and relate character and action (unity of action) and produce unified, meaningful action in a world where fools and rogues cannot produce rational, and therefore, according to Aristotelian thought, not unified and not meaningful, action.

In Volpone there is an expansiveness of motive and a fulsomeness in thematic content that may bring this play closer to the contemporary Jacobean practice of play writing than to classical example and theory. The principles of character and action and their creation are more fully absorbed in the governing intelligences of the play, Volpone and Mosca, making it suggest the typically Elizabethan focus on a dominant and dominating character. Nevertheless, having granted Jonson's premise of the humours, both Volpone and The Alchemist are examples of "a man is what he is because of his actions." But for Jonson the humours are not just a premise; his plays provide the evidence and justification for something that came from observation and thought, not just an imposed theory. In both plays it is action rather than theory which creates both the characters and their ends: actions both reveal and increase emotional appetites which also feed themselves by the action of

language and become in turn the resulting action.

Jonson could shift the weight of control from unity of character, as in Volpone, to unity of action, as in The Alchemist, to that of place, as in Bartholomew Fair. But consistently present in all these is the principle of unifying action as a creator of the natural or the unnatural, as a universal principle of rational order or irrational disorder. The rational concept of proportioned action in ordered space and time is the governing one, however, and it rather than the "laws" of unity of time and place, creates the boundaries of Ben Jonson's dramatic world.

BEN JONSON: PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM AND CREATION

CHAPTER I

THE CRITICAL CONTEXT: JONSON AND CURRENT CRITICAL ATTITUDES

Contemporary commentators point to the need for more specific assessments of Ben Jonson's achievement in literature when they refer to the careful, conscious complexity of his well ordered plays.[1] At the same time it seems to be taken for granted that some aspects of his work, in particular the humours theory, are already well clarified. The humours theory is an old chestnut, and G. Gregory Smith, for one, in his biography of Jonson, thinks Jonson too much remembered as "the academic and antiquary of Humours."[2] The way in which the humours theory is taken for granted is indicative of the way in which Jonson himself is taken for granted: for his biographers his colorful life and personality may serve as a

[1]Madeleine Doran, Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama (Madison, Wisconsin, 1954), pp. 169, 278, 294.

[2]G. Gregory Smith, Ben Jonson (London, 1919), p. 1.

source of amusement and legend, the blustering bricklayer Elizabethan who barely falls short of being a buffoon;[3] or he may be treated with a certain condescension as an individual of no unusual qualities except for an inclination towards the fustily academic.[4] That he had a powerful mind which helps to account for his artistically constructed plays seems to be the least important consideration; in other words, the treatment of Jonson by intellectuals seems not to value the intellectual and its resultant qualities in a work of art. Men in general turn to those who pull at their heartstrings and thereby perhaps make them think better of themselves than they had thought before. Jonson, of course, cannot call upon that source of understanding and liking, for he did not proceed through the "holiness of the heart's affections."[5]

Jonson, however, amused a good many people in his own day, so despite his critical picture of his own time, perhaps his own era had a greater capacity for and tolerance of both foibles and honesty than later periods. Perhaps also his audience had a greater appreciation, although not necessarily a critically conscious one, of aesthetic

[3]Byron Steel, O Rare Ben Jonson (New York, 1928).

[4]Marchette Chute, Ben Jonson of Westminster (New York, 1953).

[5]From E. M. Forster's essay "What I Believe" (1939).

symmetry than later ages, for whom form has made its popular and threatening appearance in standardization and mechanization: form of any kind has become either effete or repressive and the intellectually abstract is often considered irrelevant; and if it is not either romantically idealistic or cynical, it becomes suspect. On stage the predominant impression of Jonson's plays is that of a symmetry that comes from their creator's holding together a large number of elements in an overall design. This design is wrought with a dignity that comes from a classical consciousness of clear design, and curiously enough it also encompasses the most outrageous slapstick and buffoonery. In general, reacting to the design of his plays seems more dependent on an apprehension of mental activity than on intense feeling or even on a feeling of the rightness of things enacted. It is perhaps a mental activity associated more with mathematics or logic or philosophy, but literature has generally reserved to itself the right of taking all human experience as its province, and that for some time has included not just the appetitive and emotive propulsions of feeding and sleeping, loving and hating, doubting and affirming, living and dying, but also self-conscious intellectual and critical reflection on the way in which these activities are pursued.

Jonson's personality, as well as his bent of mind and the sphere of his interests, may be another reason for

only a tentative critical approval of his efforts. Boastful and belligerent, vain and pedantic, rude and uncouth, a former bricklayer become a "mountain belly" and "rocky face," with the general appearance of an ill-clad butcher, he presumed to pronounce on moral and aesthetic matters. What strange creatures nature makes. Is it possible that into such a phenomenally gross presence, nature could have placed a powerful intelligence capable of fine distinctions and an innate affinity for an understanding of fine design? How ridiculous of him not to have perceived the absurdity of the dichotomy in his own makeup and to have been properly humbled! But when Jonson talked about the evolution and definition of comedy, perhaps that idea is what he thought he was talking about, and not about pride or pedantry or manners. Despite the observation of a seventeenth century contemporary, a student at a convivial tavern gathering, that Jonson had never read about the boastful man is Aristotle's Ethics, perhaps Jonson found in the Ethics definitions of abstract qualities which did not exclude him.[6]

> Such, then, is the proud man; the man who falls short of him is unduly humble, and the man who goes beyond him is vain. . . . For the unduly humble man, being worthy of good things, robs himself of what he deserves, and seems to have something bad about him from the fact that he does not think himself worthy of good things, and seems also not to know himself; else he would have desired the things he was worthy of, since these were good.
>
> (IV.3.1125a)

[6]Steel, Jonson, p. 146.

> The man who is angry at the right things and with the right people, and further, as he ought, when he ought, and as long as he ought, is praised. (IV.4.1125b)

> For those who are not angry at the things they should be angry at are thought to be fools, and so are those who are not angry in the right way, at the right time, or with the right persons. . . .[7] (IV.4.1126)

Jonson may have found himself in these words; he may have been right, as right as those who have seen only a vain and angry braggart no better than themselves or any other. Such may always be the problem of the elusive properties of abstractions in relation to appearances.

Jonson's plays throughout and his sententiae evince a concern with the "means." By some this might be termed a concern with the common or the commonplace. Herford and Simpson account for his singularity or rarity in the following manner:

> Wherein then does his 'rarity' consist? Obviously it was in part only a relative and conditioned rarity. His contemporaries found him singular because his unmistakable genius was not in fact made on the common Elizabethan or Jacobean pattern. Had he been born two generations later, and written for that England of Dryden to which he seemed the greatest of English dramatists, he would have found himself in a society at some points more intellectually akin than his own.

They further state, "In some very obvious senses, then,

[7]Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, in Introduction to Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York, 1947), pp. 387, 389.

'rare' Ben Jonson is not one of the rarer spirits, but a man built of somewhat common materials, and on no very exalted lines."[8]

Jonson, to emphasize it again, was concerned primarily with comedy, and comedy was concerned primarily with "common" personages. In the first place, the "common" is certainly an area in need of the touch of poetry, both for the sake of those who have and keep their being there and for the sanity of those who can and do reach beyond it. In the second, Jonson's treatment of the common should not be allowed to disguise the fact that intellectually, if not emotively, Jonson reaches beyond the common. His plays are constructed with intellectual excellence and their structure always provides the intellectual perceptiveness and quality that their characters lack. In the third place, Jonson may have failed in tragedy, in general the vehicle of heroically proportioned characters, but Volpone is evidence that he knew and could convincingly draw the lineaments, design, and substance of the heroic character as it had been conceived and depicted on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. The trouble was that he did not really conceive it to be heroic; his ideal was a different one--

[8]C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, Ben Jonson: The Man and his Work (Oxford, 1954), I, 120. All citations of Jonson's work will be from this text, hereafter cited as H. & S., Works.

the man tutored in the intellectual mean as a philosophical and ethical principle, a man like Cicero in Catiline. In the fourth place, it seems strange that a man's singularity in one age, the Elizabethan and Jacobean, should be diminished by virtue of his likeness to writers of another age, the "Age of Reason;" just as it seems strange that another man's reputation, such as that of Wordsworth, should be enhanced by contending that he is unlike the eighteenth century. For that matter, it begins to appear that the eighteenth century itself is a singular age, there not having been anything like it before or since in British or American literature.

The eighteenth century, of course, was not unanimous in its praise of Jonson. Writers such as Pope and Dryden, critics and scholars such as William Gifford and Octavius Gilchrist, gave him credit and approval, but it was during this period that the practice of Jonson-baiting began, apparently because of fancied slights of Shakespeare by Jonson. This period was the beginning of the process of idolizing Shakespeare, and loving the bard on "this side idolatry" it seems was not enough. It was not conceived or admitted that one writer could criticize another, if he happened to be Shakespeare, on the basis of certain sincerely-held standards of literary creation; it had to

be the result of spleen and envy.[9] This insolent epitome of envy is the picture drawn of Jonson by Rowe in his 1709 edition of Shakespeare:

> tho' I don't know whether the other /Jonson/ ever made him /Shakespeare/ an equal return of Gentleness and Sincerity. Ben was naturally Proud and Insolent, and in the Days of his Reputation did so far take upon him the Supremacy in Wit, that he could not but look with an evil Eye upon any one that seem'd to stand in Competition with him. And if at times he has affected to commend him, it has always been with some Reserve, insinuating his Uncorrectness, a careless manner of Writing, and want of judgment. . . .[10]

Jonson himself is certainly aware of the possible excesses of any state of mind, including, for instance, that of Asper, intent on purging humours, and that of Macilente, the learned man deprived of recognition and fallen into an "enuious apoplexie." A passage from the Poetaster further illustrates, in good Aristotelian fashion, this awareness on Jonson's part:

> he doth implore,
> You would not argue him of arrogance:
> How ere that common spawne of ignorance,
> Our frie of writers, may beslime his fame,
> And glue his action that adulterate name.
> Such ful-blowne vanitie he more doth lothe,
> Then base deiection: There's a meane 'twixt both.
> Which with a constant firmenesse he pursues,
> As one that knowes the strength of his owne muse.
> And this he hopes all free soules will allow;

[9]S. Schoenbaum, "Shakespeare and Jonson: Fact and Myth," The Elizabethan Theatre II, ed. David Galloway (Canada, 1970), pp. 1-19.

[10]Shakespeare, Works, ed. Nicholas Rowe (1709), I, xiii, cited in Schoenbaum, Elizabethan Theatre, p. 8.

> Others, that take it with a rugged brow,
> Their moods he rather pitties, then enuies:
> His mind it is aboue their iniuries.
> (3rd Sounding, Prologve, 16-28)

Jonson apparently had an affinity with the classical. Pride then would seem a virtue not a sin, abstract thought beautiful not barren, concepts of order relevant guidelines not repressive or suspect regulations.[11]

[11]This attitude is in contrast to the Christian tradition wherein pride is the deadliest of the seven deadly sins, and humility is one of the principal virtues.

CHAPTER II

THE CRITICAL CONTEXT: THE ENGLISH CRITICS, GENERAL IDEAS ON THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF POETRY

Looking at Jonson in a critical and classical context may avoid, but hopefully not evade, the "fearful" personal qualities associated with the satirist and focus more clearly on his intellectual achievement. His contemporary critical context and later opinions about it and the period have a bearing on assessments of Jonson. The critics chosen here are not necessarily ones whom Jonson read; instead they are intended to illustrate general trends of criticism and its conclusions on certain important topics.

These principal topics have to do for the English with establishing the nature of poetry and winning approval for its purpose. The important topic of imitation is all but ignored; though it appears in Puttenham and Sidney, its appearance in their writings serves to show the confusion in English criticism about its meaning, the way in which "making" is juggled with "imitation" and "imitation" with "copying." This juggling shows the vacillation between a primarily Platonic or neo-Platonic interpretation and a

primarily Aristotelian interpretation of the act, function, and product of poetry. Poetry as a making connotes divine inspiration and ideal, frequently the same as moral, truths, and Plato is the ultimate and primary source of this interpretation of and attitude towards poetry. Poetry in the Aristotelian sense of imitation of nature, idealized or unidealized, does not emerge with clarity and definition from the works of the English critics discussed here. The beginnings of a later controversy of what constitutes an original are here apparent.

The question of nature may appear explicitly, as in Sidney, or only implicitly, as in Heywood and Whetstone, who equate morality with reality, or with art, or life, or truth. Unity of action appears hardly at all, and in general these important topics, when they appear, are subordinated to the question of poetry's reputation for good and ill.

Attention seems to have been divided between a meticulous, logical, painstaking gathering and application of rules, on the one hand, and a practical, erratic implementing or ignoring of them on the other. Many critics, especially among the Italians, did attempt an expanding of acceptable forms to include post-classical and contemporary works, and Sidney among the English critics admitted a liking for "Chevy Chase." But English critics in general and Sidney in particular seemed to shake their heads over

contemporary abuses of good taste and good form. In addition there seemed to be some confusion about morality and aesthetics, their distinctions and their interrelationships. Most often the critics, at least the vociferous ones, were concerned with attacking or defending the debatable morality of contemporary literature, in particular the drama. On the question of aesthetic form and purpose, English critics were happy to confine themselves in general to technical considerations of meter and its use in the English language and to the honorable history of poetry and its possible use to good and wise effect at the current time.

In Thomas Lodge's "Defence of Poetry" (1579) and Thomas Heywood's "An Apology for Actors" (1612) are reflected the problems of incorporating art with the other values of a specific culture, and the assumption is that art is an instrument of civilization. Relying frequently on ancient authority, Lodge allies poetry to philosophy and describes it as a path to wisdom.[1] Heywood, concerned specifically with the drama, says that playing improves and refines the "harsh, uneven, and broken" English language; it informs the ignorant and in general makes good citizens. Comedy corrects "unhandsome behavior" and cures melancholy. For a definition of comic form he follows

[1]G. Gregory Smith, ed., Elizabethan Critical Essays (London, 1964), I, 61-86.

Donatus in giving the oft-quoted "Ciceronian" definition of comedy and in referring to its peaceful conclusion and its proper sphere as that of domestic activities. As a form or phenomenon in itself with legitimate bases in the everyday world, poesy is still under attack. Its justification must be found in other subjects or studies or in its edifying moral effects.[2]

George Whetstone in the dedication to Promos and Cassandra (1578) has a different approach to the problem of morality in comedy. Relying on Plato, he affirms that "naughtiness comes of the corruption of nature and not by reading of the lives of the good or lewde." Using this premise makes it impossible to argue for the morally instructive effects of comedy. It may indicate a greater awareness on his part of there being some distinction between aesthetics and morality. At any rate, he devotes most of his attention to formal matters: the unities of time and place, decorum in character and speech, the purpose of poetry, and the importance of probability. Too many English writers, he says, ground their work on the impossible. His preference in this matter of the possible indicates one indigenous English tendency, as well as an Aristotelian one, which Jonson will develop more fully.

There seems to have been wide agreement about the

[2]Alan H. Gilbert, ed., Literary Criticism, Plato to Dryden (New York, 1940), pp. 553-564.

Horatian injunction that the end of poetry was to instruct and/or delight, but to or about what end poetry was to instruct or delight there was less certainty. Was it to be for the humanistic considerations of learning, wisdom, and happiness in this world, or was it to be for moving the soul towards some almost divine perfection that is not here, has never been here, and never shall be here? There was a need for clear definitions of specific matters but with reference to some larger and more comprehensively logical context than most critics offered.[3]

For Jonson there is this logical context, one sufficiently large to encompass both the aesthetic and the moral. The perfection suggested is not necessarily divine in the usual religious sense; it is instead primarily a rationalist's idea of divinity, an idea that "guides us by the hand to action."[4]

> Now the poesy is the habit or the art; nay, rather the queen of arts, artium regina, which had her original from heaven, received thence from the Hebrews, and had in prime estimation with the Greeks, transmitted to the Latins and all nations that professed civility. The study of it, if we will trust Aristotle, offers to mankind a certain rule and pattern of living well and happily, disposing us to all civil offices of society. (11.2381-88)

Jonson here clearly leans toward the humanist ideal of man

[3]Smith, I, 58-60.

[4]Discoveries, in H. & S., Works, VIII.

living well in man's world. He speaks of poetry as a habit in much the same way that Aristotle speaks of goodness as the habit of living well and he combines the two ideas with an ease that does no logical violence to the integrity of either. The passage appears to be a syncretic one drawing on the Ethics, Poetics, and Politics. Herford and Simpson find no definite source for showing it a translation. It is noteworthy perhaps that he puts the revelation of poetry at a time in the past, it being now an instrument of man, and the passage concludes on the note of the civil context of poetry.

William Webbe in "A Discourse of English Poetrie" (1586) links poetry to the heavenly and ideal by reason of its divine inspiration and its "vertuous and most devout purpose," according to Plato, at the same time that he refers to the Horatian and more secular concern with the "happy end of mans life." He quotes Horace: "Let things that are faigned for pleasures sake haue a neere resemblance of the truth." He interprets this truth to be that which instructs to the moral. Chaucer, he says, duly observed this advice, for in what seems to be "nothing but the telling of a merry tale" he hides "profitable counsaile." Poetry has a divine source, a devout purpose; if it tells the truth, in an unobtrusive way, it will be moral. A moral life then is the happy end of man's life to be sought while on earth or is it the state of being necessary

for bringing about a happy end to man's earthly existence? Moral, true, devout, and happy all seem interchangeable terms, rather than ones related to each other in an orderly and specific way.

The poetic means to this ambiguous end are not so important as the end itself, and on the crucial question of imitation Webbe gives diverse impressions in an appended translation of the concluding section of the sixth book of the enlarged edition of Fabricius' De Re Poetica Libri Septem (1560). Matter may be "fayned" by the poet himself or it may be borrowed from others. If he borrows, and borrowing apparently means using other authors' works, then he should follow exactly that author whom he imitates, lest he should fall into inconsistencies. Apparently, divine inspiration does not always provide the poet with insight. Later, however, it is granted that a poet should not be too servile in following his mentors; instead, guided by learning, he may enter into new paths. Imitation here refers only to borrowing from other literary masters, and "fayning" to the possibly dangerous act of either borrowing from nature or using one's own inventiveness. The first has precedent; the second is close to being a lie or counterfeit.[5]

[5]Smith, I, 226-302.

The different points of reference involved in poetic perception and invention are muddled, interchangeable, and subject to continually shifting definitions. This problem in critical and aesthetic definition is possibly a reflection of typically Renaissance problems. Should one listen to the voice within, implanted there by a divine creator, and direct one's efforts and attention to an otherworldly goal? Or should one look more closely at the world directly in front of him (the book of nature) to perceive and create from its forms, sights, and sounds? How should one orient oneself, consciously, in a physical, material world that is slowly assuming shape, flesh, lineaments, and value for its own sake? How is one to relate solid substance and complexity to a divine theorem? What are the points of reference and what the general perspective? Not that these were consciously conceived questions, at least not on the part of many critics, who were offering isolated definitions that dissolved when placed in relationship to other isolated definitions.

The contention either for divine inspiration or for following other authors with consistency and for the sake of consistency leaves a great gap in the middle and points to the greater need for poetic method and its definition. The concept of imitation is one that can provide this definition and link substance and theory. It will be for Jonson "the doing," the "faining," the "expressing," the

"habit," not just a theory or product ideal in its truth. Jonson found his own method; that he found it partially by means of following other authors or their guidelines does not make it less his own. His slight tracing of the history of poetry, handed down to and from the Hebrews, in the passage quoted above, his history of the evolution of comedy in Every Man out of his Humour, and various passages in the Discoveries on the right of current poets to exercise their own invention point to his sense of poetry as a changing thing subject to temporal laws rather than a reflector and purveyor of forever unchanging idealizations of earth life. The presence of Grace or grace in a number of his plays, such as Every Man out of his Humour, Bartholomew Fair, and perhaps the Queen as Cynthia in Cynthia's Revels, suggests his awareness, within his plays' world of man, of things beyond man's world or beyond his comprehension, but Jonson is more concerned with the means by which man arrived, or rather failed to arrive, at that sublime end. The desired ideal truth to be shown forth in literature in Jonson's plays is the end of the means he depicts his characters as successfully not pursuing and not attaining. He is perhaps rather hardnosed in thinking a man rather far from understanding supernal or sublime virtue if he can not understand virtue on an individual, civil, social, or intellectual basis.

George Puttenham in The Arte of English Poesie (1589) makes a competent struggle with the relationship between art and nature, between words and meaning:

> . . . so as we may conclude that nature her selfe suggested the figure in this or that forme, but arte aydeth the judgement of his vse and application. . . .
>
> (XXIV.17-19)

> . . . or perhaps rather that he /the Courtier/ could dissemble his conceits as well as his countenance, so as he neuer speake as he thinkes, or thinke as he speaks, and that in any matter of importance his words and his meaning very seldome meete. . . .
>
> (XXV.1-5)

Puttenham has moved farther away from the position that would ally art with lying; like the Courtier, the poet must be a skilled craftsman in dissembling so that his art appear natural, but the truth he speaks is suggested by nature, and the method by which he achieves his end is allied to the rational and the judicial. There is a clearer orientation of the artist in relation to the world about him and in relation to his artistic methods.

Nevertheless, the old problem reasserts itself when Puttenham calls the poet a "maker" who "makes and contriues out of his owne brains" just as God "without any trauell to his diuine imagination made all the world of nought, not also by any paterne or mould, as the Platonicks with their Idees do phantastically suppose." If the poet "makes" in this manner, then he uses neither the matter or the forms of nature. Poetry then could be a holy dream

from above or a false image fashioned by the Devil. To know the difference would demand a divine instinct, not the reason judging by referring a creation to external nature or to skill in method. Also, of course, it makes the poet very susceptible to the charge of being a liar, like that master of all liars, Satan.

Jonson speaks of the "Poeticall Rapture" and the importance of nature, instinct, and a "goodnes of naturall wit" (Discoveries, ll.2489,2411). But he cautions that the poet not think "hee can leape forth suddainely a Poet, by dreaming hee hath been in Parnassus, or, having washt his lipps (as they say) in Helicon" (ll.2488-91). The poet is what he is "by nature, by exercise, by imitation, by Studie. . . ." He must pass through the disciplines of "Grammar, Logicke, Rhetoricke, and the Ethicks, adding somewhat, out of all peculiar to himselfe. . . ." (ll.2406-8). The natural wit and instinct are to enable his pouring out "the Treasure of his minde," this treasure apparently to be acquired through study. This study is related to imitation, at least in one sense that Jonson uses the word:

> Not, to imitate servilely, as Horace saith, and catch at vices, for vertue: but, to draw forth out of the best, and choisest flowers, with the Bee, and turne all into Honey, worke it into one relish, and savour: make our Imitation sweet:

> observe, how the best writers have imitated, and follow them.[6]
>
> (11.2475-80)

Only the fool takes himself as master; the poet instead must choose "the best, and choisest" (1.2507). Among these Jonson lists Horace and Aristotle first.

Jonson then values poetry as having "her original from heaven" and he values poetic instinct, but he places the emphasis on careful artistry, study, and learning. Most of all he is an example of one who constructs on the basis of principles, principles which relate fact to idea. As for the poet being a liar, Jonson boldly outcountenances this superstition by making liars in many instances his chief characters and by even allowing them to be architects in the plot. Brainworm in EMIH, Mosca in Volpone, and the Subtle-Face duet in The Alchemist are good examples of characters appearing to create the plots of their plays. And he most emphatically affirms that his constructions have a relation to the external world:

> He rather prayes, you will be pleas'd to see
> One such, to day, as other playes should be.
> Where neither Chorus wafts you ore the seas;
> Nor creaking throne comes downe, the boyes to please;
> Nor nimble squibbe is seene, to make afear'd
> The gentlewomen; nor roul'd bullet heard

[6]This is a long, densely-packed passage. H.& S. give parallel or similar passages for some sections from a wide variety of sources, but none for many others. Jonson has put all together with his own thought in his own way.

> To say, it thunders; nor tempestuous drumme
> Rumbles, to tell you when the storme doth come;
> But deedes, and language, such as men doe vse:
> And persons, such as Comoedie would chuse,
> When she would shew an Image of the times,
> (EMIH, Prologve, 13-23)

Other critics spoke of showing an "Image of the Times;" Jonson meant it.

Aristotle, with his theory of mimesis, and Plato, with his idea of methexis, had, like Jonson, given the constructions of man a link with the external, physical world and, ultimately, also with the divine. Later Milton, partially perhaps in recognition of this problem, was to describe God as having created ex deo, from "one first matter all," instead of ex nihil. In Puttenham the two possibilities exist side by side, and he includes the function of imitating as well as that of making:

> And neuerthelesse, without any repugnacie at all, a Poet may in some sort be said a follower or imitator because he can express the true and lively of euery thing is set before him, and which he taketh in hand to describe: and so in that respect is both a maker and a counterfaitor: and Poesie an art not only of making, but also of imitation.
> (I.I. 20-25)

He is careful to point out that no "repugnancie" is attached to this definition of the poetic function, and he also points out a distinction between the copier and the imitator. The copier translates out of "foreine copie or example," while the imitator catches the true and lifelike image of the things in front of him. Imitation then has

moved closer to having as its sphere phenomena of the material world; it does not exclude literary phenomena, but it does exclude an author's mere copying of other authors. The critic refers here to the sphere in which imitation is exercised, to the qualities of its end product, and indirectly to one purpose or end of imitation. He does not explicitly refer to imitation as a method, and "imitation" is still the poor second cousin of "making."[7]

J. W. H. Atkins in English Literary Criticism: The Renascence says Sir Philip Sidney is the only one of the English critics to have understood what Aristotle meant by imitation.[8] But what Sidney says specifically about imitation, or mimesis, does not differ greatly from other current definitions:

> Poesy therefore is an art of imitation . . . a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth . . . with this end, to teach and delight. . . .

Elsewhere he speaks of the "meaner sort of painters, who counterfeit only such faces as are set before them." He also links imitation to the following of other authors, including historians; the matter of history the poet can make his own by beautifying and adorning.

[7]George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie, 1589, ed. Edward Arber, English Reprints (Westminster, 1895).

[8]Atkins, 2nd ed. (London, 1951), p. 330.

What seems different in Sidney is his recurring and more emphatic assertion that the poet as creator improves on nature, by adding to it "in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature. . . ." Aristotle had said that the poet showed forth things as they should be but he had also spoken of the poet's depicting men either better or worse than the ordinary; not all of them would represent improvements on nature. "Every understanding," says Sidney, "knoweth the skill of each artificer standeth in that idea or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself." This statement is hardly compatible with either the letter or the spirit of Aristotle who arrived at his definitions by induction, by the observation of the works themselves; instead, of course, it reflects Plato's pre-existing forms or ideas.

While Aristotle acknowledges for each way of knowing an appropriate worth and relevance, Plato's exalted idea of philosophy tends to displace the autonomous aesthetic value of a work in favor of the idea that it shadows forth. Sidney had an affinity for the nobly idealistic, and, in addition, was somewhat inclined to regard literary endeavors as a pastime in which the cultivated and the gentlemanly displayed their talents and learning. They did not publish the results of these endeavors and call them with great seriousness Works, as Jonson did, to the

amusement of many. Jonson's inclination to method and to the empirical would disincline him to the Platonic. Also, of course, his background as a bricklayer and his rather robust personality would disqualify him as a gentleman. At least, so thought some members of the Court when King James wanted to knight his favorite poet.[9]

In his discussion of "right poets" Sidney says these "be they which most properly do imitate to teach and delight, and to imitate borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be." Here imitation is linked to creating divine patterns, which by imitating men may become better men, provided they are moved to do so because of experiencing delight with these patterns. The importance of this concept to Sidney is illustrated by his frequent references to man's fallen nature, to "our degenerate souls, made worse by their clay lodgings." Further, in his definition of "right poets," he says that "these indeed do merely make to imitate. . . ." The two terms "make" and "imitate" seem rather abruptly yoked together by juxtaposition rather than by logic or definition. Considering the main emphasis of his defense that the poet is a maker (from poiein) or creator and that herein resides his

[9]Steel, Jonson, p. 132.

superiority, it is strange that he should refer to the poet's "merely" making. Since he also refers to the superior forms or patterns which the poet creates, it would appear that he has transposed the logical sequence of his terms.

No one can read Sidney's Defense without being aware of his superior sensitivity to and understanding of poetry. But the ultimate classical source of that understanding, in addition to Sidney's own intelligence, would appear to be Plato and not Aristotle. His idea of the poet's creation of models or patterns or forms is primarily Platonic, and his awareness of the "brazen" world of nature would preclude her imitation as the method of the poet's art. Aristotle had said the poet's business was to relate "such things as might or could happen in accordance with probability or necessity." This approach would involve some theory about the way men are, the way of human nature, the way of the world, "deedes, and language, such as men doe vse," not just the way men ought to be.[10]

Jonson, despite his awareness of man's "clay lodgings" and "fallen nature," is not averse to taking his forms from unidealized nature. He links imitation to action, rather than to divine forms, and he thinks of an

[10]Sir Philip Sidney, Defense of Poesie, in Literary Criticism, ed. A. H. Gilbert, pp. 406-461.

"Image of the times" and its forms as legitimate, as legitimate as things "better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew." It is Art, rather than divine inspiration or poetic rapture, which leads the poet to perfection. Jonson thinks of the poet as improving but not by augmenting, and the revealing of falsehood is a way of discovering truth.

> Let us beware, while wee strive to adde, wee doe not diminish or deface; wee may improve, but not augment. By discrediting falsehood, Truth growes in request.
>
> (Disc., ll.2103-6)

CHAPTER III

THE CRITICAL CONTEXT: THE GRAMMARIANS AND EARLY COMMENTARIES: TOWARDS A METHOD

A Greek and Latin edition of Aristotle's Poetics had been published by Paccius in 1536, and in 1548 and 1550 appeared the commentaries on Aristotle's dramatic criticism by Robortellus and Madius. As the century drew to a close there was a more general and pervasive awareness of Aristotelian thought and method. Old habits persisted, however, and Madeleine Doran in Endeavors of Art characterizes sixteenth century criticism as one "long exegetical exercise" on the Poetics that was more Horatian in its legislative spirit than Aristotelian and Aesthetic."[1]

All interpretations, including those of Aristotle, Horace, Cicero, and others, were influenced and qualified by the inheritance from the fourth century of dramatic views by the grammarians Donatus and Evanthius. These grammarians are the ones who first provide the careful, formal criticism about the pattern and function of the drama. In Donatus' famous commentary on Terence are two

[1]Doran, p. 265.

essays, combined in the sixteenth century under the title of De Comoedia et Tragoedia. One of them is entitled De Comoedia and the other De Fabula, which is now ascribed to Evanthius.

In the essay De Fabula Evanthius notes the distinguishing qualities of comedy: it deals with ordinary human affairs, contains no fearful dangers, and has a cheerful outcome. Comic characters should be tempered and restrained in their emotions and never swell to tragic heights or descend to farce. Terence, Evanthius says, preserves these rules of character, and with regard to plot he carefully knits the middle part with the beginning and the end. Frequently he enriches his plots with double actions. Models for both comedy and tragedy have been provided by Homer, the Iliad for tragedy and the Odyssey for comedy. The plots (argumenta) of tragedy are often true, but those of comedy are always feigned.

The second essay De Commoedia contains the Greek definition of comedy from Diomedes that it is "a treatment of private and civil station that is without danger to life." Donatus also gives the definition attributed to Cicero: "The imitation of life, the mirror of custom, the image of Truth."[2] Donatus emphasizes the didactic

[2]This is the definition of comedy offered by Cordatus in EMIH (III.vi.206-7).

function of comedy and the difference in social rank between comic and tragic characters. For him, according to nature means according to custom.

Donatus apparently had no direct knowledge of Aristotle's definition of tragedy, but he helped to set the tone and pattern for later critics' application to comedy of Aristotelian methods in defining tragedy. It cannot be determined if he knew Plato, but by the beginning of the sixteenth century, other Terentian commentators, such as Marsus and Barlandus, were to find strong support in Plato (Republic, Gorgias, Phaedrus) for Donatus' emphasis on the didactic aim of "right rhetoric." He also helped to establish the tradition that comic plots are "feigned," made up on the basis of everyday life, as an imitation of that life; i.e., names and events were fictitious.

These writers purveyed certain ideas about the drama in general and comedy in particular that remained current and popular throughout the age. They provided precedent for anyone who wished to consider comedy as an important and worthy subject, comparable and analogous to tragedy, but the drama was primarily a teaching vehicle, and one should be careful of its construction chiefly for didactic reasons. Their writings were dependent, on this didactic principle, and derivative, from the plays of Terence.

With the publication of commentaries on the Poetics, criticism approached nearer to a more acute awareness of method. The syncretic one, however, was still pursued, and in 1548, in his commentary on the Poetics and essay On Comedy, Robortellus combines traditional accounts based on Horace, Donatus, and Servius and incorporates them with Aristotle. Aristotle said little about comedy but his contributions to the comedic canon were noted as being the following: he did say that Homer was the father of both tragedy and comedy,[3] that characters were either worse (comedy) or better (tragedy) than men of the current time, that comedy used fictitious names and incidents, and that the happy ending of the Odyssey with its double plot was more suitable for comedy.[4]

Several problems emerge or become more emphatic as a result of an awareness of Aristotle's work. Imitation becomes more definitely associated with plot-making, and the relation of plot-making to unified action, or unity of action, had to be determined.

While the English critics did speak of the formal aspects of poetry, and drama, they did so in a cursory way.

[3]Unlike Evanthius-Donatus, Aristotle says that the Iliad and the Odyssey are models for tragedy; yet he says the plot of the Odyssey is more suitable to comedy.

[4]For excerpts from Evanthius-Donatus, Donatus, and Robortellus, see Marvin T. Herrick, Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century (Urbana, Illinois, 1950), pp. 58-60, 65-70, 79-80, 227-239.

They spoke of the unities of time and place and their neglect in the English drama, and about the unity of action there was less discussion. Imitation had appeared in various contexts: (1) it meant following other authors and borrowing from them, with or without additions from personal invention; (2) it meant representing, counterfeiting, figuring forth a true and lively image of things, things being in the case of comedy the "common errors of our life." It was not specifically or emphatically related to action and to plot and to method. For them, it was closer to being a problem in morality than to a problem in aesthetics. How to achieve organic structure, an action causally connected from beginning to middle to end, was a major practical and aesthetic problem of the Elizabethan dramatists, but, generally speaking, the Italian and continental critics, rather than the English, are the ones who struggled most persistently with the definition of formal elements, such as unity and the unities, and with the definition of critical terms, such as imitation.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRITICAL CONTEXT: THE ITALIANS, ON NATURE, IMITATION, AND UNITY

Giraldi Cinthio's Discorsi (written 1543, published 1554) is one of those general critical works appearing by mid-century and showing an awareness of Aristotle. In his discussion of the source of comic and tragic plots, he argues that both may be feigned, as he had done in his tragedy Orbecche. The essence of tragedy is not in a known plot but in its arousal of tragic feelings, and the power to move tragic feelings depends on imitation, on "words fitly and poetically joined together," according to Aristotle, only one element of imitation. The poet may feign his plot, "if that plot is in conformity with natural habits and not remote from what can happen and often does happen." Here Cinthio has associated imitation with poetically written words and their power to move, not with plot making. In his section on the subject of imitation, he says that literary judgment may be acquired by conversations and discussions with learned men and by reading authors "who have attained excellence." By this second

way he does not refer to making use of another's methods but to feeling the spirit that caused the activity of the poet imitated. A flame may be awakened which will become a fire and then a fury and then divine enthusiasm. In other words, instead of learning a method, one catches a spirit.

When Cinthio speaks of the poet as a maker, that term which continues to carry connotations of the divine creator, he again refers to the poet's feigning (or making), but this time he refers it to subjects or fables of the marvellous and the impossible, as in myths, but which are accepted because of custom and the poet's skill. Earlier he had said that the poet imitated in accordance with natural habits, but now, in distinguishing between poetry and history, he says that the poet "in his fictions imitates illustrious actions, presenting them not as they are but as they ought to be." The poet, therefore, need not write of both vices and virtues. This statement is in accord with his theory that the end of poetry is to introduce good morals and that tragedy, like comedy, can have a double plot or structure, which, of course, would also allow for rewarding the good and punishing the evil. For authority, he refers to that much-debated Aristotelian statement that Homer's Iliad and Odyssey were both examples of tragedy, and another one, difficult to reconcile with the first, that the double plot of the Odyssey was more

suitable to comedy. Tragedy then can imitate the action like comedy, and the simple action is best suited to tragedy that ends unhappily. Simple action rests on a single quality of a person, and by double action he means an action based on "diverse kinds of persons of the same station in life." Several tendencies, already noted in the English critics, persist here too: following other authors is a source of inspiration, not of method, and the ideal is the desirable object of a poet's imitation. A new note is added in reference to imitation of action, though it is colored by Cinthio's desire to defend the double plot of his tragedy. He links action rather mathematically to persons and seems to think its imitation controlled primarily by a happy or unhappy ending.[1]

In 1564 Antonio Minturno published the work usually called L'arte poetica but to which he refers in the dedication as Della toscana poesia (Of Tuscan Poetry). Oneness is a principal idea stressed by Minturno: one is the idea in Nature's work, one is the law of Art, one is the matter of the imitative arts, one is the subject of all written works in the arts and sciences, and "one sole and single action" should be treated in every poem.

> Hence the variety that comes from different times cannot bring about the possibility of treating in poetry more than one action that is entire and of suitable size, with which all the rest may truly and reasonably harmonize and join.

[1]Gilbert, Criticism, pp. 243-273.

He apparently equates the Platonic idea of perfect uniqueness, the one unchanging ideal form that lies behind the various faces of earthly flux, with the Aristotelian concept of one action, whole, entire, and complete. But it leads to a curious dichotomy when he speaks of "all the rest" that harmonize with the one action and of the impossibility of treating more than one action. It also seems a dichotomy in perspective since the first (Platonic) idea of oneness is something which was to be perceived in something external to the poet, the common quality or principle in different individual things, and the Aristotelian idea suggests an idea of coherence proceeding at least partially from the poet.

In his sections explicitly on the subject of imitation, he says that it is "not strong enough to equal the thing chosen for imitation and to represent it as it is; moreover copying may encounter the difficulty that nature herself cannot bring it to pass that copies cannot be distinguished from the things that are represented and imitated." It is apparently necessary then to represent as it is the thing chosen for imitation at the same time that the "copying" ought to produce something distinguishable from the original; that is, it should not be a counterfeit. It matters, therefore, "what sort of poet you set before yourself for imitation." Curiously enough, Minturno advises that in order to make it seem that a plant has

sprung from his own garden, the poet should follow his model rather closely, not with regard to facts and words, but with regard to the method of obtaining and arranging matter and to the form of speech. The poet may change his speech but only according to "what the one imitated thought was permitted." This seems a curiously confused and contradictory idea of imitation, though he does hesitate towards imitation as a method.[2]

Giangiorgio Trissino published the first four divisions of his Poetica in 1529 and the last two divisions in 1563; in the first volume Trissino shows only a slight acquaintance with the Poetics, but the last volume is an extended paraphrase of Aristotle. He adds sections on comedy, extending Aristotle's comments on tragedy to comedy as well.

> Comedy then, imitates worse actions with speech, rhythm, and harmony, as does tragedy, and it imitates an action single, complete, and large, which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. . . . It suffices to know that comedy is an imitation of the wicked and the vicious. . . .

Comedy, he concludes, has the "same substantial parts as tragedy." By this time a complete awareness has been achieved of the distinctions between drama and narrative.

Trissino stresses that the end of poetry is to teach humans to live well. Perhaps as a result of this goal for poetry, he also stresses the "discourse or

[2]Gilbert, pp. 275-303.

expression of thought in the play" and that it be taken from the art of persuasion, rhetoric. In composing the plot the first important step is laying out the speeches and then inserting the episodes; "to lay out the speeches generally is nothing other than to note the whole action that he wishes to imitate." He appears to contradict this advice when he writes that he who wishes "to compose a comedy well should first arrange the fable, that is, find the action and write a summary of it, and put it before his eyes, and consider well the moral traits, and see what is fitting and what is contrary or repugnant, and then put in the names, and insert the episodes, and treat it with excellent sententious sayings, and with words familiar, ornate, and suitable, as we have said about tragedy." Though this statement may sound somewhat artificial, as if governed too much by an attention to the moral suitability of the subject, it does show an attempt at describing method or process, no matter how busily it attempts to be comprehensive. He refers to action as a principle of coherence, without enlarging on the idea. Instead he almost equates the "laying out of speeches" with the "whole action."[3]

In 1571 Lodovico Castelvetro published his annotated translation of Aristotle's Poetics. He was very

[3]Gilbert, pp. 213-232.

influential among critics of the sixteenth century, and in the next century Milton thought of him as one of the principal expositors of the Poetics. Though he is more strict than other critics of the day in maintaining the distinctions between comic and tragic, he takes the unpopular stand that pleasure is the end of poetry. He takes issue with J. C. Scaliger on the subject of poetry's teaching morals. Scaliger agrees with Aristotle that "beatitude is nothing else than perfect action," but action is "a mode of teaching" and "the moral habit will be its end." Castelvetro disagrees because, he says, Aristotle states that moral habits of character were chosen by poets to second the action and not action to second the characteristics. Castelvetro alone, among the critics thus far mentioned, recognizes Aristotle's point about the relation of character to action and the importance of action. These conclusions, on Castelvetro's part, however, are associated with his statement that poetry is for the common people, for their delight and recreation. Comedy, which raises laughter, does so because of "our nature, corrupted through the sin of our first parents, which rejoices at the coming of evil upon someone else at some benefit to ourselves. . . ." His strictures about the length of plays arise partially from "regard to the ease of the people . . . and human necessities for eating, drinking, sleeping, and other things."

This consideration for the "ease of the people" may lead indirectly to his formulation of the unities of time and place and from these in turn to the unity of action. In referring to Aristotle's statements on action and plot, he observes that Aristotle offers no reason or proof and he then attempts to rectify this omission. The plot in comedy and tragedy contains "one action or two which because of their interdependence can be reputed one . . .;"

> not because the plot is not fitted to contain more actions but because the space of time of twelve hours at most in which the action is presented and the limitation of the space in which it is acted do not permit a multitude of actions or even the actions of one family, nor indeed the complete presentation of one action, if it is somewhat long.

Action, however, is one he says because it relates to one person only or to two, whose actions are interdependent, even though he has recognized earlier that character is subordinate to action. Whereas the internal or "intellectual" limit of the epic is not dependent upon the "sensible," the limit of tragedy is; hence the unities of time and place and internal coherence are further subordinated to external through relevant considerations. The actualities of stage presentation and the everyday world of time become the bases for the imaginative temporal and spatial orientation of a play's world.

In all, Castelvetro seems concerned with preserving the boundaries of the actual world on the basis of the

reasonable. He also takes issue with the attribution of divine furor to the poet. By claiming divine inspiration for themselves, the poets have been pleased to play upon the credulity of the people. Although the "matter of poetry is found and imagined by the ability of the poet, and its words are not such as are used in reasoning," poetry is accomplished by the man of knowledge, reflection, and careful reasoning. The matter of poetry "should be like the matter of history and resemble it, but it ought not to be the same." If the poet fails to discover "things like the truth" and produce "a resemblance of them" then he may not merit his reputation of being more divine than human. It is difficult to determine exactly what Castelvetro means by "things like the truth," for he also states that discovering "something that was and will be perpetually in the nature of things" is performing the "function of a good philosopher and of a good scientist but not that of a good poet."

According to Castelvetro, then, the poet is a man of reason but he must maintain his reputation as someone more divine than human. He must produce things like the truth but they are necessarily "in the nature of things." He must strictly heed the ordinary and actual in concepts of time and space, but he must produce that which is both delightful and marvellous. Castelvetro is attempting to balance the poet somewhere in the current and often

conflicting critical concepts of poetry. It is a rational man's attempt at reconciliation; it is not necessarily a coherent one wherein the concepts are interrelated rather than simply balanced.

That he himself recognizes the difficulties is suggested by his section on imitation. "The imitation that is natural to men is one thing and that which is demanded of the poet is another." The first is a following of the examples of others.

> But the imitation the poet is expected to use not merely does not follow the examples laid down by another, or do the same thing that has already been done without knowing the cause for doing it, but does something completely separate from what has been done and sets before itself, so to speak, another example to follow.[4]

What this other example is he does not say, but the knowledge of causes and careful reasoning on the part of the poet should not be called imitation; instead, the process of creation should be called "the strife of the poet . . . in finding an incident of human conduct delightful to listen to and marvelous." He recognizes and struggles with the problematical meaning of the word "imitation" and finally discards it as inapplicable to the business of poetry.

These critics attempt to count actions, characters, hours, and space. An action is one, some think, because it

[4]P. 312 in Gilbert, Criticism, pp. 305-357.

relates to one person, not a mistake that Jonson makes, either in the Discoveries or in his plays:

> So many there be of old that have thought the Action of one man to be one. As of Hercules, Theseus, Achilles, Ulysses, and other Heroes; which is both foolish and false; since by one and the same person many things may be severally done, which cannot fitly be referred, or joyned to the same end: which not only the excellent Tragick poets, but the best Masters of the Epick, Homer and Virgil, saw.
>
> (ll. 2764-70)

For some the action is one because everything in studies and in the universe is one. Jonson, like Aristotle, might have one end in mind, but a multiplicity of things might construe to that end and thus unity of effect would be achieved. Castelvetro, despite a certain infamy for formulating the unities of time and place, comes closest to a coherently rational and composite view. Some are simply "great Renaissance clutterholes," as Marvin T. Herrick describes Minturno, who attempted, he says, "to include everything and follow everybody."[5]

[5]Herrick, Comic Theory, p. 271.

CHAPTER V

THE CRITICAL CONTEXT: ARISTOTLE

In the critical commentaries thus far reviewed there occurred a flattening out of ideas until they became aphorisms which it was possible to place in a numbered order, unrelated to concepts of universal order, then to take apart and reassemble in a differently numbered order. Literary criticism, like other fields of study, apparently has always had the tendency to isolate its particular subject from its surrounding contingencies, perhaps an unavoidable tendency in an always, and now increasingly, complex world.

One characteristic of the Renaissance has been persistently identified as the discovery and realization of form, a realization that how something is said is inseparable from what is said, a realization attributed to the impact of classical culture. Ultimately this realization of the importance of how in aesthetic matters was to enhance an awareness of scientific method in the development of empiricism; a sense of dynamism was to be incorporated in a method which eventually would challenge the static,

unchanging forms of the medieval heritage. In other words, the "laws" of classicism were to contribute to an innovation.

A neglected aspect in Renaissance literary criticism, then and now, is the intellectual milieu of the authorities upon whom they drew for guidance. The critics struggled with the words, their translation and application, in terms of their own historical context and succeeded in incorporating them in their own times, a difficult task with which later ages were to be impatient. One thing accomplished, as stated earlier, was a sense of the importance of form. It was a tedious, hard-fought struggle and should not be lightly forgotten or cast aside, for under the guise of this struggle for form was man struggling for a sense of his own form.

The issues of this struggle become more apparent if the formative milieu of one chief Renaissance authority is examined, that of Aristotle, with whom Ben Jonson, more than any other English critic, including Sidney, had much in common. Platonic ideas pervaded and tended to dominate English criticism, and it was only slowly and confusedly that a gradually deepening, precise awareness of Aristotle became dominant in the best known Italian critics. When Aristotelian ideas appear in Jonson's critical comments, there they are generally clear, coherent, and unconfused, with some exceptions. That Jonson knew and understood

Aristotle, no matter from what source, seems apparent from an examination of his plays, to appear later in this study, as well as from a close reading of his criticism. The closeness of this understanding affinity between Jonson and Aristotle should become clearer by isolating an essential and fundamental distinction between the two major Greek thinkers, whose intellectual achievements were the culmination of a long series of developments. An examination of these developments should help illuminate their relevance to Renaissance thought in general and Jonson in particular, and the importance of that fundamental distinction.

Greek philosophy inherited from its pre-Olympian religion a pervading dynamic force called Physis--nature or growth. Ionian philosophers were preoccupied with finding in this eternal flux a fundamental unity. This search involved isolating by thought the pervasive unifying force held on faith from the time of man's earliest religious awareness. Sometimes this force was given a religious name or interpretation, sometimes a purely physical or rudimentary scientific one, and sometimes both these areas of speculation, now called religion and science, were involved in the definition. Philosophy struggled in a realm intermediate between these two. The problem was to find the generating and unifying cause of the phenomenal world, to relate the supernatural to the natural, the abstract to the concrete.

Thales of Miletus called this unifying force "water," a "scientific" term, which he further described as "one original soul-substance." Anaximander, Thales' successor, further differentiated and separated the one principle, "nature," by not including it as an element among the elements that it generates. His statement of cosmic orientation was also a statement of moral significance.

> Things perish into those things out of which they have their birth, as is ordained; for they give reparation to one another, and pay the penalty for their injustice, according to the disposition of time.

Aristotle echoes this idea later: "If any of the opposites were infinite, the rest would have ceased to be."[1] The Greek fear of hubris viewed in this context becomes a fear of violating natural law, and natural law is synonymous with moral law. Hubris is then a concept based on the inherent order of the universe, and on man's understanding of it, and not, as in the Christian context, on man's defiance of God, resulting in his fallen nature and in a particular ordering of earthly space and time.

Anaximenes called an element, Air, the first cause, but he also called it Soul. For Anaximander's eternal and conscious movement causing innumerable worlds he substituted a quantitative and purely mechanical change of

[1]Aristotle, Physics, V5,204b, quoted in G. R. Levy, The Gate of Horn (London, 1948), p. 303.

position. For Anaximenes, Thales, Anaximander, and for primitive religious man, Nature, as the underlying force, existed in time and space. But it was to be progressively withdrawn or abstracted from that sphere into the realm of speculative thought until it culminated in Plato's perfect Ideas or Forms, for the static nature of which Plato was criticized by Aristotle.

The Orphic religious doctrine of cyclic experience, involving successive transformations or becomings, involved the natural world, with its animal kinships, and reached upwards to the divine, which must be experienced in this world before ultimate escape into a God-like existence could be achieved. These successive transformations involved a struggle with death in some form or image, both divine and human, and the creative energy liberated by the struggle formed the new image of man emerging from this conflict. Aristotle's later formulation of the theory of catharsis with its liberation and purification of certain emotions may be rooted in this early religious idea of individual transformation but placed in a more sophisticated rational and social context.

Pythagoras helped to transform the nature of the Orphic cyclic experience of becoming into an intellectual endeavor; that is, redemption was through the way of recreating thought by experience. It was thought of as a process, an activity, an action and this action through

its various stages of definition by different thinkers retained its sense, or echoes of it, of a participation in both subhuman and superhuman life. It therefore retained its mystical sense, but with Pythagoras and his followers, the endeavor proceeded more by intellectual argument and contemplation than by prophecy. For the Pythagoreans the theory of the One and the Many was also related to mathematics, music, astronomy, to the mysterious relationship between numbers and the universe.

Plato's formulation of the One and the Many was indicative of a widening gap between worlds earlier interrelated, but the process was begun before him by Xenophanes and Parmenides. Aristotle calls Xenophanes "the first Partisan of the One."[2] Xenophanes transferred life to the One of which the Many he said are but passing forms. Parmenides called the way of the Many illusory and maintained that the One cannot evolve the Many. Completed form and the process by which that form is completed become thereby separate and distinct, and a static conception is placed in intellectual supremacy. Parmenides, Aristotle says, has denied Physis or nature, because he has done away with motion.[3]

Plato does relate the Many to the One (created

[2]Aristotle, Met., A,5,986B, in Levy, p. 304.

[3]Aristotle, ap. Sext. Math., X46, in Levy, p. 310.

things to their heavenly patterns) by methexis, or participation, but he leans towards the static Parmenidean conception of inflexible abstractions. Aristotle objected to these distinctions which tended toward inflexibility. For Plato the abstract forms, because they were unchanging, made perfection, or perfect conceptualizing, possible. Whether or not any one ever discovered them was not of necessary relevance to their existence. For Aristotle, though his Prime Mover is himself unmoved, the process of discovering, arriving, becoming, remained important; one might or might not arrive, and prior to that arrival there were many things of importance in the phenomenal world. For him the One is a kind of Fourth Dimension which permeates all the rest and is the basis of participation, which Plato called methexis and Aristotle called mimesis, or imitatio.

The terms "nature," "imitation," and "unity of action" which became so important in Renaissance literary criticism are terms which in their implications reach beyond the bounds of strictly literary studies and efforts to define them in rhetorical terms. A person faced with the stage as a metaphor of life and with creating a world in miniature and also aware of the current critical concensus might realize the important relationship between word and world more readily than one confronting the problems of textual analysis and explication.

It is unfair to hold the Renaissance critics responsible for something restored to the world only at a much later date, but it does seem that they should have had more regard for context, some sense of a whole structure dependent upon its interrelated parts, as the parts were dependent upon the whole, even had they known nothing of primitive religious experience and the pre-Socratic philosophers. The Renaissance world did know about Plato and about a large number of Aristotle's works, so it seems they should have proceeded with more regard for both the distinctions and relationships between categories and kinds.

They decided that the poet's aim in characterization was an idealization of nature. The Aristotelian basis for this decision is the following passage:

> Since tragedy is the imitation of characters better than those we know in life, we should imitate good portrait painters. They too render the characteristic appearance of their subject in a good likeness which is yet more beautiful than the original. So when the poet is imitating men who are given to anger, indolence, and other faults of character, he should represent them as they are, and yet make them worthy. As such as example of violent temper we have the Achilles of Agathon and Homer.[4]
> (XV.1454b)

This passage gained force and was given emphasis because it could be reconciled with other statements, such as Horace's well-known ut pictura poesis. The critics avoided the neglect of any one authority; multiplicity and variety are

[4]Aristotle, On Poetry and Style, ed. G. M. A. Grube (New York, 1958), p. 31.

indicative of the general trend in criticism as well as in drama; but in reconciling the diverse authorities they might violate the integrity of one.

In the above-quoted passage Aristotle is talking specifically about tragedy. Comedy, he says, is an "imitation of men who are inferior but not altogether vicious." In a more generic passage he has the following to say:

> Since those who make imitations represent men in action, these men must be superior or inferior, either better than those we know in life, or worse, or of the same kind. . . . We can see this in painting: Polygnotus represented men as better than life, Pauson represented them as worse, and Dionysius made them like life. Obviously, these differences also occur in each of the kinds of imitation we have mentioned; they are different because they imitate different models in this way.[5]
>
> (II.1448a)

The critics had decided as a general precept that art imitated nature but idealized it; this is not the same as presenting something "better than those we know in life" or "better than the ordinary." It more nearly implies that the ideal is not to be found in nature, but only in an otherworldly storehouse of perfection to which the inspired poet has access. Idealizing nature is really the Platonic ideal, generally speaking more compatible and earlier incorporated with Christianity than Aristotle. Aristotle is more susceptible to several different possibilities.

[5]Grube, p. 5.

> Since the poet, like the painter and other makers of images, is an imitator, the object of his imitation must always be presented in one of three ways: as it was or is, as it is said or thought to be, or as it ought to be.[6]
>
> (XXV.14606)

His work really offered poets and critics a middle plane where they did not have to defend poetry to the uninitiated against the charge of lying and immorality.

Closely linked, of course, with the concept of nature is that of imitation. Both Plato and Aristotle spoke of all art as imitation, but the Medieval and Renaissance idea of art as imitation came chiefly by way of Horatian commentators and is also to be found in the "Ciceronian" "Imitatio vitae, speculum conseutudinis, imago veritatis." Acquaintance with Aristotle's works brought further speculation and helped to modify and change the idea of imitation as copying or mimicking, since Aristotle spends some time defining and discussing imitation as a natural activity of man and often uses it as a comprehensive term applying to the whole process of art. Nor did imitation in Aristotle have the slightly pejorative connotations that it had in Plato. In the Physics he says specifically that art imitates nature, and by 1555 the Horatian commentators seemed fully aware of this work.[7]

[6]Grube, pp. 54-55.

[7]Marvin T. Herrick, The Fusion of Horation and Aristotelian Literary Criticism (Urbana, Illinois, 1946), p. 33.

But Plato, or perhaps Cicero, still seems importantly present in their minds when they speak of imitation in accordance with an idea or a figure in the imagination. And art again emerges as an idealized fiction.

To say that Aristotle thought art an imitation of nature in accordance with a true idea seems a misrepresentation of his whole philosophical point of view.[8] For essential to that philosophy was his conception of nature as a continually generative process, a process, a becoming, not a perfect idea. He criticized other thinkers, including Plato, for omitting from their definitions of nature the idea of motion, and here would seem to be one reason for his placing so much emphasis on action in general. The drama he says is not an imitation of men or their ideas but of their actions. The poet, unlike others except the philosopher, is able to perceive the universal in the particular, but it is of the essence in Aristotle's approach that the universal grow out of the particular, according to the probable, not according to a true idea. This does not exclude coherent thought holding the drama together; it does avoid using a word or term that had specific philosophical connotations with which Aristotle disagreed. This is not to deny that Aristotle had a concept of reality but

[8]Samuel Henry Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts (London, 1895), p. 153, cited in Herrick, Fusion, p. 38.

it is simply to emphasize that he emphasized arriving at these concepts by means of observation and induction, that he emphasized method or process.

The parallel to method or process in philosophy or art is motion in nature and action in human life. Actions then and unity of action are the focal point of organic unity in the drama. Thought is not divorced from action but it grows with the creative process of action. The coherence that grows out of this process is for the drama the plot, the imitation of an action which is in harmony with a rational principle that pervades the universe and which has a certain specific disposition in space and time.

Heraclitus' statement that a man's character is his destiny might be modified in Aristotle's scheme to a man's actions are his destiny; man's movements are in space and time; his rhythms make certain inevitable reverberations in this context. So an action which is one and whole must not have any part which can be deleted. It exists in the universe and must obey its laws and like the universe it has a certain size and order. Like other created things, the work of art, because it has form, and it has form because it has followed the path of creative laws, also has autonomy. When a completed work of art has autonomy, it is then possible in turn, to approach it from the reverse side, from the critic's side, from the standpoint of aesthetics rather than from that of morality alone. Not that its morality

is an excludable issue; it is in this instance subsumed under another category. The logos of the fabula is not then a mere plot summary, as it emerges in many of the major Renaissance critics, and this idea Ben Jonson, as both critic and dramatist, correctly perceived.

CHAPTER VI

THE CRITICAL CONTEXT: BEN JONSON

Though relevant passages from the plays are cited, this section is devoted primarily to the Discoveries and its importance in establishing Jonson as a discerning classical critic, as "original" as, or perhaps even more "original" than, any of his contemporaries or immediate predecessors, a critic who knew and understood Aristotle well and who as a playwright was influenced by Aristotle fairly early in his dramatic career, with particular reference to the classical principle of unity and unity of action and to Aristotle's idea of imitation.

The pendulum of critical opinion of the Discoveries as a critical document has swung between two extremes. The work has been acclaimed on the one hand as an outstanding piece of criticism and on the other as a patchwork of translations with little relevance to Jonson's dramatic work. As usual the truth probably lies somewhere in between. Jonson is burrowing through the works of others, but when he can, according to Herford and Simpson, synthesize in the space of six pages ideas from such a diversity of people as Joannes Buchler, Aristotle, Cicero,

Strabo, Sidney, Seneca, Plato, Ovid, Virgil, Horace, and Petronius, together with sundry things not attributable to others, then he has to have contributed a great deal of his own, not the least being a powerful if ponderous mind. In this section an attempt will be made at a careful verbal analysis primarily of those sections relating to Aristotle, his work, and his thought.

In the Discoveries Jonson speaks of Aristotle with high regard:

> Aristotle was the first accurate Criticke, and truest Judge; nay, the greatest Philosopher, the world ever had: for, hee noted the vices of all knowledges, in all creatures, and out of many mens perfections in a Science, hee formed still one Art.[1]
> (11.2512-15)

Three things seem important in this passage. First is Jonson's awareness of Aristotle's pre-eminence as a critic. Despite the fact that many other critics and writers are noted, translated, and cited in the Discoveries, Jonson is less inclined than other Renaissance writers to regard criticism as a kind of undifferentiated potpourri where the pronouncements of one must be made level and reconciled with that of another.[2] When he works with Aristotle, he does so with some consistent attention, pursuing his statements for a continuous time as a coherent thought. Second, Aristotle appears as one

[1]H. & S., Works, VIII.

[2]When Jonson did attempt this, he apparently intended to include only Horace and Aristotle.

who in exploring nature found there vices ("of all knowledges") and not just as one who supposedly said art was an idealization of nature. It is notable too that the vices are given an intellectual slant. Third, the passage suggests works in addition to the literary criticism. This particular passage reflects knowledge of the Ethics, as do other sections of the Discoveries, which betrays the frequent influence of Aristotle, Aristotle as a thinker rather than as just a reference on the one hand or an absolute authority on the other. On one occasion the clause occurs "if we will trust Aristotle," and on another there is the statement that Sophocles, and others who wrote well, lived before Aristotle. But Aristotle emerges in the Discoveries as one who wrestled rather better than others with the nature of things.

> But, whatsoever Nature at any time dictated to the most happie or long exercise to the most laborious; that the wisdome, and the learning of Aristotle, hath brought into an Art: because, he understood the Causes of things; and what other men did by chance or custome, he doth by reason; and not only found out the way not to erre, but the short way we should take, not to erre. /italics mine/[3]

This passage refers to Aristotle's work as art and it suggests the reason as an instrument of originality which probes the causes of things, the nature of reality. In the parallel passages in his text, Heinsius is concerned

[3]Heinsius speaks of the wise and learned man who operates by reason. Jonson inserts the name of Aristotle as this embodiment of reason. See H. & S., XI, 286-287.

with the generic "vir sapiens & eruditus" who "ratione agat," with the necessity for judgment and reason in art. There does follow a long passage in praise of Aristotle which Jonson, however, translates and reworks elsewhere. But here it is Jonson who makes Aristotle the embodiment of reason.

Erring and not erring, in this passage, seem to have both moral and aesthetic implications. In the first passage quoted "vices," "knowledges," "perfections," "science," and "art" are all blended.[4] This approach on Jonson's part suggests a composite view of Aristotle's work, a view clear and coherent, the kind that usually comes after a prolonged exposure to and meditation about a particular author. It is the kind of composite view behind Aristotle's own works. Two passages from two different works, the Ethics and the Poetics, will illustrate the interrelatedness of his views.

In defining virtue and vice in the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle associates virtue with an intermediate between excess and defect. In elaborating on his point, he has the following to say:

> If it is thus, then, that every art does its work well--by looking to the intermediate and judging its works by this standard (so that we often say of good works of art that it is not possible either to take away or to add anything, implying that excess and

[4]Jonson leaps, deletes, and adds in such a way to suggest that he is quite comfortable with both the concepts and the words.

> defect destroy the goodness of works of art, while the mean preserves it; and good artists, as we say, look to this in their work). . . .[5]
> (6.1106b)

This is easily comparable with the passage from the Poetics. Reading it again can confirm the impression of interrelatedness in Aristotle's works, the organic nature of his view, and the recurring principles of that view.

> As in other kinds of imitative art each imitation must have one object, so with the plot: since it is the imitation of an action, this must be one action and the whole of it; the various incidents must be so constructed that, if any part is displaced or deleted, the whole plot is disturbed and dislocated. For if any part can be inserted or omitted without manifest alterations it is no true part of the whole.[6]
> (VIII.1450b)

In the parallel passage in the Discoveries, Jonson conveys in his translation the same sense of an interrelated whole. For the practicing dramatist this would be a crucial passage, and Jonson does not neglect it. To its main point he devotes more discerning attention than almost any other critic of the age.

> The Fable is call'd the Imitation of one intire, and perfect Action; whose parts are so joyned, and knitt together, as nothing in the structure can be chang'd, or taken away, without impairing or troubling the whole; of which there is a proportionable magnitude in the members. As for example; if a man would build a house, he would first appoint a place to build it in, which he would define within certain bounds;
> (11.2679-87)

The reference here to proportion and magnitude recurs many

[5]Richard McKeon, Introduction to Aristotle, p. 339.

[6]Grube, On Poetry, p. 17.

times in the concluding sections of the Discoveries; in Aristotle it is an idea which occurs in a section earlier than that on unity of plot: "Beauty is a matter of size and order" and "What is a matter of art is the limit set by the very nature of the action. . . ."

Symmetry, magnitude, proportion, appropriateness, all are ideas highlighted in this section of the Discoveries, "Of the magnitude and compass of any fable," and all of them are recurring concepts in Aristotle's work.

A major idea related to all the foregoing is also that of an action existing within certain bounds. There is concrete illustration and elaboration of the point, all of which Jonson follows and to which he adds his own example of Tityus the Giant. Examples of this idea from Aristotle are "If the opposites were infinite, the rest would cease to be" and "evil belongs to the class of the unlimited" and "good to that of the limited." In Jonson's works, particularly the two humour plays, characters such as Kitely (EMIH) and Asper-Macilente (EMOH) are continually accusing themselves and others of not being able to act in "more stricter bounds," and describing the humour as "wanting power to contain it selfe."

The last sections of the Discoveries are derived primarily from Aristotle, a highly concentrated distillation, and focused primarily on the idea of wholeness and unity and on action as the vehicle of that unity. It is

evident that Jonson, as evidenced in this critical work at least, is quite aware of the unity of action, and of the principle of unity, a classical principle, which thinkers applied in different ways. For Aristotle the One was a pervasive, rational, and universal principle which accounted for the harmony and coherence of the universe. Man cannot live in this universe without acting and he may be in or out of accord with this rational principle, but whatever he does will place him in some total relationship to this principle--totally positive or totally negative, if considered on a purely abstract, logical plane. He participates in life, he imitates the motions of life, not of death, and the poet makes imitations and in doing so represents men in action. Poetry representing men in action does not therefore necessarily exclude certain kinds of poetry, and it should be remembered that Aristotle regarded thinking as an action, the highest kind.

It is well to bear in mind the special relation of action to imitation and the interrelatedness of action, imitation, and nature in looking at what Jonson said about imitation. Like other Renaissance writers Jonson spoke of imitation as a following of other authors, not servilely, but as one "that feedes with an Appetite, and hath a Stomacke to concoct, divide, and turne all into nourishment" (11.2473-75). In this context he seems to think of <u>imitatio</u> in terms of both substance and method: (1) "to

bee able to convert the substance, or Riches of another Poet to his owne use;" (11.2467-69). (2) to "observe, how the best writers have imitated, and follow them" (11.2479-80) [italics mine].

His second use of imitation is as "faining; expressing the life of man in fit measure, numbers, and harmony. . . ." (11.2349-50). A poet is he who "fayneth and formeth a fable, and writes things like the Truth. For, the Fable and Fiction is (as it were) the forme and Soule of any Poeticall worke, or Poeme" (11.2353-55). He does say that all this is according to Aristotle, so it would appear that he did not grasp Aristotle's meaning in the appropriate context, at the appropriate time.

J. W. H. Atkins says that Jonson here, unlike Aristotle, represents imitation as "mere 'feigning' or fancy . . . without any correspondence to truths of a higher kind." Only Sidney, he says "grasped Aristotle's meaning with regard to 'imitation.'"[7] But Sidney, as pointed out earlier, also called imitation a feigning or counterfeiting, and his conception of poetry as a purveyor of higher truths seems to come ultimately from Plato rather than from Aristotle, and there was a crucial difference between Plato and Aristotle in the way they approached poetry. Atkins further suggests that Jonson did not know Aristotle's text, that he knew only that of

[7]Atkins, Criticism: The Renascence, p. 325.

Heinsius, published in 1611, because, he says, Jonson follows Heinsius' mishandling of Aristotle with regard to laughter or the risible not being suitable in comedy.[8] But Sidney says much the same when he speaks of delight being more appropriate to comedy than loud laughter. It was perhaps then an idea current in the age and not therefore proof that Jonson did not know Aristotle's text. A. H. Gilbert, in his Literary Criticism, apparently thinks Sidney justified in referring to Aristotle as an appropriate authority in this matter.

Without making it too important a point, one might note that in the same passage where Jonson calls imitation a feigning, he speaks of the "fable and fiction" as the "forme and Soule of any Poeticall worke, or Poeme." This apparently is not Aristotle by way of Heinsius, and "forme" and "Soule" are important words in Jonson's vocabulary.[9] Herford and Simpson give no source for this passage of the Discoveries. According to them Jonson's borrowings from Heinsius occur later in the text. Heinsius does not call the plot the "soul" of tragedy but Aristotle apparently does (VI.1450b).[10] Also, later, in another passage, Jonson equates the fable with "the Imitation of one intire, and perfect Action; whose parts are so joyned and knitt

[8] Atkins, p. 330.

[9] H. & S., XI, 281-282.

[10] Grube, p. 14.

together, as nothing in the structure can be chang'd, or taken away, without impairing or troubling the whole; of which there is a proportionable magnitude in the members" (11.2679-84). This passage, again for which Herford and Simpson do not give a source, could just as easily have come from Aristotle as from Heinsius. The coherence and organization of it is closer to Aristotle than it is to Heinsius:

> As in other kinds of imitative art each imitation must have one object, so with the plot: since it is the imitation of an action, this must be one action and the whole of it; the various incidents must be so constructed that, if any part is displaced or deleted, the whole plot is disturbed and dislocated. (VIII.1451a)[11]

Heinsius' passage, which, according to Herford and Simpson is parallel to a later passage in the Discoveries, consists of a long discourse where he draws an analogy between space in building and action in tragedy. He does not here refer to the fable being the imitation of an action; he does not refer to the "fabula" at all until much later in a different context: "Hactenus ergo, quantam esse fabulam tragoediae oporteat & actionem."[12] Jonson translates this as "An so farre for the measure, the extent of a Fable Dramaticke" (11.2749-50).

A little further on in another section: "Poesy, is his /the poet's/ skill, or Crafte of making: the very

[11]Grube, p. 17.

[12]H. & S., XI, 292.

Fiction it selfe, the reason, or forme of the worke" (11.2376-78). This passage is a translation from Joannes Buchler of Gladbach.[13] Jonson adds "is his skill, or Crafte of making" and he translates ratione as "reason." Reason and form are used synonymously, reason being that perhaps which brings form and shape, which does shape or make, and which is indicative of something having shape. This passage would seem to reveal Jonson thinking of poetry as something autonomous, a form of its own, a reason of its own, something to be considered on aesthetic principles, as well as on the basis of its content, or its "correspondence to truths of a higher kind." And it does convey the sense of imitation as a creating Process, guided by the reason.

The point of Atkins' argument is that Jonson, like Bacon, regarded poetry as a "mere [italics mine] fiction," and his not understanding the implications of Aristotle's "imitation" Atkins thinks is one proof of this attitude. Considering the close relationship between action and imitation in Aristotle's studies it seems possible that even if one did not fully grasp the meaning of imitation and if one did understand the importance of unity of action, then this understanding of the second would bring one close to a comprehension of the first.

[13] H. & S., XI, 282.

For one thing, Jonson was primarily a writer of comedies and it was primarily with comedy that he was concerned. Everywhere in the relevant passages of the Discoveries he speaks of the plot, the action, of tragedy and comedy. He always includes comedy and when he speaks of raising the despised head of poetry to her former dignity, it is in his comedies that he speaks of doing so. Here it is obvious that he has a high regard for what poetry is. Also, he regards comedy as a form of poetry. And comedy, as the times attested, and as Aristotle's Poetics helped to reinforce in its thinking, was not the same vehicle of high and serious truths as was tragedy. It was an imitation of the "common errors of our life." Common errors are not generally the ones that rip open the universe and reveal its deep, serious, and mysterious truths. Catastrophic errors or events are generally the ones that impress people with the seriousness of existence. So Jonson had a problem.

In imitating men in action, men "worse, or of the same kind" (II.1448a), men whose actions did not have highly serious reverberations or consequences, in dealing with follies rather than with crimes, how was he to expend justifiably on his drama the seriousness that he was instinctively inclined to expend and to receive the serious attention he was naturally inclined to expect?[14] In

[14]Grube, p. 5.

presenting fools and rogues, how was he to perform the duties of poetry in presenting idealized nature, as all the critics agreed that poetry should do? Plato had said that poetry should do this, i.e., idealize nature, but Aristotle had only said that it might do this and he had not really said that it was idealization; with regard to tragedy he had spoken of men "better than ourselves" or better than average. And Aristotle's method stressed method or process or principles rather than idealized forms.

In England in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries someone native to that time was also stressing method and that was Bacon. He owed Aristotle a debt though he did not always admit it. The Anglo-Saxon world has always had a certain reverence for facts and has favored building truth out of fact. Bacon is an example of this characteristically English approach to life, but at this time Bacon of course was not alone, and the age in general was becoming aware of and seeking what would now be called in literary terms realism and in scientific terms empiricism. In true empirical fashion they had tried the medieval combination of Platonic and Aristotelian Catholicism, and now they were ready to try something else. Various writers attempted to grapple with and translate into literature this new spirit. In drama there were the domestic tragedies and bourgeois comedies, somewhat uncertain in intent and mixed in effect; there were also the

incipient forms of the novel, frequently propagandistic in tone and effect and in form, swamplike gardens where everything was expected to grow. Their creators had not mastered a form which could make coherent a multitude of factual detail and also elicit from them universally interesting truths.

Jonson is one of those who grapple with the new realism. Some of his contemporaries make derogatory assessments of his method. William Webbe describes Jonson's work as that in which "humorous vapors take the place of holy inspiration" (II.389) and calls him "a meere Empyrick, one that getts what he hath by obseruation. . . ." Dekker calls him "a mere sponge, nothing but humours and observation."[15] The Oxford English Dictionary defines "Empiric" for the year 1621, as one who "relies solely upon observation and experience without benefit of reasoning, scientific theory or philosophical theory," sometimes synonymous with a quack. Burton in the Anatomy (II.i.iv.i) so uses it: "There be many mountebanks, quack-salvers, Empericks, in every street."[16] These derogatory comments suggest that Jonson's sometimes aggressive attitude sprang from a keen awareness of that against which he fought. He is, at this time, operating partially in a theoretically

[15]Atkins, Criticism: The Renascence, pp. 402, 255.

[16]Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, eds. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York, 1955).

alien or unpopular critical and intellectual tradition. Humours are not heavenly patterns or images of the ideal, and observation may challenge and displace inspiration. Is it safe to admit that an imitation of life may produce people who have not glimpsed universal truth and beauty in the Mirror of Nature? What of that whole area wherein exists the process of arriving at truth, the means to the end? What if the process is as important as its end? What if absolute truth may or may not be attained through the concrete specifics of the physical world--a possibility which Aristotle deemed important?

Jonson wanted his work to be an image of the teeming physical world in which he lived. But he was also interested in the way in which the external world of fact coalesced with "higher truths," and he is one of the first dramatists to cope with fact and truth and the principles which interrelate them. For him the connecting bridge was a rational principle and in his work this principle created form and form was to be arrived at by a method, a process, by "election and a meane," not by inspiration. Imitation then in the context of Jonson's work and world suggests a method, an approach, not a depiction of idealized nature.

Thinking of the practice of poetry as a method or process is compatible with thinking of it in an evolutionary way, an attitude which Jonson expresses on many

occasions:

> I am not of that opinion to conclude a Poets liberty within the narrowe limits of lawes which either the Grammarians or Philosophers prescribe. For, before they found out those lawes, there were many excellent Poets, that fulfill'd them. Amongst whome, none more perfect than Sophocles, who liv'd a little before Aristotle. (11.2555-70)

Poetry must be free to develop in accordance with the new minds and fresh spirits that apply themselves to it. A sense of poetry's evolutionary development is more explicitly expressed in one of Jonson's early plays, EMOH, by the Grex, or Chorus:

> Cord. No, I assure you, Signior. If those lawes you speake of, had beene deliuered vs, ab initio, and in their present vertue and perfection, there had beene some reason of obeying their powers: but 'tis extant, that that which we call Comoedia, was at first nothing but a simple, and continued Song, sung by one only person, till SVSARIO inuented a second, after him EPICHARMVS a third; PHORMVS, and CHIOMIDES deuised to haue foure Actors, with a Prologue and Chorus; to which CRATINVS (long after) added a fift and sixt; EVPOLIS more; ARISTOPHANES more then they: euery man in the dignitie of his spirit and judgement, supplyed something. And (though that in him this kinde of Poeme appeared absolute, and fully perfected) yet how is the face of it chang'd since, in MENANDER, PHILEMON, CECILIVS, PLAVTVS, and the rest; who have vtterly excluded the Chorus, altered the property of the persons, their names, and natures, and augmented it with all liberty, according to the elegancie and disposition of those times, wherein they wrote? I see not then, but we should enioy the same licence, or free power, to illustrate and heighten our inuention as they did; and not bee tyed to those strict and regular formes, which the niceness of a few (who are nothing but forme) would thrust vpon vs.[17]

This lengthy statement is made by Cordatus in answer to a

[17]This passage resembles Aristotle's brief history of Comedy; Aristotle mentions Epicharmus, Phormis, and Crates (V.1449b). Grube, pp. 10-11.

question by Mitis, another member of the Chorus: "Does he obserue all the lawes of Comedie in it?" Jonson is usually thought of as a classicist because of his taking note of the "lawes," and passages such as that quoted above are cited as proof of his not being an "out-and-out classicist."[18] He does, in the prologue to Volpone (11.30-2) refer to the "lawes of time, place, persons" and in the preface to the 1605 Quarto of Sejanus to his own violation of the "strict Lawes of Time." It is interesting that he is called a classicist because he mentions the "lawes," and does sometimes adhere to them, and not-a-classicist because he sometimes sets aside these same "lawes." It seems more accurate to think of him, or anyone, as a classicist because of his desire to regularize the drama in terms of reasonable proportion, in giving reason, as maker of order, coherence, and symmetry in the classical sense, a part in dramatic form, in creating unified action, and also in creating character.

That he considered imitation a "mere feigning, a fiction," a mere counterfeiting, should be looked on with some skepticism. After all, some of his humour characters are persistently referred to as counterfeits, as those whose outsides do not agree with their insides. They are people who are lies, mere fictions, people who have affected wills and an affected reason and cannot act with "election;" what

[18] H. & S., IX, 422, note 1.235.

they are is "borrowed;" they do not act with proportion, within bounds, and have not got "a habit" of acting well. Some of their follies are essential and some may seem only borrowed fads, but their follies themselves are in a sense lies since these follies make of their possessors rational monsters; they are violations of nature, a nature conceived of as operating on a rational principle.

Jonson's "counterfeits" then are embodiments of a violated universal truth. They bear an inverse "correspondence to higher truths" and are concrete images of exceedingly abstract thought. They are drawn from the critically neglected realm of unidealized nature and given parts in a form not generally conceded to be a purveyor of higher or serious truths.

In the Ethics Aristotle describes the good, or virtuous, life as that life lived in accordance with a rational principle. He describes the purpose of a life:

> if this is the case, [and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence:[19]
>
> (I.7.1098a)

The good man is one who exercises moral choice, or election, who consistently does the right thing for the right reason. A man can by the habit of acting well become

[19]McKeon, Aristotle, p. 318.

good, or a good man better. No man, since he can create his own life, should wish to live any life save his own; he will not borrow what cannot be a part of his own. He lives it with proportion, "concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle . . ." (II.6.1107a).[20] Such a course of action brings about integration, integrity, oneness. Concrete action can create abstract quality and character, a character whose spirit is in tune with universal principles of truth and harmony. The resulting effect in both character and action is that of unity or uniqueness residing in, not isolated from, multiplicity or plurality.

This same effect is the general effect of Ben Jonson's plays. Madeleine Doran places Jonson artistically in the Renaissance tradition of "multiple unity, of the coordination of accents" rather than in the classical one of the subordination of accent; yet in her assessment it is to another classicist that she refers for a comment on Jonson's work:

> As I have emphasized before, Jonson's great comedies, well-organized as they may be, are truly of the Renaissance both in number of lines of action complexly interwoven and disentangled and in general richness of detail--in character, in language, in observation on things and people. Dryden praised Jonson,

[20]McKeon, p. 340.

> significantly, for "the copiousness and the well-knitting of the intrigues."[21]

Jonson's plays are complex, multiple, and rich in detail, but he seems to favor also the principle of subordination of accent as evidenced by the careful way in which he manages the power relationship of the Volpone-Mosca and Face-Subtle partnerships. The Discoveries contains a passage on this principle of patterning:

> In being able to counsell others, a Man must be furnish'd with an universall store in himselfe, to the knowledge of all Nature: That is the matter, and seed-plot; There are the seats of all Argument, and Invention. But especially, you must be cunning in the nature of Man: There is the variety of things, which are as the Elements, and Letters, which his art and wisdome must ranke, and order to the present occasion. For wee see not all letters in single words; nor all places in particular discourses. That cause seldome happens, wherein a man will use all Arguments. (11.74-83)

Using "rank and order" accords with his emphasis on using "election, and a meane."

Jonson's use of the humours in creating his characters is another reason why some critics regard Jonson as one more of his own time than of a classical one. The humours theory was a pervasive one in Elizabethan and Jacobean times, appearing in the current physiological texts and used by other literary people besides Jonson. George Chapman is one example, but he made a rather inorganic use of the humours, a use that Jonson would not have entirely approved. The theory itself was, of course, an

[21]Doran, Endeavors, p. 278.

ancient one, promulgated in the fifth century B.C. by Hippocrates. The body of man was comprised of blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile, and on these four elements the body was dependent for its health.

> His health is most perfect when these elements are evenly proportioned to one another in combination, quality, and quantity, and are perfectly mingled. He has pain when one of these elements is defective or excessive or is isolated in the body, uncompounded with the others.[22]

Galen in the second century A.D. developed Hippocrates' theory by adding to it the idea of spirit pervading all parts and mingling with the humours. Presumably at this point the theory became psychological as well as physiological. Thomas Linacre translated Galen's book Of Temperaments into Latin in 1521, and Linacre's pupil Sir Thomas Elyot did much to popularize the idea. Elyot's Castel of Helth was published in 1539 and went through numerous editions. In Jonson's own immediate time, Robert Burton is the only one who analyzed the humours:

> A humour is a liquid or fluent part of the Body, comprehended in it, for the preservation of it; and it is either innate or born with us, or adventitious and acquisite. (I.i.2.2)

He names and describes the humours and also expresses the idea of a spirit which acts as "a common tie or medium betwixt the body and soul," or as, according to "Paracelsus, a fourth soul of itself."[23] Burton refers

[22] Of the Nature of Man, written by Polybius, son-in-law to Hippocrates, quoted in H. & S., IX, 391.

[23] Burton, Anatomy, p. 393.

frequently to Jonson's characters in illustrating certain kinds of people, the gullish, for instance, or the too uxorious. One of Jonson's most explicit definitions appears in EMOH:

> some one peculiar quality
> Doth so possesse a man, that it doth draw
> All his affects, his spirits, and his powers
> In their confluctions, all to runne one way;
> (2nd sounding, 105-8)

One interesting thing about this theory and Jonson's use of it is the idea of oneness, the spirit's contortion in accordance with one particular humour so that a character is drawn to being of one sort and to acting in one way. In addition to being reminiscent of Hamlet's delineation of "that particular fault," that "one defect,/ Being nature's livery, or fortune's star" (I.iv.31-36) which may cause corruption and of the Greek hamartia, it suggests also the Aristotelian concept of integrated oneness of character.

Jonson's use of this theory is ultimately rather like several pages out of the Ethics. Hippocrates-Polybius' "defective or excessive" and Galen and Burton's "spirit" also suggest Aristotle. A number of Aristotle's works, including the Ethics, Physics, and Rhetoric, which were known by the early part of the sixteenth century, and the Poetics were exerting an influence by mid-century. At any rate, all these branches go eventually back to a common soil. Jonson would have had ample opportunity for exposure

to the humour theory from any number of sources, and one need not limit him to the Ethics, for instance, since he was an eclectic and omnivorous explorer of ideas. But in addition to and perhaps more important than distinguishing between the real or organic humour and the foppish or superfician fad, there is the clear, rational treatment of a clearly irrational principle, a treatment bearing more kinship to Aristotle than to other possible influences. If Aristotle's virtuous man acts consistently in accordance with a rational principle, Jonson's humour characters act consistently in accordance with an irrational principle. Instead of doing the right thing for the right reason, they do the wrong thing for the wrong reason. The wrong reason has to do with something that cannot always be literally equated with one of the four humours; it does have to do with generally their being the wrong way around, the reverse image of the integrated man in harmony with his best self and the universe. They become, frequently, because of their irrationality, images of perverted creativity, rational monsters. They act in accordance with some particular fault or defect. By this action their fault grows, they increase in the humorous, and become "by habit" more greedy, more envious, more fantastic. Since their ends are not ultimate or absolute ones, since they substitute secondary goods for ultimate ones, they can become only something grown to excess within their own warped bounds.

A sense of purposeful action that is ultimately senseless arises from characters acting in accordance with their fault but in the context of a world view which holds rational action in accordance with a spiritual, "non-corporeal," ultimate as the ideal.

If the characters violate the principle of harmonious oneness and integrity, they are nevertheless created upon the basis of a principle of unity and made to act in relationship to that principle. Their very violation of this unity is the source of a unified purpose, a unified effect, and a unified action. Jonson's perception and use of the unifying principle between character and action and the unity of action possible in senseless actions is suggested by a passage from the Discoveries, a passage from the lengthy section on plot and unity of action, based on the Dutch scholar David Heinsius' De tragoedioe constitutione, published in Leyden in 1611. In the section on "What /is meant/ by one and entire" concerning the madness of Sophocles' Ajax, Heinsius' text reads thus:

> Exempli gratia, Sophoclis Aiacem videamus: Aiax armis priuatus, indignatur, & sic erat contumaliae impatiens, rabit ac furit. Ergo, quod pro tali est, haud pauca sine menta agit, & postramo pro Ulysse pecudes insanus mactat.

Jonson translates this passage in the following manner:

> For example, in a Tragedy, looke upon Sophocles his Ajax: Ajax, depriv'd of Achilles' Armour, which he hop'd from the suffrage of the Greekes, disdaines; and, growing impatient of the Injurie, rageth and turnes mad. In that humour he doth many senseless

> things; and at last falls upon the Grecian flocke,
> and kills a great ramme for Ulysses:
> (11.2794-2800)

There are apparently several associations in Jonson's mind. The humour can be a form of madness, at least the progenitor of "many senseless things," and it is like the tragic flaw or error of tragedy. The passage demonstrates the important association that Jonson makes between the humours and unity of action. It is the association which enables him to create coherent plays with unified actions, action proportionate in a rational context and concept of space, time and being. These unified actions help to create coherent characters: emotional appetites are revealed and given increase by the actions and the language of action and the increase becomes the resulting action itself.

Atkins is skeptical of using the Discoveries to comprehend or analyze Jonson's drama. The work was not published until 1640-1, by Sir Kenelm Digby, and Atkins thinks its contents and the understanding they suggest belong to the latter part of Jonson's life, more particularly to 1620-25, though some of the passages suggest an earlier date, 1605-15. "At any rate," he says, "it is important to note that the dramatic theory expounded at the end of the work has but little bearing on his earlier dramatic creations."[24] In his earlier dramatic creations" he was "more romantic in his bold and original efforts to

[24]Atkins, Literary Criticism: The Renascence, p. 314.

devise a new English drama."[25] Although he had "inborn classical tendencies," up to 1616 he had "much classical learning but little classical technique." Does this imply then that he can be said to have used classical technique in his later plays because there is extant a work from his later years containing many passages on technique, primarily the classical? It is really between The Case is Altered and the two humour plays that a dramatic change occurs in Jonson's technique. Jonson thought so himself; there must have been a reason.

Presumably Jonson was a student of the classics from his early years in Camden's school. Aristotle was well known by the time Jonson was born in 1573. Herford and Simpson's list of books from Jonson's library include the following:

> Aristotle. Opera Omnia quae extant, Graece & Latine. Authore Guillelmo Du Val. Paris, 2 Vols., 1619.
>
> Aristotle. De Poetica Liber. Latine conversus. Ed. T. Goulston. London, 1623.

There is also a copy of Aristotle's Rhetoric in Greek and no copy traced of Heinsius' commentary on Aristotle. The dates of these known editions are late, but the date on his edition of all Plato's extant works is early, 1578, and Jonson does not refer to Plato any more than he does directly to Aristotle in the plays. He was apparently a frequenter of libraries, the University and Bodleian Libraries at Oxford, for instance.

[25]Atkins, p. 261.

Any critical work of his early period would have been destroyed in the fire of 1623, including the preface and commentary to his version of the Ars Poetica of Horace. The commentary to this work he says was Aristotelian, Horace illuminated by means of "the Stagarite." As early as 1605, in the 1605 Quarto edition of Sejanus, he announces this work. In the Conversations with Drummond it is mentioned again. In 1623 it is still unpublished and after that it is lost. In this fire he says, in the "Execration upon Vulcan," there perished

> twice-twelve-years stor'd up humanitie,
> With humble Gleanings in Divinitie,

This passage suggests that he had been in the habit of exploring as he does in the Discoveries for a considerable length of time.

The liberties he takes with Heinsius' text and the rapid, abbreviated syntheses that he makes suggest that Jonson is retracing old trails, that it is not material encountered for the first time and only in this place. The pendulum of critical consensus has swung from acclaiming Jonson as an original interpreter and student of Aristotle to either an almost complete rejection of the Discoveries' importance in this matter or an ambiguous realization that there is something peculiarly Jonsonian in these passages. Tentative attitudes towards the Discoveries are understandable since it is a trail long since covered by the leaves of many autumns, but it seems fair to say that

Jonson is often as "original" in this particular work as he is in his plays. In his conception of imitation he saw nothing to prevent his making use of other men's works, provided he understood them and knew how to turn them to his own use, provided that he understood the sense and that in his own writing there was no contradiction between words and sense, another principle of creation stressed by Jonson.

It is not really necessary to rescue him, and his dramatic works, from classicism in order to describe him as "bold and original," and therefore "romantic." Jonson knew how to be classical and "original;" he understood the spirit and principles of classicism, beyond the "laws" assigned to it; he knew how to imitate and he knew how to steal, as another poet, of the modern era, T. S. Eliot has described his own method. If he can be described as "stealing" in the Discoveries, thereby decreasing its importance in relation to his drama, he certainly knows how to give, with the appearance of ease, the stolen property the imprint of his own mind, which suggests a great and continued familiarity and an understanding that was by this time second nature.

There are the same clarity and appearance of ease in the implementation of aesthetic principles of his plays, which are really different from anything else in the period. They are both earthy and sensual and abstract and rational. Like some of the poets of the eighteenth century,

Jonson is simultaneously specifically concrete and largely abstract. He is the man who can think both of administering emetics to turgid poets, such as Marston, and of regarding his plays as "phisickes of the mind." And most of his plays are, in a sense, intellectual physicks; they demand first, not a gut reaction, but an intellectual recognition. Such a trickster, to probe into such irrational and "natural" realms of folly with such an intellectual weapon, a weapon which made occupants of these realms unnatural. To catch a thief, hire another thief. Jonson, however, always announced himself. Many still missed his coming, and his going too.

CHAPTER VII

THE HUMOURS: AFFECTED OR GENUINE

Critical treatment of the humours in Jonson's work has ranged from their consideration as the four physiologically based temperaments of Renaissance "science" to their being simply affected mannerisms. The first would be a deeply rooted, inherent, temperament and therefore genuine, the second a shifting, facile adoption of surface mannerisms and therefore not genuine.

Herford and Simpson give an historical account of the "scientific" theory of the humours and state "Such was the theory which Jonson turned to literary account in the Comedy of the Humours."[1] In an article designed to interpret the humours anew, Henry L. Snuggs draws attention to a passage in the Induction to Every Man out of his Humour:

> But that a rooke, in wearing a pyed feather,
> The cable hat-band, or the three-pild ruffe,
> A yard of shooetye, or the Switzers knot
> On his French Garters, should affect a Humour!
> O 'tis more then most ridiculous.
> (11.110-114)

[1] H. & S., Works, IX, 394.

On the basis of this passage, and the playwright's use of miracle to convert Sordido and, in the play's original ending, Macilente, he contends that Jonson deliberately used the term in two senses: the "genuine and the affected or eccentric." Macilente, and perhaps Morose in Epicoene, he says are the only genuinely humoural characters in Jonson's plays. He concludes that "Though Jonson portrays, then, both the genuine and the affected humour, the humour of his comedy is almost exclusively affectation or eccentricity."

Snuggs' argument is also based on the eighteenth century's treatment of Jonson's work and ideas. Jonson's conception of the comic humours, he maintains, is "carried over with little change into the Restoration." He points to Dryden's statement about the "comic humour of eccentricity," an "extravagant habit," to Shadwell's dramatic use of social affectation, and to John Dennis's comment on the spurious humour, "which is only a Habit or Disposition contracted by Use of Custom."[2] One encyclopedia of the eighteenth century, however, indicates that the humours had retained something of their original definition in addition to having acquired a new one.

> Humour is also used in dramatic poetry, for a subordinate or weaker species of what the critics call manners.

[2]Henry L. Snuggs, "The Comic Humours: A New Interpretation," PMLA, LXII (March 1947), 114-122.

It is a mannerism derived from social behavior, but it is something else as well.

> Humour is usually considered by critics, as a fainter or weaker habitual passion peculiar to comic characters, as being chiefly found in persons of a lower degree than those proper for tragedy.[3]

Even though this second definition suggests the theory's original application, it is considerably weaker than, for instance, Sir Thomas Elyot's in his Castel of Helth (1539).

> In the body of Man be foure principall humours, which contynuinge in the proportion, that nature hath lymytted, the body is free from all syckenesse. Contrary wise, by the increase or diminution of any of them in quantitie or qualytie, ouer or vnder their natural assignement, inequall temperature commeth in to the body, which syckenesse, foloweth more or lasse, accordynge to the lapse or decaye of the temperatures of the sayd humours, which be these folowinge.
>
> (Bloudde, (Choler,
> (Fleume, (Melancoly.[4]

Jonson's use of the humours really partakes of something of all these definitions. That eighteenth century critics and playwrights interpreted his humours to mean only social affectations or eccentricities does not mean that he gave them a clear warrant to do so. That his humours did not fit the temperaments as defined in the "science" of the times need not preclude a personal theory.

[3] E. Chambers, Cyclopaedia: Or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences; Containing an Explication of the Terms, and an Account of the Things Signified Thereby, in the Several Arts, both Liberal and Mechanical, 2nd ed. (London, 1738), I.

[4] H. & S., IX, 391-392.

That he depicted humours as revealed in the "manners of men" need not mean that he saw them as originating there or that he collected them like a "mere Empirick" without a creative and controlling synthesis. There is a mass of evidence in the plays to indicate that Jonson intimately connected the humours with human nature itself. It is true, however, that he could not always decide exactly what that connection was. Fairly early though, in Every Man in his Humour, he decided it was something either "bred in the bone" or staining "vnto the liver, in some;" the second of these alternatives allows for the possibility of the humour as something learned, and this, of course, does allow for one possible source being the "manners of men." Jonson was grappling with, not evading, the age-old, and still unanswered, question of the source or cause of man's flawed, imperfect nature. He does not always refer to the humours by that name, but when Busy emerges in zealous "Originall Ignorance" and Wasp in irrational "vapours," in Bartholomew Fair, they are being just as humourous as Macilente. The fact is that the humourous in Jonson's work refers to a large inclusive realm, resolved into categories only by the characters themselves. That realm is the irrational and the appetitive, where man's chief pursuit is self-gratification. It is, therefore, a realm of shifting desires and pliant emotions. Like Cavalier Shift in Every Man out of his Humour, a character may be "easily yeelding

to any good impressions." Like Busy, he may follow any scent, whether it be pig or "a pyed feather" or the "worlds soule." All his characters have this in common, that they yield to impressions, the sensory and the sensual, rather than to reason. This yielding, or shifting, is the humourous action. Some may yield to the trivial in a trivial manner. Others may have stronger appetites and better wits, but they too yield, if not to the trivial, at least to the false. Jonson probes with a double-pronged dexterity: impelled from either direction, from the "liver" or the "cable hat-band," man manages to lose himself. In any case, Jonson had warrant, if he so desired it, from a contemporary's definition of the humours: Burton stated that they could be "either innate or born with us, or adventitious and acquisite."[5]

It is impossible to classify Jonsonian characters according to the four "scientific" humours of the time. The phlegmatic is missing, as is the sanguine, and the melancholic is rare. The choleric man does make frequent appearances, but usually he is not simply choleric. But the characters do have humourous dispositions, humourous in accordance with Jonsonian definition and usage. Usually in his plays there is at least one and often more than one strongly humoural character who is a kind of anchor man

[5]See above, p. 77.

around which whirl the weaker-spirited characters, more superficial, more foolish, or more obsessed with trivia. In all, the force that moves them is a force beyond the reach of reason. Whatever portion of this force a character may have, it is frequently a small or perverted portion. It may be directed lightly, foolishly, towards the trivia of life and in such a circumstance, the comic tone is not impaired. But it is a portion of the same force, larger and more perverted, which flows in the veins of the shadowy creatures, such as Macilente-Asper, that haunt the satiric comedies and the greater villains and scoundrels of the major plays.

To use Snuggs' terms, Jonson does then portray both the "genuine" and the "affected humour." But the substratum for the "affected," or learned, humour is a physiological-psychological pre-disposition to be humourous and the second, or affected, humour is even more ridiculous or contemptible because of the reality and awareness of the first. Characters may be temporarily cured of a particular manifestation of the humourous, but not necessarily of the inclination to be humourous. The conclusions of The Alchemist and Bartholomew Fair indicate the way in which Jonson completely incorporated this second proposition in his work. All the humours, both the strong and the weak, are perversions of the principle of reason which Jonson thought did, or should, underly the nature of things,

creating coherence and making a man an integrated, unified, whole person. Not only do the "absurd, affectatious" ones fail in "manners," they fail in all that makes man dignified and worthy of the name man. They are apes who imitate the surface of life. But anyone who says they are more properly cases for a psychiatric ward than representatives of humanity must surely not have looked very closely at humanity itself. Jonson has simply stripped away disguising features which might confuse the issue and displayed the follies in the forefront of the stage.

The main action in Jonson's plays then may be described as man doing "many senseless things." Within each personal temperament these senseless things exist <u>in potentia</u>; in action they are given actuality. Although the humour is in itself irrational, and therefore a fragment, characters acting in consistency with their particular humour produce unified action revealing each character for what he is and making an action picture of the pattern of humanity as well. The characters are not self-directed in the highest sense of being moved by the reason, but they are in the sense of being self-impelled towards personal gratification. If they are puppet-like, it is because they act in accordance with their natural impulses, which are not here the source of spontaneous and meaningful action. This may be a hard proposition, unpalatable to the heirs of

the Romantic revolution. It is not necessarily a whole truth, but it is certainly a portion of the truth, as most propositions are, in art or elsewhere.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CASE IS ALTERED: EARLY HUMOUROUS ACTION

This play, first published in 1609 but dated by Herford and Simpson at 1597-98, is Jonson's only known attempt at adapting something resembling the double plot in vogue in the Elizabethan drama of the 90's and at borrowing ready-made plots to tailor to his own uses. From two contrasting plays of Plautus, the Captives and the Auralaria, Jonson takes his two stories--the one a serious romance with comic relief, the other a satirical comic treatment of avarice with serious moments. Although both lend themselves to the Elizabethan love of mingling the grave and the gay, neither satisfies that same taste for a plot filled with incidents and crowded with persons. Jonson, however, satisfies this deficiency for his audience. Not only does he have two plots in one play, whereas Plautus had single-line action plots, but he also multiplies the original two suitors to five, he adds two children, Aurelia and Phoenixella, and he also adds the clownish Juniper and Onion. Charles R. Baskervill remarks on the Elizabethan characteristics of this play:

> The wealth of motive and material found in The Case is Altered--romantic love, romantic friendship, mazes of love entanglement, Plautine motives of lost and stolen children, clownish fads, and folk point of view, satire on word-mongers, and especially on unchecked follies--exhibits nearly every current that is apparent in the drama around 1599, when experiments were being made in many lines.[1]

Freda L. Townsend remarks on the search for classical unity of action, or rather the single line of action, by various critics and points in answer to five main strands of interest: (1) Count Ferneze and sons, Paulo and Gasper-Camillo, and the prisoner Chamont, (2) the love of Paulo and Rachel, and the treachery of Angelo, (3) the wooing of Christophero, Onion, and Ferneze; (4) Jaques and his money; and (5) the activities of the Count's daughters.[2] The play would seem indeed an example of the "co-ordination of accents," rather than the subordination, of which Madeleine Doran speaks.[3] But need the search for classical unity be the search for a single line of action? In the Discoveries Jonson comments on "What /is meant/ by one and entire":

> One is considerable two waies; either as it is, only separate, and by it selfe, or as being composed of many parts, it beginnes to be one as those parts grow or are wrought together. That it should be one the first way alone, and by it selfe, no man that hath tasted letters ever would say, especially having required before a just Magnitude and equal Proportion of the parts in themselves.

[1] English Elements in Jonson's Early Comedy (Austin, 1911), p. 103.

[2] Apologie for Bartholmew Fayre (New York, 1947), p. 40.

[3] See above, p. 75.

> Neither of which can possibly be, if the Action be single and separate, not composed of parts, which laid together in themselves, with an equal and fitting porportion, tend to the same end; which thing out of Antiquitie it selfe hath deceiv'd many, and many this Day it doth deceive.
> (11.2751-63)

The rest of the passage refers to the erroneous thought that "the action of one man" produces one action and emphasizes, repeatedly, that only those actions which can be joined "to one and the same end" can produce unified action.

Jonson himself, in this passage based on Heinsius, reveals that he does not conceive of unity of action consisting in a single and separate action. Some of the amplification in this passage is not to be found so explicitly stated in Aristotle, who, in places, is ambiguous on the subject, but who, nevertheless, provides the basic justification. "A story," says Aristotle, "does not achieve unity, as some people think, merely by being about one person" (VIII.1451a). Homer, he says "built his plot around the one action which we call the Odyssey; and the same is true of the Iliad" (VIII.1451a). On another occasion, however, he refers to the double plot like that used in the Odyssey as being more appropriate to comedy than to tragedy. But he apparently has in mind the divided attention and the diverse effect created by the good being rewarded and the bad punished at the end (XIII.1453a). In any case, the matter of importance is "the limit set by the very nature of the action" (VII.1451a). Another of his statements on

unity seems important: "The unity of a statement can be understood in two ways: the whole Iliad can be said to be one because its parts are connected, but the definition of man is one because it indicates one thing" (XX.1457a).[4]

Jonson was working with an idea or consciousness of space different from that of the Greeks or of the Middle Ages. For the Renaissance in general the consciousness was of space enlarged, but it tended to be heavenly space displaced and relocated in a more temporal and human frame. To occupy this increased space, the playwright might turn to and explore past time, relating it confusingly on occasion to the present. Or he might bring a stronger lens to focus on contemporary humanity, highlighting and enlarging some and increasing the number of objects brought into view by the power of the glass. In more space on earth, there is room for more people. Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights set about to demonstrate this with alacrity. Absolutes were still present or implied, but they did not hold space and time in the same vertical relationship to eternity as in preceding ages. With the development of the baroque sensibility, time re-oriented itself, at least momentarily, to the vertical ascent heavenward as well as to man's horizontally defined destiny. There was still a scene crowded with incidents, characters, and objects. In

[4]Grube, ed., On Poetry, pp. 16,17,25,44.

Jonson, of course, there is this crowded scene, sometimes seeming very compressed because of the large number of characters, because he tightens his control by tightening time or place, and because each minute is ticked off more emphatically. There is also an awareness of absolutes, but these absolutes define man in an earthly, temporal context.

The Case is Altered cannot be described as having a single line of action or simply a double one with a main plot and a subplot. Instead, there are several focal points from which actions radiate and then interlace with one another. Some of these focal points are weightier in interest than others, which are subordinate. The limits of the movement are marked by these principal centers of interest: Count Ferneze and his genteel establishment, on the one hand, and Jaques and his humble residence, on the other. Between these two points move the lesser characters, attracted by an opportunity to court or to display fine and affected manners or by an opportunity to indulge an affected love. The immediate and perceptible space of the play is also denoted by these two magnetic poles. The Venetian locale alluded to but not shown relates primarily to past actions which, however, will be resolved in the present circumstances: the earlier loss of the Count's son Camillo, the kidnapping of Rachel, and the restoration of both to their proper station. Disposed in these two main

centers and providing the play in general with holding pegs, so to speak, are two genuinely humoural characters, the Count and Jaques.

When Count Ferneze enters for the first time, he does so in an impatient peremptory manner, illustrating his son Paulo's description of him which precedes his entry:

> You know my father's wayward and his humour
> Must not receive a check, for then all objects,
> Feede both his griefe and his impatience,
> And those affections in him are like powder,
> Apt to enflame with every little sparke,
> And blow up reason, therefore Angelo, peace.
> (I.vi.85-90)

He fires a short quick speech and sends the servants flying about in search of his son Paulo, upon which he concludes,

> Patience? a Saint would loose his patience to be crost,
> As I am with a sort of motley braines
> See, see, how like a nest of Rookes they stand,
> Gaping on one another.
> (I.vii.17-20)

Paulo accounts for his father's behavior partially by his grief for loss of his wife, but his grief is easily displaced by the prospect of acquiring Rachel DePrie for himself. He needs only the knowledge that his steward, Christophero, seeks her for himself to decide that he, the Count, is "farre in love," a "perswasion" wrought in him by "fancie." He immediately proceeds to pursue the object of this current fancy. In the midst of his pursuit, word comes of Paulo's capture, and the Count turns aside in another direction:

> I set my thoughts on loue, on seruile loue,
> Forget my vertuous wife, feele not the dangers,
> The bonds and wounds of mine owne flesh and bloud,
> And therein am a mad man: therein plagu'd,
> With the most iust affliction vnder heauen.
> (III.iv.18-22)

He is more susceptible to a guilty conscience than to reason, which can be blown up by "every little sparke." His temper leads him to raise his hand against a prisoner under his protection, and unknown to him his own son. Thus, though the Count may not be classifiable as one of the four "scientific" humours, his humourous disposition makes him precipitate in his actions and obtuse in his comprehension of others.

The other character delineated as being strongly humourous is the Count's opposite in the social scale; presumably an outcast, a beggar, whose only rare possession is a daughter, Jaques De Prie expresses his humour in one particular way, his affection for his gold. He does not appear until Act II, but when he does, he is presented boldly. Immediately, his moving passion is delineated, by Jaques himself, and its effects are physical in their manifestation. He has spied Paulo and Angelo haunting his dwelling and he fears their motive is greed for his gold.

> . . . What a could sweat
> Flow'd on my browes, and over all my bosome!
> Had I not reason? to behold my dore
> Beset with unthrifts . . .
> . . . . . .
> That I might live alone once with my gold.
> O 'tis a sweet companion! kind & true!

> A man may trust it when his friend cheats him;
> Brother, or friend, or wife! o wondrous pelfe,
> That makes all men false, is true it selfe.
> (II.i.2-5; 27-31)

His humour is strong enough to lead him to steal, to kidnap, to disguise himself and Rachel in "beggery counterfeits," even to overcome the stench of dung in his nostrils. All motives are referred first of all and most importantly to his one preoccupation, his sweet treasure hidden under a pile of dung. His other treasure, Rachel, has some reflected value from the gold simply because she was stolen from the same place at the same time.

Likewise, the majority of the remaining characters in the play dance attendance upon appetites which control their motions. Some of them do have a sense of the true or real as opposed to the false or counterfeit: Paulo and Rachel are true to their love; Gasper-Camillo and Chamont are true to their friendship, to their word, and to the soldier's code of courage. But behind the "romantic love, romantic friendship, mazes of love entanglement" which Baskervill finds in this play, Jonson is writing his own kind of play. As it reveals characters yielding easily to any impression, the romantic love motif becomes a vehicle for satire.

Paulo and Angelo introduce the major love motif as Paulo decides that Angelo is the "true proper obiect" of his soul, a constant friend with whom he can entrust the

care of his beloved Rachel. Soon after, Onion joins the love-smitten ranks, desiring Juniper as spokesman to Christophero who will in turn be spokesman to Rachel. Christophero in his turn decides to press his own suit, but first he will consult and seek the support of the Count, who in turn sets about pursuing Rachel for himself. Every one of the lovers seeks an emissary or assistant and by each he is betrayed and deceived.

The motivation of the inconstant friends as eventually inconstant lovers may seem casual, but it does not necessarily seem unrealistic. People are susceptible to suggestion and they tend to want what others want. Why should depth be demanded of fictional characters and not of real people? Appetite unallied with either developed emotion or reason easily shifts its affection, as it surfaces first in one place and then in another.

Onion derives his affection, on infection, partially from the false poet Antonio Balladino who in the first scenes helps to set the tone of superficiality, of facile "trembling hearts" and "trickling teares." Juniper also forms a member of this trio and has the "sprightly humour" of calling upon large, incomprehensible words such as "Hierogliphick" and "Aequinoctiall." Valentine calls it a humour, but Juniper construes it as a "naturall gift." Juniper presents Onion to Balladino as one "mightely enamored of thee," "one as right of thy humour as may be,

a plaine simple Rascal, a true dunce." Onion has pretensions to noble poetic sentiments, but in his cloddish insensitivity he thinks that because Rachel is poor, she is not above his station. Both Juniper and Onion are easily turned from the scent of love by the scent of gold. As they wax amorous at the keyhole of Jaques' house, Onion for Rachel and Juniper to help Onion woo Rachel, the owner returns with "amorous eyes," to "court" his gold. Juniper is thoroughly clouted by Jaques while Onion takes refuge in a tree and thereby spies out Jaques' secret treasure. And thereafter Onion's love is given "a box of the eare." When they surface in the play again, they have dressed themselves in fine suits and have become convivially drunk. One passion, after all, is as good as another, whether it be poetry, love, or drink.

As indicated earlier, this group blends easily with the presumably more cultivated by means of Juniper's request for assistance from Christophero and Christophero's suit to the Count. As soon as Christophero announces his romantic intentions, it is also made apparent that his love is humourous and shallow:

> I spide her lately at her fathers doore,
> And if I did not see in her sweet face
> Gentry and noblenesse, nere trust me more:
> But this perswasion, fancie wrought in me,
> That fancie being created with her lookes,
> For where love is he thinkes his basest object
> Gentle and noble; I am farre in love.
> (II.vi.37-42)

He seems more susceptible than Onion to the gentility in Rachel's face, but he concludes that love has simply ennobled a base object. One suspects that not love so much as the material value of that love is an important consideration for Christophero. This suspicion is confirmed when he seeks to assure the Count that a wife would not make him neglectful of his duties as a steward. The Count himself privately notes that Rachel's poverty should be a deterrent to Christophero. In both men, to some degree, financial calculation is at work. This materialistic perversion of love into a fancy or humour is perhaps symbolized by Jaques' golden hoard. Rachel, the real treasure, presumably sought by so many, sits like a "Madona" atop the treasure in which most of her suitors are really interested. The action, therefore, which takes so many characters on the path to Jaques' house also leads to the play's major revelations, or examples of altered cases.

Angelo, not so easily described as tainted, even indirectly, by the smell of gold, is nevertheless as humourous in his major actions as the Count or Jaques. Like both, he is willful; at the same time he is also "yeelding to any good impressions." He is willful in that he insists on his right to so yield.

> He is an asse that will keep promise stricktly
> An any thing that checks his private pleasure;
> Chiefly in love. S'bloud am not I a man?
> Have I not eyes that are as free to look?
> And bloud to be enflam'd as well as his?
> (III.i.7-13)

Thematically he is important because he is another key figure illustrating the dominant influence of appetite: trust and the bonds of a close friendship cannot restrain him. He is close to the group of characters in which affective impressions have been made and will be retained and, of course, is a foil for Paulo's true love. In the action he will hasten the binding together of Paulo and Rachel and his own displacement by Rachel as the "true object" of Paulo's soul.

In several of this play's characters, Jonson has begun to mold the strongly humourous character, the character whose passion is of sufficient strength to give momentum to a feasible line of action, whose actions can be observed as consistent with what he is. Each character acts consistently in accordance with what he is and all the characters are in some way consistent with each other. They share the same wayward flesh, the same irrational motivation, and their minds are all delinquent in the exercise of reason.

One critic has described Jonson's construction in this play in an impressive manner:

> The plot and intrigue both have a thorough-going stratification which includes almost all the principal characters and, furthermore, furnishes them their main motivation. These elements rarely infuse one another; rather they are parallel lines.[5]

[5]J. J. Enck, "The Case Is Altered: Initial Comedy of Humours," SP, L (April 1953), 209.

Una Ellis-Fermor sees this independence of parts existing in as late a play as The Alchemist. She refers to the intrigue and interactions as the "outer form," the characters and their moods as the "inner form," and compares both to a modernistic, non-representational painting in which color-groups and line design are unrelated.[6]

This appearance of independent parts seems to vanish if one does not demand the wealth of figurative and symbolic language to be found in many Elizabethan and Jacobean plays. Jonson was contemptuous of conceits: his false poets are generally stuffed with conceits, and only a character like Onion demands a "prety Paradox or some Aligory" made. Instead, Jonson's language tends toward the abstract and analytical; the figurative, the concrete, the symbolic, are used, but they are not the vehicles by which the poet mounts aloft, nor generally the means of universalizing a play's application. Frequently, of course, Jonson the critic attempts to make this application directly. A man so conscious of the distracting play of the emotions would not allow his audience a possible escape through the flowery chain of a poetic leit motif. He wanted no pauses by the wayside to contemplate one particular moment. His audience must go all the way, and to this end he carefully molded character and action, both tending towards one end,

[6]The Jacobean Drama. An Interpretation (London, 1953), p. 44.

consistent and unified in overall effect. All characters in this early play persist to the end. Jonson does not create a unified effect by dropping some in order to focus on one. Immediately after Paulo's realization of Angelo's treachery, the stage is set for the restoration of the Count's lost son, Gasper-Camillo. Count Ferneze and his entourage, Maximillian and Francesco, enter, followed by servants leading in the prisoner Camillo. Christophero enters in frenetic haste, interrupting the denouement of this particular problem. Jaques soon follows; "a confusion of languages" ensues as each one, the Count, Christophero, and Jaques, loses himself in an ecstasy of complaint about his own interests; and Maximillian demands "What rule is here?" Chamont, Paulo, Rachel, and Angelo return: the restoration of son Paulo is followed by Chamont's revelation of Gasper's past history and Jaques' confession of Rachel's kidnapping. Chamont now has a sister and a bride-to-be as he is paired with Aurelia. Maximillian becomes the master of ceremonies as he sorts out information and directs all to the nuptial celebrations. Juniper and Onion who began the play, return to end it in the last scene. Their presence reveals the fate of Jaques' gold, now in the possession of "hinds" who think that worth can be had by the purchase of a lordship or silk clothes.

CHAPTER IX

EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR: THE HUMOURS CONTAINED

Every Man in his Humour was first acted in 1598, but not printed until 1601. It did not again appear in print until the folio edition of 1616, at which time, before being placed first in the edition of Jonson's works, it had undergone some careful revision. This revision probably took place about 1608-1610, but may have been as early as 1605.[1] In general, the dramatic substance of plot and character remain the same; the most important changes involve the transfer of the setting from Italy to England and the Anglicizing of the characters' names. However, since this paper is concerned with the early influence of classicism on Jonson's work, this chapter will be concerned primarily with the first version of this humours play.

Although Jonson has been writing plays of humourous action prior to this one, with the presentation of Every Man in his Humour he explicitly draws attention to the humours as an important concept. That he places the concept in a position of prominence suggests of course its conscious

[1] H. & S., Works, II, 345; IX, 344.

use as an "Image of the times" and as a unifying device in molding character and action. As an "Image of the times," however, it is more than a mirror image of customs and behavior, a concern with "affectations and misjudgments rather than threats to the health of society."[2] It is more nearly a clearly focused but reversed image of life as a rational process; as such the image is of life in perverted imitation of reason.

If, in Greek philosophy and in Jonson's plays, nature's secret principle is reason, and action is the primary means by which nature fulfills itself as a rational process, there must be some cause for action not being rational or not eventually leading to a revelation of reason. That cause is the perversion of reason in the human. The humour theory, for Jonson, is a statement of this perversion. Piso's definition of the humour suggests this interpretation: "it is a monster bred in a man by selfe loue, and affectation, and fed by folly" (III.i.157-58). It is a monster because it is unnatural, because it confuses and fragments the species man by separating his inner truth from his outer image, which in turn confuses all observers. One who swears bravely may be taken for a brave man. One who says he is a poet and writes a few verses may be thought a poet. One who says he is reasonable may think

[2]Alan C. Dessen, Jonson's Moral Comedy (Evanston, Illinois, 1971), p. 45.

he is so. One who pretends to be dissolute and irreverent may be judged to be so. "Superficiall formes" and "reall substance" (I.i.74-75) do not correspond, as Lorenzo Senior tells his nephew Stephano they should. In the language of Aristotle, the Formal Cause and the Efficient Cause should be working in harmony, but in a humourous world they fail to do so.

It is not enough to say a humour is a perversion, an unnatural state producing unnatural effects. One must define the natural, of which it is a perversion, as the reason and as the rational action chosen by the will guided by reason. There are enough references in this play, and others, to construe this classical principle of unity as Jonson's standard. In Act II of this play, Lorenzo Senior ponders how to restore his son to a regular course of action, "to reduce him from affected will/ To reasons manage":

> My troubled soule beginnes to apprehend
> A farther secret, and to meditate
> Vpon the difference of mans estate:
> Where is deciphered to true iudgements eye
> A deepe, conceald, and precious misterie.
> Yet can I not but worthily admire
> At natures art: who (when she did inspire
> This heat of life) plac'd Reason (as a king)
> Here in the head, to haue the marshalling
> Of our affections: and with soueraigntie
> To sway the state of our weake emperie.
> (ii.6-16)

As he continues to "reason" on the subject, he begins to encounter certain difficulties in confronting the reality

of illogical diversities in kingdoms and in men. From these difficulties he turns aside to reaffirm his faith in reason.

> Els, if the power of reason be not such,
> Why do we attribute to him so much?
> Or why are we obsequious to his law,
> If he want spirit our affects to awe?
> Oh no, I argue weakly, he is strong,
> Albeit my sonne haue done him too much wrong.
> (11.31-36)

It is clear that though he begins with reason as something mixed by nature's art in the human brain, he ends with its being an imposed law at strife with other elements in man, a law which must win its battles by intimidation.

The rule of reason advocated by the older generation, represented in this play by Lorenzo Senior, may seem to the young unnatural, imposed, and certainly no insurance against error. Although Lorenzo Senior speaks well for reason, he does not escape the general error and confusion. He is easily fooled by Musco in disguise as the soldier Portensio, although he swears to judge "if thy deedes/Will cary a proportion to thy words." He expresses surprise that one of such good exterior presence should be so degenerate in mind. The right formula is his, but he does not know how to apply it. All poetry he thinks idle, a useless toy to be exposed eventually by reason and experience.

In contrast to Lorenzo Senior is another representative of the older generation, Justice Clement, who, in addition, is a legal authority. Like the other characters, he has a humour, to be merry, but his humour is to challenge

the reality of all the others in the play. He does not accept the statements of others without examination. He can correlate deeds and words. He can distinguish between true and "idle" poetry, partially because he knows poetry and therefore can recognize a plagiarism, even though jumbled. He cautions Lorenzo Senior against his anxious spying:

> Nay but good Signior: heare me a word, heare me a word, your cares are nothing; they are like my cap, soone put on, and as soone put off. What? your sonne is old inough, to gouerne himself; let him runne his course, it's the onely way to make him a stay'd man: if he were an vnthrift, a ruffian, a drunkard or a licentious liuer, then you had reason: you had reason to take care: but being none of these, Gods passion, and I had twise so many cares, as you haue, I'ld droune them all in a cup of sack: come, come, I muse vour parcell of a souldier returnes not all this while.
> (III.iii.131-141)

Clement's merry temperament helps him to remember the experimental playfulness of youth and to know that reason can be more easily and truly discovered than imposed. Clement's sense of sanity is the prevailing spirit of this play. Men are still likeable and not so dedicated to the humours but they can be dissuaded from them with a jest.

By the time of the second, revised version, however, the signs point more clearly toward a more devastating image of man. In the 1616 folio version of the play Knowell (Lorenzo Senior) attempts to account for the humours. Although he bemoans the time past when "age was authoritie," he recounts in great detail the vices of both parents and children.

> Nay, would our selues were not the first, euen parents,
> That did destroy the hopes, in our owne children:
> Or they not learn'd our vices, in their cradles,
> And suck'd in our ill customes, with their milke.
> Ere all their teeth be borne, or they can speake,
> We make their palats cunning! The first wordes,
> We forme their tongues with, are licentious iests!
> . . . . . .
> But, this is in infancie; the dayes
> Of the long coate: when it puts on the breeches,
> It will put off all this. I, it is like:
> When it is gone into the bone alreadie.
> No, no: This die goes deeper then the coate,
> Or shirt, or skin. It staines, vnto the liuer,
> And heart, in some.
>
> (II.v.14-20; 25-31)

This detailed analysis of the humours more fully supports Piso and Biancha's statements, in the first version, that a humour is a disease. It points towards the plays to follow where the perverted representations of life become more intense. In Every Man in his Humour there is still a possibility that the surface appearance is false to the inner truth, that experience can be clarified by itself and reason can emerge triumphant.

Nevertheless, though the general tone is light hearted and gay, the whole action is still the result of a composite of humourous actions, even, unified, and controlled in effect. Each character is limited as a human being because of his humour; his actions are therefore limited to those arising from or illustrating his humour. Because each character is true to his humour, the action emerges as a unified one even though the characters are numerous and frequently trade humours and the appropriate actions.

The patterning of this play is similar to the previous one in that some characters seem more determined in their humours than others, in that these characters provide a focus for all the actions. Thorello's house, of course, is the principal setting and Thorello's is usually the dominant humour in any scene where he appears. By the end of Act I, in scene iv, in which Thorello first appears, all the major characters, except Clement and Prospero, have been introduced. Thorello's scene with Piso and Guiliano is the last one and serves as a climax to this first act. After much vacillation between confiding and not confiding in Guiliano, he delivers a long, detailed analysis of his brother Prospero's "giddie humor." Like Musco in his counterfeit form, Prospero, Thorello thinks, is betraying his true self in a false form leading to a "diseased riot." Thorello's speech is both an analysis of his brother's humour and a picture of his actions. In subsequent speeches, and he has four long ones in this scene, he analyzes other humours and creates more action pictures by following the logical paths of their currents; all this is motivated by his own jealousy. The scene ends with the appearance of Biancha, the cause of all his anxiety, and at this point there is explicit reference to the "new disease." Thorello immediately presents its anatomy. Although it causes a violation of the human form, it is something more than a violation of social forms.

> A new disease? I know not, new or old,
> But it may well be call'd poore mortals Plague;
> For like a pestilence it doth infect
> The houses of the braine: first it begins
> Solely to worke vpon the fantasie,
> Filling her seat with pestiferous aire,
> As soone corrupts the iudgement, and from thence,
> Sends like contagion to the memorie,
> Still each of other catching the infection,
> Which as a searching vapor spreads it selfe
> Confusedly through euery sensiue part,
> Till not a thought or motion in the mind
> Be free from the blacke poison of suspect.
> Ah, but what error is it to know this,
> And want the free election of the soule
> In such extreames? Well, I will once more striue,
> (Euen in despight of hell) my selfe to be
> And shake this feauer off that thus shakes me.
> (I.iv.205-222)

Perhaps the question of whether the humour is real or affected is related to a more basic problem which reveals itself in many forms: can man control himself and his own destiny or is he a prey to unknown forces, both external and internal; is a tragic flaw the result of a basic individual imperfection or of a single misjudgment at a particular time; can Swift, in the empirical age of the eighteenth century, hold ideas to be the result of indigestion and at the same time hold man responsible for being rational; can the humour be as organic as a disease and still be shaken off by an effort of will following a conscious realization? Thus far man has had to balance himself between the horns of this dilemma; Jonson in his time does likewise.

At any rate, Thorello is a key figure and he appears importantly placed at other moments of the play. In the central act of the play, Act III, in the first scene, he

sets the tone for the rest. Piso responds to another of his long, humourous speeches:

> Whence should this flow of passion(trow) take head?ha?
> Faith ile dreame no longer of this running humor,
> For feare I sinke, the violence of the streame
> Alreadie hath transported me so farre,
> That I can feele no ground at all:
> (11.132-136)

The humour ultimately sweeps away everything into a mass confusion, and each character in turn fastens on the term to explain the incomprehensible confusion that he experiences in trying to relate to or understand another. This act is rounded off with Thorello's jealousy again manifesting itself, its cause, Biancha, now present and visible on stage. A scene between Cob and his wife Tib occurs to parallel Thorello and Biancha's situation just depicted and the last scenes of the play when all gather at the water-carrier's house for the further satisfaction of their humours. Thorello appears in these last scenes with the others and here Cob's beating of Tib is both the low-brow reflection of Thorello's suspicions and the direct result of troubles in Thorello's house.

Thorello may be thought of as representative of the middle-age group to which conventions bring no security or stability; Prospero, Lorenzo Junior, and the other gallants and fops as the young who make sport of conventions or misunderstand them; Lorenzo Senior and Judge Clement, as the elder statesmen who keep watch over the conventions, effectively and ineffectively. The last two balance each other,

both in the concepts they represent and in their appearances in the play. Lorenzo Senior opens Act I, appears briefly again (for the third time) in the center point of the play, Act III, scene iii, to receive the sage advice of Clement who has just appeared for the first time. Clement's role now increases in importance as Lorenzo's diminishes. In the last act it is Lorenzo who is the most confused onlooker and Clement who is the complete master of the situation. It is Lorenzo who has condemned all poetry, but it is Clement who can apply the light of learning and thereby truly judge false poetry condemned to the flames of destruction. It is Lorenzo who is deceived by Musco dressed as a soldier, but it is Clement who is not deceived either by Musco or by Bobadilla's asserting himself to be a soldier. By means of these two, Lorenzo Senior and Judge Clement, the beginning, middle, and end of the play are clearly marked.

Scampering about beneath the noses of their elders, the gallants and fops and fools, always kept informed by Musco, weave their own spell. The few but lengthy appearances of Thorello, Clement, and Lorenzo Senior are balanced by the brief but numerous appearances of Lorenzo Junior, Musco, Stephano, Matheo, Bobadilla, Prospero, Guiliano, and Cob, who carry less of the play's thought than its action. The women seem exempt from the humours, but they are accused by the men of being something worse; eventually, however, they are drawn into the general melee: Biancha goes to

Cob's house to spy on Thorello, Hesperida proceeds to an assignation with Lorenzo Junior, and Tib generally joins in with Cob's angry words.

By the end of Act I, all the major intrigues are under way, each one having been introduced in each of the four scenes: (1) Lorenzo Senior's suspicions of his son and his resolve to follow after and spy on him; (2) Lorenzo Junior and Musco's counter-conspiracy; (3) most of the circle of gallants and fops, including Matheo, Bobadilla, and Cob, and Prospero introduced by name only; (4) Thorello and the usual auditors of his fears, Guiliano and Piso. The second act begins with the appearance of Musco disguised as a soldier. His first important act will be to fool Lorenzo Senior. His counterfeit appearance is a visible materialization of the conscious intent of the play. Musco can knowingly assume as counterfeit what the others confuse with the real. He does so when he flippantly pleads the "humor of necessitie" to Lorenzo Senior to account for a soldier's begging alms. Like attacks of Âte, or blind passion, among the Greeks, which helped account for irrational human passions and acts, the humours become an excuse for or explanation of almost anything. Stephano seriously pleads himself bewitched because he loses his purse; Bobadilla says he does not defend himself from Guiliano because he has been struck helpless by a planetary influence. But these are the fops, who never fail to

confuse superficial form and essential substance; their whimsical behavior, though superficial, is a manifestation of something's being basically wrong with the situation in general.

One faction of the gallants has been introduced by Act I, but in Act II they are all brought together, the witty played off against the witless, and their humours displayed for the admiration of their fellows, for the derision of the audience. Bobadilla introduces his habit of swearing, a habit which grows throughout and which is finally caught by the witty Prospero. Stephano says he is melancholy; Matheo swears he is melandholy too and when he is melancholy he writes sonnets; so Stephano promptly sits down to write sonnets too. Their "essences," so easily acquired, are easily assumed by others, and here their humours and their actions are deftly interlaced, one with the other.

The same interlacing occurs throughout the play. In Act III, scene ii, for instance, Bobadilla, for the benefit of Prospero and Lorenzo Junior, discourses on the wonders of tobacco. Piso, who has been in the preceding scene, returns in search of a messenger to his master, Thorello. He exits and enters again with Cob, the sought-after messenger. On both occasions, first one and then both, as they pass through, fling out caustic remarks about "rogish Tabacco;" in the meantime, Bobadilla pursues his

own interests by demanding that they help him light his match. As each intrudes his particular concern on the business of another, a general confusion of words and action is the result. At any moment the unexpected and the seemingly irrelevant may intrude with explosive results, because each one pursues his particular concern, because no one understands about the business of another, and because each will nevertheless risk quarrelsome comments about another's pre-occupation. The same quarrelsome pattern of confusion repeats itself in the next scene as Clement confounds Cob for speaking against tobacco. Scene iv comes as a climax to the subdued rumblings of the two preceding scenes: it begins with a quarrel between Guiliano and Biancha about the gallants and ends in taunts, challenges, and swordplay, when all become embroiled in Guiliano's misunderstanding of one word overheard from the end of a conversation.

This confusion of minds, interests, and actions reflects a major theme of the play, a theme suggested by such lines as "signior Pithagoras, he thats al manner of shapes" and "Let all things be preposterously transchanged." At the end of the play this distortion of reality and perversion of reason is summed up by the responses of Lorenzo Junior and Judge Clement to Matheo's poetry. Lorenzo Junior comments:

> Poetry? nay then call blasphemie, religion;
> Call Diuels, Angels; and Sinne, pietie:
> (V.iii.305-306)

People "think" and act according to "grosse opinion" and "fat iudgements," in other words, irrational, unintellectual, subjective predilections. Clement gives a reason for the existence of "this barren and infected age."

> I Lorenzo, but election is now gouerned altogether by the influence of humor, which insteed of those holy flames that should direct and light the soule to eternitie, hurles foorth nothing but smooke and congested vapours, that stifle her vp, & bereaue her of al sight & motion.
> (V.iii.344-348)

Both these speeches indicate the humours to be more serious than mere follies or social affectations, but they come at the end of the play when there has been a revelation of reason and everyone has vowed a better behavior for the sake of all.

CHAPTER X

EVERY MAN OUT OF HIS HUMOUR: THE HUMOURS OVERFLOW

As the next episode in the continuing saga of man's humourous degeneration begins, it is apparent that what often seemed mere theorizing on human nature in Every Man in his Humour has become more deeply a part of characterization in Every Man out of his Humour. The humours have the same source and are of the same kind as those in Every Man in his Humour, where they have already been described as a disease, staining "unto the liver, and heart," in some, something deeper "than the coate, or shirt, or skin." But this analysis of the humours in Every Man in his Humour was presented with a certain calm, contained rationality. And there was much emphasis in this play on keeping a due proportion and balance.

Now, however, the tone is sardonic, more openly and emphatically satirical. Satire involves emotions strong enough to usurp the office of reason and upset the balance which reason can create. It involves indignation and contempt, which not only rule their possessor but also the portrayal of their objects. Exaggeration is involved because contemptible traits hidden among or interwoven with

other less objectionable traits or redemptive ones are extracted and highlighted in an anatomy of man. If these traits are not presented with a force sufficient to suggest a strong emotional distaste, then the point is lost, especially on those who are not susceptible to reason. So there is a very rational justification for the choice of satire as a writer's vehicle. The careful and orderly structure of Every Man out of his Humour suggests such a rationale, and the dual character of Asper-Macilente suggests such an awareness on Jonson's part.

Macilente in the first act sets the tone and suggests the rationale behind his own creation.

> but, Stoique, where (in the vast world)
> Doth that man breathe, that can so much command
> His bloud, and his affection?
> . . . . . .
> There is no taste in this Philosophie,
> Tis like a potion that a man should drinke,
> But turnes his stomacke with the sight of it.
> I am no such pild Cinique, to beleeue,
> That beggery is the onely happinesse;
> Or (with a number of these patient fooles)
> To sing: My minde to me a kingdome is,
> When the lanke hungrie belly barkes for foode.
> . . . . . .
> I wish the organs of my sight were crackt;
> And that the engine of my griefe could cast
> Mine eye-balls, like globes of wild-fire, forth,
> To melt this vnproportion'd frame of nature.
> (I.i.2-3; 11-15; 25-28)

On the one hand, he rejects reason and philosophy as ineffective in a world where the basic structure has no proportion. On the other, he emphasizes the fact that an inequitable fortune has physical effects, that man is a creature with a physical nature, and that hardships, such

as a "hungrie belly," generate strong emotions. Throughout the play he will respond to the deformities of his fellow characters with the passionate intensity generated by his condition. But he also makes social and moral judgments, judgments which he would not have made, however, if his own condition were not impoverished and that of the undeserving prosperous. He therefore has a vested interest or a selfish motive in seeing the others exposed.

Alvin Kernan in The Cankered Muse states that Jonson in Every Man out of his Humour "went to some trouble to make clear that the character of the satirist is a mask which an author assumes for the purpose of making some lasting impression on the world he is attacking." He concludes that Jonson developed in "dramatic terms the relationship between author and satirist which is axiomatic in both Elizabethan formal verse satire and critical discussions of the genre."[1] One wonders why, if the convention of the mask was so axiomatic, Jonson had to underline, explain, emphasize its use, and therefore, of course, why Asper exists. He was, of course, adapting the convention to the drama and also he was rather sensitive to the way in which he was frequently disallowed the multiple awareness and aesthetic distance of the thinking man and artist. Asper, despite the vehemence of his outbursts, still

[1]Alvin Kernan, The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven, Connecticut, 1959), pp. 116-117; 137-138.

insists on his right to be judged according to "arte, or iudgement." His vehemence, however, matches Macilente's, as he frequently refers to "publicke vice," "iniquitie," "crimes," "sinne," and an "impious world." Later in the play the Grex make the well-known distinction between hate and envy, with reference to Macilente's motives; Asper's emotion then is presumably hate or indignation rather than envy. Like the man of reason he can hate the right thing at the right time for the right reason. Why then could not Macilente have been motivated by hatred of crime or sin alone rather than envy of others? Probably the answer lies as much in Jonson's desire for realism and his understanding of the aesthetic distance or objectivity of art as in his desire to use a convention established in another genre. In an imperfect world of imperfect people it is rather difficult to depict anyone who does not in some way share in that imperfection. A thinking man may more accurately observe the faults of the world from a distance, but what happens when he becomes a man of action as well? May not his hatred of sin become confused with the object which embodies that sin? If, as a result, he comes to hate mankind as well as mankind's sins, then he may lose his balance, his sanity, and his right to speak to humanity. Also, of course, he would be hampered in his actions, but a character like Macilente can violate trusts, arrange betrayals that bring revelations, and even stoop

to poisoning dogs without anyone demanding that a hero not act like a villain. Action, of course, is a necessity in the drama and it is a necessity in achieving the change posited by the play's title. The work of art, the play itself, is a form of action, but it has been generalized and distanced to apply to all men who are living examples of Asper's "publicke vice," and it is the kind of contribution that the artist can make to the reformation of the world. Asper then emphasizes the author's ability to satirize without self-interest and to remain at a distance sufficient to ensure some objectivity; Macilente as a man of action, involved in the world and motivated by envy, serves the interests of realism as well as underlining the distinction between an author and his characters or his mask. He also provides the author with an opportunity to expose another counterfeit--the false and shallow critic who speaks primarily from self-interest.

The play as a form of action helps to serve Asper's desire "To melt the world, and mould it new againe." It is an expression of the artist's desire and belief that art have some efficacy, that it is relevant to reality. So Asper, in addition to standing for disinterested critical appraisal and aesthetic distance also stands for the artist's involvement in his world. So the transition from the everyday world of the audience to the appearance of Macilente in scene one and the play proper is a slow one

designed to preserve both critical distance and involvement as the audience is gradually pulled in on the author's terms. In between is the Grex who discuss the play just as the audience might, only, of course, in a more informed way. Asper appears with them in this context of critical analysis. Even before Macilente and scene one, the characters begin to blend with the chorus as Buffone wanders on stage before his time and the "Prologue" abandons his formal announcement, insisting that the Grex have already made all necessary prologues. The opening may seem slow, but the audience is not abruptly plunged into strange waters and they may even have forgotten that they are watching a play. Just as the critics and the author-figure are absorbed into the play, so is the audience.

Macilente's wrath, which embraces the other characters in a flood of sardonic, sometimes savage, remarks, helps to set the tone and to create a unity of tone, but the fact that he too has a humour helps to create unity of action as well. The dispersal of humours is not brought about by one different in kind from the other characters in the play. Like the others he has that which will not contain itself, which draws all "his affects, his spirits, and his powers" "to runne one way." Macilente's humour is more intense than that of any other character and it grows in strength as it feeds itself with disgust at the "times deformitie." All the humours have "fluxure, and humiditie,"

so there are no opposing elements which cannot be mixed. Fungoso faints from the "fluxe of apparell." Briske says that Saviolina's "wit was at the floud." Mitis says that Briske's humour "ebbes apace," but Cordatus says it will flow again "till there come a generall drought of humour among all our actors." Sordido prays for a drought, so that he can make a fortune from his grain, but the one that comes is that forecast by Cordatus. In the end Macilente's humour will inundate all the others and put out the "wild-fire" in his own soul.

> COR. O, hee's a fellow of a strange nature. Now do's hee (in this calme of his humour) plot, and store vp a world of malicious thoughts in his braine, till hee is so full with 'hem, that you shall see the very torrent of his enuie breake forth like a land-floud: and, against the course of all their affections oppose it selfe so violently, that you will almost haue wonder to thinke, how 'tis possible the current of their dispositions shall receiue so quick, and strong an alteration.
> (IV.viii.152-159)

It is like an energy force of sufficient intensity to consume that which is like itself without destroying form. All action is generated by it and all is of the same kind.

There is one scene which brings together the two characters most responsible for the play's tone and for the outcome of the action. It occurs near the end at a moment when abundant proof and justification for its point has been offered. In addition to all this, it offers further proof that Jonson was thinking in terms of "like unto like." At the tavern Carlo Buffone and Macilente have been

discussing the appropriate action for the forthcoming debacle of humours when they turn to remarks on the nature of man.

> CARL. 'Tis an Axiome in naturall philosophie, What comes nearest the nature of that it feeds, conuerts quicker to nourishment, and doth sooner essentiate. Now nothing in flesh, and entrailes, assimulates or resembles man more, then a hog, or swine--
>
> MACI. True; and hee (to requite their courtesie) often-times d'offeth his owne nature, and puts on theirs; as when hee becomes as churlish as a hog, or as drunke as a sow: but to your conclusion.
>
> CARL. Mary, I say, nothing resembling man more then a swine, it followes, nothing can be more nourishing: for indeed (but that it abhorres from our nice nature) if we fed one vpon another, we should shoot vp a great deale faster, and thriue much better: I referre mee to your vsurous Cannibals, or such like: but since it is so contrary, porke, porke, is your only feed.
>
> MACI. I take it, your deuill be of the same diet; he would ne're ha' desir'd to beene incorporated into swine else. O, here comes the melancholy messe: vpon 'hem Carlo, charge, charge.
> (V.v.60-79)

Man can mix with swine, water with water, humour with humour, and if man is not careful, he will find himself becoming one flesh with the devil. The element in which he lives here will be the element in which he lives hereafter, trapped by the physical law by which he has lived. If one is searching for an example of savagery in tone, he need not look further. The scene is even more ironic if one remembers Carlo himself will shortly hereafter receive a beating from Puntarvolo, aided by Macilente. Of all the other characters, it is only Macilente whom Carlo has in

any way favored.

> 'Slid, the slaue /Macilente/ were to be
> lou'd next heauen, aboue honour,
> wealth, rich fare, apparell, wenches,
> All the delights of the belly, and the
> groine, whateuer.
> (V.iv.29-32)

One refrain throughout the play has been Carlo's contempt for friendship.

> Pish, the title of a friend, it's a vaine
> idle thing, only venerable among fooles:
> you shall not haue one that has
> any opinion of wit affect it.
> (IV.iii.111-113)

In a sense, Carlo is betrayed by a lapse from his humour, as Volpone will be in a later play. The gallants who are partners in playful tricks are developing into the villains, partners in crime.

Critics have, in various ways, called this play a failure on the basis, primarily, of its lack of unity. Una Ellis-Fermor thinks that this play is worse in "confusion of plot" than Every Man in his Humour, that it is "over-burdened with non-dramatic material, which, while attempting to explicate character and plot, actually succeeds only in deadening them."[2] Herford thinks Jonson's "classical instinct for order and unity" has been "overpowered" by a "motley disarray" of "pathological specimens, labelled and classified."[3] Jonas A. Barish calls it "a

[2] Jacobean Drama, p. 106.

[3] H. & S., I, 378-379.

heroic failure" because it lacks a "minimal suspense."[4] Alan C. Dessen states that a "tension clearly exists between Jonson's literary aims and the basic demands of the theater, a tension which results in elaborate and often confused scenes."[5] As an example of this confusion he cites the scene in St. Paul's aisle (III.i-vi) where many characters meet and exchange remarks, a scene which may look far less confusing on stage than it does on paper, a scene which, even if confusing, does not seem inappropriate when the author's message is confusion.

But the structure of this play does not lack unity, and the movements of the characters may be disorderly, but they are not disordered. The array of characters in the large central scenes suggests the motley crowds pushing about on any busy day in London, where people lived closely together, crowds which were familiar sights to any London playgoer. Like Walt Whitman, Jonson captures the "hurl and blab of pave" and he does so with a care that hides his art.

Macilente begins the play proper, violently, and also ends it, gently. The next two scenes are evenly balanced, with Macilente, Buffone, and Sogliardo in scene ii and Macilente, Sordido, and Hine in scene iii.

[4] Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy (Cambridge, Massachusets, 1960), p. 104.

[5] Jonson's Moral Comedy, p. 51.

Sogliardo and Sordido are brothers; the first is a country lout who aspires to be a gentleman at court; the second is a country lout who aspires to wealth and to power over his fellows; the first apes the superficial or false values of authority and the second flouts all authority. The tone and direction of the play have been established: the characters will now move towards the object of their ambitions, acceptance and glorification at court. It is not the object for all, but it is the general direction of movement in the play. At court, of course, they find another counterfeit like themselves, and following this they will fall into various forms of disrepute more appropriately located in a tavern and in prison.

Macilente's second-in-command, Carlo Buffone, after having been introduced in the Prologue and in scene ii with Macilente, will open Act II, where Fastidius Briske is introduced and his humour exposed, by Buffone, along with Sogliardo who aspires to be a gallant like Briske and whose talk is peppered with the word "humour." The arrival of a messenger, Cinedo, and their discussion of "the knight" prepare for the appearance of Puntarvolo and the play-within-a-play to be enacted in scenes ii and iii. Puntarvolo's homecoming, programmed by himself to sound like a medieval romance, is the principal scene for this particular character, but it also blends, in scene iii, with one of the large scenes where all the characters

heretofore introduced and one new one, Fungoso, have foregathered. The preceding scene has established Puntarvolo and his Lady as the center of interest, but around their imitation of "sir Lancelot, and queene Gvevener" there are interwoven a number of other interests and actions: the relationship between Sordido, Sogliardo, and Fungoso is established; Fungoso is impressed with Briske's "fine sute of clothes" and presses Uncle Sogliardo to help him obtain money for such a suit while Sogliardo presses him for news of "a new Motion" in London; Briske and Puntarvolo vie with each in displaying their knowledge of court affairs and the subject of Saviolina, the "court-starre," "that planet of wit," is introduced; Puntarvolo discusses the business of his travel venture; Briske discovers that his merchant's wife, Fallace, is Sogliardo's niece and Fungoso's sister. Carlo moves from group to group, weaving all together and making the satirical comment appropriate to the humour in progress. Actions already begun are furthered, new ones begun, and preparations made for future ones. Old humours are whetted and new ones blossom. After this "Scene full, and relieu'd with varietie of speakers to the end," the groups break apart and the following three scenes bring different individuals to prominence on the basis of relationships established in the preceding scene: Deliro acts out his uxoriousness and Fallace her contempt; Fungoso and his sister talk at cross

purposes, he of his new clothes, she of her admiration for Briske; Briske appears to astound Fungoso with another new suit, to delight Fallace with his presence, to promise to introduce Macilente to the court. Macilente takes over this portion of the play and, as Buffone has done in the last major scene, he keeps a current of satiric commentary running.

Act III which opens in the aisle of St. Paul's gradually builds by a series of accretions to another large gathering of characters by scene vi. Clove and Orange's attempt to gull the gentlemen helps to establish the atmosphere of the place which in turn helps to emphasize the fraudulent and commercial nature of the characters' ambitions. A number of important things happen: Sogliardo buys a coat of arms and acquires "a pimpe" for a tutor, recommended by Carlo, for his preparation as a gentleman--one Cavalier Shift, who has a principal scene in which to establish his character; Fungoso's attempts to ape Briske become more emphatic as he brings his tailor to observe and then copy Briske's apparel; some telling remarks are elicited from Carlo which emphasize the lack of values in this upside world where scoundrels ply their trade in a church, where a lineage is bought at market, and the habits of a gentleman are learned from denizens of the underworld and brought to perfection in a tavern. Carlo's remarks also reveal his own values and prepare for his

later downfall.

> Nay, looke you sir, now you are a gentleman, you must carry a more exalted presence, change your mood, and habit, to a more austere forme, be exceeding proud, stand vpon your gentilitie, and scorne euery man. Speake nothing humbly, neuer discourse vnder a nobleman, though you ne're saw him but riding to the Starr-chambre, it's all one. Loue no man. Trust no man. Speake ill of no man to his face: nor well of any man behind his backe. Salute fairely on the front, and wish 'hem hang'd vpon the turne. Spread your selfe vpon his bosome publikely, whose heart you would eate in priuate. These be principles, thinke on 'hem, I'le come to you againe presently.
> (III.iv.101-111)

Near the end of the act, after the fulsome scenes at St. Paul's, in scene vii, the focus returns to single characters and small groups. It is also the beginning of every man's being put out of his humour. Sordido, who is ready to hang himself "since flesh and bloud cannot beare this crosse," is saved by some rustics whose contemptuous remarks also save him from his humour. The next scene, with Macilente and Briske at court with Saviolina, reveals the shallowness of Sogliardo, Fungoso, and Fallace's ideal and foreshadows their disillusionment: when Saviolina appears, Briske falls apart and casts about for props to his conversation--a vaulting-horse to do tricks on, a pipe to fill up his many pauses. The scene is punctuated by Macilente's contemptuous judgment of court values:

> Be a man ne're so vile
> In wit, in judgement, manners, or what else;
> If he can purchase but a silken couer,
> He shall not only passe, but passe regarded:
> Whereas, let him be poore, and meanely clad,

> Though ne're so richly parted; you shall haue
> A fellow (that knowes nothing but his beefe,
> Or how to rince his clammy guts in beere)
> Will take him by the shoulders, or the throat,
> And kicke him downe the staires.
> (III.ix.10-19)

Sordido's redemption has begun a counter movement which from this point gradually includes the rest of the characters. After this conversion in Act III, Macilente becomes busier as he begins the task in earnest of stripping "the ragged follies of the time,/ Naked, as at their birth": he tells Deliro of Briske's poor reception at court, and Deliro resolves, now that the "masking vizor is off," to bring an action against Briske for his many loans. Fallace is angry with Deliro and Macilente and worries about Briske, whereupon Macilente proceeds to anatomize Fallace with disrespect. Those characters who do not appear in the first scenes of this act are kept in the minds of the audience because they are discussed by the other characters. Then towards the end of the act in a carefully modulated movement, they, in this case Sogliardo, Briske, and Fungoso, appear in scenes which highlight and emphasize for the last time their individual humours. Carlo and Macilente's opinions are given fuller prominence in this act, and with each word he utters Carlo more fully reveals and damns himself. The act ends with Macilente's plot to expose Saviolina.

Act V begins with a large foregathering, but as it proceeds the participants gradually diminish as one by one

each character is put out of his humour. All the threads have been carefully interwoven. Sogliardo's introduction at court will deprive Saviolina of her self-conceit that she can judge "that inward power that formes his /Sogliardo's/ countenance." It will expose her and prove Macilente's criticism of the court valid. It will also expose Sogliardo, but he will not lose his humour until the next scene when Puntarvolo's dog, and fellow-traveller in his projected business venture which has also involved Briske, provides the occasion for unmasking Sogliardo's "professor," Cavalier Shift. Shift, to prove himself a tall man, has sworn to many robberies and now swears, in a kneeling posture, just the opposite to clear himself of poisoning Puntarvolo's dog. At the tavern where Carlo awaits the company for a celebration dinner, Carlo, at the instigation of Macilente, cannot resist doing what he usually does anyway. He indulges his propensity to make caustic remarks, Puntarvolo beats him, constables appear to stop the uproar, and at the end Fungoso, found hiding under a table, is held for the reckoning. Because of his fine clothing, no one believes that he cannot pay; by the time Deliro arrives to rescue him, he is willing to foregoe his appetite for fine clothes. Macilente has sent Deliro to redeem Fungoso and thereafter sends Fallace to rescue Briske, now in prison. Deliro goes because of his fatuous desire to please Fallace and Fallace goes because of her

obsession with Briske. Macilente, of course, sees that Deliro will discover Fallace and Briske together. When Briske swears to leave off imitating gallants and fops, Macilente is also put out of his humour. He concludes the action by humbly and gently appealing to the audience for their "kind approbation."

Freda L. Townsend, who is one critic with a favorable opinion of this play, remarks that each character is "in reality an action in himself."[6] There is something more: each character, or action, is part of one large action, slowly modulated at the beginning but sweeping rapidly at the end to a conclusion where all threads have been interwoven and not a stitch dropped.

[6] Apologie for Bartholmew Fayre: The Art of Jonson's Comedies (New York, 1947), p. 46.

CHAPTER XI

VOLPONE:

HUMOUROUS ACTION: "EASILY YEELDING TO ANY GOOD IMPRESSIONS"

The Dedication preceding the text of Volpone should prepare the reader for a greater intensity and seriousness of purpose. In it Jonson defines the true poet as "the interpreter, and arbiter of nature, a teacher of things diuine, no lesse then humane, a master in manners; and can alone (or with a few) effect the business of man-kind;" whereas, of the "writers of these dayes" he says "not only their manners, but their natures are inuerted." This suggests something beyond his avowed purpose in earlier plays of an imitation of life "accommodated to the correction of manners" (EMOH III.vi.10-11). He admits here to a general concern with the nature behind manners, not really a new concern, but newly admitted, at least in his comedies, and certainly appropriate to and obvious in Volpone, where characterization, action, theme, and imagery consistently reflect this inversion of nature.

Heretofore, although Jonson has referred to his humourous characters as diseased or as monsters, he has

also maintained they are ridiculous subjects for pleasant laughter and all has ended happily. Although the characters of Volpone are also ridiculous, the laughter they provoke may be more nervous than pleasant. In Every Man out of his Humour there was a long discourse on swinish human nature by Carlo Buffone; now in Volpone the characters are themselves portrayed as various carcass-snuffling scavenger birds. Jonson certainly serves notice in the Dedication that this comedy may be thought by some to violate "the strict rigour of comick law," and this play, unlike earlier ones, ends with justice rather than with unmitigated happiness. Despite this difference in the comic conclusion and in the extremities of the aberrations, the psychology of the humours is still present and working. Lady Would-bee, despite her ability to reduce everything to nonsense, gives an accurate description of the psychology of the legacy-hunters:

> And, as we find our passions doe rebell,
> Encounter 'hem with reason; or diuert 'hem,
> By giuing scope vnto some other humour
> Of lesser danger: as, in politique bodies,
> There's nothing, more, doth ouer-whelme the iudgement,
> And clouds the vnderstanding, then too much
> Settling, and fixing, and (as't were) subsiding
> Vpon one obiect. For the incorporating
> Of these same outward things, into that part,
> Which we call mentall, leaues some certaine faeces,
> That stop the organs, and as PLATO sayes,
> Assassinates our knowledge.
> (III.iv.101-112)

Mosca possesses the same knowledge, but he realizes its significance and knows how to use it for something more

than the appearance of erudition. After the first trial, Volpone remarks on the blindness of their victims, that distrust of Volpone and Mosca has not occurred to them. Mosca replies:

> MOS. True, they will not see 'it.
> Too much light blinds 'hem, I thinke. Each of 'hem
> Is so possest, and stuft with his owne hopes,
> That any thing, vnto the contrary,
> Neuer so true, or neuer so apparent,
> Neuer so palpable, they will resist it_____
>
> VOLP. Like a temptation of the diuell.
> (V.ii.22-28)

Earlier humour characters have been generally thought by critics not truly to possess humours because they were not profoundly enough obsessed. But Mosca here explicitly states a psychology which he and they share:

> But your fine, elegant rascall, that can rise
> And stoope (almost together) like an arrow;
> Shoot through the aire, as nimbly as a starre;
> Turne short, as doth a swallow; and be here,
> And there, and here, and yonder, all at once;
> Present to any humour, all occasion;
> And change a visor, swifter, then a thought!
> This is the creature, had the art borne with him;
> (III.i.23-30)

Paradoxically, while they are obsessed with one thing which overpowers the judgment, this same obsession leads them to assume many shapes, in violation of many standards, shapes which naturally seem superficial since they lack truth; but even though they lack depth, the obsession which prompts them is itself deep-seated.

This variability in being is a persistent theme in Jonson's plays and is as essential to the humours theory as

the obsession which compels consistent action. It appears in a position of prominence in the opening scene of the play when Volpone sings his morning hymn of worship to his and the "worlds soule," his gold. His hymn is a hierarchical catalogue of the values which gold can change or invert: it displaces the saints in heaven; outshines the sun and the light of creation which banished chaos; it is a son greater than the father; it replaces all human joys as well as all heavenly ones--children, parents, friends; it creates virtue, fame, and honor. It is the uncaused cause, the unmoved mover, of all things of worth.

Scene one witnesses the change of all those intangible values which man presumably and traditionally has adhered to. Scene two becomes a physical testimony to his spiritual transformation and forecastes the ultimate degradation of all who live by this new code. The creatures spawned in this new heaven on earth would not have pleased Bernard Shaw, with his hopes for the evolution of a superman, but Tennyson would have appreciated their implications that changing may not mean improving. Volpone's dwarf, hermaphrodite, and eunuch are all perversions of man's physical image, just as Volpone's credo is a perversion of his soul. Nano, Androgyno, and Castrone entertain their lord and father with a skit which emphasizes this shifting of elements out of their proper proportion and balance. Nano traces in verse various transmigrations

of the soul of Pythagoras who, according to Nano, believed in the shifting of the elements; these transmigrations presumably illustrate his theory, but there is an unfortunate degeneration from the time when the soul was given by Apollo to Pythagoras, then passed eventually through knights and knaves, lords and beggars, oxes and camels, mules and goats, and now ends, in uneven rhyme, in the body of a hermaphrodite with the soul of a fool. Although this skit is like a playful nursery rhyme, it illustrates in exaggerated form the other characters' ultimate physical degradation resulting from spiritual abuse. At some point the intangible and tangible touch with quite literal effects resulting. The humours theory with its psychological and physiological interrelatedness is still at work, but it is given added dimension and intensity by the religious and animal imagery suggestive of sacrilege and unnatural perversions. The Elizabethan hierarchical concept of natural creation persists in Jonson's time and work, but it has been startlingly translated into the literal, everyday world of trade and commerce.

All the major characters in the play, excepting Celia and Bonario, in some way shift their positions. Corbacchio shifts his will to disinherit his natural legatee on the basis of his unnatural hopes of outliving Volpone. Corvino shifts from a jealous husband outraged over a trifle to one "liberal" and "tolerant" enough to

offer his wife for the restoration of Volpone. Voltore, a lawyer ostensibly committed to justice, shifts in that role to protect his and Volpone's interests, shifts again when he thinks all hope of inheritance lost, and shifts yet again when he learns Volpone to be still alive. This last change is dramatized as the most grotesque and ludicrous as he rolls on the ground in a fit, a man pretending to be possessed by the devil and in truth obsessed with a devilish greed. Like the soul of Pythagoras in its progress through time and change, his soul ends in a physical posture reflecting its debased condition. All of these shifts are in keeping with the obsessive greed of the characters, but the shifts are also essential parts of the action: Corbacchio and Corvino's duplicity towards son and wife leads to the first major vexing of Volpone's will and results in the first court assemblage which involves Voltore whose first imposing performance at court contrasts markedly with his second.

The two principal protagonists, Volpone and Mosca, likewise undergo changes and shift their positions in ways most important to the action. Although Herford and Simpson say that the relationship of Volpone and Mosca is a development from Jonson's writing of tragedy, this "league of two able villains, master and servant, ending in a deadly struggle between them," is also suggested in the humour

plays, particularly Every Man out of his Humour.[7] The tenuous alliance between Carlo Buffone and Macilente has already been commented on: Carlo helps Macilente purge the others and then Macilente precipitates the coup de grace administered to Carlo. There is another relationship in this play which foreshadows that of Volpone and Mosca: Sogliardo and his pimp professor Shift. Among their pet names for each other are those of "Countenance" and "Resolution." Ironically, Shift, who says "Faith, I am easily yeelding to any good impressions" (IV.v.73), plays the part of "Resolution." In the partnership of Mosca and Volpone, each helps purge the other of his humour, or at least bring him to retribution. In addition, Mosca, also a pimp among his other accomplishments, stands behind the false visors, or countenances, assumed by Volpone: the impotent man, sick and dying; the mountebank who performs beneath Celia's window; the commandadore who ventures forth to "vexe 'em all." In turn Volpone is the resolution behind Mosca's rapid shifts in attitude and sympathy and his last appearance as a Clarissimo.

Retribution is not effected by the forces of good combatting those of evil, a course of action which might have produced that lack of unified effect, or double plot, noted by Aristotle in the Odyseey. There are, of course,

[7]H. & S., I, 60.

Celia and Bonario, but they are acquitted rather than rewarded or elevated. They do not belong to the world which is the predominant one created in the play. They are dragged into the action through the actions of the other humorous characters, but they perform little action themselves. In character they are rather like Mitis (EMOH) of whom Jonson says, he is "a person of no action, and therefore we haue reason to affoord him no Character." They remain rather abstract embodiments of innocence which serve to illustrate the effects of Volpone and his kind on those unlike themselves. The presence of Celia and Bonario, more than anything else, makes this play susceptible to those critical strictures about double actions and lack of unity. But, as pointed out above, they do not constitute an action, and their roles are carefully passive and subdued.

In Every Man out of his Humour, unity of action leading to unity of effect was maintained partially because Macilente shared in the humours of the other characters. In Volpone, the two protagonists not only share an obsession but that obsession pursues the same goal. Their resulting actions are consistently obsessive although they themselves shift constantly in accordance with their desires or obsessions. They act in accordance with their humours rather than in accordance with a sense of integrity or personal identity, that being which the churchmen said

evil lacked. Their actions can then be interwoven and their roles interchanged without any loss of unity. Jonson pursues not one man, but one action. On the one hand, therefore, he heeds Aristotle's caution that events concerning one man do not necessarily constitute one action. On the other, he fulfills his preferred definition of unified action:

> Now, that it should be one, and intire. One is considerable two waies: either, as it is only separate, and by it self: or as being compos'd of many parts, it beginnes to be one, as those parts grow, or are wrought together. That it should be one the first way alone, and by it self, no man that hath tasted letters ever would say, especially having required before a just Magnitude, and equall Proportion of the parts in themselves. Neither of which can possibly bee, if the Action be single and separate, not compos'd of parts, which laid together in themselves, with an equall and fitting proportion, tend to the same end; which thing out of Antiquitie it selfe, hath deceiv'd many; and more this Day it doth deceive.
> . . . . . .
> So Homer lai'd by many things of Ulysses and handled no more, then he saw tended to one and the same end.
>
> (Discoveries, ll.2751-63;2780-81)

Dryden criticized this play as having a double action resulting in two climaxes, one occurring naturally, in the fourth act, and another one forced and unnatural in the fifth act.[8] This might be a valid stricture if the play could be described in the rather broad terms of vice pitted against virtue; in this case, one of them, vice, would

[8] Essay of Dramatic Poesy, ed. W. P. Ker, The Essays of John Dryden (Oxford, 1900), I, 73.

have won. Instead, it is vice pitted against vice or vice defeating itself; in the last climax, of the fifth act, the two major "vices" confront each other and each is undone by the other. Virtue does not win; it simply fails to lose. Volpone is sent to the hospital of the Incurabili with his disease unremedied.

In any case, the action will not have reached the moment of fruition until Mosca can stand before the Advocatori as the equal of Volpone. The two climaxes, therefore, grow naturally out of the two main characters' motives and actions. Preparation for the climax of Act V begins in Act I, scene i, when Mosca helps Volpone vaunt his achievements and thereby manipulates Volpone to turn his appreciation towards himself:

> You know the vse of riches, and dare giue, now,
> From that bright heape, to me, your poore obseruer,
> Or to your dwarfe, or your hermaphrodite,
> Your eunuch, or what other houshold-trifle
> Your pleasure allowes maint'nance.
>
> VOLP. Hold thee, Mosca.
> Take, of my hand; thou strik'st on truth, in all:
> (I.i.62-67)

In the beginning, in addition to Volpone's god, Volpone's own greed and his love of seeing others endure his own feverish torment provide the immediate motivation for Mosca's actions. Mosca, however, desires his own resolution, and it is "the worldes soule" which is also to Mosca "vertue, fame,/ Honour, and all things else." From this catalogue Volpone would exclude learning, but not Mosca.

If possible, Volpone is something of a perverted idealist, but Mosca is a practical man. Volpone says that avarice punishes itself; Mosca says it does so with a little help. Although Mosca falls short of Volpone in his perverted appreciation of the god, it motivates his actions of a servant apparently attempting to please his master in the first part of the play and the embryonic action which in the latter part comes to the forefront as Mosca parades in magnifico's attire.

In Act I, scene ii, there is another subtle hint of Mosca's real interests and of another legacy hunter's lurking just behind Volpone's blind spot. Voltore has just departed, leaving behind a rich piece of plate.

VOL. I long to haue possession
O my new present.

MOS. That, and thousands more,
I hope, to see you lord of.

VOL. Thankes, kind MOSCA.

MOS. And that, when I am lost in blended dust,
And hundred such, as I am, in succession--

VOL. Nay, that were too much, MOSCA.
(I.ii.116-121)

Mosca is straining so far to flatter his master that even Volpone recognizes "that were too much," but what Volpone thinks flattery in others, he deems kindness in Mosca. Mosca seeks to include himself among the heir-hunters only on the basis of sharing a death prior to Volpone's and, of course, for the audience establishes himself as the most

astute member of their calvacade. Mosca here feigns impending death just as Volpone does within his "tombed sepulchre."

It should be obvious to Volpone that Mosca will outlive him, but he, like the rest, lets his desires perplex his judgment, and so, like Corbaccio, his ears have grown stale with age. But his point of deafness is far removed beyond that of Corbaccio or Voltore or Corvino. His point of deafness comes with the personal limitation of an ego that has confused itself with its god and believes itself invulnerable. He cannot conceive of that happening to himself which he sees happening to others. His after all is the true worship.

Mosca, however, has studied behind the scenes and knows how to make Volpone false to his god and to himself. The series of plots contrived to gratify Volpone become a series of temptations. In Act I Mosca describes Corvino's wife in a vocabulary suited to Volpone's understanding. The wily contriver describes Celia in terms which equate her with Volpone's gold and also promise an eternity of fleshy sensuality.

> a soft lip,
> Would tempt you to eternitie of kissing!
> And flesh, that melteth, in the touch, to bloud!
> Bright as your gold! and louely, as your gold!
> (I.v.111-114)

At this point, it is still Volpone who articulates his own reaction when he says he must see her and that he will "go

see her, though but at her windore." The mountebank scene follows, one where Volpone, as Scoto of Mantua, at the height of his powers delivers a masterful performance in double-barrelled duplicity. But the epilogue is a beating for the great actor; Mosca quietly calls attention to this fact and with his art he hopes to improve on Volpone's performance.

Ultimately, Mosca not only provides Volpone's final temptation, but he also articulates what Volpone's response to that temptation should be. In Act V, scene ii, after Voltore has performed so beautifully for Volpone's sake, Mosca gives the advocate high praise:

> He' ⁊Voltore⁊ has taken paines, in faith, sir,
> & deseru'd,
> (In my poore iudgement, I speake it, vnder fauour,
> Not to contrary you, sir) very richly--
> Well--to be cosen'd.
> (V.ii.44-47)

This he speaks even after his advice to the contrary:

> Why, now you speake, sir. We must, here, be fixt;
> Here, we must rest; this is our master-piece:
> (V.ii.12-13)

And Volpone follows the lure to cozen:

> 'Tis right.
> I cannot answer him, MOSCA, as I would,
> Not yet; but for thy sake, at thy intreaty,
> I will beginne, eu'n now, to vexe 'hem all:
> (V.ii.53-56)

He abrogates his own will, and for Mosca's sake, not for his "worldes soule," he will "vexe 'hem all."

It is at this point that their roles shift in action

as well as in dialogue and the themes of shifting values and shifting countenances can be traced in the action's pattern. Volpone now begins, as Mosca has formerly done, to implement the action; he outlines the specifics of the proceedings by telling Nano and Castrone to advertise that he is dead and by telling Mosca to present himself as the newly-made heir. The spider's lair is deserted and Volpone doffs his magnifico's attire to descend into the streets, where Mosca once worked his master's will. Volpone plays his god false by giving lip service to a natural rhythm which he had sought to pervert, that is, his death. He deserts his social position and his shrine to gain his pleasure in a "common way" in the streets. No longer does he aspire to and for his god in its addition and possession; instead he taunts others for his own personal satisfaction.

When the legacy-hunters hear of his death and the death of their hopes, the spell of evil and the hope of gain, which Volpone has helped to cast, is broken. Volpone does in effect become dead; his misfortune is in living beyond his time, into a realm which is reality for his victims but illusion for him. The illusion is his death, for he is no longer in a position to impose his will; what is reality for the others becomes, because he has abrogated hiw will and his power, likewise a reality for him.

The shift in Volpone's role and his subsequent downfall are foreshadowed in several scenes: in the

mountebank scene mentioned above and also, more emphatically, in the scene following the court battle. Volpone admits "In good faith, I was/ A little in a mist" but swears "not deiected:/ Neuer, but still my selfe." Immediately preceding this avowal, however, it has taken considerable drink to restore his vitality, and his discourse has revealed more profound misgivings:

> Well, I am here; and all this brunt is past:
> I ne're was in dislike with my disguise,
> Till this fled moment; here, 'twas good, in priuate,
> But, in your publike, Caue, whil'st I breathe.
> 'Fore god, my left legge 'gan to haue the crampe;
> And I apprehended, straight, some power had strooke me
> With a dead palsey: well, I must be merry,
> And shake it off. A many of these feares
> Would put me into some villanous disease,
> Should they come thick vpon me: I'le preuent 'hem.
> Giue me a boule of lustie wine, to fright
> This humor from my heart;
> (V.i.1-12)

In the public marketplace Volpone is out of his element and there he does not breathe so easily. The camouflage which aids preservation in his natural habitat provokes in public those ailments held in abeyance at his private haunts. This habitat in which Volpone flourishes is for him a natural one, but considered within the complete scheme of nature, it is an unnatural, perverted, and artificially created one. But it is when Volpone begins to lose his adhesion to this unnatural world that he feels himself shake with a "dead palsey" and a deadly humour strike his heart with fright. The frailties of the flesh creep back into reality only when he deserts the "wholeness"

of his chosen world. His fall comes about then not only by his commitment to that world in the first place, but by his unfaithfulness to that world. The world of justice and right cannot infect his world by its presence there, just as all of Celia's pleas fall on deaf ears. His world can infect a healthier one with disease and sickness, just as the fourth Avocatori can think of his personal gain in having Mosca as a son-in-law.

As for the flaw which brings about Mosca's fall, it consists, like that of Volpone, in a personal point of deafness, which for Mosca results in over-confidence, and in the perversion of a higher devotion for personal ends. By the commencement of Act III Mosca has begun to grow in love with himself:

> I Feare, I shall begin to grow in loue
> With my deare selfe, and my most prosp'rous parts,
> They doe so spring, and burgeon; I can feele
> A whimsey i' my bloud: (I know not how)
> Successe hath made me wanton. I could skip
> Out of my skin, now, like a subtill snake,
> I am so limber. O! Your Parasite
> Is a most precious thing, dropt from aboue,
> Not bred 'mong'st clods, and clot-poules, here on earth.
> I muse, the mysterie was not made a science,
> It is so liberally profest! almost
> All the wise world is little else, in nature,
> But Parasites, or Sub-parasites.
> (III.i.1-13)

He too falls short of the worship and turns toward becoming his own god, a "precious thing, dropt from aboue." When he and Volpone exchange their roles, know division one from the other in personal diversion from their common purpose, and fall away from their higher goal, both fall together.

Their respective roles slip back into the original positions of the relationship; Volpone is punished in accordance with his position and not in strict accordance with his crime; Mosca is punished not only for being "chiefest minister" of the treachery but also for, although being a fellow of no birth and no blood, having abused the "habit of a gentleman." But he has had his moment of glory, his rise as well as his fall, and the acknowledgment within the play's structure of his importance.

There is another important consideration with regard to the play's so-called double climax. The play consistently presents the power of Volpone and Mosca and what they represent, but it presents their naturally diminishing power as they overreach themselves. The first court scene does more than restore the status quo; it illustrates Volpone's power not only to deceive but to win more converts, for here Lady Would-bee is added as an active member of the legacy hunters when she bears false witness against Celia. She has visited Volpone before this, but it has been primarily in the interest of making politic contacts. This brings up another criticism of the play's unity, the underplot or double plot involving three characters regarded as unnecessary--Sir Politique Would-bee,

his wife, and Peregrine.[9] For one thing they illustrate the way in which any small fish which happen along may be caught in a net cast for larger ones. They stand at the periphery, but they too are drawn into the main vortex. Mosca's lie to Lady Would-bee in order to rescue Volpone from her chatter (that he has seen her husband with a courtesan) involves Peregrine, whom she mistakes for a woman disguised as a man. Her gauche solicitude upon discovering her mistake makes him mistake Sir Politique for a pimp. Peregrine in revenge brings about Politique's discomfiture; both he and his wife are put out of their "peculiar humour" "to obserue,/ To quote, to learn the language [of Italy], and so forth--." Politique also gives up his idiotic schemes for acquiring wealth and power, schemes pale and pathetic beside those of Volpone. His hiding in a tortoise shell also of course sustains the animal imagery of vulture, raven, and crow associated with Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino. At the same time that they illustrate Volpone's power to infect and corrupt, they are instances of his diminishing power, for they are very poor specimens.

But the power he represents is still alive in the fifth act when Voltore does another volte-face and when one

[9]See H. & S., II, 64-65; Robert Gale Noyes, Ben Jonson on the English Stage 1660-1776 (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), pp. 92-93; C. M. Gayley, "A Comparative View of the Fellows and Followers of Shakespeare," Representative English Comedies (New York, 1932), II, xlv-xlvi.

of the Advocatori seriously considers the newly-rich heir, Mosca, as a prospective son-in-law and for thinking of that cannot consider the evidence before him. But because Volpone and Mosca cannot agree between themselves and both vie for mastery, all is lost for both; and not because a miracle has occurred, as Celia thinks; and not because the Advocatori have clear judgment or the laws of Venice have efficacy.

The concept of the humours is also a concept of action, a force with a pattern of movement latent in matter, destructive, antithetical to reason, judgment, art, and likely to impel man to destruction before he can discover these virtues. But even if man does not discover them, nature apparently knows the standard which it cherishes despite certain aberrations in time-locked pools of stagnant humanity where creatures still grow, but in unnatural ways which carry them backwards to a primeval beastliness. Volpone can survive as long as he clings to his hothouse existence, but outside this artificial environment he finds the hammer blows of time move against himself as well as others.

CHAPTER XII

THE ALCHEMIST:

UNITY IN MULTIPLICTY PERFECTED

The Alchemist has been almost universally acclaimed among critics and regarded as a masterpiece, particularly in its plotting and in its adherence to the unities. Freda L. Townsend points out that the general tendency of numerous critics is to regard it as an achievement of Jonson the classicist, but at the same time to comment on it as a "vast, complex, but powerfully integrated drama."[1] This description she contends disqualifies it as classical, and throughout her discussion of Jonson's plays she opposes "variety of interest" to a "lordly and all-mastering unity of action" as the criteria for judging Jonson either a Renaissance author or a classicist.[2] If one sees Jonson accomplishing a "variety of interest" growing out of a unified action, there really is no need to set up these mutually exclusive categories. Just as Aristotle places

[1]H. & S., II, 98 in Townsend, Apologie, p. 66.

[2]Townsend, Apologie, p. 66. Madeleine Doran makes a similar distinction in her discussion of Jonson in Endeavors of Art, p. 278.

action before character, so too Jonson's general tendency is to subordinate character to action, but this technique is a means of creating variety of interest, for no one character, generally speaking, towers above all the others; instead the interest is spread out among many who have numerous exits and entrances. Aristotle allowed for other things in the drama, including character, thought, diction, music, and spectacle. So does Jonson, but action remains his chief means of unifying. That his particular technique of unifying fails to reproduce "the plots of Roman comedy, which are 'narrow and the persons few'" does not disqualify him as a classicist.[3] But if Jonson does subordinate character to action, he does not create an action which sweeps over or around the characters, an action in which they have no part, as Miss Townsend indicates when she notes in her discussion of Every Man out of his Humour that each character is an action. Instead Jonson uses action to express character in a unique way and all characters are integrated into a whole by means of the action. No one part can be extracted without upsetting the balance of the whole, and that all parts should thus cohere was Jonson's understanding of "one action, whole and entire."

The Alchemist is not the first play in which Jonson achieves his basic idea of unity, but it is the most

[3]Dryden, Essay, I, 47 in Townsend, Apologie, p. 70.

perfectly balanced expression of his art. It is the play in which his control of action is so superb that many characters can stand out with an eminence and emphasis not evident in earlier plays. In the earlier plays discussed, Jonson could be observed disposing the action without an emphatic center of interest. Although there was not such a center and the action could not be described definitely either as centripetal or centrifugal, there were certain characters, or areas of interest, given greater weight than others: Count Ferneze and Jaques in The Case is Altered, Lorenzo Senior and Thorello in Every Man in his Humour, and Macilente-Asper and Carlo Buffone in Every Man out of his Humour.

Jonson employs a variety of means to balance his characters one against the other. The major characters are surrounded by a large number of lesser ones which may seem to blur their importance. What one character gains in duration of speech and presence on stage in a single appearance, he may lose by a fewer number of appearances. What another may gain in frequency of appearance, he may lose in the less passionate intensity of character, tone, and gesture. While one may dominate either a certain stratum within the play or the play itself in the first half, another will supplant him in the last half. In the last half of Every Man in his Humour, Justice Clement, for example, assumes the role and position of the voice of authority

which Lorenzo Senior has had in the first half. After his preliminary excursions in the first few scenes of Every Man out of his Humour, Macilente gives up the reins to Buffone and then resumes control again in the last acts.

At the same time that Jonson sustains this equality of accent, he employs a subtle subordination of accent as well. Of the two major characters in The Case is Altered, Count Ferneze occupies a higher social position than Jaques. While Angelo makes a definite commitment to villainy in speech, Paulo, in words, remains a shadowy figure; but in action Paulo reveals his supremacy in the matter of keeping faith. In Every Man in his Humour, Lorenzo Senior is in the top echelons of authority with regard to age whereas Thorello occupies the middle ranks; but Thorello has more involvement in the action. In Every Man out of his Humour Macilente is closer than Buffone in spirit and perception to Asper and thereby in turn closer to the informed critics of the play, the Grex, and when he appears, his sting is sharper than a gadfly's; but Buffone, slight and shallow though he is, seems more omnipresent and he bridges the gap between the detached world of criticism and the confused land of fops and courtly gallants--the two polarities between which Macilente moves.

In all three plays there is a discernible movement towards gathering dramatic force at the center. Although the action in The Case is Altered moves between the houses

of Count Ferneze and Jaques DePrie, most of the characters are involved with the Count's household, and the final resolution, which includes Jaques, takes place at the Count's home. Although Lorenzo Senior and Thorello are the most humourous characters in Every Man in his Humour, Lorenzo Senior leaves his own dwelling at the beginning of the play to spy on his son at Thorello's. Although Macilente and Buffone in Every Man out of his Humour will eventually be at odds with each other, they approach having a partnership in satiric commentary on the other characters. By the advent of Volpone the partnership of two able villains has evolved and most of the action transpires in one location. Movements away from this location are interrelated with theme: the beginning of Volpone's downfall is when he ventures away from his sick bed and the successful disguise it affords him. Both his and Mosca's downfall are assured when they move away from their partnership. In this play there is a more obvious subordination of accent as Volpone and Mosca dominate the lesser villains and almost run away with the action, and would if not for their mutual betrayal. But here again one character, Volpone, dominates in the first part of the play, and another, Mosca, as he assumes Volpone's role and position, dominates in the second. Still Volpone is the master and at the end he is punished in accordance with his station, while Mosca is punished as befits a slave.

In comparison with previous plays, Volpone may seem to subordinate action to character, and the two main characters may appear to throw the action into an imbalance. In The Alchemist, however, all the successful ingredients of Jonson's earlier plays are blended with something very like perfection. Strongly controlled action is concentrated in one location and now instead of a dual partnership, as in Volpone, there is a "venter tripartite" to dominate a plenteous number of characters. And here the "venter tripartite," although its members change, does run away with action, thus affirming in the action what Jonson knew all along, that very few can be put out of their humours. A careful balance is achieved between multiplicity of accent and unity or subordination of accent.

A stream of people arrive at Love-Wit's house to be gulled. They come from the country and from the city, they range from a lowly law clerk to a knight of the realm, they represent the commercial and the religious, they include practical realists and woolly cloud-gatherers. Yet each one emerges with his own distinctiveness, as something more than a mere pawn; at the same time there is a carefully sculpted niche in the whole structure into which one fits.

Sir Epicure Mammon is the best and best-known example, fittingly so, since he is of higher social station than the other dupes. He occupies a prominent place both

in the action and in the language and dialogue. After the initial scene establishing Face, Subtle, and Dol as the three principals, the rest of Act I is concerned with establishing their modus operendi and with introducing two of the lesser dupes, Dapper and Drugger. Epicure appears at the opening of Act II and his grandiose plans for changing the face of nature are in marked contrast to the humbler hopes of Dapper and Drugger. Their hopes have been humble, at least in the beginning stages, but Subtle and Face have carefully worked them up to something of greater import. Unlike Dapper and Drugger, at this point, Epicure has visited the alchemist's lair before and when he appears, his presence affords a climax to the careful first steps of the manipulations in the preceding act. His exalted and blasphemous poetry of nonsense makes him perhaps the finest example of the alchemist's art, the true philosopher's stone, a jumbled brain that can outrage every subject it touches. The fact that he appears at the opening of Act II signifies his importance; it is a positioning in action used before by Jonson for characters of importance, although secondary. Musco so appears in Every Man in his Humour and Buffone in Every Man out of his Humour. With his lengthy and eloquently rhapsodic speeches, he dominates the first half of Act II and Act IV, where his discomfiting follows upon that of Dapper in the last part of Act III--another example of symmetry in the pattern of action.

Also included among the greater fools and villains, in addition to Mammon, are the religious zealots, Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome. Like nobility, which Mammon represents, religion, which they represent, is one of the principal mainstays and stabilizers of society. That their violation of their roles and positions is more egregious than others' is emphasized by their desire for the philosopher's stone. Dapper, in the beginning, has only wanted a familiar for luck at gambling and Drugger to know how to build his shop for the best trade. So the two "religious" brothers are near the top of the hierarchy. With the philosopher's stone they hope to control a whole nation for their own ends. Their eminence is emphasized not only by the sphere of society which they represent and their desire for the philosopher's stone, but also by the timing and length of their appearances. Ananias appears in Act II, as Mammon does, and occupies much of the second portion of the action. Subtle adjusts his language appropriately, but Ananias is suspicious and not easily pleased. The narrowness of his religion and his mind are revealed as he doggedly chops trifles into shreds of literality. In contrast to the overblown and swaggering Mammon, he cuts a smaller, more precise figure; but his part is further underlined when he and his pastor, Tribulation Wholesome, appear again in the first two scenes of Act III, a duet of "Saints." Whereas the largeness of Mammon's daydreaming

is counterpointed and contrasted by the practicality of the downright Surly, the smallness of Ananias is doubled and emphasized by his brother Tribulation. The latter reveals himself the more versatile logician of the two as he argues that "we must bend vnto all meanes," and "The children of perdition are, oft-times,/ Made instruments euen of the greatest workes" (III.i.11;15-16). Like the others, they reveal their fraudulence with their own words:

> TRI. What makes the Deuill so deuillish, I would aske you,
> Sathan, our common enemie, but his being
> Perpetually about the fire, and boyling
> Brimstone, and arsnike? We must giue, I say,
> Vnto the motiues, and the stirrers vp
> Of humours in the bloud. It may be so,
> When as the worke is done, the stone is made,
> This heate of his may turne into a zeale,
> And stand vp for the beauteous discipline,
> Against the menstruous cloth, and ragg of Rome.
> (III.i.24-33)

Tribulation hopes for a triple transubstantiation from the heat of hell to the humour in the blood to the zeal of the "beauteous discipline." Such a way of thinking makes it all the easier for him to believe in the philosopher's stone reputed to accomplish similar miracles. The satirical effect, of course, is to label their zeal a humour disguised and to link both, zeal and humour, to the fire of hell as well as to the alchemical process presided over by Subtle. Ananias and Tribulation do not appear again until the scenes involving many characters in a general uproar--Ananias in Act IV, scene vii, and both brothers in the confused mob of the last act.

The lesser dupes are not linked to the central image of the alchemist through the philosopher's stone. Because their zeal is less or their imaginations smaller, their aspirations are not so great and as students of the master alchemist they cannot be raised and refined to a place of eminence in the hierarchy. However, they have their place too, and they can contribute something like in kind to the motivation of the others--their greed. Dapper is the least apt of those willing to learn. He must be prompted continually to those actions which will please the Queen of Fairy; he must be coaxed and badgered until contributions increase satisfactorily; and he undergoes the most obvious degradations without too much complaint. In all he appears only five times, but his appearances are spread evenly throughout the play, in the middle of Acts I, III, and V. His discomfiting is accomplished in the most obvious way, with the most broadly comic and visual effects which even the dull or the most unwilling cannot fail to see or appreciate: first he is made to hum and buzz like some insect; then he is blindfolded with "Fortune's petticoate;" finally he is thoroughly pinched to make him discard his purse and other valuables (III.iv.-v.). When Mammon suddenly appears on the scene, Dapper is thrust into a foul-smelling privy with a piece of gingerbread stuffed in his mouth. There he waits until the last act when he is brought even lower, a moment appropriate to Dapper's

role, but also appropriate as the last performance of Subtle's diminishing power and resulting in the exposure to Love-Wit of Face's activities. Subtle bids him crawl on his knees and wriggle and then to "kisse her /Dol as the Queen of Fairy/ departing part." Both are still fooled: Subtle thinks his power and his position still intact, and Dapper thinks the familiar Dol gives him will bring him luck, even though it must suck on his blood once a week.

Drugger, the tobacco merchant, who wants to know how to build his shop and who confuses art with necromancy, also only has five appearances. He does not contribute so much as Dapper to a visual implementing of the play's theme and he hasn't much to say, but he is present in every act and his role is more crucial to the action. It is Drugger who knows of a rich widow and her brother up from the country, she, Dame Pliant, desirous of learning the latest fashions and he, Kastril, of learning to quarrel and live by his wits, and of his sister's marrying a count. This complicating factor will be the heaviest stone in the troubled waters of the "venter tripartite." It will give Surly a lever and it will help increase the intensity and frequency of the cozening trio's quarrels. It will culminate in a major scene (IV.vii.) of general uproar near the end of the play as the action quickens and threatens to explode. In this scene Drugger will be used primarily to

daunt Surly and help bring his efforts to naught. Although Subtle attempts to interest Drugger in the philosopher's stone, Drugger adheres to the more prosaic interest of marrying a rich widow, and in the end he is treated with more peremptory contempt than Mammon and the "Brethren," but not more than Dapper: he loses the widow because he stayed at washing his face too long, Face says, and Love-Wit's blows, intended for Ananias and Tribulation, land on his back instead.

Kastril and Dame Pliant's roles are the most limited, although their appearances are rather frequent, Kastril appearing six times and she five. But they form the kernel of an action which will grow to fruition in the last act. Their roles and actions are interlaced with the others by Drugger's introducing them to Subtle and Face, by Surly's attempting to use Dame Pliant to expose Subtle and Face, by Subtle and Face's quarrelling over the widow, by Kastril's being used, appropriately, to make the loudest quarrelling noise in silencing Surly, and by Face's using Dame Pliant to appease Love-Wit at the end.

Because Surly first appears with Mammon, who usually dominates the scene when he does appear, this practical realist of few but pointed words does not at first glance seem to stand out as much as some others. But he has nine appearances in all, a frequency greater than that of either Mammon or Ananias. In addition he launches into long

speeches in Act II, scene iii, where he turns Subtle's tactics and terms back on the user and reduces all to a concoction

> Of pisse, and egge-shells, womens termes, mans bloud,
> Haire o' the head, burnt clouts, chalke, merds, and clay,
> Poulder of bones, scalings of iron, glasse,
> And worlds of other strange ingredients,
> Would burst a man to name?
> (11.194-198)

In Act IV he appears four times and serves as the catalyst producing the near-rupture of the plot in the seventh scene. His beating of Subtle in the sixth scene is paralleled by his own dumfounding defeat in the next scene. In addition to having a humour not to be gulled, he also, like the others, has a humour to profit, but his realization at the end is more bitter than any of the others': "Must I needs cheat my selfe,/ With that same foolish vice of honestie!"

Each character is distinctive and each is in some way subtly subordinated to another. All of those thus far discussed are in turn subordinate to the "venter tripartite," the authors, stage-managers, and directors of the whole show. Dol is the leading lady and the peace maker of the group; her role is less important than that of either Subtle or Face and somewhat resembles that of Dame Pliant. From their point of view she is an object to be fought over, and from her own point of view they are a means of acquiring booty, to be obeyed, bullied, or placated in accordance with who is winning. Subtle is the master artist of words

and poses who remains closeted within the magical house of wonders, protected in a controlled way from the infectious plagues without. Face is the master workman of many faces who reconnoiters, solicits, and brings home raw material from the infected populace.

At first Subtle seems the more powerful and prominent member of the partnership, but, like Volpone, he will be betrayed by his captain and assistant Face, who has an ace in the hole, his position as Jeremy in Love-Wit's household. Just as Mosca displaced Volpone, so Face will displace Subtle as the master of the revels, but Face will in turn be displaced by Love-Wit. So, in addition to there being a triple pattern in the unholy trinity of villains, there is also the same pattern in the triple shift of the action. As in Volpone, there are subtle foreshadowings of Subtle's fall, which brings Dol down as well. Although Subtle retains his mastery throughout most of the play and the other characters remain subordinate to him, there are those who measure up against him very well and sometimes almost overtop him. Mammon can outtalk him and can encompass almost as much of the universe in his nonsense as can Subtle. Ananias is most refractory and persistent and zealously convinced that he is right; it takes both Tribulation and Subtle to convert him. He is right when he says that Subtle speaks a heathen tongue, but, unfortunately, he is right for the wrong reasons.

Surly can aptly mimic Subtle's doubletalk and it is he who beats Subtle and makes him yell "Help, murder!" It is after this encounter with Surly that Face remarks upon Subtle's loss of countenance:

> Come SVBTLE,
> Thou art so downe vpon the least disaster!
> How wouldst tho' ha' done, if I had not helpt thee out?
> (IV.vii.92-94)

Immediately afterwards Love-Wit returns. The flock of defeathered birds cawing at the door is heard inside by Subtle:

> FAC. Did you not heare the coyle,
> About the dore?
> SVB. Yes, and I dwindled with it.)
> (V.iv.14-15)

In this scene Subtle, who in Act I, scene i, has been "Soueraigne" and "Generall," now acknowledges Face "the precious king/ Of present wits" (11.13-14). The eventual rupture between Face and Subtle has been foreshadowed, of course, by their noisy quarrel in Act I, scene i, and this quarrel, interrupted first by Dol and then by Dapper, resumes at every opportunity, appearing with consistent regularity in each act. It is ironic that Subtle praises Face at the moment when Face plans his partner's expulsion: it is an uneasy partnership in which neither overt distrust or momentary trust works very well.

Love-Wit assumes the ascendancy from Face because he is the property-owner, because he sizes up the situation

rather quickly, and because he has no scruples about taking advantage of it. Like the others he has a natural affinity for what will profit him and unlike Subtle he immediately acknowledges his "seruants wit:" "I will be rul'd by thee in any thing, IEREMIE" (V.v.143).

As a result of these statements by Love-Wit, A. C. Dessen says that the play ends with a "venter bipartite" established between Face and Love-Wit.[4] Actually, another "venter tripartite" has taken shape with Love-Wit and Dame Pliant supplanting Subtle and Dol. In the beginning there are three partners: Subtle, Face, and Dol. In the middle portion of the play there is a movement which threatens this partnership, throws it off balance, and prepares for the emergence of a new triumvirate. In this disruptive movement Dame Pliant is both the pawn and the symbol of power for which Subtle and Face compete, a battle which threatens to displace Dol. But Surley jockeys into position and threatens to displace either Face or Subtle or both. Had he succeeded, a marriage of two instead of three would have resulted, a less perverted relationship than the one wherein Face and Subtle share Dol. But Surley does not succeed, and at the end there emerges what promises to be another nefarious partnership as Face ingenuously invites the audience to be his "new ghests." As for Dame Pliant,

[4]Dessen, Jonson's Moral Comedy, p. 131.

who knows how silent the silent bride may be after marriage? She may well find that like "Madame Rabbi" she has talking fits. Love-Wit will not always be at home, and Jeremy the butler may not easily forget that as Face he once hoped to enjoy the rich widow's favors. In addition, then, to the triple partnership of the main characters in the beginning and the triple shift in the action, there is a comparable triple partnership at the end and at three main points in the play three possible partnerships of three can be seen functioning, threatening to dissolve, dissolving, and emerging newly formed and functioning again, the number three preserved as the underlying symbol of the world's unity, but not in the form of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The fundamental unity behind the eternal flux which the Ionian philosophers sought, which Aristotle and Plato formulated for the reason, and which the Christian fathers translated into a religious principle and pattern has been thoroughly violated, perverted, and finally completely incorporated in the business articles of Face, Subtle, and Dol. But they will never find or create the philosopher's stone, and the only thing left is eternal flux. All the characters are immersed in this flux; they will continually shift from one thing to another; they will never find unity in themselves or with others. Face will change his countenance many times. Subtle and Dol will climb over many back

walls, and Dol may add new characters to her repertoire of the "Queene of Fairie" and "Madame Rabbi." Surley may not soon don the costume of a Spanish count, but Love-Wit will not hesitate to do so. Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome have not abandoned the zeal which has caused their present difficulties and which will probably cause them more. Dapper and Drugger may rest for a while, but may move again when they feel the pinch for money or catch the whiff of another rich widow.

The theme of eternal shifting is central to the play, a part of the alchemical process at which Subtle labors. Subtle pretends to an art which can shift the elements and produce the "lapis philosophicus," a stone which is not a stone, but "a spirit, a soule, and a body" (II.v.41). He tampers with Nature herself and, in a sense, pretends and presumes to idealize her. Just before Mammon appears, Subtle describes Mammon's hopes for the stone:

> He /Mammon/ will make
> Nature asham'd, of her long sleepe: when art,
> Who's but a step-dame, shall doe more, then shee,
> In her best loue to man-kind, euer could.
> If his dreame last, hee'll turne the age, to gold.
> (I.iv.25-29)

Mammon has been Subtle's most apt pupil and he believes both in the philosopher's stone and in its wonder-working magic. He is a poetic dreamer who has no idea of the relationship between dreams and reality, between quality and quantity. Only his greed anchors him to any kind of

reality. With the stone he will turn all metals to gold; he will "confer honour, loue, respect, long life;" he will give "safety, valure," and "victorie" to whom he will; he will restore youth and virility to old men and cure all diseases. His speech bears testimony to a blithe disregard for all divisions of time, space, form, or basic substance. He is the dreamy creator who appreciates no distinction of any kind.

> I haue a peece of IASONS fleece, too,
> Which was no other, then a booke of alchemie,
> Writ in large sheepe-skin, a good fat ram-vellam.
> Such was PYTHAGORA'S thigh, PANDORA'S tub;
> And, all that fable of MEDEAS charmes,
> The manner of our worke: The Bulls, our fornace,
> Still breathing fire; our argent-viue, the Dragon:
> The Dragons teeth, mercury sublimate,
> That keepes the whitenesse, hardnesse, and the biting;
> And they are gather'd, into IASON'S helme,
> (The' alembeke) and then sow'd in MARS his field,
> And, thence, sublim'd so often, till they are fix'd.
> Both this, th' Hesperian garden, CADMVS storie,
> IOVE's shower, the boone of MIDAS, ARGUS eyes,
> BOCCACE his Demogorgon, thousands more,
> All abstract riddles of our stone. How now?
> (II.i.89-104)

He has just outraged ancient learning, history, fable, legend, myth, and literature as he will later outrage nature in his speech to Dol, whom he regards as a miracle of nature, and as he earlier outraged "a booke, where MOSES, and his sister,/ And SALOMON have written, of the art;/ I, and a treatise penn'd by ADAM!" (II.i.81-83). Mammon is a good example of what Jonson said the artist must not do: "we may improve, but not augment."

Mammon, like the others, is a violation of nature; most of Jonson's characters are. It is for this reason perhaps that they have appeared to some critics like puppets. J. J. Enck refers to this opinion in his article on The Case is Altered:

> The plot and language both have a thoroughgoing stratification which includes almost all the principal characters and, furthermore, furnishes them their main motivation. These elements rarely infuse one another; rather they are parallel lines. Such perpendicularity contributes something to the effect of puppets which it is claimed Jonson's characters often convey. They respond less to each other than to their own natures, which happen to be stimulated by other presences on the stage or just off it.[5]

Una Ellis-Fermor makes a similar observation about The Alchemist:

> . . . they [the characters] have a relation with each other somewhat like that of the related blocks of colour in the picture [a modernistic, non-representational painting], no more coterminous with the lines of the intrigue than the colour-groups were in the line design.[6]

It is perhaps natural that Jonsonian characters should appear to some as unnatural puppets. They are unnatural: they are the logical consequence of their violation of human nature. They are Jonson's statement about the inhuman or subhuman possibilities latent in human weakness and irrationality. They are no longer organic human beings in tune

[5] "The Case is Altered: Initial Comedy of Humours," SP, L (April 1953), p. 209.

[6] The Jacobean Drama. An Interpretation (London, 1953), p. 44.

with some universal principle of unity and integration. In Volpone the humours are infecting society and perverting nature; they are barely contained by society's safeguards. In The Alchemist only art succeeds in containing and shaping the humours. Within the play itself the "world's turn'd Bet'lem" (V.iii.54), but it is a world which people may eventually accept as the normal one; the neighbors of Love-Wit know, after all, that Jeremy "is a very honest fellow" (V.ii.39).

CHAPTER XIII

BARTHOLOMEW FAIR: THE MASK OF MULTIPLICITY

For such a play as richly complex as Bartholomew Fair, it seems a crime to attempt to catch its elusive magic on the steely prongs of critical distinctions. But Jonson's own sense of distinctions, critical and otherwise, is one thing which made the play possible. A sense of the play's complexity may well override any sense of its unity; there seems to be a trail of chaos as the characters hurtle restlessly from one incarnation to another. But the play's complexity is simply a mask for its unity, for it is the author's frustrated sense of unity that makes possible such a delicately interwoven but massively overwhelming kaleidoscope of chaos. The result is one great seething action of a myriad sights and sounds, confusing and senseless to outsiders, but tempting nevertheless and exciting. To find the unity hidden in the chaos, one must pass through this tumult, and it is perhaps doubtful that any mere mortal can get safely through it with his pants on, much less with his wits unmuddled.

Others have discovered that Jonson is laughing at himself here as well as at the world. But the world had made a mess of all his ideas of reason, order, and sanity, so he in his own fashion made a mess of the world. It may be that the argument of the play is more humane than those of earlier plays and rather warmly good-natured, but the great rumbling bee hasn't lost his sting or his sense or his judgment. His revenge is a subtle one, comprehensive, comprehending, and amused, but still a judgment. There may be a focal point of place, but there is no particular center of sympathy.

Jonas A. Barish sees the "dominant spirit" of the play as one of "warmth and animal appetite" which eventually converts the reformers or "kill-joys." Calvin Thayer sees the forces of fertility, generally the Fair and its people, triumphing over those of infertility, such as Busy, Dame Purecraft, Winwife, and Grace Wellborn.[1] But the lines are not really as clearly or simply drawn as this. Busy, with his passion for making noises that are sanctified, is regarded as the chief representative of the kill-joy reformers. But even he, though he defines appetite as a disease, also calls it a natural disease and leads after the scent of pig like a hound. He has a latent affinity

[1]Barish, Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy, p. 222; Calvin Thayer, Ben Jonson. Studies in the Plays (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), pp. 128-156. See also Dessen, Jonson's Moral Comedy, p. 148.

with the people of the Fair and what they represent, even if he does make knowledge of it inaccessible to his limited wits until an even more limited creature, the Puppet Dionysius, teaches him a lesson in a way which even he can understand. Certainly the puppet does not appeal to his reason, merely to his sense of noise. This latent affinity is also true, of course, of Win, who longs for pig, of her husband John, who writes plays for puppets, and of Dame Purecraft, who finds rich old men for young virgins of the faith.

The Fair does indeed exude a warmth, but Ursula, as well as Busy, likens it to the fires of hell, fires which are likely to render down her lard and recreate the first woman, Eve, or rather "a ribbe." Her leg, scalded as the result of her own hot temper (when she threatens Quarlous and Winwife with a pan of hot water), is doctored in "hogs grease" by Knockem who in the process describes her diseased underpinnings: "body o' me, she has the Mallanders, the scratches, the crowne scabbe, and the quitter bone, i' the tother legge" (II.v.179-181). Just before this he has called her "a Pillar of the Fayre," who in these "dogdaies" should "keepe state" in "thy chayre," a chair in which Dame Overdoo will later sit and in which now Ursula must sit, just as the other three principals must sit a while in the stocks. In addition, of course, she is "mother o' the Bawds," "mother o' the Pigs," and "mother o'

the Furies." But these are rather innocuous, bantering epithets in comparison to Knockem's realistic description of her leg and to Quarlous' description of her as a form of primeval slime, a "Bogge" or "quagmire" a man could drown in.

Throughout the play there is this suggestion of a primordial chaos breeding maggots, flies, wasps, and vermin. Ursula calls Mooncalfe "Vermine," in addition to "Polcat" and "Weasell," with "Grasse-hoppers thighes." Bartholomew Cokes is described as one with a "head full of Bees" (I.iv.81); Quarlous thinks him one "made to catch flies" (I.v.99); and later at the Fair Wasp tells him "they are such retchlesse flies as you are, that blow cutpurses abroad in every corner" (III.v.221-222). As Quarlous and Winwife make ready to follow Cokes and his party to the Fair, the latter remarks "These flies cannot, this hot season, but engender vs excellent creeping sport" (I.v.140-141). The pestilential air of the "dogdaies" does breed the "Higher" forms of life too--the polecat, the weasel, bear, horse, ferret, coney, and nightingale; but even the nightingale is a hunter in disguise, and his ballad "The Ferret and the Coney" calls attention to the hunter-and-the-hunted pattern of unidealized nature. The genteel, like Quarlous, Winwife, and Grace, may afford a temporary, amused detachment from this "sport," and a Justice who sits protected in his court may try to attribute this "swearing,"

"swaggering," "snuffling," and "snarling" to tobacco that an "Alligarta" has "piss'd" on (II.vi.27); but Overdo's delusion, illustrating a lack of any proportion or degree, is only temporary protection, and the Fair folk rightly think him a fool or madman. The mass of humanity does not indulge in such whimsicalities; it has a survival to forage and not for sport, as Punque Alice demonstrates when she does not welcome an amateur like Dame Overdo to the sisterhood.

If the Fair represents the forces of fertility, then these forces are rank, on the verge of slipping over into a rottenness that could return all to the mudsill of existence. Ursula, the dominant figure of the Fair, is diseased and constantly in danger of melting away. Can creations from the raw materials of such an environment be anything but trash? Joane Trash's gingerbread may be composed of nature's goods, but they are either stale or rotten: "stale bread, rotten egges, musty ginger, and dead honey" (II.ii.9-10). At one extreme is rottenness; at the other is artificiality and sterility. Leatherhead, Trash's co-worker, presides over mimic images of natural things: babies, dogs, cats, bears, horses, and other toys appreciated by children like Cokes. Bartholomew Cokes is both the patron and the victim of the Fair, one of the innocents massacred by its numerous predators. He loses his box, his warrant or license, his fiancee, his money,

his cloak and sword, his way home, and even his toys. At nineteen he is a child and in such an unprincipled world likely to remain so, a kind of hapless eunuch whose only progeny will be dolls, parrots, monkeys, and gingerbread images. He is among the "retchlesse flies" that blow life into dead matter and bring forth the living cutpurse. Such "innocence" as his makes such a world possible. But he too, with a little help, could be a thief, as the incident with the Pear-Man illustrates: Cokes greedily snatches for the fallen pears, as well he might, starved of real sustenance as he is; as the Pear-Man cries for the return of his pears, to no avail, Cokes cries after his lost cloak and sword. Perhaps he will turn thief when and if he ever tires of the game of puppets which he plans to continue beyond the Fair's time and place.

This puppet show, another of Leatherhead's productions, has, oddly enough, been taken by critics as further confirmation of Jonson's sympathies being with the Fair folk. But Leatherhead-Lanterne, though called, ironically, by Quarlous an "Orpheus among the beasts" (II.v.8), is no magical singer who can strike motion from a stone or charm wild animals. His sexless, brainless, repetitive puppets are as artificial and sterile as his array of toys in spite of their fetishistic preoccupation with bawdry, sex, and quarrelling, which are their master's charms for drawing money out of appreciative spectators like Cokes. These

talky substitutes for man thinking, talking, and acting can, with their infertile brains and bodies, live in an "ancient moderne" bastardization of love and friendship and not be disturbed by the incongruities of their little world. They are, however, the fitting vehicle for confounding Busy. Their representative in this debate is Dionysius, a tyrant, and an unthinking one, like all tyrants, including the public and the playwrights who pander to its taste. A tyrant does not need to think; he need only shout and this noise is a language Busy understands. Ironically, the coup de grace is a tricky technicality which points to the puppet's sterility as he lifts his skirts to prove that real sex is no part of the drama. This too Busy can understand. The puppet as King Dionysius is also, of course, the god Dionysus who takes a sly peep from beneath the skirts as well--a reminder that Busy's senses are as keen as a hound's when there is pig, or turkey pie, or money about.

The "new disease" (the humours) of Every Man in his Humour here emerges as a very old one. Knowell's lament in the second version of this earlier play left some possibility that the "disease" was something learned "in the infancie" even though it stained "vnto the liuer,/And heart, in some" (II.v.30-31). In Bartholomew Fair it does not stain in some, but in all, and the learning process, if it is that, begins now, not in infancy, but in the womb. The

unborn child in Win Littlewit's womb will also partake in the benefits of Bartholomew pig. Several conflicting ideas discernible in Jonson's canon come together here. One could argue that corruption is a learned thing even here, but the argument would seem to rest on a technicality. Innocence in Bartholomew Fair appears as stupidity and ignorance, Cokes' childish flittings and Busy's "Originall ignorance." Contrary to what Busy preaches, staying away from "evil," in the form of the Fair, does not in the least ensure salvation, for man, as Busy himself demonstrates, has a natural affinity for the scent of pig. Busy's "Originall ignorance" becomes original sin, an idea emphasized not only by Busy's participation in the Fair but also by Justice Overdo's lesson that he is "but Adam, flesh and bloud" and by Ursula's identification with Eve. This idea of man's fall from some kind of original perfection has been suggested elsewhere. In The Alchemist, for instance, Subtle, the false artist, utters the ridiculous, in this context, idea that Nature first brought forth imperfect forms and works from these towards perfect ones--a justification for his alchemical meddling with Nature's ways. Epicure Mammon, too, would interfere with Nature and bring her to "perfection." In addition to this idea of a fall into corruption, there is the additional one of progressive deterioration, demonstrated in Volpone by the progress of the soul from Apollo through Pythagoras down to the body of

a hermaphrodite with the mind of a fool. References to Pythagoras in Jonson are numerous, and although one could construe him as an example of early man's learning and accomplishments, it is also possible to regard him as an example of the relativism which makes qualities of good or bad matters of opinion only. Running counter to these ideas of a fall from original perfection and progressive deterioration is the suggestion that man evolved from some kind of primeval bog, is still closely allied to maggots, flies, oysters, polecats, and weasels, and is forever on the verge of returning whence he came. Also, Busy's original sin is original ignorance, a neglect of "all Antiquity," a substitution of "Inspiration" for learning, certainly an idea in conflict with that of all man's troubles being caused by a theft from the Tree of Knowledge. Last of all, there is Jonson's belief that man could and would reform if only he could arrive at a clear understanding of his condition; if he could attach his will to a developed and informed reason, he might prove that he only has the potential for either good or evil and that by consciously acting well he might realize one potential rather than the other.

What warrant does he have for this belief? Perhaps he no longer knows. Perhaps only a madman like Troubleall ever asks the question. And certainly the gods are silent. In Bartholomew Fair Jonson does something he has not done before, although The Alchemist makes a subtle approach to

the matter with its terrible trinity of thieves and rogues. In Bartholomew Fair all the major gods, all the idols, of man are brought back to earth, and their images suffer through eternal, restless shiftings or transformations, metamorphoses, inverted transfigurations.

Ursula Major is a bright constellation in the far-away heavens, but she is also a great waddling bear that snarls and swears at her workers and clients. She is the ancient Great Earth Mother, Demeter or Ceres, and the first Christian mother, Eve, but she is also the mother of bawds, thieves, and pigs. And her name shortened sounds suspiciously like something else, especially if Captain Whit, who blurs all distinctions in pronunciation, happens to roll it over his tongue.

A second major deity of the Fair is Justice Adam Overdo. Like Ursula, his identities shift, both literally and figuratively, as Jonson picks up fragments from almost every tradition man has ever honored or deified. He sets himself up as a "Mirror of Magistrates, a Hercules, a Columbus, a Magellan, a Drake, and is revealed to himself by Quarlous as "but Adam, Flesh and blood" (V.vi.97). At the fair he disguises as a madman, Arthur of Bradley, and a porter, never dreaming that his role as a Justice for the law of the land is also a disguise. But he comes trailing clouds of classical glory. Quoting Horace with a muddled sense of application, he regards all poetry, except the

overtly moralistic, as a taint on the land. Like Jove he visits man's abode in a succession of forms and at the end plans "to reueale my selfe, wherein cloud-like, I will breake out in raine, and haile, lightning, and thunder, vpon the head of enormity" (V.ii.4-6)--a statement carefully ambiguous enough to ally him with both pagan and Christian traditions.

A possible third in this realm of deities is Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, a representative of the new religion and an old failing. In his person he illustrates some of the major weaknesses of Christianity. In contrast to his very literal mind, he eschews any kind of learning for a reliance on zeal, passion, and "Inspiration." This belief is reminiscent of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, the heavenly inspiration that, for instance, descended on the disciples at Pentecost, causing some of the onlookers to be amazed and others to believe the men drunk. But Peter says they cannot be drunk since it is "but the third hour of the day." He continues:

> And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:
> (Acts 2:17)

Busy has a liking for "a glasse of Malmesey" and he "has giuen ouer his Trade" as a baker since "hee do's dreame now, and see visions" (I.iii.119-120). His wrath waxes hot

against the idols of the Fair, just as God's did against the Israelites for creating a "molten calf" to worship. Busy would destroy the Fair's idols, but God would have destroyed the Israelites themselves, if Moses had not suggested to Him that this was not a very nice thing to do (Exodus 32:8-14). Unlike God, however, Busy would just as soon suffer for his calling, in public of course. As far as Busy is concerned, any disruptions of the forces of law and order are justified if they are done in the name of God. He regards his deliverance from the stocks through Troubleall as a miracle effected by a madness "of the spirit." Abraham's command from God to murder and sacrifice his own son Isaac might be regarded in a similar light, that is, if one reads it literally. Like Ursula and the Fair folk, Busy is allied with the forces of primordial shapelessness when he tells Puppet Dionysius "I haue gaped as the oyster for the tide, after thy destruction" (V.v.23-24). A primitive barbarism, wrathful, petty, lawless, and jealous, masquerades as religion and pays deference to a madman, who, Dame Purecraft says, is "mad in truth" (IV.vi.170).

The figure of Troubleall with his frenetic search for a warrant is a complicated one. When Justice Overdo sees him at the Fair, he thinks him "a sober and discreet person" (IV.i.27). One wonders then how the Justice came to dismiss him as a clerk from his court. At any rate, he

has gone mad as the result of this dismissal, apparently done because Justice is an incompetent fool and no judge. In addition to being literally a madman, he shares significantly in the epistemological questions which the play raises. This is made rather explicit by his reiterated question but also by one scene in particular which he shares with Grace Wellborn and her two suitors.

The character of Grace Wellborn has been troublesome to critics. Calvin Thayer places her among the hostile, priggish forces of infertility:

> She is part of the half-foolish, half-mad world eternally at odds with everything the Fair represents, and as such she is joined in marriage with someone who has been castigated for nosing after old women and wasting the brand of life raking for a fortune in their embers.[2]

Jonas Barish calls her the "one false note" of the play and also describes her as "poised, judicious, and slightly inhuman":

> Mistress Grace, Cokes's destined bride, and nominal heroine of the play as Winwife is its nominal hero, suffers from Jonson's inability to make "straight" characters interesting. Doubtless, when Jonson created her, he thought he was paying a handsome compliment to her sex. She possesses good sense, judgment, and sobriety, qualities he rarely admitted in women. The trouble is that these are no longer the qualities that the play itself is primarily recommending, and they clash rather disastrously with the dominant spirit of warmth and animal appetite.

[2]Thayer, Ben Jonson, p. 145.

Grace says that she has no fancy to visit the Fair because "none goes thither of any quality or fashion: (I.v.132). Barish comments, "That Jonson permitted the last of these remarks, with its prate of 'quality' and 'fashion,' to creep into the dialogue of a character otherwise labeled 'admirable,' is perhaps sufficient indication of how little, at this moment, he really cared for reason and sobriety."[3] The questions are where or how is she actually labelled "admirable" and is she "half-foolish, half-mad" only because she opposes the forces of the Fair? Every other character in the play proves false to his label or labels. And ultimately she is "half-mad" because she "thinks" in the same way that Busy and Troubleall do.

In Act IV, scene iii, Grace stops a fight between Winwife and Quarlous over her favors. Barish contrasts her reasonable deportment here with that of Ursula who berates Mooncalfe for stopping a fight in her "bower." Grace restores order by some pertinent comments:

> How can I iudge of you, so farre as to a choyse,
> without knowing you more? you are both equall,
> and alike to mee, yet: and so indifferently
> affected by mee, as each of you might be the man,
> if the other were away. For you are reasonable
> creatures, you haue vnderstanding, and discourse.
> (11.31-36)

Moreover, at this point, she is the only person who really knows of Justice Overdo's own enormities and who knows that

[3]Barish, Ben Jonson, p. 222.

he "playes the foole, with the greatest diligence than can be" (III.v.266-267). But, in her lesson to Winwife and Quarlous, the stinger starts to rise and swing around on the speaker when she adds, "And if fate send me an vnderstanding husband, I haue no feare at all, but mine owne manners shall make him a good one" (11.136-138). The "reasonableness" with which Winwife credits her is suddenly transformed into something between magic and divination.

> You shall write either of you, heere, a word, or a name, what you like best; but of two, or three syllables at most: and the next person that comes this way (because Destiny has a high hand in businesse of this nature) I'le demand, which of the two words, he, or she doth approue; and according to that sentence, fixe my resolution, and affection, without change.
>
> (11.48-55)

Contrary to her original, reasonable intent of knowing the young gentlemen better, she too, like Troubleall, seeks a warrant or, like Busy, some direct communication. At which point, enter Troubleall to play the part of Destiny. Surprisingly enough, he does make a choice, and he gives her to the one who will fail to help her keep her wardship.

Troubleall's reiterated question, then, may well mean, among other things, does this mad scene have any warrant in the scheme of Destiny, or Fate, that force more powerful than Jove or Demeter or any of the gods? Furthermore, is there any such scheme or master plan of order? Is Destiny a madman or does one simply go mad if he asks such

a question? If man goes searching for a warrant, he may get a contradictory answer that tells him to multiply and replenish the earth and then demands of him a warrant for what he does. Then, he may run mad, as Troubleall does, with his twin refrain of "Haue you a warrant?" and "Quit yee, and multiply yee" (IV.i.107; 112-113). If man runs after a direct statement of the absolute from God or the universe, he may well get it directly from the horse's mouth instead, as Troubleall finally does from Knockem the horse-courser. The warrant is a fraud, but it does allow the troubled soul to take a drink in peace. In the end when a real warrant from Justice Overdo is forthcoming, it is delivered to, again another shift, a fraudulent madman, a "ragged robe" hiding the scheming self-interest of Quarlous. Man is back where he started from, stranded on a little island of the self pounded by waves of doubt. And since Overdo simply signs his name on a blank piece of paper, Justice in effect gives madness or self-interest carte blanche to both quit itself and multiply itself.

There is, then, no particular center of sympathy: to divide the play between the forces of fertility and infertility would be inconsistent with the Jonsonian practice of creating a totally humorous action embracing all the characters. The deities of the place include not only Ursula, of the Fair, but Justice Overdo and Busy as well. In addition to all these "gods," there is Destiny, a madman,

who by questioning the warrant of the "gods," and everyone, thereby questions the warrant, or plan, of the world in general. The action still moves by characters "yeelding to any good impressions," but this shifting now includes transformations that range from the physical to the metaphysical.

Jonson achieves an incredibly rich suggestiveness by thus swiftly shifting his characters through a series of transformations which are both literal and figurative, physical and metaphysical. They make reflections not easily caught full in a pig's eye, though the pig may suffer for them just the same. On a physical and appetitive level, these transformations are begun by a shifting of scents, and the action moves by the same means. The humours are still at work, but they too have many guises: "longing," "vapours," "appetite," "motions," "zeal," "calling," "Inspiration." In addition to the obvious multiplicity of accent, subordination, in a rather special sense, is still at work. The range includes, in addition to the deities discussed above (representatives of the cosmos, religion, law, and earth and hearth), members of the genteel and gentlemanly (Winwife, Quarlous, Grace Wellborn), the bourgeois (John and Win Littlewit, Dame Purecraft), and the lower social orders, which in turn have their own semblance of a hierarchy (from Ursula, Knockem and Captain Whit, to Mooncalfe and Punque Alice). The ground swell of appetite

cuts across all these distinctions, however, making each one false to his supposed distinctiveness and uniting all of them in a common pursuit, a pursuit which in turn pits one interest against another. Although Jonson maintains unity of place and unity of time on a literal level, thematically he works simultaneously upward and downward in space and backward and forward in time--a situation perhaps responsible for the keepers of the watch (Haggise and Bristle) not knowing what time it is and resolving to argue then that time is dependent on them rather than they on it. But, then, they are easily confounded by a madman.

Even if the presiding spirit is that of a madman and even if there is no villainous mastermind or artist directing the action in this play, the threads of action are just as skillfully interwoven as in The Alchemist. The Fair, of course, is the philosopher's stone which draws all the characters to partake of its pleasures and thus bear witness to their true gods, no matter what stratum of society they occupy. The play begins on a middle plane in the bosom of homey, middle class respectability with John Littlewit and his wife, Win. But there are "enormities" lurking within their home, to be revealed in the last scene of this act, including not only Dame Purecraft, Win's hypocritically pious mother, but also Busy who has his "teeth, i' the cold Turkey-pye, i' the cupbord" (I.vi.34-35). John and Win discuss Quarlous and Winwife, who subsequently

appear. Wasp arrives to collect the license John has expounded upon in the first scene and is followed by his ward Bartholomew Cokes and party (Grace Wellborn, his fiancee, and Dame Overdo, his sister). Cokes has a longing to visit his Fair, "because of Bartholmew: you know my name is Bartholmew, and Bartholmew Fayre" (I.v.66-67). Like Littlewit, he has a habit of redundantly making a point. Later, when Littlewit the proctor becomes Littlewit the author of puppet shows, he will find a perfect spectator in Cokes. Cokes and party go off to the Fair, whereupon Win also develops a longing for Fair pig, and Quarlous and Winwife follow after to watch the "sport," a sport which, as it turns out, Quarlous knows better than any other how to play in earnest. Purecraft and Busy emerge at the end of the act to supply with their combined efforts a metaphysical justification for visiting the Fair. Everything has been easily and smoothly set in motion as the three groups set out for the Fair. Wasp reluctantly follows Cokes and serves as a kind of protective teacher substitute for the Justice who has abrogated his position and his responsibility in this, and in all ways, the result being that Wasp ends in the stocks with Overdo, and poor Bartholomew is crucified.

The introduction of Justice Overdo is reserved for the first scene of the second act, which introduces the Fair. Because of his longing to spy out "enormities" and

thereby fulfill his "high wisdome" as "a capitall member of this City," he shifts his identity from that of Justice to that of madman Arthur of Bradley. The scenes gradually build to the Fair's center, Ursula and her booth, where all the world eventually passes by. There is no need for Ursula to shift restlessly after the elusive scents of life. In her tumescent form, which evokes Paleolithic man and his steopogytic Great Earth Mother, Jonson has created the perfect embodiment of the humours. She is the epitome of self-gratification, which may range from the simple satisfying of the physical senses to the more intellectual pleasures of outwitting others for one's own benefit. Symbolically, she becomes the source of all the Fair's "enormities." When people arrive at her tent, things begin to happen. The first group of outsiders, Quarlous and Winwife, arrive at Ursula's charmed center and immediately the first hassle starts. The second group, Cokes and friends, arrive in time to hear Arthur of Bradley orate on the evils of tobacco, assisted in this perhaps by his nipping at ale and beer in Urs's tent. The result of his harangue, grounded in no real sense of enormity but only in an irrelevant "factual" detail, is his first good deed--providing the distraction which enables Edgworth to steal Cokes's purse. Wasp, both rightly and wrongly, beats Justice Overdo for the theft.

With the dominant image of the Fair firmly

established, the play moves into the third act. The Watchmen arrive too late, proving themselves unable to seize either the moment or the supposed thief, and no one wants the trouble of giving them an answer anyway. The third group of visitors, Busy and his flock, arrive and easily find their way to Ursula's pigs. A long speech by the Justice again precedes the theft of a purse, as Cokes is deprived a second time. Young Bartholomew and his misfortunes are the focal point of this act as he buys out Leatherhead and Trash, drools over every word of Nightingale's singing, and longs for another cutpurse to show himself. His every longing is satisfied, as apparently it has always been, and having been again deprived of his purse, he finds himself also deprived by Wasp of his license. He has not yet found or understood the warrant that will admit him to the human race. What that warrant is, however, is a secret hidden in a black box. Wasp, however, is no better protector of this warrant than Cokes, and it will eventually end in the hands of Quarlous via Edgworth the cutpurse, a young man who knows the score and who has infatuated the Justice, as his own young brother-in-law never has. It is possible to speculate here that a person may indeed have some kind of warrant for life, but one which he doesn't understand and which is useless to him as long as it remains secreted apart from himself in a box. But anything can be stolen from man, including his manhood, particularly if it

depends only on a piece of paper giving him the right to be a man; and, of course, the same warrant that would thus benefit Cokes would at the same time doom Grace to an unhappy marriage based on her value as a piece of property.

In this act the original groupings begin to break up. Cokes loses more than his purse and his license as Quarlous and Winwife lure Grace away into their company. Busy's group disintegrates as he is led to the stocks after he overthrows the gingerbread images. Dame Purecraft follows him in distress leaving John and Win. They first express this new freedom as they go off to Ursula's tent for Win to use the jordan. With Busy gone, they do not have to appeal for a metaphysical warrant. Two of the principal characters are drawn off to reappear in the stocks in Act IV. Overdo's own enormities, with regard to Grace, are revealed at the same time that his wife calls him "a lewd, and pernicious Enormity: (as Master Ouerdoo calls him.)" (III.v.206-207). The Watchmen lead him off along with Busy. The heads of the major authorities have been, in a sense, cut off, fittingly so since they don't use them anyway, and only a reckless, irrational deputy, the too-familiar "Numpes," is left to replace them.

Consequently, in Act IV, madness rules the scene, as Troubleall dashes in and out demanding a warrant of everyone. The act begins with Troubleall propelling the Watchmen off to go through the legal formalities of Justice.

It ends with Troubleall distracting them sufficiently for the prisoners to escape, and the keepers of the peace find themselves fighting with the madman. In between, Overdo, in the stocks, has several revelations: he learns the identity and condition of Troubleall and he learns that his subordinates think his judgments rest on personal whim. Cokes finds himself stripped down to his doublet and unable to find his way home again, if he ever really had one. Quarlous and Winwife fight over Grace, or grace, not really something that can be gained by combat, and not something that Destiny knows how to dispense either. In the end Grace, both as an actual character in the play and as the divine gift of grace, may prove valueless anyway, belonging only to him who owns her. The women are being converted in this act, as Win is tutored by Knockem and Whit in the principles of being a "true bred" lady. In the absence of any effectively real ladies, she accepts that she may "Hide, and be hidden; ride, and be ridden" (IV.v.102). After all, ladies do ride enclosed in coaches, and this cuckolding is probably what they do in the secret box anyway. The play's first climax occurs here in the game of nonsense called the vapours, and the last representative of any kind of authority is carried off to the stocks. Wasp, the tutor-protector of Cokes, now in possession of the license, reveals that his temper is all fustian and no force. He illustrates what Dostoevsky was to insist on in Notes from Underground--that

man will not be reasonable if reason conflicts with his own will, that man will even go mad in order to have his own way. Perhaps Wasp's temper is all fustian because he indulges it without reason.

> I haue no reason, nor I will heare of no reason, nor I will looke for no reason, and he is an Asse, that either knowes any, or lookes for't from me.
>
> (IV.iv.42-44)

And he insists, "I am not i' the right, nor neuer was i' the right, nor neuer will be i' the right, while I am in my right minde" (11.72-74). He turns indiscriminately on everyone, including the Watchmen and Dame Overdo who ineffectually tries to take the Justice's place and restore order. Wasp is led off to the stocks. Mistress Overdo confesses that she does like "Sonnes of the sword" and is led off by Captain Whit to join Win at the jordan.

A principal unifying thread throughout this act, of course, is Troubleall who directs his inquiries to everyone who comes along. He sums up everything that has gone before in the preceding acts and his spirit presides over the bedlam of the vapours. Not only are religion and justice in the stocks, but man's reason, which may have attempted these concepts in the first place, disappears in fumes and smoke. Perhaps all these things were merely another variety of scent anyway, perhaps not even that. Perhaps barbaric man can only create a barbaric god and a barbaric justice. For God and Justice to exude this kind of savage or petty

aura is inexcusable, but for man to do the same can be thoroughly, if savagely, comic. With his restless mind, he can throw up a ladder into the heavens and then spend the rest of his life arguing about whether to climb it. He makes many noises, but they are still mixed with the sounds of the deep jungle housing a party of apes and he himself is not sure that the sounds make any sense. To the universe at large he may look like a brace of quarrelsome puppets manipulated by an equally wooden master who talks as much but knows no more.

The progress of man's soul through a complicated, spiritually confusing, and intensely physical world, in which he without question has his roots, may end at a prating puppet. In the last act's puppet show, Jonson gives an audience the tiniest possible portion of life caught in an unlifelike drama. From this he has Busy learn something. About this Wasp allows himself to be tutored by Cokes. The Justice, after his own lesson from Quarlous, allows the play and all concerned to adjourn to his home, thus proving Nightingale correct, that cutpurses thrive in the courts as well as at the Fair. Everything is all the same difference anyway.

But at the end of the play, Ursula is still gross; Busy is still an ignorant zealot; Overdo is still an incompetent justice; Wasp can be tutored by a fool. Jonson did believe that man could reform himself, and he apparently

believed it rather fervently. But justice can not reward the wicked and punish the innocent, nor fail to maintain some proportion and degree in its judgments. Reason can not give up and rely on revelation and Destiny. Religion can not be convulsed by literalistic trivialities thrown up by uneducated, undeveloped minds; it can not be dependent on a shifting zeal out of touch with the rational mind, but not out of touch with the appetitive mind and the unharnessed will. At least, Jonson thought, man ought to try; that he included himself in that general category "man" does not mean that he believed it any the less. Bartholomew Fair was his London and its people his people. He was one of them. If he could at least see, why not others. Bartholomew Fair is a beautiful play as well as a very funny one; it is beautiful not only because it displays the skill and power of a giant, but also because it is deeply touching. It reveals how doggedly that very large mind explored every possible avenue of man's salvation and how, no matter what man did, this particular poet still wanted to "save" him anyway.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

This work has been concerned with clarifying Ben Jonson's position as a critic, thinker, and playwright. Jonson emerges as an independent thinker, one perhaps who knew too much, or tried to assimilate too much, but one who succeeded in preserving the integrity of his own mind without having to close it to the thoughts of others. His independence of mind is revealed by an examination of other critics, both English and Italian, who defended and discussed the drama and who analyzed concepts inherited from classical thinkers.

On the crucial question of "unity of action," those critics who dealt with it at all, primarily the Italians, justified, like Cinthio, the double plot, insisted, like Minturno, on "one sole and single action," or allowed, like Castelvetro, one or two actions dependent on one or two prrsons. These analyses represent attempts to comprehend Aristotelian thought and to acclimatize it to the contemporary scene. It has been necessary, therefore, to examine the Poetics and also the tradition of thought preceding and

leading up to Aristotle. Aristotle was like his predecessors, both the pre-Socratics and Plato, in thinking to discern a principle of unity in the nature of things. This principle has been regarded subsequently as a primary characteristic of classical thinking and has been used to distinguish classical influence from Renaissance practice in the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, wherein diversity and multiplicity have been regarded as the principal characteristics. But Aristotle, though he thought there was such a principle of unity, did not conceive of it in the same way as some of his predecessors, particularly Plato; he conceived of it as a dynamic, evolving process. In man, it was the reason which helped to ally him with this dynamic, unifying process. Hence Aristotle stressed the reason and he stressed action; hence he appreciated literature, its relationship both to life and to ultimate ends or ideals; hence in the drama he allowed one action to be the interrelationship of many parts tending towards one end.

The contention of this work has been that Jonson is closer than others of the Renaissance to Aristotle in critical thought and in actual practice and that he reveals the influence of Aristotle quite early in his career. A close examination of the Discoveries and a number of the plays reveals that Jonson was aware of there having been practiticing playwrights before there were "laws," but he was also aware that the observations of Aristotle were coherent

and had validity and could therefore be regarded as guiding principles. Like Aristotle, he subordinates character to action and he does not make unified action dependent on the deeds of one man. In the Discoveries he defines, on several occasions, one whole action, not as a double plot, not as only one action, but as unified action composed of many interrelated parts. A study of his plays reveals that this method of unifying is his practice as well as his theory. He is therefore a product both of classical and Renaissance thought. Any similarity or dissimilarity between his plays and Roman plays does not make him either classical or non-classical. That he explored the thoughts of a multitude of ancient writers should not be allowed to account for his classicism, to make him a proponent of certain "laws," to obscure the fact that he understood some of the real principles of classical thought. That he did not adhere to these supposed "laws" should not in turn disqualify him as a classicist and clear the way for claiming him as a true and original artist of the Renaissance. Jonson succeeds in combining both multiplicity and unified action tending toward a unified end and a unified effect. He stresses method, "election, and a meane," and it is method guided by principles and the reason; it is, therefore, shaping or creating as a forming process, not an imposition of theory.

Throughout the discussion of the plays there has been an attempt to demonstrate the way in which all parts of the action are interrelated into one large unified action. In order to do this it has also been necessary to explore Jonson's theory of the humours. Like unity of action, the humours theory is another key to Jonson's work. The humours is one principal means by which Jonson controls the motivation of his characters and thereby controls his action. In Jonson's work, however, the humours is not by any means equivalent to the Renaissance "scientific" physiology-psychology, nor is it simply another name for social mannerisms or affectations. It is instead indicative of that world view which critics have thought to be elusive or nonexistent. The humour is similar to the Greek hamartia, to the tragic flaw of the tragic hero; it is an indelible mark on man's nature that social or religious institutions do not succeed in restricting, restraining, eradicating, educating, or even touching. It may shift eternally in a Protean manner, but it is always there. This eternal shifting of appetitive desires antithetical to reason is also the essence of the action in Jonson's plays. In the early plays these humours are somewhat contained in characters still guided by some respect for reason and for institutions in general. But just as the humours growing to an excess form the action within individual plays, so too there is a progressive development in the humours

carrying over from one play to another. So it is, at the peak of Jonson's powers as a playwright, that there are characters such as Volpone who threaten the macrocosm as well as the microcosm; Subtle and Face who pervert nature and can help corrupt every stratum of the social structure; Ursula, Justice Overdo, and Zeal-of-the-Land Busy who pervert all of man's safeguards against chaos--a principled nature, a just social law, and a rational religion.

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