CHAPTER VI

"SPORT WITH HUMANE FOLLIES"

IfJonsonian comedy is to be realistic, 'familiarly allied to the time', and moral, provoking intelligent laughter, then it is almost inevitable that it should be satirical. Moreover, there was an established historical connection between satire and comedy. It was generally accepted in the Renaissance that comedy had its origins in the ancient Greek 'satyr plays' in which the dramatists

presented the lives of Satyrs, so that they might wisely, under the abuse of that name, discover the follies of many their foolish fellow citsens.\(^1\)

"This proto-comedy", as J.B. Bamhorough points out, "was believed to have developed in time into the 'Old Comedy' of Aristophanes, which had a more direct moral intent and ridiculed named offenders against the canons of Society, and this in turn became the 'New Comedy' in which actual persons were no longer represented on the stage but general follies were attacked in their typical guises".\(^3\)

Therefore, in keeping with his didactic attitude, Jonson was determined to 'sport with humane follies' in his characteristic

\(^{1}\) See Ejner J. Jensen, "The Wit of Renaissance Satire", P Q, 51 (April, 1972), pp.394-408.


\(^{3}\) J.B. Bamhorough, Ben Jonson, pp.26-27.
comedy. Furthermore, he was assured by the Renaissance theories of 'Vetus Comoedia' that in doing so "he was returning lost social functions to the place of their origin, the stage, and revivifying moribund dramatic values". On top of that, the age was ready for satire and Jonson "readily rolled forward gloriously on the crest of the wave".

Satire, of course, was no new thing to the English drama nor to the popular stage of the time. From the beginning playwrights had been conscious of satire and it abounded in the Moralities and the Interludes. To cite but a few instances, Barclay in his Prologue to The Ship of Fools (1509) says:

The present Booke have been nat inconveniently the Satyr (that is to say) the representation of foolishness.

In his Dedication of The Steele Glas (1576) George Gascoigne explains how

From layes of Love to Satyres sadde and sage, Our poet turns, the travaile of his time.

Coming to Jonson's own times, Marston in The Scurge of Villainy says:

From out the sadness of my discontent, Hating my wonted{ocund merriment Only to give dull time a swifter wing Thus scorning scorn, of idiot fools I sing

Thus the early writers as well as Jonson's own contemporaries

4. O.J. Campbell, Comicall Satyre and Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cresida", p.54.


repeatedly asserted that their purpose in writing plays was serious and their methods restrained.

All the same, none of these writers seems to have conceived satire as exclusively applicable to any one literary form as Jonson did. We may say that "no English dramatist had yet attempted comedy on the basis of so severe an interpretation of its scope as a picture of follies and foibles". 7 For, to Jonson the end and aim in comedy was ridicule of folly and every form of pretension, affectation, and the exhibition of the comic hideousness of lust, avarice and dishonesty.

But, at the same time, Jonson is not a formal satirist. He is essentially a comic artist. The English writers of formal satire - Lodge, Hall, Guilpin and Marston 8 - who expressed themselves with increasing fervour and boldness from 1593 to 1599 invariably assumed the role of reformer. They conceived their business to be not so much the derision of folly as the exposure of vice. As Campbell points out these formal satirists "worked themselves up into a state of vociferous indignation; their voices became strident and their lash played upon the prisoners of evil with cruel abandon". 9 Hall

strikes the note which all of those formal satirists repeat, when he pronounces:

The 'satyre' should be like the porcupine,
That shoots sharp quilles out in each angry line,
And wounds the blushing cheeke, and fiery eye,
Of him that heares and readeth guiltily. 10

Guilpin exclaims the same when he says that the writers of satire

...are Antidotes to pestilentiall sinnes,
They heale with lashing, seare luxuriousnes,
They are philosophicke true Cantharides
To vanities dead flesh. 11

Also, the formal satirists were essentially imitators of Latin literature. Although their corrective zeal was stimulated by the contemporary social and economic abuses, most of the objects against which they directed their satire were drawn from the pages of the Latin satirists - Horace, Lucilius, Juvenal, Persius and Lucullus. In the words of Alden, "without exception (save in the case of alchemy and one or two others) the vices and follies in these satires are those of classical satire". 12

Even in presenting follies and abuses the formal satirists followed the classical models and methods. Accordingly they presented sin and folly as traits of clearly conceived individuals

11. Edward Guilpin, "Skialetheia or, A Shadow of Truth, Certain Enigmas and Satyres, Sig. C.V.
thereby creating only semi-dramatic figures. For instance, Marston, in *The Scourge of Villainy*, after exhibiting a pseudo gallant who is all face and clothes, summarily dismisses him:

Is this a man? Nay, an incarnate devil,
That struts in vice and glorieth in evil.

Having cultivated themselves on these lines, the formal satirists, naturally enough, had no use for good-humoured laughter. Instead, they developed a feeling of discontent with the human situation and fostered that "Timon-like cynicism".

Jonson emerges as a different satirist altogether, though he too, to some extent, seems to have been influenced by the methods and models of the Latin satirists in his early stage, particularly in his 'Comical satires'. The things he satirizes are those follies that touch him individually. His task, therefore, is to shed comic laughter on follies he deems inimical not so much to the social structure of the actual world as to his own personal standards.

To Jonson's aim of satire, 'humour' affords an admirable weapon. Jonson sets his net wide enough to entrap all classes and types of men from the courtier to the water-carrier for the purposes of satirical ridicule. He minutely observes human follies and presents them with a vivid force which drives the ridicule home. He, however, bids us not so much to scorn and extol the follies he sports with as to laugh at them.

In his earlier plays Jonson's satire is employed mainly against individual vices and affectations. In *Every Man in His Humour* he has conceived "a kind of domestic panorama showing typical practitioners of recognizable follies, presenting an engaging picture of the relatively harmless side of human folly and absurdity". The play is a display of the relatively pleasant foibles which contribute to the comic way of the world.

Jonson holds up to ridicule the jealousy of Kitley, the choleric humour of the boastful swaggerer - Bobadill, the melancholic humour of the town gull - Matthew, and the affectations of the fashionable pastimes of hawking and hunting of Stephen, the country gull. But the final deflation and correction of the follies ridiculed are brought about in a manner quite different from that of the formal satirists. The agent of correction is Clement who "combines the roles of poet, priest, educator, and justice to arrive at judicious decisions." Hence, no salutary rebuke is made, no words of withering scorn uttered. After getting Cob and Tib reconciled to each other, Clement gently proceeds to the rest:

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15. L.L. Levin, "Clement Justice in *Every Man in His Humour*, *S E L*, XII (Spring, 1972), p.306. Clement may be taken as a prototype for central figures in the next three plays. For the purpose of the anatomizing of vice Clement is replaced by the multiple perspective of Asper-Hasilates and Cordatus in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Crites in *Cynthia's Revels*, and by Horace in *Satyria* who are related to Clement in their interest in poetry, proper education and the correction of various social abuses.
Come, I conjure the rest, to put off all discontent. You Mr. DOWNE-RIGHT, your anger; your master KNO'WELL, your cares; master KITEELY and his wife, their jealousie. (V, v, 69-72)

Thus, an atmosphere of gaiety is established in which the 'humour' characters recognize their follies and give them up. No doubt, Brainworm has the true satirist's bent, but the Justice appropriately tempers satire with clemency especially when he finally concludes:

'Tis well, 'tis well! The night wee 'll dedicate
to friendship, love, and laughter. (V, v, 84-85)

But Jonson's satiric attitude is certainly accentuated in his next play Every Man Out of His Humour. Evidently there is a sudden and radical change from the preceding easy-going domestic comedy of manners to the scathing satire of the present play. Asper, the author's spokesman, tells us that here we are to be confronted with follies that are devastating in their effect on the body politic and must therefore be extirpated ('Grex', ll. 3-26).

16. This radical change in Jonson's satiric attitude is connected by critics like O.J. Campbell (Comical Satyrs and Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida', pp.54-134) with the restraining order launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London on June 1, 1599 against satirists. ("A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London", ed. Edward Arber, (1876), Vol. III, p.316). Other critics have assumed that Jonson was motivated by a personal resentment at not being sufficiently appreciated as a playwright. But a much simpler and more reasonable answer could be that Jonson, perhaps, wanted to explore in this play the possibility of applying to stage some of the techniques of pure satire. Jonson seems to adopt the methods of satiric verse to drama. The relative plotlessness of Every Man Out of His Humour offers a good proof to the point.
Asper, a harsh and pitiless judge of whatever is vicious or ridiculous, assumes the guise of Macilente and strikes at the follies and vices of the characters who have succeeded in gaining worldly goods and favours. Delirio, the idolising husband, Puntarvolto, the mad quixotic gentleman, Sordido, the miserly father and an assiduous peruser of almanacks who thinks of hanging himself in order to prove the prophets wrong - are all thoroughly ridiculed and finally jolted out of their humours.

Jonson's satirical lash is, however, centred upon false social standards typified in Fastidius Briske, Fungoso and Sogliardo. Fastidius always boasts of his friendships with lords and ladies. He assures Carlo Buffone that he is "haunted at the court" and at his "lodging, with your refin'd choise spirits" (II, i, 83-84). He vociferates that Signor Illustra, Count Frugale, and Signor Luculenta vie with each other for his favour when he goes to the court (II, iii, 181-186). He further boasts how he dallied with a countess and how another lady sent her coach twice to his lodgings. Then he proudly displays his lady's 'garter', in which he has hung his 'dagger' (II, vi, 19-27). But all his vanities are pricked and exposed as Macilente, coming from the court, reports the true state of affairs:

Alas, the poore Phantastickes! hee's scarce known
To any lady there: and those that know him,
Know him the simplest man of all they know.

(II, iii, 189-191)
Fungoso, notorious for his "volley of othes", is a pathetic imitator and shadow of Fastidius Briske. His goal of life is to copy the clothes of Fastidius. He lies to his father to secure money and finally resorts to imploring the old man for clothes to set him up in fashion (II, iii, 149-154). Finally he is rid of his folly when he is left in an inn to pay the bill with his empty pockets.

Sogliardo is enamoured of the name of a gentleman. To be considered a gentleman is the be-all and end-all to him. Hence, on the advice of Buffone, he attempts to turn four or five hundred acres of land into two or three trunks of apparel (I, ii, 40-42), to run into debt (I, ii, 110-114), to keep a large train of followers (I, ii, 129-138), to affect an intimacy with the great (I, ii, 71-78; III, iv, 104-107), to learn to take tobacco in the most artistic manner (III, iii, 47-65), to study the fashion of quarrelling (I, ii, 79-85), to purchase a coat of arms (I, ii, 149-154), and to buy a handsome tomb to perpetuate his name (II, i, 70-75). Thus Jonson ridicules the various fantastic ways one would adopt in order to be considered as a gentleman in society.

While continuing and expanding the techniques of Every Man Out of His Humour, Jonson introduces a new technique in Cynthia's Revels for his satirical purpose. He brings allegory and masque to the service of his comical satire thereby suggesting an idealised rather than violently satirical reformation of manners. The idealistic point is brought out that vice is its own punishment.
But there's not one of these, who are vnpain'd,
Or by themselues vnpunished: for vice
Is like a furie to the vicious minde,
And turns delight it selfe to punishment.

(V, xi, 130-133)

Thus, in his second attempt to create effective dramatic satire, Jonson modifies his severity. He elevates harsh comical satire to a sort of court entertainment enriched with all the traditional peculiarities of the masque.

Cynthia's Revels attacks the vapidness of court life. Jonson here ridicules the corrupt, shallow and silly values which the court and the higher ranks of society sometimes used for standards, through four vain courtiers and their stupid ladies. Amorphus, assured of his charm for the ladies, is affected in language and is always careful to emphasize his travels and his culture (I, iv; II, iii; III, i, v). The shameless Anaides is made the butt of ridicule as proficient in all "the illeberall sciences, as cheating, drinking, swaggering, shoring and such like" (II, ii, 92-95). Hedon, the reveller, makes pretence to skill in the lighter arts of versifying and music and boasts of his powers on horseback and at tennis (II, 1, 48-69).

Coming to the ladies, Argurion, with her "most wandring
and giddy disposition", runs "from gallant to gallant ... most strangely, and seldom stays with any" and she loves "a player well, and a lawyer infinitely; but your foole above all" (II, iii, 184-180). Maria, who thinks "her selfe wise against all the judgements that come", is a "lady made all of voice, and
aire, talkes anything of anything" (II, iv, 13-15). Philautia who admires herself for all is "faire, and she knowes it, ...
... shee can dance, and she knowes that too: play at Shittle-cock, 
and that too: no quality shee has, but shee shall take a very 
particular knowledge of, and most lady-like commend it to you 
... A most compleat lady in the opinion of some three, beside her-selfe" (II, iv, 37-47). Thus the satire falls upon the 
worthlessness of the courtiers and their ladies. However, the 
newly introduced mythology "serves to remove the satire from 
such direct and immediate application as to be disrespectful 
to the Queen, or even dangerous. At the same time it enables 
the poet to emphasize the chief fault of the courtiers, their 
self-love".17

Jonson makes his satire more dramatic and comic in Postaster 
than in the two preceding plays though it is also termed a 
'comical satyre'. All the same, the significance of Postaster 
as a work of art has been clouded, treated as it was, as a docu-
ment in the 'War of the Theatres'.18 It was regarded exclusively 
as a play devised to deride and humiliate Dekker and Marston 
in particular. Crispinus was immediately identified as Marston, 
Demetrius as Dekker and Horace as Jonson.19

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17. Allan H. Gilbert, "The Function of the Masques in 

18. See R.A. Small, The Stage-Quarrel, pp.25-58;
See also A Davenport, "The Quarrel of the Satirists", 

But the business of the play, properly understood, is much more comprehensive than mere personal attack and passionate self-justification. For, Jonson had such a great respect for critical theory that he could not possibly distort the accepted forms of either satire or comedy in order to disgorge personal animosities or to produce an immediately effective stage play. So even the most fervid determination to lampoon his professional detractors could hardly have led him to ignore all the normal demands of an audience. Even if the play attacks Dekker and Marston, the attack is very far from being its main function, limited as it is to a handful of very amusing scenes.

Poetaster could be considered as fundamentally a social satire. As O.J. Campbell rightly observes "under cover of the historical fiction of Augustan Rome Jonson attacks the dissolute society of his own age". He levels his satire against bad poets but through a symbolical picture of the relations between true poets and poetasters. Thus the mood of personal hostility is restrained and, what is more, generalized according to the accepted rules of civilized literary behaviour.

Consequent on this artistic restraint and generalized nature of the play, Crispinus and Demetrius become essentially types of intellectual incompetence and fraud, although they occasionally display the individual characteristics of Marston.

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and Dekker. Jonson, in this manner, generalizes and objectifies his hostile attitude toward the world in which he lived and toward certain individuals with whom he was then quarreling. *Poetaster* thus forms an ambitious attempt to produce an effective mixture of personal, ethical and social satire and to clarify the independence of the three modes of ridicule and correction. But Jonson succeeds only partially. He accomplishes no perfect fusion of the different elements. The requisite for such a fusion Jonson first shows in *Volpone*.

Broadened in scope and increased in intensity, Jonson's satire, in his middle and later plays, is employed chiefly against social vices. It is not that he neglected them altogether in his earlier plays. In those plays also he lashed out at the use of tobacco, the addiction to swearing, the belief in astrology and the fashionable pastimes like fencing, hawking and hunting. But the criticism of social vices has been indirect and quite incidental, the focus being on individual weaknesses and affectations. From *Volpone* onwards, however, Jonson directs his trenchant satire mostly toward the vices and evils that were eating into the vitals of the society of his day.

Avarice occurs with greater frequency than other vices, because, as it had been in Elizabethan England, it was the most virulent and protean of all social and moral vices so
prevalent in the life which Jonson knew. Besides, the mass of conventional material before Jonson was so great that he could not possibly ignore it. He seems to have chosen avarice because it is highly flexible and theatrical. The usurer and miser serve as excellent comic butts. For, an avaricious man, whether he is a usurer or a miser, worships gold and is a slave to money (A Trick to Catch the Old One, IV, v, 58-64).

He is always afraid that someone will steal his money; so much so that he is troubled even in his sleep by dreams of loss of his wealth (The Merchant of Venice, II, v, 18). The audience disliked both the usurer and miser and were delighted to have them gull ed. Moreover, satiric comedy such as Jonson's needs fools and Jonson seems to have been quite aware of the ease with which avarice makes fools of men.

21. The various problems of avarice involved in Tudor England such as the exorbitant rate of interest and the chicanery practised by money lenders are explained in R.H. Tawney's Introduction to Thomas Wilson's Discourses Upon Usury. Also, see C.T. Wright, "The Usurer's Sin in Elizabethan Literature", S P, XXX (1938), pp.176-194.


23. For example, Spenser's description of Avarice:

For of his wicked pelfe his God he made,
And vnto hell him selfe for money sold;
Accursed vsurie was all his trade ...

(Faerie Queene, Br. I, Canto IV, 11. 27-29)

Jonson, however, uses material connected with avarice strictly as a comic dramatist with a didactic purpose. He does not attempt any study of the highly complex economic problems caused by avarice. He is interested only in depicting the ugliness of avarice in many of its manifestations. The protean vice is clearly demonstrated in Jonson's varied presentations of avaricious characters. Avarice is also treated as a major theme in several of his comedies.

Jonson's treatment of avarice in his early plays like *The Case Is Altered* and *Every Man Out of His Humour* is, however, conventional and he fails to show a very clear or vigorous picture of the ugly face of the vice. In these plays little more is done with the misers, Jaques de Prie and Sordido, than to make them play the role of comic butts. But this relatively poor presentation of avarice is only an evidence of the struggle Jonson had, to perfect his satiric techniques.

Jonson's satiric technique is mature by the time he comes to compose *Volpone*. Avarice appears in all its ugliest forms. The legacy-hunters — Voltore, Corbaccio and Corvino — the birds of prey, are all motivated entirely by greed. Blinded by their inordinate greed they plot the most inhuman deeds in order to secure Volpone's property. Corvino condescends to prostitute his innocent wife to Volpone; Corbaccio disinherits his good son by declaring him to be a bastard and Voltore shamelessly perjures himself twice in the open court to win the favour of Volpone. The parasite, Mosca himself, is motivated
primarily by avarice and the vice brings about his downfall.

In The Alchemist avarice is not only combined with other follies but is related to particular forms of chicanery prevalent in Jacobean London. The three rogues - Subtle, Face and Dol Common - are motivated largely by avarice and they organize the elaborate hoax of the alchemical laboratory in order to amass money. The dupes come to the shop to secure astrological and alchemical assistance because they are avaricious to the core. Dapper, the lawyer's clerk, arrives in search of a 'familiar', a 'flye' which will enable him to win in his gambling. Druger, the shopkeeper, as avid in his greed as Dapper, comes to the laboratory to find out how best he could lure the customers "by necromancie" to his shop. Sir Epicure Mammon comes for the philosopher's stone which will enable him to acquire wealth beyond the dreams of an emperor.

In Bartholomew Fair several of the visitors to the Fair, particularly Quarlous, are avaricious. Although Quarlous ridicules Winwife's idea of marrying the widow Purecraft, pointing out all the evils in marrying an old woman for her money (I, iii, 57-103), he at last decides to marry the widow himself thinking aloud:

Why should not I marry this sixe thousand pound, now I think en't? and a good trade too, that shee has beside, ha? ... It is money that I want, why should I not marry the money, when 'tis offer'd mee? ... I am resolu'd! I were truly mad, an' I would not!

(V, ii, 75-86)
Avarice manifests itself in association with one of the economic evils of London in *The Devil is An Ass* as in *The Alchemist*. Meercroft, the avaricious projector, is a swindler who lures a series of greedy fools into his net through his promises of patents and monopolies. His greed is brought to the limelight when he fondly resolves to have money at any rate:

I'll haue her! Raise wooll uppon egge-shells, Sir, and make grasse grow out o marro-bones, To make her come.

(II, i, 8-10)

Meercroft is ready to propose anything which will enable him to squeeze money from people. His projects are many. He has a scheme for "the recovery of drown'd land" - all the submerged land in England which would cost "eyghteen millions". He has other schemes like getting nine thousand pounds from the king's glover for tanned dogs skins and "two and twenty thousand pounds" from a scheme to bottle ale and a great deal of gain from the production of raisin wine.

Avarice in *The Staple of News* too is linked with a swindling operation of Jonson's own day. The satire is levelled against the avarice and knavery of the swindlers who organise the news bureau as well as the avarice and the miserliness of the usurer, Uncle Peni-Boy.

The motivating force in *The Magnetic Lady*, Jonson's last comedy, is also avarice. Most of the characters - Sir Moth Interest, the usurer, Mistress Polish, Mr. Bias, Mrs. Kepe, the nurse, Mother Claire, the midwife Parson Palate, Doctor Ru
Tim Item, the apothecary, Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, the courtier, and Practise, the lawyer are avaricious. Their behaviour is chiefly regulated by this trait and they are satirised through the ridiculous follies attendant upon avarice.

Thus, Jonson makes the best dramatic use of avarice utilising it in almost every possible form. He uses avarice as substantial matter which can be cast into a wide variety of comic moulds. It is tightly interwoven with elements of plot and comedy.

Lechery is a vice sufficiently prevalent in any age to engage the attention of satirists or moralists. The Jacobean dramatists use lechery for characterisation as well as for motivation of plots. In the Jacobean satiric comedy lechery is chiefly associated with the gallants. Barnard and Bowdler in Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* and Lipsalve and Gudgeon in Middleton's *The Family of Love* are motivated by their lust. Calrindore, Perigot, and Novall in Massinger's *The Parliament of Love* regard adultery as a game. Matheo, the gallant in Dekker's *The Honest Whore* is lascivious to the core. Marston's satire in *The Fawn* is focused on the lascivious conduct of the courtiers - Sir Amoroso Debile-Dosso, Herod Frappatore, and Nimphadore.

Jonson, in his satirical treatment of lechery, does not follow the usual pattern of the Latin and Jacobean comedy. He carefully restrains himself on the subject, because his attitude
toward lechery is not puritanical. Besides, Jonson is a comic dramatist and the comic conception of lust is usually amoral and concerned with manners rather than ethics. Naturally enough, Jonson's plays neither champion chastity nor countenance gross sensuality.

Jonson generally treats lust as a social folly. The light amorousness of Fallace and Fastidius Briske in Every Man Out of His Humour makes lust appear to be a probable folly rather than a despicable moral crime. Fallaces' thoughts dwell amorously upon the frivolous gallant. She sighs:

O, how happy is that lady above other ladies, that enjoys so absolute a gentleman to her servant! A countesse give him her hand to kiss? ah, foolish countesse! hee's a man worthy ... to kiss the lips of an empresse.

(II, vi, 117-121)

In the end, when her husband actually discovers her kissing Fastidius, she feels that she is only disgraced and Fastidius can only murmur of "the wrinkled fortunes of this poore spinster" (V, xi, 32).

Hedon, Amorphus and Asotus in Cynthia's Revels are interested in amorous dalliance rather than in visits to the brothel. They appear in scene after scene in which they are concerned with courtship (I, iv, v; II, ii, iii; III, i, ii, v; IV, ii, iii, v; V, ii).

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25. This is suggested to us by such details as Jonson's stories related to Drummend about his mistresses. See Conversations, 11. 287-294, 476-482.
The lust of Chloe and captain Tucca in *Postaster* is also presented as a light social folly. Throughout the play, the audience feels that Chloe's desire for a lover is no more violent than her desire for a coach. Tucca's broad ribaldry and his use of the language of the brothel are comically treated as conventional traits in the braggart soldier of Italian and English comedy.26

The Ladies Collegiates in *Epicoene* are, no doubt, satirised as lecherous but their lechery is treated only as a part of the less serious vices of sham, gullibility and stupidity (IV, iii; V, ii). Wittipol in *The Devil is An Ass* appears to be a lecherous gallant as he woos Mistress Fitzdottrel in several scenes (I, vi; II, vi) but in the denouement he relinquishes his desire for the lady and assures her that he "can love goodnes ... more/Then ... Beauty" (IV, vi, 37-38).

However, in two of his plays - *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* - Jonson treats lust not as a social folly but as a breach of the moral code. Volpone's lechery appears with terrifying concentration in his sudden passion for Celia, the virtuous wife of Gervino. No sooner does Mosca describe Celia to Volpone than the magnifico regrets why he "had not known this before" and longs to see her "though but at windore" (I, v, 107-127). When Gervino, tricked by Mosca's scheme, brings Celia to Volpone's

chamber even before the appointed time, Mosca says in an aside:

did ere man haste so, for his horns?
A courtier would not ply it so, for a place.

(III, vii, 4-5)

When Celia is left alone in the inner room with Volpone, he is moved into voluptuous raptures and sings:

Come, my CELIA, let us prove,
While we can, the sports of love;
... ... ...
Sunnes, that set, may rise againe:
But if, once, we lose this light,
'Tis with us perpetuall night.

(III, vii, 165-173)

After tempting Celia in vain with his treasures, Volpone paints before her eyes the splendour of the passion he has to offer. He says that her

bathes shall be the iuyce of iuly-flowers,
Spirit of roses, and of violets,
The milke of unicorunes, and panthers breath
 gather'd in bagges, and mixt with certeain wines.

(III, vii, 213-216)

In *The Alchemist*, unlike *Volpone*, lust is treated in a markedly light manner. We find lust in its ordinary, animal manifestations in Dol Common, Face and Subtle. The three schemers in the alchemist's shop regard their illicit sexual relations as the natural order of things (I, i, 176-179). The two rogues regard Dol's prostitution as an asset. Having lured Curly, disguised as a Spanish nobleman, to the house Face gleefully tells Subtle that a "noble Count" is coming
to make his battre
Upon our DOL, our Castle, our singue-Port,
Our Doner pire, our what thou wilt.

(III, iii, 10-19)
Furthermore, both the rogues, Subtle and Face, want to possess the "soft and buxome widow", Dame Pliant, who "melts like a Myrobalame"! (IV, ii, 42). They agree to draw lots to decide as to who shall marry her. "You'll ha' the first kisse", says Face, in annoyance, "'cause I am not readie". "Yes", agrees Subtle smugly, "and perhaps hit you through both the 'nostrils'. (IV, ii, 40-41). Finally, Face agrees to take the whore off Subtle's hands "with all her faults" (IV, iii, 90).

The common lechery of Dol, Face and Subtle is contrasted with lust overblown and rotten in Sir Epicure Mammon. From the time he appears on the stage, Sir Epicure displays an absurdly libidinous disposition. The moment he comes to know that the philosopher's stone is almost completed he plans to buy first and foremost sexual gratification. He longs

To have a list of wivies, and concubines,
Equall with SOLOMON; who had the stone
Alike, with me: and I will make me, a back
With the elixir, that shall be as tough
As HERCVLESS, to encounter fiftie a night

... ... ...
I will have all my beds, blowne vp; not stuff:
Downe is too hard. And then, mine owle roomes,
Fill'd with such pictures, as TIBERIVS tooke
From ELEPHANTIS: and dull ARETIME
But coldly imitated. Then, my glasses,
Cut in more subtill angles, to disperse,
And multiply the figures, as I walke
Naked betweene my succubae.

(II, ii, 35-39, 40-48)
The lechery of Sir Epicure is thus reduced to an absurdity. The emotion which it rouses is merely contemptuous amusement.
Thus, Jonson's portrayals of lust show us a wide variety of the weakening, the degrading, and the ugly aspects of the vice. He treats lust essentially as a comic dramatist without an exaggerated sense of the moral values involved in the action.

Jonson chose drunkenness for his satirical treatment not merely because it was a vice prevalent in the Jacobean London but because the drunkard on the stage is basically comic, acting as he does automatically. Besides, the drunken man is grotesque in his deviation from the normal thereby becoming "immortal in the realm of laughter".

In the satirical treatment of drunkenness, the Jacobean dramatists are rather sententious. Chapman, Marston, Dekker, Heywood, Middleton and Massinger include in their comedies moral speeches on the evils of drink. In Chapman's May-Day Lodovico discovering Aurelio in a drunken state says:

What a loathsome creature man is, being drunk! Is it not pity to see a man of good hope ... quite drowned, in a quart part.

(I, 1, 197-203)

There is quite an ironic speech on drunkenness in Marston's

The Payne:

27. In 1606 parliament passed "An Acte for representing the odious and loathsome synne of drunkenes". According to the law, the habit had "of late grown into common use within this Realm". (Statutes of the Realm, 4 James I (1606-1607), C.5, p.1142).

28. Bérgson (Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic, pp.146-147) points out that automatism is the basic source of laughter.

Drunkenness brings all out, for it brings all the drink out of the point, all the wit out of the pate, and all the money out of the purse.

(V, i, 176-180)

Middleton in his A Trick to Catch the Old One rebukes the drunkard, Dampit:

here, he lies, like a noisome dunghill, full of the poison of his drunken blasphemies.

(IV, v, 52-53)

But Jonson's attitude toward drinking is different. Unlike many other Jacobean dramatists, Jonson is unusually tolerant in his portrayals of the drunkard in his comedies. He makes no obvious attempts to turn drinking scenes into sermons. The portrayal of Buffone's drinking bout with himself in Every Man Out of His Humour (V, iv, 44-90) offers a good example. As he drinks toasts to himself with the affected declarations and gestures, the satire falls upon affectation and grossness rather than upon drink. Even when Jonson designates drunkenness as a vice in a character, as in the case of Anais's in Cynthia's Revels (II, ii, 32), he does little more than ridicule it with other vices in a delineation of a gallant. Juniper's drunkenness in The Case is Altered is employed mainly for its low-comedy effect.

30. That Jonson was too convivial himself to deal in a militant or moralistic way with drunkenness is clear from our knowledge of Conversations (11. 295-302). Moreover when Jonson was reconciled with the Church of England, to indicate his robust faith he "drank out all the full cup of wyne" (Conversations, 11. 314-316).
Thus Jonson preaches no sermons such as are delivered by Chapman and Marston. He includes no moral asides in the drinking scenes scattered through his plays. His use of drunkenness, then, appears to correspond with his personal attitude. We may say that to Jonson drunkenness is a vice only in so far as it makes a man a fool, and as it is an index of wastefulness and affectation.

Jonson's satire is directed against other contemporary vices like fraudulent demoniac possession and faked necromancy connected with witchcraft. The devil, of course, was outmoded on the stage, but he was comic and familiar, and therefore was a good subject for laughter.

In Fitzdottrel's first soliloquy in *The Devil Is An Ass* (I, 11, 1-53) Jonson satirises the work of actual conjurers in and around London with whom he was absolutely out of patience. He exposes the process of false demoniac possession through Meercraft's description of the simplicity of the game to Fitzdottrel. Meercraft urges how

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{It is the easiest thing ... to be done.} \\
\text{As plaine, as fizzling: roule but wi' your eyes,} \\
\text{And foame at th' mouth. A little castle-soape} \\
\text{Will do't, to rub your lips: and then a nutshell,} \\
\text{With toe, and touch-wood in it to spit fire.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[V, \text{iii, 1-5}\]

§1. Despite the work of King James in detecting fraudulent practices in persons pretending to be possessed with the devil, impostures of various types of demoniac possession continued.


Greene's 'coney-catching' pamphlets, vividly portraying the London underworld rogues, abound in practices of false demoniac possession. Then, we have Edgar in disguise in *Hamlet* and Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale* who remind us of such practices.
We have in *Volpone* and *The Devil Is An Ass* two most positive exposures of the tricks and habits of false demoniac possession. On the instigation of Volpone, Voltore, the lawyer, pretending to be possessed with the devil, falls on the floor in the court. Volpone highlights the scene with his convincing remarks:

See, see, see, see!  
He vomits crooked pinnes! his eyes are set,  
Like a dead hare, hung in a poulterers shop!  
His mouth's running away! doe you see, signior?  
Now, 'tis in his belly ...

'...will out, 'twill out; stand cleere. See, where it flies!  
In shape of a blew toad, with a batte wings!'  

(V, xii, 24-28, 30-31)

In *The Devil Is An Ass* Jonson exposes the ease with which court and public alike could be deceived by false demoniac possession. Fitzdottrel with the intention of escaping "the imputation of being cuckold" (V, v, 38-53) is tricked by Meercraft, the projector, into false demoniac possession. Fitzdottrel, with a false belly, a soap in the mouth to foam and sentences of Spanish and Greek on tongue, demonstrates the gamut of possible tricks of demoniac possession before the lawyer, Sir Poule Etherside, who comes to the conclusion that the exhibitions are 'palpable'. But overcome by the sudden revelation that Pug, whom he has been entertaining as his servant, is in reality one of the imps of Satan, Fitzdottrel discloses the devices he has been using to impose upon the credulous spectators and the law:

Sir, I am not bewitch'd, nor have a Diuell:  
"...I will tell truth,..."
And shame the Feind. See, here, Sir, are my bellowes, And my false belly, and my Mouse, and all That should ha' come forth!

(V, viii, 138-145)

Thus, Jonson uses devil-lore to strengthen his satire on the viciousness of London life and to help him achieve comic and theatrical effects, as he does in his masques, particularly in The Masque of Queens.

Jonson lashes out at one of the persistent social pests of the age - Puritanism. He thought the Puritans a menace to church and state. Besides, to him as to any other dramatist of the time, the Puritans personified the attack on the theatre. Hence, his tone is slightly acid whenever he mentions the Puritans. None the less, Jonson's treatment of the Puritans is broadly comic and satiric rather than doctrinaire. His satire on the puritans represents his fully developed satiric technique.

The Jacobean dramatists generally associated with the Puritan vices like avarice (Sir Giles Goosecap, II, i, 262-265), gluttony The Malcontent (V, iii, 145), lust (The Family of Love, I, iii, 161-170), and drunkenness (A Chaste Maid in Cheapside (III, ii, 88-89, 161-168), and their baseness was always covered with hypocritical piety. But Jonson focuses his satire on their

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32. Puritanism was an element in English social and religious life which was growing stronger during the reign of James. (See William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (1570-1643); M.M. Knappen, Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism.)
hypocrisy, the most comic of all. With his mature satiric
technique Jonson uses hypocrisy to develop his characters and
his plots and builds satire and comedy from it. It is to make
them more disgusting that he uses the sub-vice of avarice and
gluttony. And he ingeniously forces artistic elements like
parody, repetition, contrast and incongruity to serve the
purpose of satire and laughter.

We cannot possibly agree with W. David Kay that "no play
of Jonson's before The Alchemist contains satire on Puritans". In Volpone Jonson ridicules the Puritans as notorious for
gluttony, priggishness and prudery. While discussing Pythogoras' doctrine of the transformation of souls, Androgyne relates to
Nano that the soul when it left the mule went

Into a very strange beast, by some writers cal'd an asse;
By others, a precise, pure, illuminate brother,
Of those denoure flesh, and sometimes one another:
And will drop you forth a libell, or a sanctified lie,
Betwixt every spounefull of a natiuitie-pie.

(I, ii, 42-46)

Here Jonson satirises the Puritans as great eaters of meat as
well as eaters of one another in the metaphorical sense of being
fanatical. Their claim to inner illumination is also mocked at.

In Epicoene, again quite incidentally, Jonson shows how the
Puritan sect was a social pest. Truewit, in his attempt to
dissuade Morose from marrying, paints before him the dangers of

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33. W. David Kay, "The Shaping of Ben Jonson's Career: A
Reexamination of Facts and Problems", M. P. 67 (Feb., 1970),
p.228.
matrimony with a puritan wife, warning how Morose will be
obliged to

feast all the silenced brethren, once in three days;
salute the sisters; entertaine the whole family, or
wood of 'em; and heare long-winded exercises, singings
and catechisings, which you are not given to, and yet
must giue for: to please the zealous matron your wife,
who, for the holy cause, will cosen you ouer and aboue.

(II, ii, 80-85)

It is in The Alchemist that Jonson finds the best opportu-

nity to satirize the Puritans. Here he ridicules them as moral
bumbugs and hypocrites preaching what they themselves do not
practise. The two Puritan brethren of Amsterdam, Tribulation
Wholesome and Ananias come under heavy fire. Tribulation wants
to establish the Puritan morality by means of immorality, bribing
the civil magistrate with "aurum potabile". Ananias, who
denounces Subtle as a heathen and his stone as a work of dark-
ness, is overjoyed at the prospect of having gold.

Jonson seems to cover the multitude of vices which he
wanted to attribute to the Puritans when he makes Subtle say
that the Puritans, after receiving the philosopher's stone, will
not need

to winne widdowes
To give you legacies; or make zealous wines
To rob their husbands, for the common cause;
Nor take the start of bonds, broke but one day,
And say, they were forfeited, by Prudence.
Nor shal you need ore night to eate huge meales,
To celebrate your next daies fast the better.

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Nor cast
Before your hungrie hearers, scrupulous bones,
As whether a Christian may hauke, or hunt;
Or whether, Matrons, of the holy assembly,
May lay their haire out, or ware doublets;
Or haue that idolatry starch, about their linnen.

(III, ii. 69-82)
In this ironic catalogue of Puritan vices and offences Jonson's satiric lash is visible.

A close examination of the satiric material in Jonson's comedy would reveal that Jonson has attacked more social evils than any other single Jacobean dramatist. We may say that there is hardly a folly, an affectation, or a fraud of his day which he does not satirize in his plays. Avarice, lechery, quackery connected with alchemy and astrology, fake demoniac possession, the danger of the projects of monopoly, hypocritical puritanism - all these are found more vigorously and thoroughly satirized in Jonson's plays than in those of any other major Jacobean dramatist.

It should, nevertheless, be borne in mind that Jonson is essentially a comic artist, not simply a satirist or a reformer. He is not a satirist in the sense Swift or Pope is. Nor his satire on social and economic problems is the conventional matter of Jacobean dramatic plots. It is evident from the study of the didactic and satiric content of his comedies that he endeavours to build his plots and characters out of the very material which he wants to attack. Thus he ingeniously works satire into the dialogue and the dialogue into the movement of the plot so much so that to remove the satire is to remove plot and character.

Jonson's unerring relentlessness, therefore, is born as much of his artistic integrity as of his intellectual uprightness. His censorship is certainly more judicious than strictly moral. He is mainly concerned with follies and vices that are
intellectually unacceptable rather than morally deplorable. Jonson seems to be one with Bernard Shaw when the latter, in his defence of Mrs. Warren's Profession, says:

I have spared no pains to make known that my plays are built to induce, not voluptuous reverie but intellectual interest, not romantic rhapsody but human concern. 

Also, Jonson's treatment of human follies and vices is theatrical rather than sociological. As a dramatic artist he seems to be more interested in the dramatic use and comic effect to which a vice or folly can be put than in the mere correction of evil. Hence he is essentially a comic dramatist who bends his energies even to the creation of satire. As T.S. Eliot reiterates, "satire like Jonson's is great in the end not by hitting off its object, but by creating it". This point calls attention to the uniqueness of Jonson's comic world, by virtue of which he transcends the limits of space and time, and has that element of 'permanent modernity'. So it is not as though "in selecting 'humours' as his prime target he was condemning himself inevitably to a degree of ephemeral triviality". The kind of individual and social behaviour Jonson satirized is still the product of genuine and recurrent aspects of human nature.