JONSON'S USE OF THE MORTALITY VICE IN VOLPONE AND THE ALCHEMIST

JONSON'S USE OF THE MORALITY VICE IN VOLPONE AND THE ALCHEMIST

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to demonstrate the ways in which Ben Jonson incorporates some of the qualities of the Morality Vice into the lead characters of Volpone and The Alchemist. While critics have often ignored Jonson's Morality heritage, the similarity between his lead cozeners and the Vice is often striking. Face and Mosca's overwhelming love of the theatre manifests itself in their superior ability to create a drama in which their scheming partners and ambitious clients expose the faults to which all humanity is prone. Certainly, as it strives to rule the dramatic world, the Vice forms a precarious bond with the audience. Its Morality traits underscore its evil nature and therefore alienate us from the Vice to some degree. However, this figure could imitate humanity and thus invites the audience into an uncomfortable camaraderie which exposes the spectators' own attraction to greed. The first chapter of my thesis examines many of the Vice's central characteristics, such as his love of masks and his ability to create and sustain anarchy. The second chapter examines the shift in power which occurs between Volpone and the true Vice of this play, Mosca. The following chapter focuses on The Alchemist in which Face rises to the Vice's role above his self-deluding companions and their victims. Moreover, this chapter illustrates Face's irresistible theatrical attraction and thus the

audience's susceptibility to the visions with which Face baits his clients. The final chapter of my thesis examines the ways in which Jonson alters the Morality tradition in order to make his audience aware of its own moral weakness. The spectator's attraction to the Vice's energy is tempered only by its fear of the evil figure's ability to infiltrate the human realm. Indeed, the relationship between stage and society which the Vice-figure is able to elucidate, becomes an important aspect of Jonson's work. In order to explore this relationship, I have chosen to adapt an audience-response approach to the text. In other words, I visualized how the play would look on stage and noted my reactions to this imaginary performance.

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Introduction

In order to gain a thorough understanding of Ben Jonson's work, it is essential to consider the traditions which influenced his drama. Many critics refer to Jonson's classical influences. One of the most extensive studies of this nature is Douglas Duncan's Ben Jonson and The Lucianic Tradition. Duncan focuses on the playwright's use of Lucian and his follower Erasmus as Jonson creates drama with a serious moral message beneath its irreverent dialogue and action. Peter Hyland in his book, Disguise and Role Playing in Jonson, asserts that the outcome of Jonson's plays illustrate the sentiments of Neostoic writers of the seventeenth century, like Justus Lipsius, who asserted that the actor himself was hurt by his endless performances; the virtuous man remains true to the qualities of wisdom and virtue which comprise the "self". The fool, however, is obsessed with the worldly and attempts to hide his emptiness behind many masks. Like Duncan, Hyland refers to the presence of the Morality Vice character in Jonson's work, but it is only mentioned cursorily in his prefatory survey of the sources which influenced the playwright. However, Jonson's English dramatic heritage certainly deserves more than a casual

reference as it is indeed an important formative influence on both Volpone and The Alchemist.

Robert Potter in his book The English Morality Play analyzes Volpone with reference to this tradition labelling "the fox" a Jacobean figure with traits reminiscent of characters such as Everyman and Titivillus. Mosca also co-ordinates divergent elements from the older drama for he is both the redeemed morality figure and the damned schemer. While Potter's argument is provocative, it is inconsistent. He never fully explains how the characters can be both good and evil, both victim and Vice. Indeed, by far the most extensive and convincing work in this area has been done by Alan Dessen. His book, Jonson's Moral Comedy, compares the structure of Jonson's plays to the structure of the Elizabethan Morality play. Dessen notes that the Morality is concerned in general with the welfare of the kingdom. Usually, the Vice embodies that which the playwright believed to be detrimental to the realm. The Vice performs his mischief on his victims who represent a cross-section of society. Dessen compares what he terms the thesis-and-demonstration structure of the Moralities from 1560-1580 with Jonson's work. In Volpone, the thesis which the magnifico embodies is that avarice has overcome and corrupted society. The persona then interacts with a variety of social types or estates and demonstrates the effect of his particular sin on humanity. Volpone's prayer to gold in the first scene establishes its power and the remainder of the drama proves wealth's

might. Clients are degraded and exposed for their pettiness and, in Acts II and III, greed assaults the righteous as the magnifico forces himself upon Celia. Mosca also assumes the role of the Vice-figure by overcoming Bonario's better judgement with clever argument. Indeed, the corruption of justice in Act IV is used as a central metaphor for the pernicious effect of greed on society. The actions of the court are entirely scripted by Mosca and Volpone's desires until Volpone sheds his disguise. The audience is left believing that the virtuous may indeed be helpless in the face of avarice.

Dessen's analysis of The Alchemist follows similar lines. Face, Subtle and Dol, like Volpone and Mosca, represent anti-social forces that profit from exploiting the weaknesses of men through their business venture. The action revolves around the cozener's ruthless degradation of the public and society's lack of moral standards. There are essentially three estates, three levels of society depicted in this play, according to Dessen. Mammon represents the negligent knight who credulously attempts to buy Christian piety in order to win the philosopher's stone. The second estate is represented by the Brothers whose concern for their sect eclipses their charitable religious feelings. The Alchemist's third estate consists of those dependent on the clergy and knighthood for their well-being. Dapper, Drugger and Kastril represent frail humanity, easily victimized when spiritual counselling and social care are no longer society's primary concern. Dessen asserts that order is never restored in the play despite the

appearance of judgement figures like the constables, Surly and Lovewit. Lovewit's renewal of the tripartite venture with Face and Pliant only perpetuates the cycle of cozening and degradation as their new clients are gleaned from the audience.

Indeed, Dessen's work is useful in that it discloses Jonson's adaptation of the English Morality pattern which had previously received very little attention. Furthermore, Dessen reveals the importance of the Vice-figure. However, Dessen ignores the way in which Jonson alters the familiar Morality structures in order to delight and astonish the audience.

Rainer Pineas' article "The Morality Vice in Volpone" is important because it reveals the similarities between Volpone's and Mosca's character and the Vice's. Pineas asserts that Volpone's self-proclamatory nature, his love of evil and disguise make the magnifico seem omnipotent; however, the drama's most powerful Vice-figure is in fact Mosca. Mosca ultimately stage-manages the play and, more skillfully than Volpone, hides his intentions under many visors. Mosca can appear loyal, moral or compassionate at will despite his "motiveless malignity" (Pineas, 457). Pineas' article is inadequate because it does not explain the way in which the role of Vice reverts from Volpone to Mosca. Moreover, Pineas ignores Jonson's subtle adaptation of the Vice which makes Volpone especially effective in performance.

In this study, I hope to reveal the importance of the Vice and how its craving for power shapes the drama's plot as the Vice secures its welfare against an onslaught of envious competitors and foolish clients.

By far the most comprehensive study of the Vice-figure in drama is Bernard Spivack's Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil. He notes that one of the Vice's most striking characteristics is its love of showmanship. The Vice-figures are inclined to "put themselves, their intrigues, and their human victims on moral display, conducting themselves as masters of dramatic ceremonies whose first duties are to the spectators" (Spivack, 126). In his article entitled "'The Vice' and the Popular Theatre, 1545-1580", Peter Happe also notes, "On the one hand [the Vice] engages the audience by his sheer outrageousness, which is always familiar. But the attention is directed not to a character but to a performer. In the real world of the audience, the Vice is a successful performer who exercises great virtuosity" (Happe, 27). These critics' comments are supported by Infidelitie's speech in Wagner's play The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene. Infidelitie states,

> Infidelitie, no beware of me Infidelitie,
> Like as faith is the roote of all goodnesse,
> So am I the head of all iniquitie,
> The well and spring of all wickednesse.
> Mary syr, yet I convey my matters cleane,
> Like as I have a visour of vertue,
> So my impes, whiche unto my person do leane,
> The visour of honestie doth endue.
>
> (3 recto)

Infidelitie's boasts are aimed directly at the audience as the Vice praises his ability to adapt roles wholly contrary to its natural disposition in order to trap mankind. Moreover, the Vice boasts about the control which he exercises over the other players — he relishes his position as both director and consummate actor in his dramatic world.

The Vice's acting style is also important to an understanding of his role in the drama. As well as his boastful soliloquies, the Vice is famous for his tactic of allowing his victims a leading role in their own destruction. Confident of people's concupiscence, the Vice lays snares and then lets human nature do the rest. As early as the Morality Play Mankind (ca. 1465-70). Titivillus relies on this battle tactic;

> Ever I go invisibull—it is my jett—
> Ande befor his ey thus I will hange my nett
> To blench his sight. I hope to have his fot-mett!
> To irk him of his labur I shall make a frame:
> This borde shall be hid[d]e under the earth prevely.
> [Titivillus places a board in Mankind's field.]
> His spade shall enter, I hope, onredily!
> By then he hath assayde, he shall be very angry
> Ande lose his paciens—peyn of schame.
> (11.529-536)

Infidelitie in The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene also gloats over his ability to predict the actions of his victim. In order to tempt her into the ways of prostitution, Infidelitie and his fellows appeal to Mary's vanity;

Infidelitie.	M. Mary, had you never y smal pox in your youth?
Pryde.	You are a mad fellow Prudence, of a truth.
Marie.	I pray you M. Prudence, wherfore ask you that?
Pride.	It is like that in you he hath spied somewhat.
Carnall Concupisence.	Alas good gentlewoman, she blushes like coles.
Infidelitie.	In dede about her nose there be little prety holes, Therfore I think that she hath had the pocks, I meane good faith without any gaudes or mocks.
Mary.	If there be any fautes in my face verily, For money I trust shortly to have remedy.

(11 recto, 11 verso)

Here, the Vice displays with a sardonic sneer the extent of his persuasive expertise. In order to ensure that Mary look the part of a prostitute, he appeals to her conceit by drawing attention to her physical, rather than moral, blemishes. Mary meets the Vice's expectations and agrees to wear a visor of cosmetics in order to keep her new friend's admiration. The Vice's love of masks, then, is reflected in Mary's actions as she dons a prostitute's costume in the Vice's drama. When Mankind abandons his plough for idleness and Mary changes her appearance, the gloating Vice's control over the actions of the characters in the play must be acknowledged.

In Morality drama the Vice's chief goal is to destroy the order of God's universe and thwart His plans for man not out of malice, but for the pleasure derived from showcasing its ability to do so; thus, the Vice's proud vaunts often arise from its sense of control. Dessen explores this at great length in his book, Jonson's Moral Comedy. He notes the way in which society's estates, such as the legal system, the knighthood and the clergy, are destroyed by the vices which work from within to corrupt men, making the innocent the victims of the schemers' grand deceptions. All for Money by Thomas Lupton shows how easily men can be bribed to betray their neighbours so that the sinful man is saved and the poor man lost. Society's moral order is sacrificed to serve the greed which the Vice personifies. Gregorie graceles states,

> Mine neighbours saye they will hang me because I am a theefe.
> The last night I chaunced to take a budget with two hundred
> pound,
> And maymed also the partie that they thinke he will die,
> The budget with money I did hyde in the ground:
> So that they mist it although they tooke me,
> Therefore for your ayde to you nowe I hie;
> And the one halfe shall you have for saving my life,
> And the other must keepe my house, my children, and my wife.
> (12 recto, 12 verso)

This appeal to All for Money, mediated by the Vice called Sinne, is successful; just punishment in a Christian sense becomes meaningless. In The Tide Tarrieth No Man, moreover, a character called No Good Neighbourhood appeals directly to the Vice, Courage, asking his advice on

how to evict a poor elderly tenant who is dependent on his land for food and shelter.

> Then sir this is the matter, if it shall please you give eare,
> I have a neighbour who dwelleth to me somewhat neare,
> Who hath a Tenement, commodyous and feate,
> To which Tenement I beare a love very greate.
> This man my neighbour as far as I can learne,
> Hath in his Tenement but a short tearme,
> Fower of Fyve yeares or there about,
> Which tearme you know, will soone be worne out.
> Now syr might I in reversion, a lease thereof have,
> I would give the Laindlord, even, what he would crave.
> (7 recto)

Courage offers enthusiastic encouragement, "Therefore see no time herein be delayede, /Mayster Helpe here shalbe to thee a stay, /For with mayster greediness, he beareth great sway" (7 recto). Here again, then, we see the Vice stage-managing his lesser helpers in order to bring about confusion and division between neighbours and friends, disrupting the social order and fostering greed. Indeed, it is these manifestations of social disorder which afford the Vice the most delight as he is able to manipulate all members of a fractured society with much less difficulty. There is evidently the same explanation for the Vice's habit of separating frail Mankind from his wise counsellor because he is easier to coerce when he feels isolated and vulnerable. Moreover, the Vice attempts to sever society itself from the wisdom of God and make His representatives on earth, the church, for example, indifferent or corrupt. Indeed, this is a quality which Spivack notes in his study. Spivack writes, "evil in its greatest magnitude expresses

division and disorder" and when the Vice attacks a member of society "a great bond of piety, electric with cosmic meaning is ruptured; the religious foundations of society are shaken and the universe is racked with disorder" (Spivack, 49). Bernard Beckerman echoes Spivack's observations and adds to them by stressing the importance of the Vice's manipulation of the audience. Beckerman notes,

> Essentially [the Vices] are agents of anarchy, and consequently in their contact with the audience they promote disruption.... Later in the play... the Virtues deliver their soliloquies and so break or attempt to break the hold of the Vice on the onlookers. In this way, the play induces a struggle in the audience that leads to moral triumph in the end despite the Vice's attempts to tempt the audience into immorality.
>
> (Beckerman, 132)

The clash on the stage, then, between Christianity and Courage in The Tide Tarrieth No Man simulates a very real struggle in the soul of the person who watches the play as he is attracted to the vitality of the Vice and yet aware that the good characters are persecuted despite their viture.

The Vice's interaction with the audience as he parades his skill makes this internal conflict even more intense as he invites the audience into a comradeship. Generally, the Vice's opening soliloquy establishes this relationship from the very beginning of the play. Infidelitie's "beware of me

Infidelitie!" (3 recto) and Courage's remark; "If you come not soone, /You shalt have no roome" (2 recto) inevitably draws an audience to them as they candidly go on to describe the meaning of their names and plans of attack. Happe writes, "The Vice's entry would have been a moment of theatrical importance, as he quickly set up a relationship with the audience" (Happe, 20). Clearly, the Vice's attitude in the play sustains this bond. In Thomas Lupton's All for Money for example, Sinne enters and jokes with the audience abut the disagreement he has had with Satan, "You may laugh well ynough that Sinne and the Devil be falle out, /But we will fall in againe or ever it be long: /Stande backe in the mischief, or I will hit you on the snout" (6 recto).

Indeed, the Vice's intimacy with its audience stems, not only from this character's energetic and agressive speeches, but from the very nature of the Vice itself. In the Elizabethan Morality play, as Dessen argues, the Vice embodies the dangerous qualities which threaten the existence of a choherent social structure and the individuals within it. Mary Magdalene enters plucking at the threads of her dress and cursing her clumsy tailor. Clearly, her self-absorption leads her to abandon her duty to God and then prostitute her body for money instead of resigning herself to a chaste life in God's service. Infidelitie merely plays upon her vanity and sensuality, her readiness to abandon virtue. The Vice's familiar sentiments about women's frailties and human weakness in general is part of his appeal as he relates

his observations wittily. When Mary says to Infidelitie and his associates, "Which of you I should love best truly I can not see", the Vice quips, "This is a true proverbe, and no fained fable, /Few womens words, be honest, constant, and stable" (12 verso).

The Vice's stage business also attracts the audience to his character as he acts in a manner unhampered by inhibitions. The Vice unabashedly follows his inclination to do evil deeds with irreverence and outrageousness which attracts the spectators. However, the playwright alerts the audience to the destruction which such impulses can lead to by depicting the plight of the Vice's frail victims who are utterly destroyed. The Vice, then, thrives on his ability to attract the audience to him by defying convention. Furthermore, Spivack notes that the Vice illustrates through his art of dissimulation the tendency of humanity to disguise under a fair semblance the moral evil to which it is prone (Spivack, 155). Certainly, these disguises are numerous. Infidelitie states in The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene,

> For every day I have a garment to weare,
> Accordyng to my worke and operation,
> Among the Pharisies, I have a Pharisies gown,
> Among publicans and synners an other I use.
> (17 recto)

Happe also explores this aspect of the Vice's nature in his article "'The Vice' and the Popular Theatre, 1547-1580". The rapid transformation of the

Vice's features became a standard and sensational part of his repertory (Happe, 27). His swift physical movements are mirrored by the transformation of his apparel which he achieves with equal dexterity. As the Vice moves in and out of his different costumes, he evokes surprise and reaps his wicked rewards by manipulating his victims into feeling very genuine pangs of alarm, enmity, pity and so on (Happe, 27). The Vice can weep to feign concern for his victim and then laugh with the audience behind his prey's back. Moreover, the costume changes of the Vice often open different segments to signify new stages in the drama. The Vice's transformations also establish the pace of the drama. In Like Will to Like Quoth the Devil to the Collier, Bevington notes that the Vice encourages the scoundrels which he has set upon his victim and then soliloquizes between episodes in order to facilitate costume changes (Bevington, 158).

Spivack states that "in one of the Martin-Marprelate tracts the Vice is referred to as though he were, not simply a metaphorical fiction of the stage, but another struggling playwright or actor of the times: 'Roscius pleades in the Senate house; Asses play upon harpes; the Stage is brought into the Church; and vices make plaies of Churche matters...'" (Spivack, 192). Indeed, this creativity is one of the most powerful traits of the Vice. In later Moralities, he is on stage almost constantly, prefacing and concluding each part of his activity with explanations and triumphant monologues; he says what he will do and predicts the outcome, offstage

developments, entrances and exits (Spivack, 185). Polliticke Perswasion in The Plaie of Pacient Grissell, for example, decides to attack Grissell by feigning kindness,

> Nowe, Polliticke Perswasion, nowe or els never,
> Phie, for chaffing I can skant keepe my teeth to gether,
> I tell you I have found out such an invention,
> As among the common sort, shall kindle discencion:
> A Marquis maried to a beggerlye Grissill,
> Her father an olde foole, and an impotent criple,
> His store and substance in value not worth twentie pence,
> This geare cannot chuse but breed inconvenience,
> I will not cease prively her confusion to worke,
> For under honnie the proverbe saith poyson maye lurke.
> (11.889-898)

The Vice then takes control of the play and its plot becomes a piece of art over which he may gloat. The Vice takes the lead role, and exhibits his acting talents through many standard devices. The Vice may break out into energetic song or he may run among the audience commanding their undivided attention (Happe, 22). However, the true allure of the Vice lies in his imagination and ingenuity.

Because the Vice is such a self-conscious manipulator of the drama, controlling props, costumes, blocking and prompting, he is the focus of the dramatic art itself in action. His self-conscious performance gives the audience a new way to look at the playwright's task as both strive to materialize the creative vision in their minds. These attempts, however, are never carried out without impediments. Indeed, even though the Vice is

immortal because he embodies humanity's innate tendency towards sin, he is often at the centre of a competition between his inferiors. In Common Conditions, for example, Bevington notes the usual contest for supremacy between the Vice and his henchman which is easily won by the Vice who must ultimately be acknowledged as Master (Bevington, 192). In The Tide Tarrieth No Man, moreover, Courage picks a fight with Fayned furtheraunce.

Courage. What Fayned furtheraunce are you so coy,
Will you never leave the trickes of a boy,
Come agayne I say, least I doe you fet,
And say what thou wilt, here shall no man let.

Further. Fet mee?

Courage, Yea fet thee.

Further. Marry doe what thou dare.

Courage. That will I not spare. [Out quickly with his dagger].

Helpe. Good syr hold your hand, and beare with his rudenesse.

Courage. Nay I cannot nor will not suffer his Lewdenesse.

Further. Tuth a figge for him, let him doe what he can.

Courage: Alas syr who are you, but a Parchauntes man,
Good syr what you are, we know right well,
Who is your mayster, and where you doe dwell.
You profess that your mayster you doe greatly further.
And yet for his goodes, you would him gladly murther.

Further. If so I doe with, it is long of thee,
For thou thereunto haste encouraged mee.
(3 recto)

Indeed, discord follows the Vice-figure. Because he is a breeder of chaos, chaos characterizes all of his relationships and activities. In a world characterized by disorder, order must be established and maintained from within among the lesser vices by the character who is the source of all sins. Courage represents man's insolent and daring nature. He is "Courage contagious, /When I am outragious." (2 recto). From this sin comes Fayned furtheraunce, that boldly claims to help others, but follows his own pursuits. The most explicit example of the Vice fathering vices occurs in All for Money. Sinne states, "nowe for a midwyfe I would give twentie pound, /Holde me up Sirs, for nowe I begin to sounde" (5 recto), and then gives birth to Damnation. Moreover, perhaps because of the Vices' positions as progenitors, the Vice-figure preserves his authority by maintaining his position as director of the drama as he stage-manages the actions of the lesser vices. Indeed, the Vice acts as if there is no just God to fear, that only Fortune and skill combine to form the stage's primum mobile (Spivack, 271).

In the drama of Ben Jonson, this principle is transformed so that the main characters themselves become Vices, exhibiting their love of drama while struggling to gain control over the dramatic world in which they exist. Jonson's drama, then, becomes a world of rival actors where he

who conquers is he who performs the tricks of the Vice the best. Indeed, just as the Morality's audience was forced into censuring the Vice's exploits, its delight in the Vice's theatricality would challenge moral censorship. Often, as he fights among his peers, the Vice's evil does not draw severe or appropriate condemnation until it is loosed upon the innocent and even then, it is often slow to receive censure. Indeed, the Vice's dramatic victory was meant to show the audience's moral defeat and thus make it aware of its own concupiscence.

The next two chapters of my thesis will focus on the plot of Jonson's Volpone and then The Alchemist in order to trace the Vice's influence on these comedies as the power of artistic creation shifts from one character or set of characters within the course of the action to aother. Indeed, the Vice's manipulations provide the play with its energy and drive, drawing the audience's attention to the drama as a work in progress. The concluding chapter of my study will examine Jonson's variations on the Vice character, and how these variations affect the audience's experience of the play.

The Elizabethan Morality play is particularly useful to a study of Jonson's work because of its relative proximity to the composition of his plays; however, where relevant, I will refer to the Elizabethan Morality's ancestor, Mankind, in which one of the first Vices, Titivillus, displays some of this figure's basic tendencies. Indeed, the Morality plays of the 1560's

and 1570's share with Jonson's work a concern for society as they examine the effect of evil people and their shortcomings on that society. Robert Potter in his book The English Morality Play writes,

> What begins to take shape in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, then, is a tradition of corrective comedy, derived from the didactic dramaturgy of the Morality play, but also proceeding from humanistic interpretations of comedy... as moral philosophy. These plays seem puritanically obsessed with the omnipresence of evil. Corruption lurks in every alley, usually perceived in terms of economic and social abuses.
>
> (Potter, 109)

Indeed, Moral comedies like All For Money support Potter's observation. Sinne gloats, "For a whore to have a childe it is but a small matter, /And after it is borne the same to kill and murther. /Is not my grandfather money of great power and might. /That such a crooked matter so quickly can make straight" (12 verso). Clearly, the world of the Morality playwright was the world of Ben Jonson in many ways. Vice was an archmanipulator, whether it be greed or self-delusion which the figure personified. There is an underlying, ineradicable moral ugliness that permeates the clever disguises of Jonson's villainous manipulators which tempers the audience's enjoyment of their agile skills. The audience members can recognize their privileged immunity to the drama's action and are reminded of how vulnerable they are outside the theatre to the beguilements of Vice.

Chapter One: Volpone

In Volpone, the stage becomes an arena for the competition between two characters vying for the powerful role of the Vice. Initially, Volpone appears to be the master of the dramatic world, dominating it with his vitality and wit. However, he is overcome by his own short-sightedness when he abandons his original pursuit of gold for more dangerous game. Indeed, Volpone's loss of power is evidenced in many ways: his loss of control over Mosca, the audience and the dramatic action. Moreover, the Sir Politic Wouldbe sub-plot also traces the magnifico's waning might by paralleling the egoism of the two characters and predicting their own downfall. With each passing scene in the play, furthermore, Mosca illustrates the extent of his authority. In Mosca's evil hands, the tone of the drama becomes more alarming as he attacks the relationships and institutions which knit society together and ensure moral order. Ultimately, Volpone's and Mosca's greed destroy their play world entirely, and ambition seems to overthrow their hold on society. However, the very nature of the Vice's origin guarantees the survival of that which they personify, and the epilogue reflects the Vice's confidence in Greed's tendency to prosper in society.

The powerful opening of Volpone places the fox at centre stage. In this speech, his similarity to the Vice-figure is suggested. Spivack writes that the Vice's "monologues re intended to be unqualified public addresses, and when properly delivered that is what they are, without any pretense at self-communion overheard by an eavesdropping auditory" (Spivack, 31). Certainly Volpone's prayer to gold has the atmosphere of an address as he tells the audience what it is that rules Venetian society and grants him such power within it. Rainer Pineas notes in his article, "The Morality Vice in Volpone", that the magnifico's speech follows the pattern of the Morality Vice's opening statement (Pineas, 452). First, Volpone announces his role in the drama. He is the embodiment of gold's allure and greed itself as he charismatically praises the "dumb god that gives all men tonges" (I.i.22). As Volpone concludes his speech, he announces with a sense of pride reminiscent of the Vice, his plan of attack on humanity. He has devised a plot that allows him to become rich through the greed of society's members and establish his dominion over them. "I have no wife, no parent, child, ally, /To give my substance to; but whom I make/Must be my heir, and this makes men observe me" (I.i.73-75). Volpone is at the centre of his dramatic world, then, and he builds a play around his authoritarian role while Mosca, a lesser vice at this point, merely stage-manages the details. Clearly, Volpone, like all Morality Vices, greatly enjoys his ability to "create schemes for the seduction of man" (Pineas, 452) and is eager to demonstrate his

skill. Volpone will write and direct the perfect play in which he is triumphant over weaker characters. After this spectacular opening, the audience would expect this character to be outrageously successful before meeting his demise and, for awhile, its expectations are satisfied.

From Act I, scene i, Volpone exercises extensive control over the clients involved in the dramatic action. His authority is such that the audience, despite its awareness of the fox's corruption, is almost sympathetic to his cause as Volpone quite rightfully punishes the greed-stricken clients that come to his door and proves himself to be a more attractive character by virtue of his acting skills and vitality. Jonson, then, makes the audience's admiration of the Vice-figure more permissible. Indeed much of the tension of the Morality drama arose from the fact that the audience felt attracted to that which was essentially evil. But as the virtuous characters fell victim to this evil, the audience felt morally bound to reprimand the Vice. Christianity in The Tide Tarrieth No Man is much less fascinating than his immoral opposite, Courage, but Christianity's entrance at the end of the play makes the audience question their ready enjoyment of his prosecutor. However, Jonson creates a play in which the Vice may take control of the stage without reservation--an audience is permitted to feel unimpeded enthusiasm as it trusts in Volpone's ability to punish the grasping clients. Clearly, Volpone's clients are reminiscent of the Vice's more corrupt petitioners like No Good Neighbour or Willfull

Wanton in The Tide Tarrieth No Man. Both want to accumulate wealth the quickest way. They await the day of judgement in the play world when they will be rewarded for their schemes and their faithful service to their god, Wealth. The vision of the clients is very limited, then, as it does not look forward to a Christian day of reckoning. Each character represents a social group, and thus each reflects the failed morality of society in general. Alan Dessen writes,

> in A Knack to Know a Knave, the courtier, the coneycatcher, the farmer, and the priest display the faults inherent in four major areas of English society; similarly in Volpone Corvino the merchant, Corbaccio the miser, and Voltore the lawyer function as "estates" which provide specific demonstrations of Jonson's thesis...Volpone and Mosca, who victimize both "estates" and the virtues, provide Jonson's Venetian equivalent for the vices who traditionally impose their will upon a world which by its acquiescence and complicity has granted them power.
> (Dessen, 81)

Indeed, this observation is validated by the fact that the clients are condemned, not so much as characters in their own right, but as representations of social estates in general. Mosca says to Voltore the advocate, "I oft have heard [Volpone] say how he admired/Men of your large profession, that could speak/To every cause, and things mere contraries,

/Till they were hoarse again, yet all be law" (I.iii.52-55). Corbaccio is introduced in a similar manner. He knocks on the door, is abused by Mosca, then after he leaves, is slandered by Volpone as an example of an old miser, "So many cares, so many maladies, /So many fears attending an old age" (I.iv.145-146). Obviously, when greed makes some of society's most respected men relinquish their assets in order to win more, they become debilitated by their service to Volpone, who is greed personified.

At this stage of the drama, then, the plan which the Vice sets out in the opening of the play seems to be working very effectively. The magnifico and his associate are in control of the dramatic action as each visitor is handled and dispatched easily despite the rapidity of their appearances. By organizing the action of these estates, moreover, Volpone displays society's subservience to the superficial appeal which the Vice has to humanity as both audience and clients admire the magnifico's power. The first act also seems to reinforce the Vice's authority over this subservient companion, Mosca. Despite the lively stage show which he puts on for his Master who delights in the antics, Mosca seems primarily concerned with handling the props for Volpone. It is still unclear who is the real driving intelligence behind the schemes. Mosca says, "Stay, sir; your ointment for your eyes" (I.ii.114); he takes the plate from Voltore and places it on the hoard to "Stand there and multiply" (I.iv.2), puts more ointment on Volpone's eyes before Corvino arrives and takes Corbaccio's gold and the

merchant's pearl and diamond. Mosca, then, like the estate's gulls, seems very much tied to the wealth of Volpone's chamber and thus the lure of the Vice's promised gold.

However, despite Volpone's success in this scene, the audience realizes in the following acts his deficiency as a Vice. The magnifico's supervision of the rather limited and redundant dramatic action fails to bring to the surface the true ugliness of his victims which the Vice is usually able to do with such expertise. It will take a more powerful figure to reveal the clients' truly outrageous and unnatural personalities. In Volpone's chamber, Voltore seems to be a well-composed and even-tempered man who, despite Mosca's insults, is above fighting back; Corbaccio seems devoted to his son's welfare as he ultimately considers how to augment his income in order to increase his son's inheritance and finally, Corvino appears to be a man who, despite his deepest desires, will not use violence to attain his ends--he will not allow Volpone to be strangled even though Mosca is willing.

Nonetheless, Act II continues to explore Volpone's role as the Vice. In this act, Volpone's judgement precipitates more than just the farcical dreams of the greedy men who visit his chamber. It presses forward the action of his own drama as he evaluates Celia's worth. Furthermore, Celia's appearance brings a new element into the drama: the medieval figure of Virtue, with startling consequences. However, before the

audience sees Volpone's performance as a mountebank, Jonson inserts the scene between Sir Politic Wouldbe and Peregrine.

The sub-plot has been effectively analyzed by many critics such as Jonas Barish and John Creaser, but what is important for the purposes of this discussion is the way in which Jonson exploits the sub-plot in order to enlarge on his exploration of Volpone's demise. In practical terms, Act II, scene ii, allows Volpone and Mosca time to devise a plan to see Celia, and make their way to the street in front of Corvino's house. Thematically, this scene draws attention to the similarity between Sir Politic's self-aggrandizement and Volpone's. Both characters act on the premise that they possess powers beyond ordinary men's (Creaser, 51). Volpone as the Vice brags that he is able to see into the unnatural hearts of people and play upon their greed in order to make them to his bidding. Sir Politic claims to be able to interpret "unnatural" events and thus gain insight into the future. "Now, heaven! /What prodigies be these? The firest at Berwick! /And the new star! These things concurring, strange! /And full of omen! Saw you those meteors?" (II.i.35-38). Caught up in his own world, Sir Politic has lost his hold on reality. He looks for plots everywhere and yet misses those unfolding before his eyes which leave him vulnerable to the schemes of his fellow actors. Like Volpone, then, he is blinded by his egotistical pursuits and his downfall is necessary because of his myopia.

The next scene, however, reminds the audience of Volpone's power as the Vice. Spivack states that "a part of the Vice's talent in deceit is his virtuosity in the art of false faces. The rapid transformation of his features is a standard and sensational part of his repertory" (Spivack, 161). Clearly, this is demonstrated in the Mountebank scene as Volpone changes his garb from that of an ailing old man to the virile Scoto of Mantua's. His theatrical agility, as well as the energy of his performance, wins both the audience's and Celia's admiration. Like the Vice-figure, Volpone moves easily among the crowd, seducing the clients and the audience alike. Indeed, the nature of the thrust stage inevitably involved the audience in its "three dimensional effect" (Brennan, 5). Jonson makes Volpone's entrance into the crowd a spectacular one. Scoto enters, and a mob flows in from the stage doors to envelop not only Peregrine and Sir Politic, but the theatre audience as well. In this way, Volpone increases his number of admirers and stacks the jury in his favour as he seeks approval for his acting expertise. The audience, aware of his tricks, can laugh condescendingly along with Volpone at his credulous spectators and thus participate in his victory over the dupes.

The impact of this scene on the audience is noteworthy in another way. The audience only has met Celia through Mosca's descriptions of her sensuality. She has "a soft lip, /Would tempt you to eternity of kissing! /And flesh that melteth in the touch to blood!" (I.v.111-113). Douglas

Duncan asserts that "the spectator, whose appetite has been whetted at the same time [as Volpone's] is not disappointed by his first sight of the lady tossing a handkerchief from her window" (Duncan, Wascana 31). At this point, the audience might take Celia to be another pliable member of Venice's corrupt society. Indeed it might even suspect that Corvino's jealousy is warranted. Enchanted by the Vice and his performance, then, the audience anticipates a passionate scene. As in the Morality drama, however, the audience's uncritical admiration of the Vice's tricks is checked when it discovers the helpless virtue of his victim and recognizes the frailty of a moral creature when faced with obdurate evil. Dessen writes,

> Celia and Bonario, like Heavenly Man or Just or Faithful Few, function as virtuous figures whose behaviour provides a standard by which to judge the world of the play, and, even more importantly, their fates, like those of Conscience or Christianity or Simplicity, vividly suggest the perilous situation confronting innocent humanity.
>
> (Dessen, 81)

Indeed the audience is shocked from amusement to disgust at the Vice's game in the following scene when Corvino rants, "And your restraint before was liberty/To what I now decree, and therefore mark me." (II.v.48-49) and "Nay, stay, hear this, let me not prosper, whore, /But I will make you an anatomy, /Dissect you mine own self, and read a lecture/Upon you to the

city, and in public" (II.v.69-72). When Corvino raises his hand against the first innocent encountered in the play, the audience may begin to realize that its judgement has been insidiously won over. Volpone's actions are no longer justifiable. Instead of punishing the guilty for their avarice as he did in Act I, he preys on the innocent. The audience's admiration of this Vice is tempered with suspicion as it watches the effects of greed upon frail virtue.

Moreover, the audience's disillusionment seems to foreshadow the clients' revelations in the final acts. Like the audience, they also indulge in the fantasies which Volpone and Mosca outline. The clients foresee their power augmented by the dead man's wealth and ignore the image of decay before their eyes as they look to an illusory future. Indeed, the clients allow themselves to be out-manipulated. Finally they enter Volpone's chamber and the motivating greed which Volpone personified is exposed. The gulls are forced to recognize their sinful ways. Similarly, the audience at this point in the drama, is faced with the spectre which their indulgence in the Vice's actions has permitted. The audience is the force behind Corvino's attack on Celia as it has longed for the sensational spectacle of sexual intrigue. The audience's greedy desire to see a lusty Celia easily seduced is defeated by her stance as a virtuous woman—an inaccessible treasure. Like the clients at the end of their pursuit after wealth, the audience is left embarrassed by its attraction to the superficiality of great shows of power and sensational drama.

Clearly, the corruption which the Vice embodies begins to manifest itself in the struggle which is emerging between Volpone and Mosca as Mosca attempts to surpass his role as mere prop manager and adapt for himself the omnipotent role of Vice. Robert Potter notes that the transition of Volpone into a mutable character corresponds with the gradual rise of his servant to chief tempter (Potter, 145). Clearly, as Volpone abandons his original goal, collecting inert "plate, coin, jewels" (I.i.78), he loses control of the dramatic plot. Spivack writes of the Vices, "They are rigid, undeviating, monolithic, pursuing endlessly their single action and indulging endlessly their single emotion" (Spivack, 46). Volpone, then, leaves himself open to Mosca's scheming as he stops feeding on the greed of his clients in order to gain material wealth, and devotes his energy to the corruption and ravishing of virtue. Mosca, however, continues Volpone's game. He preys on the wealthy for their money, and turns his master into his victim.

Pineas notes that "While a play might contain several characters who would have to be labelled as vices, there was usually one character who deserved the title of the Vice of the play, the chief manipulator of evil. In Volpone, this title belongs incontrovertibly to Mosca" (Pineas, 453). Mosca acts without Volpone's supervision for the first time in Act II, scene vi. He attempts to gain control over the audience at this point by interacting with it in the Vice's intimate manner, thus implicating it in his plans. When

Corvino seems about ready to prostitute his wife, Mosca tells the audience, "I hear him coming" (II.vi.74). Furthermore, Mosca deliberately attempts to create division in Corvino's home. Spivack writes that "the Vice strikes out against the good, the bonds that knit nature, human society and the cosmos into hierarchic order and unity like filial piety, matrimonial love, fraternal loyalty and the immutable social degrees under God's royal regent" (Spivack, 46). Mosca's actions reflect this tendency as he attacks families, relishing the destruction which he reaps. The scene between Corvino and Mosca proves this as does the scene between Mosca and Bonario in Act III. In each case, the virtuous character is severed from his family and made to look foolish for his misplaced trust. Celia's loyalty is compromised just as Bonario's faith in his father is shattered by the unnatural thoughts which Mosca has fostered.

Now more than ever the audience appreciates Mosca's skill at playing the Vice. Volpone could act the part eagerly, change costumes rapidly and brag of his expertise in the game of deception, but it is Mosca who plants the seeds of ideas in men's minds that lead to their own destruction. Unlike Volpone, Mosca is able to step away from his work and give the victims the spotlight, trusting in their ability to damn themselves. Like Titivillus who is confident that Mankind's indolent tendencies will overcome his devotion, or Infidelitie who trusted in Mary Magdalene's

vanity and inconstancy, Mosca trusts in Corvino's greed to overcome his jealousy. Mosca states,

> ...it must be one that has no tricks, sir,
> Some simple thing, a creature made unto it;
> Some wench you may command. Ha' you no kinswoman?
> God's so—Think, think, think, think, think, think, think, sir.
>
> (II.vi.56-59)

to which Corvino replies, "She shall do't. 'Tis done" (II.vi.74). The initial discord which Volpone began by soliciting Celia for her handkerchief is intensified by Mosca who breeds an even deeper rift in the family circle by turning the husband's thoughts to prostitution. Indeed, he outdoes Volpone's attempts with a different and more insidious mask, a mask of friendship.

Mosca's talents which the audience glimpsed in Volpone's chamber blossom in the next segment of the drama. Volpone, the invalid, becomes a more static figure and it is Mosca who moves men. Indeed, the soliloquy he delivers to open Act III is dramatic proof of Mosca's rise to centre stage as the Vice. His speech makes Volpone's boasts in the opening of the play seem unfounded. Volpone claims that he is "content to coin [the clients' hopes] into profit, /And look upon their kindness, and take more, /And look on that; still bearing them in hand, /Letting the cherry knock against their lips" (I.i.86-89). Mosca's plan, however, is more insidious than

this, his actions almost uncalculated as they are part of his dissembling nature rather than a prefabricated plan of attack. Mosca gloats that he is

> ...your fine, elegant rascal, that can rise
> And stoop, almost together, like an arrow;
> .....
> Present to any humour, all occasion;
> And change a visor swifter than a thought,
> This is the creature had the art born with him;
> Toils not to learn it, but does practice it
> Out of most excellent nature and such sparks
> Are the true parasites, others but their zanies.
> (III.i.23-33)

This speech is very important as it is characteristic of the Vice's habit of self-proclamation. Spivack notes that "They always say in effect: 'This is what I am, and now I'll show you what I can do with frail and foolish humanity.'" (Spivack, 126). Mosca, then, prepares the audience for his maneuvering in the scenes to come. Like the Vice of the Morality play, he draws attention to his name, explains the nature of the Parasite and revels in his superior ability to blind foolish men who do not understand his natural talent for dissimulation and are easily deceived (Pineas, 454). Typically of the Vice, Mosca never articulates his motivation for destroying the lives of those around him. Like the Vice, he practices his immoral art for the sake of self-display and showmanship. He seems to bear no malice toward the clients as people; they are merely props with which he displays his superior talents. Clearly, Volpone is becoming one of these props as

Mosca steals his lead role from the manifico who seems oblivious to his "friend's" ambitions.

Peter Happe writes, "the Vice is a successful performer who exercises great virtuosity. He moves in and out of the personifications of evil, and switches the emotional tone by violent contrasts" (Happe, 27). Indeed, Mosca's performance at this point in the play illustrates this as he expresses joy and then sorrow in rapid succession (Pineas, 455). Just after his boastful soliloquy, Mosca encounters Bonario. During the course of nineteen lines, Bonario's opinion of Mosca changes radically. Bonario begins, "But you shall give me leave to hate your baseness," (III.ii.9-11) and concludes, "What? Does [Mosca] weep? The sign is soft and good. /I do repent me that I was so harsh" (III.ii.18-19). Mosca's feigned grief is that much more outrageous against Bonario's very real pain at the news of his disinheritance. The audience is again reminded of the scene between Corvino and Celia after Mosca's departure, when Corvino adopts a loving visor in order to set his wife up for prostitution. The virtues are easily won by such a show of kindness, and the audience is horrified as it knows the victims' danger and the maliciousness of their seducer. Moreover, the audience realizes that the foundations of an ordered society are beginning to crumble as the Vice attacks the bonds within families.

Even the bonds between master and servant dissolve as Mosca subtly eclipses the magnifico's role in the drama. Indeed, Mosca's rise is

accompanied by Volpone's demise, which is exposed through his interaction with the other characters. Volpone's attempts at doing evil become farcical, while Mosca's are as ugly and threatening as the Morality Vice's. Volpone's attempts at exploiting clients begins to fail. Lady Wouldbe, for example, takes over Volpone's demanding mountebank role during her visit and echoes Scoto's words by offering quack remedies for Volpone's feigned illness. "Alas, good soul! The passion of the heart, /Seed-pearl were good now, boiled with syrup of apples" (III.iv.51-52). Volpone is no longer centre stage as Lady Wouldbe showcases her own abilities and adjusts her costume to be sure "all things [are] apt," (III.iv.17). Furthermore, in Mosca's presence, Volpone was given gold, plate and jewels. Lady Wouldbe offers him a "toy, a cap here, of mine own work." (III.v.14-15). Finally, the only way Volpone can escape his entrapment is to call for help, "Some power, some fate, some fortune rescue me!" (III.iv.126).

In the following scene, Volpone's attempted rape of Celia makes him appear even weaker in the audience's eyes. Volpone, like Lady Wouldbe, storms his victim with a barrage of words and encounters staunch resistance:

> ...See, behold,
> What you are queen of; not in expectation,
> As I feed others, but possessed and crowned.
> See, here, a rope of pearl, and each more orient
> Than that the brave Egyptian queen caroused;
> Dissolve and drink'em...
> (III.vii.188-193)

Indeed, Volpone displays his ultimate failure as a Vice-figure. He underestimates Celia's virtuous nature and offers her delights which only the depraved crave. His showmanship is futile and, when Celia clearly will not yield, Volpone realizes the inadequacy of his scripted words and takes on an active role as the impassioned lover. Instead of being the tempter, he becomes the tempted as Celia, he discovers, does not long after the wonders which he promises. Volpone's power has evidently decreased since the mountebank scene. His costume gone, so is the power of the Vice's attractive theatricality. Celia is repulsed and the audience laughs at this would-be lover's poetic acrobatics, just as loudly as it laughed at the pretentious Lady Wouldbe's. Celia's response quite obviously echoes Volpone's own bitter cries for help in the previous scene. Celia cries, "O! Just God" (III.vii.267). Just as Mosca intervened to save one of his fellow vices from a powerful attacker, Bonario saves a fellow innocent from Volpone's advances. "But that I am loath to snatch your punishment/Out of the hand of justice, you should yet/Be made the timely sacrifice of vengeance, /Before this altar, and this dross, your idol" (III.vii.269-272). Volpone is thoroughly devastated as he is faced with the punishment which his actions demand according to the Morality drama. Clearly, unlike the powerful Vice, he is not immune to man's wrath. Of this episode, Potter asserts that with Bonario's entrance we are back in the world of the Morality drama where divine mercy is the reward for innocence and evil is

hoisted up for punishment (Potter, 148). Naturally, Volpone must once again seek Mosca's aid.

The scenes which result from the intrigue of the previous action are once again constructed as companion panels to one another and illustrate the magnifico's loss of power and his abdication of the Vice role. Moreover, the drama tests Mosca's ability to meet new challenges and reveals the ugliness of a world at his hands. Spivack notes, "For the Vice, by natural extension of the theatrical side of his allegorical nature and homiletic enterprise, becomes in later comedy... the play maker whose histrionic deceits and beguilements create the action of the play" (Spivack, 191). Mosca's influence is seen in the trials of both Volpone and Sir Politic who are accused of sexual indiscretions. Sir Politic, like Volpone, is forced into an inactive role in the proceedings. His only defence against his wife's barrage of accusations is helplessness or absence; "I must bid adieu/To your delights. The case appears too liquid" (IV.ii.57-58). The only character who is able to take control of the situation with any authority is Mosca who takes the opportunity to integrate all of the stories of the characters and adjust reality to suit his purposes in Volpone's upcoming trial.

Once Jonson has established the extent of Mosca's influence over the action and Volpone's helplessness, he presents Mosca with his greatest challenge. Jonson masterfully creates tension in the court scenes by disappointing the audience's expectations and giving Mosca an easily won

victory. The Avocatori begins the scene with an accurate evaluation of the characters on trial:

> Fourth Avocatore. The gentlewoman has been ever held
> Of unreprovèd name.
> Third Avocatore. So the young man.
> Fourth Avocatore. The more unnatural part, that of his father.
> Second Avocatore. More of the husband.
> First Avocatore. I not know to give
> His act a name, it is so monstrous!
> Fourth Avocatore. But the imposter, he is a thing created
> T' exceed example.
> (IV.v.3-9)

However, despite these suspicions, the Avocatori are deceived by a plot master-minded by Mosca. Indeed, Mosca seems to derive special delight from his manipulations at court. In this scene, he is entirely in control. Like an Elizabethan director, only he has access to the play which is about to unfold in its entirety. His actors know their lines and the motivation for their roles but they are unaware of the entire picture. Corvino asks the director in an aside, "But knows the advocate the truth?" and Mosca replies, "O sir, /By no means. I devised a formal tale/That salved your reputation" (IV.iv.6-8). Corbaccio is told, "Sir, only you/Are he that shall enjoy the crop of all, /And these not know for whom they toil" (IV.iv.17-19) and finally, even though Mosca has assigned Voltore the lead role in his courtroom drama, the advocate is unfamiliar with the entire play. Mosca says "I have another witness if you need, sir, /I can produce" (IV.iv.26-27). Voltore

responds, "Who is it?" and Mosca replies, "Sir, I have her" (IV.iv.28). Clearly, Mosca's power in this scene is overwhelming. As the Vice, his sense of theatricality creates a drama that easily wins his audience, the avocatori, which thrives on the melodrama over which Mosca has total control.

Also in keeping with his theatrical heritage, Mosca finds gulling the judicial system an especially attractive prospect. Dessen notes that one of the Vice's favorite vaunts in the Lucre plays, like All for Money, is bribing witnesses, lawyers or judges in order to subvert justice (Dessen, 91). All for Money, acting as magistrate, declares that "All maner of men" will thrive in his court "be their matter never so wrong" so long as "they come from money" (Dessen, 91). In Volpone, Mosca gloats over Voltore's absolute corruption and the Avocatori's confusion when the proceedings are over, "... if Italy/Have any glebe more fruitful than these fellows, /I am deceived. Did not your advocate rare?" (V.ii.30-32).

Evidently, the Vice takes delight in disrupting society's legal system because his primary function in the Morality drama was creating discord and division (Beckerman, 130). This court scene shows the audience what a world ruled by Vice would be like. William Slights writes about the scene, "What strikes the avocatori in Volpone as a temporary procedural problem—lack of order in the courtroom and of clarity in the proceedings—in fact mirrors and even ratifies the violation of familial,

sexual, and financial bonds in the first three acts" (Slights, 81). Although Slights does not attribute this action to the manipulations of a Vice-figure it is, nonetheless, very applicable to this discussion. Indeed, the chaos which the Vice creates is manifested in many ways in this scene. First of all, the audience becomes aware of the characters' irresponsible use of language. Voltore echoes the verbosity of Volpone as Scoto. Like Volpone, Voltore asserts that his cause is more noble than it actually is. Both con artists assert that the driving force behind their performance is to cure the ills they see about them. Scoto asserts, "I despise money. Only to show my affection to you, honourable gentlemen, and your illustrious state here, I have neglected the messages of these princes...only to present you with the fruits of my travels" (II.ii.191-196). Voltore informs the Avocatore of the nature of the illness in their midst and what must be done to remedy it in equally sensational terms, "Can any man imagine/That [Bonario] will spare's accuser, that would not/Have spared his parent?" (IV.v.99-101). He tells them passionately of "The most prodigious and most frontless piece/Of solid inpudence, and treachery, /That ever vicious nature yet brought forth" (IV.v.31-33). Under the Vice's influence, then, speech is meaningless, a chaos of sound. Moreover, that which is unnatural is made to seem natural. Volpone's appearance at court inspires a speech in which Voltore names the crimes that Volpone is guilty of, making them seem impossible and opposed to the laws of nature; "See here, grave fathers, here's the ravisher, /The

rider on men's wives, the great imposter, /The grand voluptuary!" (IV.vi.23-25). This complex double inversion is at the heart of the courtroom scene as language becomes part of the Vice's mask and Voltore's speech a manifestation of the corruption which Mosca has nurtured. In the world ruled by disguise, truth becomes so contorted that it cannot be recognized as such. Moreover, Mosca's attack on the family unity is intensified through the part he has assigned to Voltore and the lines which the advocate utters. The Avocatori are called "Your fatherhoods" (IV.v.24) and "honoured fathers" (IV.vi.43). The Avocatori, then, are established as the guardians of social order. After expulsion from from his family unit, Bonario is threatened with explusion from society by its fathers as well. The first Avocatori commands, "take 'em to custody, and sever them" (IV.vi.54). It would seem that, as in Morality drama, the Vice has insidiously divested society of its virtuous members and left society to destroy itself from within.

The opening of Act V is indeed effective. Stephen J. Greenblatt, in his article entitled "The False Ending in Volpone", asserts that "What is striking about... the entire opening of Act V is its deadness. Volpone throughout has been a master of the alchemy of language, transforming vulgar wealth into precious wonders, but suddenly his powers fail him" (Greenblatt, 93). Although I agree essentially with Greenblatt's criticism, Volpone's loss of power is not "sudden" but gradual as it has corresponded with Mosca's steady rise. Nonetheless, when Volpone enters talking to

himself abut the trial, his old confidence is gone. His speech in Act I had exuded self-assurance, "What should I do/But cocker up my genius and live free/To all the delights my fortune calls me to?" (I.i.70-72), but now Volpone's discourse lacks this energy, "'Fore God, my left leg 'gan to have the cramp, /And I apprehended, straight, some power had struck me/With a dead palsy. Well, I must be merry" (V.i.5-7). Volpone's success at playing the invalid in the courtroom, the audience discovers, was not a display of skill but of cowardice. Even his most powerful tool, his ability to create and control his drama, has failed him and Volpone must turn to wine in order to sustain himself.

Ultimately, in an attempt to remedy his loss of control in the drama, Volpone strives to return to the world over which he had once exerted such authority as a Vice-figure. Volpone ignores his failure with Celia and attempts to refocus the action of the drama on the old inheritance plot again. Before Mosca left Volpone to talk to Corvino, the magnifico's last words were these; "I never meant [Corvino] for my heir" (II.v.29). Now Volpone attempts to regain his role as Vice and script his own drama. Ignorant of his vulnerability to Mosca's ambition, Volpone chooses Mosca for his inheritor, and supplies him with the props to play his part convincingly. Mosca easily adapts to this new role and sees it as a way to exhibit his superior cunning. Mosca gloats, "So, now I have the keys and am possessed./Since he will needs be dead afore his time, /I'll bury him, or gain

by him. I'm his heir" (V.vi.11-13). Indeed, Volpone's foolish actions complete the reversion of power from master to servant. Mosca, with rich man's attire and surrounded by pelf, visually echoes Volpone's character in the opening scene. Moreover, the gulls enter in the same order as they did in act one. Voltore comes first, next Corbaccio, then Corbino and finally Lady Wouldbe. However, it is now around Mosca, the powerful and alluring Vice, that the clients flock.

The last scenes of Volpone involve the judgement of all its characters and the final stand-off between the competing vices which leads to the exposure and punishment of the Vice. In Act V, scene vi and vii, Sir Politic's trial foreshadows Volpone's hearing as both characters' crimes are exposed. Sir Politic's world, like Volpone's, is one of strange inversions where dishonest mountebanks are called "the only knowing men of Europe!" (II.ii.9) and a simple fool like Stone is in reality an evil spy, "One of the most dangerous heads/Living within the state" (II.i.65-66). Because Sir Politic has scripted a drama of intrigue in which it is impossible to determine fact from fiction, Peregrine, like Mosca, is able to capitalize on this confusion and ruin the character by guiding his illusion to its natural conclusion. Sir Politic believes he is a dangerous and crafty schemer, and so he is accused of treason and his plots exposed; similarly, Volpone's death necessitates Mosca's inheritance and the fox's entrapment. Furthermore, Sir Politic's tendency to make the natural unnatural is manifested in his

donning the tortoise shell as he transforms himself from man to beast because of his gullibility and his illusions of self-importance. However, once his shell is removed by the agents of justice, Politic loses his most dangerous and endearing quality, his ability to speak in magnificent terms and his belief in his own Vice-like craftiness. Politic, like Volpone, realizes that he has been out-manipulated in the dramatic world. Peregrine states, "Now, Sir Pol, we are even; /For your next project I shall be prepared." (V.iv.74-75). Ultimately, Sir Politic internalizes the features which his disguise fleshed out, shunning Venice "forever, /Creeping with house on back, and think it well/To shrink my poor head in my politic shell" (V.v.87-89).

The final scenes at the Scrutineo are complex and owe much of their dramatic tension to the struggle for power which ensues between Volpone and Mosca in asides. Like the trial scene in Act IV, this trial teases the audience into believing that the facts will be revealed. Just as the Avocatori in Act IV spoke the truth about the nature of the characters to be tried, here Voltore appears ready to reveal some of the injustice behind Celia's and Bonario's conviction. He pleads, "O, /I know not which t'address myself to first, /Whether your fatherhoods, or these innocents/...Whom equally/I have abused, out of most covetous ends" (V.x.3-6). The audience actually shares the other villain's sentiments wondering "Will he betray himself?" (V.x.8), keeping silent despite its knowledge of the

criminal's actions. Volpone, too, finds himself trapped into silence, and seeks Mosca to script words for him,

> ...O, the dull devil
> Was in this brain of mine when I devised [my plan],
> And Mosca gave it second; he must now
> Help to sear up this vein, or we bleed dead.
> (V.xi.4-7)

Volpone's final embarrassment is finding that he has lost the keys to his household, "Mosca take the keys? Why, so! /I am farther in" (V.xi.13-14). Volpone realizes the extent to which he has allowed his role in the drama to degenerate from the powerful Vice to a Fool, "These are my fine conceits! /I must be merry, with a mischief to me?" (V.xi.11-14). Like Politic, Volpone feels stifled by the drama which he has created and attempts to find some way to save face.

Volpone's change of costume from commendatori to a court officer prepares the audience for the renewed vigour of his performance as he attempts to regain his old powers. Indeed, Volpone returns to stage managing by directing Voltore and renewing his hope of fortune by resurrecting the old magnifico. "Sir, you may redeem it: /They said you were possessed; fall down, and seem so" (V.xii.21-22). Dessen writes of this scene,

> Volpone, who supposedly is helping to "dispossess" the advocate, is in reality offering the audience a final and summary demonstration of this Vice-like ability to control a representative figure (here a lawyer in a courtroom) by playing upon his particular weakness or obsession. The visual impact of this scene is more important than what is actually said. What we see is an erect figure (Volpone) standing over...a victim who is groveling on the floor of the stage in a fit...Voltore...in visual terms is being degraded to the level of an animal crawling on the ground.
> (Dessen, 100)

Certainly, the action reaches a crisis when Mosca enters the scene dressed in the robes of a rich man, thus winning the fickle admiration of the Avocatori, upholding his present position of power and even threatening to augment it by making a match with the fourth Avocatori's daughter. "It is a match, my daughter is bestowed" (V.xii.62). Evidently, Venetian society not only reveres Vice, but seeks to invite it into their homes. The society has become so permeated with the dissembling Vice, moreover, that the only way in which virtue can win is if greed overreaches itself. But even when this occurs, it is a hollow victory for decency, as Mosca's and Volpone's punishment is essentially meaningless. The greed which they personify lives on in human nature. Spivack notes the allegorical immunity of Vice to any real curtailment of its timeless existence. Its behaviour in the face of

punishment is usually a parody of alarm or resistance (Spivack, 197). The Vice Haphazard's last speech in Apius and Virginia, for example, is this,

> Must I needes hange, by the gods it doth spight me
> To thinke how crabbedly this thick lase will bite me:
> Then come cosin cutpurs, come runne haste and follow me,
> Haphazard, must hange, come folow the luverie.
> (Apius, 11.1173-1176)

Mosca, after sentencing, exits with only a curse at Volpone, "Bane to your wolfish nature" (V.xii.115). But Volpone, who ends the play by revealing his identity and exposing the brilliance of his plots and disguises, delivers this epilogue with a sardonic grin,

> Now, though the fox be punished by the laws,
> He yet does hope there is no suff'ring due
> For any fact which he has done 'gainst you.
> If there be, censure him; here he doubtful stands.
> If not, fare jovially, and clap your hands.
> (V.xii.153-157)

As in the Morality drama, the stage punishment seems to be merely a formality. The popularity of the Vice and its place in human nature make it indestructible. Mosca was out-viced in the end only because his superior ability as tempter tempted Volpone's Vice-like instincts and the greed which prompted their action out of hiding. Bonario's statement, "Heaven could not long let such gross crimes be hid" (V.xii.98) underestimates the power of vice and the Vice-figure to create or destroy the dramatic world. Heaven played no part in the denouement of this play—it was a character's greed

for gold and greed for the accolades which he believed his acting skills deserved which directed the plot. Unless an audience sees beyond this mask of language to Jonson's cynical innuendo beneath, it has allowed Bonario's clichés to draw it into the world of gulls hungry for happy endings.

Chapter Two: The Alchemist

In The Alchemist, the audience is once again faced with a struggle between two characters for power. In this play, Jonson presents three cozeners who direct the action of the drama together until one Vice emerges victorious through his superior ability to manipulate others. Indeed, Face exhibits many of the Vice's characteristics. He is adept at disguise. Moreover, he is able to use the chaos which lurks just below the surface of the play world to his advantage. Face creates the drama, then, as he meets the challenges which the clients pose and ultimately dismisses his partners from the stage. Furthermore, the way in which Face manages the various plots sustains the overall dramatic energy of The Alchemist as it teases the audience which waits expectantly for the Vice's demise at the hands of a judgement-figure. However, Lovewit and Face's union at the conclusion of the play reminds the audience of its continued vulnerability to Vice once moral order, and man's reason which maintains it, are subverted by the pursuit of pleasure alone.

Unlike Volpone, The Alchemist establishes immediately the struggle for power among the main characters. As in the Morality, the squabbling of the competitors illustrates their baseness and immorality. In

The Tide Tarrieth No Man, for example, the struggle between Courage and Fayned furtheraunce is similar to Subtle's and Face's quarrel. A third party's failed attempts at mediation punctuate the scene;

> Further. Marry doe what thou dare.
> Courage. That will I not spare. [Out quickly with his dagger.]
> Helpe. Good syr hold your hand, and beare with his rudnesse.
> Courage. Nay I cannot nor will not suffer his Lewdness.
> (3 recto)

Similarly, The Alchemist begins,

> Face. Believe 't, I will.
> Subtle. Your worst. I fart at you.
> Dol. Have you your wits? Why, gentlemen! for love—
> Face. Sirras, I'll strip you—
> Subtle. What to do? Lick figs
> Out at my—
> (I.i.1-3)

Indeed, the aggression which the Vice and his associates display reflects a number of important issues in the plays. As was previously noted, the Vice by nature promotes and thus in some ways represents disorder. The outburst between Subtle, Face and Dol, then, indicates the unstable nature of the tripartite venture and the fragile and destructive world which it creates. Subtle challenges "I shall mar/All that the tailor has made, if you approach" (I.i.9-10). Dol is worried about intruders discovering them, "Hark, I hear somebody" (I.i.8), as is Face who asks his challenger, "Will you be so loud?" (I.i.17). The audience senses that under the illusion of

order which the cozeners create in later scenes, the tendency towards chaos, which this trio verbalizes, constantly lurks. Alchemical terms only confuse communication and men are reduced to the level of beasts lacking reason; Subtle is "Doctor Dog" (I.i.19); Face is a "scarab" (I.i.59) and Dol Common is a "brach" (I.i.111).

The opening scene also establishes the characters' competition for the role of the Vice as each claims superior ability to create disguises and costumes for one another. Subtle and Face each assert that he gave the other the skills to deceive men and win his way into their hearts. Each character claims, then, to be the founding father of the group. Face states,

> I gave you count'nance, credit for your coals,
> Your stills, your glasses, your materials,
> Built you a furnace, drew you customers,
> Advanced all your black arts; lent you, beside,
> A house to practice in—
> (I.i.43-47)

Subtle replies indignantly, that he

> ...made [Face] fit
> For more than ordinary fellowships?
> Giv'n you your oaths, your quarreling dimensions?
> Your rules to cheat at horse-race, cock-pit, cards,
> Dice, or whatever gallant tincture else?
> Made you a second in my own great art?
> And have I this for thank! Do you rebel?
> Do you fly out i' the projection?
> (I.i.72-79)

Subtle and Face, then, echo the arguments posed by the early Vices whose very nature demanded their recognition. Spivack notes that there is generally one root from which the other vices spring; thus, the Vice is the creator and patron of lesser evils. One sin establishes itself as central to the human heart and then quickly makes a path for the next (Spivack, 141). In Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene, for example, Pride of Life elucidates his relationship to the Vice, Infidelitie,

> If thou be once rooted within the hart,
> Then maist thou make an entrance by thy craft and art
> So that we may come into hir at pleasure,
> Fillying hir with wickednesse beyond all measure.
> (7 recto)

By imitating the argument of their forefathers, the cozeners reveal their mutual desire to corrupt humanity; however, Jonson warns his audience that only one of the three characters can claim the title of the Vice. Moreover, that character must have a special appeal to the human heart and certainly as the play progresses, Face's irresistible talent for acting foreshadows his victory.

Indeed, as the audience waits for one Vice to emerge from the incompatible cozeners, it is attracted increasingly to Face's energy. Paul Goodman writes, "In the beginning, Face and Subtle seemed almost formally identical but as the intrigue progresses, we find Face infinitely various, while Subtle is handled more and more as an expert in one line;

therefore, Subtle is deflatable, but Face is not" (Goodman, 115). While Goodman did not have the Vice-figure in mind when he analyzed Jonson's work, his observation is applicable to this discussion. For one of the Vice's most notable characteristics is its ability to adapt to any situation, its inexhaustible ability to create a drama from the surrounding circumstances which will prove to be the most profitable. Face is the first cozener to introduce a client and therefore the first to take an active role in script writing. Face immediately becomes stage manager as well and tells Subtle, "Get you/Your robes on" (I.ii.194-195) before he too changes his appearance, transforming himself into the Captain. Moreover, once Dapper has entered the house, Face devises a play for the gull and lends him a new identity of greater importance. Dapper is given the role of "a special gentle, /That is heir to forty marks a year, /Consorts with the small poets of the time, /... /Is a fine clerk, and has his ciph'ring perfect" (I.ii.50-55). Like Infidelitie in The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene, Face senses what Dapper's weaknesses are, his desire for renown and admiration, and plants visions in his mind to match these dreams. In stage whispers, Face and Subtle increase the gull's appetite for winning and entice him into the costly plot involving his Aunt, the Queen of the Fairies. Consummate agents of temptation, Face and Subtle taunt Dapper with the prospect of wealth and tempt the audience into admiring their improvisational skills.

However, as Joyce Van Dyke observes in her article entitled "The Game of Wits in The Alchemist", their improvisation shows the real tension between the actors. Her insightful article deserves to be quoted at length.

> Subtle introduces the idea of the Queen of Fairy, but when Face takes Dapper aside to give him the news, he improvises further; he tells Dapper not merely that he is favoured by the Queen but that he is allied to her. In Face's version, Subtle's ceremonious otherworldly queen is transformed into an ordinary mortal. As the dialogue proceeds, each knave asserts his own version:
>
> Subtle. O, good sir!
> There must be a world of ceremonies pass:
> You must be bathed and fumigated first;
> Besides, the Queen of Faery does not rise
> Till it be noon.
> Face. Not if she dance tonight.
> Subtle. And she must bless [your familiar]
> (I.ii.143-151)
>
> Before the befuddled Dapper, Face further transforms the Queen of Fairy into his aunt and amplifies by describing her as "a lone woman, /And very rich" (I.ii.155-156) who might in earthly fashion take a fancy to a young man...when Dapper finally" [provides] for her Grace's servants" (III.iv.141), the money goes straight into Face's pocket, and Subtle is not onstage to observe it. It is Face's ingenuity and daring, in ludicrously secularizing the Queen of Fairy, which creates another way to soak the client, in addition to demanding the usual fee for the Doctor's services.
> (Van Dyke, 261-262)

Indeed, Face's superior wit is proven by his larger income as he successfully subdues his fellow actors through his double dealings, guiding the plot lines

to his own ends. Already, Face's partners have become his dupes. Like the Vice, his only allegiance is to himself despite his words of friendship.

In the next scene, another of Face's acquisitions, Abel Drugger, is let into the house. Once again, Face encourages his client's self-deception. Like the Morality Vice, he appeals to the character's sinful sense of pride. "This is my friend, Abel, an honest fellow, /He lets me have good tobacco and he does not/Sophisticate it with sack-lees or oil/ ... /A neat, spruce, honest fellow, and no goldsmith" (I.iii.22-31). Aware of the gull's ambition, the cozeners augment Drugger's visions of success. "This summer/He will be of the clothing of his company, /And next spring called to scarlet. Spend what he can" (I.iii.35-37).

Despite their team-effort in front of the clients, their mask of solidarity slips in private as they vie for power. Face's speech after his two victims have exited in fact echoes the vaunts of the potent Vice, gloating over his accomplishments;

> Why, now, you smoky persecutor of nature!
> Now do you see that something's to be done
> Beside your beech-coal, and your cor'sive waters,
> ...
> You must have stuff brought home to you to work on!
> And yet you think I am at no expense
> In searching out these veins, then following 'em,
> ...

> ...'Fore God, my intelligence
> Costs me more money than my share oft comes to
> In these rare works.
> (I.iii.100-109)

After playing the faithful friend to Abel, Face exposes his predatory nature by bragging about his victim's stupidity. Face's sudden reversal from trustworthy friend to victimizer emphasizes his Vice-like disregard of social values, and the danger which threatens Subtle and Dol.

Face's attempt at wringing accolades for his dissembling from his partner is met with Subtle's own indirect self-congratulation. Unlike Face, Subtle evaluates his success based on the degree of his client's delusion, rather than his ability to find the raw materials for deception. Subtle lacks any real concept of the ingloriousness of the con artist's work. Face acknowledges the hollow nature of alchemical tools and the value of a Vice's ability to dissemble in order to tempt men deeper into folly. Certainly, the Morality Vice's main talent lies in finding the concupiscent soul and leading it to destruction. Infidelitie, for example, searches for Mary Magdalene then preys on her preoccupation with worldly matters, like appearance. Subtle, however, in his speech on Mammon, is almost carried away by his own vision of the magical spell which he has cast over the fool.

> ...O, I did look for him
> With the sun's rising, marvel he could sleep!
> This is the day I am to perfect for him
> The magisterium...
> ...

> Methinks I see him ent'ring ordinaries,
> Dispensing for the pox
> (I.iv.12-19)

Subtle is as convinced of the power of his words as Mammon. Indeed, it is Subtle's mistaken belief in his infallibility which leaves him vulnerable to Face's attack, for again, pride is often the downfall of a Vice's victim.

Dessen notes that the scenes with Sir Epicure Mammon are very significant in that they reveal the effect which the Vice's actions have on society. Mammon neglects the role of the knight in society by shirking his responsibility to the poor. Instead of feeding the starving, his primary concern is with luxury, the "thirst of satin, or the covetous hunger/Of velvet entrails for a rude-spun cloak, /To be displayed at Madam Augusta's" (II.i.15-17). Mammon certainly realizes that his responsibility lies in the "Founding of colleges and grammar schools/ ... building hospitals, /And now and then, a church" (II.iii.50-53) but instead of investing his money into these worthwhile projects, Mammon squanders his wealth on selfish and impossible dreams. Clearly, the cozener's attack on society leaves the entire realm soul-sic and an unwary audience could easily submit to Mammon's illness by overlooking the knight's immorality because of the spectacular nature of his speeches.

Even if the results of the Vice-figure's actions are not admirable, the audience can appreciate the performance of Subtle and Face, and the

speed with which they change masks. In the previous scene, Face had been dressed as the Captain, and Subtle as a necromancer. Now, Face is dressed as Lungs, Subtle's minion, and Subtle has transformed himself into a pious alchemical sage, a "homo frugi" who is an "honest wretch, /A notable, superstitious, good soul, /Has worn his knees bare and his slippers bald/With prayer and fasting" (II.ii.101-104). However, not only is their skill at fast changes noteworthy, the mental and physical agility of the Vice and his partner are also proven. Happe notes in his article that the Vice's movements are characteristically rapid as he initiates and sustains the action of the plot (Happe, 20). In The Alchemist, this is very apparent as the characters move on and off the stage more quickly through scenes one through four. Indeed, the real focus of the activity is Face. In scene three, for example Face enters six times and exits again five, while Subtle and Dol only make minor appearances. Moreover, Subtle's part is somewhat less colourful than Face's. His long speeches slow down the action of the plot as the falso alchemist attempts to silence Surly with his own verbosity. "It is, of the one part, /A humid exhalation, which we call/Materia liquida, or the unctuous water; /On th'other part, a certain crass and viscous/Portion of earth; both which, concorporate, /Do make the elementary matter of gold;" (II.iii.142-147). Rebhorn accurately asserts that "The source of Subtle's power over the dupes is his command of language, in particular the mysterious language of alchemy" (Rebhorn, 361). However, as the scene in

which Subtle is unmasked and Face must rescue him illustrates, this charm is a weak one, easily negated by the aggressive physical action of others. Again, Face proves this by his domination of the stage in this scene with his energy. Face's physical activity, moreover, reflects his mental dexterity. Indeed, in this scene, despite the fact that Mammon is technically Subtle's client, it is Face who takes in the material rewards. In this way, he is like Mosca who handles the props of the trade, and ultimately claims ownership of them by remaining one step ahead of his partner. Mammon tells Face to "Drink [his gold]" (II.iii.252) and then, only seventy-one lines later, tips Face again, "Take, go" (II.iv.325).

Sir Epicure Mammon, moreover, indicates a weakness in Subtle which will keep the "doctor" from becoming the Vice in the play. Mammon's story-line is so well-developed that it almost takes on a dramatic life of its own as it comments on the main action, much like the Sir Politic Wouldbe sub-plot in Volpone. Both Sir Politic and Sir Epicure Mammon underline the characteristics of Volpone and Subtle which will eventually lead to their downfall. Sir Politic exposes Volpone's egotistical love of self-serving drama. Through the exposure of this failing, the audience is alerted to Volpone's own vulnerability. Similarly, Mammon exposes Subtle's tendency to overestimate his powers of enchantement. Indeed, neither Subtle nor Mammon is able to remove himself from centre stage and thus both are

vulnerable to the consummate Vice who is able to keep drama and reality in perspective. Subtle rages in Act I,

> ...No, you scarab,
> I'll thunder you in pieces. I will teach you
> How to beware to tempt a Fury again
> That carries tempest in his hand and voice.
> (I.i.59-62)

Mammon also boasts,

> This is the day wherein, to all my friends,
> I will pronounce the happy word, "Be Rich".
> This day you shall be spectatissimi.
> (II.i.6-8)

Both characters believe in their awesome ability to destroy or create. Mammon, then, like Sir Politic in Volpone, exposes the major character's faults and his subjection to a world of illusion based on ego and divorced from reality.

This scene with Mammon emphasizes Face's power by proving his manipulative talents as he is met with one who will not willingly be gulled and plays the role of a wise counsellor to Mammon. Clearly, Surly appears to be a figure of judgement and truth.

> Now I am sure it is a bawdy-house
> I'll swear it, were the marshal here to thank me:
> The naming this commander does confirm it.
> (II.iii.297-300)

Indeed, it must be acknowledged that Surly is a somewhat questionable figure of honesty in that he is himself a gambler who cheats at cards and his prime motive for uncovering the cozeners is his jealousy of their superior scams. He is not a figure like Christianity in The Tide Tarrieth No Man who represents the absolute goodness which man has rejected:

> Christianity I doe represent,
> Muse not though the sword of pollicy I bear:
> Neyther marveile not what is mine intent,
> That this fayleable shield of riches I weare.
> ...
> I am deformed with pollicy, and riches vayne:
> And still I say, as the greater part sayeth,
> I am still a Christian, and so shall remayne.
> (21 verso)

Despite the evil which surrounds it, Christianity stands firm on principles grounded on divine law. "Oh faythfull fewe, of me have no doubt. /I am Christianity though thus deformed: /And though thus abused, by the great route, /Yet by God I trust my tytle shalbe turned" (22 recto). Indeed, in a world based on the Vice's laws, moral law is inconsequential and Surly wins the role of "virtuous figure" almost by default. He becomes Mammon's good counsellor, a corrupt version of Mankind's ally, Mercy, in the older Morality play. Surly states, "Heart! can it be/That a grave sir, a rich, that has no need. /A wise sir, too, at other times, should thus/With his own oaths and arguments make hard means/To gull himself?" (II.iii.278-282). Indeed, Face proves his Vice-like skill when he follows the cues of his ancestors.

Titivillus' aim when corrupting Mankind was to separate man from his good counsellor just as Courage in The Tide Tarrieth No Man kept humanity from Christianity. Spivack notes, quite accurately on the basis of his research, that

> the Vice [is] the artful breeder of strife and alienation between his victim and his victim's true spiritual friends, the attendant personifications of virtue. He is the cunning instigator of discord and debate, and his success in this part of his stratagem appears when the frail hero attaches himself to the company and guidance of the Vice, rebuffing and insulting Virtue.
>
> (Spivack, 153)

Spivack goes on to note that

> According to the same homiletic logic, expressing the human decline from moral good to moral evil, the Vice accomplishes the remaining part of his enterprise in seduction when he is able to unite himself to his victim in the bond of friendship, in the relationship of servant to master, or in that of preceptor to pupil. 'Your servaunt wyll I be,' says Folly to Manhood in Mundus et Infans as the hero abandons his allegiance to Conscience.
>
> (Spivack, 153-154)

Indeed, Face uses this method of attack in his dealings with Mammon. When Face approaches Mammon using the alchemical terms of their trade, Surly is immediately ostracised. He is an outsider who cannot share their "beliefs". Subtle's use of the terms is not quite as successful, as he places

himself in a defensive position in the face of Surly's own knowledge of alchemy. Mammon tells Subtle, "I but come/To ha' you confute this gentleman" (II.iii.23-24). Indeed, Subtle tries to avert the argument with stage business, as he and "Lungs" discuss the progression of the chemical processes occurring off-stage. Only when Surly interjects derogatory comments which can no longer be ignored does Subtle acknowledge him. Then Subtle is forced to ask him, "what have you observed, sir, in our art, /Seems so impossible?" (II.iii.125-126), and the rapid exchange of alchemical cant begins. As the argument progresses, Mammon allies with Subtle, echoing his words and commending the Master's rejoinders. "Well said, Father!/Nay, if he take you in hand, sir, with an argument, /He'll bray you in a mortar" (II.iii.176-178). Dol's appearance ends the confrontation and it seems reasonable to assume that Face pushed her onto the stage realizing that action was needed to silence the verbose opponents and their duelling egoes. Surly announces his contempt for their tricks saying "Heart, this is a bawdy house! I'll be burnt else" (II.iii.226), and Mammon seals his allegiance to the cozeners by rushing to their defence and expanding upon the play which they began for him. Mammon abandons Surly when he lies for the cozeners, "'Heart, you abuse yourself. /I know the lady, and her friends, and means, /The original of this disaster. Her brother/Has told me all" (II.iii.266-269). Face then enters and completes the severance. He befriends Mammon entirely, physically dividing him from Surly. Face tells

Surly, "Here's one from Captain Face, sir, /Desires you meet him i' the Temple church, /Some half-hour hence, and upon earnest business" (II.iii.288-289). Surely asks, "Sir Epicure, I shall leave you?" (II.iii.313) and Mammon readily agrees. Mammon then praises his new guide and friend, "Lungs, my Lungs!/I love you" (II.iii.321-322), "You've witched me, rogue" (II.iii.325). It is significant that the next time Mammon visits the alchemist's chamber he comes alone.

The following scene with the Anabaptists emphasizes Face's position of power as the Brothers' alliance is similar to the cozeners'. Subtle preys on Ananias' weaknesses and bullies him into silence with his thundering reproaches. "Had you holy consistory/No name to send me of another sound/Than wicked Ananias? Send your elders/Hither, to make atonement for you, quickly" (II.v.74-77). When next the troupe of Anabaptists return in Act III, the audience discovers that there exists a hierarchy of power among the thieves which is reminiscent of Subtle, Face and Dol's arrangement. In this scene, Ananias is the character most associated with world-play, like Subtle. Ananias corrects Subtle's use of the word Christmas with "'Christ-tide,' I pray you" (III.ii.43), and reprimands Subtle's use of alchemical language with "I understand no heathen language, truly" (II.v.12) and "All's heathen but the Hebrew" (II.v.17). However, Ananias is eventually silenced by his associates and his precise knowledge of his sect's articles ignored. What is truly powerful, truly

frightening about the Brothers is their imagination as they envision a world ruled by the sect. "It may be so, /When as the work is done, the stone is made, /This heat of [Subtle's] may turn into a zeal, /And stand up for the beauteous discipline/Against the menstruous cloth and rag of Rome" (III.i.29-33). Their power to rule humanity begins with the solicitation and conversion of new members into their world, and this way, they reflect Face's own Vice-like villainy as he solicits society's members.

Certainly, Alan Dessen's commentary cannot be overlooked (Dessen, 118-121). Just as Mammon represents the knighthood and its perversion through his sensual imagination and self-aggrandizement, here Jonson shows the disintegration of another institution which should provide for the poor and foster the spiritual welfare of the realm. Religion is prostituted for gain, and the poor that it was meant to protect are abused. Subtle points to the Brotherhood's perversion as he names the ways in which they will perpetrate sins against society with the philosopher's stone. "A lady that is past the feat of body, /Though not of mind, and has her face decayed/Beyond all cure of paintings, you restore/With the oil of talc: there you have made a friend" (III.ii.33-36). Indeed, Vice has permeated every level of society, as older women costume themselves to play the parts of young prostitutes. However, Face's success at feeding men's imagination and Subtle's of appealing to their ego, promise the survival of this immoral world.

After the introduction of Ananias, a short scene ensues as the distracted brother returns to the fold. It is during this scene, that the last two characters are introduced. Kastril is a young heir who wishes to learn quarreling and find an appropriate mate for his sister. Dame Pliant is "a rich young widow/... /But nineteen at most" who "does long to know her fortune" (II.vi.29-31). At this point, the nature of the Vice who "seeks to achieve a masterpiece in his craft" (Spivack, 30) is given the perfect goal for which to strive. The trading of clients, the mutual venture, cannot hold these cozeners' attention for long, as it does not provide one single object which symbolizes success. Dame Pliant, however, provides physical proof of who is the best beguiler. It is significant that the widow is rich and young. She appeals both to men's sexual appetites and material lusts and thus her acquisition signals a victory on every front. In a way, Pliant plays the role of the soul in the Morality drama in that the procurement of her is the goal of both Vice and "Virtue", Face and Surly. The closed circle of power which controls the little dramas seems dangerously close to being infiltrated by self-interest and sexual desire then, as all strive to win her. Dol, the least powerful member of the tripartite venture, is eliminated entirely from the conspirators' plants, leaving Subtle and Face to fight for supremacy, "A wife, a wife for one on's, my dear Subtle/ ... /But Dol must ha' no breath on't" (II.vi.85.92). The audience, then, becomes prepared for a more obvious struggle between Subtle and Face and doubtlessly anticipates Face's victory.

After all, this energetic Vice has gleaned most of the profits so far and has established in the first act his rightful possession of his master's house, for if Lovewit returns, he has told his colleagues, "you shall have sufficient time to quit it" (I.i.187). Moreover, as Van Dyke points out, "Subtle's customers seem to be established ones, Face's are newly recruited" (Van Dyke, 259). Face, then, is able to attract more gulls and has an endless store of stories and plot lines to draw up for them.

However, it is Face's ability to find gulls, which introduces an older danger, disguised, into his plotting. Face enters after searching for Surly "i' the Temple church," (II.iii.289) and says that he has been unsuccessful, but has met with a "don of Spain" (III.iii.10) whom he now intends to gull. Clearly, this is Face's greatest miscalculation as he is deceived by Surly's guise. Like Polliticke in The Play of Pacient Grissell, Face's impudence proves to be his weakness. When Polliticke uses the wrong approach on Reason and Sobriety, it is because he miscalculates their natures and intent. Polliticke states, "yea and now and than I swere by this light, /Betwert them on her part is proclaimed open fight, /God send the graie mare good footinge and amble apace, /For now and then her recomaundemets are sene in the goodmans face" (11.412-415) to which Reason replies, "This talke from a mind malliscyous dothe proceade, /Therefore cease this vaine clatter" (11.416-417). Similarly, Face does not understand the nature of the Don and approaches him imprudently.

Jonson prepares the audience for a mangificent fall from power for Face in other ways as well. The lesser gulls are late for their appointments with the cozeners, frustrating Face's attempts at organizing their dramas. "A pox on 'em./They are so long a furnishing!" (III.iii.53-54). Moreover, when Drugger and Kastril finally enter, they are without the widow. The cozeners are unable to evaluate the worth of the prize, "For she may be so light/She may want grains" (II.vi.88-89). Without question, Face's improvisational skill is being rigorously tested when the clients finally arrive in clusters. Dapper, Drugger and Kastril knock at the door, forcing Face to play off fool against fool and thus prove Subtle's power by boasting about the miracles which he has performed. Face advertises Subtle's success with Dapper who is "to be initiated, /And have a fly o'the Doctor. He will win you/By unresistable luck, within this fortnight, /Enough to buy a barony" (III.iv.57-60). But, just as soon as this challenge is met, Face is presented with another. In the middle of the ceremonies scripted for Dapper, Mammon arrives. Face must instantly change costumes, go from the Captain to Lungs in rapid succession.

Mammon's scene, once again, points to Subtle's weaknesses and also seems to foreshadow the demise of the venturers. Mammon is not content with one prize, the philosopher's stone. This time he comes to the cozeners' den in order to get Dol Common. His original plan to make society a slave to his power is aborted in favour of a new project. Like

Subtle and Face, he is side-tracked by his desire to win a woman. The results of his misdirection are disastrous. The stage approaches chaos as Subtle yells from within about the noise which he overhears as Dol chants a stream of garbled names and phrases from Broughten's work. The cozeners have begun drowning out Mammon's words and therefore diminish his power on the stage. When Subtle enters, the audience realizes that Mammon has been discovered wooing Dol and that Subtle, costumed in his alchemical robes, has the power to destroy the gull. All of the cacophonous outbursts which characterized this scene culminate in the great crack which is heard within. Mammon is humbled so that he can hardly speak, asking only "Will nought be saved that's good for med'cine, think you?" (IV.v.98). He leaves Lovewit's house a failed schemer and disappointed visionary.

Because Jonson has made Mammon's story reflect Subtle's faults and the vulnerability of Face's world of imagination, the audience must indeed wonder if the venturers' ambitions will lead to the same disastrous conclusion. In Volpone, the audience witnessed the magnifico's demise as he turned from collecting the client's gold to attaining Celia. Similarly, it is quite possible that the venturers will find their power wane as they begin to seek out new prizes. Indeed, the audience is ready for a spectacular disclosure of the charlatans which will equal Surly's sensational exposure of Mammon's lascivious ways. Face is beginning to feel the pace of the drama a strain on his Vice-like ability to change costumes and cries, "O, for a

suit/To fall now like a curtain, a flap! / ... /You'll ha' the first kiss, cause I am not ready" (IV.ii.6-8). The competition between the vices for their prize is becoming heated indeed and involves split-second timing. Ultimately, Surly's arrival confirms this. The Don comes too early for his appointment with the prostitute, forcing Face to improvise quickly. However, once again, Face seems to miscalculate and gives the prize after which all seek to Surly, the Spanish Don, who woos Dame Pliant in the very practical terms of a business venture.

> And where I might have wronged your honour, and have not,
> I claim some interest in your love. You are,
> They say, a widow, rich; and I am a bachelor,
> Worth nought. Your fortunes may make me a man,
> As mine ha' preserved you a woman.
> (IV.vi.9-14)

Now, the figure who posed as Mammon's wise counsellor and was rejected attempts to adapt a new protégé in the person of the widow. However, the real baseness of Surly's character is apparent at this point, for unlike Mercy in Mankind who attempts to counsel his friend for philanthropic reasons, Surly advises Pliant out of his hatred for the cozeners and for his own self-love. Surly approaches Pliant with the moralistic outburst, "Lady, you see into what hands you are fall'n." (IV.vi.1); however, he ends by prostituting himself for her money.

Ultimately, Surly's attack on Subtle, although it silences and thus disempowers this minor vice, does not destroy Face's control of the dramatic

action when he enters to find his partner in Surly's clutches. Face again separates this wise counsellor from his quarry, Pliant, and displaces him from the drama by bringing to the surface the chaos which has lurked beneath the play world all along and made itself manifest in Mammon's scene. Kastril, Drugger and Ananias bombard Surly with physical violence and verbal aggression. Indeed, the gulls are a part of Subtle, Face and Dol's business machine just as the off-stage apparatus of Mammon's drama was of their ingenious devising. Again, the cozeners beat the misguided figure of "good counsel" off the stage with their fantastic creation. Certainly, the Vice's association with disorder as noted by Beckerman (130) and Spivack (153) is important to this scene. Donald Gertmenian in his article "Comic Experience in Volpone and The Alchemist" notes,

> we can never like Face and Subtle's London. Without a moral dimension, it lacks greatness, dignity, compassion, order—all values we hold dear ... Also, the world is near chaos. Though Subtle's jargon is fun, it is almost pure gibberish, because it has reference to nothing actual in Subtle's world, even through irony. And competition whose only regulation is success or failure tends toward chaos.
>
> (Gertmenian, 254)

Indeed, the play world lacks any standards of morality. The characters that are the most easily deluded and quickly conquered are those that believe a moral order exists and that virtue is rewarded and evil is punished. Mammon accepted his failure in the dramatic world because he felt assured

of an order in which Subtle, his superior, was guided by God's laws. Similarly, Surly does not understand the nature of the chaotic realm in which he finds himself. Surly mistakenly believes that honesty will naturally be rewarded and vice punished. Face, however, has created a world which does not operate on these principles. Like the Vice-figure of the Morality, he believes that all things are governed by chance and that, essentially, success or failure is in no way related to a character's integrity. All things proceed from the caprice of blind fortune which allows the ambitious to control their fate (Spivack, 271). Face, then, is still determined to have Dame Pliant and proves to his opponent that he is gravely mistaken to trust in his right to the widow as a reward. Face sets the gulls on Surly and wins the battle because he recognizes and maintains the disorder which permeates the dramatic world.

Despite an audience's enjoyment of Face's victory, its moral standards dictate that the Vice be punished eventually, and so it might be expected that when Dol Common informs Face that the Master has come, some sort of moral order will be restored. Indeed, Face's cocky assertions that Subtle would be nothing if it were not for the use of his house are put to the test. With Vice-like precision, Face dons the mask of Jeremy the Butler, and, as the act progresses, switches allegiances along with this costume leaving his old partners behind him as they threaten his survival.

Face. Subtle must shave me. All my captain's beard
Must off, to make me appear smooth Jeremy.
You'll do't?
Subtle. Yes, I'll shave you as well as I can.
Face. And not cut my throat, but trim me?
Subtle. You shall see, sir.
(IV.vii.130-134)

Act V, scene iii, emphasizes the Vice's control of the play world. Dapper cries out from within the realm of fantasy, "For God's sake, when will her Grace be at leisure?" (V.iii.64), at which point Face, conferring with his perplexed Master outside the door, asserts his command over the action of the two plots. Face silences Subtle who has told Dapper "Peace, you'll mar all" (V.iii.71) and then, leaving the interests of his old comrades behind him, Face pleads his case to his new master, "Give me but leave to make the best of my fortune, /And only pardon me th'abuse of your house" (V.iii.82-83). Face leaves Subtle and Dol to dispose of Dapper by assuming their old roles and completing the drama which was begun in Act III, scene v. As Van Dyke notes, Subtle and Dol's story-line is stagnating while Face's takes a new, more profitable turn (Van Dyke, 268). Finally, Face disposes of his old partners heartlessly. In the course of six lines, Face goes from being Subtle and Dol's friend who will "wet [their sailor's whistles] tomorrow; and ... silver beakers/And tavern cups" (V.iv.117-118) to demanding the keys to the trunks, telling his old partners that they "shall not open them, indeed; /Nor have them forth" (V.iv.123-124). Face quickly

changes his visor of friendship to enmity with the Vice's detachment and agility as he takes possession of the trio's wealth.

Indeed, the new venture into which Face enters maintains the disorder over which he rules as Vice. Face wins over the soul of his Master, tempting him into admiration through his great display of wit. Again, social order is shirked as Lovewit makes a mockery of the legal system with his Vice's encouragement. To Mammon, Lovewit responds,

> Sir, I can take no knowledge
> That [the goods] are yours, but by public means.
> If you can bring certificate that you were gulled of 'em,
> Or any formal writ out of a court,
> That you did cozen yourself, I will not hold them.
> (V.v.67-70)

Chaos is restored, and the gulls beaten away howling. However, just as Subtle was never really safe from Face's Vice-like ambition, the audience can be assured that Lovewit will only be allotted a minor role in Face's drama, as he states, "I will be ruled by you in anything, Jeremy" (V.v.143). The Vice's ability to sustain disorder is ultimately manifested in Face and Lovewit's relationship. For in Face's world, the master becomes the servant and the servant the master of the household.

Faces final speech has raised many questions among critics who search for Jonson's moral message. Face announces,

> My part a little fell in this last scene,
> Yet 'twas decorum. And though I am clean

> Got off from Subtle, Surly, Mammon, Dol,
> Hot Ananias, Dapper, Drugger, all
> With whom I traded; yet I put myself
> On you, that are my country; and this pelf
> Which I have got, if you do quit me, rests,
> To feast you often, and invite new guests.
> (V.v.158-165)

Again, in Face's speech the audience hears the Vice's boastful nature. He reviews the victims of his play and looks forward to greeting his new gulls, the audience. As in Volpone, the Vice's punishment seems to leave the audience unsatisfied. Volpone laughs at his sentence, and Face laughs at his onlookers. Face has suffered a loss of status; however, Lovewit's comments assure the audience that this is only temporary. Just as the greed which motivated the actions of the characters in Volpone still existed and thus negated the finality of the Vice's punishment, so does the audience's love of spectacle and imagination ensure Face's survival. Face is unconquerable because he personifies men's fertile, even over-active imagination. Hence some of the vital elements of his character are also to be found among the spectators watching the play. To ignore his presence in us, then, is to be victims, rather than understanders and ready prey to those who are masters of imagination.

Chapter 3: Jonson's Innovative Use of the Vice

As a detailed study of his plays illustrates, Jonson uses the Vice-figure in order to develop his characters and the action of his plots. No doubt his audiences would recognize the Vice's boastful nature, his dissembling, his theatricality, his desire to provoke chaos among people with the scripts which he composed, and his ability to tempt the credulous. However, even though Jonson's Vice is rooted in tradition, he exhibits many innovative characteristics. The Morality Vice's main function was to guide the story-line and so he often disappeared from the play when he had served that purpose. Often, a play ended with the hasty dismissal of the Vice and the introduction of a figure of moral order, like Christianity in The Tide Tarrieth No Man or Love in The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene, that remedied the disorder which the Vice had caused. Clearly, the Morality playwright's purpose was not to celebrate the Vice-figure, but remind the audience that real power lay in the hands of God's agents. Jonson, however, uses the precepts of the Morality in a startling different way. Jonson sets Vices upon the stage to explore the limits of their power within an immoral society. Jonson's Vice-figures are not simply incidental characters whose action and effect are limited by the Virtues and other

agents under God's control. Jonson's Vice-figures are often central and dominant. They are far more complex than their prototypes in the Moralities who mediate between the stage and the audience and between the characters and their damnation. Because they are developed much more extensively they share a more complicated relationship with the audience as a result. The Vice is still a mediator between the play world of the unsuspecting victims and the audience; however, his mediations are often carried on with great inventiveness, energy and virtuosity.

It is possible to determine why some figures win absolute power over the drama and others are robbed of it entirely by examining their relationship to the audience. Indeed, it is through their dealings with the spectators that Jonson's characters illustrate their successful utilization and adaptation of the Vice's techniques. Spivack notes that as the Vice evolves from the Morality drama, it takes on a more humanized persona (Spivack, 311). Although it maintains the essentially abstract and unprincipled energy at its core, the Vice's power to astound and frighten the audience is augmented by its humanization as the audience discovers that the character which it watches thrives not only in the society represented on the theatre stage but also potentially in the world outside the theatre in which its members function. The most powerful Vice, then, is able to balance between the two worlds which it inhabits with equal dexterity.

The Vice rises above the human realm when it manipulates the fools on stage like a puppeteer and yet it simulates entirely human characteristics in playing upon the audience's sensitivities. The Vice can read the audience members' feelings and imitate their emotions, often defending and justifying its action on the basis of its human needs. Moreover, according to Spivack, the Vice loses a fixed and figurative meaning. It seeks to explain its deeds on stage by referring to its work as if it were a profession. Hence, the Vice becomes a cunning villain doing his job (Spivack, 311). The Vice's attacks on its victims also become less formulaic, as he does not prey on "the human soul" but on human souls with individualized needs and wants; the seed which the Vice sows is important to the character's degradation. However, the victims' destruction is largely a fault of their own temperament (Spivack, 313). The Vice, then, becomes more human in accordance with his prey's development, and often even acquires a biographical reality, according to Spivack (Spivack, 311). However, at the heart of the Vice is still the unknown, the energy which guides his attacks without providing any convincingly real explanation despite the excuses which he may propose. It is this inaccessible energy and ruthlessness which fixes the Vice in the play's setting as it precipitates the dramatic action.

The Vice is, while busy with the play world, inaccessible to the audience and at a safe distance from human lives. However, when the Vice

intrudes into the audience's realm adopting it as co-conspirators, the Vice becomes extremely threatening as the boundaries between stage and society dissolve. The Vice-figure, then, has a central role in the drama in that it must bridge the gap between ignorant gull and informed audience member, controlling both the audience's and the client's perception of what is happening on stage. However, Jonson's Vice does more than merely interpret and foreshadow action as the Morality Vice did. Indirectly, the Vice narrates and precipitates the struggle which goes on in the spectator's mind as he enjoys the sense of power which this figure lends to him and yet fears the effects of the Vice's authority over the pitiful gulls trapped blindly in their own illusions of greatness. The power the audience member is provided with by the Vice is essentially that of a foreknowledge of strategies outside of the victims' awareness. The spectator can enjoy the freedom of his invulnerability to the vicious strategies he observes on stage but this is always shadowed by a queasy awareness that, outside the theatre, lacking the privileged foreknowledge granted by his occasional access to the mind of the soliloquizing Vice-figure, he would have no immunity to such crafty plots.

Significantly, both of the characters which rise to power, Mosca and Face, are servants to society's richer men. The Vice, as Spivack notes, takes on a biography of its own and sometimes becomes a professional cozener out of financial necessity (Spivack, 311). What is most frightening

about Mosca is this Vice's uncanny grasp of human beings' needs. His reasons for becoming a parasite are not elucidated in his soliloquy in Act III; however, he does mention in his conversation with Bonario some very valid excuses for living a parasitical life. Mosca is forced to assume the demeaning role of servant in order to eat, because he was not the child of wealthy parents. "'Tis true that swayed by strong necessity, /I am enforced to eat my careful bread/ ... / being not born/To a free fortune" (III.ii.20-25). Mosca is merely using in his defence arguments which society's members have often used to excuse deviant behaviour. Mosca acknowledges his brush with poverty, then, and appeals in doing so to any unscrupulous tendencies among the poor in the audience. Unlike the old Morality Vice, Mosca does not long for an abstract object like a human soul, instead he hungers after very worldly goals.

Face, like Mosca, is believable as a character because he is associated with elements familiar to the audience. Face was merely a "livery-three-pound-thrum" (I.i.16) in a Blackfriars' home, and is acutely aware of the world beyond the stage. R.L. Smallwood notes the intimacy between Face and his audience. "The Blackfriars of the play and the Blackfriars in which Jonson's theatre stood are inseparable. The use of London place names observable in earlier citizen dramas as a means of securing the audience's sense of involvement and immediacy has been carried a stage further, so that, like the dramatic time-scheme and real

time, the place of the play's action and the place of its enactment are one and the same" (Smallwood, 148-149). Certainly, Face's reference to "Pie corner" (I.i.25), and St. Paul's Cathedral (I.i.93) as well as to celebrities like Gamaliel Ratsey (I.i.98) make him part of the real world which the audience experiences. Like Mosca, then, Face knows how difficult it is to survive in society and can use this knowledge to his advantage by approaching the audience and the gulls as a fellow Londoner.

Indeed, the Vice's method of attack reflects its experience with reality, and its intimate knowledge of the many different types of people which exist. Certainly Mosca's soliloquy at the start of Act III is central to an audience's understanding of him as it is his first real communication with his spectators. Even though this speech contains the Vice's old vaunts, praising his ability to dissemble and his victories over foolish men, Mosca's speech surpasses the shocking nature of the Morality Vice's boasts. The Vice warned the audience to guard against the particular sin which it represented; Infidelitie cries, "Infidelitie, no beware of me Infidelitie" (3 recto). The Vice intimated, then, that people were prone to identical failings and thus the Vice could corrupt all mortals using the same methods. Mosca, however, draws attention to the individual's susceptibility to the parasite's wiles. The parasite chooses a method of approach that is likely to encourage the seeds of sin which his quarry already possesses. Mosca as a Vice can present himself, not so much to Mankind, but to "any humor, all

occasion" (III.28) in order to over-power his victim. The Vice's talents in Mosca's hands become the tools of an individualist who understands the age's fascination with the science of the humors and the psyche. The audience can admire Mosca's insightfulness and worldly knowledge, yet feels that his method of attack relates the dramatic world to the real world very closely, that Mosca's ability to sense in his clients their needs and desires also allows him to sense the audience's weaknesses and to work on the nerves and susceptibilities of its members.

Face, like Mosca, is able to present the drama in terms which the audience can readily understand, thus allying himself with their world. Face is central to the structure of The Alchemist in that he adds a touch of normalcy to the fantastic proceedings. Subtle is far too immersed in his alchemical visions and self-delusions to comment adequately on the deceptions which he fosters. And, indeed, because the play world is so outrageous, Face's sensible remarks heighten the comedy of the scenes. For Face understands the idiosyncrasies of his associates and of his clients. Because the illusions which Face creates arise from the clients' own desires he differs from the Morality Vice which always preys on broad areas of human vulnerability such as pride or infidelity. Like Mosca, Face is a master of men's humors and is willing to let his gulls expand upon their own foolish dreams. Face preys on young Dapper's gambling addiction and on Epicure Mammon's obsession with the senses. Face steps back from his

work and laughs with his audience at the gull's stupidity. For example, Face reminds his spectators constantly that despite the almost mesmerizing quality of Mammon's verse, the knight's words are absurd. While Mammon courts Dol, Face and the audience can feel a bond growing between them which arises from their shared sense of superior cunning. Both Face and the audience recognize the limited insight of this verbose character who is trapped inside the play world. Moreover, Face maintains the audience's interest in Mammon, a figure with whom it is difficult to sympathize because Jonson has made him a caricature of the lascivious man. Mammon, then, becomes an object of ridicule as Face confidentially reveals to his audience the disparity between Mammon's world and the real nature of the actors within it. Mammon croons, "There is strange nobility i' you eye, /This lip, that chin! /Methinks you do resemble/One o' the Austrian princes" (IV.i.54-56), to which Face responds, "Very like. /Her father was an Irish costermonger" (IV.i.56-57). Indeed, Face is most endearing when he draws the audience into his scams, sharing with it his appreciation of the absurd. Unlike the Morality Vice, Face can enjoy men's stupidity both as a dramatic performance and as an end in itself. Face does not gleefully foresee the damnation of Mammon's soul hence his laughter lacks a diabolical edge, and does not alienate him from his spectators.

Because Jonson's Vice acts as a mediator between fantasy and reality, it is able to expose the false shows of cameraderie among the

thieves as a stage convention. In Act V, Volpone decides to announce his death and bestow his wealth upon Mosca. Immersed in the play world he is creating, he loses touch with the very real threat which the members of an opportunistic society, like Mosca, can pose. Volpone blindly believes that his servant is a trustworthy partner; however, Mosca's words to the audience emphasize Volpone's delusion and the actual nature of his parasite's attachment. When Mosca has tortured the clients by cataloguing the wealth which they had expected to inherit, Volpone expresses his admiration for the friend who has acted on his behalf. "My witty mischief, /Let me embrace you. O that I could now/Transform you to a Venus" (V.iii. 103-105) Again, Mosca becomes a terrifying figure as he abuses his master under a guise of faithfulness. Mosca enthusiastically praises Volpone for his acting ability in the next scene, "O Sir, you are [the commendatore]" (V.v.1), but after Volpone exits, the Vice reveals his contempt for the magnifico's foolishness and his plans for the direction of the drama. Mosca replaces friendly words with the language of business thus revealing the cut throat policies which underlie his relationship with Volpone. He states, "I have the keys and am possessed" (V.vi.12). Mosca's attempts at excusing his actions, furthermore, place his listeners in an awkward position. The audience realizes that Volpone should be punished, but to hear this immoral creature assert, "To cozen him of all were but a cheat/Well placed" (V.vi.16-17) challenges an audience's moral sensibilities. Mosca comes close to

searching for an acceptable answer for his Vice-like deeds and instincts; however, the audience realizes that these excuses, coming from a figure who is as corrupt as the character he wishes to punish, are inadequate. Mosca almost seems human but his inability to feel affection or compassion, his reduction of Volpone to a business prospect makes him a terrifying creature. When Mosca states that "no man would construe [his actions] a sin" (V.v.17), the audience is left to question his definition of sin. Volpone's mismanagement of his business matters demands that the Vice liquidate the magnifico's assets. In this way, Mosca does not transgress the social laws or business ethics which he constructs. The Christian meaning of sin becomes as irrelevant as friendship in Mosca's world. Mosca's painfully honest and morally crippled speech drags the audience into an uncomfortably intimate alliance with the Vice as it openly describes what force rules over the play world and how the play's ending will be shaped by the Vice's business codes.

The world of The Alchemist is also based on extremely questionable ethics. Face is frightening in that, like Mosca, he does not display genuine affection. In this way, he resembles his ancestor, the Morality Vice. For both character's emotion are part of a dramatic performance; thus the bonds of friendship and partnership are easily broken. However, Face is much more ready than Mosca to bring a certain degree of honesty into his business relationship. He and Subtle exchange

verbal blows at the beginning of the play, and Face is very straightforward in his demands for the widow. "Subtle, in troth, I needs must have this widow" (Iv.iii.5). In The Alchemist, the Vice appears to be moving away from direct audience address as Face becomes so busy with the hectic dramatic action that he withdraws into the play world itself. An audience praises Face as he punishes foolish Subtle and takes the keys to their trunks from Dol thus proving his superiority. Moreover, Face, like Mosca, uses terms which make his ruthless business world seem familiar to the audience. Face tells the prostitute, "Dol, I am sorry for you, 'i faith. But hear you, /It shall go hard, but I will place you somewhere; /You shall ha' my letter to Mistress Amo" (V.iv.139-141). To Subtle, Face quips, "Let's know where you set up next; I'll send you/A customer, now and then, for old acquaintance" (V.iv.144-145).

In contrast to Volpone, in The Alchemist the audience is not forced into an alliance with evil as much as it is attracted quite naturally to Face's control. In keeping with the Vice's subtle tricks, an audience, then, is solicited into Face's business world, rather than pulled into it. Mosca's candid soliloquy demands an audience's confidentiality and in that way establishes a bond with it despite the spectator's misgivings.

Indeed, one of the most striking characteristics of Jonson's Vices is the way in which they work with the audience's imagination. Instead of offering long sermons as the Morality Vice often did, Jonson's figures of evil

encourage the spectators to become aware of the wickedness which is in their own hearts. Unlike the Morality Vice, Mosca does not reveal the details of his plottings. He explicitly reveals his characteristics in the soliloquy at the start of Act III; however, he is not precise about the way in which he intends to work his parasitical trade on society. This Vice withholds information in order to put the audience on its guard, alert them to its own susceptibility to sin. Often, as the audience watches Mosca manipulate his victims, it can foresee the direction of the plot along with the master schemer. For example, when Mosca approaches Corvino with his plans for Celia, the audience can easily predict the direction and outcome of the drama with the Vice. Mosca states, "And since, to seem the more officious, /And flatt'ring of his health, there they have had, /At extreme fees, the college of physicians/Consulting on him how they might restore him" (II.vi.25-28). Mosca's interjection, "I hear him coming" (II.vi. 74) is not only self-congratulatory, but assumes the audience's compliance with his plans as he gloats. Inevitably the audience feels obligated to condemn the character's deceptions, but if it condemns Mosca, the audience must admit its own culpability as it recognizes in Mosca its own ability to envision and enjoy immoral actions.

The audience's alliance with Face puts it in an equally difficult position. Face has involved his audience inextricably with the fantastic activities which he has stage-managed. Smallwood notes that the audience

is always "apprehensive that the activities [it is] watching with such pleasure may be brought to an immediate halt at any time." (Smallwood, 150). Indeed, the master's return is unwelcomed by the spectators and the dupes in the dramatic world, for if Face if judged so must his accomplice, the audience, be judged. Both enjoy and profit from the world of fantasy. When Face exclaims, "The angry boy come too? He'll make a noise, /And ne'er away till he have betrayed us all" (V.iii.31-32), he seems to implicate the audience in "us all." At this point Face appears very human indeed, and closer to a failed Vice-figure like Volpone as his well-laid plans crumble about him. However, Face's swift recovery places him once again on a more powerful level than the audience that is unable to do anything except watch the events as they unfold. Finally, Face's intimate address at the close of the play tears down the thin boundaries between stage and audience, drawing it into his jurisdiction. The audience members are shocked into the realization that the impossible world which they laughed at and in many ways felt safe from because of its outrageousness, is undeniably their own. The power which Face granted the audience was limited. Like Face's other clients, the audience did not understand the Vice's plans or motivations in their entirety, therefore both subjected themselves to Face's manipulations too willingly.

In order to put the audience's dubious attraction to the Vice in perspective, it is helpful to examine the way in which the unsuccessful

characters are depicted. Subtle, like Volpone, is a character who begins the play with great declarations of his worth and his ability to gull foolish man. However, like Volpone, Subtle is out-maneuvered. His downfall, however, is less easily sympathized with than Volpone's and brings upon him the rightful indignation of the audience for Subtle is remarkably duplicitious, and condemns Face for attempting to steal the widow, even though, if he had been clever enough, he would have happily done the same. Unlike Volpone, Subtle overtly attempts to cheat his partner. Indeed, Subtle's ego, his dedication to the play world and his illusions of grandeur within that world, isolate him from the audience and make his fall a welcome one.

The audience's reaction to Volpone's demise, however, is much more complicated and makes this play a more painful experience than The Alchemist. Volpone's opening speech amazes the spectators with its luxurious rhetoric. He describes the play world which he dominates and then, at the end of his speech, lays that world in the audience's lap as he explains how the drama will progress. Volpone increases the audience's attraction to him by using highly theatrical rhetoric which fixes him safely in the play world, unable to victimize the audience. As the gullible clients enter to woo the "old man" and win his wealth, the audience may once again feel an alliance with Volpone as he gloats over the foolishness of the blind clients. Volpone's grand speeches and apparent success in the play world initially make him seem invulnerable, a magnificent playwright and

actor. However, despite an audience's initial impression of the magnifico and his dominance over the play world, it becomes apparent that he is subject to weaknesses which make him as mortal as his victims. The audience loses its awe of Volpone when he admits that he is driven by very human needs and pursues Celia imprudently. Volpone's fall from centre stage and his loss of the Vice role reveals Mosca's more frightening and subtle control of the dramatic action. Mosca becomes the mediator between play world and audience because it is he who has control of the plotting. Jonson alters the Morality's traditional portrayal of the Vice's role in the drama by replacing one Vice-figure with another midway through the play; thus, he shows the audience the fallibility of its judgement as it assumed that the biggest threat to the other characters and to itself was the magnifico. Indeed, the final act of the play excites an audience's pity for Volpone as he finally recognizes his powerlessness and his displacement. The magnifico no longer relates feelings of churlish satisfaction at other's weaknesses; now the fox speaks with the audience of his own failings: "What a vile wretch was I, that could not bear/My fortune soberly" (V.xi.15-16). Even more telling is his simple statement "I lost myself" (V.xi.22). An audience feels Volpone's abject pain as he is forced to admit his very human failure and poor judgement. Indeed, an audience can relate to Volpone's error as it similarly did not see Mosca as the driving force behind the drama in the initial scenes. Volpone's demise is sad because he has lost his ability

to act, has spent his visions and is left disillusioned by the emptiness of the play world which he had taken for real life.

Jonson's Vices, then are unusual combinations of humanity and unearthly power. More so than their Morality ancestors, these figures relate easily to the audience because of their familiarity with the conditions which have shaped the spectators' lives. Jonson's Vice, then, has practical experience surviving in London's streets as well as an impressive repertoire of contemporary learning and language. They are, moreover, as individualistic as the characters which they prey upon and they understand the idiosyncrasies of both audience and gull. While their good-natured asides coax the audience into a friendship with them, the Vice mocks the feelings of affection or admiration which characterize an audience's allegiance. Moreover, as it grants the spectators power, the Vice attacks the onlookers' feelings of superiority by showing them their similarity to the Vice's gullible victims who are too easily blinded by a convincing actor's performance.

In many ways, Jonson's plays shed the rigid theology which formed the basis of the Morality drama and pursue instead an exploration of the individuals in the audience and the social implications of their folly. Jonson's plays challenge an audience's desire for an ordered drama like the Morality in which all of the elements interacted predictably and the outcome was virtue's triumph. Indeed, the Morality drama was constructed

in such a manner that it reflected God's perfection. Each personification of Vice was matched by a representation of Virtue. Certainly, the presence of Virtue provided an audience with a sense of security as it indicated the endurance of goodness in the universe. Moreover, the Virtue's speeches promised that integrity would be rewarded and that vice would be punished. The figure of Virtue offered the prospect of a harmonious and just world as it was in tune with God's purpose and inevitably imposed it upon the stage. This figure, then, fostered an awareness of God's providence which allayed the audience's fear of rampant evil. Moreover, it successfully refuted the Vice's assertion that the world was ruled only by Fortune. The emergence of Virtue-figures encouraged the spectators to believe that as long as they did not submit to temptation, there were forces like Love and Christianity that had the capacity to rout the agents of the devil. These principles are by no means as clear in Renaissance drama. The world of Mosca and Face is bereft of order. Evil seems to thrive unchecked by virtue leaving humanity in general isolated and vulnerable. Cynicism appears to overcome faith. Indeed, the defeat of Jonson's Vice's often comes by default, by accident or oversight. The only forces which pose a serious threat to the characters are contained in the Vices themselves. Greed, envy or pride may make the Vice stumble, but they are no longer tripped by figures which represent God's omnipotence. The audience cannot be assured of the Vice's destruction because the Vice figure operates in a world which is based on

his rules. The Vice is not beaten off-stage and so the audience feels as if the definitive defeat of evil is not assured. Because the figures of virtue are so few in Jonson's plays, they are easily overwhelmed by the evil schemers and foolish seekers which ultimately eject the figures of virtue from the dramatic world.

The Moralities are didactic plays and they do not penetrate the deeply troubling emotions that Comedy and Tragedy can unleash. When Tragedy appears, the evil forces may go down to defeat but they take the good with them. Mosca is condemned to the galleys at the end of Volpone; however, Celia is also deprived of her freedom. She is placed under her father's rule and made prey to new fortune-hunters as her dowry is "trebled" (V.xii.144). In Comedy which verges on satire, the energy of the form is sustained by the playwright's savage and inventive attack on man's stupidity. This is clearly illustrated in Face's manipulation of foolish Londoners. Obviously, with such forms, the audience is involved in much more complex emotions.

Clearly, Jonson gives his play over to an anarchic Vice that punctuates its performance with the familiar stage business of the older figure; however, Jonson allows his Vice to build its own dramatic form by denying the comforting assurance of a just ending. Jonson examines the disorder of a society guided by blind greed or foolish fantasy rather than reason, and so the Vices are our vice, exhibiting vanity, greed, belligerence,

irresponsibility. Jonson's dramas are powerful because they put on stage that which makes us powerful, creative and destructive.

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