

Chapter 1 : Project MUSE - "Divided Amongst Themselves": Collaboration and Anxiety in Jonson's *Volpone*

Volpone or The Foxe: A Comedie, Ben Jonson *Volpone* is a comedy play by English playwright Ben Jonson first produced in , drawing on elements of city comedy and beast fable.

She affects strange airs and talks constantly. She is very shallow and not very intelligent. Her constant empty chatter is so offensive to Volpone that he would rather lose money than have to listen to her one more moment. She is unreasonably jealous and acts the fool when told her husband is having an affair with Celia. Lady Politic Would-be gives false testimony at the first trial, and thus, she helps save Volpone. She tries to hide her mental defects behind cosmetics and dress. The film is distributed through Empressa USA. The film has been distributed through A. Mosca is in love with himself, and like many men who are wrapped up in their own ego, Mosca underestimates his master. Nano Nano is a dwarf, one of the freaks that Volpone keeps in his household for amusement, whose sole purpose seems to be the entertainment and flattery of Volpone. The trio reappear later in the play when Volpone needs distracting. Peregrine Peregrine is a wise and sophisticated traveler, the very opposite of Sir Politic Would-be. He has many projects to advance, but he is also naive and gullible, seeing a spy around every corner. Sir Politic Would-be is eager to be thought an insider of politic doings. He also admires Volpone, does not understand that Volpone ridicules him, and in fact, wants to imitate Volpone. Sir Politic Would-be is made a greater fool by Mosca, although it is unwittingly and unknown to the knight. As a result, Peregrine is also moved to make the knight the butt of his joke. He leaves no family to inherit his estate, and finds that pretending to leave his estate to his followers has created quite an interesting game. Thus, Volpone pretends to be ill in order to manipulate several men, who think they will become his heirs, and from whom he has acquired many expensive gifts. It can be argued that Volpone has some integrity, since he is not interested in tricking widows and children out of their money, although in truth, Volpone simply considers widows and children too gullible for his interests. Instead, he picks victims who present a challenge. Volpone enjoys the performances he devises and the disguises that he assumes. However, he has three weaknesses that make his plots susceptible to failure. When his plots are discovered, Volpone is accepting of his punishment, even showing humor and resignation at the outcome. Voltore Voltore also known as The Vulture is a lawyer who presents Volpone with elaborate gifts. Voltore is a scavenger who seeks the spoils of the dead and who preys on the dying. He helps Volpone in his first trial, securing his acquittal, even suborning witnesses. Voltore is disbarred and banished when the truth is finally revealed. Voltore attempts to deceive the court and is punished when the deception is revealed. The reality is that each will be left with less wealth. However, Mosca, whom Volpone trusts without question, is also deceiving Volpone. Mosca is the only participant who clearly understands the depth of the deception. His punishment is much more severe than the that of the other participants because he has no social rank. Mosca is seized and dragged from the stage, as he cries out. Thus, Jonson felt very comfortable using this city as a setting for a story about greed. Shakespeare also used Venice as a setting for several of his plays, including *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. What was Venice really like in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Was it a center of sinful vices, as these playwrights depicted? Sir and Lady Politic Would-be represent the out-of-place English tourist, who are pretentious and too loud, much the way American tourists are regarded in the twentieth century. Research the role of the tourist during the seventeenth century. Spying was an important element in early seventeenth century life. There was a lot of spying going on in the courts of both Elizabeth I and James I, and so, this was a common motif in plays of this period. Sir Politic Would-be represents this motif, as he is very concerned with spying, which allows Peregrine to finally best him. Investigate the spying that occurred in court and how it might have influenced other elements of English society. Eventually Jonson turned to writing masques, which were much more popular with audiences than his plays, especially at court. But masques were more expensive to produce than plays, and ultimately, the exorbitant cost indirectly led to the English Revolution and the beheading of Charles I. Research the history of the masque and its staging and the role the masque played in the beheading of Charles I in *Only Mosca*, as someone without birth or blood, is subjected to physical punishment and the indignity of being dragged screaming from the court. Each of the three victims

attempts to use deception for financial gain. But the victims are each self-deceived. Their willingness to believe allows the game to succeed. Each of the victims attempts to deceive Volpone, as each pretends to be a caring petitioner. Mosca and Volpone deceive each victim with the promise of greater wealth as a return for exorbitant gifts. The deception is largely dependent on none of the victims uniting against Volpone. Each victim seeks more wealth than he deserves. And each man attempts to bargain himself into a better position through more and more extravagant gifts. Corvino loses his wife and her dowry, which he must repay at three times its worth. Corbaccio is banished to a monastery, and the estate he denied his son is turned over to the son, while the lawyer, Voltore, is disbarred and banished from Venice. Volpone is imprisoned and all his goods are dispersed to a hospital, a just punishment, since Volpone pretended to be ill. The worst punishment is provided to Mosca, who is of a lower class than the other men. Mosca is whipped and sent away to be a prisoner in the galleys for the rest of his life. Victim and Victimization Volpone puts the definition of victim to the test. But are they are victimized by Volpone and Mosca or are they victimized by their own greed? The true victims are Bonario and Celia, who are unjustly accused and convicted of crimes they did not commit. In Greek plays the sections of the drama signified by the appearance of the chorus and were usually divided into five acts. This is the formula for most serious drama, from the Greeks to the Romans, and to Elizabethan playwrights like William Shakespeare. The five acts can sometimes denote the structure of dramatic action, which are exposition, complication, climax, falling action, and catastrophe. The five-act structure was followed until the nineteenth century when Henrik Ibsen combined some of the acts. Volpone is a five-act play. The climax occurs in the third act when Celia arrives, is attacked by Volpone, and then is rescued by Bonario. The trial provides the falling action, and the catastrophe occurs in the last act when all the plotting begins to unravel and the punishment is dispensed. Character A person in a dramatic work. The actions of each character are what constitute the story. Characters can range from simple stereotypical figures to more complex multifaceted ones. Characters may also be defined by personality traits, such as the rogue or the damsel in distress. To accomplish this the author provides the character with personality traits that help define who he will be and how he will behave in a given situation. The characters in Volpone are stereotypes, since the characters are not well-defined and appear as little more than types. The audience does not really know or understand the character as an individual. For instance, Voltore is a dishonest lawyer, revealing all the stereotypes often associated with this career. Genre Genres are a way of categorizing literature. It can also include modern forms of literature such as drama novels or short stories. This term can also refer to types of literature such as mystery, science fiction, comedy or romance. Volpone is a comedy. Setting The time, place, and culture in which the action of the play takes place is called the setting. The elements of setting may include geographic location, physical or mental environments, prevailing cultural attitudes, or the historical time in which the action takes place. Venice was considered the center of depravity, according to most English thought of the day. The action occurs during the course of a day. The Gunpowder Plot is discovered. This is a plot to blow up the House of Parliament. Tobacco, a late sixteenth century export to England, was the recent subject of a pamphlet published by James I, in which the king referred to the habit as dirty and unhealthy. He will change his mind in , when the Virginia tobacco trade adds significant wealth to his coffers. The desire for wealth easily eclipses honor and duty. Tobacco continues to be a subject of much controversy. While the United States government pursues settlements with tobacco companies, the government collects huge revenues in taxes on tobacco, which it uses to subsidize tobacco growers. The forests of England have been severely diminished for several years, and imports of wood continue to escalate in price, thus contributing to inflation and economic hardship and to peasant unrest. The queen has been under increasing pressure to reduce her expenses and the cost of maintaining the royal presence. In response, she has agreed to pay taxes and to cover many of the expenses previously paid through taxation of the public. The plague continues to kill many in England, although the death toll is not as severe as two years earlier. A significant contributor to the reoccurrence of plague is the crowding and poverty of London, caused in large part by the forcing of peasants from the country and into the city.

Chapter 2 : Ben Jonson Biography - Childhood, Life Achievements & Timeline

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His comedies *Volpone*; or, the *Foxe* and *The Alchemist* were among the most popular and esteemed plays of the time. Both plays are eloquent and compact, sharp-tongued and controlled. The comedies *Epicoene* and *Bartholomew Fair* were also successful. Engraving of a scene from the play *The Alchemist* by Ben Jonson. During the visit the city of Edinburgh made him an honorary burgess and guild brother. On his return to England he received an honorary Master of Arts degree from Oxford University, a most signal honour in his time. In he suffered what was apparently a stroke and, as a result, was confined to his room and chair, ultimately to his bed. Jonson died in and was buried in Westminster Abbey. The first folio edition of his works had appeared in ; posthumously, in a second Jonson folio, appeared *Timber: Here Jonson held forth on the nature of poetry and drama and paid his final tribute to Shakespeare: He was a man of contraries. His major comedies express a strong distaste for the world in which he lived and a delight in exposing its follies and vices. A gifted lyric poet, he wrote two of his most successful plays entirely in prose, an unusual mode of composition in his time. Though often an angry and stubborn man, no one had more disciples than he. He was easily the most learned dramatist of his time, and he was also a master of theatrical plot, language, and characterization. Later they fell into neglect, though *The Alchemist* was revived during the 18th century, and in the mid-18th century several came back into favour: *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair* especially have been staged with striking success. His insistence on putting classical theory into practice in them has reinforced rather than weakened the effect of his gift of lively dialogue, robust characterization, and intricate, controlled plotting. In each of them he maneuvers a large cast of vital personages, all consistently differentiated from one another. But there are also superbly ludicrous situations, often hardly removed from practical joke. Jonson is renowned for his method of concentrating on a selected side, or on selected sides, of a character, showing how they dominate the personality. This is to some extent a natural outcome of his classical conception of art, but it also stems from his clear, shrewd observation of people. The later plays, for example, have characters whose behaviour is dominated by one psychological idiosyncrasy. What the theory provided for him and for his contemporaries was a convenient mode of distinguishing among human beings. This method was one of simplification, of typification, and yet also of vitalization. Jonson thus exerted a great influence on the playwrights who immediately followed him. But it was he, and he alone, who gave the essential impulse to dramatic characterization in comedy of the Restoration and also in the 18th and 19th centuries.*

Chapter 3 : Volpone | www.nxgvision.com

*Volpone and Other Early Plays (Penguin Classics: Penguin Dramatists) [Ben Jonson, Lorna Hutson] on www.nxgvision.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. This collection of plays by Ben Jonson contains: Every Man in his Humour, about the sexual fantasies of London's citizens; Sejanus.*

Comic drama, but also a satire. Since the "plot" is a low criminal conspiracy but what was the rebellion against Henry IV or Lear? Below these levels, three more sets of characters populate the stage. Issues and Research Sources: How would you discuss sub-plot and main plot in this play? For instance, compare the characters of Volpone and Henry IV or Lear, and try to argue for which is the more attractive title character. Jonson argues, elsewhere, that drama should be evaluated with respect to some special forms of truth. For instance, he considers "truth to type" as a good test of characters, asking whether that sort of person would have done what the character did. Jonson parodies many classical lyric forms see below re: Catullus but his most outrageous is his first, a satire on the aubade or dawn song usually sung by a lover to the beloved and answered by her upon their seeing the first rays of light which end their illicit night of passion. His character here is almost a literal transcription of some medieval morality play "vice" figures. Which play do you think Jonson had most in mind when designing this first scene? Where would you go in Shakespeare to find a similar meditation wherein a character reveals his soul, inner nature, strategy, etc.? A typical measure of dramatic structure is the relationship between chaos and order. Generally speaking, many comedies approach an apex of their disorder around the third act. To read a Roman poem Jonson may have had in mind re: The short answer--get some rich old man to make you his heir! What does Catullus offer to seduce Lesbia and how does it differ from what Volpone offers to Celia? How should readers interpret such allusions? Yet these two plays could hardly be more different in style. WS distanced his drama by locating it in the deep pagan past. With so much bad behavior afoot, how does Jonson anchor his good and bad values, something Shakespeare does via the Fool, Kent, Edgar and Cordelia? And do you see the emergence of a subplot about good and bad servants and courtiers that might be part of the same public discourse we saw re: Kent and the Fool vs. Imagine how good a paper you could write if you started working on it with six weeks left to go in the semester! Imagine how thoroughly you could think through the argument and polish your own prose. You can center your analysis on one text, using the other for comparison and contrast, or you can do a balanced analysis of both. You also could refer to more than one subordinate text to help unpack your argument about the main, post-midterm text. Though you may have "hunches" or even full-blown insights about the play that typical audiences would not detect, those hunches and insights all depend on some basic assumptions about how to read plays which you probably have unconsciously absorbed from your previous teachers. [Click here for some ways theories help you write a literary analysis of some aspect of Volpone.](#)

Chapter 4 : Jonson--Volpone

Volpone (Italian for "sly fox") is a comedy play by English playwright Ben Jonson first produced in , drawing on elements of city comedy and beast fable. A merciless satire of greed and lust, it remains Jonson's most-performed play, and it is ranked among the finest Jacobean era comedies.

On leaving Westminster School, Jonson was to have attended the University of Cambridge, to continue his book learning but did not, because of his unwilling apprenticeship to his bricklayer stepfather. After having been an apprentice bricklayer, Ben Jonson went to the Netherlands and volunteered to soldier with the English regiments of Francis Vere in Flanders. The Hawthornden Manuscripts, of the conversations between Ben Jonson and the poet William Drummond of Hawthornden [3], report that, when in Flanders, Jonson engaged, fought and killed an enemy soldier in single combat, and took for trophies the weapons of the vanquished soldier. Moreover, 32 years later, a second son, also named Benjamin Jonson, died in An undated comedy, *The Case is Altered*, may be his earliest surviving play. Jonson was jailed in Marshalsea Prison and charged with "Leude and mutynous behaviour", while Nashe managed to escape to Great Yarmouth. Two of the actors, Gabriel Spenser and Robert Shaw, were also imprisoned. A year later, Jonson was again briefly imprisoned, this time in Newgate Prison, for killing Gabriel Spenser in a duel on 22 September in Hogsden Fields [11] today part of Hoxton. William Shakespeare was among the first actors to be cast. Jonson followed this in with *Every Man out of His Humour*, a pedantic attempt to imitate Aristophanes. It is not known whether this was a success on stage, but when published it proved popular and went through several editions. It satirised both John Marston, who Jonson believed had accused him of lustfulness in *Histriomastix*, and Thomas Dekker. Jonson attacked the two poets again in *Poetaster*. Dekker responded with *Satiromastix*, subtitled "the untrussing of the humorous poet". Jonson collaborated with Dekker on a pageant welcoming James I to England in although Drummond reports that Jonson called Dekker a rogue. Marston dedicated *The Malcontent* to Jonson and the two collaborated with Chapman on *Eastward Ho*, a play whose anti-Scottish sentiment briefly landed both Jonson and Chapman in jail. Jonson quickly adapted himself to the additional demand for masques and entertainments introduced with the new reign and fostered by both the king and his consort [3] Anne of Denmark. In addition to his popularity on the public stage and in the royal hall, he enjoyed the patronage of aristocrats such as Elizabeth Sidney daughter of Sir Philip Sidney and Lady Mary Wroth. That same year he was questioned by the Privy Council about *Sejanus*, a politically themed play about corruption in the Roman Empire. He was again in trouble for topical allusions in a play, now lost, in which he took part. *The Satyr* and *The Masque of Blackness* are two of about two dozen masques which Jonson wrote for James or for Queen Anne, some of them performed at Apethorpe Palace when the King was in residence. *The Masque of Blackness* was praised by Algernon Charles Swinburne as the consummate example of this now-extinct genre, which mingled speech, dancing and spectacle. On many of these projects he collaborated, not always peacefully, with designer Inigo Jones. Perhaps partly as a result of this new career, Jonson gave up writing plays for the public theatres for a decade. He later told Drummond that he had made less than two hundred pounds on all his plays together. This sign of royal favour may have encouraged him to publish the first volume of the folio collected edition of his works that year. For the most part he followed the great north road, and was treated to lavish and enthusiastic welcomes in both towns and country houses. Drummond noted he was "a great lover and praiser of himself, a contemner and scorner of others". By he had produced all the plays on which his present reputation as a dramatist is based, including the tragedy *Catiline* acted and printed, which achieved limited success [3] and the comedies *Volpone* acted and printed in, *Epicoene*, or the *Silent Woman*, *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair* and *The Devil is an Ass*. Yet *Epicoene*, along with *Bartholomew Fair* and to a lesser extent *The Devil is an Ass* have in modern times achieved a certain degree of recognition. While his life during this period was apparently more settled than it had been in the s, his financial security was still not assured. Notwithstanding this emphatically Protestant grounding, Jonson maintained an interest in Catholic doctrine throughout his adult life and, at a particularly perilous time while a religious war with Spain was widely expected and persecution of Catholics was intensifying, he converted to the faith. His stance

received attention beyond the low-level intolerance to which most followers of that faith were exposed. The first draft of his play *Sejanus* was banned for "popery", and did not re-appear until some offending passages were cut. His habit was to slip outside during the sacrament, a common routine at the time—indeed it was one followed by the royal consort, Queen Anne, herself—to show political loyalty while not offending the conscience. However, a series of setbacks drained his strength and damaged his reputation. He resumed writing regular plays in the 1620s, but these are not considered among his best. The *Staple of News*, for example, offers a remarkable look at the earliest stage of English journalism. The lukewarm reception given that play was, however, nothing compared to the dismal failure of *The New Inn*; the cold reception given this play prompted Jonson to write a poem condemning his audience the *Ode to Myself*, which in turn prompted Thomas Carew, one of the "Tribe of Ben," to respond in a poem that asks Jonson to recognise his own decline. Jonson felt neglected by the new court. A decisive quarrel with Jones harmed his career as a writer of court masques, although he continued to entertain the court on an irregular basis. Despite the strokes that he suffered in the 1620s, Jonson continued to write. At his death in 1633 he seems to have been working on another play, *The Sad Shepherd*. Though only two acts are extant, this represents a remarkable new direction for Jonson: During the early 1620s he also conducted a correspondence with James Howell, who warned him about disfavour at court in the wake of his dispute with Jones. Jonson died on or around 16 August 1633, and his funeral was held the next day. It includes a portrait medallion and the same inscription as on the gravestone. It seems Jonson was to have had a monument erected by subscription soon after his death but the English Civil War intervened. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. These plays vary in some respects. The minor early plays, particularly those written for boy players, present somewhat looser plots and less-developed characters than those written later, for adult companies. They are, also, notably ill-tempered. Thomas Davies called *Poetaster* "a contemptible mixture of the serio-comic, where the names of Augustus Caesar, Maecenas, Virgil, Horace, Ovid and Tibullus, are all sacrificed upon the altar of private resentment. His late plays or "dotages", particularly *The Magnetic Lady* and *The Sad Shepherd*, exhibit signs of an accommodation with the romantic tendencies of Elizabethan comedy. He announces his programme in the prologue to the folio version of *Every Man in His Humour*: He set his plays in contemporary settings, peopled them with recognisable types, and set them to actions that, if not strictly realistic, involved everyday motives such as greed and jealousy. In accordance with the temper of his age, he was often so broad in his characterisation that many of his most famous scenes border on the farcical as William Congreve, for example, judged *Epicoene*. To this classical model Jonson applied the two features of his style which save his classical imitations from mere pedantry: Coleridge, for instance, claimed that *The Alchemist* had one of the three most perfect plots in literature. Some of his better-known poems are close translations of Greek or Roman models; all display the careful attention to form and style that often came naturally to those trained in classics in the humanist manner. Jonson largely avoided the debates about rhyme and meter that had consumed Elizabethan classicists such as Thomas Campion and Gabriel Harvey. Accepting both rhyme and stress, Jonson used them to mimic the classical qualities of simplicity, restraint and precision. The epigrams explore various attitudes, most from the satiric stock of the day: Although it is included among the epigrams, "On My First Sonne" is neither satirical nor very short; the poem, intensely personal and deeply felt, typifies a genre that would come to be called "lyric poetry. A few other so-called epigrams share this quality. Underwood, published in the expanded folio of 1616, is a larger and more heterogeneous group of poems. Drummond also reported Jonson as saying that Shakespeare "wanted art" i. He recalls being told by certain actors that Shakespeare never blotted i. His own claimed response was "Would he had blotted a thousand! However, it is now impossible to tell how much personal communication they had, and tales of their friendship cannot be substantiated. *William Shakespeare and What He Hath Left Us*", did a good deal to create the traditional view of Shakespeare as a poet who, despite "small Latine, and lesse Greeke", [48] had a natural genius. The poem has traditionally been thought to exemplify the contrast which Jonson perceived between himself, the disciplined and erudite classicist, scornful of ignorance and sceptical of the masses, and Shakespeare, represented in the poem as a kind of natural wonder whose genius was not subject to any rules except those of the audiences for which he wrote. But the poem itself qualifies

this view: Yet must I not give Nature all: Thy Art, My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part. Some view this elegy as a conventional exercise, but others see it as a heartfelt tribute to the "Sweet Swan of Avon", the "Soul of the Age! John Aubrey wrote of Jonson in " Brief Lives. Jonson was at times greatly appreciated by the Romantics, but overall he was denigrated for not writing in a Shakespearean vein. Bentley notes in Shakespeare and Jonson: Many critics since the 18th century have ranked Jonson below only Shakespeare among English Renaissance dramatists. Critical judgment has tended to emphasise the very qualities that Jonson himself lauds in his prefaces, in Timber, and in his scattered prefaces and dedications: For some critics, the temptation to contrast Jonson representing art or craft with Shakespeare representing nature, or untutored genius has seemed natural; Jonson himself may be said to have initiated this interpretation in the second folio, and Samuel Butler drew the same comparison in his commonplace book later in the century. At the Restoration, this sensed difference became a kind of critical dogma. But "artifice" was in the 17th century almost synonymous with "art"; Jonson, for instance, used "artificer" as a synonym for "artist" Discoveries, Jonson was the first English poet to understand classical precepts with any accuracy, and he was the first to apply those precepts successfully to contemporary life. Earlier, Aphra Behn , writing in defence of female playwrights, had pointed to Jonson as a writer whose learning did not make him popular; unsurprisingly, she compares him unfavourably to Shakespeare. Particularly in the tragedies, with their lengthy speeches abstracted from Sallust and Cicero , Augustan critics saw a writer whose learning had swamped his aesthetic judgment. In this period, Alexander Pope is exceptional in that he noted the tendency to exaggeration in these competing critical portraits: Though his stature declined during the 18th century, Jonson was still read and commented on throughout the century, generally in the kind of comparative and dismissive terms just described. Shortly before the Romantic revolution, Edward Capell offered an almost unqualified rejection of Jonson as a dramatic poet, who he writes "has very poor pretensions to the high place he holds among the English Bards, as there is no original manner to distinguish him and the tedious sameness visible in his plots indicates a defect of Genius. The romantic revolution in criticism brought about an overall decline in the critical estimation of Jonson. The early 19th century was the great age for recovering Renaissance drama. Jonson, whose reputation had survived, appears to have been less interesting to some readers than writers such as Thomas Middleton or John Heywood , who were in some senses "discoveries" of the 19th century. In the next era, Swinburne , who was more interested in Jonson than most Victorians , wrote, "The flowers of his growing have every quality but one which belongs to the rarest and finest among flowers: In an essay printed in The Sacred Wood, T. Eliot attempted to repudiate the charge that Jonson was an arid classicist by analysing the role of imagination in his dialogue. At the same time, study of Elizabethan themes and conventions, such as those by E. The proliferation of new critical perspectives after mid-century touched on Jonson inconsistently.

Chapter 5 : Volpone (Ben Jonson) (The Diary of Samuel Pepys)

A comprehensive performance history of Volpone remains to be written. It would be a daunting project, since it was the most performed of all early modern plays in the twentieth century, saving only those of Shakespeare.

To Volpone, Mosca mentions that Corvino has a beautiful wife, Celia. Disguised as Scoto the Mountebank, Volpone goes to see Celia. Corvino drives away "Scoto" Volpone, who then becomes insistent that he must possess Celia as his own. Mosca deceives Corvino into believing that the moribund Volpone will be cured of his illness if he lies in bed beside a young woman. Believing that Volpone has been rendered impotent by his illness, Corvino offers his wife in order that, when he is revived, Volpone will recognise Corvino as his sole heir. Mosca guides Bonario to a sideroom, and Volpone and Celia are left alone. Upon failing to seduce Celia with fantastic promises of luxury and wealth, Volpone attempts to rape her. Bonario comes forward to rescue Celia. In the ensuing trial at court, the truth of the matter is well-buried by Voltore, using his prowess as a lawyer to convince the Avocatori, with false evidence given by Mosca, Volpone and the other dupes. Sir Politic constantly talks of plots and his outlandish business plans, while Lady Would-Be annoys Volpone with her ceaseless talking. Mosca co-ordinates a mix-up between them which leaves Peregrine, a more sophisticated traveller, feeling offended. He humiliates Sir Politick by telling him he is to be arrested for sedition and making him hide inside a giant tortoise shell. Volpone insists on disguising himself and having it announced that he has died and willed his wealth to Mosca, which enrages the would-be heirs Voltore, Corbaccio and Corvino, and everyone returns to court to dispute the will of Volpone, who becomes entangled in the circumstances of the plots that he and Mosca devised. Volpone reveals himself and his deceits in order to topple the rich Mosca. Either that summer or the next, an outbreak of plague closed the London theatres, and the company performed the play at Oxford and Cambridge. It was performed for Charles in while he was still Prince of Wales, in , and again at the Cockpit-in-Court in . After the Restoration, the play enjoyed a lengthy prominence: John Genest records over fifty performances before . The same cast was seen by Samuel Pepys in . The play continued in performance throughout the 18th century. Richard Steele mentions a performance in a edition of Tatler. As with many other Jacobean plays, Volpone had lost its appeal before the end of the 18th century. By the end of the century, the objections appeared insurmountable to producers, and the play fell into disuse. Yeats was in the audience and mentions the production approvingly in a letter to Allan Wade. A production introduced two of the dominant elements of twentieth-century productions: The play has since been staged by a number of famous companies. At the same theatre in , Eric Porter played Volpone. In , the play was staged at the Bristol Old Vic. This version was used by George Antheil in his opera Volpone. In a French film version was released, under the direction of noted filmmaker Maurice Tourneur. Begun in by Jacques de Baroncelli, the production shut down because of financial difficulties. Tourneur took over and the shooting resumed in . This version also used portions of the adaptation by Romain and Zweig. The stage adaptation Sly Fox, by Larry Gelbart, updated the setting from Renaissance Venice to 19th century San Francisco, and changed the tone from satire to farce. The Honey Pot is a film by Joseph L. Mankiewicz based on Volpone, although with a romantic subplot and sentimental trappings. In the film was adapted for Italian cinema by Maurizio Ponzi, with the title Il volpone. The score was written by John Musto with libretto by Mark Campbell. The Sydney Morning Herald. National Library of Australia. Retrieved 1 January . University of Toronto Press, Indiana University Press; Sussex: The Harvester Press, Gibbons, Brian, Jacobean City Comedy: Harvard University Press, Volpone, or The Fox, in: Oxford University Press, ; Jacobean Comedy, " Madison: University of Wisconsin Press,

Chapter 6 : Volpone Written by Ben Jonson

Volpone was written at the end of this extremely trying period, in the early months of It was one of Jonson's biggest hits, and it firmly re-established him as an important literary figure.

Table of Contents Context Ironically, although "William Shakespeare" is by far the better-known name today, we know a great deal more about the life of his fellow Elizabethan dramatist Ben Jonson. Our knowledge of his personal life comes mainly from personal conversations conducted between the playwright and William Drummond, the Laird of Hawthornden, in , which Drummond later wrote down. In his lifetime, he was more honored than Shakespeare and served as an advisor to young poets until the time of his death on August 16, , at the age of sixty- five. His birthplace and the names of his parents remain unknown. What is known is that he grew up in the village of Charing Cross, which was then a mile outside the walled City of London. Charing was home both to the townhouses of courtiers nobles who attended at the court of Queen Elizabeth as well as masses of the urban poor, living in close proximity. As David Riggs notes, Jonson was "surrounded by extremes of poverty and wealth from the earliest years of his life. Its students were either on scholarship for academic ability, or they were sons of the nobility. As a result, Jonson friends in later life would include many lawyers and a good share of nobility. At the age of sixteen, he was forced to leave the school and tried his hand at soldieringâ€”he joined the English forces camped in the Netherlandsâ€”before becoming apprenticed to a bricklayer in London. The apprenticeship was terminated when Jonson decided to marry Anne Lewis. In an era where marriage meant the termination of an apprenticeship and was expected of men only when they had achieved some sort of economic independence, this was an extremely rash move. But it may very well be related to another decision Jonson made in the mid s, which was a decision to devote his life to the theater. Jonson became known as an hilariously bad actor, as well as a violent ruffian who once killed a fellow actor without provocation, and it was only when he tried his hand at writing plays instead of performing in them that he began to have success. It was a product of a change in the activity of acting companies; whereas companies had previously toured, beginning in the s and s they began to station themselves in the ever-growing city of London, fast becoming the most important city in Great Britain. Since the audience would now consist of repeat customers, a great demand for new plays was created. He became famous and well respected even though he had converted to Catholicism during his first time in jail being a Catholic in Protestant England at the time was a very unpopular thing. But in , he was arrested for co-writing a play titled Eastward Ho, which the censors interpreted probably correctly as a derogatory statement on the newly crowned King James. That year, he had also separated from his wife. Volpone was written at the end of this extremely trying period, in the early months of Around the same time, he re- united with his wife. He idealized the countryside in such poems as To Penshurst and saw much of the city life around him as grasping, brutish, and nasty. He viewed his art as being a sort of moral corrective to this "publicke riot. So, according to critics such as Riggs, Volpone serves as the repudiation of what Volpone the character symbolizes: But intellectually, he identified with Celia and her value system. The conflict between the two value systemsâ€”one full of desire and greed and another based on Christian morality and reasonâ€”is central to Volpone and seems to have been a conflict with which Jonson dealt personally.

Chapter 7 : Volpone: Stage History | The Cambridge Works of Ben Jonson

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Chapter 8 : Ebook Volpone And Other Plays

The play opens at the house of Volpone, a Venetian nobleman. He and his "parasite" Mosca "part slave, part servant, part lackey" enter the shrine where Volpone keeps his gold. Volpone has amassed his fortune, we learn, through dishonest means: he is a con artist.

To Volpone, Mosca mentions that Corvino has a beautiful wife, Celia. Disguised as Scoto the Mountebank, Volpone goes to see Celia. Corvino drives away "Scoto" Volpone, who then becomes insistent that he must possess Celia as his own. Mosca deceives Corvino into believing that the moribund Volpone will be cured of his illness if he lies in bed beside a young woman. Believing that Volpone has been rendered impotent by his illness, Corvino offers his wife in order that, when he is revived, Volpone will recognise Corvino as his sole heir. Mosca guides Bonario to a sideroom, and Volpone and Celia are left alone. Upon failing to seduce Celia with fantastic promises of luxury and wealth, Volpone attempts to rape her. Bonario comes forward to rescue Celia. In the ensuing trial at court, the truth of the matter is well-buried by Voltore, using his prowess as a lawyer to convince the Avocatori, with false evidence given by Mosca, Volpone and the other dupes. Sir Politic constantly talks of plots and his outlandish business plans, while Lady Would-Be annoys Volpone with her ceaseless talking. Mosca co-ordinates a mix-up between them which leaves Peregrine, a more sophisticated traveller, feeling offended. He humiliates Sir Politick by telling him he is to be arrested for sedition and making him hide inside a giant tortoise shell. Volpone insists on disguising himself and having it announced that he has died and willed his wealth to Mosca, which enrages the would-be heirs Voltore, Corbaccio and Corvino, and everyone returns to court to dispute the will of Volpone, who becomes entangled in the circumstances of the plots that he and Mosca devised. Volpone reveals himself and his deceits in order to topple the rich Mosca. Text[edit] The play appeared in quarto in early , printed by George Eld for publisher Thomas Thorpe. Either that summer or the next, an outbreak of plague closed the London theatres, and the company performed the play at Oxford and Cambridge. It was performed for Charles in while he was still Prince of Wales , in , and again at the Cockpit-in-Court in After the Restoration , the play enjoyed a lengthy prominence: John Genest records over fifty performances before The same cast was seen by Samuel Pepys in The play continued in performance throughout the 18th century. Richard Steele mentions a performance in a edition of Tatler. As with many other Jacobean plays, Volpone had lost its appeal before the end of the 18th century. By the end of the century, the objections appeared insurmountable to producers, and the play fell into disuse. Yeats was in the audience and mentions the production approvingly in a letter to Allan Wade. A production introduced two of the dominant elements of twentieth-century productions: The play has since been staged by a number of famous companies. At the same theatre in , Eric Porter played Volpone. In , the play was staged at the Bristol Old Vic. This version was used by George Antheil in his opera Volpone. In a French film version was released, under the direction of noted filmmaker Maurice Tourneur. Begun in by Jacques de Baroncelli , the production shut down because of financial difficulties. Tourneur took over and the shooting resumed in This version also used portions of the adaptation by Romain and Zweig. The stage adaptation Sly Fox , by Larry Gelbart , updated the setting from Renaissance Venice to 19th century San Francisco , and changed the tone from satire to farce. The Honey Pot is a film by Joseph L. Mankiewicz based on Volpone, although with a romantic subplot and sentimental trappings. In the film was adapted for Italian cinema by Maurizio Ponzi , with the title Il volpone. The score was written by John Musto with libretto by Mark Campbell.

Chapter 9 : SparkNotes: Volpone: Context

In other words, Volpone does not merely lie, nor he does not merely deceive; he makes an entire production out of his game, using a special eye ointment to simulate an eye infection, creating a character (the sick Volpone) using wardrobe, make-up, and props.

Table of Contents Plot Overview Volpone takes place in seventeenth-century Venice, over the course of one day. The play opens at the house of Volpone, a Venetian nobleman. He and his "parasite" Mosca—part slave, part servant, part lackey—enter the shrine where Volpone keeps his gold. Volpone has amassed his fortune, we learn, through dishonest means: And we also learn that he likes to use his money extravagantly. For the last three years, he has been attracting the interest of three legacy hunters: Voltore, a lawyer; Corbaccio, an old gentleman; and Corvino, a merchant—individuals interested in inheriting his estate after he dies. Volpone is known to be rich, and he is also known to be childless, have no natural heirs. Furthermore, he is believed to be very ill, so each of the legacy hunters lavishes gifts on him, in the hope that Volpone, out of gratitude, will make him his heir. The legacy hunters do not know that Volpone is actually in excellent health and merely faking illness for the purpose of collecting all those impressive "get-well" gifts. In the first act, each legacy hunter arrives to present a gift to Volpone, except for Corbaccio, who offers only a worthless and probably poisoned vial of medicine. But Corbaccio agrees to return later in the day to make Volpone his heir, so that Volpone will return the favor. This act is a boon to Volpone, since Corbaccio, in all likelihood, will die long before Volpone does. She is kept under lock and key by her husband, who has ten guards on her at all times, but Volpone vows to use disguise to get around these barriers. Sir Politic takes a liking to the young boy and vows to teach him a thing or two about Venice and Venetians; Peregrine, too, enjoys the company of Sir Politic, but only because he is hilariously gullible and vain. Scoto engages in a long and colorful speech, hawking his new "oil", which is touted as a cure-all for disease and suffering. At the end of the speech, he asks the crows to toss him their handkerchiefs, and Celia complies. Corvino arrives, just as she does this, and flies into a jealous rage, scattering the crows in the square. Volpone goes home and complains to Mosca that he is sick with lust for Celia, and Mosca vows to deliver her to Volpone. Meanwhile, Corvino berates his wife for tossing her handkerchief, since he interprets it as a sign of her unfaithfulness, and he threatens to murder her and her family as a result. He decrees that, as punishment, she will now no longer be allowed to go to Church, she cannot stand near windows as she did when watching Volpone, and, most bizarrely, she must do everything backwards from now on—she must even walk and speak backwards. The third act begins with a soliloquy from Mosca, indicating that he is growing increasingly conscious of his power and his independence from Volpone. This time, Volpone lets her in, but he soon regrets it, for he is exasperated by her talkativeness. Mosca rescues Volpone by telling the Lady that Sir Politic has been seen in a gondola with a courtesan a high-class prostitute. But Celia and Corvino arrive first—Celia complains bitterly about being forced to be unfaithful, while Corvino tells her to be quiet and do her job. When Celia and Volpone are alone together, Volpone greatly surprises Celia by leaping out of bed. Celia had expected an old, infirm man, but what she gets instead is a lothario who attempts to seduce her with a passionate speech. But Bonario, who has been witnessing the scene from his hiding place the entire time, rescues Celia. Bonario wounds Mosca on his way out. Corbaccio finally arrives, too late, as does Voltore. A short while later, in the early afternoon, Peregrine and Sir Politic are still talking. Sir Politic gives the young traveler some advice on living in Venice and describes several schemes he has under consideration for making a great deal of money. They are soon interrupted by Lady Politic, who is convinced that Peregrine is the prostitute Mosca told her about—admittedly, in disguise. But Mosca arrives and tells Lady Politic that she is mistaken; the courtesan he referred to is now in front of the Senate in other words, Celia. Lady Politic believes him and ends by giving Peregrine a seductive goodbye with a coy suggestion that they see each other again. Peregrine is incensed at her behavior and vows revenge on Sir Politic because of it. But the defendants make a very good case for themselves, led by their lawyer, Voltore. Voltore portrays Bonario and Celia as lovers, Corvino as an innocent jilted husband, and Corbaccio as a wounded father nearly killed by his evil son. The judge are swayed when

Lady Politic comes in and set up perfectly by Mosca identifies Celia as the seducer of her husband Sir Politic. Further, they are convinced when Volpone enters the courtroom, again acting ill. The judges order that Celia and Bonario be arrested and separated. In the final act, Volpone returns home tired and worried that he is actually growing ill, for he is now feeling some of the symptoms he has been faking. To dispel his fears, he decides to engage in one final prank on the legacy hunters. The plan goes off perfectly, and all three legacy hunters are fooled. But Mosca lets the audience know that Volpone is dead in the eyes of the world and that Mosca will not let him "return to the world of the living" unless Volpone pays up, giving Mosca a share of his wealth. Meanwhile, Peregrine is in disguise himself, playing his own prank on Sir Politic. Peregrine presents himself as a merchant to the knight and informs Politic that word has gotten out of his plan to sell Venice to the Turks. Politic, who once mentioned the idea in jest, is terrified. When three merchants who are in collusion with Peregrine knock on the door, Politic jumps into a tortoise-shell wine case to save himself. Peregrine informs the merchants when they enter that he is looking at a valuable tortoise. The merchants decide to jump on the tortoise and demand that it crawls along the floor. They remark loudly upon its leg-garters and fine hand-gloves, before turning it over to reveal Sir Politic. But his plan backfires nonetheless. Volpone nearly recovers from his blunder by telling Voltore, in the middle of the Senate proceeding, that "Volpone" is still alive. Mosca pretends to faint and claims to the Senate that he does not know where he is, how he got there, and that he must have been possessed by a demon during the last few minutes when he was speaking to them. He also informs the Senators that Volpone is not dead, contradicting Corvino. Realizing that he has been betrayed, Volpone decides that rather than let Mosca inherit his wealth, he will turn them both in. Volpone takes off his disguise and finally reveals the truth about the events of the past day. Volpone ends up being sent to prison, while Mosca is consigned to a slave galley. At the end, there is a small note from the playwright to the audience, simply asking them to applaud if they enjoyed the play they just saw.