



كلية: الآداب

القسم او الفرع: قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

المرحلة: الثالثة

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اسم المادة باللغة العربية: المسرحية

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اسم المحاضرة الأولى باللغة العربية: مسرحية فولبون كحكاية خرافية للحيوان

اسم المحاضرة الأولى باللغة الإنكليزية: **The Beast fable in Volpone**

THE BEAST FABLE in Johnson's *Volpone*

One of the more obvious influences on the play is the beast fable, which is defined as a short tale in which “animals and birds speak and behave like human beings [...] usually illustrating some moral point.”[1] [2] As Dutton observes, “no other play of its era is so fully peopled with characters who are explicitly animals, birds, and insects, behaving exactly in the manner of Aesop's archetypal beasts, as the text knowingly reminds us.”[3] Jonson even gives his characters names which identify them as their animal counterparts in fables. There is Volpone, the protagonist, whose character is almost identical to that of his namesake, the fox. Like the animal, he “feigns death in order to catch predatory birds.”[4] The similarities do not end with the actual creature, however. Volpone also shares features which have been ascribed to the fox in mythology. He certainly qualifies as a “crafty shape-shifter”[5], since he spends a large part of the play in disguise, fooling almost everyone around him. The protagonist himself makes references to the resemblance between his plot and events in the fables of Aesop: “Good!—and not a fox/Stretched on the earth, with fine delusive sleights, / Mocking a gaping crow?”[6] Volpone's victims are just as aptly named: Voltore, Corvino, and Corbaccio, the vulture, crow, and raven. They all personify the faults which were associated with the birds whose names they carry. Vultures “were associated with avarice, particularly in lawyers, but also with their persuasiveness.”[7] Voltore certainly fits the bill perfectly, as he demonstrates in his pursuit of Volpone's riches and his manipulation of the Avocatori in court. Corvino and Corbaccio match their animal foils just as well. The former's treatment of his wife can be seen as an ironic hint to the “medieval fable of a white crow turned black by Apollo for tattling on his wife's infidelity”[8], while the latter's treatment of his son corresponds to the idea of ravens neglecting their offspring.[9] Mosca is an equally good example. Volpone, other characters, and he himself constantly call him a “parasite”[10]. His relationship to his master reflects the relationship between the parasitic fly and the fox. At first he only lives off Volpone's possessions and seems to help him with his schemes, but later in the play he turns on his master. Like the flies, Mosca turns out to be “the best cure for the ‘fox's evil’.”[11]

Of course, this does not mean that Volpone is a beast fable. The characters may be called Voltore or Covino, but they are still completely human and not just animals acting like humans.