

THE ALCHEMIST
BEN JONSON
ACT III CRITICAL STUDY

Second Lecture For Second Year Students
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**LECTURE TITLE: ACT III, SCENES I AND II CRITICAL
CRITICISM, ELEMENTS AND TECHNIQUES.**

DRAMA

SECOND STAGE

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Act III

Scenes I and II

This lecture is categorized into three parts which are: a short critical criticism of these two scenes, their major elements and finally techniques. These things are implemented by the playwright Ben Jonson cleverly.

- ❑ **Critical criticism**
- ❑ **The Scenes' Major Elements:**
 - **Exile and Separation**
 - **The Parody of Christ**
 - **Dramatization of 'the sectarian mind**
- ❑ **Techniques:**
 - **Satire**
 - **Irony**
 - **Parody**
 - **Phlegmatic**

❑ **Critical Criticism :**

Jonson reflects a harshest kind of satire for the negative role of the Puritans in the real life, and their attempts to close theatres as well as sanitizing themselves too. Among all those gulled characters in the play, just in the case of the Puritans, Jonson refused to reveal his audience's pity on them. Jonson attributes that to their hypocrisy in deceiving people with appearing as a self-righteous and sinless too. Jonson consistently despises hypocrisy, especially religious hypocrisy that couches its damning judgments in high-flown language. Tribulation and Ananias call their fellow men "heathen" and in one case, say that someone's hat suggests "the Anti Christ". The Puritans are money-hungry as the rest of the characters which are part of the ironic joke in this play. Since, *The Alchemist* was written in 1610 to disclose Jonson's dislike of Puritanism's harsh judgment. It seems that, Jonson starts to create characters who are sympathetic one, despite their vices. Throughout the play, puns on religious terminology continuously draw attention to the ways in which proto-capitalism beside the religious speech and preach. The Puritan deacon Ananias and the Anabaptist eagerly wait for visiting Subtle to achieve their materialistic worldly dreams.

The Scenes' Major Elements

1. Exile and Separation
2. The Parody of Christ
3. Dramatization of the sectarian mind

1. Exile and Separation :

The notions of “exile and separation” are incarnated clearly in the Anabaptist acceptance of the theological and religious concepts of martyrdom and suffering as a way of achieving victory and everlasting triumph on man’s weakness. It also indicates dismissing of Tribulation Wholesome, Anabaptist and Ananias due their shortcomings, betray and greediness. Tribulation and Ananias depicted this separation and sanctimonious acquiescence with a humble prayer and withdraw into ‘the whole company of the Separation’ as in (III.i.1-4, p.83), (III.i.29-35, p.84) and (IV.vii.85, p.128). Anabaptist mistakenly beliefs that the true church is separated from the ‘world’. In this place, Jonson mocks the Puritans’ hypocrisy because the church symbolizes one unity of Christ’s body and unite wholly with the word for the sake of salvation and human being redemption.

The Scenes' Major Elements

- 1. Exile and Separation**
- 2. The Parody of Christ**
- 3. Dramatization of the sectarian mind**

2. The Parody of Christ

Another scenic element used by Jonson in the Third Act is the parody of Christ which represents a religious factor in the process of Jonson's criticism. Ben Jonson manipulates "The Parody of Christ" to shed light and belittle the hypocrisy of the Anabaptists or Ananias. Anyhow, There was difficulty in restraining Ananias's over-zealous interjections and dogmatic insistence in order to correct Subtle's 'impure' use of religious terms, as it appears in (III.ii.11-14, p.85). Jonson's anti-Puritan satire is perhaps best illustrated by Subtle's enumeration of hypocrisies that can be abandoned once the Saints are in possession of all the wealth promised through the Stone.

The Scenes' Major Elements

- 1. Exile and Separation**
- 2. The Parody of Christ**
- 3. Dramatization of the sectarian mind**

3. Dramatization of the sectarian mind

Jonson emerges an obvious dramatization to 'the sectarian mind' by means of satire to give it a considerable bite through his deliberate allusions to Anabaptism. At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that in drawing his satirical portraits of the two Anabaptists, Jonson amalgamated the attitudes and language shared by different forms of extreme Puritanism. So, Jonson concentrates on the exaggerated invective (abusive) of Ananias towards anything considers 'popish' or belongs to Catholic Church. Jonson derides (mocks) and belittle the puritans hysterical antagonism directed against the Roman Catholic Church represented by Pope. This abusive mocking is reflected in the word 'mass' which suggests popery, Ananias insists, apparently in accordance with Puritan custom in replacing Catholic mass by 'Christ-tide' (III.ii.43, p.86).

Techniques

There are so many techniques which emerge in this act specifically and these two scenes particularly which are:

1. **Satire**
2. **Irony and Caricature**
3. **Parody**
4. **Phlegmatic**

1. Satire:

In many occasions satire is used along this play. Jonson in spite of satirizing the puritans but he is feeling sorrow on their state and also sympathizing being outcast or dismissed as appears in the following speech (III.i.1-4, p.83). Another satirized speech is expressed in (III.i.29-35, p.84) where the Anabaptists see themselves as Christ's successors in addition to attributing the "inspiration" as Heavenly endowment. This is an allusion to their hypocrisy and Tribulation is considered as an arch-hypocrite. Subtle obviously accuses Puritans with hypocrisy through an anti-puritan satire to mingle it with comedy and irony to enhance his idea in (III.ii.49-52, p.86). Jonson never hesitated to interwoven both allusions and satirical portraits to convey the morbid sectarian mind through dramatization such images. Jonson through his characters looks into sectarian issue as one of the most dangerous matters which destroy society, threats social security or peace and leads into endless wars.

Techniques

1.Satire

**2.Irony and
Caricature**

3.Parody

4-Phlegmatic

2. Irony and Caricature

Subtle employs irony and caricature to attack the greediness of the Protestantism new business classes which failed in fortifying the Londoners from exploitation but it was a reason of spreading corruption through the religious institute. More precisely, Jonson was clearly aware of the exploitative practices based on economic calculus and of the possibilities of self-interested abuse inherent in the Puritans 'Christian gaining' and 'lawful prospering'. Such kind of ruthless exploitation with no doubt was on occasion for the masked pietism. Even the practices of usury seems to be 'lawful' since the sanction of 'providence' is invoked to justify the forfeiture of 'bonds broke but one day!' . Subtle's accurately particularized the permitted or not permitted matters of 'Christian ... of the holy assembly' . Jonson went far away to regard this speech (III. ii. 79-82, p. 87) as one of the most abusive and insulting accidents through adding a caricature description to it.

Techniques

1.Satire

**2.Irony and
Caricature**

3.Parody

4-Phlegmatic

3. Parody

It emerges through mingling religious sectors with politics for achieving certain materialistic benefits by means of exploiting the naïve and poor in the community especially the most needed ones. The Anabaptists established themselves as God's representatives on earth. Jonson through Subtle's words in (III.ii.11-14,p.85) is exposing their zeal to obtain the Philosopher Stone because they came to believe in this stone power more than their trust in God's will. This is another clue or manifestation to their hypocrisy. This is a stigmatized sign for puritans' wrong claims of being self-righteous and God's representatives on earth. Subtle's attacking Puritans shortcomings did not exempted the Catholic Church from committing mistakes too as in (III. i, L. 33, P.84)

Techniques

1.Satire

**2.Irony and
Caricature**

3.Parody

4-Phlegmatic

4-Phlegmatic

Subtle describes Tribulation as a phlegmatic and hypocrite person who exploits religion to deceive the naïve people. This phlegmatic feature engendered hate within one religion. The religious men create unzealously conditions through encouraging a religious, social and solidarity coldness in the community especially at the times of crises as in London during plague ordeal at 1610. Tribulation and Ananias interest was just to have the philosophers stone (III,ii,58-60, P.86). Finally Subtle announces to Ananias his hate to everything tradition in a clear attack to Catholic church in (III. ii. 106-7, p.88),

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