



Every Man in His Humour

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Places Discussed

*London. England's capital and largest city. While most of the play's scenes are set at the various London homes of its characters, Jonson does little to give symbolic significance to most settings. The actions that take place in such settings are conventional: For example, Knowell's home is a refuge from the dangers (both physical and moral) of London society, while the Windmill Tavern is a place of lusty intrigue and low-life braggadocio. Scenes set outdoors suggest that the London streets were places where people of every walk of life might pass and even exchange pleasantries without violating social norms associated with the class structure prevalent at the time.

Clement house. London home of the ebullient, jovial eccentric Justice Clement, and the one place that has special thematic significance in the play. Like many of his contemporaries, Jonson ends his comedy by suggesting some restoration of the social order, setting aright the machinations and plots of his characters. It is not surprising that the final act takes place at the house of Justice Clement. As his name suggests, this official is a man who passes judgment with both justice and mercy. Hence, it is fitting that his home becomes a visible symbol of the well-ordered society.

Bibliography:

Barton, Anne. *Ben Jonson, Dramatist*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Compares Jonson's and William Shakespeare's treatment of the country and the city as settings. Indicates that contrary to Elizabethan convention, Jonson would not allow sudden conversions in character. Analyzes Jonson's revisions in a later version of the work.

Brock, D. Heyward. *A Ben Jonson Companion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983. A valuable resource. Defines key terms. Identifies both real people who were important in Jonson's world and characters who appear in the plays. Selected bibliography.

Dutton, Richard. *Ben Jonson: To the First Folio*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1983. A chapter on the early plays shows how Jonson had to educate his audience to appreciate a kind of comedy different from Shakespeare's because Jonson's comedy relies heavily on neoclassical principles.

Riggs, David. *Ben Jonson: A Life*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989. A chapter on the comedy of humors discusses the theory and the origins of that genre and explains how Jonson's theory of satire differed from Shakespeare's.

Watson, Robert N. *Ben Jonson's Parodic Strategies: Literary Imperialism in the Comedies*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987. The chapter on *Every Man in His Humour*, "The Purging of Monstrous Conventions," shows how "wits supersede the fools," and how satire supersedes the usual plot patterns.

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