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# UNIT 1 THE DRAMATIC CAREER OF BEN JONSON

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## Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Life and Works of Ben Jonson
- 1.3 Chronology
- 1.4 Critical Extracts
- 1.5 Questions
- 1.6 Annotation Passages

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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Our primary objective in this Unit is to offer a bird's eye view of i) the major phases in Jonson's dramatic career and ii) landmarks in Jonson's biography so that his achievements as an artist can be examined against the background of his time and his involvement with the theatre and fellow playwrights.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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The growth and development of Ben Jonson, the dramatist, has been for a longtime treated as following an a priori critical commitment, and therefore, linear in character. A closer study indicates how restless Jonson was as an experimenter and how he repeatedly did not adhere to a formula. He was not trapped by success. His career appears to open a new chapter in the history of English drama because he conferred on comedy a dignity unknown earlier.

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## 1.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF BEN JONSON

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For students of British drama, Ben Jonson's career has a special interest partly because he was the first playwright to whom plays mattered, partly because his life is documented in greater detail than that of his fellow playwrights, and finally because his plays seem to bear a direct relationship to developments in the theatre and to the larger social milieu. While others acquiesced in the inferior rank accorded to plays as ephemeral and trivial, Jonson secured for the dramatic art its due place in serious literature. Jonson's inclusion of his plays in the 1616 folio edition of his works is a milestone in the history of the theatre. By thus elevating the status of plays, he probably paved the way for the publication of the first folio of Shakespeare seven years later. From this perspective, Jonson's two seminal observations on Shakespeare, "Would he had blotted a thousand," and "He was not of an age but for all time" may be said to inaugurate a new earnestness in the criticism of drama. Jonson was well known as an epigrammatist, grammarian, and a writer of odes, lyrics, and masques. But this account focuses on his plays, and seeks to locate *The Alchemist* against the wider canvas of his life and other plays selectively highlighted in the accompanying 'Chronology'.

Tradition has it that Ben Jonson's ancestors hailed from Scotland. His grand - father is said to have made the move from Carlisle to London and prospered for a while. In

course of time, the family estate was lost and Jonson's father became a clergyman. Jonson himself was born probably in London in 1572 a month or so after his father's death. With the re-marriage of his mother to a bricklayer, Jonson spent most of his childhood in the vicinity of Charing Cross. In the face of his step-father's indifference to academic pursuits, Jonson was fortunate enough to attend a private school in St. Martin's church. Subsequently, in the Westminster School, he came to the notice of his teacher, William Camden, the eminent scholar and antiquary, the first and foremost influence on the boy's career.

Jonson's schooling came to an abrupt end when he was about sixteen. For a while he was apprenticed, against his wishes, in brick laying. Unable to proceed to Oxford or Cambridge, he enrolled himself in the English Expeditionary Force, and fought in Flanders in 1591-92. During a lull in the fighting, he killed in single combat an enemy soldier "in the face of both the camps". Elizabeth Cook brings out the significance of this event: "The scene is an emblem of his life; the giant figure, a party to neither faction, warring alone in the classic manner before his awed onlookers". Jonson's carrying back the weapons of the enemy as *opima spolia* reverberates throughout his many literary battles with rivals and foes. In 1594 he married Anne Lewis who bore him a son and a daughter who died in their infancy.

Like most playwrights of his time, Jonson too seems to have begun his career as an actor and a hack. An early version of *A Tale of a Tub* is often assigned to 1596. In 1597 Jonson figures as "a player" in the theatre manager, Philip Henslowe's *Diary*. In the same year Jonson was sent to jail for his share in Thomas Nashe's "seditious" play, *The Isle of Dogs*. In 1598 the Children of the Chapel performed Jonson's *The Case is Altered*. He probably considered them minor and did not, therefore, include them in his *Works*, but he revised the former play in 1633, four years before his death. Jonson perhaps wrote a few tragedies which are lost, for Francis Meres mentions him as a leading playwright, among "our best for tragedy".

### **EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR**

The year 1598 appears quite eventful. His first major play, *Every Man in his Humour*, was staged by the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the Curtain theatre with Shakespeare in the cast. Within a few months he was imprisoned in Newgate, this time for killing the actor Gabriel Spencer in a duel. He turned a papist, and pleading benefit of clergy, escaped hanging after being branded on the thumb. On the curious situation of Ben Jonson in 1598 right after his release, Herford and Simpson comment: "he went out of prison, a recusant, a branded felon, and a pauper, but untouched in life and liberty, inspired by a lofty intellectual ambition, and the author of the best example of genuine comedy yet produced in England".

The original Florentine setting of *Every Man in his Humour* was changed to London and the revised version was published probably in 1605 and the first to be included in Jonson's *works*. The title provides a clue to Jonson's characterization from the perspective of Renaissance physiology. The excess of a 'humour' or a fluid in the body, viz. phlegm, cholera, blood and black bile would produce phlegmatic, choleric, sanguine, and melancholic temperaments. Thus was born the Comedy of Humours and unfortunately his reputation as the virtual inventor of this genre eclipsed his many-sided achievement. The humour of the merchant, Kiteley is jealousy which is roused during a visit of his brother-in-law Wellbred and his friends. He suspects them of dishonourable intentions against his wife, and his sister Bridget. Wellbred is accompanied by his servant, Knowell, the mischief monger, Brainworm, his country cousin, Stephen, besides, Bobadil the boastful soldier, and Matthew the town gull. Complications arise through the inordinate concern of Knowell's father for his son's virtue, and the trapping of Kiteley through luring him to discover his wife at the water-house. Through Justice Clement's intervention de-humouring takes place and wedding bells for Knowell and Bridget mark the close of the play.

The Prologue to the revised version of the play succinctly captures a programme for comedy as he envisages it:

He rather prays you will be pleas'd to see  
One such to-day, as other plays should be;  
Where neither chorus wafts you o'er the seas,  
Nor creaking throne comes down the boys to please...  
But deeds, and language, such as men do use,  
And persons such as comedy would choose,  
When she would show an image of the times.

The focus is unmistakably not on persons but follies in order to portray contemporary life realistically.

In the very next year, 1599, The Lord Chamberlain's Men produced at the Globe, *Every Man out of his Humour*, "a comical satire" as Jonson describes it, a truer and more forthright expression of his views on the nature and function of comedy and humour. Set in the "Fortunate Island", the play castigates the dramatis personae explicitly through a prefatory note on "the characters of the persons", Jonson, suspecting that John Marston had ridiculed him in the sketch of the poet-philosopher, Chrisoganus in *Histrion-Mastix* parodied with characteristic deftness Marston's affectations in speech. This incidental portrait marked the beginning of the War of the Theatres which raged for the next three years, and Jonson's further skirmishes are celebrated in *Cynthia's Revels* and *The Poetaster*. To *Every Man out of his Humour*, Marston responded with an unflattering portrait of Jonson as Brabant Senior in his *Jack Drum's Entertainment*.

In *Cynthia's Revels* staged by the Children of the Chapel in 1601, Jonson as Crites, attacked Marston, and for some obscure reason Thomas Dekker too as Anaides and Hedon respectively. The Queen's participation was hinted in the early production by the role of Cynthia. Marston, in turn, portrayed Jonson as the vainglorious Lampatho Doria in *What you will*.

Jonson countered this attack with *The Poetaster* produced in the same year again by the Children of the Chapel. In the self-portrait as Horace, he poured ridicule on Marston and Dekker through the figures of Crispinus and Demetrius. The former was given an emetic so that he could throw up all his recondite vocabulary. Dekker exposed Jonson's arrogance and peculiarities of appearance in *Satirionastix or the Unmasking of the Humorous Poet* (1602). For his part Jonson appended "The Apologetical Dialogue" to the *Poetaster*, not an expression of regret, much less a holding out of an olive branch.

The War of the Theatres, "*Poetomachia*" as Dekker called it, made the children's companies so popular in the city that adult groups had to seek a living in the countryside. Shakespeare takes note of this recent innovation:

.. there is, sir, an eyrie of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question and are most tyrannically clapped for't. These are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages (*Hamlet*, II.ii).

The fame of Jonson became a settled thing. As M.C. Bradbrook sums up, : "The War established Jonson's reputation among the judicious: hence forth he was 'dramaticorum sut sacculi facile princeps'".

In spite of this success, Jonson found himself out of favour with the players, playwright friends and some influential people. In poverty, and possibly because of domestic discord, he left home to be with Sir Robert Townshend and later on with Esme' Stewart, Lord of Aubigny. He occupied himself with epigrams and hack work on *The Spanish Tragedy*. In 1603 he turned his hand to tragedy for the reasons mentioned in "The Apologetical Dialogue".

... since the Comick muse  
Hath prou'd so ominous to me, I will trie  
If Tragedie will have a more kind aspect.

The result was *Sejanus* produced by the King's Men in 1603. This scholarly and faithful re-creation of Roman life and history proved unpopular and was hissed off the stage. In the context of the conspiracy of Essex, he was summoned to appear before the Privy Council on suspicion of dangerous satire but was let off. But fortunately for Jonson, he was called upon to compose a masque in 1604 by royal favour. This launched him on a new phase of his career till the end of King James's reign.

Jonson returned to the public stage with *Eastward Ho!* collaborating with Chapman and Marston. For his share in poking fun at the Scots, they were hauled up by the authorities, and were released after a brief period of imprisonment. Jonson's voluntary surrender before the court has been noted by his biographers. His integrity was such that with the wiping away of suspicion, he was restored to favour. In 1605 he was commissioned to discover the conspirators behind the Gunpowder Plot, though he remained a Catholic.

### VOLPONE

*Volpone*, produced by the Kings's Men at the Globe in 1606, marks a turning point in Jonson's personal and professional fortunes. During the next ten years, he wrote his "mature comedies", according to most critics. To this period belong *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*, (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610) *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), the monumental *Works* (1616), and the second tragedy *Catiline* (1611).

The action of *Volpone or the Fox* is set in the 'home' of corruption, Italy. The play is about cheating people, a game in which the magnificent, Volpone, pretends to be on his deathbed in order to extract gifts from the hopefuls for his legacy. His servant Mosca (the fly) lures the lawyer Volpone (the vulture) the merchant Corvino (the raven) and others.

Greed is the master theme of *Volpone*, a power degrading man and making him sink to the sub-human level. The animal symbolism lends the characters a fierce energy through a reversal of the fabliaux mode. For the dominant notes of Jacobean London affluence and acquisitiveness, Jonson finds a parallel in Renaissance Venice. Volpone's feigning ironically mirrors a deep sickness, matched by the depravity of the gulls, notably that of the merchant willing to prostitute his wife. Even more impressive than Volpone's apostrophe to gold, and his sensuality is his irresistible love of acting, of dissimulation. The English visitors, Sir Politick – would – be and his Fine Madame provide the necessary foil. The element of spectacle is exploited theatrically. In investing eccentricity with a rare intensity Jonson succeeds in depicting characters driven by an obsession.

After a lapse of three years Jonson returned to the stage with his *Epicoene*, acted by the Children of the Queen's Revels in 1609. The noise-hating miser, Morose is on the lookout for a silent woman as his wife. Assisted by his nephew, Sir Dauphine, he does succeed but very briefly. His wife, after marriage, turns out to be a loud mouthed chatterer, and worse, a boy who is passed off as the bride. With the restoration of the inheritance to his nephew, Morose obtains his release. Dryden chose this play as the model of excellence in his "Examen" and the play has been, since then, a favourite with theatre goers.

### THE ALCHEMIST

From the monomaniacs of these two plays, Jonson turns to sketching an acquisitive society in *The Alchemist* produced by the King's Men in the year of the plague, 1610.

Chicanery is the effect rather than the cause of the mischief in this comedy. Alchemy is employed as a metaphor for man's proneness to be gulled. Many critics consider this his best, if not the best in the English language. Lovewit, the master is away in the country, the servant, Captain Face colludes with Subtle, the quack, and Dol Common, the whore, to defraud a number of gulls through promising to fulfil their fond hopes for wealth, youth, business success, love and so on. The sudden return of Lovewit forces the cheats to flee, abandoning their earnings. Jonson's comic realism, whether it be in the varied jargon of diverse professions, the evocation of the Blackfriars neighbourhood, the mastery of the alchemical know-how, or the numerous topical references, locates the play firmly in Jacobean London. Yet its universal appeal, despite occasional obscurity of phrase, has remained unrivalled. The morality of Lovewit's appropriating Dame Pliant to himself, the resolution of the play's action, has been much debated. The play's enormous and enduring success in the theatre is indisputable. The unforced economy of the action, the immense improvisation demanded of the actors and the sustained threat of exposure contribute to its power on the stage.

At the pinnacle of his fame, Jonson decided to return to tragedy, a genre in which he apparently failed earlier. *Catiline* was acted by the King's Men in 1611, and was a failure on the stage. Most of the next year, Jonson spent in Europe as tutor to Raleigh's son.

### BARTHOLOMEW FAIR

In 1614, *Bartholomew Fair* was performed by the Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Hope. More loosely structured than his earlier comedies, the wide canvas of the play reflects a greater variety of characters and motives. While in *The Alchemist* Jonson seems to be more on the side of the cheats than that of the gulls, a greater balance is evident in *Bartholomew Fair*. The presiding deity, so to say, of the Fair, Ursula, the Pig Woman, errs on the side of frailty and has a touch of Falstaff about her. Another contrasting feature is that while in *The Alchemist* the impression of many characters is an illusion produced by the cheats, the cast of *Bartholomew Fair* is quite large befitting its social realism. The rogues here have been aptly compared to Hogarth's in vivacity, especially the horse-trader Knockhun, the prostitute aptly named Punk Alice, and the pickpocket Fawcworth. The play set the tone for the Restoration Comedy of Manners.

The publication of Jonson's *Works* in the folio edition of 1616 is considered a milestone in English drama. Jonson left out his ventures prior to *Every Man out of his Humour* and chose for some mysterious reason not to include *Bartholomew Fair* also. Among the plays in this edition are: *Every Man out of his Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels*, *The Poetaster*, *Sejanus*, *Volpone*, *Epicoene*, *The Alchemist*, and *Catiline*. The revision, often an expansion of some of the plays, reflects Jonson's scrupulousness in matters of detail.

Soon after the publication of his *Works*, the King's Men produced *The Devil is an Ass*. This play along with *The Staple of News* (1626), *The Magnetic Lady* (1632), and *A Tale of a Tub* (1633) is ranked by Dryden and a number of critics among Jonson's "dotages". Recent critical evaluations of these plays have, however, highlighted Jonson's refusal to follow the beaten track and the surprising freshness of the pastoral and nostalgic elements in the late plays.

Jonson had already been awarded a pension of 100 marks annually by King James. As F. H. Mares notes, "In the first decade of James's reign begins the transformation of Asper ---- into 'Father Ben', the corpulent literary dictator, compelling the admiration of the best brains in London at a love-feast in the Devil tavern." Jonson undertook a walking tour of Scotland in 1618, and stayed briefly with William Drummond of Hawthornden who recorded his conversation, a not totally reliable record. On his return to England he was awarded an honorary M.A. degree by Oxford University, a gesture unparalleled till today. Herford and St. Albans mightly

observe: "It was a tribute, rare in the history of the University before or since, to a great scholar-poet who owed nothing to Universities".

The decline in Jonson's fortunes is evident in a series of calamities. In 1623, a fire reduced to ashes the books and manuscripts in his personal library. Five years later, he suffered a stroke and was paralysed. Still, he continued to write. When he died on August 6, 1637, the inscription on his tomb, "O rare Ben Jonson!" captures the popular image of the man and the playwright, more than any long-winded tribute.

Jonson's career spanning the closing years of Queen Elizabeth's reign and those of Charles I has been stereotyped as a linear development till 1616, followed by a decline. Anne Barton challenges this theory and rejects the alleged Jonsonian consistency as too simplistic an explanation. She underscores Jonson's flair for creative adventure, his rare sensitivity to the shifting pressures of his time and his deliberate refusal to be trapped by success into repeating a "formula". Ranking *Volpone*, *Epicoene*, *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair* among Jonson's great works, she undertakes a revaluation of his later plays and notes in them a return in depth to older forms and a new pervasive tone of nostalgia. The dotage theory, she argues, does not account for the freshness of the unfinished *The Sad Shepherd*. Jonson's enormous creativity in the non-dramatic verse of this period is cited as further justification.

David Riggs views Jonson the man as Rabelaisian in egotism, ever compulsively driven by persistently neurotic impulses. He cites as evidence Jonson's boasts, duels and imprisonment. In a striking contrast is the artist, ever in control of method and material, employing humour and the act of writing primarily for their therapeutic function. Recent assessments including those of Marquette Chute, Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth and others endorse Anne Barton's re-mapping of the pattern of Jonson's dramatic career.

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### 1.3 CHRONOLOGY

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1572 (June 11)	Birth of Ben Jonson
1572	Mother's marriage to a brick layer Favourite pupil of William Camden
1588	Apprentice bricklayer
1591	Enrolment in English Expeditionary Force
1594	Marries Anne Lewis
1596	Draft of <i>A Tale of a Tub</i>
1597	Mentioned by Henslowe Collaboration on <i>The Isle of Dogs</i> Imprisonment
1598	<i>The Case is Altered</i> performed by the Children of the Chapel. <i>Every Man in his Humour</i> performed by the Lord Chamberlain's <i>Men at the Curtain</i> Hailed as "The best for Tragedy" by Francis Meres. Killing Gabriel Spencer Imprisonment Claiming benefit of clergy Becomes a Catholic
1599	<i>Every Man out of his Humour</i> performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the Globe
1600	<i>Cynthia's Revels</i> performed by the Children of the Chapel
1601	<i>Poetaster</i> performed by the Children of the Chapel
1602	Living in the home of Lord Townshend
1603-1607	Patronage of Esme Stewart, Lord D'Aubigny

- 1603 *Sejanus* performed by the King's Men  
Charge of Treason – imprisonment.
- 1604 Invitation to write a Masque  
*Eastward Ho!* in collaboration with Chapman and Marston,  
performed by the Queen's Revels at the Blackfriars
- 1605 Revised version of *Every Man in his Humour* acted by the King's  
Men
- 1606 *Volpone* acted by the King's Men at the Globe.
- 1609 *Epicoene* acted by the Children of the Queen's Revels
- 1610 *The Alchemist* acted by the King's Men  
Return to the Anglican Church
- 1611 *Catiline* acted by the King's Men
- 1612 Continental tour as tutor to Raleigh's son
- 1614 *Bartholomew Fair* performed by the Lady Elizabeth's Men
- 1616 *Works* – the folio edition  
*The Devil is an Ass* performed by the King's Men at the Blackfriars.
- 1618-19 Walking tour to Scotland.
- 1619 Honorary Master of Arts – Oxford University
- 1623 Library destroyed in a fire  
Virtual Poet Laureate  
"Sons of Ben" like Robert Herrick meet in the Apollo Room of the  
inn, The Devil and St. Dunstan  
Death of King James  
Return to public stage under Charles I
- 1626 *The Staple of News* performed by the King's Men at the Blackfriars.
- 1628 Paralysis
- 1629 *The New Inn* acted by the King's Men at the Blackfriars
- 1632 *The Magnetic Lady* acted by the King's Men at the Blackfriars
- 1633 *A Tale of a Tub*, revised and acted by the Queen's Men
- 1637 Death – burial in Westminster Abbey.

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## 1.4 CRITICAL EXTRACTS

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### M.C. BRADBROOK

The introduction to *Every Man out of his Humour*, his first manifesto, contains a definition of his new type of comedy, and a justification of his departure from classical models. At the same time he sought constantly to defend his Art, so that the introductions, epilogues and incidental comments in his plays furnish the most complete theory of the drama which the age produced, based not upon scholastic arguments but upon practical experience.

### CLAUDE J. SUMMERS AND TED-LARRY PEBWORTH

Although his final plays were neither popular nor critical successes, they represent continued experimentation with theatrical form. When he died, he left an unfinished manuscript of a pastoral drama, *The Sad Shepherd*, perhaps his most lyrical dramatic composition. He continued writing non dramatic poetry in his last years, too, and his final poems show no great diminution of poetic power. Perhaps most remarkably, they avoid despair and sentimentality, embracing instead quiet dignity and gentle humor.

### RENU JUNEJA

Jonson began with the traditional New Comedy, largely affirmative in its conclusion, moved to satire, thence to irony, and finally concluded with comedies which have

rich symbolic and ritualistic overtones....Insofar as Jonson's world view is consistent, his norms of judgement constant, his universe may be said to be unchanging.

### HERFORD AND SIMPSON

But no earlier British poet had so truly reigned, or been commemorated at his passing, with honours so signal, on purely literary grounds, as Jonson... A square flag of blue marble was alone to be seen, rudely inscribed with the legend: 'O rare Ben Jonson'... That brief vernacular ejaculation, so naively human in its contrast with the sententious Latin epitaphs around conveys the impression made by Jonson upon his age more vividly than any formal obituary... The Jacobean world saw in this doughty champion of unpopular traditions the most incisive individual personality, the most commanding personal force which had, within its memory, mingled in the world of letters. For it, he was not the assertor of commonplace, but the 'rare', the incomparable, the unique, Ben Jonson.

#### *F. H. MARES (1967)*

He was a public figure, a man of strong (sometimes overbearing) character, arrogant, opinionated, disputatious, convivial, but of great courage, honesty, and integrity, and surprising tenderness and delicacy of feeling... This independence is like Jonson's own, who served the court for years without ever seriously compromising his own integrity, who could beg from great men or dedicate to great ladies in a tone that never allows compliment to decline into flattery. When Jonson prepared his text for the printer of the folio he did not write in all the details of stage-business, especially if they were clear from the dialogue... It is the assumption of this edition that the 1616 folio represents Jonson's considered intention...

#### D.H. CRAIG

In the early part of his career, when he was establishing himself as a writer of humorous comedies and as the English Horace, his emphasis is positive, stressing the reforming and innovative aspects of his drama. In 1605, in his *Volpone* prologue Jonson defines his allegiance to classicism negatively, as an act of opposition to contemporary popular culture... The failure of *Sejanus* on stage in 1605 was the key event in this development it.

#### D.V.K. RAGHAVACHARYULU

Ben Jonson's famed erudition was thus organic and functional to his world – view of which all his work as a dramatist was paradigmatic. In his understanding of tradition and individuality, Ben Jonson is astoundingly modern, which explains the recent sea-change in his critical reception, long overshadowed by the Shakespeare Goliath.

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## 1.5 QUESTIONS

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1. What was Jonson's contribution to the status of plays in England?
2. Write notes on : a) Comedy of Humours, b) The War of the Theatres.
3. Sketch the personality of Jonson.
4. Why did so many of Jonson's plays, in spite of their success, involve him in controversies ?
5. Comment on Jonson's stated goals in the realm of comedy.
6. What are the aspects of Jacobean society depicted in Jonson's plays ?
7. Identify the concerns of Jonson's mature comedies.
8. How was Jonson treated by men of letters in his last days?



9. Point out the nature of recent assessments of Jonson's career.  
10. What was Jonson's contribution to the status of plays in England?

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## 1.6 ANNOTATION PASSAGES

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Annotate the following passages with reference to context.

- i) But I shall put you in mind, sir, at Pie Corner,  
Taking your meal of stem in from cooks' stalls,  
Where, like the father of hunger, you did walk  
Piteously costive, with your pinched-horn nose,  
And your complexion of the Roman wash,  
Stuck full of black and melancholic worms,  
Like powder-corns shot at the artillery yard.
- ii) When all your alchemy and your algebra,  
Your minerals, vegetals, and animals,  
Your conjuring, cozening, and your dozen of trades,  
Could not relieve your corpse with so much linen  
Would make you tinder, but to see a fire,  
I ga' 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 practise in —
- iii) No, your clothes.  
Thou vermin, have I ta'en thee out of dung,  
So poor, so wretched, when no living thing  
Would keep thee company but a spider or worse?  
Raised thee from brooms and dust and watering pots?  
Sublimed thee and exalted thee and fixed thee  
I' the third region, called our state of grace?  
Wrought thee to spirit, to quintessence, with pains  
Would twice have won me the philosophers' work?  
Put thee in words and fashion? Made thee fit  
For more than ordinary fellowships?
- iv) Nor any melancholic underscribe,  
Shall tell the Vicar; but a special gentle,  
That is the heir to forty marks a year,  
Consorts with the small poets of the time,  
Is the sole hope of his old grandmother,  
That knows the law, and writes you six fair hands,  
Is a fine clerk, and has his ciphering perfect,  
Will take his oath, o' the Greek Testament,  
If need be, in his pocket, and can court  
His mistress out of Ovid.
- vi) The spirits of dead Holland, living Issac,<sup>o</sup>  
You'd swear were in him; such a vigorous luck  
As cannot be resisted. 'Slight, he'll put  
Six o' your gallants to a cloak, indeed.<sup>o</sup>
- vii) O, good sir!  
There must a world of ceremonies pass,  
You must be bathed and fumigated first;

Besides, the Queen of Fairy does not rise  
Till it be noon.

- viii) 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,  
Nor washes it in muscadel and grains,  
Nor buries it in gravel underground,  
Wrapped up in greasy leather or pissed clouts,<sup>o</sup>  
But keeps it in fine lily-pots, that opened,  
Smell like conserve of roses, or French beans.<sup>o</sup>  
He has his maple block, his silver tongs,  
Winchester pipes, and fire of juniper.<sup>o</sup>  
A neat, spruce, honest fellow, and no goldsmith.<sup>o</sup>
- ix) By a rule, Captain,  
In metoposcopy, which I do work by,  
A certain star i'the forehead, which you see not.  
Your chestnut or your olive-coloured face  
Does never fail, and your long ear doth promise  
I knew't by certain spots too, in his teeth,  
And on the nail of his mercurial finger.
- x) The thumb, in chiromany, we give Venus;  
The forefinger to Jove; the midst, to Saturn;  
The ring to Sol; the least, to Mercury;  
Who was the lord, sir, of his horoscope,  
His house of life being Libra, which foreshowed,<sup>o</sup>  
He should be a merchant, and should trade with balance.
- xi) ...There is a ship now, coming from Ormus,<sup>o</sup>  
That shall yield him such a commodity  
Of drugs — This is the west, and this the south?
- xii) Why, now, you smoky persecuter of nature!  
Now do you see that something's to be done,  
Besides your beech-coal and your corsive waters,  
Your crosslets, crucibles, and cucurbites?  
You must have stuff brought home to you to work on?
- xiii) This is the day I am to perfect for him  
The *magisterium*, our great work, the stone,<sup>o</sup>  
And yield it, made, into his hands: of which  
He has this month talked as he were possessed.  
And now he's dealing pieces on't away.
- xiv) Methinks I see him entering ordinaries,  
Dispensing for the pox; and plaguy houses,  
Reaching his dose; walking Moorfields for lepers;<sup>o</sup>  
And offering citizens' wives pomander-bracelets<sup>o</sup>  
As his preservative, made of the elixir;  
Searching the spittle, to make old bawds young;  
And the highways for beggars to make rich.
- xv) He will make  
Nature ashamed of her long sleep, when art,  
Who's but a stepdame, shall do more than she,  
In her best love to mankind ever could.  
If his dream last he'll turn the age to gold.