

Every Man in His Humour

Ben Jonson

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Every Man in His Humour is a 1598 play by the English playwright Ben Jonson. The play belongs to the subgenre of the "humours comedy," in which each major character is dominated by an overriding humour or obsession. In general outline, this play follows Latin models quite closely. In the main plot, a gentleman named Kno'well, concerned for his son's moral development, attempts to spy on his son, a typical city gallant; however, his espionage is continually subverted by the servant, Brainworm, whom he employs for this purpose. These types are clearly slightly Anglicized versions of ancient types of Greek New Comedy, namely the senex, the son, and the slave. In the subplot, a merchant named Kitely suffers intense jealousy, fearing that his wife is cuckolding him with some of the wastrels brought to his home by his brother-in-law, Wellbred. The characters of these two plots are surrounded by various "humorous" characters, all in familiar English types: the irascible soldier, country gull, pretentious pot-poets, surly water-bearer, and avuncular judge all make an appearance. The play works through a series of complications which culminate when the justice, Clement, hears and decides all of the characters' various grievances, exposing each of them as based in humour, misperception, or deceit.



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