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## Volpone as a Dark Comedy.

Out of the great comedies of Volpone Jonson, Volpone is the most powerfully constructed, in the tradition of the morality plays, with a violent attack on cupidity, meanness and Machiavellism, which was all projected through his anti-romantic comedy. As to ~~as well~~ acquainted with the ancient Greek and Roman writers, his theory of comedy ~~was~~ <sup>was a</sup> result of his deep study of Greek and Roman writers. His theory was also a result of his dissatisfaction with the prevalent English comedy of the times which was romantic and episodic.

In the comedy prevalent during the times entertainment was the sole aim, but this was devoid of <sup>any rules</sup> any social or moral purpose and of any specific unity. Because of this reason comedy was considered superior to tragedy, which too had several defects but its <sup>of the non which</sup> rules were taken from the <sup>ancient</sup> writers of Gr. & Roman tragedies.

Jonson with an aim to give comedy a definite rule, set himself to write his own comic drama, which have since then been regarded as the best models of <sup>neo</sup> classical comedy or his Anti-Romantic comedy. "The parts of a comedy are the same with a tragedy and the end is partly the same," said Jonson. "for they both delight and teach." Hence the interpreters of Jonson made their readers believe that tragedy works out its moral force by effecting pity & fear, and comedy by ridiculing follies and vices of human beings. Comedy generally creates laughter at the end by making the lesser faults of human nature look ridiculous. The purpose behind his comedies as Jonson has already declared is a social purpose, a satirical purpose, a classical purpose, a moral purpose and a national and realistic purpose. Thus Jonson's comedies

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time, place & action, the unity of time, moral attitude, satire & realism of delight and not mere laughter should be the entertainment, generally and lastly his emphasis on humorous plot-construction.

deals with real life characters, <sup>in</sup> ~~with~~ <sup>in</sup> their deeds and actions. This idea of life has been stated by Jonson in his very first successful comedy 'Every Man in His Humour', where he says;

~~to quote~~ "She would show an image of the times.  
And report with human follies, not with crimes!"

Of all the plays 'Volpone' is the most painfully constructed and is in the tradition of the morality plays. The cynical human nature that Jonson presents here is very much like the French 'theatre raisonné', for which school Jonson has created striking models. The central character V is a rich, old, childless bachelor, who delighted by his gold, uses it as a form of enjoyment against his false friends, who are interested in 'V' just because of his wealth. Mosca helps 'V' carry out his plan, and each of the legacy hunters are ready to sacrifice their honor, child and wife to obtain the rich man's inheritance. In the end all the legacy hunters, including Mosca and 'V' are punished. But it is only Volpone who takes it

spottingly and so Jonson name this play as a comedy.

Jonson wrote all his scenes in <sup>\*1</sup> ~~London~~ and made his characters English people, giving them real racy, colloquial language and life-style. He deviated from this only once in Volpone because here he had to show a character who would prostitute his wife for legacy hunting. This would have gone against the national sentiment, and so Volpone's scenes are set in the degenerate period of Italian life.

Morality play  
story of the  
play



realistic background of London life. But the character that he wanted to show here, where against the national sentiment & so he shifted the scene to Venice. This he did with when he portrayed a person disowning his very loyal son for the sake of gold and another selling his wife and declaring her a whore, just for the greed of gold. But as R.S. Kroe rightly points out "Wherever he may place the scene, Jonson's eye is ever on London."

As far as realism in character is concerned we should not forget that Jonson's realism is at best an external realism, and it is a narrow kind of realism as it ignores the human heart. His realism takes into account like that of Dickens only the men of the lower strata of the contemporary London society.

The purpose behind writing a comedy, as already mentioned by Jonson, has been social, satirical, classical, moral, national and realistic in deeds & language of men. To explain it further we take instances from his works.

Social Purpose - "She would shew an image of the times  
And sport with human follies rather than crimes."

Satirical Purpose - "I'll strip the ropp'd follies of the times  
Naked as at their birth  
With a whip of steel  
Right wounding lashes in their iron ribs."

After Volpone he declared that his comedy would be 'a quick comedy refined as best critics have designed. And here the classical purpose "The laws of time, place, persons he observeth  
From no useful rule he severeth."

To aim at the moral purpose he said that his comedy would both amuse as well as teach a lesson. (The Silent Woman)  
The ends of all, who for the scene do write  
They, or should be profit & delight."

The prologue to The Alchemist once more declares the National & Realistic Purpose behind a Jonsonian comedy -  
"Our scene is London.  
No country's mirth is better than our own"