

ABSTRACT

A Comparative Study of the Major Comedies of William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson

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This research paper aims at presenting a comparative study of Shakespeare's As You Like It, Twelfth Night and The Merchant of Venice; and Jonson's Volpone, The Alchemist and Bartholomew Fair.

It demonstrates through the three chapters (1) Intention: Explicit and Implicit; (2) The Language of Their Art; and (3) Characterization -- that both are great comic dramatists with different styles and distinctively different visions of their world.

Chapter One involves a discussion of the twentieth century theories of literature which disregard knowledge of the author's intention as a prerequisite for objective criticism. Whether or not an author states his intention, the critic can discover various facets of his intention. Jonson's works, for example, are not always faithful to the intention delineated in his Induction to Bartholomew Fair, his Dedication to Volpone and his Prologues. Implicit in these works are several aspects of his unstated intention but there is a panoply of ideas that he wishes to convey and which the critic can deduce. Chapter Two explores the authors' handling of language to the enrichment of their comedy

in the artistry of prose and poetry. Their use of imagery, myth, irony, jargon, classicism, motifs, nomenclature, and allusions, among other devices will be discussed as building blocks for the perfecting of their style. In Chapter Three there is a discussion of the authors' fools and their roles in the plays' development.