The London City: The Treatment of His Character in English Realistic Comedy 1593-1640

by

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Abstract

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The first half of the seventeenth century was a period of critical social readjustment in England. Medieval concepts of the nature of the ideal society were being challenged at every point by the reality of a daily existence in which the reins of power were passing from the hands of the old landed aristocracy into the hands of the emerging mercantile class. The transition period was one of tension, for the aristocracy clung tenaciously to its hereditary privileges. In the struggle, the writers of realistic comedy allied themselves, for both ideological and economic reasons, on the conservative side, the side of the old nobility. The treatment of the character of the London citizen (or "cit" as Shirley calls him in The Gamester) in the comedies of London life reflects the conservative bias of the comic playwrights.

The citizens of London had emerged during the latter half of the reign of Elizabeth as a pressure group of considerable strength, deriving their power from wealth acquired in trade (both domestic and foreign) which experienced unprecedented expansion during this period. Throughout the reigns of James I and Charles I the Londoners exploited every means in their struggle to acquire the political power which would enable them to protect their interests through control of trade policies, which formerly had been part of the prerogative of the Crown. As their
economic base lay in trade rather than in land, so their ideological base was found in the Puritan theology of Calvin rather than in the conservative tenets which the Church of England had inherited from medieval Catholicism. The struggle of the London citizens to liberate themselves from restrictive government policies thus took on religious as well as economic implications.

Early in the period between 1598 and 1640 some playwrights like Heywood and Dekker still sought to appeal to the citizen audiences of the public theaters. Despite the disapproval of the public officials of the city and the Puritan clergymen, the public theaters remained popular by presenting the old fashioned histories and comedies which appealed to the common taste. The citizen is presented as a hero in a number of realistic comedies. But he is a type of citizen of whom the upper classes would approve. He is generally a small craftsman, who because he rejoices in his city and his citizen status, does not seek to advance himself or his family beyond the limits of his own class. Nor does he seek to entrap unwary gentlemen by manipulating his economic power. Rather he supports the status quo, accepting without question the division between commoner and noble, and accepting also the privileges of a man of gentle birth.

As the lines of social conflict became clearer, it was apparent that the dramatist had to appeal to the aristocratic audience of the private theaters to be financially
successful. Thus many of the realistic comedies of this period patently celebrate the gentle classes at the expense of the mercantile classes of the City. The dramatists use the cit as a blocking character who must be eliminated from the play or converted to the gentle view of existence in order for the equilibrium of the comic world to be restored. The citizen is shown to be dominated by the sin of avarice; he becomes a usurer, bent on ruining young gentlemen by pandering to their vices in order to get them into debt. Or he is shown as a socially aggressive man who, violating all the tenets of correct social behavior for one of low station, pushes himself forward by his wealth into the society of his betters. Such characters are always defeated by agents of a more traditional world, thus the conservative position in English social theory is upheld by the writers of realistic comedy from 1598-1640.
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The London Civ: The Treatment of His Character in English Realistic Comedy 1598-1640

Introduction

When Northrop Frye attempts to schematize literature in his *Anatomy of Criticism* he speaks of realistic comedy as belonging to what he calls the *low mimetic mode*. Of this mode he says: "If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us; we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the plot the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience. This treatment gives us the hero of the *low mimetic mode*, of most comedy and of realistic fiction."  

Given further his statement that "The theme of the comic is the integration of society...," it appears to me that an inquiry concerning the relations between the fictional society portrayed in the drama and the existential society upon which it depends for its realism is a valid pursuit for students of literature. Ben Jonson, in the prologue to *Every Man in His Humor*, expresses a similar thought in different words, when he says that he will employ "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,.../" Unless we understand the times, we can hardly expect to comprehend the image.

I have limited my subject, at the suggestion of Dr. Carroll Camden, to an investigation of the treatment of
a single type in the real society of late Elizabethan and early Stuart periods, the London cit. What I shall attempt to show is that the dramatic treatment of the citizen of London in the realistic comedy of the years from 1598 to 1642 reflected the conservative point of view in respect to the social struggle going on in England. That social struggle was the result of the decay of a medieval world order that had been perpetuated on the surface during the Tudor period and the rise of a new power structure which had its economic base in the counting-houses of the London citis and its ideological base in the theology of Calvin. The character of the citizen is molded by the desire of the theater audiences, which became more and more exclusively aristocratic as the period wore on, to see demonstrated in a concrete fashion the validity of the social barrier which the gentry erected to distinguish themselves from the wealthy commoner. I shall try to show that the realistic comic dramatist was, to a substantial degree, a propagandist for the preservation of an outmoded and static social structure in a world which was becoming daily more dynamic. As such, he employed the traditional form of old morality play and developed the form which would become the Restoration comedy of manners, using them as the Elizabethan playwrights had used the history play, to support the Establishment. As propagandist he appealed from a less than ideal present to an idealized past,
celebrating the London cit as medieval craftsman and small shopkeeper and condemning him as large-scale entrepreneur and manipulator of substantial economic power: idealizing him as a servant of the gentry, rebuking him when he threatens to become its master.
Code to Play References

iv.

5. **CW** - Brome - *The City Wit* (London, 1873)
8. **EMIH** - Jonson - *Every Man in His Humour* (Brooke & Paradise, New Haven, 1933)
14. **ITNGP** - Dekker - *If this be not a Good Play, the Devil is in it* (Fredson Bowers, Cambridge, 1958)
15. **K of BP** - Beaumont - *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Brooke and Paradise, Boston, 1933)
17. **MC** - Brome - *A Mad Couple Well Matched* (London, 1873)
19. NW to POD - Massinger - A New Way to Pay Old Debts (Brooke and Paradise, New Haven, 1933)

20. RG - Dekker and Middleton - The Roaring Girl (Fredson Bowers, Cambridge, 1958)

21. SH - Dekker - The Shoemaker's Holiday (Brooke and Paradise, New Haven, 1933)


24. WH - Dekker - Westward Hoe (Fredson Bowers, Cambridge, 1958)
Chapter 1: The Social Backgrounds of Realistic Comedy

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business:
He shall stand before kings."
Proverbs 22:29

When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, she left to her
Stuart successors a multitude of problems which they were
totally incapable of handling or even comprehending.
But these were not problems that had sprung up overnight;
rather they were natural developments from policies which
the Tudor monarchs, and particularly Elizabeth herself,
had pursued to provide for the security of the Crown. Many
of these policies had been economic, and had involved the
merchants and artisans and shopkeepers of London. One of
the Stuarts' biggest problems was the London cit.

Although the capital of England was London, the center
of the highly centralized government of Elizabeth was
Westminster, a few miles to the Southwest. It was here,
to the court, that the nobility and would-be courtiers
flocked. But this was not the true London, nor were the
nobles true Londoners. The real London lay in the City,
still medieval in appearance, which had become the economic
hub of a country that was experiencing financial boom
without precedent. The true Londoners were the merchants,
the craftsmen, and the shopkeepers, whose membership in
the formidable livery companies rendered them "free" of
the city, thus citizens. It is with these "cits," the
merchants and artisans as they were shown to be in the
drama of the period and as they are to be found in historical records, that this thesis will be concerned. Those other Londoners, their wives, and those potential citizens, the London apprentices, although perhaps more popular with the dramatists, will be treated only in passing, as they have been dealt with extensively elsewhere.¹

The Elizabethan city was interested in making money and Elizabeth's economic policies helped them to do it. One of the first acts of her reign was to call in the currency which had been seriously debased during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary. As Elizabeth Burton has pointed out, Elizabeth inherited her grandfather's respect for money.² She was also shrewd in choosing her advisers, and for most of her reign her chief financial adviser was the noted economist Sir Thomas Gresham. Elizabeth's new coinage was issued at the old sterling standard of purity which stabilized the value of money. Burton notes: "Economic order was brought out of economic chaos. Confidence was restored and, incredible as it may seem to us, the government made a profit of £14,000 on the deal."³

The growth of London's population was a significant factor in her economic development. Both Louis Wright and M. T. Jones-Davies offer statistics which, although they may not be scientifically accurate, do give at least a general idea of the numbers of people in London.

"Of all the urban developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the growth of London was the most phenomenal and did the most to color the whole
of Elizabethan civilization. In Chaucer's prime, London had a population of probably fewer than 30,000 inhabitants. The population in 1563 has been estimated at 93,276; in 1580, 123,034; in 1593-95, 152,478; in 1605, 224,275; in 1622, 272,207; in 1634, 339,824. Since the population of the whole of England in 1600 was only about 4,400,000, the importance of London in relation to the rest of the country is at once apparent, for the capital was many times the size of any other city in the realm. In less than three-quarters of a century London had more than trebled in size, expanding from a provincial walled town into a cosmopolitan city stirring with business, surrounded by busy suburbs.

"...il passe à 123,034 âmes en 1580, à 152,478 en 1593 - 5, est triple en 1620 - 2 et, vers 1632, à terme de la vie de notre Dekker, s'élève à 317,097."

It must be remembered, when one looks at these figures, that the population of the capital was regularly cut into sharply by the ravages of bubonic plague. This fact implies that the influx of workers from the provinces must have been tremendous. This emigration from the land was a result not only of the perennial lure of the city, but of the increasing numbers of gentry who were enforcing policies of enclosure, turning their land from subdivided farm land to more profitable pastureage.

So trade expanded rapidly, patronized by the Crown. Of course, Elizabeth was not by any means a disinterested party in the matter. G. W. O. Woodward reports: "Another very substantial portion of the royal revenue in the Tudor period was derived from the duties imposed upon trade, and this fact largely accounts for the abiding interest of the crown in the state of commerce...Eliza-
beth continually displayed an active, and by no means disinterested, interest in the development of new trades, for when trade flourished, the Crown shared in the prosperity of its merchant subjects. "6 The Crown granted charters to all overseas merchant companies, including the great East India Company (1601):

"Elizabeth, by the grace of God, etc...Whereas our most dear and loving cousin, George, earl of Cumberland, and our well-beloved subjects, Sir John Hart, of London, knight, [217 others] have...been petitioners unto us for our royal assent and license to be granted unto them, that they, at their own adventures, costs and charges...by way of traffic and merchandise to the East India...greatly tendering to the honour of our nation, the wealth of our people, and the encouragement of them and others of our loving subjects in their good enterprises, for the increase of our navigation and the advancement of lawful traffic to the benefit of our commonwealth...it is granted..."7

Trade was no longer merely inter-European, nor was it dominated by the Hanseatic League to the North and Venice to the East. British ships carrying woolen cloths, clothing and hides in particular, but all the other products of British enterprise as well, traded in the Baltic, the Mediterranean, along the Atlantic coast of Africa and in both the Indies. A. W. Ward tells us: "Companies of craftsmen under the authority of the crown took the place of the old municipal guilds; attempts at a better technical education (not for the first time) were set afoot; and a select immigration of skilled foreign workmen in special branches of production, was encouraged. English trade abroad, so far as possible, was protected, and a vigorous banking system was called
The monetary benefit of all this protected trade was almost entirely realized by the merchants of London, while the small master craftsman lost influence proportionately. Christopher Hill speaks of this development in his book *The Century of Revolution*. "London profited most of all from these developments. Thanks to the Tudor peace, to the establishment of law and order and standard weights and measures, to good internal communications, the home market expanded steadily though we have no statistics to measure it and so are apt to attach excessive importance to foreign trade. By 1600 London handled $7/8$ of English trade, and its exports (excluding short-cloths) increased $5$ times over the next forty years. By 1640 most of the richest men in the land were city men. London's economic dominance of the country was unique in Europe."*9

With the unprecedented expansion of trade, and for London, of population, there came inflation. Rising prices created substantial social pressures. The rising prices put money in the hands of the merchants, the speculators, the men who, because of lack of consistent government regulation in this area could corner the market in even so basic a commodity as corn, and fix prices as they chose. The price of corn rose six times between 1540-1640.10 This sort of endeavor, of course, required considerable capital, but in the absence of a really stable banking system, many London merchants considered that their safest
position in the market was having their money invested, in land, (this required a great deal of money), in plate (subject to theft) or in loans to other merchants, or in goods. In the last two economic positions, the merchant-investor was extremely susceptible to fluctuations in the market. George Unwin, in his chapter on Commerce and Coinage in *The Cambridge History of English Literature* says of the state of internal trade:

"The typical working man of the period was the small master, who worked not for a wage but for a profit and who was at the same time a small-holder producing part of his own food. He was not only a worker, but a trader, the smallest link in a chain of traders who maintained the connection between production and consumption. He was a small capitalist, who needed the cooperation of larger capitalists, in order to keep in touch with supply and demand. When this dependence became oppressive it took the form of debt—of an advance made on extortionate terms. In itself an advance of capital was not an abnormal or oppressive act. It represented, in fact, merely the beginnings of that system of having industrial enterprise on credit, which has since then been enormously developed."

The catch is, of course, the nature of the terms of the advance—extortionate. This meant usury, (not only in the Elizabethan, but also in the modern sense), and was the basis of many of the dramatic attacks against the merchant. So significant was this particular aspect of Stuart economics to the playwrights of our period, that a chapter will be devoted to the subject later.

The people caught in the squeeze of inflation were those at both extremes of the social scale. The workers for wages were in the worst situation, for they had no power, no voice through which their appeal might be made. Becoming desperate, they would turn to robbery and vagabondage. The nature and extent of the problem may be
seen by looking at the quantity of poor-law legislation produced during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I and Charles II. At the other end of the social spectrum were the great landowners. The more progressive of them adopted the new capitalistic techniques and applied them to their estates and, in a market which favored those producing to sell, survived. But for many, tradition proved an insurmountable obstacle in the path of progress. Trained to regard service to one’s country, either in the military or at court or as justices of the peace, as the only path for a gentleman, they were unwilling and generally unable to handle the monetary details of their estates, which, left in the hands of stewards, provided handsomely for the latter and less and less handsomely for the owners themselves. Furthermore, many landowners rented to tenants, who worked the land, on extended leases, with fixed rent for the length of the lease. In a period of inflation, such an arrangement would amount to a substantial loss to the owner. The nobility had long been accustom to an extravagant manner of living, and in order to maintain their standards the nobles depleted their capital to supplement income. A contemporary observer Fynes Moryson wrote, “Gentlemen disdaining traffic and living in idleness, do in this course daily sell their patrimonies...The buyers are for the most part citizens and vulgar men.” Unlike the workers, however, the nobility were vocal, and employed all the means at
their disposal to keep the mercantile class in its place.

"Throughout almost all of the social legislation of the Tudor period," Unwin writes, "we may see the England of the past erecting vain barriers against the England of the future." The Anglican church reinforced what Tilliard calls "The Elizabethan World Picture" from the pulpit, and the realistic comic dramatists, attempted to reinforce it from the stage. A later chapter of this thesis will be particularly concerned with the dramatic treatment of the class prejudice between the gentry and the rising middle class.

Despite the opposition of the nobility, who represented the country in the House of Lords, the power of the London merchants grew, for the alliance with the city had proved to be very profitable to the Crown. Thomas Burke states bluntly, in his book The English Townsman: "With the rapid increase in foreign trade, the merchants and manufacturers soon became almost as powerful as the church and the old nobles. They brought about the rise of the middle class, a class whose strength lay in coffers and vaults." A contemporary reporter, Thomas Wilson, is more specific: "...it is well knowne that att this time there are in London some merchants worth £100,000 and he is not accounted rich that cannot reach to £50,000 or neer itt." Elizabeth Burton has pointed out the necessity of understanding the wealth of the Elizabethan merchant in modern terms. "But nowadays even knights, gentlemen, merchants and other wealthy citizens could afford costly
cupboards of plate worth five or six hundred or even a thousand pounds.' To understand what this represents in today's money, one would have to multiply by at least fifteen." She continues in a note: "To arrive at the equivalent in terms of the pound sterling today is not easy. It has been variously estimated that one should multiply by a figure of from fifteen to thirty. A. L. Rowse gives the latter figure, while the American historian Denis Meadows gives 15. The discrepancy can be accounted for by the fact that prices rose by 100 per cent between 1545 and 1645."16

Needless to say, a merchant who was worth £100,000 pounds in Elizabethan times would have been a man of no small consequence. This conclusion is made even more obvious when one notes that the income of the Queen herself, with which she had to run the entire government, was less than £400,000 one year after the Armada, in 1589.17 The merchants and artisans of London were completely aware of their power and were exceedingly jealous about maintaining their position and privileges, and demonstrating them to all and sundry by means of public display and ceremony. This display of power was particularly important to Londoners since merchants, who were not generally accounted gentlemen by the gentry in the sense of being aristocratic were in a manner of speaking only second-class citizens.

London, the City, was in point of fact a kingdom within a kingdom, and the chief official, the Lord Mayor,
was a petty monarch within his domain. Even the king of England could not enter the precincts of the City without asking leave of the Lord Mayor. Nor did the monarch have the authority to appoint the administrative officers of the capital; they were elected by the citizens, that is, those "free" of the city by reason of their membership in the livery companies, those powerful successors to the medieval guilds. The contemporary author, Thomas Wilson, records the following concerning the state of citizens:

"These, by reason of the great privileges they enjoy, every city being, as it were, a Common Wealth amongst themselves, no other officer of the Queen nor any other haveing authority to entermelde amongst them, must needs be exceeding well to pass. They are not taxed but by there owne officers of there owne brotherode, every art having one or 2 of his owne which are continually of the counsell of the Citty in all affaires to see that nothing pass contrary to their profitt..."¹⁸ It is clear from this and other sources, that the City and the administration thereof were jealous not only of the gentry, but also of their rights vis à vis the Crown.

The Stuarts were unable to manage their City affairs with any degree of success. Where Elizabeth had been careful with her money even to the point of stinginess, the Stuarts behaved as though there were an endless supply of it. Further, they were personally and officially poor credit risks. Hill writes: "Loans were not repaid
for decades. That made to the King by the corporation of London in 1617, for instance, was paid off in 1628, and then only in the form of crown lands. In 1640 the City refused to lend to the government because of its resentment of past treatment." The Crown demanded forced loans, and billeted troops on the unwilling citizens, thus creating demand for liquid funds, and causing financial crises in the London market. Where Elizabeth had created some degree of stability in the realm of finance, her successors managed to create chaos, and the economic pendulum swung wildly from speculative overconfidence to despair, from boom to crash.

The most consistent of James's economic policies, perhaps the most disastrous and certainly the most unpopular, was that of arbitrarily establishing monopolies for the manufacture or distribution of goods, which he handed out to his favorites, usually men of little business acumen, who sought only the maximum profit to themselves from the administration of their grants. This policy affected every man, woman and child in the realm who consumed anything, even something so basic as salt. Such practice was particularly galling to the business community, which saw a forced rise in the price of goods which benefited neither consumer, producer, nor merchant but only a court parasite. James' support of the monopolies of trade to certain parts of the world held by the major trading companies tended to concentrate the
wealth of the City in the hands of a few fabulously wealthy men, and to freeze the formerly fluid social lines within the merchant community itself, by hindering the expansion of small business enterprises in order to protect the large ones. Although Elizabeth had granted some monopolies, James's policies proliferated them to the extent that not only the borough representatives to Parliament but the shire knights as well, objected to them in 1624:

"An act concerning monopolies...Forasmuch as your most excellent Majesty, in your royal judgment and of your blessed disposition to the weal and quiet of your subjects, did in the year of our Lord God 1619, publish in print to the whole realm...that all grants of monopolies...are contrary to your majesty's laws...yet nevertheless, upon misinformations and untrue pretences for the public good, many such grants have been unduly obtained...be it declared and enacted...that all monopolies and all commissions...for the sole buying, selling, working or using of anything within this realm...shall be utterly void and of none effect."  

James I had committed a cardinal sin against the English economic community. He had demonstrated that his name on a contract was of no value.

We have, then, attempted to show the economic community of the London city in the period under discussion. We have seen the development, under the protective policies of Elizabeth, of an economic system much more modern than medieval and of a strengthened bourgeoisie class. We have observed the shift of the monetary basis of power from the old nobility to the city merchant-capitalists and to the careful farmer
producing for the market. We have shown, finally, the frustration felt by the business community under the erratic economic policies of the Stuarts. It remains only to point out that the merchants of London were without a substantial voice in Parliament. The City had four representatives, but the balance of political power was in the hands of the nobles and the country gentry. The merchants were thus unable to protect their own political interests except by illegitimate means, such as bribery and coercion. Naturally, social tensions were the result.

This was the economic situation. But men, even solid men of affairs, such as the London cits of the period in question undoubtedly were, are never entirely controlled by monetary realities. They were also influenced by ideas, affected both by the strong claims which tradition made upon them and by the new ideas of the Renaissance and of Reformation theology. They were influenced, doubtless, by what they read, by political developments at home and abroad, by what they heard bruited about The Royal Exchange, and by what they heard from the pulpit, and what they heard and read, they accepted or rejected by comparing it with their own experience.

What the London merchants and the other citizens would have heard from an orthodox Anglican pulpit from 1598-1640 would have been, in the realm of social theory at least, something on the order of what Tillyard writes in *The Elizabethan World Picture*. 
"The point here is that so many things are included simultaneously within this 'degree' or order, and so strong a sense is given of their interconnections. The passage [Ulysses's speech on order from Troilus and Cressida] is at once cosmic and domestic. The sun, the king, primogeniture hang together; the war of the planets is echoed by the war of the elements on earth; the homely brotherhoods or guilds in cities are found along with an oblique reference to creation out of the confusion of chaos. Here is a picture of immense and varied activity, constantly threatened with dissolution, yet constantly preserved from it by a superior unifying power." 21

Unity, political order, and stability were the social ideals of the day. Society was understood to be organic and hierarchical and the whole duty of man was to serve to the best of his ability in the particular hierarchical level to which his Creator had assigned him and to render honor and obedience to his superiors. This view was essentially a medieval one, which the Anglican church had inherited from the Roman church at the time of the English reformation. It was a view which dealt perfectly with a society of two levels, aristocracy and agricultural commonalty, whose places in the order were assigned by inheritance. It could not, however, deal with a powerful, mobile middle class, where position in the social order depended on the success or failure of a mercantile speculation. The Elizabethan world picture simply did not have room for an ambitious man who was not of gentle birth.

When the London cit listened to an orthodox clergyman, or read Hooker or Raleigh or Elyot's Governor, he must certainly have felt the discrepancy between life as such men portrayed it and living as he observed it. But these were not the only people he heard or read. In the
first place, he probably read the Bible in English, and it was, in all probability, the Geneva Bible, at least until the printing of the King James Version in 1611.

Then there were Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* and various moral tracts, for much literature was to be read more for profit than delight. Louis B. Wright discusses the nature of the middle class reader. "The bourgeois reader liked to be amused, but more important was the demand for information of every conceivable sort...Although the deepening shades of Puritanism increased bourgeois interest in godly literature, and the gradual accentuation of utilitarianism sent the tradesman scurrying for 'useful' books, the middle-class reader never lost his taste for diverse reading. Fashion never dictated to him set types and forms of literature, but he continued to seek out whatever he felt was of interest and profit."22 He continued to listen to diverse opinions which were preached about the City on the subject of religion and to lend his support to that form which dealt most successfully with his life as he saw it. The Puritans found their major supporters in the City.

Puritanism, which advocated the thorough remodeling of the English church on the order of the Presbyterian church of Scotland, had been present, more or less, from the time of the initial split of the Anglican Communion from the Church of Rome. The guardians of the child-king Edward VI had pushed the English church toward a more
extreme form of Protestantism, rejecting the *via media* to which Henry had subscribed. Mary's return of the country to the fold of Rome had done nothing to heal the breach, but had resulted in the exile of many English Protestants and the terrible persecution of those left at home. Perhaps the most influential development which came out of the Marian persecution was the publication of Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, in 1563. The returning exiles brought back to the English puritan movement a thorough grounding in the teachings of the Genevan reformer, John Calvin. The Elizabethan settlement in reality settled nothing, it merely provided an opportunity for those of differing opinion to escape any sort of official harassment with making a token gesture of submission to the Anglican church by attending services and subscribing to the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. By the time the Stuarts came to the throne, Puritanism was a substantial force in the land. But James I had had enough of Scottish Presbyterianism at home, and he was unreceptive even to the most moderate proposals for reform in the structure of the English Church, since it fitted in so conveniently with his theory of the divine right of kings in a hierarchical society. The new king had scarcely mounted the throne when the English Puritans presented the new king with the Millenary Petition in 1601, requesting a few minor changes in ceremonies; James placed himself on the side of the high Anglican bishops, telling the Puritans
that they must conform to the Church of England or he would "harry them out of the land." Thus the Puritan, during the period from 1598 to 1640, lived under a cloud of official disapproval. Nevertheless the movement gained in strength throughout those years.

The nature of the Puritan appeal to men of the citizen class is fairly obvious. Although Calvinism and Capitalism may not be causally related as was proposed by the German scholar Max Weber, in his book *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, nevertheless the two great movements of the modern world grew side by side at this time and seem to have appealed to the same aspects of the nature of man.

Medieval social theory predicated a solid, organically conceived communal relationship among men, which is readily seen to be at odds with the basic premises and practices of the growing mercantile element in English society. A member of a community based on agriculture which had little in the way of crop diversification and little scientific knowledge which might add some variety to farming procedure, obviously took a multitude of risks in common with his neighbor. There were few agricultural problems that did not affect the whole community, or risks that were not shared in common, at least in so far as the economic life of the area was concerned. Since even the lord of the manor was engaged in agriculture, even he was affected in common with his people by the
amount of rainfall, sunshine, etc. In the growing mercantile communities, and so particularly in London, the individual was more and more isolated, cut off from a set of common hopes and common fears. Competition is a vital part of commercial enterprise in a way that it is not part of a small farming culture, and competition is an isolating factor in a community. The Elizabethan or Stuart merchant in his pursuit of financial success and that more elusive thing, financial security, took his risks as an individual, as a solitary gambler, and he played for exceedingly high stakes, since both profits and risks were great in such a speculative market. The cautious manager, who diversified his ventures and kept a close watch upon profit and loss, naturally stood the greatest chance of being successful, but even the greatest caution might not be sufficient to save a man from financial disaster, as witness the case of Antonio in The Merchant of Venice. The mercantile man was thus very much the man alone with his fears. It was but one more step for this man to feel himself alone with his God; thus the Calvinist tenet coincided nicely with the city's experience of the world. Kemper Fullerton, in commenting upon the Weber thesis mentioned above, writes, "Because of the elimination of all intermediaries between God and man there arises at the very heart of the Calvinistic system a tremendous emphasis upon individualism. That this individualism has played a noble part in the cause
of human liberty is too often forgotten, but logically it is anti-social. It concentrates the attention upon the self, even at times to the extent of evading too intimate friendships as a worship of, or reliance upon the creature."

A second aspect of Calvinist theology which appealed to the man of business was the concept of one's role in the secular world being a 'calling.' Throughout the Middle Ages there had been a traditional prejudice against the man who pursued wealth through merchandising, against the middle-man who created nothing but added his profit to the cost of the goods he bought to sell. This man was guilty of the deadly sin of avarice. The text of Chaucer's Pardoner's sermon, "Radix malorum est cupiditas", was a popular one amongst the clergy. Yet men found satisfaction, both material and psychological, in the successful management of business enterprises. They were conscious of monetary success as a blessing which God in his wisdom had bestowed upon an individual, rather than an evidence of his sinfulness. The Puritan world view saw the end of man as the glorification of God, and maintained that the man who was diligent in his secular role or "calling" and demonstrated his diligence by his success, was in a real way glorifying God. R. H. Tawney points out that in the view of Calvinism "...the Christian must conduct his business with a high seriousness as in itself a kind of religion." If, then, a man's worldly business was his calling,
his means of glorifying God, then that man was justified in devoting himself to that calling and did not need to feel that in concentrating upon his business he was neglecting his duty toward the Deity. Those practices which tended toward the maximization of profits in the economic sphere came to be applied to the whole of life, and developed into a bourgeois code of virtues, a code which contrasted radically with the permissive standards of conduct of the gentle classes and their Anglican pastors. Tawney writes: "Puritanism had its own standards of social conduct, derived partly from the obvious interests of the commercial classes, partly from its conception of the nature of God and the destiny of man. These standards were in sharp antithesis, both to the considerable surviving elements of Feudalism in English society, and to the policy of the authoritarian state, with its ideal of an ordered and graded society whose different members were to be maintained in their traditional states by the pressure and protection of a paternal monarchy."28

At the heart of the bourgeois code of virtues was the concept that in order to glorify God, one must apply His discipline or method to the conduct of one's life as one applied method to the making of profits in the conduct of one's business. The enlarging of profit in business is dependent upon the curtailing of waste. From the point of view of the bourgeois, then, waste becomes a sin. Wasting of one's time, say, in attending the theater, or in writing poetry, or in watching bear-baiting, or in any such amuse-
ment or relaxation, was looked upon as a serious moral offense, as the participant had allowed himself to be drawn away from his calling. Ambition and individualism in the middle class was looked upon askance in the medi-

eval world view because these qualities tended toward the dislocation of classes, but found favor in the eyes of the bourgeois, who regarded both as keys to industriousness.

The nature of Elizabethan and Stuart trade demanded of the merchant a standard of public appearance and conduct that indicated stability in the midst of a permanently unstable situation. The necessity of the business man became the virtue of the Puritan; sober garb and solemn demeanor came to be an outward sign of an inward grace. The danger, of course, was that the sign would become merely a cover for inward corruption.

We have shown in the discussion above the nature of the Calvinist, or Puritan appeal to persons of the bourgeois class and have attempted to point out some of the details of the Puritan scheme of values which would affect the London cit in the conduct of his daily affairs. It remains, however, to make some sort of assessment of the response which the appeal evoked among the people of London and the effect that Puritan psychology and conventions had not only upon class attitudes in general but upon the specific problem of the relationship between the city and the theater.

It is generally agreed among historians that London
was the single most important center of Puritanism in England during the revolution. But that spirit of independence, discipline, and stern morality which was to be called by that name was in evidence in London long before James I came to the throne. The spread of strongly Protestant doctrine within the Church of England had been aided by the Marian persecution, which set the common people of the realm firmly against the church of Rome in the middle years of the 16th century. The Papal bull of 1570 releasing the Catholic subjects of Elizabeth from their allegiance to her stimulated more anti-Papist feeling among the commons, particularly in the capital where political events were felt most strongly. Ronald Bayne notes that the word "Puritan" as applied to private congregations was first used about the year 1567. 29 Holden says that "...faction becomes party as the number of supporters grow, and as intentions are expressed in a coherent program. After about 1572 the Puritans took their place as a major force in English life." 30 In an age in which religious concerns were of paramount importance a powerful dissident religious group was very nearly identical with a powerful dissenting political force, so that it is not difficult to understand the feeling of the government that repressive policies were in order. But repressive measures were ineffective, and they irritated rather than alleviated the problem. Besant writes of London in the early part of Charles's reign: that the
people of London, were nine tenths puritan, or at least strongly protestant and they watched angrily the severance of the ties connecting the church of England with foreign Protestant churches as well as the introduction of rites and ceremonies offensive to the Puritan feeling; the expulsion of Puritan clergy; and so forth. The citizens of London read their Bible, looked at the life around them, compared the church of England with the forms which the Gospels proclaimed as appropriate for Christian worship, listened to Puritan preachers arguing the need for cleansing of church and society, and by and large espoused the Puritan ideals.

Puritanism provided a substantial ideological base for the opposition between the City and the Crown, which existed anyway as a result of governmental attempts to usurp the prerogatives of the citizen. One of the earliest centers of the controversy, which only subsided after an alliance between London and the country power represented by the House of Commons had eliminated the Crown, was the issue of the presence of theaters within the liberties of the city. The reader should keep in mind the fact that London was severely under-represented in Parliament, and that the struggle of the citizens to maintain their right to run their city as they chose was not merely a matter of civic pride (although this was undoubtedly a potent factor), it was a matter of economic necessity. In the 1570s a conflict of interests had arisen between the city and the crown over the building of theaters
within the boundaries of the city, and the city fathers and their successors, in their official capacity (if not in their private lives) never completely got over their opposition to the theater in general; this dispute continued to flare up occasionally throughout the period with which this thesis is particularly concerned. In 1572 a statute was passed declaring that actors not in the service of any nobleman "shalbe taken and adjudged and deemed Roges, Vacabondes and stundy beggars" and subjected to the punishments reserved for these unsavoury types. This official disapproval did not extend, of course, to acting companies patronized by the powerful peers of the realm, but official London was not so scrupulous when it expressed its opposition to a royal warrant which had given Burbage and the company of the Earl of Leicester license to play within the city limits and assigning censorship rights to the office of the Master of the Revels, a court post. William Archer and W. J. Lawrence deal with this particular instance of conflict between London and Westminster, commenting: "But the City Fathers were not inclined to acknowledge the royal jurisdiction within their boundaries. A few months before the date of Burbage's warrant, they had declined a request by the Lord Chamberlain that they would delegate to a nominee of his Lordship their right of licensing places of performance; and on December 6, 1574, seven months after the date of the warrant, they issued
an order asserting their own rights of licensing and censorship, and imposing severe penalties on all who should ignore their authority." It is important to remember that the grounds upon which the city authorities based their public objections to the playhouses and actors were moral ones, more often than political. In the Remembrancia, the series of books preserved by the Town Clerk of the City of London we may read the letters of many Lord Mayors protesting theatrical performances, the wording of which resembles this one of 12 April 1580, from Sir Nicholas Woodrose, Lord Mayor, to Sir Thomas Bromley, Lord Chancellor:

"Howbeit I have further thought it my dutie to informe your Lp and therwith also to have in your honorable remembrance that the players of playes which are used at the Theatre and other places and tumblers and such like are a very superfluous sort of men and of such facultie as the lawes have disallowed, and their exercise of these playes is a great hinderance to the service of God who hath with his mighty hand so lately admonished us of our earnest repentance it is also great corruption of youthe with unchast and wicked matters, occasion of much incontinence...."

It was felt by many of the more sober minds of the City and of the Common Council that plays were devices of the devil and remnants of popish idolatry; that they were a corrupting influence upon the unsophisticated populace, and that, further, they provided opportunity for a multitude of petty crimes easily perpetrated in large crowds of people, and that, finally, they contributed incidentally to the spreading of the plague. The dispute between London and the theaters was not dead in 1600, when
complaints from the city provoked an order from Elizabeth's privy council "to restrain the excessive number of play-houses and the immoderate use of stage plays in and about the city."35 It is again a problem of morals as well as a problem of administration.

"Whereas divers complaints have been made unto the Lords and others of Her Majesty's Council of the manifold abuses and disorders that have grown and do continue by occasion of many houses erected and employed in and about the City of London for common stage plays...forasmuch as it is manifestly known and granted that the multitude of the said houses and the misgovernment of them hath been made and is daily occasion of the idle, riotous and dissolute living of great numbers of people, who leaving all such honest and painful course of life as they should follow, do meet and assemble there; and... many abuses and disorders...do thereupon ensue."36

The proclamation above goes on to say that stage-plays are not necessarily evil in themselves (a politic concession to Elizabeth's fondness for plays) but that the frequency of performance and number of theaters need to be curtailed because they are "inviting and calling the people daily from their trade and work to misspend their time."37 The granting of royal charters and patronage to the acting companies during James's reign and the increased power of the Revels Office effectively removed the theaters from the jurisdiction of the Common Council, but it did not silence the protests nor prevent the increased feeling of opposition to the theater as a whole. The need to please courtly patrons drew the dramatists further and further from the mainstream of London thought and feeling, until they became almost exclusively mouthpieces for the courtly point of view in the ideological
conflict which resulted in the Puritan revolution.

London did not object to the performances at the public playhouses and later at the private theaters as spectacle. The London cits were fond of spectacle, and the livery companies sponsored many a holiday performance of their own, while many a playwright during the period, like Dekker and Heywood, earned extra money by turning his talent towards honoring the city in a Lord Mayor's show. What the city fathers were concerned with, at least in part, were the moral and political ends to which the spectacle was being turned. The city performance contributed to the mystique of this kingdom within a kingdom, supporting civic pride in the same way that the scarlet gowns of the aldermen did, as indeed, Elizabeth's royal progresses served her propaganda effort and the mystique of the crown. The city performances, in short, were useful to London. Furthermore, they often were morally edifying even from the strict Protestant point of view. The popular public and private dramatic performances served no such civic end and in the eyes of the London cits, who were increasingly influenced by Puritan ideas, appeared morally destructive. The drama supported the social establishment to which the city, of necessity, had become unalterably opposed. With the final triumph of the Puritan cause, the theaters were closed.
"Are these not my brave men, brave shoemakers, all
gentlemen of the gentle craft? Prince am I none,
yet am I nobly born, as being the sole son of a
shoemaker." (Sh. Hol. III, i, 54-57)

The London cits were an audience well worth catering
to throughout the Jacobean period, despite the attacks on
the drama by the London Common Council, and later by the
House of Commons, as well as by increasing numbers of
clergymen with Puritan leanings as the Calvinist cause
gained strength in both city and country. During the
reign of Charles I, of course, this contention becomes
less and less valid, as the theater became to a great
extent the plaything of the court. But in the reign of
James, the tradesmen of London, from the humblest artisan
to the powerful merchant, controlled a substantial pro-
portion of the national wealth, and they were willing to
spend a few pence to attend the theater occasionally,
or, as was true of the wealthiest among them, to put on
a performance in their own homes. Louis B. Wright points
out in *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England* in
his chapter on the stage and drama that several theaters
were specifically interested in attracting the commons as
opposed to the gentry, among these being the Theatre, the
Curtain, the Red Bull, and Fortune.¹ By the beginning
of the seventeenth century, it is clear that the tastes
of the court party and the city classes were starting to
29.

diverge, so that one finds the more expensive private theaters presenting, as a rule, a far different kind of play than those theaters listed above. Nowhere, perhaps, is the split more clearly defined than in the writing of realistic comedy, for while the court party appreciated the ironic-satiric view of the city presented by such dramatists as Jonson, Massinger, Brome, Marston, and Middleton, the citizens, who never really tired of the chronicle-history plays of the 1590's and dramatized chivalric romance, also created a demand, in the early years of James's reign, for the romanticized realistic comedy of London life that was the specialty of Dekker and Heywood.

It becomes apparent, even upon a superficial reading, that those plays which we have rather facilely lumped together under the category "realistic comedy," those that deal with London life in a manner more or less consistent with our experience of human existence in an urban society, are hardly a monolithic collection but rather range along a theoretic continuum, one pole of which is pure irony while the other is pure romantic comedy. Frye attempts to define the two poles:

"The irony play passes through a dead center of complete realism, a pure mime representing human life without comment and without imposing any sort of dramatic form beyond what is required for simple exhibition... The further comedy moves from irony, the more it becomes what we here call ideal comedy, the vision not of the way of the world, but of what you will, life as you like it."
We will attempt in this chapter to deal with those plays which idealize the Londoner, which tend to make him in some sense an heroic figure while maintaining a more or less realistic environment in which he must function, those plays which present city life "as the city might like it" leaving until later those plays which satirize him.

Naturally enough, those playwrights who made their living by writing plays to be presented to the audience of the public theaters had to appeal to the taste of the burgesses, artisans, and apprentices who were the more substantial patrons of such establishments. The taste of these audiences was fairly unsophisticated, that of men accustomed to dealing with the financial realities of life, with buying, manufacturing and selling; men who were educated, probably, in the guild schools and through apprenticeship rather than at the universities. As such, they appreciated a good tale well told, dramatized with color and action rather than an extensive verbal exploration of a highly complex moral problem, or a sophisticated treatment of decadent high society, or a play whose principal virtue was its skillful utilization of decorative language. Like all men, they were susceptible to flattery, and the comic dramatists of the city, Dekker and Heywood particularly, exploited this characteristic to the fullest.

One of the points at which the Londoners were most vulnerable to dramatic flattery was in the matter
of their civic pride. The pride of infant nationalism which had been carefully cultivated by the Tudor monarchs, particularly by Elizabeth, to replace feudal loyalties; that pride whose crowning historical triumph was the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588; that pride which Shakespeare and others had celebrated in chronicle history plays which continued to draw audiences throughout the Stuart period; that national pride contained within itself the civic pride which had been manifest in Londoners and which had been apparent since before the medieval period. The citizens of the capital were convinced that England was the finest nation on earth and that their city was the brightest jewel in the nation's crown. The livery companies of the city celebrated her greatness yearly in the Lord Mayor's pageants, and many playwrights, including Heywood and Dekker, found profitable employment in writing pageants for the companies. Celebration of the city's greatness occurs often in the chronicle plays and in prose works as well, witness the following passage from Middleton's The Triumphs of Truth (1613): "Search all chronicles, histories, records, in what language or letter soever let the inquisitive man waste the dear treasures of his time and eyesight, he shall conclude his life only in this certainty, that there is no subject upon earth received into the place of government with the like state and magnificence as is the Lord Mayor of London." What could appeal more to the civic pride of the cits than the full scale presentation of a play concerned with the triumph
on the stage, not of a king, but of one with whom they could personally identify, with one of their own?

Given the tradition of highly romantic, courtly comedy that had been handed down from Lyly, it is not surprising to see a fairy-tale adventure in one of the earlier attempts to celebrate the tradesmen of the city, placed in a pseudo-historical context of the period following the conquest. The heroes are the four sons of the deposed Earl of Boulogne, each of whom has been apprenticed to one of four London trades in order that they may earn their livelihoods. This play, *The Four Prentices of London*, is a juvenile attempt of Heywood's, probably written about 1598-9. Although of noble birth, when the young men are asked by their father whether they are content with the lots assigned them, they reply with celebrations of their various city callings. Godfrey, the eldest, says:

Godfrey:  Bound must obey; since I have undertooke
To serve my Master truly for seven years
My duty shall both answer that desire,
And my old Master's profite every way,
I prayze that citty which made Princes Trades-men;

Where that man, noble or ignoble borne,
That would not practice some Mechanicke skill
Which might support his state in penury,
Should die the death; not suffered like a drone,
To sucke the honey from the publicke hive.
I hold it no disparage to my birth,
Though I be borne an Earle, to have the skile
And the full knowledge of the mercer's trade.
An were I now to be create anew,
It should not grieve me to have spent my time
The secrets of so rich a trade to know,
By which advantage and great profits grow.

*(FP of L, I, i, p. 169)*
Despite this celebration of the city trades by Godfrey and his three brothers, (slight exception being taken by Eustace, the youngest, who feels his master is overly severe), the four boys take the first opportunity to abandon the municipal life to join a crusade to the Holy Land, bearing the arms of their guilds at the conquest of Jerusalem. The banners they bear notwithstanding, what the young heroes have done in effect is to exchange their adopted roles as citizen-commoners to take up the roles to which their noble birth entitles them, the roles of soldiers and rulers. The play fails in many ways, but what is important to notice for our argument is that Heywood never really convinces us that the princes' roles as citizens are anything more than fairy-tale disguises. The attempt to impose a sense of realism upon such an obviously fantastic tale never succeeds. The experiment of linking a romantic tale to the London reality of apprenticeship is an interesting one, however, even if it doesn't work, for it indicates that perhaps the source of a convincing realistic drama needs to be something other than the romantic type of tale that derived from chivalric romance and that had worked for Shakespeare in *As You Like It* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The attempt to focus the attention of the audience upon a comic protagonist who was a London cit presented many problems to the dramatist, not the least of which arose out of the social structure of England during this period. The hero of traditional romantic comedy was a
young man of noble birth who despite obstacles thrown in his way by chance or by the calculation of blocking characters, managed, by his wit and/or martial skill and luck to emerge triumphant in love and usually in the politics of his social structure as well. In dealing with the London cit, the dramatist was, first of all, making his center of attention an older man, usually married and established in business. By custom, the term of apprenticeship to a London trade lasted until a young man was well into his twenties, a tradition which had roots in the middle ages, when an apprentice might well not achieve freedom of the city until he was twenty-six. Although apprentices were not in quite the same position as household bond-servants, they were nevertheless contracted to a master and not free, as was a young gentleman, to wander the world seeking adventure. Even after the young citizen achieved his freedom, he was obliged to earn his daily bread, since he had not, as a general rule, the independence of those who had the advantage of inherited wealth. The ordinary London cit, then, was a man well on in life; often, in drama, he was old enough for the role of the senex of classical comedy, who was usually a blocking character, not a comic hero. He was often tied to his shop or to his counting house and often to his family as well. All in all, he was not a likely candidate for a traditionally conceived heroic-comic role.

Another social problem in making the London cit a romantic hero was his lack of military training and a
tradition of personal honor. England possessed a hereditary officer class in her aristocracy, and her young men of noble birth were trained from childhood in the use of weapons and the management of horses and men. The apprentices, on the other hand, were continually discouraged by civic ordinances from engaging in violent play, from bearing arms, even from the competition in dress that often led to brawls between the town gallants. Professor Camp writes on this point: "The attire of apprentices was plain. At the end of the 16th century they were compelled to wear blue gowns in winter and blue coats down to their calves in summer. Flat cloth caps, shining shoes and plain stockings completed the attire. Apprentices were strictly forbidden to wear silk; they were allowed to carry no weapons except a pocket knife." When occasions of violence rose among the apprentices, the weapons used were fists and/or the stout cudgel that gave rise to the famous battle cry of the apprentices, "Clubs." The city was occasionally ordered to supply men for the ranks of the army, as Harrison reports in his *Last Elizabethan Journal*. "5th August 1600. From the City are now required 350 men for the Irish service...They shall be taken from the masterless men of able bodies...there are also required among them 15 carpenters, ten rough masons or bricklayers and bakers, coopers and 6 smiths." It is important to notice that it was masterless men who were most likely to be levied for the army. The citizens themselves maintained the "trained bands" of London, a sort of civic militia whose ceremonial use was
substantial, but whose actual worth in combat was apparently suspect, if the caliber of the drill in Beaumont's *Knights of the Burning Pestle* is any indication. Since the soldier-citizens are anything but prepared for battle, the rallying speech made by Ralph, the grocer's apprentice, contains an added note of comedy.

*Gentlemen, countrymen, friends and fellow soldiers, I have brought you this day, from the shops of security and the counters of content, to measure out in these furious fields honour by the ell and prowess by the pound. Let it not, oh let it not, I say, be told hereafter, the noble issue of this city faint: but bear yourselves in this fair action like men, valiant men, and free men! Fear not the enemy, nor the noise of the guns, for, believe me brethren, the rude rumbling of the brewer's cart is far more terrible, of which you have a daily experience. Neither let the stink of the powder offend you, since a more valiant stink is nightly with you.* (K of BP, V, iii, 62-76)

What these playwrights faced, who, like Dekker, wished to celebrate the citizen class and the London of their daily life, was the prospect of a society that lacked the tradition of military prowess and the chivalric code that made the fairy-tale heroes of romance possible. This society lacked the leisure that would make dalliance in the Forest of Arden credible. The dramatists, then, faced a world incompatible in a multitude of ways with the traditional form of romantic comedy.

There was a type of drama in English literary tradition, however, that proved itself more readily adaptable to the task of honoring the London cit as a type of hero. This form was the medieval morality. Its purpose was an ethical one; it was didactic by nature, attempting to teach
its audience to reject the temptations of vice and espouse the moral virtues. It was an especially good form, as Parrot and Ball point out, to use for the purposes of propaganda. The morality made no particular demands of class upon its hero; he must merely be human, for his victory is not military or romantic, it is ethical and social. Often combined with bawdy humour to make it entertaining, the moral play succeeded in pleasing the audiences of the public theaters, endorsing the bourgeois code of success and industry as well as delighting the patrons with its comedy.

Thomas Dekker is the playwright who comes closest to making his London into a "green world" and his most popular comic protagonist, Simon Eyre the shoemaker, into a benificent Duke. In the principal plot of The Shoemakers Holiday (1600) Sim, the legendary happy-go-lucky shoemaker of Tower Street, rises to riches and honor through luck and the fortunate loan of thirty portegues from the disguised nobleman, Lacy. Eyre becomes first sheriff, and ultimately Lord Mayor of London. This bright and effervescent drama must have delighted citizen audiences, for it shows what any one of them might have achieved. L. C. Knights comments extensively upon the civic aspects of the play.

Eyre's progress from master craftsman to Sheriff and finally to Lord Mayor of London (not, significantly, to a house in the country) represented a dream which a good many apprentices must have cherished. And Eyre's relations with his workmen are presented in the most attractive light. He drinks and jests with them, listens to their
advice, and protects them from the tongue of his wife...The relationship, although obviously idealized, had, as we have seen, a basis in fact, and its presentation would be particularly appreciated since it depicted a state of affairs that was rapidly vanishing as business became more impersonal. Moreover, the pride, the ambition, the prejudices of Eyre and his men are limited by the city. Not only does the Earl of Lincoln oppose the marriage of Lacy, his nephew, to Rose, a citizen's daughter, her father, the Lord Mayor, 'scornes to call Lacy son-in-law,'...Rose, it is true, marries Lacy in the end, but Lacy has proved himself a good fellow and has not scorned the gentle craft; besides romance demanded it. It is the citizen's independence, however, that is most applauded. Even the surly attitude of the shoemakers when they demand the journeyman's wife, Jane, from the wealthy and inoffensive Hammon (V ii) is presented for approval; and Eyre, though proud of his civic dignities, has none of those ambitions to step outside the limits of his order which were already providing material for the comic dramatists.\textsuperscript{11}

A closer examination of The Shoemaker's Holiday gives us the basic framework of what might be called a citizen's code of virtue, adherence to which creates a cit hero, as adherence to the chivalric code made a hero of romance. Further, a comparison of this play with Heywood's Four Prentices of London provides an indication of the differences between the hero of the comic romance and the civic hero of realistic comedy. First of all, the citizen's code does not demand that he be eager to achieve personal glory by serving his country in wars abroad, just that he be willing to serve if required or if the defense of the city is an issue. Simon Eyre, when his journeyman, Rafe, is impressed for service in France, sees no wrong in attempting to bribe Lacy, as commanding officer of the troops, to let the man off.
Eyre: All we come to be suitors for this honest Rafe. Keep him at home, and as I am a true shoemaker and a gentleman of the gentle craft, buy spats yourself, and I'll find ye boots these seven years.

(SH I, i, 137-140)

When this offer proves unavailing, however, the merry shoemaker urges his man to go bravely to the wars, to fight not for his personal glory, but for the honor of his guild.

Eyre: Hold thee, Rafe, here's five six-pences for thee; fight for the honor of the gentle craft, for the gentlemen shoemakers, the courageous cordwainers, the mad knaves of Bedlam, Fleet Street, Tower Street and Whitechapel, crack me the crowns of the French knaves; a pox on them; crack them; fight, by the Lord of Ludgate, fight, my fine boy! (SH I, i, 236-244)

The implications of this last speech are significant. If one cannot, by money or influence, avoid impressment and the domestic hardship war entails, then one must do one's duty cheerfully, since one's conduct reflects upon those institutions which give one civic identity: craft, guild, and city. Already it is clear that, in the eyes of Sim Eyre, membership in the shoemakers livery makes a man as much of a gentleman, of as much importance, as much a significant individual as if he had been born a gentleman. Contrast this point of view with the attitude of the four prentices of Heywood's play, who feel that civic identity is somehow of secondary rank when compared to the individual glory of a noble name reinforced by valour in arms. Lacy, who disguises himself as a shoemaker to gain access to Rose Otley, daughter of the Lord Mayor,
nevertheless is closer to the attitude of the sons of the
Earl of Boulogne than to that of Simon Eyre, when he
apostrophizes Love:

Lacy: O Love, how powerful thou art, that canst change,
High birth to baseness, and a noble mind,
to the mean semblance of a shoemaker.
(SH II, ii, 9-12)

Lacy, whose tradesman pose is but a temporary disguise, is
the romantic hero of the play, but the primary focus is on
the civic hero, Eyre. Dekker has not seen fit to abandon
the trappings of romantic comedy here, but realistic
comedy is dominant.

We do not see the prentices in the context of their
trades, but Eyre is seen in his shop as well as elsewhere,
surrounded by his family and his employees, and thus we
are presented with an opportunity to examine Dekker's
concept of the ideal tradesman in his business dealings.
The main quality of Eyre's establishment is the merriment
and good will between employer and employee. The smallness
of the enterprise makes this possible, but the character
of Sim Eyre makes it a reality. There is true affection
between the mad master shoemaker and his foreman and
journeymen. "By the Lord of Ludgate," cries Sim, "I love
my men as my life!" (SH II, iii, 99) Simon is far from
stingy; he gives Rafe what little money he can afford
when the former leaves for war, provides beer for his men
on every occasion, and, instead of renting or selling
his business when he becomes a London official, he signs
it over to his foreman, Hodge. Dekker, who was constantly
in debt to Henslowe—that theatrical capitalist par excellence—may well have envied Hodge and Firk their affectionate master.

If this tale of a citizen's progress is marked by any one quality in the character of the protagonist, it is the utter lack of selfish individualistic ambition in the spirit of Simon Eyre. It should be remembered that we are dealing with an era in which to say that Caesar was ambitious was to impute to him a grievous fault. Yet we are also dealing with a period in which the middle class is rapidly becoming aware of its power and is anxious to employ that power to advantage. Perhaps nothing indicates so clearly Dekker's conservative position with regard to the social order than does this particular characteristic of his ideal citizen. Sim's rise to wealth and position is in large part a stroke of luck, although he rises because he knows how to take advantage of his luck. His pride in that rise is concerned, not with his personal glory so much as with the glory of the shoemakers, that one of their own should wear the robes and chains of office, and entertain the king at a mighty feast, ordain a yearly holiday for the prentices, and build a hall which is an ornament to the city. The shoemaker has no realization that his wealth might be used to manipulate the economics of the city to his personal advantage. Though a highly independent man, who bows to no one, who is familiar even with his king, Sim Eyre is a supporter of the
status quo of the social order, even to the extent of agreeing with Sir Roger Otley that Rose would be ill advised to marry Rowland Lacy, a gentleman of noble blood, that she would be better off marrying within her own class.

Eyre: Be rul'd, sweet Rose: th'art ripe for a man. Marry not with a boy that hast no more hair on his face than thou hast on thy cheeks. A courtier! wash, go by, stand not upon pishery-pashery: those silken fellows are but painted images, outsides, outsides, Rose; their inner linings are torn. No, my fine mouse, marry me with a gentleman grocer like my lord mayor, your father; a grocer is a sweet trade: plums, plums. Had I a son or daughter out of the generation and blood of the shoemakers, he should pack. (SH III, v, 58-69)

It is not the citizen's place, in terms of the code of Sir Eyre, to seek to cross the borders of social class, but to be content with the honors possible to gain in one's own sphere and to contribute to the honor of one's own group. The prejudice of Sir Roger Otley when he says, "Too mean is my poor girl for his [Lacy's] high birth; Poor citizens must not with courtiers wed," (SH I, i, 11-12) is shared by Eyre. The city social sphere has gentility in its own right in the eyes of the Londoner but it is a distinct sphere from that of the nobility. Crossing class boundaries in marriage is not endorsed by the gentleman shoemaker.

A citizen's code of virtue in Dekker's terms then, is different from that of the nobly-born romance hero. He does not pursue personal honor and glory; his reputation is not posed upon the end of a sword; nor is he primarily con-
cerned with courtship, with winning a bride. Although Tillyard maintains that the "Puritans and the courtiers were more united by a common theological bond than they were divided by ethical disagreements,"¹² nevertheless those ethical disagreements were there. Sim Eyre, in clinging to a code which (one must agree with Knights here) was fast becoming obsolete, at the same time that he is upheld as an ideal citizen, reflects Dekker's attempt to revert to a more stable world order than that of his contemporary London, an order in which class did not challenge class, an order which never really existed (if one may accept Sylvia Thrupp's estimate of the medieval merchant class). The London of The Shoemaker's Holiday is the London world "as you like it," or a mercantile Forest of Arden. In such a world, and in a man like Simon Eyre, economic shrewdness motivated by greed and ambition has no place, thrift does not imply parsimony, and success is crowned by a philanthropic contribution to the city, not by an attempt to move into the country squirearchy. Riches, in short, are respected, but not idolized. Professor Knights writes:

Dekker's social morality is a morality that the average decent citizen would find acceptable. He does not despise or distrust riches so long as they are used conscionably. Virtue itself should be fair and charitable; the poor should aim at content; the honest workman should maintain himself decently in his calling, and if he rises it must be within the limits of his own order....It is a citizen morality, but it is neither entirely individualistic nor out of touch with tradition.¹³
What is even more significant for our basic argument concerning the fairly consistent conservatism of the late Elizabethan and the Stuart comic dramatists with regard to the social order is that Simon Eyre is a citizen of whom the gentry could approve. Even as a wealthy man Eyre does not choose to challenge the superiority of the gentlefolk, nor does he attempt to use his economic power as a club with which to victimize their sons. He remains the same man as Lord Mayor that he was as a small shopkeeper.

Beneath the merriment and romance of *The Shoemakers' Holiday* is a serious concern with the ethics of civic life. The medieval morality tradition that was to hold its own in the common theater and to emerge at its most influential in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is apparent throughout the play. It is more overt, however, in another of Dekker's plays, *The Honest Whore* (1604-1608). In this comedy, the dramatist uses the citizen story as subplot to the conventional aristocratic romance, but although both are stilted and overly moralistic, the treatment of the citizen hero in the subplot is interesting from a social, if not a dramatic point of view. Dekker chooses, here, to dramatize an exemplum story of the male Patient Griselda type. Candido, a linen draper, is made the personification of patience and throughout both parts of the play he is repeatedly tested by the outrageous acts of the other characters: his wife, Viola, his brother-in-law, the gallants of the city, and so forth. Candido is far from
being so satisfactory a dramatic character as is Simon Eyre, because he is so strictly emblematic and two-dimensional, but through this subplot we are brought to a further understanding of the ethical nature of civic heroism. The Linen draper, like the "mad" shoemaker of Tower Street, is inordinately proud of his freedom of the city and he celebrates the flat cap of the tradesman as a badge of honour.

Cand: Each degree has his fashion, its fit then
One should be laid by for the citizen.
And thats the cap which you see swells not hye,
For caps are emblems of humility;
It is a citizen's badge, and first was wore
By 'th Romans; for when any Bondsman's turne
Came to be made a Freeman; thus 'twas said
He to the Cap was call'd; that is, was made
Of Rome a freeman, but was first close shorn,
And so a citizen's haire is still short wore...
If the Cap had no honor, this might reare it,
The Reverend Fathers of the Law do weare it.
It's light in the summer, and in cold it sits
Close to the skull, a warm house for the wits;
It shewes the whole face boldly, 'til not made
As if a man to look out were afraide,...
Let then the City cap by none be scorned
Since with it Princes heads have been adorned.

(HWII, I, iii, 38-70)

A similar speech celebrating the city gown appears in Act Three, scene one, of the first part of The Honest Whore.

In the conduct of his business Candido exhibits his patience with his customers, maintaining a policy that the customer is always right even in the face of patently absurd conduct on the part of three gallants who demand a pennys-worth of cloth from the very center of his best bolt of lawn. He justifies himself as follows:

Cand: We are set here to please all customers,
Their humors and their fancies; - offend none:
We get by many, if we leese by one
May be his minde stood to no more than that,
A penworth serves him, and mongst trades is found,
Deny a pennorth, it may crosse a pound.
Oh he that meanes to thrive, with patient eye
Must please the divell, if he comes to buy.  
(HWI I, v, 121-128)

When the three gallants abscond with the best beaker in the house, Candido has them attached by the constables, triumphing over them not in anger but in the patient use of the machinery of law. Even Flucello, one of the gallants who is apprehended, admits that "Such a meeke spirit can bless a common weale." (HWI I, v, 228-229)

Candido's virtues, that make him ultimately triumphant in the citizen's world, are similar to those of Simon Eyre, but the world itself is already taking on a darker tone, being filled with rogues and whores, conspicuously absent in the earlier play. Candido's patience, though wearing, and sometimes unconvincing, is nevertheless a trait to be cultivated by the city apprentices and their masters who must earn their livelihoods by serving a public composed partly of people who expect their superior rank to be acknowledged. Again, as in The Shoemakers' Holiday, Lekker creates a tradesman, a small shopkeeper, not a citizen engaged in the growing capitalistic enterprises on foot in Jacobean England. This is his ideal cit (many of his citizens are not) a man proud of his position in his own community, demanding that the position of citizen be recognized by outsiders as worthy of respect, but at the same time cultivating personal humility and making no effort to raise himself
above the class to which he was born. Rampant individualism is not a characteristic of Dekker's virtuous citizen-protagonists. Instead they are portrayed as pillars supporting the status quo. Professor Knights writes on this point: "And, finally, Dekker's conception of the ordered state is, in general, the traditional conception that lies behind Ulysses's speech on 'Degree,' on the one hand and the acts of the Elizabethan Privy Council on the other. So far as one can piece together a coherent social attitude behind the plays, it is approval of a scheme in which each man has his proper place, the whole being bound together by justice." 14

Thomas Heywood, like Dekker, sought to attract the citizen audience, as we have seen above, by flattering their civic pride. Although his *Four Prentices* fails to integrate romantic heroism with civic reality, his later attempts to find comic heroic elements which were organic in the history of the capital proved more successful. The second part of *If You Know Not Me You Know No Body*, (1604) though ostensibly about the troubles of Queen Elizabeth, is in fact a realistic comedy of sorts, concerned with the life of the noted Elizabethan merchant-economist Sir Thomas Gresham and his building of the Royal Exchange, an ornament to the city as was Simon Eyre's Leadenhall. Gresham is not the only virtuous citizen in the play, however; the Haberdasher Hobson in the subplot is another of the Simon Eyre types, a small businessman, industrious and merry, well able and willing to lend
his sovereign two hundred pounds on demand. Professor Camp
sums up the treatment of the merchant-protagonist of the
main plot: "Gresham is throughout the play a strange com-
bination of altruism and worldliness; he is utilitarian,
is interested in useful trades and pursuits, but his industry
has as its goal the placing of him in the public view. On
thinking of the future craftsmen who will transact business
on the Exchange, he says 'Some shall prove masters, and
speak in Gresham's praise, / In Gresham's work we did our
fortunes raise."\textsuperscript{15}

Another play of Heywood's that celebrates the citizen's
virtues is \textbf{The Fair Maid of the Exchange} (1607). The author
is not completely biased in favor of the cits here, however,
for he can see evil as well as good in this London world,
and the sources of evil are not always in classes other than
the mercantile one. A brief plot summary will help orient
us in this less familiar work. Phillis, the Fair Maid for
whom the play is named, and Ursula, her companion, are
accosted by two men whose attempt to ravish the two girls
is foiled by the Cripple (who serves as a moral commentator)
and, trapped again, all three are saved by Frank Golding,
the youngest son of the late merchant Golding. Frank dis-
covers that both his well-to-do older brothers are in love
with Phillis, but by means of several ruses and the help
of the Cripple, he manages to win the girl. The subplot
involves two gallants, Bowdler and Barnard, who both wish
to marry Mol Berry. Again, through the agency of the
Cripple, Barnard, who is in the debt of Mol's father, the
merchant Berry, wins the girl and her dowry, which is sufficient to redeem his lands, renounces his prodigal ways and turns to a more thrifty course.

Early in the play we are presented with a scene which demonstrates the attention to detail which business required of employees.

Phil: Stay, Ursula, have you those suits of Ruffes, Those stomachers, and that fine piece of Lawne, Marked with the letters C. C. and S?

Ursula: I have.

Phil: If your forgetfulness cause any defect You're like to pay for it, therefore look unto it. (FM p. 6)

Scrupulous attention to detail is obviously essential to the profit of a business operating on a small margin, but Heywood shows his audience in later scenes that over-concern with monetary matters can be wrong too. This exchange between Barnard and the Merchant Berry is a case in point.

Berry: Master Barnard, to morrow is your day Of payment, sir, I meane the hundred pound, For which I have your bond, I know 'tis sure, You will not breake an houre; then if you please To come to dinner sir, you shall be welcome.

Barn: Sir, I did meane to visit you at home, Not to pay downe the money, but entreate Two month's forebearance.

Berry: How! Forbeare my monoy? Your reason, why I should forbeare my own?

Barn: You know at first the debt was none of mine, I was a surety, not the principall: Besides the money that was borrowed Miscarried in the venture; my friend died, And once already have you prisoned me To my great charge, almost my overthrow, And somewhat raised the debt by that advantage: These things considered, you might well forbeare For two months space, so small a sum as this.

What is most interesting here is the reaction of the Cripple, who is himself a tradesman—a London cit, when Berry, like
Shylock, refuses to be merciful to his debtor, saying he himself has need of the money and accusing Barnard of being a dissolute prodigal, which incidentally is true. Prodigality is a violation of the mercantile code of behavior. Shylock accuses Bassanio of being prodigal in The Merchant of Venice and Sir Giles Overreach says the same thing of Wellborn in A New Way to Pay Old Debts.

The Cripple lashes out against what he sees as obnixious self-interest, which leaves no room in the heart of man for the greatest of Christian virtues, charity.

Crip: Thou wretch, thou miser, thou vile slave
And drudge to money, bondman to thy wealth,
Apprentice to a penny, thou that hoards up
The frie of silver pence and half-penies,
With show of charity to give the poore
But putst them to increase, where in short time
They grow to be a child's part or a Daughter's portion

Thou that inventst new clauses for a bond
To cousin simple plainnesse: O not a Dragon
No, nor the devil's fangs are half so cruell
as are thy claws...

...that dost hunt
The deere, deere life of noble gentry.

(EM p. 29)

But this is not the end of the matter, for the Cripple, the conscience of the play, sees that Berry, despite his own passionate defense of Barnard, does have a degree of right on his side, since Barnard has indeed wronged him.

As Barnard goes off to a dance, the Cripple soliloquizes.

Crip: 'sblood, were I indebted a hundred pound
/as we have seen in Chapter I above, this
was no small sum/
My fortune fail'd and fled as Barnard's is:
I should now be devising sentences
And caveats, for posteritie to carve
Upon the inside of the Counter wall:
Therefore I'le now turn provident; ile to my shop
And fall to work.
The ultimate impression with which the reader is left is that the position of the merchant, although extreme and harsh is at least more defensible in Heywood's terms than that of the irresponsible gallant. The Cripple speaks for Heywood, the true London cit, and prefers the ant to the grasshopper, but in the playwright's ideal world the ants would be merciful. After Barnard marries Mol Berry even he resolves to adopt the civic virtue of frugality.

Barn: What shall I say? if you will give consent, As you redeem my lands, so I my time ill spent Meane to redeem with frugall industry, I'll be your councill's pupill, and submit, My follies to your will, mine to your wit.  
(FA p. 81)

Rank and marriage are issues here, as they were in Dekker, for as the marriage between Rose and Lacy is disapproved of by their older kinsmen, so is the marriage between Mol and Barnard initially disapproved of by her father. We are never entirely satisfied, nor, I think, is Heywood, with Barnard's argument that the quality of his blood adequately compensates for the emptiness of his pockets. Heywood is still operating in a world in which, as in that of Dekker's plays about virtuous citizen, the cits are proud enough of their own position not to seek to marry their daughters merely to a noble name. Even Mr. and Mrs. Flower, the parents of the Fair Maid, although they are foolish in many ways, are cautious cits in their preference for making their girl a wealthy alliance within their own class.

Chastity is a matter of considerable concern in this play, and will become more significant in later dramas, in
which the cits are seen to be sexually disadvantaged. To Phillis, the preservation of her virginity is of equal importance with the saving of her life. She thanks the Cripple for saving her by saying "Thanks, honest friend, who from the gates of death, hath set our virgin souls at liberty." (FM p. 8) Professor Camden makes it clear that this degree of concern for one's chastity was the norm for the virtuous Elizabethan woman,16 but my point here is that the attitude of the female cits in many of the realistic comedies directed toward the small, courtly audiences was quite different from that of the Fair Maid. The contrast between court and city drama is often most evident in the importance placed in the plays of each upon sexual integrity. In Heywood's *Fair Maid* even the verbal immorality of the London gallants as exhibited by Bowdler and Barnard, is condemned by the Cripple.

Crip: Otthou art one of those, that if an honest maid be sent to thy chamber with her Mistris goods, and return as honest and chast as the moon: Sirra, you are one that will slander the poore wenches, by speaking of their proneness to love; and, withall, bragge how cheape you have bought their ware metaphorically ....(FM p. 26)

The gallants are portrayed as interested in any kind of sexual conquest, irrespective of morality:

Bowdler: ...there will come a day
When Humphrey Bowdler will keep holiday,
Then Moll looke to your selfe, see you be sped
Or by this light I'le have your maidenhead.

Barn: Spoke like a gallant, spoke like a gentleman,
spoke like your selfe
Now doe I see some sparkes of manhood in you.

Heywood, then, in his celebration of the London cit, tends to praise those particular qualities in the middle
class that would help preserve the status quo of a society based on the medieval concept of degree. He praises civic patriotism, the focusing of the successful merchant's interest in the betterment of the city, as in Gresham's contribution of a building for The Exchange. This is a virtuous way for a citizen to employ his wealth, the alternatives being the less attractive employment of money in usurious loans or hoarding, or using it to force one's way into gentle society. Civic pride, even if it included antipathy between the classes, also served to hold firm the class lines important to the gentry, and to keep the citizens contented with their lot as one worthy of honor. Heywood deplores greed in the merchant Berry, and seeks through his plays to recreate a London world governed by the moral virtues, especially charity, thrift, and chastity.

*Eastward Hoe*, that conglomerative effort of Jonson, Marston, and Chapman, is the object of considerable debate among critics, principally because it was presented at the aristocratic Blackfriars theater in 1605, although it appears to be a play that would "tickle the fancies of London citizens and apprentices,"17 who would be more likely to attend the Red Bull. Professor Camp apparently reads the play straight, avoiding the issue of audience response altogether and observing merely that the play is "an extremely important member of a group of partially domestic plays in which craftsmen are introduced."18 L. C. Knights observes in a note to his chapter on "Dekker, Heywood and Citizen Morality,"
Compare the 'increase of wealth and advancement' brought by 'honest and orderly industry' to the goldsmith's apprentice Golding in *Eastward Hoe*! (1605) There is an obvious element of parody in this play...acted at the Blackfriars and dedicated to the City - but it shows what the citizens liked. At the Blackfriars Touchstone's tags - 'Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee,' etc., the sudden rise of the honest apprentice and the equally sudden repentence of the prodigal were probably not received in the same spirit as they would have been at the Fortune.¹⁹

Ironic though the play may be, we may nevertheless see in it, a presentation of alternative social orders of London cits, the anarchic civic world, in which class lines were violated by ambitious city madams and new-made knights, opposed to the orderly traditional civic world of the small shop and the conscientious businessman, who, like Simon Eyre, has no social pretensions for himself or his family.

The theme of the Prodigal Son, one particularly dear to the souls of the London cits, is fully developed in *Eastward Hoe*! in terms of Jacobean London, and its obvious morals pointed.²⁰ Touchstone, the goldsmith, has two apprentices: Golding, the virtuous and industrious one, and Quicksilver, the prodigal, whose interests lie anywhere but in the shop of his master. Touchstone also has two daughters, who reflect the same opposing tendencies as the apprentices: Mildred, who is modest, virtuous, and obedient to her parents, and Gertrude, the city madam type, who wants the title of lady and all the stereotype trappings, including the reputation for immodesty that the London cits attributed to the group of ladies at court. In her
perversity Gertrude is abetted by her mother, a weak-witted sort, whose head is turned by dreams of social advancement. Gertrude, like Quicksilver, is not content with the slow means of industrious labor to bring her to her goal. So from the beginning we have two groups espousing opposing civic philosophies: Touchstone, Mildred, and Golding, who cling to the old-fashioned virtues and the old social order, and on the other hand Mrs. Touchstone, Gertrude, and Quicksilver, cits dominated by ambition, who depend on external appearance to make their judgments of value.

It is easy for the ambitious group to be deluded in Stuart London, for the dramatists portray a world of tremendous complexity, of intense social pressures, of fraudulent schemes to trap the unwary. Gertrude is victimized by a man whose title of knight covers nothing noble in the soul, and her mother by her daughter's belief in a castle in the country. It is easy for Quicksilver to be tempted into prodigality. He is deluded by his conception of his own social position. He is the younger son of a justice of the peace, thus of gentle birth, though by the law of primogeniture the eldest son will inherit. Quicksilver's apprenticeship is galling to him because he feels it to be a condition of servitude incompatible with his family coat of arms. He urges Golding, who is as well born as himself, to abandon the goldsmith's shop and to take up gallantry as a role more fitting to a gentleman.
Quick: Harry, faugh, goodman flat-cap! 'Sfoot! Though I am a prentice, I can give arms; and my father's a Justice 'o Peace by descent and 's blood... I am a gentleman and may swear by my pedigree, God's my life! Sirrah Golding, wilt be ruled by a fool? Turn good fellow, turn swaggering gallant... We are both gentlemen and therefore should be no coxcombs; let's be no longer fools to this flat-cap Touchstone! 'S life, man, his father was a malt-maker and his mother sold gingerbread in Christ Church. (EH! I, i, 131-151)

Class distinctions become an issue here even more than they did in Heywood's plays. The resolution of Eastward Hoe! reasserts the honorable nature of London citizenship as Quicksilver repents his prodigal conduct and acknowledges that his master "was a Touchstone black, but true." (EH! V, v, 67)

Even if, as often seems to be the case, Touchstone is little more than a sounding board off which the dramatists may bounce their observations of the world of Jacobean gallants and speculators, thirty-pound knights and city madams, it remains that the only reason he can function in this way is that his ethical position is a defined one, while the ethics of the non-shop world are either nonexistent or highly relative, the ethics of opportunism. At the end of the play, after all, the world left standing is a world controlled by the Touchstone code. The blocking characters have all been converted or expelled; they have been tested against Touchstone and Golding, and that which was dross has been purged. Again, as we have seen in the other plays treated in this chapter, the world view upheld as good is the conservative one. Even Touchstone's severity,
which he must learn to temper with mercy before the plot is resolved, is part of his conservatism, for he sees in the discipline of hard work the keystone to civic order. The alternative is riot, waste, and chaos. The cit objects to Quicksilver on the grounds that he is lazy, that he wastes time and energy and money that might be more profitably invested.

Touch: Behind my back thou wilt swear faster than a French footboy, and talk more bawdily than a common midwife...Prentices recreations are seldom with their master's profit...Heyday! Ruffians Hall! Sword, pumps, here's a racket indeed.

Quicksilver's system of values is brought into question when he maintains that he associates with the gallants merely to encourage them to borrow money of his master. But Touchstone will have none of this rogue-citizen code, but maintains the superiority of his own.

Touch: Seven-score pound art thou in the cash; but look to it, I will not be gallanted out of my moneys. And as for rising by other men's fall, God shield me! Did I gain my wealth by ordinaries? No! By exchanging of gold? No! I hired me a little shop, bought low, took small gain, kept no debt-book, garnished my shop for want of plate with wholesome, thrifty sentences...

We see in the fates of Gertrude and Quicksilver the penalties exacted from those who heap scorn upon the city and her trades and who would take themselves off to a non-existent castle in the country and to Virginia on the promise of speculators. The city honors her own who respect and honor her, like Mildred and Golding. We see, and I am sure the
audience at the Blackfriars saw, how limited was the nature of the idealized civic society placed before them, but, on the other hand, what a threat to any order at all was the realistic alternative presented. At the very least Touchstone represented an order that the gentle could control. He and those like him who sought the preservation of the status quo presented no substantial threat to their social superiors.

The realistic comedies that present the London cit as ethical hero are numerically few, and, artistically, they are far from being the very best examples of the comedy of the period. But they do hold up for emulation a world in which order in society is a real possibility. It is clear, too, that as a tool of conservative propaganda, they cannot be entirely ignored.
Chapter III - The Citizen's Sin - Avarice

"The ways to enrich are many, and most of them foul"
Bacon, "Of Riches"

The examination of the conditions of the world in which the London cit may operate as a protagonist has shown us a society in which commercial activity is carried on on a small scale for the most part and social mobility tends to be limited by the boundaries of the class into which one is born. But a survey of realistic comedy of the Jacobean and Caroline periods shows clearly that Simon Eyre the shoemaker, Hobson the haberdasher and Touchstone the goldsmith, although delightful and memorable dramatic creations, are not typical of the "cits" of Stuart comedy. Their civic pride, honest dealing, lack of social ambition beyond the limits of the city hierarchy and concern with community as well as private welfare, are shown to be the exception, rather than the rule of civic conduct as it was portrayed on stage. The citizens of the darker London world created by the satiric dramatists are of a different breed from those of Dekker's civic romances and Eastward Hoe! But the world which, by implication, is the ideal urban society against which the darker world is measured by the satirists and their audiences, is the same. As civic characters deviate from the conservative ideal exemplified by characters like the three above that they become viable negative or blocking characters. Newly emerging social forces which tend toward the abolition of
the idealized world of the London romances, toward the
destruction of the "Elizabethan World Picture" are harshly
attacked; the stage remains, almost exclusively, the pro-
paganda mouthpiece of entrenched, conservative social
interests.

The majority of the comic dramatists of the period
found less cause to praise the London citizens on stage
than to satirize them, for while the citizen audience re-
mained fairly substantial (especially in James's reign)
despite the attacks on the stage by the Corporation and
puritan clergy, the better paying audiences of the private
theaters were likely to be members of the gentle classes,
rather than the city commons. As Bastiaenen has pointed
out in respect to the decline in moral tone of Jacobean
and Caroline drama as a whole "the character of those who
attended regularly was responsible...performances were, as a
rule, given in the afternoon, when the more sober, industrious
part of the population were at work, and so it is evident
that only the wealthy and idle could at all think of regu-
lar attendance; playwrights and actors having to conform
to the taste of those on whose favor they depended for
success, a disintegrating influence was the result."1

Certainly it can hardly be coincidental that as the split
between the court interests and the city interests widened
the number of plays in which the citizens are treated as
a group antagonistic to the consolidation of an ideal
comic society increased.

The class differences in Jacobean and Caroline England
operated on even the most basic facts of existence and so its effect on the drama is hardly surprising, particularly with the dramatists who tended to align themselves with the gentry. The upper classes, even the country squirearchy, felt that they were, by birth, a cut above the mercantile class, even though the group they looked down upon was acquiring substantial public influence by virtue of its wealth. The members of the upper class seem to have been unaware that the basis of power was shifting or to have been unequipped to cope with change. The gentlemanly education generally ignored the economic realities of profit and loss in favor of training in the bearing and appearances of rank. Ruth Kelso writes of the basic assumption that governed such training.

"Every office and aspect of life was ordered for the gentleman by the fundamental assumption that he was the example, the leader, the governor of the common people and must therefore be distinguished from them. To fill his place in the hierarchy of the world, he must be better born and better educated, have better manners, wear better clothes, and wear them more gracefully, live in a larger house, find recreation in more refined and more taxing amusements, look to his morals more closely, cherishing above all things a fine sense of honor,—in short, never forget his essential superiority to the rabble."²

Thus the practical study of basic economics was left to stewards' sons and London apprentices, and the young gentleman was often the victim of his own ignorance in financial dealings. The position in which such a transaction put him would, no doubt, be galling to his sense of innate superiority and his class prejudice would be reinforced, since the blame for the outcome of the dealing might be
transferred to the "sharper" who had victimized him.

By the end of Elizabeth's reign, too, it was already clear that the day of the "mad" shoemaker Eyre and the merry Haberdasher Hobson, was long past, for the small craftsman was less the representative "cit" than was the merchant-trader, the infant capitalist. No longer were the London citizens willing to render unquestioningly the respect demanded by any man of rank, the men and material required for foreign wars, the money required by a king for the indulgence of his whims. The expansion of the economically sophisticated and increasingly politically and socially self-conscious middle class with its wealth, and its Calvinist notions of the equality of prince and beggar before the eyes of God, began to pose a substantial threat to the security of the landed country gentry, of the courtiers and their entourages at Westminster, of the Crown itself. The gentle audiences of the theaters like the Blackfriars, then, would quite naturally delight in seeing the satiric comedies that portrayed the upstart citizens as blocking characters, vulgar, morally debased, guilty of the grossest breaches of ethics, who are ultimately defeated on stage by the forces of traditional "natural" order.

The City, with its counting house and its Exchange, was the nerve center of the newly powerful and frankly acquisitive social order that was the middle class. As individuals, the cits were actively engaged in the pursuit of wealth; as a group, they pursued the power to eliminate govern-
mental paternalism in the economy, and to create an un-
fettered market. Wealth was, for the mercantile class, the only key to power, the only way by which it might influence governmental decisions. Furthermore, one of the principle distinctions between the middle class and the gentry was that, for a citizen, mobility within the limits of his own class was governed almost exclusively by the accumulation of wealth. Rank could be acquired by attaining a position in the city administration, but such offices (as we have seen even in the case of Simon Eyre) were accorded only to men who possessed the means to maintain themselves without a government salary and without practicing a trade for the duration of their administration. Simon Eyre is elected to the city posts of sheriff and Lord Mayor only because he has acquired wealth through shrewd speculation with Lacy's money; wealth gives him status. Loss of his wealth, incidentally, would lose him this status. In the upper classes, on the other hand, a title, an illustrious name, and a distinguished ancestry often allowed one to preserve one's position despite the lack of gold in one's own vaults. Further, there were alternate routes by which upward mobility within the upper class was possible other than simply increasing one's wealth, as government service in both military and civil positions was open to the gentleman as a means of advancing his social position.

The position taken by the satirical comic dramatists toward this acquisitive society differs radically from Dr. Wright's report of the stand taken by apologists for
"A logical consequence of the glorification of the gospel of work was an intense emphasis upon thrift, a virtue which predicated diligent industry and carried connotations of self denial, sobriety and frugality. If there was a single maxim above others which the Elizabethan youth of the commercial classes heard constantly dinned in his ears, it was one which exerted him to the ways of thriftiness...if he talked overmuch about virtue, a volubility often ridiculed on the stage, it was not to offer a sop to his conscience for his shady dealings—as Jonson and Middleton would have us think—but rather to deliver a message he believed divinely inspired by a God who was pleased with a sacrifice upon the altar of business." 3

The satirists maintained that this ethic, an ethic which seemed to them to be the primary feature of middle class morality, was basically no more than a mask for baser motivating forces in the mercantile world. They reached this position by making basically conservative, upper-class assumptions about the way in which the world should be ordered.

To the gentleman, who could not accept the validity of the Puritan contention that the mere accumulation of worldly wealth was a legitimate "calling" for a man, that the successful stewardship and increase of one's material goods was the sign of one's "election" by God, the citizens' intense concern with making money must have seemed obsessive. As we have seen, the gentleman had other interests which often took precedence over money-making. Working out of the medieval tradition of morality which the Church of England had inherited from the Church of Rome, the gentleman tended to see the thrifty, practical, shrewd, careful financial activities of the London cits as evidence, not
of their virtue, but of the whole class having fallen into
the clutches of the devil through the deadly sin of avarice.
This is what L. C. Knights has called the "anti-acquisitive
tradition," which is assumed to be part of the intellectual
environment of the Stuart audience by the Stuart playwright. 4
Thus, one of the ways in which the dramatists got at the
abuses in Jacobean and Caroline England while, at the same
time, flattering their aristocratic audiences, was to pre-
sent the middle class characters as motivated basically by
greed, guilty of the sin of avarice, and to explore the
disastrous consequences of the exercise of rampant economic
individualism.

Avarice is the sin by which a man replaces God, in his
life, with a god of gold. In other words the acquisition
of material possessions becomes the primary motivating force
in his conduct. For an audience which tended to view the
world as one large hierarchical structure or chain of being,
the replacing of God by Mammon implied a distortion of the
whole of existence. This adds, of course, to the horror
of a figure like Volpone, when he says,

"Thou being the best of things, and far transcending,
all style of joy in children, parents, friends,
or any other waking dream on earth,
Thy looks when they to Venus did ascribe
They should have given her twenty thousand cupids,
Such are thy beauties and our loves! Dear Saint,
Riches, the dumb god that giv'st all men tongues,
That canst do nought, and yet mak' st men do all things;
The price of sold; even hell, with thee to boot,
Is made worth heaven! Thou art virtue, fame,
Honor, and all things else." (Volpone I, i, 16-26)

Nor is this an entirely isolated instance, for even the
genial Dekker, in If This Be Not a Good Play the Devill
is in It, writes of Barterville, the merchant, who is given a speech similar to that of Volpone. Lurchall, a devil sent to tempt Barterville asks him what makes him disguise himself as a Turk and the merchant replies:

Bart: "That, for which manie their religion Most men their Faith, all change their honestie, Profite, (that guilded god) Commodity. (ITBNGP IV, 6-9)

Nor is it just gold that merits such adulation; the draper Quomodo in Middleton's Michaelmas Term addresses the land he has stolen from the gallant Easy, if not as a deity, at least as a beloved woman.

Quo: O, that sweet, neat, comely, delicate parcel of land! like a fine gentlewoman i' th' waist, not so great as pretty, pretty;" (MT II, ii, 90ff)

Bloodhound, in William Rowley's A Match at Midnight is another example of the character who worships the material.

Blood: "Prayer before providence! When did ye know any thrive and swell that uses it?" (MatM I, i, p. 7)

and later

Blood: "O excellent money, excellent money, mistress of my devotions! (MatM V, i, p. 83)

Finally, the mere possession of wealth leads Massinger's Luke Frugal to think himself larger than life:

Luke: "Hermes Moly! Sybilla's golden bough; the great Elixir, Imagine'd only by the Alchymist Compar'd with thee are shadows, thou the substance And guardian of felicity. No marvail My brother made thy place of rest his bosome, Thou being ever the keeper of his heart, a mistris To be hugged ever. In by corners of This sacred room, silver in bags heaped up... There being scarce one shire
In Wales or England, where my moneys are not...
I am sublim'd! grosse earth
Support me not. I walk on ayr!..."  
(Cm III, iii, 10-42 passim)

Clearly, the most blatant form of avarice is the conscious replacement in the mind of a character of God by material possessions, and this treatment of the citizen character by the Stuart satirists is amply demonstrated above. It should be pointed out here that the playwrights do not make avarice the exclusive property of the middle class. Ben Jonson, particularly in Volpone, shows it corrupting every level of society. As Alvin B. Kernan writes,

"This gold-centered world is, of course, a grotesque image of the materialistic culture of the Renaissance, and Jonson constantly reminds us of the width of his satire by frequent reference to contemporary professions and practices: the courtiers who 'ply it for a place at court'; the usurers who coffin men alive for debt; the mill owners who grind 'oil, corn or men' into powder; the doctors who 'kill with as much licence as a judge; the Puritans who sometimes 'devour flesh, and sometimes one another'; the projectors--i.e. entrepreneurs--with such fantastic commercial schemes as 'waterworks in perpetual motion.'"

The dramatists concern themselves not only with covetousness in its pure form as in the instances above, but with what its derivative social effects are. Some of the most obvious and at the same time most petty abuses which the playwrights record are found in the everyday acts of retail selling. Their plays reflect a belief in the general decline of business ethics among London shopkeepers; the attitudes of their citizen characters contrast dramatically with the concern of Touchstone and Golding in *Eastward Hoe*! with their reputations for scrupulous honesty in their dealings. The contention of the satirists seems to be that a man who
centers his life upon the acquisition of material goods (by thrift or industry) reaches a point when his world view becomes so colored by his quest that he ceases to concern himself with the ethics of business, so that cheating the customer by dishonest, if not legally punishable, devices, becomes a positive value in the pursuit of gold—just another evidence of one's industry and thrift. In Middleton's Michaelmas Term we are shown how the scene is calculated to deceive the buyer. Quomodo, the grasping draper, purposely darkens his shop so that the inferior quality of his cloth may not be apparent and in this he is aided by his assistant, Falselight, whose name suggests his mission.

Quo: "Go, make my coarse commodities look sleek; With subtle art beguile the honest eye: Be near to my trap window, cunning Falselight."
(MT I, 86-88)

Quomodo is wholly conscious of his greed, and the devices he uses to entrap the unwary, but later in the play he contends that he is no worse than the average tradesman.

Quo: "Why Thomasine, go to: my shop is not altogether so dark as some of my neighbors; where a man may be made cuckold at one end, while he's measuring with his yard at t'other."
(MT II, iii, 34-37)

In Marston's play The Dutch Courtesan, the playwright introduces in the subplot a citizen and his wife, the Mulligrubs, who are of the same breed as Quomodo, but on a smaller scale. They are vintners, and so their cheating takes a different form; yet Mrs. Mulligrub contends that they are being false to their religion by even being so honest as they are.
Mist Muls: "Truth, husband, surely heaven is not pleased with our vocation. We do wink at the sins of our people. Our wines are protestant; and I speak it to my grief, and to the burden of my conscience, we fry our fish with salt butter."

(DC II, iii, 9-12)

To which her husband replies,

Mul: "Go, look to your business; mend the matter, and score false with a vengeance."

(DC II, iii, 13)

The Mulligrubs have no redeeming characteristics to save them in the eyes of the audience, for while we may admire the dimensions of the evil in Quomodo, the overreacher, the Mulligrubs alienate us simply by the pettiness of their activities. Marston does not even give them audacity or wit (though they are shrewd) so that our sympathies tend to be with the picaresque rogue Cocledemoy, who possesses both, and outwits the grubby vintners at every turn for the mere joy of trickery. After one incident in which Cocledemoy has cozened them out of fifteen pounds by playing on the tendency of Mulligrub to be a gossip, Marston shows us how they intend to make up the loss.

Mistress Muls: "Good husband, take comfort in the Lord; I'll play the devil, but I'll recover it... Have a good conscience, 'tis but a week's cutting in the term."

"Cutting" is defined by the editor in a note as "sharpening (in the way of adulterating the liquors, frothing the cans, etc.)."

These particular examples, however, are merely symptomatic of a larger attitude held by "cits" in many of the comedies of London life, the attitude that in trade honesty
is not necessarily the best policy, especially if one's goal is the rapid accumulation of wealth. Richard Brome, in The City Wit, presents this view through Pyannet Sneakup, mother-in-law to the eccentric and exceptional citizen, Mr. Crazy, who has gone bankrupt because of his upright dealing and faith in human nature.

Py: "Honest man! Who the devill wish'd thee to be an honest man? Here's my worshipfull husband, Mr. Sneakup, that from a Grazier is come to be a Justico of Peace; And, what, as an honest man? Hee grew to be able to give nine hundred pound with my daughter; and what, by honestie? Mr. Sneakup and I are come to live i'th City, and here we have lyen these three years, and what, for honesty? Honesty? What should the City do with honesty; when 'tis enough to undo a whole Corporation? Why are your wares gumm'd; your shops dark; your Prizes writ in strange characters? What, for honesty? Honesty? Why is hard waxe call'd Merchants waxe; and is said seldom or never to be ripp'd off, but it plucks the skin of a Lordship with it? What! for honesty?" (CW I, i, p. 284)

The pursuit of individual advantage in the economic world of the play does not allow indulgence in the luxury of personal integrity. The shopkeepers' worlds created by the satiric playwrights in Michaelmas Term, The Dutch Courtezan and The City Wit are quite drastically changed from the London of Simon Eyre. They are darker worlds, in which pride in craftsmanship and honest dealing are the exception rather than the rule in citizenly conduct.

Avarice distorts a man's sense of values so that he becomes inclined to put a price upon everything in life, to the point of considering people as commodities to be traded in the market-place. This is particularly true in
respect to relations between the sexes. Brome, in *A Mad
Couple Well Matched*, exploits the widely held notion that
the London "cits" put their pretty wives and daughters in
their shops to attract customers by offering their bodies
as a sort of bonus in a sale. This unattractive idea put
the husbands or fathers in the positions of complacent
cuckold and pander. Saleware, the London citizen of Brome's
play, dresses his wife like a lady and boasts of her appear-
ance.

Sal: And I am highly honor'd; and shall grow fat by
the envy of my repining neighbors, that cannot
maintaine their wives so like court-ladies,

some perhaps...will say shee's but Tom Sale-

ware's wife, and she comes by this Gallantry
the Lord knows how, or so. But Sapientia mia

mihi, let the assinegos prate while others
shall admire thee, sitting in thy shop more
glorious, then the Maiden-head in the Mercers
armes, and say there is the Nonparrell, the
Paragon of the Citie, the Flower-de-luce of
Cheapside... (MC III, i, p. 58-9)

The outcome of this kind of thing in Brome's London world
is a foregone conclusion. Lady Thrivewell accuses her
husband of infidelity and he confesses to having had an
affair with Mistress Alicia Saleware.

Thrive: Light Saleware my Silke-mans wife.
Lady T: The same I meant, Y're a fair dealing
husband. On what condition...Only to bring
good Custome to her shop, And send her
husband venison (Flesh for Flesh)? I did
observe you bought there all last terme,
and wish'd me to her shop, and Mr. Saveall,
with divers others to bestowe our monies...

(MC I, i, p. 16)

But by the time Lady Thrivewell makes her discovery Alicia
is already attracting better custom, Lord Lovely and his
friend Bellamy. Saleware addresses the three upon his
And there I will direct you in your progress. Ally how dost? Mr. Bellamy how ist? How does my noble Lord? You are sad methinks. Ha' you everbought anything here, and so repent your bargaine? Or cannot my wife and you agree upon 't? You must use Mr. Bellamy kindly my sweet Ally: he is our noblest Lords most special favorite, and must find all faire dealing here, as well when I am abroad as at home sweet heart. (MC IX, p. 28)

Brome has created a citizen who is a perfect ass, incapable of comprehending that he is seriously compromised by the conduct of his wife or by his acts that make hers possible. It is not clear that the playwright intends us to examine the moral structure of his play closely, for its tone is consistently light, but the point is that the very assumptions of the citizenly character which he makes are moral assessments of the drama's city-world. Certainly such a character as Saleware would do nothing to change the view of the upper classes that cits were morally debased, incapable of valuing personal honor. It is profitable to compare the semiconscious or amoral actions of Saleware with the completely conscious actions of Corvino, the merchant in Volpone. Corvino is totally aware of what he is doing when he presents Celia to Volpone. His wife is his most cherished treasure, as Mosca says "She's kept as warily as your gold," (Volpone II, v, 118) she is shielded even from the sight of the world. And yet when the issue is brought up, the merchant is willing to be a pander to his own wife and the reasons are clearly those of avarice. He deceives himself by pretending that this act is no more than a demonstration of how far he lacks the traditional citizen's jealousy, but Celia, who is one
of Jonson's morally normative characters, is unsatisfied with such rationalization.

Corvino: I've told you reasons; What the physicians have set down; how much It may concern me; what my engagements are; My means, and the necessity of those means For my recovery; wherefore, if you be Loyal and mine, be won, respect my venture.

Celia: Before your honor?

Corvino: Honor! tut, a breath. There's no such thing in nature; a mere term Invented to awe fools. What, is my gold The worse for touching? Clothes for being looked on? Why this's no more... (Volpone III, vii, 33-46)

Jonson is handing down in Volpone a serious indictment against this avaricious, grasping society (of which he makes the merchant perhaps the worst example), accusing it of an incredible distortion of the natural order that subsumes the value of the integrity of the human soul beneath the value of an inanimate god of gold. Even the corrupt Volpone can estimate the worth of a Corvino, and he renders what we probably should accept as Jonson's estimate of the merchant:

Vol: Assure thee, Celia, he that would sell thee, Only for hope of gain, and that uncertain, He would have sold his part of Paradise For ready money, had he met a cope-man. (Volpone III, vii, 140-44)

The marriage-mart is another aspect of the gold-flesh equation to which the dramatists in the anti-acquisitive tradition are so opposed. In this case, of course, it is the parents that barter their children, ordinarily their daughters, for gold. The Yellowhammers in Middleton's A Chaste Maid in Cheapside are horrible examples of this sort of parents. They are not solely interested in marrying their daughter, Moll to Sir Walter Whorehound because of his rank,
although this is a factor. They are also interested in the fact that he is the heir presumptive of the wealthy and childless Sir Oliver Kix. Touchwood Junior, who, with Moll herself composes the moral norm of the play, comments on the real nature of the appeal Sir Walter has for the goldsmith and his wife.

Touch Jr: How strangely busy is the devil and riches! Pour soul [Moll] kept in too hard, her mother's eye Is cruel toward her, being to him. (CM in C I, p. 179)

Even when Sir Walter is exposed as corrupt, a man who has cuckolded a citizen and keeps his mistress and all his illegitimate children in full view of the public, Yellowhammer is not moved to break off the proposed marriage, although he knows Moll's affections are given elsewhere.

Yel: Well, grant all this, say now his deeds are black, Pray, what serves marriage but to call him back; I've kept a whore myself, and had a bastard By Mistress Anne...The knight is rich, he shall be my son-in-law; No matter, so the whore he keeps be wholesome, My daughter takes no hurt then; so let them wed... (CM in C III, iii, p. 234)

Surely the morality here is the basest attributed to the London cits in any play.

The pursuit of widows is motivated almost entirely by avarice, and the citizen characters are not behind the gentlemen in their close reckoning of the financial advantage to be gained by marriage with any particular widow of means. The two gentlemen who recommend the money-lender Hoard to the pretended wealthy widow in A Trick to Catch the Old One leave no doubt as to the nature of their negotiations.
1st Gentleman:  Then with a new and pure affection, 
Behold you, gentleman; grave, kind 
and rich, O match worthy yourself; 
esteeming him, You do regard your 
state.

Hoa:  I'll make her jointure, say. 
1st gent: He can join land to land and well possess you 
Of what you can desire. (Trick III, i, p. 37)

The "widow's" remark on the issue is to the point.

Cour: Alas, you love not widows but for wealth. 
(Trick III, i, p. 39)

Although, as Boas remarks of this play "the characters are 
for the most part types, and their fortunes do not move us 
deeply," the obvious carry-over of market place interests 
and ethics to the domestic sphere is hardly morally elevating, 
and the treatment of the London cit, Hoard, and his equally 
unpleasant enemy, Lucre, cannot be said to be advantageous to 
the middle class. Similarly, the treatment of Bloodhound, 
the avaricious citizen in Rowley's A Match at Midnight, in 
respect to his contemplated marriage, makes it clear that 
his motives in contracting such an alliance are purely mer-
cenary.

Blood: 0 excellent money, excellent money, mistress 
of my devotions!  My widow's estate is little 
less too; and then Sander he has got a moneyed 
woman too; there will be a bulk of money. 
Tim is a puling, I may tell thee, one that 
by nature's course cannot live long:  t'other 
a midnight surfeit cuts off:  then have I a 
trick to cosen both their widows, and make 
all mine. (M at N V, i, p. 83)

Avarice blinds the sinner even to sympathy with ties of blood, 
he is conscious only of one passion, that for gold. 

The treatment of avarice in the London cit by some of 
the comic playwrights of Stuart drama is linked to the mask
motif. Masking involves, in this context, the conflict of at least two ethical codes. One of these codes is unacceptable to the society of the play at large. Thus the character who acts according to such a code must hide behind the appearance of conformity to another system of ethics: the one practicing such deception is a hypocrite. As has been pointed out above, the crass individualistic materialism of the infant capitalists in the middle class was to a large extend unacceptable to the upper classes. Even Till- yard, who is primarily concerned with pointing out the elements of thought common to the gentle and the common classes at this time admits that "they were divided by ethical disagreements."8 The very necessity of promulgating an order like that of 22 August 1599, demonstrated the kind of economic opportunism that was showing up in the middle class and was obnoxious to the crown, the government, and, we may assume, to the upper classes who officered the army. "An order concerning Prices: The Earl of Nottingham, being Captain-General of all forces at this time, hath set out an order concerning the prices to be charged during the abode of the forces in and about London; and warning also all victuallers or others not to withhold or hide grain or other victuals on pain of imprisonment."9 From the point of view of the victualler, of course, such a regulation would seem unjustifiable interference with the workings of the open market, particularly if he had cornered the barley market in hopes of making a killing in the grain sales to the troops.

In realistic comedy, the mask for avarice or economic
self interest which the dramatist provided for his middle-
class characters was often that of the Puritan. Thus, in
Bartholomew Fair, Jonson makes both Dame Purecraft and
Rabbi Busy greedy persons hiding behind the calvinist mask.

Behind the virtuous exterior of plain living and sincere

concern with the salvation of the community of brethren
Jonson shows us a less pleasant reality. Dame Purecraft
tells Quarulous:

"These seven years I have been a wilful holy widow
only to draw feasts and gifts from my entangled suitors.
I am also by office an assisting sister of the deacons
and a devourer, instead of a distributor, of the alms.
I am a special maker of marriages for our decayed brethren
with our rich widows, for a third part of their wealth,
when they are married, for the relief of the poor elect...
And if I ha' not my bargain, they may sooner turn a
scolding drab into a silent minister than make me leave
pronouncing reprobation and damnation unto them. Our
elder, Zeal-of-the-Land, would have had me, but I know
him to be the capital knave of the land, making himself
feoffee in trust to deceased brethren, and coz'ning
their heirs by swearing the absolute gift of their
inheritance." (BF V, ii, 49-64)

We have seen above the same tendency in the Mulligrubs, to
hide their villany behind a mask of religious terminology.

Nest Mult: "Good husband, take comfort in the Lord...
Have a good conscience, 'tis but a week's
cutting in the term." (PC II, iii, 114-115)

Luke Frugal in Massinger's The City Madam is perhaps the
best example of this sort of masking; only his brother is
able to see through him. Even the virtuous Lord Lacie is
taken in by Luke's arguing on behalf of mercy for his brother's
creditors.

Lord: "I would have you,
What's pass'd forgot, to use him as a brother;
A brother of fair parts, of a clear soul,
Religious, good, and honest."
Luke's villainy is gradually unmasked after he is made custodian of his brother's wealth while Sir John attends him disguised as an Indian. Not only does he prove himself miserly and grasping, harder on creditors than the firm but understanding Sir John, but he commits the final atrocity of attempting to sell flesh, his brother's wife and daughters, to savages for human sacrifice. He even calls in the mortgage on Lacie Manor, to Lord Lacie's intense embarrassment. Ultimately, Sir John discloses himself, and reestablishes the society of the play on a firmer basis, like a beneficent Duke in a Shakespearean comedy. The point about the discrepancy between virtuous appearance and avaricious reality that is possible in the soul of man has been made, however, and the wealthy London citizens pointed to as the most likely candidates to be tempted to such sin.

The whole field of financial credit, of conditions of borrowing and lending money, was in a fluid state in Jacobean England. As it is shown in the realistic comedy of the period, it is an issue upon which the gentle classes and the citizens of London were deeply divided, and it is often as usurer that the city becomes a prominent blocking character in the comic world. As we shall see, the dramatists tended, on the whole, to take a traditional approach to the lending
of money at interest and to ally themselves with the gentle classes against the capitalistic citizens on this point as on others. The emotionalism which surrounded the victimization of a nobleman by the avaricious usurer in the drama was perhaps the biggest factor in creating the impression of superficial students of the Stuart period that all stage citizens were vulgar grasping moneylenders like Shylock.

The Church of England, as we have noticed above, inherited almost intact the ethical and moral code of the Church of Rome, and this code included specific concepts concerning the lending of goods and money. Medieval Catholic theology maintained that usury was in and of itself evil, that it was a form of injustice, usury being defined, "when gain and fruit is sought without labour, cost or risk, from the use of something which is not fruitful." Thus, says Father Watt, "usury is a charge made, on the sale of a 'fungible' thing, over and above the just price of that thing, merely for the right to use it." In canon law usury, the taking of interest on money lent was as illegal and immoral as charging for the loan of a loaf of bread and was governed by Canon 1543 "si res fungibilis ita alicui detur ut ejus fiat et postea tantundum in eodem genere restituatur, nihil lucri, ratione ipsius contractus, percipi protest." Such was the traditional prohibition on Christians to lend at interest, a prohibition which gave rise to such works as Miles Morse's "Arraignment and Conviction of Usurie", 1595, in which we find: "Not only hee who is lending cove-
nanteth for gaine, or whose usurarious practices may be discovered of men, is such an usurer as is condemned by the word of God: but even hee which lendeth without any covenant at all, and doth onely expect an increase, or hope for gaine at the hand of the borrower, he is judged of men and condemned of God as a committer of usurie."¹³ But Henry VIII had made the taking of interest legal in England in the thirty-seventh year of his reign, 1546, and Elizabeth, taking lending at interest as a fact of life, sought only to limit the interest rate and set it at ten per cent in 1571.¹⁴ And, to further complicate the issue, John Calvin had, in his theology, repudiated the stand of the Roman church against usury and given his approval of its essential morality:

"Quid si iigitur ex negociatione plus lucri percipi possit, quam ex fundi cuiusvis proventu? Unde vero mercatoris lucrum? Ex ipsuis inquies, diligentia et industria."¹⁵

This doctrine, imported by the English Puritans, gave rise to its own tradition, and to writers who like the merchant in Wilson's Discourse upon Usury felt that "Merchants' doings must not thus be thwarted by preachers and others, that cannot skill of their doings."¹⁶ The lines that were drawn in theoretical ethics were fairly clear. The Church of England and its strong adherents, who tended to be the gentry, accepted the legality of interest, but questioned its morality and deplored the lack of Christian charity in the enforcement of contractual obligations between borrower and lender. The business community of London, with its tendency toward
puritanism, accepted the legality and morality of interest, as well as practical necessity of abiding by the letter as well as the spirit of contracts. The dramatists, on the whole, supported the conservative position of the gentry.

In examining the dramatic rendering of the ethical dichotomy which existed in Stuart England in respect to borrowing and lending at interest, it is important to remember that such a transaction was negotiated between individuals. Since there were no banks or credit organizations on the modern scale, the individual borrower appealed to a particular goldsmith or mercer or other tradesman (or even a judge) for a loan. Credit had not become depersonalized by the 17th century. This made it possible for the playwright to simplify his plot to the point at which we must see the relationship between borrower and lender, usually at the point when payment of a loan is due, as a problem in situational ethics. The character portrayal becomes very important; the dramatists are usually inclined to be against the lender and to favor the borrower. The appeal is made to the audience's Christian charity, and assumes that its sympathies have been sufficiently engaged by the borrower-protagonist so that judgment will be rendered against the antagonist and the balance of the social world will be restored.

The City Madam is one of the most fruitful plays of this type (although complicated by lack of an individual protagonist) because it compares the economic dealings of two characters in similar positions. Initially, Sir John Frugal
has lent money to three men, Fortune, Hoyst and Penurie. Having need of money himself he is anxious to have the debts repaid on the day appointed; the creditors are unable to make such payment and beg an extension of the loan. Sir John is inclined to be a stern creditor and to demand economic integrity in those to whom he lends money, but Massinger paints him as a basically good man in a frustrating position.

Sir John: What would you have me do? Reach me a chair
When I lent my moneys I appear'd an Angel;
But now I would call in my own, a Devil
(CM I, iii, 1-3)

And later, after the first appeal is made for an extension, he says

Sir John: I know no obligation lies upon me
With my honey to feed Drones.
(CM I, iii, 13-14)

This voice seems to be that of heartless economic individualism, but Sir John is moved to mercy by the pleading of his brother Luke on behalf of the debtors.

Luke: I glory in the bravery of your mind
To which your wealth's a servant. Not that riches
Is or should be contemn'd, it brings a blessing
Deriv'd from heaven, and by your industry
Pull'd down upon you; but in this, dear Sir,
You have many equals...but the distinction
And noble difference by which you are
Divided from 'em, is, that you are styl'd
gentle in your abundance, good in plentie,
And that you feel compassion in your bowels.
Of others miseries...while they are curs'd
As rigid and inexorable. (CM I, iii, 46-56)

He argues that hard creditors are unacquainted with morality and religion. Sir John, moved to show compassion to his debtors, is approved by Lord Lacie and presumably, by the
audience. When Luke is put in the same position, however, as has been pointed out earlier, he shows his true colors and becomes an even sterner creditor than Sir John, incapable of being moved by any appeal to his better nature.

Another significant aspect of Massinger's play is that the dramatist gives us a point of view from which to regard the London community as a group as well as embodied in two individuals. After Sir John yields to the pressure of the debtors, Lord Lacie and Luke, he says:

"You shall prevail. Give 'em longer day. But do you hear, no talk of 't. Should this arrive at twelve on the Exchange, I shall be laught at for my foolish pity. Which money men hate deadly... (CM I, iii, 112-116)

Later, when Lord Lacie announces Sir John's supposed death to the company, he makes a comparison between this man and the business community at large.

"The noble Merchant, Who living was for his integrity And upright dealing (a rare miracle In a rich Citizen) London's best honour." 
(CM III, ii, 39-41)

Clearly by the end of the play, Sir John, having allied himself to the ethical position personified by Lord Lacie, becomes the normative character of the play. Luke is a villain but it is not at all clear that he is much worse than the group of London citizens who would laugh at pity, considering it foolish. Massinger does not give us a strong sense either of the justice of Sir John's original position or the culpability of the debtors in failing to live up to their bargains. The burden of self-justification
lies with Sir John, and only his conversion to the aristocratic ethic saves him from condemnation as a classic figure of the usurer.

The character of Sir John Frugal is almost the only favorable portrait we have of a money lender. The rest of the specimens of the breed are more like Luke than like Sir John, a sort of gallery of financial fraud and corruption, types of avarice. On the other hand, the debtors are often not much better than the usurers; they are often rogues whose only saving graces are their wit, youth, and, often their rank.

The introduction to Dekker's *If This Be Not a Good Play*, *The Devil is In It* makes the motives of Barterville the merchant apparent at the outset. "Knowledge and Reward dwell far asunder. Greatness lay once between them. But (in his stead) Covetousness now. An ill neighbor, a bad Benefactor...But tis now the fashion. Lords, look well; Knights, Thank well; Gentlemen, promise well; Citizens, take well; Gulls, sweare well; but None, give well." (ITNGP Dedication)

The whole social world of the play, from the king down, is corrupted by visitors from hell, but Lurchall has the most success as his victim, Barterville, has already pretty well damned himself

"a master, who more villanie has by hart,
Then thou by rote; see him but play his owne part,
and thou doest Hell good service."

(ITNGP II, ii, 12-14)

Dekker exposes some of the devices by which usurers were
reputed to cheat their debtors. Bartervile's contract requires that the money be repaid before a certain hour, and the usurer has him kept waiting by a servant at the door until the hour is almost past, then "accidentally" mixes some of his gold with that of the gentleman. While they are sorting it out the hour passes. Bartervile's economic self-interest condemns him in the eyes of the young king who has defeated his own devil. The contention that

"Nature sent man into the world (alone),
Without all company, but to care for one,
And that I'll do," (ITBNGP IV, ii, 79-82)

is not an acceptable ethic in the world of the play, although to Lurchall it appears as "True Citie Doctrine Sir".

Quomodo, the linen draper in Michaelmas Term is more than the simple "type" of the avarice-driven London usurer. As we have seen above he cheats the customers who come to his shop, but his heart is set on bigger game. He plots to get the land of the innocent young gentleman Easy by tempting him to dissipated behavior which will get him into Quomodo's debt. He urges his assistant, Shortyard, "shift thyself into the shape of gallantry; I'll swell thy purse with angels. Keep foot by foot with him, outdare his expenses, flatter, dice and brothel to him; give him the sweet taste of sensuality; train him to every wasteful sin, that he may quickly need health, but especially money." (MT I, i, 1 123-130) The whole issue of credit comes up in the seduction of the young man; credit in London seems to depend upon acquaintance with the right people, upon public reputation and outward appearances. We see this
sort of system operating to the disadvantage of the money-
lender Lucre in *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, for the false
rumour that his nephew Witgood is to marry a wealthy widow
reestablishes the young man's credit with his uncle and
leads ultimately to the defeat of the uncle. This device
appears in Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* as well.

In *Michaelmas Term*, however, Shortyard's appearance of firm
credit tempts Easy to co-sign a note for him, and the young
heir is left to pay the debt when Shortyard defaults. Here,
of course the material gain for the avaricious Quomodo is
land but it does as well. The usurer exploits the economic
innocence of the young Easy,

> Easy: "Nay, master Blastfield, Shortyard you do not
> hear what master Quomodo said since, like an
> honest, true citizen i' faith; rather than you
> should be diseased upon't, you shall take up a
> commodity of two hundred pounds."

*(MT III, iii, 1 254-258)*

The loan in kind was one of the gambits of the usurer, for
all the young men can realize from their commodity when they
seek to sell it is £60 while the bond is for £200. After
the forfeiture of Easy's lands, however, the usurer over-
reaches himself by pretending to have died in order to
test his heirs. His wife marries young Easy, his heir
turns gallant and loses the property to the rightful owner.
Again, it is the young, honorable, charming gentleman and
his world order that triumph while the avaricious merchant,
and all the devices of the London business world that are
a trap for the innocent, go down to defeat.

Boas points out that *A Trick to Catch the Old One* is
representative of Middleton's early comedies. "They introduce us to the world of middle-class London life, portrayed with light-hearted cynicism, where youth is chiefly given over to dissipation and age makes a god of money." But he also is quick to point out that the play "wins most appreciation if its standards of conduct are not taken too seriously." Again the two usurers are portrayed as types of the greedy man, (only their rivalry differentiates them from Luke and Quomodo) and they are defeated by youth combined with wit. Witgood's repentance of his roguish ways at the end of the play is awkward, but it is the playwright's attempt to reestablish some sort of moral framework for his comic world, of which the regenerate young man may be representative.

Old Bloodhound in Rowley's *A Match at Midnight* and Sir Giles Overreach in Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* are both defined (at least in part) by the nature of their trade, usury. They are both avaricious, but Overreach like Quomodo has other motives for his activities as well, as will be shown in the next chapter. Both are defeated by forces identified as superior in wit and rank upon which the final ethical order of the play depends. The Widow Wag and Jarvis, her disguised husband, are not necessarily of higher rank than the Bloodhounds, but they are independently wealthy and their actions are clearly not motivated by crass materialism. In Massinger's play, of course, the class distinction is more significant. Overreach is the only citizen in the play; although he has moved to the
country he has not left his city ethics behind. In the end, the moral order of the world of the play is reestablished on the basis of the conservative, aristocratic ethic represented by Lady Allworth and Lord Lovell. Massinger and Rowley, like other realistic-comic playwrights of the Stuart era, exploit the emotionalism surrounding the economic issue of interest to turn the character of the usurer into an emblem for a whole complex of antipathetic assumptions made by the gentry about the morals and motives behind the actions of the aggressive London middle class.
Chapter IV - The Social Ambition of the London Cits

"We that had our breeding from a trade, cits, as you call us, though we hate gentlemen ourselves, yet are ambitious to make our children gentlemen."

Shirley The Gamester

In the previous chapter, discussion was focused upon the sin of avarice as a motivating force in the characters of the London cits as they appear in the comic worlds of the realistic dramatists. Greed was treated there as if it appeared in isolation, as if the cits were little more than emblems; two-dimensional creations, like the vices of the old morality plays. Such analysis is, of course, helpful in deepening the reader's awareness of the widespread identification of the citizen character with covetousness in Stuart realistic comedy, but it does not, obviously, accurately represent the complexes of motives which drive some of these dramatic creations. Another major psychological and social force which influenced the actions of the stage citizens was social ambition, the desire to rise not only within the class to which they were born, but, usually through means other than the simple accumulation of money, to transcend the social barriers erected between one class and another. Most of the actions of the citizen characters which are condemned by the satiric dramatists can be traced to these two factors, greed and ambition.

Class distinctions were a reality in Stuart England and the social ambition of the real citizens of London was not merely a matter of superficial social climbing, although
if one considers exclusively the dramatic portrayal of the
city madams and their daughters, this may appear to have
been true. The London merchant was pursuing more important
ends in seeking to improve his social position. He sought power
to protect his won wealth, to avoid the kind of dis-
crimination against him that Harrison records in A Jacobean
Journal: "23rd October 1605. One Milwarde, a goldsmith in
Cheapside, was today in question in the star Chamber, for he
caused a sergeant to arrest the Countess Dowager of Rutland
for a debt of 90, which was done very irreverently and
whilst the lady was in her coach...it was argued at length
what were the privileges of wives of noblemen, and concluded
that they have like privileges as their husbands the
goldsmith is fined 200 and imprisonment The
London cits knew, further, that the long-term preservation
of the economic gains they had made, the preservation of
their new and luxurious way of life, depended upon their
acquiring the political power to shape their own destines
and the destinies of England. As Mrs. Jones-Davies describes
the situation, the social confrontation in England, in the
London of Dekker, was a facing-off of two power groups.
"...tous les marchands et maîtres des Corporations, tous les
Londoniens qui, grâce au remarquable progres du négoce dans
les dernieres années du règne d'Elizabeth, et au début du
XVII* siecle arrivent à constituer une aristocracie de la
richesse, dont la puissance se dresse en face de la plus
ancienne et traditionelle aristocracie de la naissance."
It is hardly surprising that the wealthy cits, perceiving their socially and politically disadvantaged position, would seek to correct the imbalance between their economic power and their political and social influence. So long as political power in the form of seats in the House of Commons was the province of the landed gentry, the wealthiest among the merchants, to protect their own interests, were obliged to ally themselves with the petty nobility, through marriage or by purchase of land. It was, as A. W. Ward observes, "one of the distinctive phenomena of this age—the closer relations between the nobility and the gentry, on the one hand, and the wealthier class of burgesses, the merchants, on the other." We may seriously question the inclusion of the nobility here, but it is certain that the Lower House of Parliament came to stand, during this period, for the alliance of the gentry and powerful City interests.

Some class lines, then, are beginning to blur. The financial predicaments of James I facilitated the passage of the wealthy man from the rank of citizen to that of gentleman. When he felt the pressing need of money, when he had become such a bad credit risk that even the City Corporation made him post crown lands as collateral for loans, the king made certain titles subject to outright purchase. Thomas Arundell records the method by which the king sought to get money out of the Londoners who would no longer lend to him. "Upon James I instituting the hereditary order of knighthood, termed Baronets, he made it for
the first time a purchaseable rank, and to any subject, whatever his position, if he could only produce the sum named (£1095), letters patent were immediately granted, and he became a baronet. A large sum was realized by the King from this source, many merchants and aldermen of London and other towns being purchasers, and very many of the present baronetages go back to the years 1610 to 1620, not one of which titles, we believe, was granted but by purchase."4 Even the peerage was not, in James's reign, beyond the reach of the tradesman. "It is certainly below the mark to affirm that more than two hundred peerages have been founded by Lord Mayors and other members of the London Livery...Sir Baptist Hicks obtained his wealth from the trade of Mercer, which he carried on in Cheapside, being mercer to the King (James I) and the court. He was first knighted and afterwards created Viscount Camden."5

There were two substantial groups that remained unaffected or negatively affected by the dynamism of the alliance between merchant and country squire. These were the lower class, (both urban and rural) and the court. The power struggle developed without consideration for the lower classes; it became a court-country issue. The court partly tended to identify itself as "the gentle classes" and to resent the move into prominence of the wealthy citizens. Their objection took one intellectual form in the theory of the organic nature of the stable state. Shakespeare put this theory into the mouths of Menenius and the First Citizen in Coriolanus.
If the state is likened to the human body, then it is obvious that each member was accorded a function by nature, and any attempt by a member to function in a manner other than that so accorded would result in a disease of the body politic. Persons operating out of this and similar hierarchical theories of the ordering of the world could not but see the ambition of the London cits as a threat to the social order of the state, rather than as any sort of beneficial social evolution or progress. And it is with such people, the conservative aristocratic audiences of the private theaters of London that we see the satirical dramatists allying themselves.

Attacking the social pretensions of the London cits was by no means a new diversion in Jacobean England. The rapid expansion of trade and commerce during Elizabeth's reign had brought riches and luxury within the grasp of more of the middle class than ever before, and wealthy citizens were proud enough to wish to display their new found abundance in a high style of living and dress. Luxuries of these kinds had been out of the reach of all but the wealthiest of the landed aristocrats for so long that they had become signs
of the class itself; thus the appropriation of even the outward appearance of gentility by the cits seemed to many Elizabethan moralists to be an attempt to break down the ordered society upon which they felt England's strength rested. As early as 1577 we read in Harrison's Description of England of the charge of extravagance levelled against the middle class. "Oh how much cost is nowadays bestowed upon our bodies and how little upon our souls." It is reported that the merchants of London wore rich silks and velvets to do business upon the Exchange, and that merchants and other wealthy citizens possessed "costly cupboards of plate worth five or six hundred or even a thousand pounds" and that a countryman would have been astonished at the luxury and variety of a merchant's table. Elizabethan moralists were deeply concerned about this state of affairs. "Harrison," writes Thomas Burke, "was of opinion that the merchants kept too high a table and deplored their extravagance in food and wine as well as clothes." Philip Stubbes, in his Anatomy of Abuses (1583) makes the same kind of criticism. "As for private subjects, it is not at any hand lawful that they should wear silks, velvets, satins, damasks, gold, silver and what they list, except they being in some kind of office in the commonwealth do use it to the dignifying and ennobling of the same." In the drama, the superficial aspects of the pursuit of higher social position and the acquisition of wealth, such as clothes, aping of the manners of the gentry and so forth,
are almost always the province of the city wives and daughters—
hence the title of Massinger's play *The City Madam*. Even
Dame Margery in *The Shoemakers' Holiday* does not escape
gentle censure at the hands of Dekker for her concern with
the external privileges that accrue to her as wife of a city
official.

Wife: "Art thou acquainted with never affardingale-
maker nor a French hood-maker? I must enlarge
my bum, ha, ha! How shall I look in a hood, I
wonder! Perdy, oddly, I think."

* (SH III, iv, 1 43 ff.)

Gertrude Touchstone, in *Eastward Hoe*, is a more vicious case,
and, in the drama at least, a more typical one. She would
reject her city heritage entirely; she treats even her citizen
father and sister with disdain.

Ger: O sister Mill, though my father be a lowcapped
tradesman, yet must I be a lady; and, I praise
God, my mother must call me Madam. Does he
come? Off with this gown, for shame's sake,
off with this gown; let not my knight take me
in the city out in any hand." (EH! I, ii, 1 4ff)

In *The City Madam* the concern of Lady Frugal and her daugh-
ters with the externals of rank and position corrupts even
the basically virtuous Sir John Frugal. The return of a
ship from a profitable trading venture is good news to him.

Goldwire: "And it comes timely
For besides a payment on the nail for a Mannor
Late purchased by master, His young daughters
Are ripe for marriage...When you went
To the Indies, there was some shape and
proportion
Of a Merchants house in our family, but since
My master, to gain precedence for my mistris
Above some Elder Merchants Wives, was knighted,
Tis grown a little court, in bravery...He must,
Or there's no rest for him at home...."

* (CM I, i, 1 6-28 passim)
Mistris Touchstone and Gertrude, Lady Frugal and her daughters are brought, finally, to a recognition of the error of their ambitions. They create tensions in the comic worlds in which they operate because they seek to impose their wills upon the males in their societies, rather than submitting to them. Margery never moves beyond the control of her husband Sim, thus her pride and ambition is lightly amusing; she does not attempt to reach beyond the limits of the middle class, so does not threaten the stability of the social structure.

The equivalent temptation for the young cit is the temptation to gallantry. As the City Madams are unable to comprehend what it is that distinguishes a real lady, and depend on external trappings to define them as ladies, so the young man is unable to discriminate between the real gentleman and the gallant. The education of the young citizen did not prepare him to make such distinctions. The tradition of Aristotle which persisted through the middle ages into the Renaissance held that "the son of a ignoble man... inherits a tendency to vice, skill in low and mechanic arts, and a servile and mercenary spirit...." It could not be expected that he would understand the "disinterested love of virtue which inspires the gentleman." This was the tradition out of which many of the Jacobean satirists were working when they depicted their cits as attempting to be gallants. Like Quicksilver in *Eastward Hoe*, young Barnacle in Shirley's play *The Gamester* is such a character. His uncle, Old
Barnacle, is anxious that the boy should become a gentleman. It is important to notice to whom the older cit turns to make his nephew into a gentleman and what action he feels is necessary. Old Barnacle approaches a gamester named Hazard and asks him to let the boy beat him in public to show his gallantry. But the young cit is completely beyond his depth in the gallant's world; he turns into a roarer, a loud braggart, until the uncle, in fear for the boy's life, pays Hazard to defeat him and turn him back into a cautious, even timorous cit. The basic lack of understanding is clear. Old Barnacle conceives of valor in terms of tavern brawls and beatings, honour as something defended in such encounters; the reputation of a gentleman as something to be bought. The reasons behind his strange request of Hazard define the ambition of the cit class as conceived not only by Shirley but many of the other dramatists in the tradition of realistic comedy.

Old B: "And thus I satisfy you: we that had
Our breeding from a trade, cits, as you call us
Though we hate gentlemen ourselves, yet are
Ambitious to make our children gentlemen:
We for our children purchase land; they brave it I
The country; beget children, and they sell,
Grow poor, and send their sons up to be prentices.
There is a whirl in fate; the courtiers make us
cuckolds; mark! we wriggle into their
Estates; poverty makes their children citizens;
Our sons cuckold them: a circular justice."
(Gamester I, i, p. 201)

The ownership of land was a major issue in Stuart England and it became a principal issue in realistic comedy of the period. L. C. Knights observes in his study of
"The numerous kindred of Sir Walter Whorehound are all fortune hunters, and a good deal of the amusement they provided, when their intrigues were successful, must have been due to their showing the tables turned; the underlying assumption is that as a rule the city preys on the country....It is not merely that the city is the home of the usurer...Middleton assumes a major social movement—the transference of land from the older gentry to the citizen middle class."

If this statement seems to be at odds with the earlier contention in this chapter that the country interests and the city interests there were growing together into an alliance of the country against the crown, it must be remembered that the Stuart dramatists did not have the broad perspective on their own contemporary scene that modern social historians have. What they viewed as a destructive force in society has been viewed as a positive step in social evolution in England. Middleton's assumption of wholesale transference of land to usurer citizens from impoverished young heirs is not an entirely accurate picture. Many a young man's estate was redeemed by a judicious marriage in the city, from which both parties benefitted. Many a younger brother, unwilling to remain in an elder brother's service, made his own way in a city trade. The result was a mingling of bloods, rather than the total destruction of a class. But drama thrives on conflict, not upon a quiet, practical resolution of social problems, and the dramatists, concerned with the preservation of a class that patronized the theater, emphasized class antipathy as one more tool useful in maintaining the status quo, the stable society. "As a matter of course," writes Ward, "this tendency to the removal of traditional
distinctions was deplored by contemporary observers, anxious to escape the stigma of a tacit assent to the inevitable processes of social evolution. Such assent would have been acceptable to neither the private theater audiences nor the court censors.

Quomodo, in Middleton's *Michaelmas Term*, is one of the type of the land-hungry citizen who made the perfect antagonist for Stuart comedy. His covetousness is combined with a hatred for the "gentry" of the comic world as an undifferentiated group. His morals are, as we have seen in the previous chapter, non-existent. He practices petty cheating in his shop and even during his leisure time he plots.

Quo: "Know, then, that I have not spent this long vacation
Only for pleasure's sake;—give me the man
that out of recreation culls advantage,
Dives into seasons, never walks but thinks,
Ne rides but plots: my journey was toward Essex...
Where I have seen what I desire."

Sho: "A woman?"
Quo: "Pooh, a woman! yet beneath her,
That which she often treads on, yet commands
her; Land, fair neat land."

Sho: "What is the mark you shoot at?"
Quo: "Why, the fairest to cleave the heir in twain,
I mean his title; to murder his estate,
Stifle his right in some detested prison:
There are means and ways enough to hook in gentry,
Besides our deadly enmity, which thus stands,
They're busy 'bout our wives, we 'bout their lands." (MT I, i, 98-112)

The young heir, Easy, is tempted to turn gallant and ultimately loses his land to Quomodo as much through his ignorance of economic dealings as anything else. The draper apparently wishes the land not only that he may leave it to his son, whom he has educated at Cambridge and the Inns of Court, but
so he may excite envy among his fellow citizens.

"Now shall I be divulg'd a landed man
Throughout the livery: one points, another whispers,
A third frets inwardly; let him fret and hang!...
...Now come my golden days in. Whether is the worshipful master Quomodo and his fair bed-fellow rid forth?
to his land in Essex. Whence comes those goodly loads of logs? From his land in Essex. Where
grows this pleasant fruit, says one citizen's wife in
the row? At Master Quomodo's orchard in Essex."  
(MT III, iv, 5-13 passim)

And later he daydreams again:

Quo: A fine journey in the Whitsun holidays, i'faith,
to ride upon pillion, some upon side-saddles,
I and little Thomasine i' the middle, our son
and heir, Sim Quomodo, in a peach-colour taffeta
jacket, some horse-length, or a long yard before
us." (MT IV, i, 74 ff)

Clearly, success is more complex for Quomodo than for Luke
Frugal. For Luke, simple accumulation of wealth is sufficient;
in Quomodo, avarice is complicated by social ambition. Luke
is irresponsive to the opinions of others of his own class;
Quomodo shares their antipathy towards the gentry and courts
their envy, but dreams of his own social fulfillment in
terms of being able to entertain a group of his fellow cits
on his own land. As Miss Lynch writes, "Ambitious London
tradesmen eagerly seek for themselves the privileges and
immunities enjoyed by gentlemen. It is true that fashion-
able manners, for their own sake, still mean practically
nothing to Middleton's bluff and downright citizens."16

The defeat of Quomodo is brought about by his own over-
reaching. Thomasine marries the young Easy and Sim turns
gallant and loses his land to his new stepfather. The
restored norm leaves Easy in possession of his hereditary
estates and further enriched by marriage with the wealthy
"widow" Quomodo. If, as L. C. Knights contends, much of the comic effect of these plays depends on the reversal of ordinary expectations of the city taking advantage of the innocence of the country, this play is ultimately successful. What is important for the argument of this thesis is that Middleton has resolved his intrigue in favor of the gentle class. The ambition of the citizen draper Quomodo has been totally frustrated. Not only has he succeeded in depriving himself of the lands he plotted and schemed for, but his son, Sim, has eliminated the possibility of the continuation of a landed Quomodo family. The sexual jealousy which Quomodo exhibited toward the young gentry early in the play, seems to have been, to some extent, justified, for Thomasine does not wait long before marrying her husband's victim.

Sexual jealousy is an essential ingredient of the satiric dramatists' view of relations between citizens and gentry. Both stage citizens and stage gallants in many realistic comedies operate on the premise that the wife of a citizen is easy game for a gallant young gentleman with fine clothes and winning ways. We have seen above that Quomodo assumes that it is reason enough to take a young heir's lands since "They're busy about our wives." (MT I, i, 112) Much of the fun of Jonson's Every Man In His Humour centers around the fears of the well-to-do merchant Kitely with respect to his wife, whose brother's gentlemen friends often gather at the merchant's house.

Kitely: "Why't cannot be, where there is such resort Of wanton gallants and young revellers, That any woman should be honest long." (EMIH II, iii, 1 12-15)
The same sexual assumption operates in Brome’s *A Mad Couple Well Matched*, where the ethics of gentlemen who do take advantage of City wives are brought into question in the person of Sir Oliver Thrivwell. Even the genial Dekker in *Westward Hoe* and *The Roaring Girl* exploits the gallants’ preconceptions about the character of citizens wives. Laxton, a gallant, says of Mrs. Gallipot, the tobacconist’s wife:

Laxton: I know she cosins her husband to keep me, and Ile keepe her honest, as long as I can, to make the poore man some part of amends.”

*(RG II, i, 1 122ff)*

In this particular play the wives manage to outwit the gallants and to become reconciled with their husbands, but the comedy is absolutely dependent on the dramatic convention of sexual jealousy in the character of the London cit as part of his hatred of the gentry.

Sir Giles Overreach, in Massinger’s *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, is a character constructed on the same set of assumptions that were the basis for Quomodo. The first is that the citizen is motivated by avarice and social ambition. His philosophy of business is summed up in his own words:

“I must have all men sellers, and I the only purchaser.”

*(NW to POD II, i, 1 32-33)* Again, as with Quomodo, Sir Giles is not motivated simply by avarice. He seeks to satisfy his desire to advance socially through the aggrandizement of his daughter, Margaret.

Over: “She must part with That humble title, [mistress] and write honourable, Right honourable, Marrall, my right honourable daughter, If all I have, o’er e’er shall get, will do it.”
Massinger's presupposition about the social world in this play is that the audience will recognize that the ideal comic order is embodied in the hierarchical structure headed by Lord Lovell and Lady Allworth. It is thrown into disarray by the ambitions and actions of Sir Giles Overreach and can only be reestablished by his defeat. It violates every tenet of the conservative world view which the playwright supports here that any lady, "decay'd" or otherwise, should act as servant to an city girl.

The second assumption about citizens that Massinger makes (as do Middleton and others) is that the business dealings of such men are unregulated by the code of standard Christian ethics, which was basic in what Ruth Kelso has called "the code of the English gentleman." Overreach tells his henchman Marrall,

"I would be worldly wise; for the other wisdom,
That does prescribe us a well-govern'd life,
And to do right to others as ourselves,
I value not an atom." (NW to POD II, i, 23-25)

Massinger portrays Sir Giles as a man incapable, finally, of comprehending the mind of a true gentleman, who like Lord Lovell, is concerned with the way the world regards him and will not corrupt himself in his own eyes by touching ill-gotten wealth. He cannot, in fact, even understand
his own daughter, who, like Mildred Touchstone, is uncomfortable beyond her own level in society. Margaret, like the other characters who oppose Sir Giles, is governed by religious principles, for which her father, who, as L. C. Knights points out, "is explicitly anti-Christian", berates her. Traditional Christianity held it a virtue to walk humbly in the path appointed by God. Sir Giles's pride and ambition is, in terms of such a moral ethic, as unchristian a trait as his lack of charity.

The third assumption the playwright makes is that in the mind of a citizen there is a hatred of the gentry that makes the cit delight in their ruin. The class prejudice is reciprocated by those on the highest levels of society in the play, Lord Lovell and Lady Allworth.

Lady: "...I dare then say thus:
As you are noble (howe'er common men
Make sorded wealth the object and sole end
Of their industrious aims) 't will not agree
With those of imminent blood, who are engag'd
More to prefer their honors than to increase
the state left to 'em by their ancestors."
(NW to POD IV, i, l 180-186)

Even Wellborn counsels his friend, young Allworth, to look higher than Mistress Margaret for his wife. Despite this, however, there is a marriage between the two, and the city girl marries into the country squirearchy. As with the marriages between Rose Otley and Lacy in The Shoemakers' Holiday nothing much is made of Margaret's alliance. It only satisfies the requirements of romance and, apparently, does nothing to break down the class structure that the play is so concerned with protecting. The defeat of Sir
Giles is the defeat in the terms of the play of a powerful anti-social, anti-traditional, anti-Christian force in the world. The conservative forces in society combine to destroy the ambitious citizen.

The attempt on the part of ambitious citizens to push their children ahead in society is commonplace in Stuart realistic comedy. The Yellowhammers in Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* are interested in both rank and wealth when they try to marry their daughter to the utterly depraved Sir Walter Whorehound and their son to the knight's supposed niece, who is reputed to have considerable land in Wales. They are defeated by young Touchwood, who persuades Moll to marry him, and by their own ambition, for they find that Tim's bride is only a common whore. In Jasper Mayne's *A City Match*, young Plotwell's attempt to contrive a fine match for his sister by setting her up as a lady of wit and fashion come to naught, and she is obliged to settle for a marriage with young Seathrift, a wealthy if somewhat dull citizen.

The citizen's lack of comprehension of factors fundamental to the culture of the gentleman, such as the concepts of personal honor, chivalric gallantry, appreciation of wit and form and sometimes even of Christian ethics as they apply to everyday life, has been amply demonstrated in preceding pages. One factor that hasn't been touched on is the cultural gap between the classes. This was of course of considerable significance to the playwrights, who depended upon the artis-
tic appreciation of their audiences for many of their
dramatic effects. Beaumont's The Knight of the Burning
Pestle provides a highly amusing view of the lack of under-
standing the cits have of the theater, something the artists
assume to be basic in the life of the gentleman. The cits
in Beaumont's play are not depraved, not at all vicious and
scheming; they are delightfully simple people with enough
money to take them to a play. They are just untutored, un-
able, at times (like Rabbi Busy in Bartholomew Fair) to
distinguish between reality and artifice. Yet nothing so
effectively underlines class distinctions as the kind of
social faux pas George and Nell commit. They show their
lack of sophisticated taste in their demand, "Why could you
not be contented, as well as others, with 'The Legend of
Whittington', or 'The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Gresham'...."
(K of BP, Induction) plays which made up for a deficiency
of art with a great deal of action and civic spirit. Nell
is unable to discriminate properly between the weak Humphrey
and the strong, courageous Jasper, for she favors the former
in the contest for the hand of Luce. George and Nell, as
John Doebler has pointed out, are people who accept "stock
forms which imply stock values."19 The point is, of course,
that the audience of the Blackfriars, the aristocratic,
cultured audience, is implied to be capable of much greater
perception.

The realistic dramatists of the Stuart period consis-
tently emphasized class distinctions. For them the term
"ambitious" still bore the pejorative connotations it has
born for Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar*, particularly when it was used in connection with one of less than noble birth.

For the theater, as so many commentators have observed, became more and more the plaything of the court, and audiences became more exclusively composed of men who appreciated plays that supported their sense of "essential superiority to the rabble." It was symptomatic of the schizophrenic state of Stuart society that while the playwrights created comic worlds in which the ambitious citizen was consistently defeated by the forces of a conservative, Anglican landed gentry, in the real world the balance of power was shifting to a group for whom the trait of ambition in a man was looked upon not as a vice but a virtue, and humble birth as no unsurmountable barrier on the road to success.
Conclusion

The process of dramatic creation is one of selection and organization, so that the reflection of life that we see in the playwright's mirror held up to nature is something other than a simple slice of life. As I have shown, this is certainly true of realistic comedy in England from 1598 to 1640. When the dramatists focused their attentions upon the character of the London cit, they portrayed him in relation to certain preconceptions about the nature of the ideal society. These preconceptions were drawn from traditional medieval theological and political thought; they are the conservative attitudes that we find in Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture*. But it was clear for a significant portion of society in Stuart England, the monied classes represented in the House of Commons, that the Elizabethan world picture was not the Jacobean world picture or the Caroline world picture. Medieval notions of a layered society based upon a localized agricultural economy were not applicable to a modern world whose money economy was dependent upon world wide trade.

Robert W. Corrigan, in his article "Aristophanic Comedy: The Conscience of a Conservative" has pointed out that the Greek comedian's program was "to urge the Greeks to repeal the second half of the fifth century."¹ He continues, "Actually, because of its concern with society's need and its ability to maintain and preserve itself, comedy is by
nature conservative, and Aristophanes and all other writers of comedy tend more or less to be conservatives." While I leave to Mr. Corrigan the task of defending his generalization as a whole, the preceding chapters of this thesis demonstrate that the realistic comic dramatists of Stuart England tended to take a conservative point of view when they treated the London cits. One might even go so far as to say that, on the whole, these writers would have liked to repeal all the social evolution of the middle class after about 1580. The ideal world picture they portray in their plays is one in which the middle class is restricted to a modest group of small artisans, whose ambitions are limited to official positions in the government of the city, whose deportment before those of gentle degree is governed by a clear perception of the differences between classes. The comic dramatists oppose the cit whose set of values and actions fail to conform to such a pattern.

I have shown how the ideal cit is created. His character is built around a basic contentment with his lot and pride in his role as a citizen of the greatest city in the world. He disapproves of presumptuous fellow citizens who seek to thrust themselves forward in society. His virtues are patriotism, modesty, humility, attention to duty, and industry; and because of these he earns the honor of the City and the patronizing approval of the upper classes.

When the economic power of the London merchant class proved itself a substantial threat to both crown and nobility,
threatened in fact to shake the whole structure of society, the dramatists began to emphasize other and far less attractive character traits in the citizens, making them blocking figures that must be destroyed or converted to the conservative comic world view, rather than being original representatives of it. The cits were shown to be grasping, greedy, avaricious men. They were portrayed as cheating in trade and fraudulently depriving gentlemen of their estates. They were shown as ambitious men, pushing themselves into the ranks of the upper classes, but at the same time violating the code of behavior which distinguished the gentlemen from the rabble. The very title "citizen" came to carry a number of these unpleasant connotations.

In an analysis of a process of selection in the drama, what the artist chooses to disregard, to leave out, has a definite bearing on any conclusion one may draw. What strikes one who is examining the realistic comedy about London in the Stuart era in relation to its milieu is that the dramatists do not deal with the member of rising middle class on his own terms. One can construct a hypothetical realistic comedy in which a young and virtuous (from the middle class point of view) apprentice struggling against great adversity, rises to be a great merchant, purchases a great estate in the country perfectly legitimately, and ultimately marries a young lady of gentle blood and lives happily ever after. My research revealed no such play. Such a play, one concludes, would have been unacceptable
to the court-oriented audiences of Jacobean and Caroline England upon whose approval so many playwrights depended, perhaps even to the government censors. Thus, an examination of both the positive and negative aspects of artistic selection in respect to the characterization of the London citizen in realistic comedy from 1598-1640 demonstrates the validity of the original contention of this thesis. The treatment of the London citizen in Stuart realistic comedy is governed by the consistently conservative point of view taken by the dramatists with respect to critical social issues of the day. These comedies measure the dynamic middle class by the standards of a static social tradition.
Footnotes

Introduction


2. Frye, p. 43.


Chapter I


12. Quoted by Hill, p. 16.
18. Fischer, p. 20.
22. Wright, p. 83.
27. Green, p. 17.
28. Green, p. 49.
Chapter II


Chapter III


Chapter IV


5. Arundell, p. 5.


11. Quoted by Burke, p. 15.


13. Kelso., p. 23.


17. Kelso., p. 11.


20. Kelso., p. 13.

Conclusion


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Doebler, John. "Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and the *Prodigal Son Plays."


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