LONDON LOW LIFE AS SEEN IN MIDDLETON'S COMEDIES

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THESIS

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By

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Acknowledgments

To

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CONTENTS

Introduction ..... i-xiv

I. Types of Characters 1

II. Use of Setting 25

III. Devices for Carrying Out Plots of Intrigue..35

IV. Style 73

Bibliography 91

LONDON LOW LIFE AS SEEN IN MIDDLETON'S COMEDIES

INTRODUCTION

From the Dictionary of National Biography we learn that Thomas Middleton, (c. 1570-1627) dramatist, was probably born in London. Little is known of his early training, but his writings indicate that he was a cultured man, a classical scholar, and probably attended one of the universities. His connection with the stage probably began with The Old Law, written in collaboration with Thomas Rowley. This, and other of his earlier plays, although now lost, were recorded by Henslowe, and, judging by their titles, were taken from remote history.

The Black Book and Father Hubburd's Tales, 1604, are early prose tracts of London life which paved the way for his comedies of contemporary manners. The period from about 1604 to 1621-22 was spent in writing literary treatises for public ceremonials, pageants and masques. In 1620, in recognition of his services to the city, he was appointed city chronologer, for which he received a yearly salary of ten marks. In 1621-22 Middleton, then at the height of his power, produced the Changeling and probably The Spanish Gypsy. In 1624 he wrote a political drama, A Game at Chess, which aimed at the national hatred of Spain and for which he was

thrown in prison. Little is known of the remaining three years of his life, except that he wrote one pageant The Triumphs of Health and Prosperity. According to the register of the parish church, Middleton was buried at Newington Butts, July 4, 1627.

Little is known of Middleton's relations to his contemporaries. However we know he was associated with several writers and particularly with Rowley. Jenson, in his Conversations, calls him a base fellow; Heywood mentions him as among the well-known playwrights of the age, but without any special tribute; and Webster leaves him out altogether.[1] Nevertheless he was popular with the play going public and was greatly admired by his city patrons. Middleton has not, until just recently, been given full recognition for his merits, and been given that place in literature which is rightfully his.[2]

Middleton's plays, except for his masques and pageants, may be divided into two groups, romantic comedies and comedies of manners. It is his comedies of manners, those which portray the seamy side of London life, that will be dealt with in this paper. Middleton could see dramatic situations in the life of the common people, and presented this life as he saw it, dealing with the actualities of life and not

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[1] Ward, A.W., English Dramatic Literature, 3 vols., London, 1899, II, 498.

[2] Ibid., p. 499

trying to moralize and idealize.[3] He is happiest when he depicts and satirizes the manners and customs of the people of his age.[4]

In style, Middleton is propriety itself; especially in verbal felicities, technical skill, wit and power of satire, and versification.[5] He understood the secret of dramatic action, wich probably resulted in his creation of individual scenes, and in the rapidity of movement of his plays.[6] His plots are "well constructed and carefully balanced",[7] and, as a rule, there are two plots in each play, a subplot and a main plot, usually connected by one of the main characters in the play. One of Middleton's greatest artistic accomplishments is the ease with which he writes.[8]

The six comedies of manners, used as a basis for my subject, which excellently portray the contemporary low life of London, are: Michaelmas Term, A Trick to Catch the Old One, The Family of Love, Your Five Gallants, A Mad World, My Masters, and A Chaste Maid in Cheapside.

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[3] Schelling, Felix E., Elizabethan Drama, 2 vols., Boston, 1908, I, 516.
[4] Ward, A.W., Op. cit., II, 499.
[5] Schelling, Felix E., Op.cit., I, 516.
[6] Ward, A.W., Op. cit. II, 538.
[7] Schelling, Felix E., Op.cit., I, 516.
[8] Ward, A.W., Op. cit., II, 539.

Summary of Middleton's Comedies

MICHAELMAS TERM

The characters in Michaelmas Term are the usual type of characters seen in those comedies whose setting is in London and whose satire is directed against the everyday follies and vices of the age. Easy, a "country gull" of some wealth, comes to London and is completely taken in by a usurer, Quomodo, and his attendants or "spirits", Shortyard and Falselight. Quomodo, who wishes to possess the Essex land owned by Easy, succeeds in getting Easy to go on a bond with Shortyard, disguised as Blastfield. Easy is forced to sign over his land to make the bond good, and realizes how he has been tricked.

Quomodo brings grief to himself by feigning death in order to see how his wife will grieve for him, and how his son will use the lands left to him. Much to his discomfiture, his wife marries his victim, Easy, within a few days after his supposed death. Shortyard, fearing punishment for his base dealings, returns Easy's property to him instead of giving it to Sim, Quomodo's son. Sim does not grieve over his father's death, but is ashamed of his father after he learns he was such

a base fellow.

The sub-plot deals with Rearage and Lethe, who are rivals for the daughter of Quomodo. Mistress Quomodo wants Susan to marry Rearage, a gentleman, but Quomodo wants her to marry Lethe, an adventurer. Lethe's downfall is brought about because of his affair with a courtesan, formerly a country wench. Lethe is forced to marry the courtesan as his punishment.

A TRICK TO CATCH THE OLD ONE

Witgood, the profligate nephew of the usurer, Lucre, succeeds in tricking both his uncle and his uncle's enemy, Hoard, another usurer, through the help of a courtesan. Lucre holds a mortgage on the property of Witgood, but, when he hears that his nephew is to marry a rich widow, he changes his malevolent attitude toward him with the hope of ultimately gaining all of the property of the rich widow. Hearing that the rich widow is about to marry the nephew of his enemy, Hoard decides to try to secure the prize for himself.

Witgood is in love with Joyce, the niece of Hoard, but he feels it is his duty to help the courtesan, disguised as the rich widow, to marry Hoard. When Lucre learns that Hoard is the favored suitor, he goes to the rich widow to intercede for Witgood, and promises that he will sign all the property back to Witgood if she will marry him. She promises to marry Witgood on this condition. The widow then tells Hoard he must pay Witgood's creditors in order that she may be rid of him. Blinded by the thoughts of her rich lands he complies with her request. After Hoard has married the widow, his brother recognizes her as the former mistress of Witgood

Heard is very angry at first, but after the courtesan repents he decides to make the best of things. Although Lucre is happy over Heard's discomfiture, he realizes that he has been tricked by Witgood.

THE FAMILY OF LOVE

Doctor Glister does not want his niece, Maria, to marry Gerardine, a young gallant whom she loves, and to prevent an elopement he has her locked in her room. Gerardine pretends that he is leaving the country and has sent to Maria, a trunk, which is supposed to contain valuable articles for her, but in which Gerardine himself is really concealed. In this way Gerardine can see Maria as much as he likes and can plan a way to get the consent of her uncle.

Purge, an apothecary, is very jealous of his wife, who is an elder in the Family of Love. He overhears the password and gains admittance to the Family. In his disguise he is not recognized by his wife, and to prove that she is unfaithful to him, he secures her wedding ring. This ring is used against her in the court scene staged by Gerardine for the purpose of showing up Glister in such a compromising position that he will be forced to submit to Maria's marriage with him. The incident of Mistress Purge and Purge is brought in the courst trial in order to make it appear real so that Glister will not become suspicious. Mistress Purge shows her cleverness in getting out

Of this close situation when she says that she knew by very instinct that he was her husband or she would never have given him the ring. Mistress Glister has her husband summoned to court, charging him with being the father of the nurse's child, and of the child Maria is to have. Gerardine, disguised as a doctor, tells Glister that if he will seal a bond leaving a thousand pounds to Gerardine, he thinks that he can persuade him (Gerardine) to marry Maria. Glister consents, and Gerardine reveals himself.

YOUR FIVE GALLANTS

Fitzgrave, a gentleman, is in love with Katherine, a wealthy orphan, and has as his rivals the five gallants, Frippery(the broker-gallant), Primero(the bawd-gallant), Goldstone(the cheating-gallant), Pursenet(the pocket-gallant), and Tailby (the whore-gallant). These gallants make their living in a questionable manner, and are so base as to cheat among themselves. Katherine is to choose Fitzgrave as her husband or one of the five gallants. Knowing that these gallants are base, Fitzgrave plots to show them up. He disguises as a university scholar and wins their friendship. A string of pearls which Fitzgrave gives Katherine, and which are later stolen from her, are a means by which Fitzgrave discovers that the gallants are rogues.

When the time comes for Katherine to choose a husband, the gallants persuade Fitzgrave, disguised as a scholar, to help them put on a masque for her benefit. Fitzgrave plans a way by which he can disclose the baseness of the gallants. He enlists the help of the courtesans, whom the gallants have deceived, after he tells them what the gallants are planning to do. The gallants are shown up and are

forced to marry the courtesans. Fitzgrave wins Katherine, but does not try to take all the glory to himself for having planned the masque so skillfully.

A MAD WORLD, MY MASTERS

Dick Follywit, a designing rascal, desiring some of the wealth of his grandfather, Sir Bounteous Progress, before his death as well as after, disguises as Lord Owemuch and is received as a guest in his grandfather's house. While there he stages a robbery and makes his grandfather think that he has been robbed also. Sir Bounteous is so completely taken in by the faked robbery that he gives money to Follywit in order to reimburse him for the property he is supposed to have lost through the robbery.

Frank Gallman, a courtesan, dupes Harebrain into believing that she is virtuous so that he will permit her to be his wife's companion. She helps Mistress Harebrain carry on an affair with Penitent Brothel. Follywit marries Frank, unaware that she is his grandfather's mistress, and invites her to a feast his grandfather is giving. Follywit presents a play at the feast and robs his grandfather of more property and leaves as a player. He returns as Follywit, and tells his grandfather of his marriage. The property is found on Follywit, and thus his rascality is discovered. Frank learns that she has married a thief, and Follywit that he has married a courtesan, but they decide to make the best of it.

A CHASTE MAID IN CHEAPSIDE

Moll, the daughter of Yellowhammer and Maudlin, is in love with Touchwood Junior, but her parents want her to marry Sir Walter Whorehound, whom they believe to be wealthy. Sir Walter brings the Welshwoman, his former mistress, to town and introduces her as his niece, hoping she will marry well. Mistress Allwit, Sir Walter's present mistress, is well provided for by him, as is also her husband, Allwit, who is content to live in this way, and does not want Sir Walter to marry. Hearing that Moll is to be married to Sir Walter, Allwit goes to her father, disguised as Yellowhammer's cousin, and tells him that Sir Walter is the father of Mistress Allwit's children, and supports the Allwits. Touchwood Junior fights with Sir Walter, who is wounded, and it is believed that Touchwood Junior is dead. Moll is grief stricken and her parents are penitent. Touchwood Senior brings a message to her and she swoons. She feigns death and is carried in a coffin to church where Touchwood Junior is brought at the same time and they are reunited and married with her parent's consent.

Tim, Moll's brother, believing the Welshwoman to be a wealthy property owner, promises to marry

her. Later he learns that she is a whore, and, since he cannot prove her honest through logic, he says he loves her and will marry her for her wit. The sub-plot deals with Sir Oliver Kix and his wife, and is connected with the main plot through Sir Walter and Touchwood Senior. Sir Walter is shown up as an old bebauchee and is punished.

LONDON LOW LIFE AS SEEN IN MIDDLETON'S COMEDIES

Chapter I

Types of Characters

In these comedies of manners, Middleton gives a witty and satirical picture of contemporary life; presenting the actualities of life as seen by a man of the world, rather than an idealized world as viewed by the moralist.[9] His realism shows "the frank worldliness of his attitude toward life."[10] He portrays the follies and vices, the intrigues, the illicit love affairs and the gulling which went on among the common people of London in his age. "Middleton's characters show more than human weakness under temptation, we lose our sympathy in them from a certain 'meaness of spirit' which is commonly theirs; and from their 'saucy impudence in wickedness' as it has been happily called."[11]

Middleton is not noted for creating individual characters, but for his types of characters, such as gallants, usurers, courtesans, tricksters, citizens' wives, and old profligate nobles, which he presents in a realistic setting. Individual characters are not usually found in plays of intrigue, because the

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9 Schelling, Felix E., Elizabethan Drama, 2 vols., Boston, 1908, I, 515.

10 Ibid., I, 518.

11 Ibid., I, 517.

plot itself and the individual scenes of intrigue overshadow the characters." If a dramatist tries to create a great individual character, in a plot of intrigue, the plot is submerged by the character and the intrigue becomes a secondary matter. Middleton was interested in creating plots of intrigue and used type characters for this purpose. The characters[12] he uses are those which best represent the low life of London, presented as actually seen and not as a moralist would present them. He makes use of the city sharper who trickes the country gull, the young rascals who gull the old profligates, the intrigues of the citizens' wives, the young gallants who live on nothing, and the courtesans who usually succeed in tricking some debauchee into marriage. Middleton, in general, does not use characters of high rank in his comedies, and when he does they are usually old debauched knights of base character, whom we are glad to see punished.

Middleton's heroes are usually clever young

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[12] "The 'beggarly fools and swarming knaves', to use a phrase of his own, who traffic in souls, bodies and possessions throughout the travesties, confusions and familiar accidents which happen in town, are set agog by no moralist, but by so keen and unprejudiced an observer of the human comedy that, for the most part, they come out in their naked colors, almost against his intention."

Ward, A.W. and Waller, A.R., The Cambridge History of English Literature, 15 vols., New York, 1907-1916, VI, 72.

rogues, who cozen an older relative out of his estate or money, in order that they may carry on their own lascivious living. In A Trick to Catch the Old One, Witgood, a profligate nephew, has mortgaged his estate to his uncle, Lucre, an old usurer. The way in which he gets all his debts paid by Hoard, another old usurer, shows the clever trickery of these young rogues. Their lack of conscientious scruples as to how they obtain their living is illustrated in Witgood's speech:

> Well, how should a man live now that has no living? hum,- why, are there not a million of men in the world that only sojourn upon their brain, and make their wits their mercers; and am I but one amongst that million, and cannot thrive upon't? Any trick out of the compass of law would come happily to me.[13]

However they do have a kind heart and a conscience about other things, as is seen when Witgood, in talking to the courtesan, says:

> Wench, make up thy own fortunes now; do thyself a good turn once in thy days; he's rich in money, movables, and lands; marry him: he's an old doating fool, and that's worth all; marry him: 'twould be a great comfort to me to see thee do well, i' faith; marry him: 'twould ease my conscience well to see thee well bestowed; I have a care of thee, i' fai

Dick Follywit in A Mad World, My Masters is another well drawn character of this type. His

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[13] A Trick to Catch the Old One, Act I, scene 1

[14] Ibid., Act III, scene 1.

roguish character is excellently described by Penitent Brothel in the following:

> Here's a mad-brain a' th' first, whose pranks scorn to have precedents, to be second to any, or walk beneath any madcap's inventions; has played more tricks than the cards can allow a man, and of the last stamp too, hating imitation; a fellow, whose only glory is to be prime of the company.[15]

Follywit, a designing rascal, desiring some of the wealth of his grandfather before his death, as well as after, plans a way, by means of disguise, in which he does secure some money and property from his grandfather, but is duped and justly punished himself. The punishment which befalls Dick Follywit, after his series of rascally tricks, is a marriage to the courtesan, his grandfather's mistress. He accepts this marriage "in very good heart", since it is "recommended to him by gold", which he says "makes amends for vice".[16]

Gerardine in the The Family of Love is another rogue of this type, except that his immediate object in trickery is love instead of money. However, true to his type, he has no conscientious scruples about stooping to trickery to secure money. In the disguise of a doctor, he forces Glister, the uncle of Maria, to seal a bond leaving him a thousand pounds to give Gerardine in order that he may persuade him

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[15] A Mad World, My Masters, Act III, scene 1

[16] Ward, A.W., English Dramatic Literature, 3 vols., London, 1899, II, 518.

to marry Maria. One speech by Gerardine gives an insight into his character, as well as into Middleton's satirical view of the Familists. In answer to Dryfat's statement that he hoped to see him become a Familist, Gerardine replies:

> Thats most likely, for I hold most of their principles already: I never rail nor calumiate any man but in love and charity to myself; I never make my neighbor a cuckold for any hate or malice I bear him, but in love and charity to his wife.[17]

It is these clever young rogues who lend the spice to Middleton's comedies and keep the action moving. Our sympathy is usually with them, because we feel that these old usurers and debauchees should be punished, even though the rogues are not quite fair in their method of trickery.

Another group of characters, the tricksters, differ from the clever young rogues in that they are not clever and likeable as the young rogues are, but are base characters. We do not sympathize with them as we do the rogues, but, instead, hope to see them punished. In the Family of Love, Glister, a doctor of physic, is a trickster of this type. He tricks Lipsalve and Gudgeon into whipping each other because each wants Mistress Purge, and he also wants her. Some ideas of his character

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[17]The Family of Love, Act IV, scene 1

is revealed in Gerardine's words to Mistress Glister:

> Tut, these doctors have tricks. Your niceness is such that you can endure no polluted shoes in your house; take heed lest 'a make you a bawd before your time; look to it.[18]

Penitent Brothel in A Mad World, My Masters is a trickster of this same type. He is in love with Mistress Harebrain, and with the aid of a courtesan manages to be with her. He disguises as a doctor and thus deceives Harebrain very cunningly. He differs from Glister in that he refrains from folly at first, and then, after he falls, he repents. He upbraids himself, exclaiming:

> Ha? read that place again--Adultery
> Draws the divorce 'twixt heaven and the soul.
> Accursed man, that stand'st divorced from heaven!
> Thou wretched unthrift, that hast play'd away
> Thy eternal portion at a minute's game;
> To please the flesh hast blotted out thy name!
> Where were thy nobler meditations busied,
> That they durst trust this body with itself;
> This natural drunkard, that undoes us all,
> And makes our shame apparent in our fall?
> Then let my blood pay for't, and vex and boil![19]

Shortyard, Quomodo's attendant, in Michaelmas Term is one of the basest of all the tricksters. Disguised as Blastfield, he fleeces Easy by pretending to be his friend, and after he is caught turns against his master in order to save himself.

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[18] The Family of Love, Act I, scene 3.

[19] A Mad World, My Masters, Act IV, scene 1

He is unscrupulous in all his dealings, and will stoop to any mode of trickery to further his own ends, regardless of how low or base it may be. He is proud of his ability to trick gulls, as is seen in his words to Quomodo:

> Let your care dwell in me; soon shall it shine:
> What subtilty's in man that is not mine?[20]

In his desire for more gain, Shortyard overreaches himself and falls through his own subterfuge. The words of Shortyard, after his arrest, show that he realizes that his use of trickery, as a means of livelihood, is ended:

> This is the fruit of craft:
> Like him that shoots up high, looks for the shaft,
> And finds it in his forehead, so does wit
> The arrow of our fate; wit destroys wit;[21]

The five gallants in Your Five Gallants are the best portrayal of gallants in Middleton's comedies. They are Frippery (the brothel-gallant), Primero (the bawd-gallant), Goldstone (the cheating-gallant), Pursenet (the pocket-gallant), and Tailby (the whore-gallant). "Your Five Gallants tells con amore the tricks and dodges of 'a choice fraternity of vagabonds' who live on nothing a year and thrive."[22] These

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Michaelmas Term, Act I, scene 1.

[21] Ibid., Act V, scene 1.

[22] Schelling, F.E. Op. cit., I, 513.

gallants live by fleecing and tricking others, very much as the rogues do; however they differ from the rogues in that they are not as subtle and cunning, and are usually gulled themselves. A good description of the gallants is given in Fitzgrave's soliloquy:

> Thou, Impudence! the minion of our days,
> On whose pale cheeks favor and fortune plays.
> Call you these your five gallants? trust me they're rare fellows:
> They live on nothing; many cannot live on something;
> Here they may take example.[23]

The gallants were thought of as unconstant and fickle in love, as is shown when Mistress Glister in The Family of Love warns Maria against Gerardine:

> Believe not these great-breeched gallants; they love for profit, not for affection: if 'a brings thee to a fools paradise, 'a will forsake thee.[24]

In The Family of Love, Lipsalve and Gudgeon, two gallants who pursue city lechery, are typical of those gallants who fawn on others for their favor, and are completely duped and gulled in the end. Their attitude toward love and marriage is shown in their conversation with Gerardine, in which they tell him of the folly of taking a wife:

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23 Your Five Gallants, Act IV, scene 5.

24 The Family of Love, Act I, scene 1.

Lipsalve. Now, by the horns of cupid's bow, which hath been the bane to many a tall citizen, I think there be no finer fools under heaven than we men when we are lovers. How thou goest crying up and down, with they arms across, for a wife! which hadst thou, she'd cross both arms, head and heart. Dost not yet know the old saying,-- a wife brings but two good days, that is her wedding-day, and her death day?

Gullman. Believe him. Gerardine, 'a speaks now gospel: a man may take more wife with one hand than he's able to put away with ten, Gerardine, a wife is such a cross, that all married men would most gladly be rid of.[25]

The old profligates in Middleton's comedies are usually debased and debauched knights, who, because of their low character, cannot move in the social circle their title would indicate, but must be classed with the low life of London. Sir Bounteous Progress, one of Middleton's best developed characters, belongs in this group. He is a gullible old fellow, who entertains lavishly and is "never happier than when some stiff lord or great countess alights to make light his dishes."[26] He is cozened three times by his grandson, Follywit, disguised as Lord Owemush. It was quite easy to deceive him because he was so pleased and flattered by the visit of a lord in his home, that he was not suspicious of the plots laid for him. His mistress, Frank Gullman, was also deceiving him.

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[25] The Family of Love, Act I, scene 2.

[26] A Mad World, My Masters, Act I, scene 1.

[a] Cf. Palladas, Marriage.
"Pasa gune cholos estin echei d' agathas duo horas,
Ten mian en thalamoi, ten mian en thanatoi."

but he was such a foolish man that he did not suspect her.

Probably the basest of all of Middleton's old profligate nobles is Sir Walter Whorehound in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside. He is a lascivious old fellow who supports two mistresses and wants to marry Moll. He is a weak and cowardly old man, who although content to live a base life, repents of his sins when he thinks he is near death. This is seen in his conversation, after his fight with Touchwood Junior:

> O my vengeance!
> Let me forever hide my cursed face
> From sight of those that darken all my hopes,
> And stand between me and the sight of heaven!
> Who sees me now, O too, and those so near me,
> May rightly say I am o'er grown with sin.
> O, how my offences wrestle with my repentance![27]

Most of these old profligates are justly punished for their life of sin and debauchery, but some are rewarded. One of these is Touchwood Senior in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, who, after his lascivious living and cunning trickery of Sir Oliver, is richly rewarded.

The usurers in Middleton's comedies are usually tradesman who practise usury, or the charge of excessive interest. Quomodo, a woolen-draper in Michaelmas Term is Middleton's best characters of

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[27] A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, Act V, scene 1.

this type. He is an old scoundrel who cheats and tricks a country gull in order to get his lands and his money. He says, gloating over his cunning ability to cozen Easy:

> First have I caught him in a bond for two hundred pounds; and my two hundred pounds' worth a' cloth again for threescore pound. Admire me, all you students of cozenage.[28]

Not content with the possession of the 'Essex lands' of Easy, Quomodo wishes to see how his son will use the lands after his death; so he feigns death to satisfy this desire. Jealously of his wife and a desire to test her fidelity leads him on in this wild scheme, but he goes too far when he plays a part in his own trickery, and loses both his wife and lands.

The two old usurers, Lucre and Hoard, in A Trick to Catch the Old One, are good examples of this type of character in Middleton's comedies. Lucre wants his nephew to marry the rich widow so that later he may cozen them out of the land, and Hoard, desiring the lands and also wishing to foil his old enemy, Lucre, wants to marry the widow himself. They are both gullible old fools, susceptible to flattery and to a woman's wiles; so it was not difficult for Witgood, with the help of the courtesan, to trick

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28 Michaelmas Term, Act II, scene 3.

them. The character of the usurer, Lucre, is given in Witgood's speeches:

> I know the state of an old man's affection so well; if his nephew be poor indeed, why, he lets God alone with him; but if he be once rich, then he'll be the first man that helps him.
>
> Thou knowest I have a wealthy uncle i' th' city, somewhat the wealthier by my follies: the report of this fortune, well and cunningly carried, might be the means to draw some goodness from the usuring rascal.[29]

We are glad to see these two old usurers punished, although their punisher is a young scapegrace himself.

In Middleton's comedies we see the naive country gull who is fleeced by the city sharper, and the city gull who is stupid and an easy mark for the cunning rogues. Easy in Michaelmas Term is one of the best examples of a country gull. He is tricked by an old usurer who wants his lands in Essex. His arrival in town is described by Cockstone as follows:

> One Master Easy, has good land in Essex;
> A fair free-breasted gentleman, somewhat
> Too open--bad in man, worse in woman,
> The gentry-fault at first: -- he is fresh,
> And wants the city powdering.[30]

Anxious to have friends in the city, he is com-

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[29] A Trick to Catch the Old One, Act I, scene 1.

[30] Michaelmas Term, Act I, scene 1.

pletely taken in by Blastfield, one of Quomodo's 'spirits' in disguise, who offers to help him get some money from friends of his, and, as Ward says, "Nothing could be more drastically true to life than the way in which Easy is wheedled into apparently inevitable ruin;"[31] Easy was not a stupid fellow; it is human nature for those of the country to be more trustful of their fellowman than those of the city, and Easy was no exception. The following speech of the Boy brings this out:

> Alas, poor birds that cannot keep the sweet country, where they fly at pleasure, but must needs come to London to have their wings clipped, and are fain to go hopping home again![32]

Excellent examples of city gulls are the creditors in A Trick to Catch the Old One. They are completely gulled by Witgood, who owes them money. He tells them of his plan to marry the rich widow and of his immediate need of funds. They are so completely taken in by his "smooth talk" that each volunteers to lend him all the money he needs, although their object in coming to him was to collect money which he owed them.

Harebrain in A Mad World, My Masters is the "jealous husband" type of gull who is deceived in

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[31] Ward, A. W., Op. Cit., II, 515.

[32] Michaelmas Term, Act III, scene 2.

his own home by his wife and her lover, Penitent Brothel, with the aid of the courtesan, Frank Gullman, whom he thinks to be a virtuous woman. He is suspicious of his wife, because of his jealousy, and for this reason is easy prey for the cunning courtesan in the plot she lays for him. Although he is suspicious of Penitent Brothel, he is so susceptible to flattery that he puts all suspicion out of his mind and accepts Penitent as a true friend. This is shown in his conversation with Penitent:

> Let me embrace thee, sir,
> Whom I love even next unto my soul,
> And that's my wife.
> Two dear rare gems this hour presents me with,
> A wife that's modest, and a friend that's right:
> Idle suspect and fear, now take your flight![33]

This type of gull is usually at the mercy of that notoriously famous character, the citizen's wife, whom Middleton keenly satirizes.

The citizens' wives are, as a rule, rather loose women. Middleton has contempt for these women and, with one or two exceptions, pictures them in as bad a light as possible in his comedies. Thomasin, the wife of Quomodo, in Michaelmas Term offers herself, without any apparent reason, to Easy, whom her husband is attempting to gull. At

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[33] A Mad World, My Masters, Act IV, scene 4.

first in talking to Mother Gruel, she says, "I would fondly scorn that man that should love me only for a need, I tell you."[34] We feel that the change in her character, which prompts her to love Easy, comes too readily. She conceals herself in the balcony and overhears Quomodo's plot against Easy. The beginning of her downfall is seen in an aside:

> Why stand I here(as late our graceless dames,
> That found no eyes), to see that gentleman
> Alive, in state and credit executed,
> Help to rip up himself, does all he can?
> Why am I wife to him that is no man?
> I suffer in that gentleman's confusion.[35]

This would indicate that her first feeling for Easy is only sympathy. Her complete downfall is seen when she admits her love for him, although he has given her no encouragement for an affair of any kind. In fact, up to this time, he is scarcely aware of her existence, though she is apparently very much in love with him, as is seen in another aside, in a balcony scene:

> Thou art deceived; thy misery but begins:
> To beguile goodness is the core of sins.
> My love is such unto thee, that I die
> As often as thou drink'st up injury;
> Yet have no means to warn thee from't, for he
> That sows in craft does reap in jealousy.[36]

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[34] Michaelmas Term, Act II, scene 3.

[35] Ibid., Act II, scene 3.

[36] Ibid., Act III, scene 3.

In Your Five Gallants Mistress Newcut, a merchant's wife, and a woman of loose character, goes to a brothel herself. She thinks it is all right to have her pleasures and desires fulfilled, just so she is not seen. She has no moral conscience, but, as shown in the following speech, she does have a care of her reputation:

> Forgive me sweet Master Primero: I can be content to have my pleasures as much as another, but I must have a care of my credit: I would not be seen;[37]

Mistress Purge in The Family of Love is probably the most subtle and cunning of all the citizens' wives. She carries on intrigues with several men in the Family, as well as with her husband, who is in disguise. The clever way in which she gets out of the close corner in which she is placed by the ring episode, is seen when she says she knew it was her husband all the time "by very instinct."[38] These citizens' wives are deceitful and sly concerning their indiscreet acts, because their position in society requires them to be, whereas the courtesans, as opposed to them, are open and frank about their illicit love affairs since they are just a part of their trade.

The courtesans play an important part in Mid-

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[37] Your Five Gallants, Act II, scene 1.

[38] The Family of Love, Act V, scene 3.

dleton's comedies of London Low life. They act as go-betweens, as aids to the young rogues and as a means of gulling the old profligates. The courtesans are more clever and charming than the citizens' wives, and usually show the latter off to disadvantage. They ply their trade for varied purposes; some for a desire for fine clothes, some as a means of livelihood, and others with the intentions of marrying their seducer.

Probably the most outstanding of all the courtesans is Frank Gullman in A Mad World, My Masters. She is clever, charming, and quickminded, but a thorough hypocrite. She makes Harebrain think she is a virtuous woman, and tricks Follywit, who also thinks she is virtuous, into marriage. Her hypocrisy is shown where she pretends to be coy and bashful when her mother brings her in to see Follywit. She strives against her mother and says:

> Pray, let me go; why, mother, what do you mean?
> I beseech you, mother! is this your conquest now?
> Great glory 'tis to overcome a poor
> And silly virgin.[39]

After Frank's real character has been made known to Follywit, her husband, she sees that it is to her advantage to repent of her past life of vice. Her

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[39] Ibid., V.

A Mad World, My Masters, Act IV, scene 5.

repentance is seen in the following speech to Follywit:

> What I have been is past; be that forgiven,
> And have a soul both true to thee and heaven![40]

The courtesan in A Trick to Catch the Old One is a similar type, in that she is cunning and clever. She pretends to be the rich widow whom Witgood is to marry, and in this way helps him get his lands back from his uncle and his debts paid by Hoard. The courtesan is sincere in her affection for Witgood, and is willing to help him, although she gains nothing from it herself. However she succeeds in marrying the rich Hoard, which enables her to give up her life as a courtesan. She repents and says that now since she is reclaimed she abhors the things of her past life.

The Welshwoman, the mistress of Sir Walter, in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside is brought to London by him and introduced as his niece, in order to secure a husband for her. She succeeds in becoming betrothed to Tim, the university scholar, who falls in love with her because of her lands, and then, after he learns she is a whore, marries her for her wit. She also repents of her past

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[40] Ibid., Act V, scene 2.

follies and wants to be made honest through marriage.

The Country Wench in Michaelmas Term is a courtesan of a slightly different type. She is the 'innocent country girl' type, who, in order to get beautiful clothes, comes to the city to ply the trade of a courtesan. She defends her trade when, in talking to her father, who is in disguise, she exclaims:

> Why, thou art an unreasonable fellow i' faith. Do not all trades live by their ware, and yet called honest livers?[41]

True to her type, she marries her seducer, but, in her case, it is more from a desire to keep out of jail than to be made honest.

The characters of the courtesans are more individualized than any of the other characters in Middleton's comedies. Their individuality is expressed in their attitude toward life, toward men, and toward love and faithfulness. These traits in his other characters are not individualized as to separate characters, but as to types. The Country Wench's attitude toward life is that she has as much right to be a gentlewoman as her more fortunate sisters who are born in that class. Even

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41 Michaelmas Term, Act IV, scene 2.

though she knows she is doing wrong, her desire for fine clothes is so great that she lets it dominate her life, and obeys Hellgill when he proposes that she become a harlot in order to attain this desire. When her father, who is her serving man in disguise, upbraids her for wearing the clothes of a gentlewoman and living the life of a courtesan, she excuses herself, saying:

> Why, you fool you, and are not gentlemomen sinners? and there's no courageous sinner amongst us but was a gentlewoman by the nother's side, I warrant you.[42]

She uses men to get what she wants out of life, and the idea of love and faithfulness never occurs to her. She shows no particular desire to marry Lethe until she is arrested and sees this is the only way out.

The Courtesan in A Trick to Catch the Old One is a decided contrast to the Country Wench, especially in her attitude toward love and men. Although she knows that Witgood, her seducer, is in love with Joyce and wishes to marry her, she remains faithful to him. He calls her his "loathing" and accuses her of consuming all his money. To this scornful rebuke, she responds:

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[42] Ibid., Act IV, scene 2.

> I've been true unto your pleasure; and all your lands
> Thrice rackt was never worth the jewel which
> I prodigally gave you, my virginity.
> Lands mortgaged may return, and more esteem'd
> But honesty once pawn'd, is never redeem'd.[43]

When Witgood tells the Courtesan that it is through her that he must derive all his means, she shows her love and faithfulness to him in her reply:

> From me? be happy then;
> What lies within the power of my performance
> Shall be commanded of thee.[44]

Immediately after her marriage to Hoard the Courtesan risks losing everything for herself by suggesting to her husband that he pay Witgood's creditors in order to be rid of Witgood. Her faithfulness in keeping the vows she has made to Witgood prompts her to do this, although she realizes the gravity of the situation. This faithfulness is shown in two asides during a conversation with Hoard:

> Alas, his creditors so merciless! my state yet being uncertain, I deem it not unconscionable to further him.
>
> .....
>
> I'm yet like those whose riches lie in dreams,
> If I be wak'd, they're false; such is my fate,
> Who venture deeper than the desperate state.
> Though I have sinn'd, yet could I become new,
> For where I once vow, I am ever true.[45]

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[43] A Trick to Catch the Old One, Act I, scene 1.

[44] Ibid., Act I, scene 1.

[45] Ibid., Act IV, scene 4.

Her desire to reform appears more genuine than that of the other courtesans.

A personality which differs from either of these is that of Frank Gallman, the Courtesan in A Mad World, My Masters. Her attitude is to make the best of the situation at hand, and, if possible, derive some material benefit from it. Although she assists Mistress Harebrain in being unfaithful to her husband, it does not bother her conscience; to her it is just a part of the game. She accepts life as she finds it, and has no particular aversion to her position as a courtesan. It does not bother her a great deal to discover, after she marries him, that Follywit is a thief. She accepts it as one of the tricks of life, and decides to make the best of it, especially since she has played the part of a hypocrite in order to marry him.

Middleton glorifies the courtesans and holds them up as unfortunates who deserve a better fate. He usually rewards them in the end, even though they have lived by means of ill-gotten gains. Although the courtesans are more individualized than the other characters in Middleton's comedies, nevertheless we class them as type characters.

The different types of characters which Middleton portrays in his comedies give us a good insight into the people who represent the seamy side of life

in London. Middleton's comedies are not remembered for their individual characters, but for "their brace of gallants, their 'school' of wantons, their clash of cozner with cozner, their ingenuities of deceit, the 'heat of fury' of their entangled action".[46] He creates his type characters in order to satirize the follies and vices of the common people of London at that time. Middleton had contempt for the hypocrisy practised in certain religious sects, and, as a result, keenly satirized the Familists in The Family of Love. His satire is more forceful because of his having used type characters rather than individual characters. In this use of type characters he does not sacrifice satire for character. He does not gloss over the intrigues and illicit relations of this class of people, but presents them as he saw them. Middleton's portrayal of life as it really was, and not as we would like to see it, gives him the place as the "most absolute realist in the Elizabethan drama".[47]

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[46] The Cambridge History of English Literature, VI, 73.

[47] Schelling, F.E., Op.cit., I, 516.

Chapter II

Use of Setting

Setting plays a very important part in Middleton's comedies. Streets, taverns, shops, citizens' homes, courtesans' lodgings and bedchambers are the chief scenes employed in his plays. He alternates these scenes a great deal for the sake of realism. A reason for the choice of brothels and taverns as favorite scenes of Elizabethan comedy is found partly in a theory from Italian and Latin drama, "that this was the province of the comic muse".[48] These settings lend an appropriate atmosphere and are in keeping with the low life of London as portrayed by Middleton. One expects to find the rogues, the tricksters, and the courtesans on the streets, the tradesmen and their apprentices in their shops, and the gallants in the taverns. Middleton is very consistent in his use of characters and setting; he never makes the mistake of having his characters meet at Hyde Park, or some other rendezvous of the upper class.

Streets are very important as used in Middleton's comedies. It is here that the courtesans ply

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[48] Ward, A.W., and Waller, A.R., The Cambridge History of English Literature, 15 vols., New York, 1907-1916, VI, 72.

their trade, that the country gull is tricked by the rogue, and that the Promoters "practice their trade of spying out offences against the law, and --which is beyond a promoter's line of business-- to execute it by a summary process of confiscation".[49] An excellent example of the Promoters in a street scene is found in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside. They are stationed on the street to accost everyone that goes by to see that he has no meat during Lent. Of course Middleton takes this excellent opportunity to satirize the Promoters. The streets make appropriate settings for the courtesans to meet the young rogues in order to further their plots of intrigue, and to meet their seducers. Witgood in A Trick to Catch the Old One meets the courtesan on a street and they plan a way to get Witgood's lands back from his uncle, Lucre. It is in a street scene in Michaelmas Term that the Country Wench is persuaded by Hellgill to start on her downward path as a courtesan in order to have fine clothes. Ironically enough, a street furnishes the setting in which we see the Country Wench's father looking for his wayward daughter, who has become a "street woman". The street is also an ideal place for the courtesans to meet the old de-

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[49]Ward, A.W., English Dramatic Literature, 3 vols., London, 1899, II, 522.

bauchees, who are, as a rule, their means of livelihood. The Country Girl in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside meets Touchwood Senior on a street and accuses him of being the father of her child, but is satisfied to drop the accusation when he gives her money. In this same play Middleton has a great deal of action, which concerns Touchwood Junior, Moll, and Sir Walter, take place on a street by the Thames.

During Middleton's age it was a custom for the rogues to station themselves on the streets, or other public places, in order to fleece the country gull when he came to town, especially during a term of court when hosts of country people were in town. This is excellently brought out in Michaelmas Term when Quomodo, on seeing Easy in the Middle Aisle of St. Paul's and, knowing he is fresh and free from the country, decides to dupe him. St. Paul's, one of Middleton's favorite settings, is used as a place for several of his characters to meet and give the exposition of his play, or make some plot of intrigue. In this same play Rearage, Salewood, Cockstone, and Easy meet at St. Paul's and tell about the affair of Rearage, Susan, and Lethe. It is here also that Lethe meets his mother, whom he does not recognize, and employs her to aid him in his base designs.

Next in importance to the streets as public

meeting places are, perhaps, the taverns. It is in a tavern that Shortyard in Michaelmas Term has his first opportunity of befriending Easy by offering to get money for him after he has lost at dice. It is quite realistic to have the country gull duped in a tavern, as this is a logical place to find him. The tavern in A Trick to Catch the Old One is the scene of a cleverly laid plot by the Courtesan and Witgood. It is a natural and plausible situation to have Hoard come into a tavern and take the widow off with him, whereas, had the scene been placed anywhere else it would have appeared artificial. The Mitre, a celebrated tavern in Bread Street, Cheapside, is a very important setting in Your Five Gallants. The way in which taverns were regarded during this age, even by the gallants themselves, is seen in Goldstone's speech:

> Why, la, was not this better than hazarding our reputations upon trifles, and in such public as a tavern, such a questionable place?[50]

The gallants meet at the Mitre to further their intrigues with the courtesans, to cheat and trick each other at cards or dice, and to make their plans to win the wealthy Katherine.

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[50] Your Five Gallants, Act II, scene 3.

Almost equally as important as the taverns for meeting places to further plots of intrigue are the shops. It is here that the cunning tradesmen are able to trick gullible fellows out of their money and lands. Middleton uses shops a great deal as scenes in his plays, because the shopkeepers play such an important part in the low life of London. These shopkeepers are significant as the instigators of the plots of intrigue against the gulls. One of the most striking uses of these shop scenes is Quomodo's shop in Michaelmas Term. Shortyard, in disguise, gets Easy to come here with him in order that he may borrow money from Quomodo, and of course, by means of flattery, entices Easy to go on a bond with him. Yellowhammer's shop in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside presents a scene in which Yellowhammer and Maudlin contrive to marry their daughter, Moll, to the wealthy Sir Walter, and their son, Tim, to the Welshwoman. Middleton uses these two shop scenes primarily to portray this type of London low life and, incidentally, to satirize the London tradesmen, who think of nothing but wealth, and, even though it involves stooping to trickery or sacrificing the happiness of their own children, have no conscientious scruples about obtaining this wealth. The pawn shop, operated by Frippery, the broker-gallant, in Your Five Gallants, portrays a baser type of

shop and shopkeeper, and also affords an amusing situation.

The citizens' homes used as settings in his plays are usually the homes of the London tradesmen. He shows that the citizens' homes, as well as places of lesser repute, are scenes for the making and the carrying out of plots of intrigue. In Yellowhammer's home in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, we see Yellowhammer and Maudlin rebuking Moll for her lack of initiative in securing a husband, and pointing out to her that it is her duty to marry Sir Walter, whom they think an excellent match for her. They also contrive to have their son, Tim, meet the supposedly rich Welshwoman here, and plan a marriage between them. A citizens' home used as a place for "low-brow" intrigue is excellently portrayed in the scene in which Touchwood Senior carries out his cunning trickery in the home of Sir Oliver Kix. It is in a scene in Lucre's home in A Trick to Catch the Old One that Lucre is first told about the rich widow and her relations to his nephew, Witgood. It is quite in keeping with Lucre's unscrupulous character that he should welcome his nephew back into his home with the intention of getting possession not only of his lands but also those of the rich widow.

Middleton makes excellent use of a citizen's

home in A Mad World, My Masters in order to satirize a citizen's wife. It is here that Mistress Harebrain, with the aid of the courtesan, dupes her husband by having an illicit affair with Penitent Brothel. In this same play the country home of Sir Bounteous Progress makes an excellent setting for a plot of intrigue in which Follywit, on visiting his grandfather, Sir Bounteous, under a false guise, steals from him. Perhaps one of the most important, as well as one of the most clever, scenes found in a citizen's home is that in Glister's home in The Family of Love. Glister is completely overthrown in his own home by his niece Maria and her lover Gerardine through their cleverly laid plans. One of the most enjoyable scenes portrayed in a citizen's home is that in which Mistress Newcut in Your Five Gallants is tricked by Goldstone and her cousin, Bungler, concerning the disappearance of a valuable salt-cellar. Middleton's use of the citizens' homes in his comedies of London low life is chiefly to satirize the follies and vices of the citizens. He shows that illicit relations, plots of intrigue, and trickery take place here very much as they do in the courtesans' lodgings, the taverns, and other objectionable places.

During Middleton's age the courtesans' lodg-

ings were a favorite place for the gallants and tricksters to assemble and carry out their plots of intrigue. The courtesans play such a significant part in the low life of London that it is quite realistic to portray them in their natural setting. The Country Wench's lodging in Michaelmas Term exemplifies the use of the courtesans' lodgings as a meeting place for the gallants and tricksters. Here we see Shortyard continuing the plot in which he intends to ruin Easy; and also it is here that the courtesan makes her plans to prevent the marriage of Lethe. As a contrast to these two settings portrayed in a courtesan's house, Middleton shows the scene in which the Country Wench's father rebukes her for her life of vice. The Courtesan's lodging in A Mad World, My Masters is used also as a setting for the plotting of intrigues. Frank Gullman, the courtesan, and Penitent Brothel plan their little episode here, in which the courtesan is to pretend that she is ill in order to get Mistress Harebrain in her house, so that she and Penitent can carry on their illicit love affair without interruption from Mistress Harebrain's jealous husband. It is also here that Frank later acts the part of a virtuous and innocent girl in order to marry Follywit. Middleton's portrayal of these scenes in the courtesans' lodgings por-

mits him to show the double life led by the courtesans. The action which takes place in these settings is usually lively and vivacious, which is in keeping with the characteristics of the courtesans. These settings are never obscene and objectionable as one might expect them to be, but, on the other hand, are rather enjoyable.

The most objectionable and repulsive of all the scenes which Middleton uses in his plays are the bedchamber scenes. These are usually the settings for the culmination of some vulgar intrigue or base trickery, and we see, in them, the very lowest type of character which Middleton portrays. This is particularly well illustrated in the bedchamber scene in Allwit's house in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, where we see the Gossips and Puritans whom Middleton pictures in a very poor light. Their action and conversation stamp them at once as being very coarse and vulgar. Another bedchamber scene almost as revolting as the one in Allwit's house is in A Trick to Catch the Old One. Here we see Dampit, the drunkard, in bed and, although at the point of death, calling for more sack. In this scene, as in the other, a great deal of coarse language is used. His clevepest use of such a scene is probably that shown in the courtesan's bedchamber in A Mad World, My Masters. In this scene the courtesan carries

out her clever plot of intrigue by which she aids Mistress Harebrain in betraying her husband. These bedchamber scenes show Middleton's portrayal of the actualities of this type of life without any squeamishness. Although these scenes are abhorrent to us, we recognize Middleton's art in using them as a device for showing the low life of London.

From this sketch of the settings which I have chosen from Middleton's comedies, it is evident that he keeps his characters within their confines. In his portrayal of the manners and customs of the common people of London, Middleton presents them in their actual setting . This, although at times violating the niceties of life, lends a realistic atmosphere to his plays. Because of their realistic effect, we remember single scenes, such as the deathbed scene of Dampit, the drunkard, in A Trick to Catch the Old One, which give "a marvellous and sometimes cruelly comic reality".[51] Middleton was not concerned with settings as to their relation to the play as a whole, but "chose surroundings for their immediate stage effect".[52]

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[51] The Cambridge History of English Literature, VI, 73.

[52] Ibid., p. 74

LONDON LOW LIFE AS SEEN IN MIDDLETON'S COMEDIES

Chapter III

Devices for Carrying Out Plots of Intrigue

Middleton wrote his comedies of intrigue in order to portray the follies and vices of London low life, and to please the vulgar tastes of the Elizabethan audience. He had a love for "mean adventures of loose people in cities, highwaymen and gypsies".[53] Middleton's comedies do not depend upon either humorous dialogue or character for their excellent worth, but upon their variety of events and roguish intrigues. Sex, as an occupation, dominates these plots of intrigue[54] which are usually planned and carried out by the clever young rogues, the usurers, or the courtesans, The dramatic action rises steadily to the denouement in which the intrigue is unfolded.

The devices which Middleton allows his characters to use in carrying out their plots of intrigue are those which were common to the Elizabethan stage, and to the life portrayed in his comedies. The most significant of these devices are the use of disguises, deception, eavesdropping, letters and documents, asides, masques, and time

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[53] Ward, A.W. and Waller, A.R., The Cambridge History of English Literature, 15 vols., New York, 1907-1916, VI, 73.

[54] Ibid.,p. 71.

that is significant because of a particular event. Among these, disguises and asides are used to a greater extent than any of the others. Of the two important uses of disguise, the one in which the audience knows of the deception and the characters do not, and the one in which the audience does not know, Middleton uses the former in his comedies. The way in which he lets the audience know of the disguise, is, as a rule, through the conversation in the preceding scene.

Probably the most clever uses of disguises seen in Middleton's comedies are those employed by Shortyard and Falselight in Michaelmas Term. Shortyard disguises as Blastfield, a gentleman, and pretends that he knows Easy's friend in Essex in order to win Easy's confidence. He succeeds in completely duping Easy and enticing him into signing a bond with him, payable to the usurious creditor, Quomodo, which involves his Essex lands. Falselight aids Shortyard in carrying on the intrigue by employing the use of several disguises. First he pretends to be a porter, next a broker, Idem, then a yeoman, and lastly a wealthy citizen. Shortyard also uses other disguises in order to further the plot against Easy. He takes the disguise of a sergeant in order to arrest Easy, then later comes in with Falselight, in the garb of a wealthy

citizen to substantiate Quomodo's statement that Easy has signed away his lands to Quomodo. It is when disguised as Blastfield that Shortyard performs his most subtle trickery.

Quomodo uses disguise also as a means of playing a part in his own trickery, but he overreaches himself, and his disguise proves his ruin. After he has pretended to be dead, he disguises as a beadle in order to observe the grief of his wife and son over his death. While in this disguise, he signs a receipt for the money given to him for his services as a beadle, but makes the fatal mistake of signing his real name "Quomodo" to the paper in which he gives away all rights to his home and property. He unmasks himself and attempts to tell everyone that he is Quomodo, but no one will believe him. In this same play we see the father of the Country Wench employing the use of disguise for a purpose other than trickery. He is anxious concerning his daughter's welfare and is afraid that if he comes as her father she will be afraid and leave him again. The wearing of this disguise, brought about through paternal anxiety, is shown in the following:

> May be my present form, and her fond fear,
> May chase her from me, if her eye should get me;

> And therefore, as my love and wants advise,
> I'll serve, until I find her, in disguise.[55]

In A Mad World, My Masters we see Follywit, a clever young rogue, employing the use of several disguises in order to trick his grandfather, Sir Bounteous Progress. Knowing his grandfather's love for entertaining lords and ladies in his country home, Follywit disguises as Lord Owemuch and pays his grandfather a visit. While there, through the use of another disguise, he succeeds in robbing his grandfather without being suspected. He disguises as his grandfather's mistress in order to rifle the casket of jewels, and, just as Follywit had planned, the mistress is accused of the theft. Follywit and his companions disguise as players and come to the home of Sir Bounteous to entertain. During the performance of their act they borrow money and jewels from the guests and attempt to escape with them, but are caught. In this same play Penitent Brothel disguises as a doctor in order to be with Mistress Harebrain. He is aided in his duplicity by Frank Gullman, a courtesan, whom Harebrain thinks to be a virtuous woman, and therefore a suitable companion to his wife. Frank feigns illness in order to get Mistress Harebrain and Penitent, disguised as a doctor,

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[55] Michaelmas Term, Act II, scene 2.

into her home without arousing the suspicion of the jealous Harebrain. They are successful in carrying out this cleverly devised plot of intrigue.

Fitzgrave in Your Five Gallants disguises as a university student in order to win the confidence of the five gallants, his rivals for the hand of Katherine, the rich heiress. Realizing their unworthiness of Katherine, Fitzgrave determines to expose their base natures. In this disguise of the university student , he tricks the gallants into believing that he is the ideal person to help them win the heiress. He uses this disguise because of the conventional attitude toward the university student, which was that he was a stupid fellow and an easy prey for the gallants and rogues. This attitude toward the university scholar is seen in Goldstone's speech:

> Piping hot from the university; he smells of buttered loaves yet; an excellent scholar, but the arrant ass! For this our solicitor, he's a rare fellow five-and-forty mile hence, believe that: his friends are of the old fashion, all in their graves; and now has he the leisure to follow all new fashions, ply the brothels, practice salutes and cringes.[56]

From this, we can see why the gallants did not

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[56] Your Five Gallants, Act II, scene 1.

suspect him of trickery. Had he been in some other disguise, however, he might have aroused their suspicion through some of the things he said and did. Fitzgrave's choice of the university scholar as a disguise shows his cleverness in recognizing its merits as a device for tricking the gallants.

We find a single scene, in this same play, in which disguise plays a major part. Bungler, a cousin to Mistress Newcut leaves the room, and while she is gone, Goldstone takes a valuable salt-cellar from the table and leaves with it. He returns in a short time in the garb of the real Goldstone, whom Mistress Newcut is expecting. When Mistress Newcut returns she is quite bewildered as to where her other guest and her salt-cellar have disappeared, and, upon questioning the servants, learns that none of them saw anyone leave the house. She is forced to remain in the dark, while Goldstone and Bungler enjoy their joke at her expense.

Another instance in which the use of disguise plays an important part in a plot of intrigue is seen in <u>The Family of Love</u>. Here Gerardine uses several disguises to carry out his plot of intrigue against Doctor Glister in or-

der to win his niece, Maria. First, he disguises as a porter in order to bring to Mistress Glister a letter which implicates Doctor Glister in a shady affair. The effectiveness of this disguise is seen in his conversation with Dryfat:

Gerarding. Is't possible, sir, my disguise should so much fool your knowledge? How? A northern landlord? can you think I get my living by a bell and a clack-dish?
Dryfat. By a bell and a clack-dish? how's that?
Gerarding. Why, by begging, sir. Know you me now?
Dryfat. Master Gerardine disguised and ashore! May, then I smell a rat.

Gerardine's next use of disguise in carrying out his plot is as an apparitor. In this disguise Gerardine has the privilege of summoning to court those who will bring evidence against Doctor Glister that will force him to consent to Maria's marriage with him. During the court proceedings Gerardine is disguised as a doctor and has charge of the questioning of those whom he has summoned, and the deciding of their fate. As a result of his cleverly contrived plot, Gerardine wins Maria and also a thousand pounds.

We can see from the preceding discussion that the use of disguise is very important as a device for carrying out these plots of intrigue.

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[57] The Family of Love, Act IV, scene 2.

The use of the disguise is particularly effective in the creation of single scenes, one of Middleton's greatest merits. One might wonder how the characters could be so often and so easily fooled by these disguises, but when we know that it is the clever young rogues who usually do the tricking in which the disguises are used, and that it is the gallants, gulls, and old profligates who are duped, then, it is easily understood. Middleton recognized the differences in the types of characters used in his comedies of London low life, and knew the most effective ways of bringing out these differences and of portraying them to his audience.

Closely related to disguise as a method of furthering plots of intrigue is deception. Both of these devices, disguise and deception, are based upon deceit, but they differ, in that deception, as used here, is carried on without the aid of disguise. Deception in Middleton's comedies includes impersonation, the pretense of change in the personality of a character, and the pretense of death. The most interesting and most clever use of deception is that used by the courtesans. In A Trick to Catch the Old One we see an excellent use of impersonation as a means of furthering a plot of intrigue. Witgood tells the Courtesan that she is to take the name and form of a rich

country widow and go to London where she is to aid him in tricking his covetous uncle in order to get his lands back, and also to secure a rich husband for herself. Her eagerness and her aptitude for carrying out this deception are seen in her speech to Witgood:

> Arm your wits then
> Speedily; there shall want nothing in me,
> Either in behaviour, discourse, or fashion,
> That shall discredit your intended purpose.
> I will so artfully disguise my wants,
> And set so good a courage on my state,
> That I will be believ'd.[58]

Witgood, with the help of the host, started the rumor of the rich widow and of her intended marriage with him. The admirable effect produced by this rumor made it easy for the Courtesan, with her natural ingenuity for deception, to be accepted as a rich widow. Through her clever impersonation the Courtesan succeeded in tricking Lucre into returning Witgood's lands to him, and in marrying the rich Hoard.

An occasion in which a courtesan carries on a deception, through a pretense of change in her character, is seen in A Mad World, My Masters. Here Frank Gullman, perhaps the cleverest of all of the courtesans in Middleton's comedies, pre-

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[58] A Trick to Catch the Old One, Act I, scene 1.

tends to be a virtuous woman in order to be accepted by Harebrain as a suitable companion for Mistress Harebrain, and to marry Follywit, the grandson of her seducer, Sir Bounteous. Her unscrupulousness in carrying out her first purpose, that of tricking Harebrain by means of deception, is seen in her words to Penitent Brothel:

> Pooh, all the world knows women are soon down: we can be sick when we have a mind to't, catch an ague with the wind of our fans, surfeit upon the rump of a lark, and bestow ten pound in physic upon't: We're likest ourselves when we're down; 'tis the easiest art and cunning for our sect to counterfeit sick, that are always full of fits when we are well; for since we were made for a weak, imperfect creature, we can fit that best that we are made for.[59]

In contrast to the real Frank Gullman, as seen in this speech, we see her acting the part of a timid and coy virgin as she appears striving against Follywit. Her conversation with him shows how cleverly she carries out this deception:

> Follywit. What, so coy, so strict? come, come!
> Courtesan. Pray, change your opinion, sir; I am not for that use.
> Follywit. Will you but hear me?
> Courtesan. I should hear that I would not.
> Follywit. 'S foot, this is strange! I've seldom seen a wench
> Stand upon stricter points: life, she will not
> Endure to be courted!
> .....
> Courtesan. Pray, let me go; why, mother, what do

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[59] A Mad World, My Masters, Act II, scene 6.

you mean?
I beseech you, mother! is this your conquest
now?
Great glory 'tis to overcome a poor and silly
virgin.
Follywit. The wonder of our time sits in that brow;
I ne'er beheld a perfect maid till now.[60]

It is evident that these two types of deception as devices for intrigue cannot be used to a great extent. In real life there is a great risk of immediate discovery if one uses deception of this kind; therefore it is not used a great deal. Middleton is a realist in portraying life, and, for this reason, is consistent with life in his use of devices for carrying on intrigue; but where such types of deception are used in his comedies they are very effective.

Another method of deception which Middleton uses effectively, but seldom, is that in which the chief instigator of a plot of intrigue pretends that he is dead. The most excellent use of this device is seen in Michaelmas Term, in which Quomodo, wishing to test the fidelity of his wife and son to appease his ego, feigns death. The coffin is carried on the stage and Quomodo, disguised as a beadle, stands by to observe the effect of his death on his wife and son. He is

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[60] Ibid., Act IV, scene 5.

pleased with his wife' s reaction to his death but is disappointed in his son's reaction. He hears his son, Sim, remark, that his father was so dishonest and base that he is ashamed to accompany him to church, and that he is "glad he's gone".[61] This method of deception proves fatal to Quomodo, for he not only discovers that his son despises him and that his wife's grief is not sincere, but also that he has signed away all rights to his property.

Middleton makes a happy use of the pretense of death as a means of carrying on a plot of intrigue in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside. Touchwood Junior, injured in a duel with Sir Walter, and, recognizing this as a probable means of securing Moll, sends word to her that she is to feign death on hearing the news of his death, which will, of course, be feigned also. The coffins are carried to the church at the same time, as was planned, and at a signal from Touchwood Senior each arises from his or her coffin. Moll's parents are so glad to see her alive that they agree to her marriage with Touchwood Junior.

In these two instances in which Middleton uses this device for furthering plots of intrigue

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[61] Michaelmas Term, Act IV, scene 4.

he is very successful, but, realizing the difficulties surrounding this device, he uses it sparingly. Middleton recognizes this as an excellent opportunity for creating great dramatic single scenes, and makes the most of it. The presenting of a coffin on the stage, although offensive to us today, appealed to the tastes of the audience of Middleton's age; however if used to an excess, this device would be disastrous to a playwright of any age.

All of the devices in these plots of intrigue in Middleton's comedies are consistent with the seamy side of life which he portrays, but, of these, eavesdropping is probably the one most conventionally thought of as belonging to this class of people alone. Middleton knew this and, desiring to portray this side of life as accurately as possible, as well as showing it in as poor a light as possible, makes excellent use of this device. Probably the most interesting and most humorous scene in which eavesdropping plays an important part is in A Mad World, My Masters. Harebrain, desiring to overhear the conversation between the courtesan and Mistress Harebrain, opens the door and listens. He gives, in an aside, his motive for listening:

> I'll listen: now the flesh draws nigh her end,
> At such a time women exchange their secrets,
> And ransack the close corners of their hearts:
> What many years have whelm'd, this hour imparts.[62]

The courtesan perceives him; so she holds an imaginary conversation with Mistress Harebrain, who, in reality, is in another room with Penitent Brothel. The courtesan is so clever in carrying on her one-sided conversation that Harebrain never doubts but that his wife is in the room also. She takes this opportunity to flatter Harebrain and praise Mistress Harebrain, which is, of course, just what he wants to hear. The success of the courtesan's conversation on the listener is seen in the following:

> Harebrain. Welcome, sweet wife, alight upon my lip!
> Never was hour spent better.
> Mis.Harebrain. Why, were you
> Within the hearing, sir?
> Harebrain. Ay, that I was, i'faith,
> To my great comfort; I deceiv'd you there, wife,
> Ha, ha!
> I do entreat thee, nay, conjure thee, wife,
> Upon my love, or what can more be said,
> Oftener to visit this sick and virtuous maid.[63]

In this case the listener is the dupe, whereas in most instances in these comedies the listener is

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[62] A Mad World, My Masters, Act III, scene 2.
[63] Ibid., Act III, scene 3.

the trickster.

In The Family of Love we have and excellent example in which the listener uses the information he gains through eavesdropping to aid in furthering his plot of intrigue. Purge, suspicious of his wife's connection with the Familists, listens to her conversation with Dryfat and overhears the password of the Familists. He uses this password in order to gain admittance to the meeting of the Familists and, while there, has an affair with his wife, who does not recognize him. He secures her wedding ring and later uses it as evidence against her to prove her infidelity to him. Another scene in this same play, and closely connected with this one, is that in which Lipsalve and Gudgeon overhear Purge lamenting the infidelity of his wife. Lipsalve and Gudgeon, each of whom desires Mistress Purge, are tricked into whipping each other by Doctor Glister, who also wants her. Desiring revenge, they come forward and offer their services to Purge after overhearing his remarks concerning Mistress Purge.

In A Trick to Catch the Old One there is a scene in which eavesdropping plays a part in a plot of intrigue carried on by a trickster against a clever young rogue. Hoard, the trickster, over-

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hears Witgood's creditors talking, and learns of Witgood's intended marriage with the rich widow. He also hears the Creditors say that they are going to woo Witgood, as he will soon be wealthy, and collect from him. Realizing that this is an opportune time to show Witgood up to the rich widow, Hoard decides to follow the Creditors. His purpose is shown in the following:

> Good, his creditors: I'll follow. This
> makes for me:
> All know the widow's wealth; and 'tis well
> known
> I can estate her fairly, ay, and will.
> In this one chance shines a twice happy fate
> I both deject my foe and raise my state:[64]

Hoard is another listener who is duped as a result of his eavesdropping; however, not intentionally by the Creditors, for they were as ignorant as he concerning the true identity of the rich widow.

From this discussion we see that eavesdropping plays a minor part in the carrying out of plots of intrigue in Middleton's comedies. This device is found in the basest and most vulgar plots of intrigue in his plays and is used by his very lowest types of characters. There is nothing clever about eavesdropping in itself, but Middleton uses it in a clever way. From the use of this

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[64] A Trick to Catch the Old One, Act II, scene 2.

device arise amusing situations which (otherwise) Middleton could not have given. One of the most outstanding and amusing scenes in all of Middleton's comedies is the one, cited above, in which Harebrain is completely duped through eavesdropping.

Middleton's chief interest was in showing an amusing situation, and any device which would aid in this, as well as furthering a plot of intrigue, was happily used by him. Letters and documents when read aloud, are an excellent device for this purpose. One of the best examples of the use of a letter in furnishing amusement and in furthering a plot of intrigue is found in The Family of Love in which Gerardine makes use of a faked letter in his plot against Doctor Glister. Disguised as a porter, Gerardine brings to Mistress Glister a letter which is addressed to Doctor Glister and signed Your poor nurse, Thomasine Tweedles. The effect of this letter on Mistress Glister is seen in the following:

Mis. Glister. What's here? (Reads) Your poor nurse, Thomasine Tweedles! for my life now shall I find out my husband's knavery I have so long suspected.
Gerardine. She begins to nibble; 'twill take, i'faith.
(Aside)

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Mis. Glister. 'Tis so: rats-bane! I ha't: it racks

on, it torments me! here 'tis: (reads) Woe worth the time that ever I gave suck to a child that came in the window, God knows how! --Villanous lecher! ---- yet if you did but see how like the pert little red-headed knave is to his father --- damnable doctor! a bastard in the country, and another towards here! I am out of doubt this is his work. --- You are an arrant strumpet! --- Incest, fornication, abomination in my own house! --- Intolerable! O for long nails to scratch out his eyes.[65]

This furious outburst from Mistress Glister was the reaction Gerardine had hoped and expected to see. This also appealed to the audience of Middleton's age, as they enjoyed scenes in which uncouth language was used and immorality was suggested. This letter also plays an important part in the court scene in which Glister, because of accusations made by his wife, is summoned to appear before Gerardine, disguised as a doctor. The importance of this letter in the plot of intrigue is seen when Mistress Glister, on being asked by Gerardine what proof she has of her husband's infidelity, answers:

Proof unanswerable, master doctor, the nurse's letter: let it be read; but first observe his countenance; it may be his blushing will bewray his guilt.[66]

Gerardine's success in forcing Glister to agree to his marriage with Maria is chiefly a result of this

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[65] The Family of Love, Act IV, scene 3.
[66] Ibid.,

letter. After hearing the letter read, Glister tries to affirm his innocence, but everything he says is so maliciously misconstrued by Gerardine that Glister is glad to submit to his terms.

Another instance in which a letter plays an important part in a plot of intrigue is found in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside. Touchwood Junior sends a letter to Moll, by Touchwood Senior, with instructions for her to feign death on hearing the news of his death in order to be carried to the church in a coffin which will arrive there at the same time that he arrives. Moll swoons, after reading the letter, and is carried out by Touchwood Senior and Susan, accomplices in the plot. This letter proves successful in the plot of intrigue against Moll's parents in order to gain their permission for her marriage with Touchwood Junior.

Probably the cleverest use of a letter in a plot of intrigue is seen in A Trick to Catch the Old One. The Host brings a letter from Witgood to the Courtesan which tells of his merciless creditors, and asks for further assistance. Hoard, who is nearby, asks the Courtesan, his wife, to let him "construe" the letter. The quick-witted courtesan tears the letter and stamps on it, instead,

[illegible]

Curs'd be my rash and unadvised words!
I'll set foot upon my tongue,
And tread my inconsiderate grant to dust.[67]

This cunning strategy of the Courtesan is shown in the words of the Host:

A pretty shift, i'faith! I commend a woman when she can make away a letter from her husband handsomely, and this was cleanly done, by troth.[68]

The words and action of the Courtesan have the desired effect upon Hoard. He is anxious concerning the cause of her distress. She tells him that Witgood threatens to hold her accountable for some foolish words she has uttered in the past. Hoard, willing to do anything to please her, listens to her plan which she says will let him "come off with honor", and "let baseness keep with them".[69] The Courtesan suggests that Hoard pay off the Creditors in order to be forever rid of Witgood. Hoard acts according to her plan, ignorant of the fact that she is having him do this for the benefit of Witgood, whose letter aroused her sympathy.

Letters are of invaluable worth to the dram-

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67 A Trick to Catch the Old One, Act IV, scene 4.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.

tict in the economy of time. The instigator of a plot can send, by letter, directions which, if given through action, would probably require an entire scene. The dramatist knows that the portraying of the actual carrying out of the intrigue is of greater interest to the audience than the planning; therefore, if a letter will suffice, it is well to employ this device. Middleton is very subtle in his use of letters as a device for furthering intrigue, in that the audience is never made forcibly aware of the fact. He, as a rule, glosses over the real purpose of the letters, that of aiding in plots of intrigue, by having them furnish amusing situations as well.

Closely related to letters as a device for carrying on plots of intrigue are documents. These documents are not as important as the letters in the actual carrying out of the plots of intrigue, but, rather, their importance lies in presenting the culmination of the intrigue and the portrayal of the character. When read aloud these documents usually afford humor. The use of documents to create an amusing situation and to portray character is seen in Your Five Gallants. Trippery, the broker-gallant, sums up his pawns in a notebook, and, while reading them aloud to one of his fel-

lore; ridicules those who come to him for the purpose of pawning their wares. From the reading of the document we see that clothing is the chief article pawned, which reveals the low character of the people:

Frippery. (Reads) Lent the fifth day of September to Mistress Quaet upon her gown and taffeta petticoat with three broad silver laces, three pound fifteen shillings.

Lent to Justice Crapchin upon both his velvet jackets five pounds ten shillings.[70]

Frippery's shrewdness in playing safe in the lending of his money is seen in the following:

I rank with chief gallants; I love to smell safely. (Reads) Lent in the vacation to master Proctor upon his corporal doublet fifteen shillings; sum, three pound five shillings.[71]

This document is for the purpose of ridiculing the gallants, the old profligates, and the citizens' wives, who pawn their clothing for money in order to carry on their lascivious living. The reading of the document calls forth numeral suggestions from Frippery and others present, which appealed to the Elizabethan audience.

Probably the document which creates the most amusing attention is Gerontine's will in The Family of Love. Throughout the reading of the will,

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[70] Your Five Gallants, Act I, scene 1.

[71] Ibid.

impertinent remarks are made by those present which are amusing and suggestive of the characteristics of these people. The following example excellently portrays this:

Lipsalve. (reads) In the name of God, amen. Know all men by these presents, that I Gerardine, being strong of body, and perfect in sense --
Dryfat. That's false; there's no lover in his perfect sense.
Gudgeon. Peace, Dryfat.
Lipsalve. (reads) Do give and grant to Maria Glister, daughter of John Glister, and niece of doctor Glister, physician, all my leases, lands, chattels, goods and moveables whatsoever. This is stark naught: you cannot give away your moveables, for mistress doctor and mistress Purge claim both shares in your moveables by reason of their legacies.[72]

The trunk, which is very important in the carrying out of the plot of intrigue against Doctor Glister, is also mentioned in the will. Another document in this same comedy, which plays a very significant part in the culmination of the plot of intrigue, is the bond, which Glister seals, giving Gerardine a thousand pounds.

In A Trick to Catch the Old One we see a document which is important in a plot of intrigue and which also affords an amusing situation. Hoard, a usurious creditor, pays Witgood, a clever young rogue, to sign a paper relinquishing all claims to the rich widow. This is ironical, as well as amusing, because the widow is in reality Witgood's

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[72] Ibid., Act I, scene 3.

former mistress and he is glad to release her in exchange for the payment of his debts. The use of a document, in a similar situation, is seen in Michaelmas Term where Quomodo, disguised as a beadle, signs a paper giving over his house and lands to Easy. He signs his real name "Quomodo" to the paper, but does not realize the significance of what he has done until after he hears the document read.

As shown above, the use of documents is important in Middleton's comedies for the purpose of revealing, in most instances, the result of a plot of intrigue. However, documents are used excellently also in the creation of amusing situations and in character portrayal.

Another excellent device for carrying on plots of intrigue, which serves other purposes as well, is asides. They are used to a greater extent than any of the other devices in his comedies. The greatest value of the aside in a plot of intrigue is to let the audience know what is happening, or about to happen, without the characters knowing. Other uses of asides are: to furnish humor, to give an insight into the character through his own conversation, and to show the impression certain characters make on others. But in this chapter we are pri-

marily concerned with the importance of asides in carrying on plots of intrigue.

Some of the asides which I shall treat here show the audience what is about to take place in a plot of intrigue, and others show the result of the intrigue. An excellent use of asides, in which a character tells what he plans to do in order that the audience will know, but the other characters will not, is found in The Family of Love. Purge, who overhears the conversation between Mistress Purge and Dryfat, gives his reaction to it in the following aside:

> What, so close at it? I thought this was one end of your exercise: byrlady, I think there is small profit in this. I'll wink no more; for I am now tickled with a conceit that it is a scurvy thing to be a cuckold.[73]

We can see from this aside that Purge is suspicious of his wife's connection with the Familists. In another aside we are told what he plans to do:

> I fear I shall have small cause to thank that diligence; but do your worst,
> He that hath read five herbals in one year
> Can find a trick which shall prevent this gear.
> They are going: follow, Purge, close, close and softly, like a horsekeeper in a lady's matted chamber at midnight.[74]

This aside is the beginning of an interesting plot

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[73] The Family of Love, Act III, scene 3.
[74] Ibid., Act IV, scene 1.

of intrigue in which Purge follows his wife to the meeting place of the Familists and, without being recognized, secures her wedding ring which he uses against her later in order to prove her infidelity to him. The aside, as used here and in similar scenes, is not only for the purpose of giving the audience an insight into what will happen, but also for the economy of time. A great deal of the action in a plot of intrigue can be told in an aside, which, if acted out by the characters, would probably require an entire scene. An aside in which the audience is told what has happened and what is about to happen is the following by Follywit in A Mad World, My Masters:

> A pox of such fortune, the plot's betrayed! All will come out! Yonder they come, taken upon suspicion, and brought back by a constable. I was accursed to hold society with such coxcombs! What's to be done? I shall be shamed forever! My wife here, and all! Oh, pox -- by light, happily thought upon! the chain. Invention stick to me this once, and fail me ever hereafter! so, so -- [75]

From this aside we know that the other characters are aware of Follywit's chicanery. We also see his utter discomfiture and his desperate effort to think of some plan by which he can escape.

In A Chaste Maid in Cheapside we see two excellent examples of asides in which the instiga-

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[75] A Mad World, My Masters, Act IV, scene 2.

tors of plots of intrigue tell the audience their plans early in the play. The first of these is when Touchwood Junior, on coming into Yellowhammer's shop and seeing Moll, reveals his intentions in the following aside:

> How strangely busy is the devil and riches!
> Poor soul! kept in too hard, her mother's
> eye
> Is cruel toward her, being to him.
> 'Twere a good mirth now to set him a-work
> To make her wedding-ring; I must about it:
> Rather than the gain should fall to a stranger,
> 'Twas honesty in me t'enrich my father.[76]

The other instance is when Allwit, on hearing of Sir Walter's intended marriage with Moll, plans to stop it. Knowing that if Sir Walter marries Moll his own source of revenue will stop, Allwit lets us know, in an aside, that he does not intend for this marriage to take place:

> I'll stop that gap
> Wher'er I find it open: I have poisoned
> His hopes in marriage already with
> Some old rich widows, and some landed
> virgins;
> And I'll fall to work still before I'll
> lose him;
> He's yet too sweet to part from.[77]

This aside, in which the trickster informs the audience that he is to carry on a plot of intrigue but does not tell what or how, incites the interest of the audience. Middleton is very clever in doing

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[76] A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, Act I, scene 1.
[77] Ibid., Act I, scene 2.

this without making us conscious of it.

Perhaps the most amusing situation in which asides play an important part in a plot of intrigue is seen in A Mad World, My Masters. The Courtesan, who has succeeded in getting Mistress Harebrain and Penitent Brothel into her house, carries on an imaginary conversation for the benefit of Harebrain, the jealous husband, who is listening. The way in which Harebrain is completely duped is seen in the asides which he gives throughout the courtesan's conversation. The following is, perhaps, the most interesting, as well as most amusing, part of this conversation:

Courtesan. I know you do, you need not tell me that: 'twere e'en pity of your life, i'faith, if ever you should wrong such an innocent gentleman. Fie, mistress Harebrain, what do you mean? come you to discomfort me? nothing but weeping with you.
Harebrain. She's weeping! t'as made her weep: my wife shews her good nature already. (Aside)
Courtesan. Still, still weeping? huff,huff,huff; why, how now, woman? hey,hy,hy, for shame, leave; suh, suh, she cannot answer me for snobbing.
Harebrain. All this does her good; beshrew my heart, and I pity her; let her shed tears till morning, I'll stay for her. She shall have enough on't, by my good will; I'll not be her hinderance.[78] (Aside)

This is an example in which the use of asides portrays the culmination of a plot of intrigue. The asides also show how clever the courtesan

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[78] A Mad World, My Masters, Act III, scene 2.

is in carrying out her plot, and how quick-witted she is in being able, without warning, to word her conversation so as to dupe Harebrain completely.

Middleton's use of the combination of asides with a balcony scene is seen in Michaelmas Term, where Thomasine, concealing herself in the balcony, overhears Quomodo's plot to trick Easy in order to secure his Essex lands. Her asides, from the balcony, show her indignation toward her husband and her pity for his victim. One of these gives us an insight into the scheme being furthered by Quomodo, and also Thomasine's aversion to him:

> Now is he quartering out; the executioner
> Strides over him: with his own blood he writes:
> I am no dame that can endure such sights.[79]

Another aside, given by Thomasine concealed in the balcony, shows how Quomodo's plot has succeeded, and also shows Thomasine's love for Easy:

> Thou art deceiv'd; thy misery but begins:
> To beguile goodness is the core of sins.
> My love is such unto thee, that I die
> As often as thou drink'st up injury;
> Yet have no means to warn thee from't, for he
> That sows in craft does reap in jealousy.[80]

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[79] Michaelmas Term, Act II, scene 3.
[80] Ibid., Act III, scene 4.

This use of the aside from the balcony shows Middleton's ingenuity in creating a dramatic single scene and, at the same time, permitting the audience to be on the "inside" of a plot of intrigue, whereas the person tricked is still in the dark. These asides by Thomasine also aid in the economy of time, as, otherwise, her ready acceptance of Easy would not have been plausible without being presented in a scene of action.

The aside as a device for carrying on plots of intrigue is almost indispensable in comedies of this type. In these comedies, where several plots of intrigue are carried on at the same time, it is not good dramatic technique to have all the plots unfold in the denouement. For this reason, the aside as used here, is an excellent device for giving the plot of intrigue to the audience.

Masques, as a device for carrying on plots of intrigue, are not used a great deal in Middleton's comedies. Since they are an excellent means for carrying on plots of intrigue and were so popular with the Elizabethan audience, it is surprising that Middleton does not use more masques in his comedies. There are only two masques throughout Middleton's six comedies of manners, but these two are exceedingly clever.

In each case he has the masque appear at the last of the play and in this way manages to get nearly all of the characters on the stage in the denouement. During the Elizabethan age the audience, as a rule, took part in the masques. Hence Middleton was consistent with the conventions of his time by having the spectators, in his comedies, appear on the stage with the players in the masques.

The cleverest use of a masque in instigating a plot of intrigue is seen in Your Five Gallants. The five gallants are eager to marry Katherine, the rich heiress, and desire some method of presenting themselves to her in a favorable light. They decide upon a masque as the best way of presenting their suit to her, and enlist the aid of Fitzgerald, disguised as Bouser, a university student. The following conversation reveals their hope of winning Katherine through the presentation of the masque and also their attitude toward the university student:

Goldstone. By my troth, a good jest! Did not I commend his wit to you, gentlemen? Hark, sirrah Ralph Bouser, cousin Bouser, i'faith, there's a kind of portion in town, a girl of fifteen hundred, whom we all powerfully affect, and determine to present our parts to her in a masque.
Fitzgerald. In a masque?
Goldstone. Right, sir: now, a little of thy

brain for a device to present us firm, which we shall never be able to do ourselves, thou knowest that; and with kind of speech wherein thou mayst express what gallants are, bravely.[81]

Fitzgerald uses the masque as a means of showing up the baseness of the gallants to Katherine. He tells the courtesans about the masque and arranges for them to be present without the gallants recognizing them. The gallants are to carry shields with the greatest merits of the gallants inscribed upon them in Latin, but since the gallants cannot read Latin, Fitzgerald has their basest qualities inscribed upon the shields instead. When Katherine sees the masque and reads the inscription upon the shields, she realizes how she has been duped by the gallants. When the courtesans reveal themselves, and when Frippery presents her with the chain of pearl, which has been stolen from her, Katherine is no longer in doubt as to the baseness of the gallants.

The other use of the masque, which affords an amusing situation as well as aids in a plot of intrigue, is found in A Mad World, My Masters. Follywit and his companions, disguised as players, come to the country home of his grandfather, Sir Bounteous Progress, in order to steal money and

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[82] A Mad World, My Masters, Act V, scene 1.

jewels from the audience, pretending that he needs them in the performance of his act. He attempts to escape with them but is intercepted by the constable and brought back. The audience, thinking it a part of the play, looks on and laughs as Follywit overpowers the constable and binds and gags him. Follywit leaves again, and the next time he returns it is as Follywit himself. He asks for his grandfather's blessing and, as he kneels, Sir Bounteous discovers a gold chain hanging from his pocket, which exposes Follywit's trickery.

These sketches of the two masques show how interesting and how adaptable they are to the plots of intrigue. The use of the masque is also excellent for the creating of single scenes, Middleton's greatest merit. One wonders why he did not employ it more in his comedies.

All of the devices treated above are known as artificial devices, but Middleton also makes excellent use of a natural device, time, in his comedies. The use of time as a device for carrying on plots of intrigue is important, because it was during certain seasons of the year that the tricksters had their best opportunity at plying their trade. The most significant use of time in Middleton's comedies is probably that seen in [redacted]. The following speech

by Michaelmas Term alludes cleverly to the title, and gives the significance of the time to the events which take place in the play:

> Why we call this play by such a dear and chargeable title, Michaelmas Term, know it consents happily to our purpose, though perhaps faintly to the interpretation of many; for he that expects any great quarrels in law to be handled here will be fondly deceived; this only presents those familiar accidents which happened in town in the circumference of those six weeks whereof Michaelmas Term is lord.[83]

Michaelmas Term was the autumn term of court, at which time all the people from the country came to London. Unaccustomed to the city tricksters and sharpers, they were easily duped by them. This was the most profitable time of the year for the rogues, tricksters, and usurers to practice their artifice; therefore, they remained on the streets and at St. Paul's ready to fleece the country gull. Middleton gives an excellent example of the city sharper duping the country gull in this play. Quomodo, seeing Easy on the street, during the autumn term of court, and hearing that he is a wealthy landowner from Essex, plans to secure Easy's "lands in Essex". Quomodo, in his conversation with Shortyard, mentions the significance of time in his plot

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[83] Michaelmas Term, Induction.

of intrigue:

> Thine ear shall drink it.
> Know, then, I have not spent this long vacation
> Only for pleasure's sake: --give me the man
> Who out of recreation culls advantage,
> Dives into seasons, never walks but thinks,
> He rides but plots;[84] -- my journey was toward
> Essex ----

In this same play the Country Wench comes to London during Michaelmas Term with the hope of securing fine clothes in order to become a lady. Hellgill, stationed on the street for the purpose of securing mistresses for the gallants, entices her into becoming a courtesan.

Another season of the year which Middleton uses cleverly in one of his comedies is Lent. This fast of forty days, from Ash Wednesday until Easter, affords an excellent opportunity, not only to show trickery, but also to create an amusing situation and t o satirize the police system. Touchwood Senior gives the conventional attitude toward the things which occur during Lent in the following:

> What shift she'll make now with this piece
> of flesh
> In this strict time of Lent, I cannot imagine;
> Flesh dare not peep abroad now: I have known
> This city now above this seven years,
> But, I protest, in better state of govern-
> ment
> I never knew it yet, nor ever heard of;

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[84] Ibid., Act I, scene 1.

> There have been more religious wholesome laws
> In the half-circle of a year erected
> For common good than memory e' er knew of,
> Setting apart corruption of promoters,
> And other poisonous officers, that infect.
> And with a venomous breath taint their
> every goodness.[85]

The Promoters, who are really knaves, as this is beyond their line of business, accost the passers by in order to see if they are carrying any meat home with them. If the Promoters are successful in taking any meat from the people who pass, they send it to their mistresses. The way in which the Promoters are tricked by the Country Girl is cleverly shown. They accost her, demanding to know what is in the basket which she is carrying. At first she appears reluctant to let them see what is in the basket, but finally she leaves the basket and flees; and, much to the discomfiture of the Promoters, the basket contains a baby.

A reference to time, in a plot of intrigue, is seen in Your Five Gallants. Here Dorcas, after having given the chain of pearl to the First Courtesan, discovers it on the arm of a stranger. This chain of pearl plays an important part in Fitzgrave's plot of intrigue against the five gallants, as the chain was stolen from the heiress, Katherine. The reference to time is seen in the

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[85] A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, Act II, scene 1.

First Courtesan's alibi, after being accused by Pursenet of giving the chain to a stranger:

> O, cry you mercy, 'tis true, I'd forgot it; 'tis St. George's day to-morrow; I lent it to my cousin only to grace his arm before his mistress.[86]

St. George's day, the time referred to here, is in honor of St. George, the patron saint of England. It is celebrated as a national festival on April 23. The courtesan is clever in giving this as her excuse for allowing the man to wear the chain, and, although Pursenet does not believe her, he admits that she is"notable cunning"in her reply.

Time, used as a device of intrigue by Middleton, is in keeping with the seamy side of life he portrays in his comedies. It was during the court terms and on festival days that this class of people haunted the streets, taverns and other public places for the purpose of preying upon unsuspecting victims. Middleton, desiring to portray the actualities of life, makes use of this device as an excellent means of aiding in plots of intrigue, because of its consistency with life.

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[86] Your Five Gallants, Act III, scene 5.

Middleton's use of these devices for carrying out plots of intrigue shows his knowledge of a world where "every part shoots up daily into new subtlety; the spider weaves her cauls with more art and cunning to entrap the fly".[87] These devices employed by Middleton are consistent with the low life of London realistically portrayed in his comedies. We expect to find the use of disguise, eavesdropping, deception, and time in the plots of intrigue made by this class of people, and Middleton does not disappoint us. His aim is at effect,[88] and these devices are excellent in aiding him in the accomplishment of this aim, at which he rarely fails.

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[87] The Cambridge History of English Literature, VI, 72.

[88] Ibid., p. 71.

Chapter IV

Style

Middleton is noted for the ease, vigor, and propriety of his style.[89] It is evident that he wrote hastily and with ease, and anyone who writes in this manner for the stage "will sacrifice a point of conscience to a theatrical solution".[90] The vigor of his style is seen in the blunt and frank speeches of his characters. His style is suited to the people and to the action he portrays in his comedies. The prose is alive; the dialogue alternates from prose to verse and back again; and the action, and the lewd tongues, gallop.[91] Verse is a native idiom to Middleton, and he uses it naturally, bending it as he pleases to any shade of meaning, scarcely lifting it above prose, but always keeping a good metre.[92] Middleton does not attempt to show morals; his aim is to furnish entertainment by portraying the trickeries and debaucheries that actually

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[89] Schelling, F.E., Elizabethan Drama, 2 vols., Boston, 1908, I, 515.

[90] Ward, A.W. and Waller, A.R., The Cambridge History of English Literature, 15 vols., New York, 1907-1916, VI, 74.

[91] Ibid., p. 69.

[92] Ibid., p. 76.

take place in the low life of London. He succeeds in his aim through the use of his language, the names of his characters, satire, and irony.

The language used by Middleton in his comedies realistically portrays the seamy side of life in the London of his age. He lets his people simulate the same vulgar and offensive language that this class of people use in real life. He does not gloss over the real meaning in their conversations by using sophisticated terms, but permits the use of frank and open speech on the most objectionable subjects. This appealed to that taste, always hungering and thirsting for strong meat and strong drink, representative of the Elizabethan audience, and, as the Puritans had not yet come into prominence, the dramatists were free to gratify this taste.[93] An excellent example of a frankly spoken speech is seen in the courtesan's conversation with her mother in A Mad World, My Masters:

> O, from Sir Bounteous Progress: he's my keeper indeed; but there's many a piece of venison stolen that my keeper wots not on. There's no park kept so warily but loses flesh one time or other; and no woman kept so privately but may watch advantage to make the best of her pleasure;

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[93] The Cambridge History of English Literature, VI, 72.

and in common reason one keeper cannot be enough for so proud a park as a woman.[94]

In this speech of the courtesan, the language itself is not low-brow, but the meaning is so pointed as to be almost shocking. An instance in which the language is coarse and vulgar is seen in Mistress Glister's speech in The Family of Love:

'Tis so: rats-bane! I ha't: it racks on, it torments me! here 'tis: .... Villanous lecher! .. .. damnable doctor! a bastard in the country, and another towards here! I am out of doubt this is his work. -- You are an arrant strumpet! -- Incest, fornication, abomination in my own house! intolerable! O for long nails to scratch out his eyes![95]

This speech is representative of the coarsest language used in Middleton's comedies. He employs a coarse and racy language which is in keeping with his "coarse and racy" people.

An example showing the use of informal language is seen in Follywit's conversation with Mawworm and Hoboy in A Mad World, My Masters:

Call me your forecast, you whoresons! When you come drunk out of a tavern, 'tis I must cast your plots into form still; 'tis I must manage tha prank, or I'll not give a louse for the proceeding: I must let fly my civil fortunes, turn wild-brain, lay my wits upo' th' tenters, you rascals, to maintain a company of villains, whom I love in my very soul and conscience![96]

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[94] A Mad World, My Masters, Act I, scene 1.
[95] The Family of Love, Act IV, scene 3.
[96] A Mad World, My Masters, Act I, scene 1.

Middleton's comedies are interspersed throughout with the current slang of his age, which is used upon all occasions and by all of his characters. Here are a few of the slang and colloquial words and expressions found in his comedies: scurvy murrey kersey, equivalent, perhaps, to poor piece of stuff; kersened, vulgarism for christened; what lack you, the constant address of shopkeepers to customers; grow diseased, become uneasy; i-wis, certainly, truly; a proper springall, a handsome youth; byrlady, by our lady; aunt, a procuress; wipe his nose, cheats him; bull-beggars, hobgoblins; clack-dish, a beggar's wooden dish; sack, a drink; a dutch widow, a cant term for a strumpet or harlot; brothel, a harlot; for his blanch'd harlot, his harlot, whose skin is made white by the use of cosmetics; wears a smock, equivalent to -- is a knave; the great, the gross; trampler, lawyer; good fellow, cant term for thief; prig, in the cant language of that age meant thief, or pickpocket; pig-eater, an odd term of endearment; peevish, foolish, trifling; the tavern bitch, "One of the many proverbs expressive of inebriety"; Welsh ambassador, the cuckoo; giglot, wanton; gaudy-shops, shops where they sell gauds or finery. Slang is important in Middleton's comedies im por-

trayingthe realistic side of London low life, and in lending humor to the situations that arise.

From the above discussion and examples, it is readily seen that the language is consistent with the characters and action which Middleton portrays in his comedies. From a preceding sketch of the types of characters, namely, courtesans, rogues, tricksters, debauchees, citizens' wives, and gulls, which Middleton presents in his comedies, we do not expect to find the language of the drawing-room employed.

Closely related to the use of the language is the use of the names in Middleton's comedies. Middleton gives names to his characters which almost characterize the individual. The social position of a character can be identified, as a rule, through his name. An excellent example of this is seen in the names of Shortyard and Falselight, apprentices to a linen-draper. Fairgood, a clever young rogue, true to his name, prospers through the use of his wit, whereas, on the other hand, Follywit, another young rogue, comes to folly through the misuse of his wit. The name Penitent Brothel characteristically describes that individual, a frequenter of the brothels, who later repents. The names of the

[illegible]

five gallants, Frippery (the broker-gallant), Primero (the bawd-gallant), Goldstone (the cheating-gallant), Tailby (the whore-gallant), and Pursenet (the pocket-gallant), excellently portray their characters and manner of living. The name Frippery probably needs additional explanation. The word frippery means a place where old clothes are exposed for sale: but here the profession of frippery or petty brokery seems to be meant. The name Sir Walter Whorehound excellently describes that individual, a lascivious old profligate nobleman, who supports two mistresses and desires to marry Moll. Easy is an appropriate name for the country gull who comes to London and is so easily fleeced by the city sharpers. The name Lethe, from Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, excellently describes this person who forgets his own mother as soon as he becomes a city gallant. The usurer, Lucre, is appropriately named, as is also his enemy Hoard. The former thinks of nothing but gaining more riches, and the latter of nothing but hoarding or storing them away. The name Kix is intended to describe the person who bears it, an elderly gentleman: the word kix means a dry stalk. Dampit humorously describes a person who is always drunk. The names Moneylove, Lipsalve,

Dryfat, and Purge are self-explanatory. Shrimp is a name given contemptuously to describe an undersized fellow. The name Harebrain characteristically describes a wild, giddy, or heedless person.

From these examples, we can see how important the names are in Middleton's comedies. The names ironically describe the individuals who bear them, as well as lend wit and humor to the comedies. The use of the names also aids Middleton excellently in the use of satire, an important quality in his comedies.

The satire in Middleton's comedies consists, for the most part, in holding up for ridicule the ordinary follies and vices of the age, in order to furnish comedy. The satire is usually directed against the citizens' wives, the Puritans, the old profligate noblemen, the lawyers, the doctors, the Welsh, and the university scholars. There is one instance in which an entire play is devoted to satirizing a religious sect, the Family of Love. To understand the satire in the play, it is necessary to know something concerning this religious sect. In the Preface to The Family of Love we find the following information taken from Brandt's History of the Reform:

"That Family was suspected of being more addicted to damn them to spiritual love. .....Henry Nicholas, the father of this Family, pretended to be greater than Moses and Christ, because Moses had taught mankind to know, Christ to believe, but he to love; which last being of more worth than both the former, he was consequently greater than both prophets."[97] The sect was increasing so rapidly by 1580 that the government took a hand in its suppression, and several of the Familists were thrown in prison.[98]

In the play The Family of Love Middleton shows up the loose morals of the Familists through one of its members, Mistress Purge. In accepting two new members into the family, she tells them the password with which to gain admittance into the Club, and, Purge, who has become suspicious of the illicit love carried on among the members, overhears the password and, in order to verify his suspicion, uses it to gain admittance. He succeeds in securing his wife's wedding ring, without being recognized, for the purpose of using it against her to prove her infidelity to him. Middleton also takes this

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[97] Dyce, Alexander, from the Preface to The Complete Works of Middleton, 5 vols., London, 1840, I, 103-104.

[98] Ibid. p. 104.

opportunity to satirize the citizens' wives, whom he likes to portray in as poor a light as possible, because of their illicit love affairs which they carry on secretly. This example of Mistress Purge and the one similar to this of Mistress Harebrain in A Mad World, My Masters shows how lightly the citizens' wives hold the marriage vow.

The Puritans, who had not yet become a powerful group, come in for their share of ridicule. It was the Puritans who criticized the stage, therefore it was only natural that the playwrights should ridicule them whenever possible. We see a good example in which Middleton makes the Puritans an object of satire in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside. The Puritans and Gossips come to the christening of Mistress Allwit's child, and,according to custom, they are served wine. The First Puritan, on becoming drunk, makes the following remark:

> Bring hither that same cup, nurse; I would fain
> Drive away this — hup — antichristian grief.[99]

Another instance in which Middleton keenly satirizes the Puritans is seen in the following conversation:

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[99] A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, Act III, scene 2.

First Puritan. Let me come next:
Welcome from the wellspring of discipline
That waters all the brethern.
(Attempts to kiss Tim, but reels and falls.)
Tim. Hoist, I beseech thee!
Third Gossip. O bless the woman! --Mistress Undermman ---
(They raise her up.)
First Puritan. 'Tis but the common affliction of the faithful.
We must embrace our falls.[100]

This scene in which the Puritans are held up for ridicule is not only for the purpose of satirizing them, but also for furnishing an amusing situation.

The old profligate nobles, who appear a great deal throughout Middleton's comedies, are ridiculed mercilessly by him. Probably the best example of this is seen in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside in the character of Sir Walter Whorehound. Satire is seen in the following speech by Allwit, whose wife is Sir Walter's mistress:

> The founder's come to town: I'm like a man
> Finding a table furnished to his hand,
> As mine is still to me, prays for the founder,
> Bless the right worshipful the good founder's life!
> I thank him, has maintained my house this ten years;
> Not only keeps my wife, but 'a keeps me
> And all my family; I'm at his table:[101]

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[100] Ibid., Act III, scene 2.
[101] Ibid., Act I, scene 2.

The way in which this lascivious old Knight is duped by the Wellwits, whom he has supported for so long is very satirical.

Even the professional class does not escape Middleton's satire, for he holds both the lawyer and the doctor up for ridicule. He satirizes the lawyer through the character of Dampit, the drunkard, in A Trick to Catch the Old One. Witgood's speech concerning Dampit shows Middleton's satire against the lawyer:

> Heard of him? why, man, he that has lost both his ears may hear of him; a famous infamous trampler[102] of time; his own phrase. Note him well: that Dampit, sirrah, he in the uneven beard and the serge cloak, is the most notorious, usuring, blasphemous, atheistical, brothel-vomiting rascal, that we have in these latter times now extant; whose first beginning was the stealing of a musty dog from a farmer's house.[103]

We see from this that the lawyer was not very highly esteemed at that time, and, from the following speech by Dampit, we see why:

> S'am when thou wilt again: tramplers of time, motions of Fleet Street, and visions of Holborn; here I have fees of one, there I have fees of another; my clients come about me, the fooliamity and adversity of the country; I still trashed and trotted for other men's causes; thus was poor Harry Dampit made rich by other's laziness, who though they would not follow their own suits, I made 'em follow me with their purses.[104]

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[102] A Trick to Catch the Old One, Act I, scene 4.
[103] Ibid., Act I, scene 4.

This keenly directed satire against the lawyers shows that Middleton "knew his law and his lawyers, and saw their capabilities for entertainment".[105] The doctor is also shown up unfavorably, although humorously, in one of Middleton's comedies. The courtesan in A Mad World, My Masters plans to pretend illness in order to get Mistress Harebrain into her home. She tells Penitent Brothel that he is to disguise as a doctor so that he can be there also, without arousing the suspicion of Harebrain. The following conversation shows Middleton's ridicule of the terms used by doctors:

Pen. Brothel. I a physician, lady? talk not on't, I beseech you; I shall shame the whole college.
Courtesan. Tut, man, ~~aaa~~quacksalving terms will serve for this purpose;[106]

.....

Sir Bounteous. Let's hear, I pray, what'is't you minister to her.
Pen. Brothel. Marry, sir, some precious cordial, some costly refocillation, a composure comfortable and restorative.
Sir Bounteous. Ay, ay, that, that, that.
Pen. Brothel. No poorer ingredience than the liquor of coral, clear amber, or succinum; unicorn's horn, six grains; magisterium perlarum, one scruple----
Sir Bounteous. Ah, hah!
Pen. Brothel. Ossis de corde cervi, half a scruple; aurum potabile, or his tincture --
Sir Bounteous. Very precious, sir.
Pen. Brothel. All which being finely contunded, and mixed in a stone or glass mortar with the spirit of diamber ---[107]

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[105] The Cambridge History of English Literature, VI, 73.
[106] A Mad World, My Masters, Act II, scene 6.
[107] Ibid., Act III, scene 2.

Fenkenstein's misuse of these terms affords humorous entertainment, which is Middleton's greatest object in using satire. From these examples of satire, directed against lawyers and doctors, we see Middleton's ingenuity for creating situations from the people he really knew.

The English had a national contempt for the Welsh; hence it pleased and amused an Elizabethan audience to see the Welsh ridiculed on the stage. Probably one of the best examples of this humorous satire against the Welsh is seen in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside where Yellowhammer describes the Welshwoman:

> Sir Walter's come: he was met
> At Holborn Bridge, and in his company
> A proper fair young gentlewoman, which I
> guess,
> By her red hair and other rank descriptions,
> To be his landed niece, brought out of Wales,
> Which our son, the Cambridge boy must marry:[108]

Another instance of humorous satire directed against the Welsh is seen in a speech by Tim:

> O delicious!
> One may discover her country by her kissing:
> 'Tis a true saying, there's nothing tastes
> so sweet [109]
> As your Welsh mutton. —

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[108] A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, Act I, scene 1.
[109] Ibid., Act IV, scene 1.

We can see from these examples of humorous satire that Middleton knew how to appeal to his audience.

Probably the most humorous example of satire found in Middleton's comedies is that directed against the university scholar. In A Chaste Maid in Cheapside the university bred fool is used as a development toward satiric comedy.[110] Here Middleton holds up "the raw college lad as a laughing stock to the world"[111] through the eccentric, Tim, who tries to prove and reason everything through logic. He wishes to appear superior to his associates by using unfamiliar terms, but succeeds in making a fool of himself instead. He is duped by a courtesan, because of his lack of knowledge of the world, and forced to marry her. Middleton's comic satire, directed against the university student, is seen in the following conversation:

Tim. Nothing but reasoning
About a fool, mother.
Maudlin. About a fool, son?
Alas, what need you trouble your heads 'bout that!
None of us all but knows what a fool is.
Tim. Why, what's a fool, mother? I come to you now.
Maudlin. Why, one that's married before he has wit.
Tim. 'Tis pretty, i'faith, and well guessed of a woman never brought up at the university; but bring

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[110] Nicoll, Allardyce, British Drama, New York, 1925, p. 117.
[111] Schelling, F.E., Op.cit., I, 513.

forth what fool you will, mother, I'll prove him to be as reasonable a creature as myself or my tutor here.
Maudlin. Fie, 'tis impossible!
Tutor. Nay, he should do 't, forsooth.
Tim. 'Tis the easiest thing to prove a fool by logic;
By logic I'll prove anything.[112]

Middleton apparently enjoys ridiculing the "advantages of a university education", which he portrays as preparing the youth for making a fool of himself instead of bettering himself. This use of satire appealed to the low taste of the audience of Middleton's age, as the university and the university scholar were not very popular at that time.

From Middleton's use of satire, we can see that he "appreciates the dramatic and satiric possibilities of common persons and of common situations".[113] He does not use satire in order to moralize, but to furnish comedy, and, although at times it is so gross and merciless one wonders how it could be amusing, nevertheless it appealed to the vulgar taste for comedy of the Elizabethan audience.

Middleton uses irony a great deal in his comedies, especially dramatic irony. Irony comes out of the mere faithfulness with which he presents

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[112] A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, Act IV, scene 1.
[113] Schelling, F.E., Op.cit., I, 516.

just exactly what would happen at such a moment.[114] An excellent example of this is seen in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside where the Allwits, whom Sir Walter is supposed to have most wronged, are not aware of the fact until they learn that their source of revenue is gone. Knowing that Sir Walter has supported Mistress Allwit, his mistress, and her family for ten years, the following conversation is very ironical:

Allwit. I must tell you, sir,
You have been somewhat bolder in my house
Than I could well like of; I suffered you
Till it stuck here at my heart; I tell you truly
I thought y' had been familiar with my wife once.
Mis. Allwit. With me! I'll see him hanged first;
I defy him,
And all such gentlemen in the like extremity.[115]

Another example of irony is found in Michaelmas Term where the Father comes to the city looking for his wayward daughter, the Country Wench, who has become a courtesan. Not recognizing her, because of her altered appearance, he becomes the Country Wench's serving man. Knowing the trade of the woman the Father is serving, and also that she is his daughter, the following remarks by him

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[114] The Cambridge History of English Literature, VI, 73.

[115] A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, Act V, scene 1.

are very ironical:

> A mistress of a choice beauty! Amongst such imperfect creatures I ha' not seen a perfecter. I should have reckoned the fortunes of my daughter amongst the happiest, had she lighted into such a service; whereas now I rest doubtful whom or where she serves.[116]

The speech of the Father after he discovers that he is serving a courtesan, but still does not know that she is his daughter, is very ironical:

> Thou fair and wicked creature, steept in art!
> Beauteous and fresh, the soul the foulest part.
> .....
>
> I wish'd my poor child hither; doubled wrong!
> A month and such a mistress were too long.
> Yet here awhile in others' lives I'll see
> How former follies did appear in me.[117]

In this same play there is irony in the way in which Quomodo, disguised as a beadle, signs an apparently insignificant paper, and, afterwards, discovers that he has signed away all rights to his home, his lands, and his wife. There are touches of irony seen throughout Middleton's plays, but it is difficult to single them out. As stated above, the most noticeable quality of irony seen in Middleton's plays is the way in which he presents events as they actually happen

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[116] Michaelmas Term, Act III, scene 1.
[117] Ibid., Act III, scene 1.

in real life.

The preceding discussions and examples of the style in Middleton's comedies show the consistency of his style with the life that he portrays. The language used is that spoken by the people who go to make up the low life found in his comedies, and the names given to them are in keeping with their characters and station in life. The satire, an important element, is used by Middleton chiefly for the purpose of entertainment, whereas irony is used in portraying the brutal reality of life in his comedies. These elements of style aid Middleton in his realistic portrayal of the seamy side of life in London. Middleton vies with the greatest of his contemporaries in fidelity to life, but falls infinitely below them in "the worldliness of his estimate of human nature and in his blindness to the romance of life".[118]

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[118] Schelling, F.E., Op. cit., I, 516

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