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COLE, BARBARA HANCOCK. The Shoemaker's Holiday: A Study in Technique and Significance. (1969) Directed by Dr. Joseph Bryant.

Although Thomas Dekker is accused of being a "hack without ideas," a man whose talent was chiefly journalistic, his contributions to Elizabethan drama through The Shoemaker's Holiday (1599) cannot be ignored. This play is usually classified as a romantic comedy; but the Shoemaker's Holiday is not so lacking in serious thought as many critics propose. On the surface this play is simple in theme, purpose, and construction, but it is really a piece of subtly designed dramatic fiction. Dekker's method involves the principles of romantic comedy, but his play is set against a verifiable background. Characters come from chronicles, records, legends, and contemporary London; landmarks in the play were outstanding in Dekker's day; situations and events arose from customs and life in the early seventeenth century. Above all The Shoemaker's Holiday reveals particular strength in the authenticity of characterization. Dekker had special ability in portraying convincingly the many sides of man's nature and the various forms of his personality.

Through the outward forms of romantic comedy and the methods of the currently popular chronicle play, Dekker probably hoped to achieve a successful play, financial reward (enough to stay away from the Counter, at least), and some assurance of his ability. Clearly he succeeded.

APPROVAL SHEET

THE SHOEMAKER'S HOLIDAY
A STUDY IN TECHNIQUE AND SIGNIFICANCE

by
Barbara Hancock Cole

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Chapter I

The Critical Reputation of Thomas Dekker

Thomas Dekker's literary life was twofold. Between the years 1598 and 1604, he devoted his efforts to dramatic productions; during the remaining twenty-eight years of his life, he wrote plays sporadically and depended upon prose as his chief resource. From the first period, Henslowe assigned twelve plays to Dekker and ten written in collaboration with other dramatists. During the second period of his career, he wrote fifteen plays both alone and in collaboration with others. Of all his work, The Shoemaker's Holiday, a play written by Dekker alone, is among the most outstanding and best loved. Judging from the entries in Henslowe's Diary, The Shoemaker's Holiday was written between May 30, 1599, and July 15, 1599. So great was the acclaim it received at the Rose Theatre that it was chosen to be performed before the Queen at the royal court on the night of January 1, 1600.

A. F. Lange has voiced the conclusion of many critics concerning The Shoemaker's Holiday: "The Shoemaker's Holiday is the best adaptation, before 1600, of the Romantic Comedy to the deeds and language such as men do use." It is in this phrase, "deeds and language such as men do use," that the realistic nature of Dekker's play is implied. Many critics call Dekker a romanticist, a sentimentalist, and a realist, and some hint at another characteristic when they say The Shoemaker's Holiday presents one of the best life-like pictures of Elizabethan

London; but this realistic aspect of his work has received little attention.

Yet in the minds of critics of the Elizabethan stage, Thomas Dekker maintains a position of debatable importance. A. H. Bullen long ago appealed to Dekker's biography in an attempt to explain what he considered Dekker's literary failure. The reason for Dekker's low rank, he said, was a long struggle with poverty, sheriff's officers, and printers' devils.² Neither wealthy patron nor powerful friend allied himself with Dekker. Bullen went on to say that great artistry was denied the playwright because "he had not the time (and perhaps too the ability) to conduct his plays with patience and orderliness."³ This point is borne out by Satiromastix, Dekker's reply to Jonson's Poetaster. It has been plausibly conjectured that Thomas Dekker had begun to compose a serious play about William Rufux and Sir Walter Tyrrel before the appearance of Poetaster, and that he rapidly included the necessary farcical and satirical matter to produce this odd gallimaufry.⁴

"To turn from Dekker to Jonson is to be jolted into recognition of the gulf between the higher and lower ranges of Jacobean dramatic literature,"⁵ writes L. C. Knights. Miss Bradbrook supports Knights when she comments: "All Jonson's virtues of concentration, order, and

²A. H. Bullen, Elizabethans (London, 1924), p. 77.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 79.

⁵L. C. Knights, Drama and Society in The Age of Jonson (London, 1937), p. 228.

critical control were lacking in Dekker."⁶ For although Dekker is usually regarded as a playwright, Knights says, his "essentially journalistic talent is best brought out if we approach him through his non-dramatic works; many of his plays are little more than dramatized versions of these."⁷ He continues:

As a journalist, Dekker addressed himself to the lower levels of the London reading public...A representative pamphlet such as "The Wonderful Year" consists of desultory gossip together with rhetorical accounts of events that were known to everybody...His accounts of wonders or marvels are all homely and commonplace; and the descriptions are matched by the moralizing. Dekker's purpose was not solely to amuse. The majority of the pamphlets contain accounts of an 'Army of insufferable abuses, detestable devices, most damnable villainies, abominable pollutions, inexplicable mischiefs, sordid inquisitions, and hell-hound-like perpetrated flagitious enormities,⁸ so 'that thou and all the world shall see their ugliness, for by seeing them, thou mayst avoid them⁹'....In the pamphlets mainly designed to show up abuses we learn little of the peculiar quality of contemporary social life; or rather such evidence as they present is incidental.¹⁰

Knights does finally admit to a too-harsh judgement of Dekker but still complains of the lack of "something that can only be called the artistic conscience."¹¹ Dekker's uncertainty of himself, the constant striving after obvious effects, the recurring introduction of irrevelancies, and the failure to maintain a consistent tone discredit him as a true artist.¹²

⁶M. C. Bradbrook, The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy (London, 1955), pp. 122-123.

⁷Knights, p. 228.

⁸Thomas Dekker, "The Belman of London," in The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, III, ed. Alexander B. Grossart (London, 1895), p. 168. (Future references to Dekker's pamphlets will come from Grossart's edition of Dekker's non-dramatic works.)

⁹Grossart, "Seuen Deadly Sinnes of London," II, 14-15.

¹⁰Knights, pp. 228-229

¹¹Ibid., p. 231.

¹²Ibid.

By contrast, Miss Ellis-Fermor praises Dekker as a poet of "exceptional sweetness." Because of his songs, many exquisite isolated lines, a ready apprehension of universal suffering and the deep underlying happiness of his spirit, Miss Fermor places him in the family of Peele, Greene, and Daniel.¹³ She admits, however, that Dekker is at his best in the "quick and eager revelation of emotion," and she finds him more journalistic than artistic. His attempts to labor a detail or event to point to a moral consciously are generally inconsistent with the rest of The Shoemaker's Holiday.¹⁴ Miss Fermor further believes that Dekker reveals the preoccupations of his time unconsciously and that he does not present a group of principles characterized by reason and coherence as Ben Jonson or Chapman does. Even more strongly she believes "he never took himself or his art seriously enough to have evolved any aesthetic creed. Thus the consensus seems to be that Dekker's comedy reflects the circumscribed world of immediate events and persons, with momentary escapes never long maintained, but never quite abandoned, into a wider universe of the spirit."¹⁵

Since Dekker was a man of little intellectuality, those students who set out to admire him in toto will find themselves repeatedly disappointed. The power to see relationships and draw conclusions is

¹³Una Ellis-Fermor, "Thomas Dekker," in Shakespeare's Contemporaries: Modern Studies in English Renaissance Drama, ed. Max Bluestone and Norman Rabkin (Englewood Cliffs, 1961), p. 158.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

sought for in vain in Dekker's work. Lack of structure, inconsistency, unfinished work, endless collaboration, and repeated re-working of the same vein appear too frequently.¹⁶ Scenes introduced for the sake of racy dialogue, episodes that find their interest in Elizabethan appreciation of the unusual and the unhealthy, lack of development of main themes and unreasonable devotion to minor interests are too familiar in the make-up of the Dekker plays. Often it seems that Dekker was driven to his task with little joy or purpose.¹⁷ He has been called a "hack", a "slave", a "hack without ideas", a writer "whose work was made still less dignified by a total lack of the brooding faculty, the austere enthusiasm of a great artist for his art."¹⁸

Critics other than Bradbrook, Bullen and Knights agree that Dekker's biography can be summed up in these words: "poverty, talent, Henslowe quarrels, prison." R. B. McKerrow admits that great artistry was denied Dekker because of a hard, hand-to-mouth sort of existence; the only incidents of real importance were his visits to debtors' prison.¹⁹ Ward, too, subscribes to the idea that Dekker had "more than his share of the difficulties that confronted the playwrights of the

¹⁶A. C. Swinebutne, The Age of Shakespeare (London, 1908), p. 62.

¹⁷K. L. Gregg, "Thomas Dekker: A Study In Economic And Social Back-Grounds," in University of Washington Publications in Language and Literature, II (Seattle, 1924), 72.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Grossart, "The Gvls Horne-Booke," II, 199.

Elizabethan period."²⁰ Perhaps A. F. Lange has expressed this point best: "Nor is the serenity of perfect mastery ever likely to be his who stands in daily fear of the Counter."²¹

Standing alone in her attitude toward Dekker, Mary Leland Hunt strongly believes the poverty in Dekker's life has been overemphasized. For her, his early work is expressive of "an independence and buoyancy incompatible with the dread of sordid specters."²² Since frequent visits to the debtors' prison were a common occurrence among men of this profession, not too much must be made of this element in Dekker's life,²³ says Miss Hunt. For her, Dekker was a poet whose uncommonly deep understanding and appreciation of life was expressed in a style of grand simplicity in keeping with his very existence--both physically and spiritually. That which is simple in form lends itself most readily to criticism, and naturally, mistakes and weaknesses in work of less elaborate plan are most obvious. She sees in Dekker no attempt to rise above his position in life--to say more than he believes, or to depict life other than that which he understands. Hunt is very likely the most pro-Dekker critic among the lot; indeed, it is difficult to find any area of his life or work for which she has not carefully made amends where apology or explanation seem necessary.

Ernest Rhys, another warm critic and admirer of Thomas Dekker, has explained his lack of fulfillment in a sympathetic yet reasonable

²⁰A. W. Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature of The Age of Elizabeth (Boston, 1896), p. 132.

²¹A. F. Lange, "Critical Essay Eighteen," cited in Gregg, p. 72.

²²Mary Leland Hunt, Thomas Dekker (New York, 1911), p. 80.

²³Ibid.

manner: "Dekker lived with cares and laughed at them, but refused to let them kill him out-right...They allied themselves insidiously with his own natural weakness to defect the consummation of a really great poetic faculty."²⁴ If a writer's work is lacking in artistic capacities, however, there must be some sound reason why his work continues to be read and enjoyed. Rhys says this of Dekker: "Dekker is one of those authors whose personal effect tends to outgo the purely artistic one. He has the rare gift of putting heart into everything he says, and because of this abounding heartiness of his, it is hard to measure him by the standards of absolute criticism."²⁵ "Even though the shortcomings and disappointments of his work are constantly sounded, he remains the same lovable, elusive being, a man of genius, a child of nature."²⁶

It will be the purpose of this thesis to examine in detail The Shoemaker's Holiday and to determine, if possible, Dekker's peculiar contribution here to Elizabethan dramatic literature.

²⁴Ernest Rhys, ed., Thomas Dekker (New York, 1904), viii.

²⁵Ibid., ix.

²⁶Ibid.

Chapter II

Purpose And Design of The Shoemaker's Holiday

Thomas Dekker did not write The Shoemaker's Holiday as a guide to fifteenth century London or as a handbook for shoemaker apprentices; neither did he write the play to exalt one level of London society above the other. Perhaps Dekker's thematic goal can be better stated as an attempt to show that the various social levels have deficiencies that are symptomatic of enduring human faults--faults that may be corrected (at least to some degree) by the proper discipline and an attitude of holiday freedom.

These areas of deficiency are readily recognized upon close examination of characters and character groups in the play. The shoemakers are a special and distinct group; as a class, they belonged to one of the most privileged and intelligent groups in London. Landed gentlemen were not hesitant to send their sons to London to become drapers, shoemakers, haberdashers, or goldsmiths. In the ranks of apprentices were the future aldermen and mayors of the city. Each of them was treated by his master as a member of the household; they were completely outside the group of exploited and unprotected laborers of the day.²⁷ The feeling of brotherhood ran high among the apprentices. If one was insulted, all were insulted. The ire of Ralph's fellow shoemakers when his trouble with Hammon arose is a strong testament to

²⁷ Marchette Chute, Shakespeare of London (New York, 1955), p. 39.

this statement. The apprentices' position was not considered one of degradation; indeed, among the apprentices were London's future businessmen.²⁸ Although the shoemakers (especially Firk) are addicted to feasting, their only real crimes are their youth and fun-loving gaiety.

Simon Eyre, the master shoemaker, is the most admirable character in the play, for he is at all times conscious of his station and purpose in life. He is among the non-titled of London society, and he has no social climbing in mind. Even when he becomes Lord Mayor, he remains Simon Eyre the shoemaker, the man who can adapt to any social level or situation. Recall the following conversation in which the character of both Simon and Margery is revealed:

Lord Mayor: Now by my troth Ile tel thee maister Eyre,
It does me good and al my bretheren,
That such a madcap fellow as thy selfe
Is entered into our societie.

Wife: I but my Lord, hee must learne nowe to
putte on grauitie.

Eyre: Peace Maggy, a fig for grauitie, when
I go to Guildhal in my scarlet gowne,
Ile look as demurely as a saint, and
speake as grauely as a Iustice of peace, but now
I am here at old Foord, at my good Lord Maiors
house, let it go by, vanish Maggy, Ile be merrie,
away with flip flap, these fooleries, these gulleries:
what hunnie? prince am I none, yet am I princely
borne: what sayes my Lord Maior?²⁹

²⁸ Henry T. Stephenson, Shakespeare's London (New York, 1905), p. 26.

²⁹ The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act III, iii, ll. 7-17, in the Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, ed. Fredson Bowers (New York, 1962), I, 55. All future references to The Shoemaker's Holiday are from this edition.

When Simon scorns Maggie and firmly refuses to forget the generosity of Hans, the Dutch shoemaker, his appreciation and humble attitude is obvious once again.

Eyre knows he received the proper inheritance since he was the son of a shoemaker. But at the same time, he is distinctly aware that honor can be gained in a life of commodity: "I am a handicrafts man, yet my heart is without craft."³⁰ Simon remains true to himself and avoids being false to his fellow man. That freedom is not entirely dependent upon money is a rule for the shoemaker-mayor. Even wealthy men must learn to compromise, and unpropertied men must create their own spirit of freedom and holiday. The Lord Mayor Oateley is envious of Simon's light-heartedness: "Ha, ha, ha, I had rather than a thousand pound, I had an heart but halfe so light as yours."³¹ And Eyre replies: "Why what should I do my Lord? a pound of care paies not a dram of debt: hum, lets be merry whiles we are young, olde age, sacke and sugar will steale vpon vs ere we be aware."³²

When Simon speaks to Rose about marriage, his pride in his class and his distrust of the nobler, titled members of London society who depend so heavily on money are obvious. This speech depicts a normal man with a healthy attitude toward reality:

Be rulde sweete Rose, th'art ripe for a man:
Marrie not with a boy, that has no more haire on
his face then thow hast on thy cheekes: a courtier,
wash, go by, stand not vpon pisherie pasherie:
those silken fellowes are but painted Images, out-

³⁰ Ibid., Act V, v, ll. 9-10, p. 83.

³¹ Ibid., Act III, iii, ll. 19-20, p. 55.

³² Ibid., Act V, iii, ll. 21-23, p. 55.

sides, outsides Rose, their inner linings are torne:
 no my fine mouse, marry me with a Gentleman Grocer
 like my Lord Maior your Father, a Grocer is a
 sweete trade, Plums, Plums: had I a sonne or Daughter
 should marrie out of the generation and bloud of
 shoe-makers, he should packe: what, the Gentle trade
 is a living for a man through Europe, through the
 world.³³

Knowledge of self and truthfulness to self are combined so effectively in Eyre's life as to produce a magnanimous man. In him is recognized a successful coalition of life as it is and life as the romantic spirit would have it. Since these two conflicting elements help define the basic differences between economic and social levels, Eyre's apparent mastery over realism and fantasy tends to place him at the center of this tale about people and their society.

Sir Hugh Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, and Sir Roger Oateley, Lord Mayor of London, play an interesting and major role in The Shoemaker's Holiday. The two dine together, it is true, but the honor and respect they bear one another is strained to say the least. Beneath the mask of good will is much distrust; each man is deeply concerned about his social status. Indeed social status and social-status purity appear to be their main interests in life. The Rose-Lacy love affair brings to light this distrust between the Lacys and the Lincolns--in effect, England's "blooded" and "non-blooded" title groups. In his efforts to maintain his dignity, the Lord Mayor remarks to the Earl of Lincoln:

Too meane is my poore girl for his high birth,
 Poore citizens must not with Courtiers wed, Who
 will in silkes, and gay apparell spend more in
 one yeare, than I am worth by farre, Therefore
 your honour neede not doubt my girle.³⁴

³³Ibid., Act V, iii, ll. 38-47, pp. 55-56.

³⁴Ibid., Act I, i, ll. 11-14, p. 23.

Oateley's recognition of money as a distinct and significant difference between the two opens the way for Lincoln to belittle his nephew's financial policies. Young Lacy plans a trip through Europe, and his benevolent uncle writes letters of introduction to influential persons and provides the boy with both money and servants; but before he travels through half of Germany, he is penniless. Because he is ashamed to admit his "unthriftiness," he remains in Wittenberg and learns the shoemaker's trade. That the "rise and fall of Rowland Lacy" happens within less than a year's time makes him a greater scoundrel.

Having fully exposed Rowland's inability to accept financial responsibility, the Earl of Lincoln attacks the problem from Rose's point of view. Granted that Rose received a thousand pound dowry, Lacy wasted that much in six months. Even if Oateley made his daughter heir to all his wealth, within one year, the certain "rioting" on Lacy's part would waste the modest wealth.

Lacy is a conniving man but at least he does have a degree of tactfulness about him. Instead of simply stating, "Oateley, let my nephew along; find someone else for your daughter to marry," he uses the money problem as an excuse. Out of Oateley's company, however, he speaks truthfully about the matter to Lovell and Rowland Lacy: "I would not haue you cast an amourous eie vpon so meane a project, as the loue of a gay wanton painted cittizen."³⁵

The Lord Mayor has his own pride to protect. He looks with scorn upon the Lacys: hoping to relieve the weight of love and attention

³⁵Ibid., Act I, i, ll. 74-77, p. 25.

proffered by Rowland Lacy, he sends his daughter to the country. The Lord Mayor and the Lacys differ not only in family backgrounds, but also in their ways and concepts of life. Obviously, Roger Oately has no use for the idle-titled: a man must earn his way in the world. When he considers the love problem, he does admit: "yet your cosen Rowland might do well now he hath learn'd an occupation, and yet I scorne to call him in law."³⁶

In the fourth act, the Earl of Lincoln searches for Lacy. When he approaches Oateley in the matter, his false honor and false love are sickeningly evident. The Lord Mayor says:

Lodge in my house, say you? trust me my Lord, I loue your nephew Lacie too too dearely so much to wrong his honor, and he hath done so, that first gaue him aduise to stay from France. To witness I speak truth, I let you know How careful I have been to keep my daughter free from all conference, or speech of him, Not that I scorne your Nephew, but in loue I beare your honour, least your noble bloud, Should by my meane worth be dishonoured.³⁷

And Lincoln in an aside recognizes "How far the churles tongue wanders from his hart."³⁸ But openly he admits:

Well, well sir Roger Otley I beleue you, with more than many thanks for the kind loue, so much you seeme to beare me: but my Lord, let me request your helpe to seeke my Nephew, whom if I find, Ile straight embarke for France, So shal your Rose be free, my thoughts at rest, and much care die which now lies in my brest.³⁹

Strong feelings between these two run high throughout the play; even though both parents finally agree to the marriage of Rose and Lacy,

³⁶ Ibid., Act I, i, ll. 38-44, p. 24.

³⁷ Ibid., Act IV, iv, ll. 12-25, p. 28.

³⁸ Ibid., Act IV, iv, l. 22, p. 68.

³⁹ Ibid., Act IV, iv, ll. 23-29, pp. 68-69.

they are not joyful fathers at the prospect. The marriage is blessed by the king, but Oateley feels that his daughter is taken from him by force; and Lincoln still cries: "I do mislike the match farre more than he, her bloud is too too base."⁴⁰ Social practice triumphs over social theory, but the real discord remains.

Hammon, who plays a minor role in the play, is a London citizen with love on his tongue and lust in his heart. Openly he has deep respect for Rose, then Jane, but in asides Hammon admits his dishonorable motives where both women are concerned. The evil that Jane and Rose suspect throughout the Hammon episode is well warranted.

When Rose turns a deaf ear to his flattery, Hammon asks Jane for how much her hand might be bought. When this fails, he proffers ardent love. Jane immediately announces that she can not be coy and feed him "with sunneshine smiles and wanton lookes", not only because she detests witchcraft, but also because her husband is alive. Hammon, always the man with an answer, admits grievously to the knowledge of Ralph's death; a friend just happened to write to him and tell him all the names of those slain in combat in every battle in France. Jane promised: "If euer I wed man it shall be you."⁴¹

Even though Hammon's trickery is abominable, his greatest discourtesy occurs when he and Jane, on their way to their marriage ceremony, are approached by Ralph and a band of shoemakers. Hammon

⁴⁰Ibid., Act V, v, ll. 101-102, p. 86.

⁴¹Ibid., Act III, iv, l. 122, p. 61.

offers Ralph twenty pounds of gold for Jane. The idea of buying and selling a human is repulsive, but so is the fact that Hammon so quickly and openly places himself on a social pedestal high above the shoemakers. A woman is insulted, but so is the moral code of the working class. Firk states the indignation most aptly: "A shoemaker sell his flesh and bloud, oh indignitie!"⁴²

Simon Eyre's wife is also an important character. Uppermost in Margery's mind is the social ladder whereby she may climb to regal heights. Simon's new position, she hopes, will afford ample opportunity to reveal "the honour that has crept upon her." Now that her husband has a title, she likes him better than ever before. But Simon is too plain and airs are too far removed from his personality to please Dame Margery. She speaks to the Lord Mayor about the problem: "I, but, my Lord, hee must learne nowe to putte on grauitie."⁴³ The shoemakers recognize Margery's pretentiousness, and it is Firk who finally tells her: "You are such a shrew, you'l'e soone pull him downe."⁴⁴ Throughout the production Margery's attempts to be far more than she really is emphasize her vanity and superficiality--her genuine snobbery.

Although the backgrounds of Rose and Lacy have been discussed, it is necessary to consider them apart from their families and their traditions--both are young, determined, and in love. Love is blind to her citizen family and to his titled family. They have no plan to overthrow English social rules; their actions and decisions stem purely

⁴²Ibid., Act V, ii, l. 86, p. 77.

⁴³Ibid., Act III, iii, l. 11, p. 59.

⁴⁴Ibid., Act II, iii, ll. 138-139, p. 44.

from their emotional involvement.

In The Shoemaker's Holiday, the king is presented as a true servant of the people. He descends from the greatest political post to honor one of the working class who has attained a measure of success; he blesses the marriage of Rose and Lacy and puts an end to social clamor by proclaiming: "Come on then, al shake hands, Ile haue you frends, where there is much loue, all discord ends...."⁴⁵ When he ends the social chaos in the story by revealing the true folly of man's concern for social status, structurally, he becomes Dekker's most important character. By him all loose plot ends are tied. To the king's wise words, nothing can be added or argued.

Thomas Dekker must have been strongly aware of the rapid movement within Elizabethan society. It was a society influenced by new ambitions; the prosperous merchant, once content to win a position of new dignity and power in fraternity or town, now flung himself into the task of carving his way to solitary pre-eminence, unaided by the artificial protection of guild or city. The fourteenth century saw the rise of the De La Pole family within a single generation from the merchant class to the aristocracy; in the fifteenth century, the Boleyns ascended the aristocracy heights from merchant levels. As the Elizabethan period progressed, such opportunities increased: more and more, wealth and brains could purchase high rank. Thereafter the movement from class to class continued. Such circumstances created new opportunities for men of humble birth and

⁴⁵
Ibid., Act V, v, l. 119, p. 87.

opened the way for intermarriage between the classes.⁴⁶

Surely Dekker knew that the rise of the new aristocrats depended on brains, money and useful service, but in The Shoemaker's Holiday, he does not set out to extract a profound sociological message. He does not point to Simon Eyre as a hero because he rose to power and position overnight, or to Rose and Lacy because they ignored class boundaries. Neither does Dekker look with ill favor upon Hammon the hypocritical citizen or Margery the genuine snob. He makes no attempt to praise the mirth of the apprentices or the kindness of the king. Dekker's motive obviously, then, was not to enlighten the masses about the levels of London society. He merely acknowledges the social conditions of the time to enhance the real purpose of his play. By using this cross-section of London people, he, through various plots, proves and praises the power of love. He takes for granted that the vaunted social principles of order and degree will work out in practice. Dekker would perhaps say to modern man:

When the great ideals of order and degree are discussed in terms of the social history of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, it is important to remember that between social theory and social practice, there was a wide discrepancy. The facts simply do not fit the theory.⁴⁷

A close examination of the love story in The Shoemaker's Holiday reinforces these ideas. In the matter of the unequal marriage, there is the same conflict between actual practice and the ideal

⁴⁶P. Thomson, "The Old Way And The New Way in Dekker and Massinger," Modern Language Review, L (April, 1956), 168-178.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 170.

expressed. The open and obvious dismay at the very idea of a marriage between a middle-class girl and an aristocrat appears throughout the play. The fact is such marriages were quite common in their time. Landowners were often quite willing to recoup their finances by marrying city money: Lord Compton married the daughter of Lord Mayor, Sir John "Rich" Spencer; Lord Willoughby and the Earl of Holderness married wealthy daughters of alderman Cockayne.⁴⁸ Of course, traditional ideals frowned upon such occurrences, but it is understandable when Sir Roger states:

Too meane is my poore girle for his high birth,
Poore Citizens must not with Courtiers wed.⁴⁹

He speaks with traditional propriety the traditional point of view. In the last scene of the play, the couple who have contrived a secret marriage face the king who is expected to endorse the parents' notions of social propriety. Although the Earl of Lincoln is the unpopular figure in the play, objectively considered, his case is just. In righteous indignation, Lincoln points to Lacy and calls him a traitor-- after all, he did desert the king's army and contract an undesirable and secret marriage. By law he should be shot. In desperation, Lincoln begs "...forbid the boy to wed one, whose meane birth will much disgrace his bed."⁵⁰

At this point the concern for social theories and doctrines is relieved, for the king asks: "Would you offend Loves lawes?"⁵¹

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 173.

⁴⁹The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act I, i, ll. 11-12, p. 23.

⁵⁰Ibid., Act V, v, ll. 56-57, p. 85.

⁵¹Ibid., Act V, v, l. 73, p. 86.

No social ideal is exalted, just love.

And so the social argument comes to nothing in The Shoemaker's Holiday. In the beginning, there is every indication that a conflict of classes is to be fully explored. Through the Lord Mayor and the Earl of Lincoln stock social ideas are expressed, but there is nothing more than acknowledgement of these ideals--no judgement--no moralization. The final question asked the two plaintiffs is simply "would you offend love's laws?" not "would you offend tradition?"

It is fitting that the nobles, the king, and the working people are drawn together on Shrove Tuesday, as the day to be absolved of sins before entering the penitential season of Lent. As the play closes, everyone prepares "to taste of Simon Eyre's banquet,"⁵² as a love feast in which all become one in brotherhood. With this sweeping gesture toward love, social issues that have been disturbing elements throughout the play are dismissed.

Even though Dekker's story includes romance and fairy tale, his play cannot be dismissed as unimportant and childish. It is true that Rose and Lacy's story is a version of the king-beggar-maid theme, that Lacy's acquittal is fairy tale material, and that the king is lacking in historical significance. The opportunity for exploitation of contemporary social values is ignored, but attention is directed to the permanent values--love, forgiveness, toleration--all of which exist irrespective of time and place.

⁵²Thomson, p. 175.

Chapter III

Dekker's Dependence Upon Records, Legends, Customs,
And Contemporary London

During the latter part of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the chronicle play flourished. The Famous Victories of Henry V, which appeared about 1586, is perhaps the first true chronicle play. With the defeat of the Spanish Armada, this type of drama enjoyed increasing popularity, for patriotic feeling ran at an unprecedented high. By 1610, chronicle material was completely subordinated to the demands of romantic comedy. As early as 1599, Thomas Dekker had subordinated historical fact in The Shoemaker's Holiday to the romantic method. Dekker's story of Simon Eyre the shoemaker came from Deloney's Gentle Craft, but character names, places, and several occurrences came from chronicles. It is important in coming to terms with Dekker's technique in The Shoemaker's Holiday to examine carefully his efforts in the areas of character choice, historical corrections of Deloney's story, and usage of contemporary events and customs.

The following chart prepared by W. K. Chandler enables the reader to comprehend readily the facts about Simon Eyre presented in The Gentle Craft, in The Shoemaker's Holiday, and in the various chronicles of the era.

<u>Deloney</u>	<u>Dekker</u>	<u>History</u>
Eyre came to London from the North Country	No origin given	Native of Brandon, Suffolk, northeast of London.
Became a shoemaker	A shoemaker	First upholsterer, then draper.
Bought argosy and became wealthy	Same	No historical authority. Eyre seems to have been of a family of substantial merchants.
Elected sheriff	Elected sheriff	Elected sheriff 1434
Elected alderman	Omitted by Dekker because of necessary condensation of time	Alderman for Walbrook.
Elected Mayor	Elected Mayor	Elected Mayor 1445
Became a draper	Not in Dekker; play stops in the year of Eyre's mayoralty	Became a draper from upholsterer, but no date given; Eyre was a draper several years before being elected sheriff.
Built Leadenhall after mayoralty.	Built Leadenhall immediately before or during mayoralty.	Built Leadenhall either in 1419 or 1445-46.

Appointed Shrove
Tuesday as banquet
for the apprentices;
originated pancake
bell.

Appointed Shrove
Tuesday for ban-
quet, but did not
originate pancake
bell.

No authority. Pan-
cake bell was of
much earlier origin.

Appointed Mondays
for the sale of
leather at Leadenhall.

The King, at Eyre's
request, appointed
Mondays and Fridays
for the sale of
leather.

Queen Elizabeth
appointed Mondays.

Died with great
honor, but no
mention made of
philanthropy except
Leadenhall.

No mention since
the play ends be-
fore his death.

Died in 1459, leaving
much to charity.⁵³

The imaginative element was not totally removed from Dekker's work by close adherence to historical fact, for as the chart reveals, Dekker retained Deloney's idea of the argosy, for which there is no historical basis. "As early as 1426 Simon Eyre seems to have been a draper of means. He instituted proceedings on July 21, 1426, for the collection of a debt for wool cloth sold by him amounting to £291."⁵⁴ Chandler notes that other volumes of the Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry VI, relate similar facts; many entries concern a wealthy Thomas Eyre who could have been Simon's father.

In The Shoemaker's Holiday, Dekker does skip the years Eyre spent as sheriff and alderman, but Professor Lange recognized the need for a compression of time -- even a "rigorous compression, which involves even the untimely death of a number of aldermen..."⁵⁵ Hodge suggests this in the fourth act of the play: "Wel, wel, worke apace,

⁵³W. K. Chandler, "Sources of Characters In The Shoemaker's Holiday," Modern Philology, XXVII (1929), 176.

⁵⁴Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry VI (London, 1901), 362, cited in

W. K. Chandler, "Sources of Characters," p. 176.

⁵⁵Gayley, p. 7.

they say seuen of the Aldermen be dead, or very sicke."⁵⁶ In Medieval London, William Benham and Charles Welch make this entry: "Two of the Lord Mayors and six Aldermen died of the sweating sickness in the first year of Henry the Seventh's reign."⁵⁷ Even though this entry is beyond the time of Simon Eyre, it at least makes Dekker's use of the idea plausible.

The Shoemaker's Holiday covers the years 1434 through the Shrove Tuesday banquet of 1446. Obviously condensation of time was of major concern to the dramatist, but Chandler says, "Considering this condensation, the only changes Dekker makes from Deloney's Eyre seem to be attempts at the correction of inaccuracies."⁵⁸ There are three major changes made by Dekker. For the construction date of Leadenhall Dekker used the date of records and chronicles. Stow records the dates 1411 and 1443-1446; these dates refer to the period before or during Simon Eyre's mayoralty. In The Gentle Craft, Deloney says Leadenhall was built after Simon Eyre held office.⁵⁹

Dekker does not attribute the origin of the pancake bell to Eyre as does Deloney. In the third column of Chandler's table, the pancake bell is recorded as "having much earlier origin." In Stow's Survey of London, no mention of the pancake bell is made.

Chandler's chart shows that neither Dekker nor Deloney is correct in Eyre's appointments of leather-selling days. Dekker even added

⁵⁶The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act IV, i, ll. 34-35, p. 63.

⁵⁷William Benham and Charles Welch, Medieval London (London, 1901), p. 19.

⁵⁸Chandler, "Sources of Characters," p. 175.

⁵⁹Ibid.

Fridays to Deloney's Mondays; however, even though incorrect in this aspect, he does have the king make the appointments rather than Eyre himself. Dekker's reliance on political logic in this instance saved him from gross inaccuracy.

Dekker's indebtedness to records is evident in his choice of characters that surround Simon Eyre. Stow records: "Maior Robert Oteley, Grocer" as the Lord Mayor of London in 1434;⁶⁰ Fabyan records the same name. Dekker relies on another source and uses the name Roger Oteley. Since Oteley was mayor when Eyre was sheriff, it was quite natural for Dekker to name the anonymous mayor of The Gentle Craft.

There were several spellings for the name Askew, the cousin of Roland Lacy in The Shoemaker's Holiday: Ask, Aske, Ascough, and Ayscough. Chandler believes evidence points to Conand Askew who fought in the battle of Agincourt with the Gloucester Lancers. In 1435, he was given a military commission in the Isle of Wight since enemies of the English crown made frequent invasions there. Conand Askew was placed in command of a group of men-at-arms and archers, some of whom had orders to march to Calais; this is particularly interesting because Conand Askew's men were to go to Calais at a date almost contemporary with Askew's marching Lacy's troops against the French in The Shoemaker's Holiday. Chandler suggests the possibility of Dekker's having found in a genealogy book a kinship between the Askews and the Lacies.⁶¹

⁶⁰ John Stow, A Survey of London, Reprinted From the Text of 1603, II (Oxford, 1908), 173.

⁶¹ Chandler, "Sources of Characters," p. 178.

The character Sir Hugh Lacy is a serious error, historically speaking. However, even this error has been explained and logically justified. First of all, only three Lacies became Earls of Lincoln. Edmund de Lacy, a captain in the Royal Army in Gascony, became an earl; however, no date for bestowal of the title upon him has been secured. In 1232 John de Lacy became Earl of Lincoln. There was another captain in the Royal Army in Gascony, Henry de Lacy, who became an Earl of Lincoln. He died in 1311 and was buried at St. Paul's. Alice, his only surviving child, married the Earl of Lancaster, who died before 1336. Her second marriage was to Hugh de Freyne; in his wife's right ~~de~~ Freyne became an Earl of Lincoln. The Earls of Lincoln whose names were Hugh were not Lacies; however, there were two Hugh de Lacies. One was a baron and the other was the Earl of Ulster. During the years between 1359 and 1467 there were no Earls of Lincoln. In 1467 John de la Pole became Earl of Lincoln. During Dekker's lifetime the son of Edward Clinton held the title of that earldom. Edmund Lacy, who was Dean of the King's Chapel, Chancellor of Oxford University, Bishop of Hereford, and Bishop of Exeter, lived during the reigns of Henry IV, V and VI (until 1455). He is mentioned in almost all the chronicles of the period, and it is strongly suspected that the Lacy name suggested the title to Thomas Dekker. Also in justification of Dekker's use of this particular title, the founders of the line were Hugh de Lacies; the name Lacy was associated with the earldom and the last Earl of Lincoln connected with the Lacy family was named Hugh.⁶²

⁶²Ibid., pp. 178-179.

Concerning Lincoln's Inn, John Stow wrote the following:

In this place after the decease of the sayde
 Bishoppe of Chichester, and in place of the house
 of Blacke Fryers, before spoken of, Henry Lacy
 Earle of Lincolne, Constable of Chester, and Custos
 of England, builded his Inne, and for most part was
 lodged there; hee deceased in this house in the
 yeare 1310, and was buried in the new worke,
 (wherevnto he had been a great benefactor) of
 Saint Pauls church, between our Lady chappell and
 saint Dunstones Chappell. This Lincolnes Inne
 sometime pertraying the name of Lincolnes Inne as
 afore, but now lately encreased with fayre buildings,
 and replenished with Gentlemen studious in the common
 lawes. In the raigne of H. the 8. sir Thomas Lovell
 was a great builder there, especially he builded
 the gate house and forefront towards the east,
 placing thereon aswell the Lacies armes as his owne:
 hee caused the Lacies armes to bee cast and wrought
 in leade, on the louer of the hall of that house,
 which was in the 3. Escutcheons a Lyon rampant
 for Lacie...⁶³

That Thomas Dekker was unfamiliar with Lincoln's Inn and the
 display of Lovell and Lacy arms is highly improbable. Indeed, his
 familiarity with this place may be at the root of his selection of the
 name Lacy.

John Hammon and Masters Warner and Scott are London citizens of
 importance in The Shoemaker's Holiday. Both Stow and Orridge record one
 Thomas Scott, a draper, who became the sheriff of London in 1447 and
 mayor in 1458.⁶⁴ John Hammon, who was a citizen and fishmonger of
 London, lived during Eyre's lifetime.⁶⁵ Robert Warner is recorded as
 a London citizen and mercer. Warner was a benefactor of St.
 Bartholomew's Hospital.⁶⁶ Once again, Dekker relied on the accuracy of

⁶³Stow, II, 90.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 174-175.

⁶⁵Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry VI, VI, 315, cited in Chandler,

"Sources of Characters," p. 180.

⁶⁶Stow, II, 23.

historical records for the accuracy of a character in his play.

In addition to these characters, Cornwall, Lovell, and the king are included. Cornwall, who has no title mentioned in the play, appears twice. The title of Earl was added to the list of characters for the play by one Fritsche, who had no authority to make such additions.⁶⁷ The earldom of Cornwall became a property of the crown when it was changed into a duchy after the death of the last Earl of Cornwall in 1336. Between 1413 and 1453 there was no Duke of Cornwall. It is possible that Dekker used the name Cornwall in reference to John Cornwall, who was a contemporary figure. He strongly supported Henry VI and was an outstanding knight. Cornwall became Lord Fanhope, custos of the Privy Seal. He gained fame in the Battle of Agincourt. To London and its citizens he gave a home for the fishmongers. Apparently Dekker's name for this character was well chosen since he was friendly to London citizens, a staunch supporter of Henry VI, and involved in the French wars.⁶⁸

Although the courtier Lovell appears only one time and then only for a very short speech, he enhances Dekker's attempts at historical accuracy. The Dictionary of National Biography records a John Lovell, eleventh Lord Lovell, Viscount Lovell, Baron Lovell of Tichmarsh, Holland, Deincourt, and Gray of Rotherfield who was a member of the Privy Council and a supporter of Henry VI. He resided in Lovell's Inn on Newgate Street north of St. Paul's. Earlier in this chapter the

⁶⁷Gayley, p. 21.

⁶⁸Stow, I, 215, and Chandler, "Sources of Characters," p. 181.

association of the Lincoln and Lovell name was discussed.⁶⁹

There is some disagreement among the critics of The Shoemaker's Holiday as to the historical namesake of the king. Professor Lange says Dekker referred to King Henry V in this play. The "victor of Agincourt" is seen "in a playful mood," says this critic.⁷⁰ Chandler, however, believes Lange contradicts himself when he says Dodger's reference to the battle in Act III, ii, is "probably as imaginary as Bobadill's description of the capture of Strigonium."⁷¹ Chandler says further, "Had Dekker intended to refer to Agincourt, it seems that there would have been no point in omitting the name of the battle, and especially of giving a false date. Such obscurity would not arouse the patriotic spirit of the audience."⁷² Since Henry VI was King of England during Eyre's time, and there was trouble with France during those years, it is highly possible and reasonable that Dekker meant the allusion to be to this king. The only clue given to the identity of the king in The Shoemaker's Holiday is in the fifth act:

King: Nay, Rose, never woove me; I tel you true,
 Although as yet I am a batchellor,
 Yet I beleeve, I shal not marry you.⁷³

Henry VI was not married until April 28, 1444, the year before Simon Eyre became Mayor of London.

Perhaps a great deal of the popularity of The Shoemaker's Holiday is derived from the realistic portrayal of Thomas Dekker's London. In

⁶⁹Charles L. Kingsford, "Hugh de Lacy," Dictionary of National Biography, XI, 375-380.

⁷⁰Gayley, p. 7.

⁷¹Chandler, p. 180, and Gayley, p. 51.

⁷²Ibid., p. 180.

⁷³The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act V, v, ll. 82-84, p. 86.

the course of the play, reference is made to thirty-five landmarks that are within a three-mile radius of the city. Research reveals the picture painted by Eyre in The Shoemaker's Holiday to be of Dekker's time and not of Simon Eyre's.

Finsbury Fields, Old Change, the Little Conduit, St. Mary Overy, the Doctors' Commons, and the Savoy are six outstanding landmarks in London that definitely date from the Elizabethan Age.

In the first act, Dekker mentions Finsbury Fields: "...all gallantly prepar'd in Finsbury..."⁷⁴ In the third act he speaks again of Finsbury: "And if I stay, I pray God I may be turnd to a Turke, and set in Finsbury for boyes to shoot at...."⁷⁵ Stow reports the following of the area:

This Fen or More field stretching from the wall of the Citty betwixt Bishopsgate and the posterne called Cripplesgate to Fensbery, and to Holy well, continued a wast an vnprofitable land a long time, ...in the yeare 1415 the 3. of Henry the 5. Thomas Fawconner Mayor...caused the wall of the Citty to be broken toward the said More, and builded the Postern called Moregate, for the ease of the citizens to walke that way...moreouer he caused the ditches from Soers ditch to Deepe ditch, by Bethlehem into the More ditch, to be new cast and cleansed, by means whereof the sayde Fenne or More was greatly dreyned and dryed: but shortly after, to wit in 1447, Ralph Ioceline Mayor, for repaying the Wall of the Cittie, caused the sayde More to bee searched for Clay and Bricke...by which meanes this fielde was made the worse for a long time.

In the yeare 1498, all the Gardens which had continued time out of mind, without Moregate, to witte, aboute and beyonde the Lordship of Finsbery, were destroyed. And of them was madea playne field for Archers to shoot in.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Ibid., Act I, i, l. 61, p. 25.

⁷⁵Ibid., iii, ll. 55-56, p. 41.

⁷⁶Stow, II, 76-77.

The Old Exchange, or Old Change as it came to be know, is mentioned in the third act; Hammon says, "There is a wench keepest shop in the old change..."⁷⁷ Later in the play the goods in Jane's shop are named: "...callico, lawne, cambricke shirts, bands, handkerchers, and ruffles."⁷⁸ The Old Change got its name after the opening of the Royal Exchange in 1566 by Queen Elizabeth. Old Change was located on Old Change Lane, near St. Paul's cathedral, between Watling and Westcheap Streets. During Dekker's lifetime, drapers' shops were located in the building.⁷⁹

The Little Conduit or the Pissing Conduit is mentioned in the fourth act: "Am I sure that Paules steeple is a handle higher then London stone? or that the pissing conduit leakes nothing but pure mother Bunch?"⁸⁰ The Pissing Conduit located by Stockes market at the intersection of Lombard, Cornhill, Thread Needle and Poultry streets was constructed about 1500.⁸¹

"Portegues thou wouldst say, here they be Firke, heark, they gingle in my pocket like saint Mary Oueries bels,"⁸² says Hodge. "East from the Bishop of Winchester house directly ouer against it, a fayre church called saint Mary ouer the Rie, or Ouerie, that is ouer the water."⁸³ This Church "or some other in its place thereof was of old time long before the conquest an house of sisters founded by a mayden

⁷⁷The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act III, i, l. 51, p. 48.

⁷⁸Ibid., IV, iv, ll. 23, 24, 26, 28, p. 58

⁷⁹Stow, I, 54, 312-313, 323.

⁸⁰The Shoemaker's Holiday, IV, iv, ll. 109-111, p. 71.

⁸¹Stow, I, 17.

⁸²The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act II, iii, ll. 21-22, p. 40.

⁸³Stow, I, 56.

named Mary..."⁸⁴ In December, 1540, the Priory was purchased from King Henry VIII by the inhabitants of that borough. With the help of Doctor Stephen Gardner, Bishop of Winchester, the Priory became a parish church. "The tower dates from the sixteenth century, and had a fine peal of twelve bells."⁸⁵ Reference to bells in the old church makes the allusion quite obviously contemporary with Dekker.

Dodger reports the wedding of Lacy and Rose at the Savoy:

"Your Nephew Lacie, and your daughter Rose, earely this morning wedded at the Sauoy..."⁸⁶ In 1505, Henry VII ordered to be built the "Hospital of St. John the Baptist for the housing of one hundred poor people."⁸⁷ It was built on the site of Savoy Palace, the house of Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, which was destroyed by Wat Tyler and his rebels in 1381. "The Savoy", as the official name of the hospital was retained, and "the Chappell of this Hospitall serueth now as a Parish church to the Tenements thereof...."⁸⁸

Sybil bears a message, "None but good: my lord Mayor, your father, and maister Philpot, your vncler, and maister Scot, your cousin, and mistres Frigbottom by Doctors' Commons, doe all (by my troth) send you most hearty commendations."⁸⁹ The Doctors' Commons was located on Knightrider Street, two blocks south of St. Paul's. Before Elizabeth ascended the throne, the great stone house served as the town house of

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Edward H. Sugden, A Topographical Dictionary To The Works of Shakespeare And His Fellow Dramatists (Manchester, 1925), p. 335.

⁸⁶The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act V, ii, ll. 149-150, p. 79.

⁸⁷Stow, II, 95.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act I, ii, ll. 21-23, p. 31.

the Blounts, Lords Mountjoy; however, in the early years of her reign Henry Harvey, Doctor of Civil and Canon Laws, Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, purchased it. Under his ownership, it served as a lodging place for doctors and thus it gained its name.⁹⁰

The Boar's Head Tavern, the Swan Tavern, Eastcheap, Gracious Street, and St. Martin' le Grand are other prominent landmarks named in The Shoemaker's Holiday. These places are used in such a manner as to imply contemporary existence with Dekker, not with Eyre.⁹¹

Although there were several taverns bearing the name Boar's Head, and although no distinction of the particular Boar's Head is made by Simon Eyre, the merry shoemaker in all probability spoke of the Eastcheap or High Street tavern. Not only were these two the most outstanding, but the locations would have been easily reached by Eyre and his company.⁹² The Boar's Head on Eastcheap would be the most logical choice. Other Boar's Heads were at least one half mile from Tower Street. The Boar's Head in Eastcheap was not an old tavern in Dekker's day, for mention of it was first made in 1537.⁹³

"Want they meate?", cries Eyre. "Wheres this swagbelly, this greasie kitchinstuffe cooke, call the varlet to me: want meat! Firke, Hodge, lame Rafe, runne my tall men, beleager the shambles, beggar al East-Cheape, serue me whole oxen in chargers, and let sheepe whine vpon the tables like pigges for want of good felowes to eate them."⁹⁴

⁹⁰Stow, II, 17, and Sugden, p. 153.

⁹¹W. K. Chandler, "Topography of The Shoemaker's Holiday, Studies in Philology, XXVI (1929), 501.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act V, iv, ll. 20-26, p. 82.

About Eastcheap Stow records: "This Eastcheape is now a flesh Market of Butchers there dewlling, on both sides of the streete, it had sometime also Cookes mixed amongst the Butchers, and such other as solde victuals readie dressed of all sorts."⁹⁵ However, the possibility of buying meat in Eyre's time cannot be lightly dismissed; indeed, such opportunity is emphasized by Stow; "For of olde time when friends did meet, and were disposed to be merrie, they went not to dine and suppe in Taverns, but to the Cookes, where they called for meate what them liked, which they always found ready dressed at reasonable rate... And to proove this Eastcheape to bee a place replenished with Cookes, it may appeare by a song called 'London lickepennie,' made by Lidgate a Monke of Berrie, in the raigne of Henrie the fift..."⁹⁶

When Eyre's wife inquires of Roger where she "may buye a good haire," the reply, "Yes forsooth, at the pouleters in Gracious street," is made.⁹⁷ Grace, Grasse, Grace-church, or Gracious Street is an old street running northward from London Bridge to Bishopsgate. Although historical records prove the antiquity of the street, the manner in which Dekker used it would indicate a reference to the dramatist's own day.

West from this Church St. Martin's Oteswich haue ye Scalding wike, because that ground for the most part was then imployed by Poulterers that dwelled in the high streete, from the Stocks Market to the

⁹⁵

Stow, I, 216.

⁹⁶Ibid., 216-217.

⁹⁷The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act III, ii, ll. 37-39, p. 51.

great Conduit. Their Poultrie which they sold at their stalles were scaled there, the street doth yet beare the name of the Poultrie, and the Poultrie, and the Poulterers are but lately departed from thence into other streets, as into Grasse street...⁹⁸

Hodge asked Simon Eyre if he remembered the ship "my fellow Hans told you of. The skipper and he are both drinking at the swan."⁹⁹ Although there were several taverns called "Swan," the most outstanding among them was the Swan in Crooked Lane, a street running due north from London Bridge. Because of its convenience to Eyre's business and its prominence, "it is likely that Thomas Dekker meant to refer to it."¹⁰⁰

Stow records:

On the East side of this lande is Crooked lane... towards new Fish streete. The most ancient house in this lane is called the leaden porch and belonged sometime to sir Iohn Merston Knight, the first of Edward the fourth: It is now called the swan in Crooked lane, possessed of strangers, and selling Rhenish wine.¹⁰¹

As a tavern it was not in existence in Eyre's time.¹⁰²

North of St. Paul's cathedral and south of Aldersgate ran the street St. Martin's or St. Martin's le Grand. This lane is of particular interest and importance. To Ralph Eyre says, "...Here fiue sixpenses for thee, fight for the honour of the Gentle Craft, for the gentlemen Shoemakers, the couragious Cordwainers, the, the flower of saint Martins,..."¹⁰³ The historical importance of this street did not miss the observant eyes of Stow: "Men of trades and

⁹⁸Stow, I, 186.

⁹⁹The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act II, iii, ll. 84-86, p. 42.

¹⁰⁰Chandler, "Topography," p. 602.

¹⁰¹Stow, I, 219.

¹⁰²Walter Beasant, London In The Time of The Tudors, p. 338, cited in Chandler, "Topography," p. 502.

¹⁰³The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act I, i, ll. 211-213, p. 29.

sellers of wares in this City haue often times...chaunged their places, as they haue found their best advantage...the Shoemakers and Curriors of Cordwayner streets, remoued the one to Saint Martins le Grand, the other to London wall neare vnto Mooregate..."¹⁰⁴ Attention to the note Stow recorded just above the preceding information provides additional depth to the significance of Dekker's use of St. Martin's le Grand Street. "Thus farre Fitzstephen, of the estate of thinges in his time, whereunto may be added the 'present', by conference whereof, the alteration will easily appeare."¹⁰⁵

Simon Eyre himself helps to set the scene for the contemporaneity of the Shoemaker's Holiday. Neither his wealth nor his rapid rise to social and civic prominence were unusual in Elizabethan times. For instance, when Sir Stephen Soame, lord mayor in 1598-1599, died, he was worth ± 40,000 in goods and ± 6,000 in lands.¹⁰⁶ "Sir Henry Billingsly, lord mayor in 1596-1597, was probably better known to his contemporaries as "a Cambridge scholar who, apprenticed to a London haberdasher, became a wealthy merchant."¹⁰⁷ But the foremost example in the minds of Dekker's audience was that of Sir John Spencer.

When Thomas Dekker wrote The Shoemaker's Holiday, it is very likely that he had in mind Sir John Spencer, Lord Mayor of London for the year beginning October 29, 1594. He became so rich as a merchant that he was known as "Rich" Spencers. His trade with Turkey, Spain, and

¹⁰⁴Stow, I, 82.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 81.

¹⁰⁶The Letters of John Chamberlain, ed. Norman E. McClure (Philadelphia, 1939), II, 241, cited in David Novarr, "Dekker's Gentle Craft and The Lord Mayor of London," Modern Philology, LVII, 1960, 234.

¹⁰⁷Sidney Lee, "Sir Henry Billingsley," Dictionary of National Biography, II, (London, 1921-22), 495-496.

Venice was so profitable that he left an estate estimated between £300,000 and £800,000. He and two other merchants held a monopoly over trade with Tripoli. In 1570 he purchased an estate at Cononbury from Thomas, Lord Wentworth; the Queen is said to have visited there in 1511. Even before he became an alderman, he was made sheriff of London. When Spencer became Lord Mayor in 1591, he bought and refurnished Crosby Place on Bishopgate Street; Crosby Place was erected about 1471 and was London's tallest domestic building. Richard III used it for a residence for some time and it had been owned by wealthy lord mayors and by Sir Thomas More. In 1599, Spencer's residence at Crosby Place was most conspicuous.¹⁰⁸

Spencer was well known, but his fame did not stem from benevolence--"he was remembered for dearth and opposition."¹⁰⁹ In the tenth month of his mayoralty, he committed a silk weaver to Bedlam for complaining about the city government. Throughout London, food riots and popular disorders flourished; apprentices were shipped and imprisoned. Some of the accusations against him included selling and converting offices to his own gain, allowing officials to be negligent, and unsatisfiable greed. One man was sent to the Counter for spreading the rumor that apprentices were planning an uprising for the good of the Commonwealth. Thomas Deloney was among a group of men imprisoned at Newgate for composing a seditious pamphlet. Attempts were made by

¹⁰⁸Novarr, p. 234.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

Spencer to control the scarcity of food and the lawlessness that resulted, but the common people considered him responsible in great measure for their plight; Spencer and his disciplinary efforts were highly unpopular.¹¹¹

There was hardly an area in public affairs in which Spencer did not make himself most vehemently apparent. For instance, one of the events affecting, or at least interesting, almost everyone occurred in the first week of Spencer's mayoralty. When he learned that a new theatre was planned for the Bankside, he took it upon himself as a public duty to beg the Lord Treasurer to suppress all stages. According to Spencer, all plays were:

corrupt & prophane..., conteining nothing ells but vnchast fables, lascivious divises shifts of cozenage & matters of lyke sort. wch ar so framed & represented by them that such as resort to see & hear the same beeing of the base & refuse sort of people or such yoong gentlemen as haue small regard of credit or conscience draue the same into example of imitation & not of avoyding the sayed lewd offences. Wch may better appear by the qualitie of such as frequent the sayed playes beeing the ordinary places of meeting for all vagrant persons & maisterles men that hang about the Citie, theeues, horsestealers whoremongers coozeners connycatching persones practizers of treason & such lyke whear they consort and make their matches to the great displeasure of Almightye God & the hurt and annoyance of hir Maties. people both in this Citie & other places about, wch cannot be cleansed of this vngodly sort (wch by experience wee fynd to bee the very sinck & contagion not only of this Citie but of this whole Realm) so long as these playes & places of resort ar by authorities permitted.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1595-1597, p. 63, cited in Novarr, p. 235.

¹¹¹ Novarr, p. 235.

¹¹² E. K. Chambers and W. W. Gregg, "Dramatic Records of the City of London: The Remembrancia," Malone Society Collections, I, Part I, (Oxford, 1907), 75-76, cited in Novarr, p. 235.

When his term of office ended, he petitioned the Privy Council to do away with plays, for they advocated "vnseemly and scurrilous behavior."¹¹³

Of course Spencer was open for attack by the dramatists of the day; however, during Dekker's writing career, the Archbishop of Canterbury issued a proclamation banning all satire from the press and thus transporting it to the stage. Lord Mayor Roger Oateley in The Shoemaker's Holiday is far from a satirical representation of Spencer; no malice is intended toward Oateley for there is simply no place for it in the play. His purpose is to objectify an attitude toward love and social position in contrast to the attitude of Simon Eyre and the king. Although the biting satire is missing, a few weeks before Dekker wrote the play, Spencer found himself in almost the same predicament as Oateley.

Spencer had only one child, a daughter of whom he was very fond. Since she was one of England's richest heiresses, she surely must have attracted countless suitors. Spencer's daughter, comparable to Oateley's daughter Rose, fell in love with William, second Lord Compton, comparable to Lacy. William was the grandson of the second Earl of Huntingdon.¹¹⁴ He was admitted to Gray's Inn in 1593; his father had been a member of this Inn also.¹¹⁵ He received an A.M. degree at Cambridge in 1595, and the next year he became Master of the Leash. The

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 77.

¹¹⁴ The Complete Peerage, IX (Revised ed., London, 1936), 677, cited in Novarr, p. 235.

¹¹⁵ Joseph Foster, The Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521-1889 (London, 1889), pp. 32, 82, cited in Novarr, p. 236.

Queen denied his desire to join the Calais expedition the following year. That William met the Lord Mayor's daughter can be logically explained. Possibly the two were related--Anne, daughter of Sir John Spencer of Althorp, was Compton's stepmother. The meeting may have been (and probably was) more extraordinary. Our first knowledge of Compton comes from the Christmas of 1594 and a Christmas party at Gray's Inn. He was in the company of the Lord Keeper; the earls of Cumberland, Shrewsbury, Northumberland, Southampton, and Essex; the Lords Buckhurst, Windsor, Mountjoy, Sheffield, Rich, Burghley, and Monteaule; Lord Thomas Howard, Sir Thomas Hensage, and Sir Robert Cecil.¹¹⁶ Present also were "'a very great number of knights, ladies and very worshipful parsonages.'"¹¹⁷ This party was one of the most elegant parties ever attempted by any Inn. There is little doubt that Spencer and his daughter attended the festivity, for the following day he was host to "'a very sumptuous and costly dinner'" in honor of the merry-makers at Crosby Place.¹¹⁸ Spencer received an invitation to become a member of Gray's Inn two days following his extravagant and elaborate party.¹¹⁹ "It is quite possible that Compton and Elizabeth may have met under the auspices of the High and Mighty Prince Henry, Prince Purpoole, who ruled his mock court during a month of merry-making."¹²⁰

¹¹⁶The Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, III (London, 1823), 281, cited in Novarr, p. 236.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Foster, Register of Admissions To Gray's Inn, p. 87, cited in Novarr, p. 36.

¹²⁰Novarr, p. 236.

Details of the courtship of Compton and Elizabeth were related to Dudley Carleton by John Chamberlain. Chamberlain wrote the following note on January 31, 1599:

Yt is geven out that the Lord Compton shall marry our Sir John Spensers daughter of London, on these conditions that he geve him 10000 li redy money with her, and redeeme his land that lieth in morgage for 18000 li more.¹²¹

Early in March Chamberlain wrote:

Our Sir John Spenser of London was the last weeke committed to the Fleet for a contempt, and hiding away his daughter, who they say is contracted to the Lord Compton, but now he is out again and by all meanes seekes to hinder the match, alledging a precontract to Sir Arthur Henninghams sonne; but upon his beating and misusing her, she was sequestered to one Barkers a procter and from thence to Sir Henry Billingsleyes where she yet remains till the matter be tried. Yf the obstinate and selfwilld fellow shold persist in his doggednes (as he protests he will) geve nother her, the poore Lord shold have a warme catch.¹²²

Spenser's strong dislike for Compton has been given neither reason nor explanation in records. Perhaps it was the rather extraordinary dowry conditions that he objected to, or perhaps (though unlikely) that he, like Oateley, wanted his daughter to marry in her class.

Even though little is known about Rich Spencer in modern times, we know scarcely more about other Londoners of Dekker's day. It was widely known that John Spencer, a former lord mayor, had fought against the theatre, had sent the apprentices to prison, and had been sent to the Fleet himself for interfering with a romance between his daughter

¹²¹Chamberlain, I, 67, cited in Novarr, p. 237.

¹²²Ibid., p. 35.

and a favorite courtier of the Queen. The audience certainly smiled knowingly when The Shoemaker's Holiday was presented in August, 1599. Not fifteenth century figures were Roger Oateley, Rose, and Lacy the shoemaker-courtier. Here in delightful form was a bit of city-court scandal of the seventeenth century. The Queen's interest in The Shoemaker's Holiday will always be questionable--was she genuinely interested in Dekker's work, or had she heard about the obvious implications made by the playwright?

The idea of forcing a child to marry a mate selected by the parents was nothing new; in fact this was a feudal custom. During the Renaissance, however, marriages of love grew more frequent; it was only after this custom had been somewhat established that protests were raised in literature against the enforcement of marriages by parents and other concerned individuals. In feudal society, the common and accepted thing was a marriage arranged for either material or social advantage. Of such marital practices, C. S. Lewis writes:

Marriages had nothing to do with love, and no 'nonsense' about marriage was tolerated. All matches were matches of interest, and, worse still, of an interest that was continually changing. When the alliance which had answered would answer no longer, the husband's object was to get rid of the lady as soon as possible.¹²³

Although the idea of forced marriages appears as a minor theme in The Shoemaker's Holiday, Dekker does champion free choice of a marriage partner in both the Rose and Jane love affairs. Even Hammon

¹²³ C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (London, 1936), p. 13, cited in Glenn H. Blayney, "The Enforcement of Marriage in English Drama, 1600-1650," Philological Quarterly, XXXVIII (1959), 454.

admits, after the Lord Mayor's attempts to make Rose marry him have failed, "Enforced love is worse than hate to me."¹²⁴

As previously stated in this thesis, the apprentices play a leading role in The Shoemaker's Holiday, and the author was once again very careful in his portrayal of Eyre's helpers. The apprentices formed a large and powerful segment of London society. They had their own military exercises, their own dress, with leather jerkin, flat cap, and club which was carried in the place of a sword. This characteristic weapon gave its name to the apprentices' call to arms. The cry "clubs" rallied the apprentices whether for help in a street riot or for political warfare. Armed in this manner, the apprentices were formidable foes to those who merited their displeasure.¹²⁵ How well remembered and how true to life is the street scene when the apprentices cry against Hammon who is on his way to be married to Jane--"Downe with that creature, clubs, downe with him!"¹²⁶

Although apprentices and masters worked well together, and apprentices became a part of the household, they performed the duties of a servant during their apprenticeship. Beasant says, "The ordering of the household was strict. Servants and apprentices were up at six in the summers and at seven in the winters."¹²⁷ Margery reports to Simon, "It is almost seven;"¹²⁸ Simon has just shouted to his apprentices:

¹²⁴The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act III, i, l. 50, p. 48.

¹²⁵Mrs. Frederick Boas, In Shakespeare's England (London, 1903), p. 50.

¹²⁶The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act V, ii, l. 46, p. 76.

¹²⁷Walter Beasant, London (London, 1912), p. 200.

¹²⁸The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act I, iv, l. 109, p. 36.

Where be these boyes, these girles, these drabbes, these scoundrels, they wallow in the fat brewisse of my bountie, and licke vp the crums of my table, yet wil not rise to see my walkes cleansed; come out you powder-beefe-queanes, what Nan, what Madge-mumble-crust, come out you fatte Midriffe-swag-belly whores, and sweepe me these kennels, that noysome stench offende not the nose of my neighbours: what Firke I say, what Hodge? open my shop windowes, what Firke I say.¹²⁹

At various times in the play, Simon sends his apprentices on errands, making full use of their time and youthful energy.

Ralph's enlistment into the king's army is convenient for the plot development of The Shoemaker's Holiday, but there remains the truth behind the incident. In order to build up her army, Queen Elizabeth exercised the rights of impressment whereby men were forced "by authority of the State" to enter the military service for the defense of the realm.¹³⁰ Nothing new or convenient was Ralph's predicament to the audience of Dekker's play; indeed, they too were liable to be drafted for the defense of the realm. In fact, beginning about June, 1598, great levies of men were made to support the Essex expedition to Ireland, and in August, 1599, when The Shoemaker's Holiday appeared in the theatre, rumors and alarms were spread throughout the city that Spain had a new armada ready to set sail. This surprise led to a royal command that sixteen of London's best ships be furnished with ten thousand men.¹³¹

When England defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, the kingdom burst into joyous song and action. People began to travel; some travelled for culture; others, for profit; still others travelled for

¹²⁹Ibid., Act I, iv, ll. 1-8, p. 33.

¹³⁰"Impressment," Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. XII, p. 127.

¹³¹Novarr, p. 234.

exploration, adventure, and even colonization. That Lacy travelled on the Continent in The Shoemaker's Holiday is not at all fantastic, for the defeat of Spain had made travel not only safe but a fad. Every youth whose family could afford the expense took "the grand tour."

Margery's concern for her wig, farthingale, and cork shoes is not time wasted in this drama, for the years of Elizabeth's reign were years of fashion consciousness; it was a time when a man's worldly station was recognized by the clothes he wore. So the gowns of silk, satin, and velvet, and the jewels, feathered hats, fancy shoes, colored hose, gloves and cambric aprons help set the mood of a gay and gaudy era as well as for The Shoemaker's Holiday. Once again beneath the surface of elements appearing rather trivial upon first consideration can be recognized the care Dekker took to make his play a reflection of late sixteenth century reality.

Henry Thew Stephenson says of wigs and hair dressing:

The Elizabethan revelled in wigs. The Records of the Wardrobe show that Elizabeth possessed eighty wigs at one time. Mary Stuart, during part of her captivity in England, changed her hair every day. So usual was this habit, and so great the demand for hair, children with handsome locks were never allowed to walk alone in London streets for fear they would be kidnapped and their tresses cut off.¹³²

Margery wanted cork shoes with wooden heels; Ralph gave Jane pinked shoes with love knots pricked on the leather. Rose promised Sybil purple stockings and a cambric apron "to learn perfectly whether my Lacy go to France or no." This was no dreaming on Dekker's part,

¹³²Stephenson, pp. 30-31.

for "bright colors and elaborate trimming were the most notable characteristics of Elizabethan dress."¹³³ Stomachers and gloves, cork shoes and French hoods were all a part of the fashionably attired woman's wardrobe.

Up to this point, only women's fashions have been discussed, but men were just as interested in what they wore--often more so. In fact, the only drastic change in Simon Eyre's life after he became wealthy is his concern for his clothes. Recall the "clothes conversation" at Eyre's house before he was worn into office:

Eyre: ...Hodge, Ile go through with it, heers a seale ring, and I haue sent for a garded gown, and a damask Casock, see where it comes, looke here Maggy, help me Firk, apparrel me Hodge, silke and satten you mad Philistines, silke and satten.

Firk: Ha, ha, my maister wil be as proud as a dogge in a dublet, al in beaten damaske and veluet.

Eyre: Softly Firke, for rearing of the nap, and wearing thread-bare my garments: how dost thou like mee Firke? how do I looke, my fine Hodge?

Hodge: Why now you looke like your self master, I warrant you, ther's few in the city, but wil giue you the wall, and come vpon you with the right worshipful.

Firk: Nailles my master lookes like a thread-bare cloake new turn'd, and drest: Lord, Lord, to see what good raiment doth? dame, dame, are you not enamoured?

¹³³Ibid.

Eyre: How saist thou Maggy, am I not brisk? am I not fine?¹³⁴

Once again in the last act, Simon speaks of his clothes in a rather proud manner. That dress has enhanced his position and wealth is evident in his remark:

...Simon Eyre had neuer walkte in a redde petticoate, nor wore a chaine of golde, but for my fine Iourneymans portigues...¹³⁵

"The people were greatly addicted to showy dress, but show in dress was a mere bagatelle. Pageants of all sorts were planned upon the least occasion. Coronations, funerals, and progresses were always got up on a most spectacular basis."¹³⁶ People were used to a great festival when a newly elected lord mayor assumed office. The parades of riding watches, the civic officials in their gaudy robes of state, the livery companies upon the river in their brilliant barges, manned by oarsmen in full livery--all such spectacles were provided with gorgeous pageants, triumphal arches, and side shows.¹³⁷

The Order of Communion published in 1548 by order of King Henry VIII threatened both religious doctrine and festivity of English life. The opening direction delivered a powerful blow against penance. Communicants were informed that if they were in a state of sin, they need not confess to a priest before receiving communion; the general

¹³⁴The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act II, iii, ll. 94-110.

¹³⁵Ibid., Act V, i, ll. 16-18, p. 73.

¹³⁶Stephenson, p. 12.

¹³⁷Ibid.

absolution pronounced in the communion rite was sufficient.¹³⁸ The people willingly endured a change of doctrine so long as they were not called upon to give up their feasting. The Easter and Christmas feasting were kept, and all the saints' days called for celebration and something better than usual to eat. There should be no surprise when Firk cries:

Nay more my hearts, every Shrousestuesday is our yeere of Iubile: and when the pancake bel rings, we are as free as my lord Maior, we may shut vp our shops, and make Holiday: Ile haue it calld Saint Hughes Holiday.¹³⁹

In England, Shrove Tuesday was a holiday for the apprentices and working class in general, yet the name indicates a penitential date when it was the custom of the faithful to confess their sins before entering into the holy Lenten season of fasting and prayer. "That none would forget this duty, a great bell was rung at an early hour in every parish, and in after-times the ringing was still kept up in some places, though the cause of it ceased with the Reformation, when it became merged with the Pancake Bell."¹⁴⁰ After confession, the people were allowed to indulge in merry-making, "which in the later days of Catholicism and the earlier ones of Protestantism degenerated into unbounded license."¹⁴¹

Ancient is the association of pancakes with Shrovetide. A plausible explanation is offered by a Catholic ecclesiastic:

¹³⁸Phillip Hughes, A Popular History of The Reformation, (Garden City, New York, 1957), p. 220.

¹³⁹The Shoemaker's Holiday, Act V, ii, ll. 202-205, p. 80.

¹⁴⁰Beasant, p. 204.

¹⁴¹William S. Walsh, Curiosities of Popular Customs and Rites, Ceremonies, Observances, and Miscellaneous Antiquities (Philadelphia, 1897), p. 884.

When Lent was kept by strict abstinence from meat all through the forty days, it was customary to use the drippings and lard in the making of pancakes. To consume all it was usual to call in the apprentice boys and others about the house, and they were summoned by a bell, which was naturally called 'pancake bell.' Eventually the functions of the pancake bell and the shriving bell were combined, and as 'the pancake bell,' the church signal survived the Reformation.¹⁴²

If The Shoemaker's Holiday is looked upon without any knowledge of sixteenth and early seventeenth century London, then surely the play appears to be only a romantic tale about a man and his wife becoming rich because "their ship finally came in," about lovers who live happily ever after because the king blessed their marriage, about apprentices who laugh more than they work. But with knowledge of legends and records of people, places, and events important to Thomas Dekker in the construction of his play, a carefully contrived realism becomes apparent.

¹⁴²Ibid.

Chapter IV

The Significance of The Shoemaker's Holiday

The Shoemaker's Holiday is a mixture of many elements all directed toward establishing a pleasing effect on the stage. First of all, the romantic-comedy-chronicle method was chosen by Dekker for a special reason. By the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, interest in England's history became popular and was reflected in chronicle plays; material for these dramas was drawn from various chronicles of the day. When the Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588, this dramatic method enjoyed increasing popularity and even served as a medium for teaching English history to the uneducated portion of the London populace. By 1590, the tendency to merge the chronicle play with the romantic comedy had appeared and was reflected in James IV by Greene. Dekker was familiar with these types of plays. Not only were they favorites of audiences but their forms lent themselves to relatively simple construction.

Early chronicle plays were loosely constructed; unity depended upon events that took place during the reign of a particular king. Many characters were involved. Such spectacular elements as pageants, coronations, and funerals were commonly used. Comic scenes often relieved tensions created by serious incidents. Of course in the romantic comedy serious love was the major concern and source of interest. Action was outside usually; characters were balanced; a heroine was idealized; reconciliations were easily made, and the ending was happy.

Because the places, events, and characters were drawn from records, legends and contemporary London, much of the creative process was eliminated; characters came with a name, a certain degree of personality, and, more than likely, a legendary reputation. Use of such persons lessened the risk of an ineffective, unappealing drama. The contemporary John "Rich" Spencer tale was easily incorporated into Dekker's plan. Of course, the chronicle method paved the way toward open expression of patriotism, another common characteristic of popular drama in the late sixteenth century.

These ideas are not presented to suggest Dekker had no talent for creating his own characters and situations but to suggest that he had little self-confidence, needed the security of an "already created" character, needed limited room (provided by the loose construction) to use his own imagination, needed the security of knowing the chronicle-romantic comedy was extremely popular with audiences. He wanted to begin with as little risk as possible. The more concrete the facts or details with which he could begin, the more he could be assured of achieving success. Also, Dekker must have seen the chronicle play and the romantic comedy presented enough times to be thoroughly familiar with the requirements of both for effectiveness.

Characterization is perhaps the most powerful element in The Shoemaker's Holiday. Character portrayal, though, was Dekker's greatest strength throughout his career as a dramatist. For the most part, people in this play are strong representatives from a particular level of London society. The people in The Shoemaker's Holiday are admirable because in their social environment they reveal neither

isolated traits nor an abnormal tendency--but a concrete whole in its living context. Eyre is the best example. From the opening of the play, he is a humorous character, and throughout the remainder of the drama he is consistently so. The scenes, however, that reveal his humorous nature also point to his qualities as friend, employer, businessman, husband, subject, and citizen. Simon Eyre is an individual, but an individual with the mark of his occupation. Bellafront and Fortunatus from The Honest Whore and Old Fortunatus are excellent examples along with Simon Eyre to prove Dekker's capacity to present many sides of man's nature and personality and yet contain him within his social position. This depth of depiction made certain of his characters immortal. Indeed, all key characters in The Shoemaker's Holiday are distinguished as individuals modified by their stations. All are ingeniously bound by being Londoners and Englishmen.

Although interest in The Shoemaker's Holiday pivots on the character Simon Eyre, outstanding and memorable character depiction is not mirrored only in him. Dekker's women, not only in The Shoemaker's Holiday, have long been recognized by critics as brilliant portrayals of human nature and personality. Basically, Dekker used the four female characters to depict not only womanhood in general but also women in the various social levels as well. Structurally Jane is a minor character, but even in this position, she is one of the most beautiful and vivid representatives of womanhood in all of Elizabethan drama. Jane belongs to the working class; her husband Ralph is a shoemaker. This however, is unimportant; for her loyalty, patience, and kindness as a woman and as a wife transcend social barriers and make her a model for

all levels. There is a certain naivete about Jane. She is wary of Hammon, but when he presents the letter proving the death of her husband, she believes him without further questioning. As a widow, she is properly and sincerely mournful. As a business woman, she is thrifty and practical. She is respected and loved by Ralph's friends. For romantic comedy's demand of an idealized heroine, Jane is perfect. There is no flaw in her character; she is pure and honest in every respect from citizen to wife to business woman.

Rose is Dekker's example of the upper middle-class woman. She is youthful, delightful, but always a lady--polished and refined. Rose is aware of social barriers, but her mind is of the newer mold--where love is concerned, social barriers are not barriers. The Lord Mayor's daughter is simply a happy, scheming, determined girl in love.

Representative of the working class woman is Margery. Probably upper lower class would be her classification most properly defined. She is interested only in rising to a more dignified social position. Even with the fine clothes, fancy language, and new honor, Margery's crudeness is neither forgotten by the audience nor concealed in her actions. Her intense desire to be so very much more than she is, and her belief that money could give her all she lacked both in character and in material goods proves her genuine snobbery. In her own unpolished manner, she loves Simon Eyre. Their affection for one another is real, but outwardly Simon never rises above his occupation even when he becomes Lord Mayor. She badgers her husband, but he obviously has grown accustomed to the nagging (and rather depends upon it), the domineering attitude. Indeed, Eyre really shows unquestioned and

positive control only where his wife is concerned. "Sincerity" most likely is not even in Margery's vocabulary and definitely never makes its appearance in her actions. Even though she is not an admirable person, she is admirably portrayed by Dekker.

Even the lower class has its representative in The Shoemaker's Holiday. Sybil, Rose's servingwoman, is much like Margery in several respects: her language is often racy, and her too familiar attitude toward the shoemakers is apparent. The major difference between Margery and Sybil is that Sybil has neither intention nor desire to rise above her present station. She fills her position well--she is always Rose's willing accomplice in any plan.

The four women in The Shoemaker's Holiday appeal to the audience's sense of belief because of their warmth, their realistic actions, their language and ambitions. An Elizabethan audience could, and probably did, appreciate them far more than a twentieth century audience could. They were thoroughly familiar with each type. Perhaps the only one other woman in Dekker's work who could approach such appreciation and admiration by the audience or vividness of description was Bellafront. Bellafront and Jane are two of Dekker's most outstanding moments of undeniable success in his career as a dramatist.

Analysis of character types points again to Dekker's strategy for success. Most of the characters in this drama are from the working class and the middle class. This is no indication that Dekker preferred one class above the other; he simply knew that the theatre drew its crowds from both classes and it was reasonable that the audience would grow (as well as the play's popularity) if points of identification could be established between play and audience.

During the Renaissance in England men could move up the social ladder to middle-class status but no farther. The upper class was reserved for blood titles. It must have been amusing to these people, though, to see themselves depicted in such life-like manner on the stage.

Historically speaking, Dekker did not limit himself to characters alone. In Chapter IV certain topographical features were proved to have been used because they set the scene in contemporary London, but even in his choice of such places ulterior motive and strategy aimed at the highest effectiveness is evident. Dekker had to be extremely careful to succeed in achieving success instead of failure. Three examples from place names mentioned in The Shoemaker's Holiday strengthen this idea. First of all Finsbury Fields was used because it was a favorite practice area for bands of men in military training; it was the haunt of motely amusements of all kinds and a place for gamesters and fraudulent tricks. Finsbury Fields was London's great gymnasium. Here was the resort of wrestlers, boxers, runners, and football players.¹⁴³ What place more familiar to every level of London society could have been named?

St. Martin's le Grand, a street at the west end of Cheapside, was probably remembered in Dekker's day as the street where shoemakers and cordwainers established their businesses. Actually there are several features that might have made this street memorable to an Elizabethan and especially one conscious of history. The name of the street

¹⁴³Stephenson, p. 216.

itself was taken from a collegiate church and sanctuary. In medieval times St. Martin's great bell tolled the curfew which was the sign for the city gates to be closed. At this church criminals found safety and could not be arrested, a privilege which lasted long after the dissolution of the religious houses.¹⁴⁴ In the early 1500's Sir Thomas More wrote of the sanctuaries of St. Martin's and Westminster; "What a raggle of theves, murtherers, and malicious heyghnous traitours, and that in twoo places specayllye. The tone at the elbowe of the Citie, the tother in the very bowelles."¹⁴⁵ On this street too was Northumberland House once owned by King Henry IV.¹⁴⁶

St. Mary Overy's is another outstanding landmark with an interesting and widespread legend. Before London Bridge was built, a ferry plied the river between what is presently Dowgate Dock and St. Saviour's Dock. The ferry master, Awdrey, became rich but extremely miserly. One day he pretended to be dead hoping his family and servants would mourn and fast thus saving his food. But his plan went awry; indeed, the servants were so happy they took everything possible. Realizing his misfortune, Awdrey ran through the house and met his real death when a servingman, thinking him to be a ghost, hit him across the head with an oar. Mary, his daughter, received the family fortune, and she at once sent for her lover whom her father had denied her. But on his way to meet Mary, he fell from his horse and was killed. The

¹⁴⁴Beasant, p. 39.

¹⁴⁵Stow, II, p. 343.

¹⁴⁶Stow, II, pp. 342-343.

daughter became so distressed she founded a convent of sisters at the south end of the ferry and took refuge in her own foundation. In time, she died there.¹⁴⁷

Quite obviously practicality limits discussion of all landmarks and stories that are referred to in The Shoemaker's Holiday. These three were presented only as samples of Dekker's reasons for selecting certain landmarks. Possibly the places were simply familiar to him, but in almost every instance the landmark was currently familiar to the populace or remembered through popular legend.

Dekker's desire to please has been recognized in characters and in landmarks and yet one step more must be taken to appreciate fully his attempts to give the audience something more than a story. The contemporary scene was rich with materials that could draw people to the playhouse. Even in details such as dress and impressment procedures, he held rigidly to truth. The problem of crossing social barriers was realistically handled. John Spencer afforded an opportunity to hint not only at gossip and scandal, but he had been involved in activities that affected either directly or indirectly members of every class of society. Were Dekker's efforts purely patriotic when at the close of his play he presented the king to bless the "forbidden marriage", or was he realistically proving that although such marriages did occur, it would take a sovereign to dissolve the anger and make lasting peace between families?

Why Dekker turned to the historical and contemporary scene for

¹⁴⁷Beasant, p. 47.

characters, places and events for The Shoemaker's Holiday may never be known. Only guesses can be made. We do know from the prose pamphlets that Dekker was poor and desperately needed success--not only for physical needs but also for personal reassurance of his ability. He wrote The Shoemaker's Holiday knowing people wanted first of all to be entertained, and that because of the historical emphasis of the day, they knew and trusted chronicle material; they also liked gossip, especially gossip that hinted at court scandal. Deloney had made the Eyre legend popular, or at least set the stage for credibility of Dekker's drama. Dekker must have presented Eyre not only for pure entertainment but also as proof that an Englishman is not bound to a lowly position. Banking on his knowledge of Elizabethan tastes and human nature, he presented his play hoping his audience could willingly suspend their disbelief, love his drama for its reality and fantasy, talk about it on the street and in taverns, inspire others to see the play and even return themselves to see a drama whose invitation to delight never quite ended.

In the final analysis, The Shoemaker's Holiday is a series of three stories connected by the love feast at the end of the play. The center of attention is Simon Eyre, and it was almost assuredly Eyre who was the organizing nucleus in the genesis of the plot as a whole. There is every reason to believe that Dekker focused his attention on the biography of Simon Eyre, but this must have appeared epic rather than dramatic to him. From the biographical data could be drawn scenes too promising to omit, but these events did not represent a chain of dramatic action. Much in the shoemaker scenes has very little or no

bearing on the three episodes which are themselves loosely held together and without concentric character and plot interest. Fortunately chronicle plays were often characterized by loose unity--a point definitely in Dekker's favor. Unity, or the lack of it, though, was always one of Dekker's biggest problems in the construction of plays. For instance in Old Fortunatus the unity is destroyed when Fortunatus dies and the action is picked up by Ampedo and Andelocia. The Honest Whore is another example of the same problem that appears in The Shoemaker's Holiday. Three short stories comprise this work: the first is the story of Infelice and Hippolito; the second, Bellafront; and the third, the struggle of a local merchant to make his wife realise his patience. All three are finally joined by a gathering at Bedlam. Even though The Shoemaker's Holiday is the presentation of three stories, Dekker does rather skillfully bind them at the end of the play when the love feast is begun. He concealed this cleverly; not only did he bind the three episodes but he bound all of London society from the king to the lowest worker. His feast was two-fold in its purpose.

The Shoemaker's Holiday exhibits nothing new in the way of theme. The three plot threads present themes that are both old and universal. The Eyre theme is nothing more than the popular success story of the working class man who achieves success and recognition. The theme of the Jane episode exhibited itself in almost every conceivable form of Elizabethan drama--in comedy and in tragedy--in English and in foreign settings. Here was the good and faithful woman and wife who

finally overcame the exacting attitude of Hammon the lover. And finally the Rose-Lacy theme represents the care-free attitude of young love irrespective of time and place and social position. If any attitude controls and aids in unification of the play, it must be a simple joyfulness in being alive and being an Englishman. Dekker's purpose in The Shoemaker's Holiday is reflected throughout; for everywhere he frankly, merrily, and roundly presents and accepts life about him. Neither the lesson of the moralist nor the distortion of the satirizer and scorner finds room in this play.

Dekker's contribution to comedy through The Shoemaker's Holiday, then, cannot be found in construction or external form. Claptrap denouements often shadow the brilliance of masterly openings. Strong scenes are often isolated or they appear in rather incongruous juxtaposition. Frequently Dekker's style is slovenly and strained, but then on the other hand it may indicate a delicate poetical, musical strength. Jonson said, "Dekker has poetry enough for anything," but he failed to mention evenness and consistency. It is at once evident, not only in The Shoemaker's Holiday, that Dekker often fell far below the level of artistic workmanship characteristic of his less brilliant contemporaries. Perhaps the constant threat of the Counter denied him the serenity of perfect mastery. Perhaps the major cause of his weakness is deeper.

It lies, for one thing, in the natural fluidity of Dekker's inspirations. His mobile fancy needed little prompting to shift the lines of the fundamental conception, pictorial to begin with, rather than deeply interpretative of essential relations and underlying causes. Action, characters, the tone or mood of the whole, were accordingly always in danger of Protean changes; and both movement and dialogue, in spite of a fixed goal, their virile rapidity, of not making swiftly towards a fixed goal. This tendency was

unfortunately not counteracted by any marked synthetic power of the more discursive sort.¹⁴⁸

When imagination and insight failed to create and develop a complex unit, Dekker could not call on logic for aid as could Jonson. He did not have the steady and determined will necessary for excellence. It was in Dekker's nature to follow the "humorous tide of the age" rather than to fashion himself and pursue his own path resolutely.

And Dekker's pathway in comedy at least lay in the area of social comedy of humour. He was not a scorner--no "gall dropped from his quill." His comic method was not constructed or influenced by wit but simply by common sense in conjunction with keen discernment and appreciation of the humorous. For him actual phenomena supplied materials and postulates. Motives came from social relations. Sources of gaiety came from characters and manners. He had been trained in fidelity to fact and inherited tradition by the domestic tragedy and the chronicle play. London provided an intimate knowledge of human conduct and experience. And his center of interest lay in conduct--but not in conduct resulting from relation of character to itself but in that conduct resulting from family or communal relationships. Only Old Fortunatus and If It Be Not Good The Devil is in It emphasize the individual aspect of character. The most characteristic qualification for the humorous treatment of social aspects of character is realized in his ability to reproduce them in their living contexts. His sketchy pictures of London appear artlessly but convincingly true because of his exhibition of men and women as individuals in the varied unity of existence.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸Gayley, p. 13.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 14.

For all of this, the romantic drama offered the best form of self-expression. But it is at this point that too many critics call The Shoemaker's Holiday a romantic comedy and carry the matter no farther. The Shoemaker's Holiday does use disguise of a lover, much outdoor action, easy reconciliations, an idealized heroine, and a happy ending; but this must not be the end of the critical appraisal. Dekker was often extremely realistic. Not only was he realistic in his topographical choices, people, situations, language and events but also in his approach to the state and in his own ability in dramatic composition. For all of his limitations, Dekker was a "genuine master of humor; he had a sure grasp of its method and its spirit."¹⁵⁰ Dekker's play is among the first exhibitions of a frame of mind and a view of life that mixes humorous with humane "in a cheerful, pleasant, comforting blend. But if he made full allowances for sentiment, he was no sentimentalist; he knew how to handle irony and a sly implicit meaning; while most often negligent in his work, he could write with care, even with artistic finish."¹⁵¹

It is extremely difficult to judge Dekker fairly. An admirer may run into raptures over Dekker as quickly as the sober critic may voice his weaknesses. Even on slight consideration, the faults of his work are evident; at the same time his richness of imagination shines through. His plays continue to contain many passages of exquisite beauty, but in no single one has he been consistently strong. Even though Dekker appeared not to take any pains, he did possess a

¹⁵⁰Louis Cazamian, The Development of English Humor (Durham, North Carolina, 1952), p. 171.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

vein of infinite tenderness and delightful humor. His work may be torn apart and belittled by criticism, but without his wayward genius, his frank, honest, abundant mirth, his glimpses of London life and people, a gaping hole would exist in Elizabethan drama.

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