The structure and theme of Thomas Middleton's "A Fair Quarrel".

David M. Holmes

University of Windsor

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd

Recommended Citation

https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/6352
THE STRUCTURE AND THEME OF
THOMAS MIDDLETON'S
A FAIR QUARREL

BY
DAVID M. HOLMES, B.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the
Department of English in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario
1964
ABSTRACT

The problems with which this thesis is concerned are two. It begins by attempting to discover in what way, and to what extent, William Rowley was a collaborator in A Fair Quarrel, and goes on to inquire into the nature of Middleton's artistic point of view insofar as it is revealed in the theme.

Chapter I attempts to deal with the first problem by examining the structure of the play with regard to diction, imagery, and versification, the integration of the underplot with the main plot, and the mode of action of the double plot, and by considering the methods and practical ends of collaboration, biographical information concerning the two authors, Middleton's ability as a dramatist and the themes and dramatic materials of his other plays, and scholarly works devoted to attributional problems in the Middleton-Rowley collaborations.

Chapter II is concerned with the question of theme and artistic point of view. It consists of a critical analysis which attempts to reduce the former and relate it to the latter, together with an evaluation of the rationales which underlie the opinions of other writers on the subject.

These inquiries reveal in turn the unlikelihood of Rowley's having had any hand at all in the conception of the plots of A Fair Quarrel, and that his contribution must have been very slight, that the play was intentionally constructed with a latent or symbolic
parallel between the two plots in order that there might exist a rapport among the characters and an effect of montage, that Middleton was concerned to applaud worthy motives in his characters and to denounce evil ones, and that certain attributional scholarship, and critical analysis of the play which is based thereon, is untrustworthy.

From these results, the thesis concludes that Middleton's artistic gifts and artistic point of view, respectively, have been seriously under-rated and greatly misunderstood, and points to the need for reappraisal of the other plays attributed to Middleton and Rowley in order that these misconceptions may be set right.
PREFACE

In this thesis, the quotations from the play are taken directly from a microcard reproduction of the edition of 1617. The title-page of this edition is inscribed as follows:

A Faire Quarr

As it was Acted before the Kin and divers times publikely by th Prince his Hignes Servants.

Written
By Thomas Miletton and William Rowley Gentl.

Printed at London for J.T. and the Christ Church C Lunj.

As the title-page is defective, so printing corruptions sometimes appear in the text, and it was occasionally necessary to refer to the edition of 1622, which is generally better printed, to obtain a reading for an illegible passage in the example of the earlier edition. The quotations in this thesis preserve the orthography and punctuation of the 1617 edition with two exceptions:

1) The letter s has been silently regularized, as have the letters v, u, i, and j, where necessary.

2) Where terminal punctuation in the original is incorrect (e.g. a comma or colon entered where a period or question mark is called for), or has been omitted, I have silently inserted the punctuation that seemed appropriate to the sense and syntax.
For their guidance in research methods and scholarly techniques, I am indebted to Professor G. B. Harrison, Professor John F. Sullivan, and Professor Eugene D. LeMire. For a critical reading of the thesis, I am grateful to Professor Eric Channen.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE STRUCTURE OF A FAIR QUARREL</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE THEME OF A FAIR QUARREL</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A. DRAMATIS PERSONAE</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B. Excerpt from W. D. Dunkel's &quot;Did Not Rowley Merely Revise Middleton?&quot;</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C. Excerpt from A Fair Quarrel, Act III, Scene 2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX D. Excerpt from Rhodes Dunlap's &quot;James I, Bacon, Middleton, and the Making of The Peacemaker&quot;</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX E. Excerpt from Chapter III of Arthur Sherbo's English Sentimental Drama</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA AUCTORIS</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

It seems strange that so many of the scholars and critics of English Renaissance drama who have ventured to express opinions about the extent and manner of William Rowley's participation in the Middleton-Rowley collaborations, and upon the nature of Thomas Middleton's artistic point of view, if any, have neglected to give due consideration to A Fair Quarrel in the process of forming them.

The product of the Middleton-Rowley collaboration which has received the most critical and scholarly attention is The Changeling, a tragedy which most writers agree is Middleton's masterpiece, in spite of a difficulty seen by many in reconciling the presence in it of a "farcical" and "vulgar" underplot. What was said by Tatlock and Martin some twenty-five years ago: "A superbly conceived main-plot is disfigured by a trashy comic sub-plot," had been said before, and has been said often since. After The Changeling, Women Beware Women and A Game at Chess, by Middleton alone, rank next in popularity with critics, the first presumably because of its profound exploration of

---


the realm of human weakness and evil, its Senecan overtones, and ingen­
ious stagecraft, and the second because of its sensational topical
significance.

Apparently A Fair Quarrel possesses none of the attractive fea-
tures of these plays. It is a tragi-comedy rather than a tragedy, it
does not preoccupy itself with evil, there are no nefarious plots or
murders, and whatever topical significance may be found in the play is
not of the sensational order. Nevertheless, A Fair Quarrel, like The
Changeling, is a play with two plots which, compared, may appear to
have not the slightest connection with each other. The main
plot,
usually attributed to Middleton, is concerned with the affairs of gen-
try, who display signs of having mature and refined susceptibilities,
more or less, while the underplot, usually ascribed to Rowley's ins-
piration and execution,\(^3\) follows the adventures of two lovers in distress
owing to a natural consequence of their experiment in premarital sexual
relations and a circumstance which prevents their immediate marriage,
all in an environment well salted with an assortment of boisterous,
rascally zanies and witlings, together with an oafish villain. Evident-
ly then, much of what has been said about Middleton and Rowley with

\(^3\) In "Did Not Rowley Merely Revise Middleton?" PMLA, XLVIII (Sep-
tember, 1933) on pp. 804-5, W. D. Dunkel quotes from C. W. Stork, "Wil-
liam Rowley: his All's Lost by Lust and A Shoemaker, A Gentleman," Uni-
versity of Pennsylvania Publications, XIII (1910), where reference is
made to P. G. Wiggin, "An Enquiry into the Authorship of the Middleton-
Rowley Plays," Radcliffe College Monographs, IX (1897), as follows: "My
analysis of the play agrees scene for scene with that of Miss Wiggin,
who gives Middleton the main plot, excepting I, i, and III, ii, and
Rowley the minor plot. Rowley's rapidity of dramatic movement made him
the more suitable of the two to write the opening scene , . . . The
secondary plot exhibits a child-like simplicity of motivation united
with great violence of passion."
reference to The Changeling might have been said equally well, given the same critical presuppositions, with respect to A Fair Quarrel.

It seems to me, however, that there is evidence in A Fair Quarrel to prove not only that the presuppositions which underlie the conventional disparagement of the underplots of the Middleton-Rowley plays as unsightly appendages are untrustworthy, but that Rowley's work, contrary to another prevalent opinion,4 is distinguishable from Middleton's, that the manner of Rowley's participation in the plays has been generally misunderstood, and that Middleton, far from being utterly detached from his subject matter, as has often been maintained by casual critic and scholar alike, is deeply concerned to denounce immorality. I believe, in other words, that A Fair Quarrel contains matter with which some of "the clichés enshrined in the textbooks and the introductions to standard anthologies"5 may be tested. It is with an examination of some of this evidence and its implications that this thesis will be concerned.

4 In The Jacobean Drama, Una Ellis-Fermor sums up the critical tradition as follows: "Because he (Middleton) was, in his early work at least, without opinions and throughout his career without prejudice, because of the adaptation of his mind to his material, reflecting and reproducing it, it becomes increasingly difficult to disentangle his work from that of a collaborator or even a reviser," and supports it with the following footnote: "We have only to recall the varying opinions that have been held (from the time of Dyce's edition downwards) on the question of his share in The Roaring Girl and The Honest Whore . . . The Changeling, Anything for a Quiet Life and The Spanish Gipsy . . . to realize that he is no more easily separable from Dekker than from Rowley, from Rowley than from Webster, from Webster than from Ford." See p. 129 of the edition referred to above, p. 1, n. 1.

CHAPTER I

THE STRUCTURE OF A FAIR QUARREL

The mode of action of a double plot is the sort of thing critics are liable to neglect; it does not depend on being noticed for its operation, so is neither an easy nor an obviously useful thing to notice.

- Empson.

The double plot appears early in the history of English drama. In the late fifteenth century, for example, Henry Medwall, writing his interlude Fulgens and Lucre, "lightens and diversifies the set debates of his original by introducing two comic serving men. . . . these clowns seek to win (the love of the heroine's maid) by mock contests in song, wrestling, and tilting." With a reminder that the main idea of the drama was serious, one of the actors remarks:

Divers toyes mingled in the same there was,
To stir folk to mirth and game. (II. 22-3)

Implicit here is recognition of the diverse tastes of members of an audience, and determination to satisfy everyone. Armado, Dull, and Costard, Launcelot Gobbo, Bottom and company, Juliet's nurse, Falstaff and company, Dogberry and Verges, Elbow, Froth, and Abhorson, Belch and Aguecheek, and Trinculo and Stephano all testify a century later to the development of this practical contrivance into a convention.

---


7 Thomas M. Parrott and Robert H. Ball, A Short View of Elizabethan Drama (New York, 1943), p. 23.
Most of the writers who have given opinions about the relative extent of participation of Middleton and Rowley in *A Fair Quarrel*, and in their other joint productions for that matter, have been strongly, where not exclusively, under the influence of this convention. It has been a bias which has given rise to comments like the following generalization:

Miss Wiggin assigns to Rowley the scenes of the underplot (of *A Fair Quarrel*) . . .; to Middleton she assigns . . . the main plot. Such a division is about what one would expect from a collaboration of an experienced dramatist like Middleton and a comedian like William Rowley.  

and to impercipient praising of the main plots and disparagement of the underplots of other Middleton-Rowley collaborations (see p. iv, nn. 1 and 2).

There are features of *A Fair Quarrel*, however, which present formidable obstacles to the supposition that the underplot is merely an appendage, loosely attached to the main plot to pander to the taste of the baser elements of the audience. The most important of these, and a remarkable feature of the play, is the extraordinary simplicity of the action of the main plot. When Captaine Agar attempts to curb a haughty and bellicose colonel's abuse of his uncle, he is called "a son of a whore." The young man immediately responds with:

Ha! Whore! plagues and furies Ile thrust that backe,  
Or pluck thy heart out after, sonne of a whore?  

---


9 See Appendix A.  

but (and this is the hinge of the plot), confident of the validity of the code that views such an encounter as a trial of truth before God, he hesitates to fight until he can obtain assurance from his mother that there is no substance in the colonel's taunt:

The Sonne of a Whore?
There is not such another murdring piece
In all the stock of calumny: it kills
At one report two reputations,
A mothers and a Sonnes: if it were possible
That soules could fight after the bodies fell,
This were a quarrel for 'em; he should be one indeed
That never heard of heavens joyes or hels torments
To fight this out: I am too full of conscience,
Knowledge and patience, to give justice too't,
So carefull of my Eternity, which consists
Of upright actions: that unlesse I knew
It were a truth I stood for, any Coward
Might make my breast his footpace, and who lives
That can assure the truth of his conception,
More than a mothers carriage makes it hopefull?
And is't not miserable valour then,
That man should hazard all upon things doubtfull?
Oh ther's the cruelty of my foes advantage.
Could but my soule resolve my cause just,
Earth's mountaine, nor seas surge should hide him from mee.
Be'ne to hells threshold would I follow him,
And see the slanderer in before I left him.
But as it is it feares me, and I never
Appeard too conscientially just till now:
My good opinion of her life and Vertues,
Bids me goe on: and faine would I be rul'd by't.
But when my judgement tells me shees but woman,
Whose fraile to let in death to all mankinde,
My valour shrinke at that, certaine shees good.
There onely wants my assurance in't,
And al things the(n) were perfect; how I thirst for't.
Heere comes the onely shee that could resolve,
But 'tis too vild a question to demand indeed.11

Lady Agar at first wrathfully denies the slur upon her honour, but when she comes to realize that her son intends to fight a duel over the matter, she confesses:

I was betraide to a most sinfull howre
By a corrupted soule I put in trust once,12

11 Quarrel, pp. C3v-C4r.
12 Ibid., p. D2v.
i.e., to a sin she did not commit, in order that he not hazard his life. When the two antagonists confront each other at the place appointed for the duel, young Agar makes overtures of peace which are met by the colonel with contemptuous upbraidings. Finally the captain's ignominy is relieved when the colonel calls him coward as a parting taunt. Agar feels that now he has a morally justifiable reason to fight:

Oh, heaven has pittied my excessive patience,
And sent me a cause:
A coward I was never: -- Come you backe sir?13

In the ensuing duel, the colonel is wounded and retires. The dénouement is an account of the action consequent upon a remarkable change of heart which comes over the colonel when he thinks he is dying from his wound. He draws up his will,

I also require at the hands of my most beloved Sister, who I make full Executrix, the disposal of my body in buriall at S. Martins i'the field: and to cause to be distributed to the poore of the same parish, forty Marke, and to the Hospital of maymed Souldiers a hundred; lastly I give and bequeath to my kindes, deare, and vertuous sister, the full possession of my present estate in riches, whether it be in lands, leases, Money, Goods, Plate, Jewels, or what kind soever, upon this condition following, that shee forthwith, tender both her selfe and all these infeoffments to that noble Captaine my late Enemy Captaine Ager.14,

and persuades his sister to carry it out. He is then told by his surgeon that the wound will not be fatal, and the play concludes with a full reconciliation between the two former enemies:

Capt. You have a goodnesse
Has put me past my answers, you may speake,
what you please now; I must be silent ever.

13 Quarrel, p. E4v.
14 Ibid., p. K2r.
Colo. This day has shown me joyes unvaleu'd treasure,
    I would not change this brotherhood with a monarch,
    Into which blest alliance sacred heaven
    Ha's plac't my kinsman, and given him his ends.
    Faire be that Quarrel makes such happy friends.15

The simplicity of the action of this plot is extraordinary not
only in general terms, but in terms of Middleton's previous single-
headed productions. A Fair Quarrel was printed in 1617.16 By that
time Middleton had spent fifteen years as a professional playwright,17
and had constructed the intricate plots of A Trick to Catch the Old
One (1608),18 A Chaste Maid in Cheapside (1611)19, and More Dissem-
bler Beside Women (1615).20

It would appear that A Fair Quarrel was something less than an
unqualified success, apparently because of unsympathetic reception of
the main plot. The "new Additions of M. Chaughs and Trimtrams Roaring,
and the Bauds Song" advertised in the 1622 edition21 indicates that
what had pleased was the underplot. The latter consists of several
elements which by 1617 were already clichés of low comedy. Master
stands between his daughter Jane and Fitzallen, whom he sus-
pects of being a fortune-hunter. He plots with two sergeants to arrest

15 Quarrel, p. K2r.

16 Ibid., title-page. See also Una Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean
Drama, pp. 300-1.

17 A Short View, p. 159.

18 Jacobean Drama, p. 300.

19 A Short View, p. 159.

20 Ibid.

21 Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, A Fair Quarrel (London,
1622), title-page. This edition will be referred to in footnotes
henceforth as Quarrel, 1622.
the young man for some imaginary debts -

Let Beggars beware to love Richmens Daughters
I le teach 'um the new morrice, I learnt it
My selfe of another carefull Father. 22 -

and so clears the stage, literally as well as figuratively, for the
introduction of his own candidate for Jane's hand, a wealthy, leche-
rous, empty-headed Cornishman, one Chaugh. However Jane, unbeknown to

Rusell, is well on the way to motherhood. Judging her distress to be
the ill effects of a humour, he calls in a physician to discover her
"griefe" and "practise remedy." 23 Eventually Jane is delivered of her
child without her secret being discovered, but the depraved physician
tries to compel her submission to his lewd proposals by threatening to
divulge it. His efforts prove fruitless -

Phis. Will you be obstinate?
Jane. Torment me not,
Thou lingering Executioner to death . . . 24 -

and, on being apprised of the facts, Chaugh refuses to go through
with the marriage. Then Fitzallen, who by this time has cleared him-
sell of the trumped-up toils, triumphs over Russell, who is unaware
that Fitzallen is the child's father, by forcing him to pay over an
extravagant dowry for agreeing to take Chaugh's place at the wedding.
These goings-on are punctuated by rowdy interludes in which Chaugh
and his imbecile servant Trimtram engage in "roaring" 25 while con-

22 Quarrel, p. Clv.
23 Ibid., p. Elr.
24 Ibid., p. H4r.
25 "Roaring" apparently consisted of boisterous conversation con-
ducted in an inane jargon with libidinous overtones. See below, pp. 18,
19, and 20.
sorting with three other simpletons, Usher, Roarer, and Vapor. The underplot then is distinctly conventional in terms of Jacobean drama.

The action of the main plot is emphatically unsensational. It is peopled with characters which, however human or realistic they seem, by contrast with Beatrice and de Flores in The Changeling or Livia and Bianca in Women Beware Women must appear prosaic for the purposes of drama. Why should Middleton, an experienced and successful dramatist, have abandoned all the tried and proven ingredients to create such a plot, and why should he then have joined it to a conventional underplot? Middleton's other work, the penetrating character studies and the carefully worked out, intricate plots referred to above, proves that he could not have been so naive as to have expected that the tame matter of the main plot would carry the play alone, or even that it would be its chief attraction. I submit, therefore, that the underplot was not attached to the main plot of this play as an after-thought or merely to provide comic relief, a point which would not be as readily demonstrable with respect to The Changeling, where the main plot might well have been expected to stand alone.

I suggest that the answers to these questions may lie in another, less obvious, less practical, and more artistic mode of action for the double plot than the one just considered. It is a mode of action too

26 No source for the play has been identified. See Gerald Eades Bentley, The Jacobean and Caroline Stage, IV (Oxford, 1941), 869.

which has a distinct precedent much earlier in the history of English drama.

Long before Medwall's time, the anonymous author of Secunda Pasterorum had used a double plot in a special way. The two plots appear in tandem arrangement, which, as can be demonstrated, is as appropriate as a locomotive pulling a caboose. The locomotive plot is the farce involving Mak, Gillot, and the swaddled sheep; the caboose is a more or less conventional Nativity scene in which the three shepherds from the first plot pay their respects to another infant. There is no direct authorial comment whatever. That the two plots are related is realized intuitively, if at all, and the realization comes with a certain shock, as does the "second taste" of an old wine. The beholder is suddenly aware of the coldness, of the curious sterility, of the satire which results from the intentional juxtaposition of two such scenes. The unmitigated blasphemy which seems to be the third meaning of the play, arising from the two scenes taken together, may have some connection with attitudes stemming from the Great Schism. In any case, it can be seen from this play how two ostensibly unrelated plots may be brought together to produce through their juxtaposition, i.e. through montage, a deeper meaning for the play considered as a whole.

I suggest that the two plots of A Fair Quarrel were intentionally selected by Middleton to produce just such a montage that he intended that their conjunction should educe a third idea to be intuited by those members of the audience who could make the necessary inductive leap. Some writers have complained that the underplot of A Fair Quarrel is not well connected with the principal action, e.g. "With the main

---

X According to Larousse: putting together, assembling, mounting (of a picture).
plot...there is very loosely connected another of a more conventional type."

28 Perhaps this opinion is put forward to strengthen the attribution of the underplot to Rowley.29 Whatever the reason for it may be, I have read the play over several times with this criticism in mind, and am satisfied that there is ample evidence in Act I alone that Middleton took sufficient pains to integrate the action of the two plots to achieve his purpose. For whatever the comparison may be worth, it can be demonstrated that there is at least as much attempt at connecting the main plot and underplot of A Fair Quarrel as there is in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. In any case, such a criticism, even if it were more than a hasty generalization, does not weaken the argument for intended montage in the play. There was no attempt by the author of Secunda Pastorum to integrate the two actions of his play, and yet the two actions manage to comment upon each other rather effectively.

Several scholars have seen more than a hack playwright in Middleton:

A wide and keen observer, he covered a range of mood and material only equalled by Shakespeare among his contemporaries and, like him again, could so identify himself with any given mood or matter as to make it his own and proper to him.30

...his discernment of the minds of women; in this no dramatist of the period except Shakespeare is his equal at once for variety and for penetration.31

28 Boas, Stuart Drama, p. 239.
29 Ibid., p. 240.
30 Ellis-Fermor, Jacobean Drama, p. 128.
31 Ibid., p. 149. It should be noted that this opinion has the special merit of having been offered by a member of the female sex.
... he also relies upon action and characterisation in a way which no one else did (except Shakespeare). His language too gains its effects by different methods from those of the majority of the Elizabethans; he does not rely upon explicit statement or direct speech but upon implication; nor upon a gorgeous and elaborate vocabulary, but upon a pregnant simplicity which is perhaps more difficult to achieve, and is certainly found more seldom.32,

... The Changeling is one of the profoundest tragedies outside of the Shakespearian canon .... It is not too much to say, viewing these plays, that, dark as Middleton's atmosphere is, he comes as near to Shakespeare in tragic conception as do any of his contemporaries or followers.33

Nevertheless, they have been unable to penetrate the crux criticorum of the "unsightly" underplots of the plays in which Rowley is supposed to have had a hand. A few have been perceptive enough to have seen in Middleton suggestions of what would be considered, even in our times, a truly avant garde artist:

It is in this pitiless abstemiousness that Middleton stands alone in Jacobean tragedy, suggesting again and again to the reader of a later age that here was in germ the Ibsen of the seventeenth century.34,

... there is ... an important symbolic element in his dramatic art. A failure to recognize this has led some critics to attribute to Middleton's supposed illogic and his love of the spectacular, elements which are perfectly meaningful as part of a ritual technique designed to emphasize an underlying theme. This element of ritual is reflected in the conscious patterning of the action which borrows much from the technique of masque and anti-masque.35

Even these, however, apparently have not felt confident enough of their ground to undertake to demonstrate the shortsightedness of a large body

32 M. C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy (London, 1952), p. 239.
34 Ellis-Fermor, Jacobean Drama, p. 152.
of critical literature which still enjoys an unwarranted influence.

If the names of two authors appear on the title-page of a play, as is the case with the two earliest editions of *A Fair Quarrel*, it is not unreasonable to expect that each author made contributions to it of his own ideas. It is an expectation which is justified not only by modern experience of collaboration, but by what is known about those collaborations among Middleton's contemporaries in which the individual characteristics of the hands appear more evident, as, for example, they do in the tragi-comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher, and of Fletcher and Massinger. At least one writer, however, has hit upon evidence that Rowley was not a collaborator in this sense at all, at least in the case of *A Fair Quarrel*. It is the kind of evidence that one would expect that the discoverer would wish to use to attack and quash such trite, meretricious statements as the following:

... Middleton . . . collaborated shamelessly, . . .
is hardly separated from Rowley . . .

Of all the Elizabethan dramatists Middleton seems the . . . readiest, except Rowley, to accept collaboration.

and the critical clichés which underly them. In a study that considers several of the Middleton-Rowley plays, W. D. Dunkel demonstrates rather conclusively that the underplot of *A Fair Quarrel* is the same as the principal action of *The Famelie of Love*, a comedy which Middleton


37 See Appendix B.

wrote alone and had published nine years earlier.\textsuperscript{39} Dunkel's first conclusion is the one that would immediately suggest itself:

If these similarities are acknowledged, why should the comic scenes be assigned to Rowley, as Miss Wiggin proposed, rather than to Middleton?\textsuperscript{40}, but his final one:

Even if Miss Wiggin's division of the play between Middleton and Rowley is accepted, does it not follow that her recognition of Rowley's verse style in these comic scenes indicates merely the work of a reviser?\textsuperscript{41}, does not have the same clear logic to recommend it.

The evidence Dunkel presents makes it distinctly possible, of course, that Rowley had no hand at all in the writing of the play. With such a conclusion one could set about doing a good deal of quashing of specious criticism. It is surprising that after having established his preliminary case and this first point so well, he did not, when he contemplated a compromise with Miss Wiggin's opinions, even consider what seems to me to be the most obvious alternative to which his evidence could have led him, \textit{viz.} that Rowley, if he was a collaborator in any sense at all, was nothing more than an assistant to whom Middleton assigned certain scenes and prescribed exactly what he wanted done with them, leaving it to Rowley to fill in the dialogue.

The title of Dunkel's study implies that he was at least tentatively satisfied with the idea that Rowley revised Middleton's plays. Happily, however, he framed it as a question, and I take the opportunity

\textsuperscript{39} Ellis-Fermor, Jacobean Drama, p. 301.

\textsuperscript{40} W. D. Dunkel, "Did Not Rowley Merely Revise Middleton?" PMLA, XLVIII (September, 1933), p. 800.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
now of proferring a negative reply.

The fact that only Rowley's signature appears at the end of the dedicatory epistle could be construed to indicate that Rowley made some kind of mutually advantageous arrangement with Middleton to have the play published under both of their names, writing the epistle and setting his name to it to lend credibility to the deception that he helped to write the play. Such a conjectural construction must remain quite valueless, of course, until it is subjected to careful investigation. The same fact might equally well be taken to indicate that it was Rowley who wrote the play alone, if the difficulty of establishing that he had the necessary ability were not so formidable.42

It seems to me much more likely that Rowley really did write some of the scenes of the play, but under Middleton's direction, not as a reviser. When one undertakes to revise a play, it is presumably for the purpose of improving it. Could or would a man of Rowley's limited ability set out to rework A Fair Quarrel with a view to improving it? Of his ability it has been said by one authority, "...we have no reason for supposing William Rowley to have been capable of writing the scenes which deal with the main action of the play."43 Was Rowley then the man to set himself up as "play-doctor"? Is it not more probable that Middleton gave Rowley a manuscript of The Famelie of Love, told him to familiarize himself with it, and then specified where, interspersed among the scenes of the main action of A Fair Quarrel, he wished certain action from The Famelie of Love to

42 See above, p. 5, n. 8.

be reproduced? If this was indeed the working situation, then the only part of the play that can really be attributed to Rowley is the diction of the dialogue in certain scenes. The gist of the dialogue throughout the play must all be credited to Middleton.

While it is true that Middleton, with his long experience as a writer of comedies, might easily have written both the dialogue of the main plot and the speeches of the vulgarians in the play, I consider it quite probable that by this stage of his career he looked upon himself more and more as a tragedian, and was quite prepared to allow an actor-dramatist, such as Rowley, with a flair for dramatic buffoonery, to write in the dialogue for his fantasies. Such a speech as the following, with its extended metaphors, occasional rhyme, and hints of the writer's having had a classical education, I take to be the work of Middleton, who is known to have studied at Oxford:45

Russ. How now Gallants?
Believe me then, I must give a limb no longer,
Can words beget swords and bring um forth, ha?
Come they are abortive propagations;
Hide 'um for shame, I had thought Souldiers
Had bin musicall; would not strike out of time,
But to the consort of Drum, Trumps and Fife.
Tis madman-like to daunce without musique,
And most unpleasing showes to the beholders,
A Lydian ditty to a Dorick note

---

44 In Act I, Master addresses this speech to the colonel and Captain Agar who have been engaging in an ever more heated dispute concerning the nature of, and methods of judging, manhood or human worth.

45 It is a well established tradition that Rowley was an actor first and a dramatist second. There is no evidence that he had more than a basic education, and modern scholars still hold him in low regard, e.g. in Jacobean Drama, p. 135, Ribner disparages the madhouse scenes in the subplot of The Changeling as follows: "... crude, farcical, generally in bad taste, and full of extraneous comic horseplay. They represent the kind of comic hackwork for which William Rowley is known."
Friends embrace with steale hands? fie it meets to hard,
I must have those encounters heere debard. 46

The diction and the sentiments expressed in this excerpt also point to
Middleton's more refined sensibilities. It is not hard to see the
contrast in all these particulars in such dialogue as the following: 47

Sec. . . . I take it for your use and understanding both
it were fitter for you to tast the moderns assault,
only the Londonian Roare.
Chau. Ifaith sir, that's for my purpose, for I shall use
all my roaring heere in London: in Cornewall wee are
all for wrestling, and I doe not meane to travell
over sea to roare there.
Sec. Observe then sir, but it were necessary you took forth
your tables, to note the most difficult poynpts for the
better assistance of your memory.
Chau. Nay sir, my man and I keep two Tables.
Trim. I sir, and as many trenchers, cattes meat and dogges
meate enough.
Sec. Note sir, - - Dost though confront my Cyclops?
Ush. With a Briarean Brousted.
Chau. Cyclops.
Trim. Briarean.
Sec. I know thee and thy lineall pedegree.
Usher It is Collateral: as Brutus and Posthumus.
Trim. Brutus.
Chau. Posthumus.
Sec. False as the face of Heccate; thy sister is a - -
Ush. What is my Sister Centaure?
Seco. I say thy sister is a Bronstrops.
Ush. A Bronstrops!
Chau. Tutor, Tutor, ere you goe any further, tell me the
English of that, what is a Bronsterops pray?
Se. A Bronsterops is in English a Hippocrene.
Chau. A Hippocrene, note it Trim, I love to understand the
English as I goe.
Trim. Whats the English of Hippicrene?
Chau. Why Bronsterops.
Ush. Thou dost obstruct my flesh and blood.
Sec. Agen, I denounce, thy sister is a fructifer.


47 Approximately the first half of Act IV portays Chaugh and Trim-
tram pursuing their studies in the art of Roaring under the tutelage of
the member of the cast who earlier in the play, during the duel episode,
is designated "Colonell's Second." Here with the assistance of his crony
Usher, he is engaged in gulling the two ingenuous Cornish worthies.
Chau. What's that Tutor?
Sec. This is in English a Fucus or a Minotaure.
Chau. A Minotaure.
Chau. A Fucus.
Ush. I say thy mother is a Callieut, a Panagren, a Duplar
and a Sindicus.
Sec. Dislocate thy Bladud.
Ush. Bladud shall conjure, if his Daemons once appeare.48

It is my opinion that the only dialogue written by Rowley is that
which occurs in the roaring scenes, and in one scene that appertains
thereto. In those scenes, in other words, where Chaugh and Trimtram
are separated from the principal actors of the main plot and under-
plot, and are engaged in nonsensical exercises which have no bearing
upon the action of either, nor upon their interaction. The first of
these occurs at the close of Act II where in some thirty-three lines,
the stage being left to Chaugh and Trimtram, the subject of roaring
is abruptly introduced for the first time:

Trim. What will you goe to schoole to-day? You are entred
you know: and your quarterige runs on.
Chaw. What? to the roaring schoole? pox on't, tis such a
damnable noise, I shall never atteaine it neither: I
do wonder they have never a Wristling Schoole, that
were worth twentie of your Fencing or Dancing Schooles.
Trim. Wel, you must learne to roare here in London, you'le
never procede in the reputation of Gallantrie else.
Chaw. How long ha's Roaring been an exercise, thinkest thou
Trimtram?
Trim. Ever since Guns came up, the first was your roaring
Meg.
Ch. Meg? Then twas a woman was the first roarer.
Trim. I, a site of her tuch-hole, 'that cost many a proper
mans life since that time: and then the Lyons they
learn't it from the Guns, living so neare 'um, then
it was heard to the Banokeside, and the Beares they
beganne to roare: then the boyes got it, and so ever
since there have beene a company of roaring boyes.
Chaw. And how long will it last, thinkest thou?

48 Quarrel, pp. G2r - G2v. This dialogue is followed by the stage
direction: "Enter 2. Roarer with Wine, and Vapor with Tobacco." The
colonel's second and his cronies hope to have a wonderful time at the
expense of the wealthy Chaugh.
Trim. As long as the Water runs under London Bridge, or Watermen at Westminster stayres.49

The roaring scenes themselves have already been referred to. They, like the scene quoted immediately above, which serves to prepare for them, are complete units of action and the only parts of the play which have no connection whatever with either the main plot or under-plot. They are continuous in themselves, and no character from the rest of the play, with the single exception of the colonel's second, enters into them or is even mentioned.

These parts of the play, the short scene which concludes Act II and the first half of Act IV, might well be said to be "loosely connected." In fact they are not connected with the balance of the play at all, except in having one minor character in common. Also the action which they portray might well be described as "trashy comic." But, and this is the point which a cursory reading may overlook, the roaring scenes do not comprise the underplot of the play. They do not incorporate a plot at all, but are merely episodes peopled with clowns who go in for horse-play dialogue.

With apologies to Miss Wiggin, and all due deference to the science of metrical tests, I think it inconceivable that Rowley should have had any hand at all in the scenes where the main plot and underplot are developed and integrated. The relatively cultivated diction and syntax, which only the better educated Middleton could have written, are just as much in evidence in the speeches of Fitzallen and Jane, and the Physician and his sister Anne as they are in those of Captaine Agar, Lady Agar,

49 Quarrel, p. E2v.
the colonel, and the colonel's sister. Furthermore, the philosophical sentiments occasionally expressed by the principals of both plots, more about which will be said in the following chapter, and the rare perception and understanding of human nature evident in the dialogue of both, and notably in that of Chaug and Trimtram outside of the roaring scenes, represent a common thread, implying the particular cast of thought of one mind, and hence the work of one hand.

In this regard, a significant contrast can be seen between the uses of obscenities in the two plots on the one hand, and in the roaring scenes on the other. Obscenities do appear in the dialogue of the main characters, but it is not there for its own sake, as in the roaring scenes where gratuitous titillation is the end, but rather to underline the bravado and earthiness of the colonel in the early stages of the play, the worldliness and unscrupulousness of Master Rpsse't-ul, and the viciousness of the physician.

For all that the spirit of chivalry may be dead and buried in our century, that of pedantry is very much alive in certain irresponsible critics. Such a comment as Stork's - "Rowley's rapidity of dramatic movement made him the more suitable of the two to write the opening scene,"50 - endorsing Wiggin's findings, reveals not only a surprising lack of familiarity with the material about which he is making critical generalizations (cf. Dunkel, "... the play [opens] with a long soliloquy, a Middletonian habit"51), but, when compared

50 See above, p. 2, n. 3.

52 See Appendix B.
with the diametrically opposite judgements of other writers, e.g.

... the actions and the dialogue, including the comments by the 'friends' of the duellists, flow with the rapid and spontaneous movement in which Middleton shows his finest art.\(^{53}\),

the general unreliability of metrical tests.

Another kind of observation of a similar nature - "... that the main plot is from Middleton's hand is ... proved ... by its origin in the sexual mystifications which continually attracted him"\(^{54}\) - is that which ignores or is blind to a fact that would be obvious to anyone with more than a superficial acquaintance with the work being referred to, the fact being, in this case, that the underplot of the play contains just as clear an indication of Middleton's predilection for "sexual mystifications" as does the main plot. The unwary student is the natural victim of such specious pronouncements because they travel in the guise of authority.

As a further consideration of the division of authorship suggested by Miss Wiggin, the question should be asked what practical end, if any, could have been served by the method of work which such a division implies. She ascribes to both authors the opening and closing scenes of the play. It is hard to imagine how two writers could both have had a hand in a given scene other than by sitting down together and attacking their work in mutual consultation. Such an awkward arrangement, aside from being very difficult to visualize in the

\(^{53}\) Boas, *Stuart Drama*, p. 239.

\(^{54}\) *Ibid.*, p. 237. The sentence from which this excerpt is taken implies that for the reason given, and with an acceptance of the evidence of metrical tests, Rowley wrote the entire underplot.
first place (Did each hand dart forward to write a line as the inspiration took it? Did the authors consult over the content and phrasing of each speech? A variety of absurdities suggest themselves), could hardly have been conducive to speed of production. The alternative situation, where one man might write the entire scene and the other review his work, striking out speeches here and there and rewriting them, is equally awkward, equally time consuming, equally unthinkable.

In any case, it is difficult to imagine a dramatist of Middleton's accomplishment and experience condescending to consult with a man like Rowley about scene construction. At this stage in his career, the latter, whose attainments were never more than modest, was, before all other things, an actor. The first of his four single-handed productions, all of which are much inferior to Middleton's work in every way, came out in 1632, five years after Middleton's death. Is it likely that a writer of whom it has been said, "... the journalistic rapidity with which he worked ... ensures a certain frankness and spontaneity of workmanship ..." and "(Middleton's) easy manipulation of his plots, with its faultless but unconscious skill, is ... like a delicate feat of horsemanship," would find it necessary or profitable or even convenient to obtain someone's help in the draughting of a scene?

Miss Wiggin also assigns another part of the main plot to Rowley, the second scene of Act III. This is the scene in which the Dutch nurse, whose services have been obtained by the physician to care for Jane's infant, appears. It is the scene to which Dunkel refers when he writes, "... the use of a foreign language for comic value ... in

55 Ellis-Fermor, Jacobean Drama, pp. 130, 133.
a play bearing his name... favors Middleton's authorship of the scenes in which the device is used." The authority of Ellis-Fermor supports this idea: "Middleton, though he did not, like Dekker, run mad at the prospect of a foreign tongue, had a sharp sense of the comic possibilities of specialized branches of English..."57

Wiggin's "ingenious" findings came out nearly seventy years ago. Nevertheless they have had their insidious blinding effect upon very recent studies of Middleton's art. Only nine years ago, for example, M. C. Bradbrook said, "Middleton's power to work with other men and produce a play of apparently seamless unity is one of the most astonishing features of the Jacobean drama," without tumbling to the possibility that that remarkable "seamless unity" might exist for the most obvious of all possible reasons, viz. that the Jacobean plays which inspired this observation are the work of one mind and one pen, rather than many. Thomas M. Parrott's comments on the Middleton-Rowley collaborations reveal a healthy uneasiness:

... Rowley... seems to have written the first and last scenes of the play. These open and end the tragic action, and if they are Rowley's, he wrote them under Middleton's direction, for it is to the greater dramatist that we must ascribe the masterly recasting of characters and events in the source.59,

but again stop short of the act of sweeping away cobwebs and answering the question which must be answered before a just evaluation of

56 See Appendix B.

57 Jacobean Drama, p. 135. For a sample of the dialogue engaged in by the Dutch nurse, see Appendix C.


59 A Short View, p. 236.
Middleton's art can be made. Indeed, the most serious consequence of this lingering critical fallacy is to be seen when a scholar who does not question it sets out to investigate Middleton's artistic point of view. The attributional data which he accepts will not stand up, and in reasoning from false premises he places himself in the same position as the farmer who attempts to make critical judgements about a horse which he knows from hearsay but has never seen.

It appears then that the discovery of printed editions bearing the names of two men has led to the false but widely accepted conclusion that Middleton wrote the main plots, and that Rowley dubbed in comic underplots of his own invention, designed solely to titillate the animal instincts of the groundlings. Of this position it can be said that it takes no account of the facts of the Middleton canon, of Middleton's distinctive diction and characteristic use of imagery, nor of what is known about the lives of the two authors. It has served, in turn, as the basis for a tradition of hollow pedantry which apparently has been content to know the object of its judgements at second hand.

It was also, evidently, the basis of the critical presupposition

---

60 S. Schoenbaum's "Middleton's Tragicomedies," Modern Philology, LIV (August, 1956), is such an investigation. On p. 16 he reveals his acceptance of Wiggin's conclusions as follows: "Apparently, Rowley deserves credit for the Russell-Jane-Fitzallen subplot, a blend of popular melodrama and farce; the additions (1622?) in which Chough practises the preposterous argot of the roaring boys; and the first episode in the main action concerning the Agers and the Colonel. Thus his share is the greater." The statement which immediately follows is syntactically coordinate, but appears to me to be non sequitor: "But the principal story, once under way, appears to be entirely Middleton's, and it is for his contribution that the play is justly celebrated," however unconsciously accurate it may be.
with which the one extensive versification study of the Middleton-
Rowley plays was approached, a study which likewise ignores the facts
about Middleton's earlier work, and is further weakened by its failure
to consider the practical ends of collaborative play-writing and what
is feasible by way of collaborative method.

The first scholar to see the main objection to Wiggin's argument
was Dunkel, writing in 1933. His knowledge of Middleton's early work 61
enabled him to discern that Rowley's part in the collaborations was
quite minor, but he hesitated to discredit Miss Wiggin altogether and
was led by this hesitancy to an illogical compromise:

Miss Wiggin's recognition of Rowley's verse style in
the minor action and in parts of the opening and closing
scene would be, therefore, merely and [sic] indication of
the contributions made by Rowley as a reviser, skilled in
acting, according to tradition, comic roles. 62, the only flaw in an otherwise sound demonstration. His conclusion
does not stand to reason. Because of their superior gifts, we might
conceive of Shakespeare or Middleton himself undertaking to revise
plays, but Rowley was a hack writer, not a "play-doctor."

The points which are readily demonstrable then are these: Middle-
ton's name appears above Rowley's on the title-pages of both of the
early editions; Middleton's authorship of the main plot has never been
doubted; Middleton had already written a play, unassisted, wherein the
main action is the same as that in the underplot of A Fair Quarrel;
Middleton's education was superior to Rowley's; the diction and imagery

61 See his The Dramatic Technique of Thomas Middleton in his
Comedies of London Life (Chicago, 1925).

which would logically be associated with the better educated man is in the speeches of the principals of both plots; and, it would have been awkward in the extreme and highly impractical for the two men to have collaborated in writing individual scenes.

All of these facts point to Middleton's having written both plots without assistance. They also indicate that Rowley, if he wrote any of the play at all, could only have been responsible for the first half of Act IV, and possibly the last scene of Act II. These parts of the play are independent units, are entirely gratuitous with respect to the action of both plots, and are not integrated with the latter except in having one character in common with the main plot.

The latter half of this thesis shall take it as an established fact then that Middleton wrote both plots of A Fair Quarrel, and that, therefore, he intentionally placed these two particular plots in juxtaposition for his own good reasons. The following chapter will explore the content of A Fair Quarrel, and examine some of the things that have been written about the play and its author, in an attempt to discover the nature of those reasons.
CHAPTER II

THE THEME OF A FAIR QUARREL

Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca . . . Hamlet and His Problems . . . Four Elizabethan Dramatists . . . All three of these essays on re-examination embarrassed me by their callowness, and by a facility of unqualified assertion which verges . . . on impudence. . . . I turned with trepidation to reread my essays on Shakespeare's contemporaries. I was astonished to find that these essays struck me as very good indeed.

- Eliot. 63

By the time Thomas Middleton came to write A Fair Quarrel, he was thirty-five or thirty-six years of age, 64 well into middle age for an Elizabethan. Commensurate with his physical age was his intellectual maturity. Judging from the statements he put into the mouths of his characters, he had a consummate first-hand knowledge of the ways of the world, and his own very decided opinions about human nature. The mood of the speeches of the principals, even those of Captain Agar who owes at least some small part of his character to Hamlet, is unwaveringly declarative. Agar may be circumspect and scrupulous, but he knows most definitely where he wants to go, and deliberately takes the necessary steps to ensure his safe arrival at his destination. So with the other characters, each has his fixed aim,

63 Essays, pp. vii-viii.

64 Boas, Stuart Drama, p. 220. With a reference to Mark Eccles' "Middleton's Birth and Education," in Review of English Studies, VII (October, 1931), Boas observes that, "... the record of his baptism on 18 April 1580 has been discovered in the register of the church of St. Lawrence in the Old Jewry."
or, as Middleton would probably have put it, had the idiom been available to him, "his own special axe to grind."

Middleton has been rightly called "the most absolute realist in the Elizabethan drama." and, paradoxically, the measures of his artistic achievement are the extent and degree to which he has been misunderstood. In second place among those curiously expressed aphorisms of art, nearly all of which are logically incontestable, with which Oscar Wilde prefaxes The Picture of Dorian Gray, is "To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim." Middleton succeeded so well in this aim that for some observers he does not exist as an artist at all. Though quite devoid of truth, such a statement as the following:

He has no point of view, is neither sentimental nor cynical; he is neither resigned, nor disillusioned, nor romantic, he has no message. He is merely the name which associates six or seven great plays.

which is by no means unique in the body of Middleton criticism to which Eliot had access, is the greatest possible tribute to Middleton's art.

Throughout the history of literature the illusion of artistic detachment has been associated with greatness and permanence. Sometimes it is a contrived detachment, such as Chaucer's so-called "ironic approval" in "The General Prologue" to The Canterbury Tales; less often the


67 Eliot, Essays, p. 85. It is ironical that this statement was made by the poet who, seven years before, had written "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," a poem which depends entirely, for its effects and true understanding, upon the juxtaposition of ostensibly incompatible elements, just as does A Fair Quarrel.
illusion is created adroitly and almost imperceptibly, as in Shakespeare; but how many win such an unequivocal and unqualified testimonial to their greatness as that which Eliot gives to Middleton?

In the following pages I shall attempt to explain Middleton's main theme in *A Fair Quarrel* by examining what he says through his characters, how he says it, and by whom he has it said. The gross features of each plot will be considered first, and then the less obvious ones. Next, I will consider the mode of action of the double plot, and finally, through discovering Middleton's rationale in combining the two plots, describe his overall artistic point of view.

As I proceed, I shall refer occasionally to various critical judgments which have been made about Middleton, and evaluate them in the light of what my inquiry elicits.

Several writers have hazarded guesses that the central issue of the main plot, Agar's reluctance to enter a duel without sufficient cause, had something to do with King James' noted dislike of violence, and violent men. As G. M. Trevelyan says,

James disliked "men of war" whether by land or sea. Until in his declining years he let the initiative pass to the volatile and ambitious Buckingham, he was the most thorough-going pacifist who ever bore rule in England. He wielded the sceptre and the pen, and held them both to be mightier than the sword. Of naked steel he had a physical horror, perhaps because he was born three months after the terrible day when armed men had burst in upon his mother's supper party and had stabbed Rizzio under her eyes.68

Hence we have Bentley's conjecture:

The date of the performance before the King noted on
the title-page is unknown, but King James would have been
particularly interested in the principal action of the play,
with its suggested condemnation of hasty duels. The subject
seems to have been of more than usual interest 1613-1616
... and one can only suggest that playwrights were more
likely to have followed than to have led the vogue.

But a deeper look into the matter will replace conjecture with near
certainty. It has been shown that a pamphlet entitled The Peace-
Maker: or, Great Brittaines Blessing. Fram'd for the continuance of
that mightie Happinesse wherein this Kingdome excells manie Empires.
Shewing the Idlenesse of a Quarrelling Reputation, wherein consists
neyther Manhood nor Wisdome. Necessarie for all Magistrates, Officers
of Peace, Masters of Families, for the confirmation of Youth, and for
all his Maiesties most true and faithfull Subjects: To the generall
avoyding of all Contention, and Bloud-shedding, which came out a
year after the first printing of A Fair Quarrel, and which was
variously attributed to James, Bacon, and Middleton, may be definitely
credited to the last:

... it has long been known that the true author is
Thomas Middleton. The evidence is clear enough. In the
Calendars of State Papers, Domestic, under date of July 19,
1618, there is recorded a license to William Alley, at the
nomination of Thomas Middleton, for the sole printing and
publication of a book by Middleton called "The Peace-Maker,
or Great Britain's Blessing."71

69 Jacobean and Caroline Stage, IV, 869.

70 Rhodes Dunlap, "James I, Bacon, Middleton, and the Making of
W. Bennett, O. Cargill, and V. Hall (New York, 1959), pp. 82-3.

71 Ibid., pp. 83-4. For further pertinent excerpts from this
study, see Appendix D.
King Jame's direct connection with the publication of this pamphlet makes it wellnigh certain that A Fair Quarrel had attracted his favourable attention not long before. It is important to remember, however, that Middleton was concerned rather with the motives to violent action than, as was James, with a wholesale condemnation of any and all kinds of fighting. Master admontory remarks to young Agar and his adversary make it clear, as does Agar's ultimate action before the duel, that the prime matter of concern is not whether or not to fight, but whether or not there is good and sufficient cause to fight. Middleton has no argument with fighting per se, which perhaps accounts for his having resorted to The Charge of Sir Francis Bacon Knight to capture some of the spirit of militant pacifism, so to speak, for his The Peace-Maker. Agar's friends, in their indefatigable protestations against his apparent cowardice, present him, and the audience, with the traditional arguments of the duelling code, for example, at the beginning of Act III:

Enter Captaine Ager with his two friends.

Capt. Well, yours wils now.

1. Our Wils? our Loves, our Duties
   To honor Fortitude. What wils have we
   But our desires to Noblenes and Merit,
   Valours advancement, and the sacred Rectitude
   Due to a valourous cause?

Capt. Oh, thats not mine.

2. War ha's his court of Justice, that's the field,
   Where all cases of Manhoode are determinde,
   And your case is no meane one.

72 See above, pp. 17-18, n. 46.
73 See above, p. 7, n. 13.
74 See Appendix D.
Capt. True, then 'twere vertuous;
But mine is in extreames, fowle and unjust.
Well, now y'ave got me hither, y'are as far
To seeke in your desire, as at first minute.
For by the strength and honour of a vow,
I will not lift a finger in this quarrell.

1. How? not in this? be not so rash a sinner.
Why sir, do you ever hope to fight agen then?
Take heed on't, you must never looke for that.
Why the universall stocke of the Worlds injury,
Will bee too poore to find a quarrell for you.
Give up your right and title to desert, sir.
If you faile vertue here, shee needes you not
All your time after. Let her take this wrong,
And never presume then to serve her more.
Bid farewell to the integrity of armes,
And let that honourable name of Souldier
Fall from you like a shivered wreath of Lawrell
By Thunder strucke from a desertlesse forehead,
That weares another's right by usurpation.
Good Captaine, do not wilfully cast away
At one houre all the fame your life ha's won.
This is your native seate, here you should seeke
Most to preserve it or if you will doate
So much on life (poore life) which in respect
Of life in honour is but death and darkness\(^75\)
That you will prove neglectfull of your selfe,
Which is to me too fearefull to imagine,
Yet for that vertuous Ladies cause (your mother)
Her Reputation, deere to Noblenesse
As grace to penitence, whose faire memory
Ee'n crowns fame in your issue. For that blessednes,
Give not this ill place, but in spite of hell,
And all her base feares, be exactly valiant.\(^76\)

There is absolutely no reason to suppose that Middleton either objected
to any link in this chain of argument, or disapproved of it as a whole.

Middleton's argument is rather with senseless fighting and all that
is implicit in the expression "a quarrelling

\(^75\) *Quarrel*, 1622, shows an additional terminal parenthesis here.
Apparently this indicates that there is an elliptical clause ending at
this point which is to be understood, "It is a poor life which, in res-
pect of life in honour, is but death and darkness." The printer of the
later edition recognized that this whole clause, not just "poore life,"
was intended to be parenthetical.

\(^76\) *Quarrel*, pp. E3r-E3v.
reputation," that is, with the questionable code of values displayed and held dear by the colonel before the duel, and by the type of which he is a caricature up to that point. Whatever else may be wrong with that set of values, morally or otherwise, some of its artificiality is suggested in this excerpt from Trevelyan's chapter on "Types of Elizabethan Gentry:"

So far as it is possible to define the important and recognized distinction between "gentle" and "simple" in the new England, the "gentleman" was a landowner who could show a coat of arms, and who had the right when he wished it to wear a rapier and to challenge to the duel any other "gentleman" from a duke downwards.  

Critics who use the word "trivial" to describe Agar's dilemma, or "casuistic," with its modern contemptuous flavour, in referring to Middleton's dramatic exploitation of it, are judging these things in the light of the relatively sophisticated moral arrangements which are fixed and generally accepted to-day. If Middleton "succeeds in giving reality and appeal to the emotional struggles of mother and son," it is so to some extent because in his day such struggles could be real and appealing. It is surprisingly easy to fall prey to the fallacies of hind-sight. As G. B. Harrison has said, in a slightly

77 Cp. Shakespeare's

... soldier,

Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.

- As You Like It (II. vii. 149-153)

78 Illustrated History, p. 371.


80 Ibid.
different context, "... although one may fetch infinite enjoyment from a play regardless of its history, one cannot study drama apart from its environment."\textsuperscript{81} The environment of this play is Elizabethan England, an England in which thinkers were wrestling with the perennial problem of appearance and reality with just as much enthusiasm and zeal as are their counterparts of the present. Alfred Harbage has pointed out that:

> It is rather amusing to observe how many civilized and Christian commentators, Coleridge for instance, have been able to give an easy nod of approval to lynch law, or at least to accept its righteousness in the ethical world of Hamlet as if the immorality of personal vengeance were an unfamiliar notion to Elizabethans. Few moral notions were unfamiliar to Elizabethans.\textsuperscript{82}

If any doubt remains as to Middleton's sincerity in presenting Captain Agar's dilemma, the sceptic should examine it in conjunction with the expressed sentiments and motivation of the other principals. He should notice, for example, Master opening soliloquy which, all other considerations aside, is quite worthy of remark as an example of Middleton's gift for making a natural combination of exposition and characterization:

> It must be all my care; theeres all my love,  
> And that pulls on the tother. Had I beene left  
> In a sonne behind me, while I had beene here  
> He should have shifted as I did before him,  
> Liv'd on the freeborne portion of his wit;  
> But a daughter, and that an onely one, oh:  
> We cannot be too carefull ore, to tender.  
> Tis such a brittle niceness: a meere cubbord of glasses.  
> The least shake breakes, or crakes em. All my aime is


\textsuperscript{82} As \textit{They Liked It} (New York, 1947), p. 98.
To cast her upon riches. That's the thing
We richmen call perfection, for the world
Can perfect nought without it; 'tis not neatness
Either in handsome wit, or handsome outside,
With which one gentleman (far indebt) has courted her,
Which boldness he shall rue. He thinkes me blind,
And ignorant. I have let him play along time,
Seem'd to believe his worth, which I know nothing.
He may perhaps laugh at my easie confidence,
Which closely I requite upon his fondnesse.
For this houre snaps him, and before his Mistris,
His Saint forsooth, which he inscribes my girle,
He shall be rudely taken and disgrac't.
The trick will prove an everlasting Scarcrow,
To fright poore gallants from our rich-mens daughters.83,

or the dialogue between Fitzallen and Jane when, near the end of Act I, they resign themselves to the fact that they are to be separated:

Jane ... Oh my Fitzallen what is to be done?
Fitz. To be still thine is all my part to be,
    Whether in freedome or captivity.
Jane But art thou so engag'd as this pretends?
Fitz. By heav'n sweet Jane 'tis all a hellish plot.
    Your cruel smiling father all this while
    Has candied o're a bitter pill for me,
    Thinking by my remove to plant some other,
    And then let goe his fangs.
Jane Plant some other?
Fitz. Thou hast too firmeely stamp'd me for thine owne,
    Ever to be cast out. I am not currant
    In any others hand; I fear too soone
    I shall discover it.
Fitz. Let come the worst,
    Binde but this knot with an unloosed line,
    I will be still thine owne.
Jane And Ile be thine.84

It will be noted that these declarations share the remarkable realism
which has veiled the author's sympathies so effectively. Each character conveys in his own way an intense genuine sincerity, and this

83 Quarrel, p. Blr.
84 Ibid., pp. C2v-C3r.
consistent intensity of feeling in subsidiary characters insists upon credibility for Agar's attitudes as well.

It is true that Middleton reveals no special sympathy for any particular one of his characters; but, and this is the point that has been missed by many writers, rather he, like Shakespeare, sympathizes with all of them. There is no essential difference between Master here and Shakespeare's Brabantio. The latter is a nobleman, of course, while manifestly has come up through the "school of hard knocks," but their problems are much the same nonetheless. Brabantio's words to Roderigo (Othello, i. i. 96-105), with their undertone of threat, are spoken in the same spirit as soliloquy, and are motivated by the same fatherly concern. And while Romeo and Juliet are the true lovers of a world of poetry, Fitzallen and Jane are the equally true lovers of the world of reality. The things that Romeo and Juliet say to each other are essentially the same things that Fitzallen and Jane say, however much less prepossessingly.

So insistent is the expectation that an author must, like Marston in The Malcontent or Jonson in his satires, use the drama to foist off his opinions and prejudices in some obvious way, that Middleton's failure to do so has led even some recent scholars to pronounce, as Eliot did, that he was unsympathetic, "coldly" detached, and opinionless. The proof that an intimate familiarity with Middleton's work is the only key to a true understanding of it perhaps lies in the fact that one of them, Una Ellis-Fermor, took the opportunity in her book on Shakespeare to drastically modify the appraisal of Middleton which she had expressed eight years earlier in The Jacobean Drama.
In the book published in 1961, she wrote as follows:

He enters into the minds of his characters . . . and speaks, as it were from within them . . . . Middleton's pictures of the travelling mind lost upon a strange and sinister road of experience convey into the imagination of the reader the terror and the pity which do not come by chance but only from the operation of deep, if hidden emotion. Middleton, like Swift, appears not to feel; but inasmuch as each stirs in reader or audience a powerful and painful response, the sympathy of the writer cannot be doubted. 85

I can only account for this considerable departure from her former view by supposing that sometime during the years intervening between the two books, she took time to reconsider Middleton, and that she was so impressed with the truth of her new idea that she felt she must get it on record, even if it must be done in a book devoted to an entirely different subject.

If Middleton is equally sympathetic in the treatment of all his characters, however, it is evident in A Fair Quarrel that he is more interested in those whose motives spring from considerations of faithfulness, unselfishness, honesty, and morality. This is proved in part by the simple fact that there are a good many more such characters in the play than there are persons represented as having unworthy motives.

I have already referred to Captain Agar's concern for his immortal soul, and glanced at the constancy of Fitzallen and Jane. Among those that remain is Lady Agar, whose character, though uncomplicated, was not a dramatic stereotype in Middleton's day. Her stoutly upright moral stature is revealed in her first response to her son's announce-

ment that he has been called the son of a whore:

Thou lyest, & were my love ten thousand times more to thee,
Which is as much now, as ere mothers was
So thou shouldst feele my anger. Do'st thou call
That quarrel doubtfull? Where are all my merits? Strikes him.
Not one stand up to tell this man his error?
Thou might'st as well bring the Sun's truth in question,
As thy birth or my honour.

And her dialogue with [censored], early in the play, wherein she reveals her determination to keep her son home from any future wars, together with the ignominy which she later heaps upon herself by admitting to a sin she had not committed, are obvious proofs of the lengths to which she will go and the amount of self-sacrifice she is prepared to make simply to keep her son safe from harm.

As has been pointed out, Schoenbaum is one of the writers who bases his opinions upon the mistaken belief that Rowley had a large share in the writing of the play. I feel that he also goes rather beyond the simple facts of the play in what he says about Lady Agar:

In spite of her struggles and sacrifice, she has failed. And, since her relationship with her son is unchanged, she will continue to fail, whether she lies or tells the truth. The story of Lady Agar is now complete, and, except for a stage direction indicating her presence in the final scene, she drops out of the play.

... Middleton's method is to have his principal female figure move, unknowingly but inexorably, towards the bitter realization of her own inadequacy. But Lady Agar's discovery, shattering as it is, is only partial. It never occurs to her that her "goodness" is really an excess of motherly love, that by her actions she is striving to prevent her son from living... according to the highest dictates of his conscience and his society.

86 Quarrel, p. F4v.

87 See above, p. 25, n. 60.

In my opinion, this is rather an elaborated reading of what Lady Agar represents in the play. Apparently Schoenbaum sees her "failure" in Captain Agar's renewed desire to fight the colonel on learning that his mother had deceived him the first time. As it turns out, Agar does not fight the colonel again, so that if this is a failure, it is one of no consequence to the action of the play and of little, if any, to Middleton's philosophy. And if Lady Agar's goodness is indeed "really an excess of motherly love," does that make it, as Schoenbaum seems to imply, any the less good? I think not. Most of our "virtues" can, after all, be looked upon as only various kinds of special pleading - means to ends. Young Agar's fondest wish is to enter the Kingdom of Heaven with an untarnished soul; his mother's is to keep her son alive and well. There may be some kind of qualitative metaphysical distinction between these ends, but they are ends all the same, and it seems to me that the literary scholar who attempts to make subjective judgements about which of two good ends is the better, is bound to make some rather unwarrantable presumptions.

As to the suggestion that "It never occurs to her that . . . she is striving to prevent her son from living according to the highest dictates of his conscience and his society," does the writer imply that if the idea had occurred to her, she would have acted any differently? If he does, then I think that his understanding of women in general, and of mothers in particular, is even less perfect than most men's. Are not women the most pre-eminently practical creatures, in their own way, on the face of the earth? I see Lady Agar as the very

89 See above, p. 6, n. 11.
soul of feminine practicality - a representative of that breed of women who anchor the visionary male's soaring concepts of what he considers at this moment or that to be "the highest dictates of his conscience and his society" firmly to the ground. She does this for the adult male with the same quiet tolerance with which a mother listens, patiently smiling, to the romantic imaginings of a small boy. Lady Agar, in other words, is the sort of woman who would not bother thinking about the niceties of such little boys' nonsense as the duelling code, or who, if she were to, would be quick to point out its ridiculous artificiality.

For Middleton, the main importance of Lady Agar, it seems to me, lay in her moral uprightness and capacity for self-sacrifice, and in the simple, honest sentiments which she expresses in a short soliloquy near the end of Act III:

Let me not loose him yet; when I thinke on him,  
His deerenes, and his worth, it earnes me more.  
They that know riches tremble to be poore.  
My passion is not every woman's sorrow.  
She must be truly honest feeles my greefe,  
And onely known to One. If such there bee,  
They know the sorrow that oppresseth mee.50

I do not believe that the idea of "failure" or "inadequacy" has any reasonable application to the case of Lady Agar. In any case, the behaviour of the other two women in the play who, besides Jane, win signal moral victories, is enough in itself to make us seriously doubt that Middleton wished his audience to view Lady Agar's experience as being in any sense a failure.

90 Quarrel, p. F4v.
One of these is Anne, the physician's sister. Upon receiving Jane's peremptory refusal, it is she whom the physician sends to act as his procuress. There is, in her initial speeches, a strong hint that some base relationship exists between her and her brother, whom she refers to as her "Keeper" in a rather unsavoury way. At all events, she begins by trying to persuade Jane to compliance, but something in the latter's manifest disgust for the idea and loathing for her brother seems to fan into flame the spark of an originally decent nature, and she quite unexpectedly bursts out with:

Hee's my brother Mistresse, & a curse on you
If ere you blesse him with that cursed deede!
Hang him, poyson him, he held out a Rose
To draw the yeelding fence, which come to hand,
He shifts, and gives a canker.91,

although she bethinks herself of the consequences of Jane's refusal and adds,

... a good name's deare,
And indeed more esteemed than our actions,
By which we should deserve it.

Nevertheless, Anne remains Jane's stout ally in the latter's opposition to her brother.

The other is the colonel's sister, who is represented as being warmly loyal to her brother. When she first learns that the colonel wants her to marry Captain Agar, she is deeply offended that he should be so cruel as to ask her to have anything at all to do with the man who had inflicted such a grievous wound upon her beloved brother, but when she understands that it is his dearest wish that she should do

91 Quarrel, p. 44r.
so, she complies with his request and submissively offers herself to Agar in a gesture of self-sacrifice which is hardly less impressive than Lady Agar's. She, like the latter and Anne, is a woman of strong character. A mark of the high intelligence and solid dignity of character with which Middleton depicts her is the reply she makes to the surgeon after the latter has given an account of her brother's state of health in the most obscure, meaningless fashion, employing a pretentious and pedantic medical jargon to conceal his ignorance of his patient's true condition:

What thankelesse paines does the tongue often take
To make the whole man most ridiculous.
I come to him for comfort, and he tyres me
Worse then my sorrow. What a pretious good
May be delivered sweetly in few words,
And what a mount of nothing ha's he cast forth.92

Jane herself has a remarkable amount of "moral fibre." Her repudiation of the physician and her determination to remain chaste, albeit within the broad limits she has already permitted herself, almost bring to mind the dialogue between Angelo and Isabella in Measure for Measure (II. iv):

Away, you are a Blackamore, you love me?
I hate you for your love. Are you the man
That in your painted outside seem'd so white?
Oh, you are a foule dissembling Hypocrite.
You sav'd me from a thiefe that your selfe might rob me,
Skin'd ore a greene wound to breed an ulcer.
Is this the practise of your Physicke Colledge?93

All of the women in the play then (even the Dutch nurse appears to be a morally substantial sort) have a healthy idea of right and

92 Quarrel, p. G4v.
93 Ibid., p. F3v.
wrong, lively consciences, and what is most important, a determination
to do what is right. At this point one should recall to mind Beatrice-Joanna of The Changeling and Livia of Women Beware Women, who prove
that Middleton was not deluded by a sentimental idealism in his view
of women in A Fair Quarrel.

Captain Agar, of course, is the most acutely sensitive of all,
and it is impossible to overlook Middleton's debt to Shakespeare in
the conception of his character. In the first of the following lines,
for example, which occur just after his mother has made her false ad-
mission of guilt, are unmistakable echoes of the "O, that this too
too solid flesh would melt . . . " soliloquy; in the last of them is
the same spirit of contempt and despair which runs through Hamlet's
speeches in the bedroom scene (III. iv):

False, do not say't, for honors goodnes doe not!
You never could be so. He I calde Father
Deservd you at your best. When youth & merit
Could boast at highest in you, y'ade no grace
Or vertue that he matcht not, no delight
That you invented but he sent it crownde
To your full wishing soul.

Curst be the heate that lost me such a cause,
A worke that I was made for. Quench my spirit
And out with honours flaming lights within thee!
Be darke and dead to all respects of manhood,
I never shall have use for honour more.
Put off your vow for shame. Why should you hoard up
Such justice for a barren widdowhood,
That was so injurious to the faith of wedlocke. Exit Lady.
I should be dead, for all my lifes works ended.
I dare not fight a stroke now, nor engage
The noble resolution of my friends.94

Finally we come to the colonel, whose role in the play can be
very readily misunderstood. What is not always recognized is that his

94 Quarrel, pp. D2v-D3r.
chief significance to the theme lies in his personal reformation after the duel. It is perhaps even easier to make light of this than of Agar's dilemma, but it is a very shallow reading of the play that will inspire that superficial indulgence. The main trouble is that there is absolutely nothing in the colonel's behaviour before the duel to prepare us for such a profound change; before the duel, he is indeed the very caricature of the "Stuart man-at-arms." The dialogue between Agar and the colonel which follows their coming upon two of their friends disputing which of the two, the captain or the colonel, was nobler and more courageous, emphasizes this fact, points the contrast between the kinds of value judgement the two men make, and looks forward, as does the preceding disagreement between the two "friends," to the larger quarrel which is the central issue of the main plot:

Capt. What should ail you sir?
    There was little wrong done to your friend i'th'at.
Colo. How? little wrong to me?
Capt. I said so, friend,
    And I suppose that you'le esteeme it so.
Colo. Comparisons?
Cap. Why sir, twixt friend and friend
    There is so even and levell a degree,
    It will admitt of no superlative.
Col. Not in termes of manhood?
Russ. Nay gentlemen -
Col. Good sir give me leave, in terms of manhood?
    What can you dispute more questionble?
    You are a captaine sir, I give you all your due.
Cap. And you are a Colonell, a title
    Which may include within it many captaines.
    Yet sir, but throwing by those titular shaddows,
    Which ad no substance to the men themselves,
    And take them uncompounded, man and man,
    They may be so with faire equallity.
Colo. Y'are a boy sir.

95 For examples, see Thorndike, English Comedy, p. 220, and Boas, Stuart Drama, p. 239.
Cap. And you have a beard sir.

    Virginity and marriage are both worthy,
    And the positive purities there are some
    Have made the nobler.

Colo. How now?

Russ. Nay good sir.

Cap. I shrinke not. He that goes the foremost,
    May be orestaken.

Colo. Death, how am I weighed?

Cap. In an even ballance sir. A beard put in
    Gives but a small advantage: man and man
    And lift the scales.96

Another difficulty is the very abruptness of the change. Immediately
after receiving his wound, he addresses these words to the captain as
the latter retires from the field:

    Oh, just heaven has found me
    And turnde the strings97 of my too hasty Injuries
    Into my owne bloud. I pursude my ruin
    And urdge him past the patience of an Angell.
    Could mans revenge extend beyond mans life,
    This would ha' wak't it. If this flame will light me
    But till I see my sister, tis a kinde one.
    More I expect not from't, Noble deserver.
    Farewell, most valiant, and most wrong'd of men.
    Do but forgive me, & I am Victor then.98

It is even possible that the colonel may be carelessly confused with
the common type of the "repentant rake" described by Sherbo,99 but
with which he has nothing in common whatever except the fact of the
reformation itself. Thus we have Schoenbaum implying that the trans-
formation was an artificial one:

    At times Middleton indulges in melodramatic episodes
    which required (sic) . . . the sacrifice of his artistic


97 The sense of the line suggests that the printer made an error
here and printed "strings" for "stings."

98 Quarrel, p. Flv.

99 See Appendix E.
which is as much as to say that a bad character is inconsistent if he reforms and, presumably, vice versa, a decidedly questionable assertion. The whole point of Middleton's *The Changeling* and *Women Beware Women* is that virtuous people may be prone to corruption, and no one has attacked these plays for a want of verisimilitude; rather their cold objective truth has been universally applauded, and it is mainly upon them that Middleton's reputation as a great realist is based. Is there any reason why the converse of the situations in these plays should not be equally true? Experience of life tells us that the bad man who is utterly incorrigible is a great rarity, far from being the general rule.

Nor has the colonel's change of heart sprung from the usual death-bed remorse, in anticipation of the final judgement; even after the surgeon has assured him that he will recover from his wound, he continues the self-recriminations which began before he was assisted from the field.

F. T. Bower's essay, "*Middleton's A Fair Quarrel* and the Duelling Code," is more valuable for what it has to say about the Elizabethan duello than for its discussion of the play (the author confines himself to consideration of only Captain Agar and the colonel) but he reveals

100 Schoenbaum, "*Middleton's Tragicomedies*," pp. 8 and 18.
a rare perception of the operation of Middleton's mind when he quotes
the short speech which Agar makes after the duel,

Truth never fails her servant, sir, nor leaves him
With the days shame upon him,101,

and goes on to observe that:

The colonel's immediate repentance would, indeed, seem
more dramatic than realistic were it not that the unexpected
result of the combat has forced upon him the same conclusion;
and his subsequent amends are dictated as much by this
feeling as by his realization that Ager is indeed a man of
complete valour.102

I would not go so far as to contradict Schoenbaum's conclusion that
"The conventions, which Middleton did so much to reform, have
triumphed in the end,"103 but that he happened to base it upon this
particular piece of evidence would seem to place it in considerable
doubt. Plainly, the colonel is not among those who make the conven­
tional "fifth-act reformation" with "wordy expressions of contrition
and promises of turning over a new leaf." Rather he has been genuine­
ly and deeply affected by the noble behaviour of his young adversary,
and his reply to his sister's inquiry as to his state of health in
Act IV, has the unmistakable ring of sincerity and truth:

In soule never better.
I feele an excellente health there, such a stoutnes,
My invisible enemy flies me. Seeing me arm'd
With penitence and forgivenes, they fall backward,
Whether through admiration, not imagining
There were such armory in a Souldiers soule
As pardon and repentance, or through power

101 Quarrel, p. Flv.

102 Fredson T. Bowers, "Middleton's A Fair Quarrel and the Duel­
64.

Of ghostly valour. But I have bene Lord
Of a more happy conquest in nine houers now,
Then in nine yeares before. O kind Lieftenants,
This is the onely warre we should provide for,
Where he that forgiues largest, and sighes strongest
Is a tride Souldier, a true man indeed,
And winnes the best field, make his owne heart bleed.104

Among the principals in whom Middleton is evidently less inter-
ested are those whose actions are not worthily motivated, viz. Master
Russell, Chaugh and Trimtram, and the physician. Even here, however,
with one exception, there are either explicit or implicit consider-
ations which mitigate their want of principle. There is an almost per-
fect distribution of sympathy in Middleton, and, unlike Dickens with
his David Copperfield and Uriah Heep, he is rarely given to creating
characters which are all white or all black. Even de Flores and Livia,
who are about the most unremittingly vicious characters of either sex
that Middleton brought forth, ring true, because he gives them a chance
to speak for themselves and to explain, as does, how they came
by their unfortunate attitudes.

Thus we know that Jane's father is not wholly bad. At least he
has what he considers to be his daughter's best interests at heart as,
after introducing her to Chaugh, he privately commends her to:

But pr'y looke well this way, ere thou go'st.
'Tis a rich Simplicity of great Estate,
A thing that will be rul'd, and thou shalt rule.
Consider of your sexes generall aime,
That domination is a womans heaven.105

Only the means he adopts to attain his ends are reprehensible, and in

104 Quarrel, p. Hlr.
105 Ibid., pp. E2r-E2v.
the end he receives "poetic justice" in a manner which was a favourite
with Middleton,106 by being duped by the young man he had injured.

As Dunkel has pointed out, Chaugh is a caricature. Both Middle-
ton and Rowley depict him as a simple animal in the disguise of a
human being. When he meets his intended bride, he immediately blurts
out his glowing approval of her as a prospective partner for sexual
relations. Other than this diversion, which he refers to quaintly but
characteristically as "wrestling," he has no interests other than
"roaring," and he even finds that tomfoolery beyond his mental powers.107
His minion Trimtram is cast in the same mould. Their ignorance, or
rather their congenital deficiency, which no doubt amounts to a rude
joke at the expense of the Cornish, extenuates their sins.

The only character in the play who is thoroughly evil, and hence
thoroughly reprehensible, is the physician. His reply to Jane's refusal
of his advances:

Have you utter'd all your niceness forth?

The Lawyer and Physitian here agrees
To women Clients they give backe their fees.
And is not that kindnesse?

Doe what you list, I will do somthing too.
Remember yet what I have done for you.
Y'ave a good face now, but 'twill grow rugged.
Ere you grow old, old men will despise you.
Think on your Grandam Helen, the fairest Queen,
When in a new glasse she spied her old face.
She (smiling) wept to thinke upon the change.
Take your time. Y'are craz'd, y'are an apple falne

106 A Trick to Catch the Old-one and The Famelie of Love.
107 See above, p. 19.
concluding as it does with a thinly veiled threat, is a well-worn cliché for stage villains. The physician then, like Chaugh and Trim-tram, is only a caricature, a "humour," a convention.

But even though Middleton's lesser interest in these characters is revealed by the conventional manner in which they are drawn, it would be (and has been) a serious misunderstanding of the mode of action of the play, and a misjudgement of Middleton's manifestly superior intelligence, to suppose that their presence is entirely gratuitous and insignificant.

As was pointed out before, we are indebted to F. T. Bowers for his learned exposition of the Elizabethan duelling code and its relationship to the central action of the main plot. Furthermore, he comes at the essence of the didactic theme of that plot when he states that:

... the dramatic importance of the refusal to defend an apparently unjust cause, and the consequent emphasis laid on it in speech and action, while undoubtedly an important theme of the play, is not its largest one or the single message to be taken away from it.

and concludes that it represents:

... a dramatic censure of the artificial code of honor which elevates honor above reason and as a consequence degrades that lofty possession by making its test not the subject for a noble and admirable duel where honor is actually involved, but the ill-conceived reason for the hasty and ridiculous quarrels which made up the majority of Jacobean duels.109

108 Quarrel, p. F4r.

109 Bowers, "Middleton's A Fair Quarrel and...", p. 64.
But while his essay is a commendable one in that it goes this far, it suffers in that ultimately it goes less than half far enough. Unconsciously, or possibly even consciously, under the influence of the short-sighted tradition of Middleton criticism referred to above in Chapter I, Bowers takes no account of the action of any of the subsidiary dramatis personae. Middleton was not the man to make bald preachers, however.

The plots of A Fair Quarrel together comprise a remarkable microcosm in which are exploited many correlatives of age and sex and circumstance. The mature Lady Agar's capacity for self-sacrifice, for example, corresponds with that of the youthful sister of the colonel. The determination of Jane, daughter of a wealthy, solicitous father, to preserve what is left of her honour, awakens a latent spark of decency in her contemporary, Anne, sister and creature of a depraved physician. The colonel's sister's devotion and subservience to her brother comment upon Anne's detestation and repudiation of hers. The duplicity in Fitzallen's treatment of Fitzallen is answered by Fitzallen's deluding of , and echoed by the physician's treachery in regard to Jane and the attempt by the presumably impecunious colonel's second to gull the wealthy Chaugh. The true devotion of the colonel's sister for her brother, and Fitzallen's and Jane's for each other, are deliberate concomitants of Lady Agar's for her son, and her son's to his honour; and all of these are commented upon by the base desires of Chaugh and the physician for Jane. The youth, moral fastidiousness, and genuine nobility of Captain Agar reciprocate with the age, licentiousness, and artificiality of the colonel before the duel, and with
the depravity of the physician and the animality of Chaugh. Finally, the moral transformation of the colonel, inspired by Captain Agar in the main plot, corresponds to that undergone by Anne in the underplot, through the inspiration of Jane.

The play, in other words, is a veritable melting pot of human values and motives. From this melting pot, only the unalloyed, the genuine, the permanently worthy elements safely emerge, and they emerge somehow brighter and better for their experience. Young Agar and the spiritually-reborn colonel issue forth with great felicity in the dénouement, as do the faithful lovers. The colonel's sister and Anne have taken advantage of opportunities to refortify their moral breast-works, and Lady Agar, for all that she may have suffered a dialectical defeat, welcomes home her unscathed son. Hence, in the world that Thomas Middleton sees, only the wicked suffer frustration and defeat; the virtuous realize their aims.

There can be no question as to the ironies of that world, just as there can be no question as to the ironies of the real world of which it is so close a copy; however, there is no suggestion of the cynicism of which Middleton has been accused.110 If Middleton had not written this play, the myth of his cynicism, which springs from his preoccupation with themes of crime and punishment in other plays, would be hard to dispel. So difficult did one writer find it to make A Fair Quarrel fit in with his hastily-conceived notion of Middleton that he argued as follows:

Dekker is all sentiment; and, indeed, in . . . A Fair

110 For example, see Ellis-Fermor, Jacobean Drama, p. 139.
Quarrel... the mood if not the hand of Dekker seems to be more present than Middleton's. A Fair Quarrel seems as much, if not more, Dekker's than Middleton's.\textsuperscript{111}, apparently being ignorant of the fact that of the whole Middleton canon, A Fair Quarrel is one of the six plays of most certain attribution.\textsuperscript{112}

A Fair Quarrel is comprised of contiguous threads of good and evil, like flowers and weeds in a garden. The flowers in that garden, however, receive a special sustenance, not available to their perverse growth-mates, by virtue of the simple fact that they are beautiful; they thrive luxuriantly and, paradoxically, choke out the weeds.

The preponderance of worthily-motivated characters in A Fair Quarrel, and the success which they enjoy in their undertakings, leads me to conclude that Middleton wished to endorse the ideals of the moral life: honesty, fidelity, self-sacrifice, and, by extension, the idea that men are indeed progressing, albeit some in the wake of others whose moral fervour places them in the forefront of the advance, towards the goal they pray for when they say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

\textsuperscript{111} Eliot, Essays, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{112} Ellis-Fermor, Jacobean Drama, pp. 300-301.
CONCLUSION

Evidently much of the attributional scholarship devoted to A Fair Quarrel, as well as a good deal of the critical analysis which has been under its influence, has been either grossly at fault or has failed to see more than fragments of the total picture of the play. This study has shown that those erroneous or incomplete conceptions of Middleton's mind and art are still having an unfortunate influence upon some of the present-day Middleton scholarship.

Middleton wrote four plays, in addition to A Fair Quarrel, with which Rowley's name is associated. A new reading and investigation of these other four plays (The Old Law, The Mayor of Quinborough, The Changeling, and The Spanish Gipsey), which recognizes the versatility of Middleton in A Fair Quarrel, and the insignificant contribution of Rowley, will lead to a fresh and just idea of the powers and contributions of perhaps the most seriously misunderstood and under-rated dramatist of the Elizabethan age. I suggest that such an investigation will lead to the recognition that while his ability as a poet, in the technical sense of the word, was moderate, his gifts for realistic observation and portrayal of life scenes, as well as his profound understanding of human psychology, were second to none in his own time, not excepting Shakespeare's, and perhaps to none since. In addition, it will be established that Middleton believed that humanity must realize, as he did, that significant self-realization only comes through, and consists in, moral fortitude, and that persistent moral
weakness leads by inevitable steps from frustration and defeat to total destruction.

The re-evaluation of these four plays should also contribute to a new understanding of the development of Middleton's philosophical point of view throughout the entire canon.
APPENDIX A

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Master Russell
Lady Agar, sister of Master Russell
Colonell
Captaine Agar, son of Lady Agar
Fitzallen, in love with Jane
Jane, daughter of Master Russell
Physician
Anne, sister of the Physician
Chaugh, suitor to Jane
Trimtram, servant to Chaugh
Dutch Nurse
A Child, bastard of Jane and Fitzallen
Colonell's Second
Usher
Roarer
Vapor
Colonell's Sister
Surgeon
Lieutenant

Two Sergeants, Friends, Servants
APPENDIX B

An excerpt from "Did Not Rowley Merely Revise Middleton?" by W. D. Dunkel in Vol. XLVIII of PMLA (September, 1933), pp. 799-805:

In each of the plays [A Fair Quarrel, The Changeling, and The Spanish Gipsy] Miss Wiggin assigns the opening and closing scenes to both authors, the main plot to Middleton, and the minor action to Rowley. Curiously enough, however, the minor action of each play seems to me to present striking similarities to Middleton's dramatic method in his comedies of London life.

In A Fair Quarrel the minor action in the following points resembles Middleton's The Family of Love.

1. In both plays the girl is separated from her lover.
2. In both plays the girl is with child by her lover.
3. In both plays neither the father, nor the guardian, knows that the lover is father of the child.
4. In both plays the girl is apparently rejected after her fault is disclosed and the father, or the guardian, is willing that the lover marry the girl.
5. In both plays the lover stipulates the addition of "one thousand pounds" to the dowry, if he marries the girl.
6. In both plays the father, or the guardian, upon payment of "one thousand pounds" discovers that the lover is father of the child.
7. In both plays the father, or the guardian, though tricked holds no resentment.
8. In both plays the sensational dénouement of the minor action, coincident with the denouement of the main plot in the final scene of the play, receives the greater emphasis.
9. In both a physician is involved in the girl's case and is severely satirized.

Since Middleton's authorship of a portion of A Fair Quarrel has
not been doubted, these similarities cannot be dismissed as a curious coincidence. In these scenes, however, we must consider further resemblances to Middleton's methods and material. In *A Fair Quarrel*, Jane is wooed by Chough, a suitor selected by her father. Both Chough and Trimtram, his man, are satirized much as Middleton presents Tim Yellowhammer and his tutor in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. In both plays the young wooer is a caricature, has not previously seen the sweetheart selected for him, and makes a presumptuous fool of himself.

In *A Fair Quarrel* appears a Dutch nurse whose speech is for comic value. In Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, Tim Yellowhammer woos in Latin a Welshwoman who finding Tim "no Englishman" replies to him in Welsh. Though the use of a foreign language for comic value is a dramatic device not peculiar to Middleton, its use in a play bearing his name . . . favors Middleton's authorship of the scenes in which the device is used.

Concerning the opening and closing scenes . . . ascribed by Miss Wiggin to both authors, two points may be made. (1) Russell opens the play with a long soliloquy, a Middletonian habit, in which he declares that he has lived by his wits. Such is the assertion of Middleton's protagonists in his comedies of London life. (2) The ending of the play in its double trick - the perpetrator in turn has a trick played upon him - recalls the endings of Middleton's comedies of London life.
APPENDIX C

Excerpt from Act III, Scene 2 of the 1617 edition of *A Fair Quarrel* showing the speeches for the Dutch Nurse, p. F2r:

Enter Physitian, Jane, Anne, Dutch Nurse with the child.

Phys. Sweet Fro, to your most indulgent care,
    Take this my hearts joy. I must not tell you
    The valew of this jewell in my bosome.
Nur. Dat you may vell, sir, der can niet forstoore you.
Ph. Indeed I cannot tell you, you know Nurse,
    These are above the quantity of prise.
    Where is the glory of the goodliest trees
    But in the fruit and branches? The old stocke
    Must decay, and sprigs, fyens such as these
    Must become new stockes from us to glory,
    In their fruitfull issue. So we are made
    Immortall on by other.
Nur. You spreke a most lieben fader, and Ick sall do de best of tender
    Nurses to dis Infant, my prettie Frokin.
Phys. I know you will be loving. Here sweet friend. Give
    Heere's earnest of a large summe of love and coyne money,
    to quit your tender care.
Jane I have some reason too
    To purchase your deare care unto this Infant. Gives her money.
Nurs. You be de witnesse of de Baptime, dat is, as you
    spreken: de godimother, ick vell forstoor it so.
Jane Yes, I am the bad mother, if it be offence. Aside.
Anne I must be a little kinde too. Gives her money.
Nurs. Much tankes to you all. Dis child is much
    beloven, and Ick sall see much care over it.
Phys. Farewell good sister. Show her the way forth. I shall often visite
    you, kind Nurse.
Nurs. You sall be welcome.
APPENDIX D


The motto of King James was "Beati Pacifici." Both in Scotland . . . and later in England . . ., he labored untiringly to put down domestic strife, including the custom of dueling, and to avoid foreign war. "He was of a peacable disposition," writes Fuller. "Indeed, when he first entered England at Berwick, he himself gave fire to, and shot off, a piece of ordnance, and that with good judgment. This was the only military act personally performed by him. So that he may have seemed in that cannon to have discharged war out of England." (Thomas Fuller, The Church History of Britain (London, 1837), III, 326) And since James was a truly well-lettered monarch, the causes that engaged his sympathies were likely to engage his literary patronage, or even his own pen.

The available evidence as to the true nature of the pamphlet is sufficient to establish three points. First, King James did in fact interest himself personally in arranging for the license, and his interest is understandable in terms of his literary practice. Second, the style of the pamphlet, both in the preface and in the main text, is unlike that of James, but shows points of kinship with other work by Middleton. Middleton was not parodying or otherwise imitating James; he was writing like himself. Third, a few passages in the pamphlet have as their true author not Middleton but Bacon.

The original license for sole publication may be seen at the Public
Record Office, where it is filed as S. P. 39: 9 (42). The text, on a single large sheet, commends the well-beloved Thomas Middleton, indicates a desire to recompense him for "this his pious works," of which it indicates the gist, and otherwise tells us only what we know already from the calendars. What the calendars do not indicate is that at the foot of the sheet there is a memorandum addressed to the king:

It may please Yo'r most exalted Majesty

This Bill conteyneth yo'r Majestie licence and priviledge vnto William Alley, during seven yeares, (at ye nomination of Thomas Middleton) for ye sole printing, and selling, of a small booke, lately made by the said Midleton, called the Peacemaker, or Great Brittain's blessing, according to ye forme vsuall in such cases.

Signified to be yo'r Majestie pleasure by Mr Secretary Naunton/ Thomas Coventrye.

The king affixed his signature. And we can thus be certain not only that The Peace-Maker was licensed with his personal knowledge and approval, but that he thought enough of the project to have his secretary of state (Naunton) tell his solicitor-general (Coventry) to draw up a license that might make the publication a profitable one for Middleton.

..............

Though dueling was slow to disappear, James's expressions against it, the writings which he encouraged, and the rigor of the penalties could hardly have lacked effect. Baldwin Maxwell has shown that specific condemnation of duelling begins to appear in the Beaumont and Fletcher plays from about 1616 onwards. ("The Attitude Toward the Duello in the Beaumont and Fletcher Plays," Studies in Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1939), pp. 84 ff.)

..............
In composing *The Peace-Maker*, Middleton blocked out his work in five parts. . . . an important topic . . . was to be the theme of the fourth section: this was the evils of dueling. And for this it was really not enough to reiterate denunciations of unbrotherly strife, though Middleton gives some space to just that. But the official attack on dueling was based on a broader range of argument. And in what looks like an attempt to supply a possible defect in his own discourse, he took a copy of *The Charge of Sir Francis Bacon Knight*, published four years earlier, and cheerfully helped himself to some choice passages.
APPENDIX E


Another favorite character of sentimental drama is the "repentant rake."

The reader or spectator is treated to a picture of a seemingly vicious young man indulging himself in various interesting forms of dissipation, practicing physical or mental cruelty on some unoffending and good female, and endangering the lives or well-being of other persons. Sometimes the dramatist inserts little hints whose (sic) purpose is to warn one that Bellmour (there are a surprising number of Bellmours) is only sowing his wild oats and is really a decent sort of fellow at heart. Often the reader is totally unprepared for Bellmour's reform. How, then, does the playwright try to make the fifth act reformation of his rake credible? Granting, only for purposes of argument, that any of the reformation of sentimental drama are credible, the answer is simple. The dramatist crowds into his last act as many speeches as he can give his repentant rake and still untangle all his plot complications. These speeches are wordy expressions of contrition and promises of turning over a new leaf, and they are made to every character from whom the rake feels he needs forgiveness. The rake protests so much that what he says is accepted. The viciousness of his career in the first four acts is overlooked as he kneels, vociferating feverishly, at the feet of his father, or his wife or his beloved, pleading for forgiveness.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Periodical Articles


Christian, M. G. "Middleton's Acquaintance with the 'Merrie Conceited Jests of George Peele'," PMLA, L (September, 1935), 753-60.


Dunkel, W. D. "Did Not Rowley Merely Revise Middleton?" PMLA, XLVII (September, 1933), 799-805.


Dissertations


VITA AUCTORIS

1947/8 On active service as seaman in the Royal Canadian Navy.


1951/7 On active service as aircrew officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

1957 Appointed Inspector, Civil Aviation, Federal Department of Transport.

1959 Bachelor of Arts Degree from University College, University of Western Ontario.

1961 Graduated from the Ontario College of Education, University of Toronto, Ontario.

1961 Admitted to Graduate Studies in English Language and Literature at Assumption University of Windsor, Ontario.

1963 Granted Graduate Assistantship in the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Windsor, Ontario.

1963 Awarded Ontario Provincial Fellowship for Graduate Studies.