CHAPTER VII

DRAMATIC THEORIES AND PRACTICES
After realizing the conscientious efforts of Dekker and Heywood to instruct the middle-class through their plays, it seems worthwhile to know their views on dramatic art in general and their own work in particular. For, a dramatist's works can be understood better with reference to his own views on dramatic art, however casually expressed they might have been. The general climate of artistic opinion and the context of ideas in which he lived, the principles which guided his composition, will help us to a proper understanding of an artist's work. A knowledge of these factors will be of immense help to avoid many errors in our assessment resulting from a taste and expectations typical of our age. Of course, it is impossible to step into the shoes of the Elizabethans and to react to their plays exactly as they did. Nor is this wholly desirable. All the same, a knowledge of the dramatic theories and practices of Dekker and Heywood will serve as a proper corrective against what may be called anachronistic standards of judgment and process of understanding - a corrective essential for a just evaluation.

The literary climate and the artistic conventions of the age, their births, education and environment, their political and religious beliefs, apprenticeship to the stage, all these and other factors had their share in the formation of the views of Dekker and Heywood. Though some of these aspects are touched upon, wherever necessary, this chapter is directly concerned with the dramatic theories and practices of Dekker and Heywood.
Elizabethan criticism at its best may appear to us as criticism "in the making," but, both these dramatists have felt that they are living in an age of enormous critical activity. They are very much alive to the contemporary theories of drama, problems involved in its production and all the disputes connected with it. Dekker's Satiromastix, a reply to Jonson's The Poetaster, occupies an important place in the 'stage war'. Apart from the occasional asides in his plays revealing his intimate knowledge of his audience, Dekker gives an authentic account of staging and the tastes and 'behaviour' of different kinds of people in his Guls Horn-Book. Heywood's An Apology for Actors is the most systematic defence of the stage against the Puritan attack. He was the first to plan a general history of "the Lives of all the Poets, foreign and modern" and he speaks of almost all his contemporaries with singular intimacy and friendliness.


3. Much of the fundamental evidence of the Elizabethan staging and audience is derived from the prose works of Dekker. A full information of the Elizabethan audience and stage and the importance of Dekker's works for this purpose is found in Alfred Harbage's Shakespeare's Audience.

4. For a detailed account see Introduction to An Apology for Actors, Shakespeare Society, pp.XIV-XVI.
Heywood is "an interesting representative of the more conscious artist" and he expressed his views on drama clearly and systematically. So, practically there is no difficulty in studying his critical opinions. But, in the case of Dekker it is less easy as most of his plays were written in collaboration with others and very often published without critical prefaces. To a large extent, his critical opinions and principles can be deduced from his plays and from what he said in the occasional prefaces and prologues. But such deductions lack the convincing ring and authority of direct personal statement.

Both Dekker and Heywood are of middle-class origin and probably Dekker's education would not have been anything more than his training at the 'Merchant Tailors' school. Heywood studied at Cambridge and he was a good scholar; he had an intimate knowledge of the classical authors and continental critics. Dekker never speaks of the classical authors and critics, and


6. Supporting the view of Grosart Earnest Rhys in his introduction to Thomas Dekker, Mermaid Edition, P.XI, says that Dekker was a student of the 'Merchant-tailor's' school. Recently, R.G. Howarth in N.Q. Vol. 199, Feb. 1954, p.52, observed that Dekker was referred to in the records as 'the poet' not as a pupil. No one, however, doubts, the fact that he had some school education.

7. "In the time of my residence in Cambridge, I have seen tragedies, comedies, historyes, pastorals, and shewes, publickly acted....". An Apology for Actors, Shakespeare Society, p.28.

8. cf. Ibid., p.49.
what may be called Heywood's classicism has little connection
with his practice as a writer. Both of them wrote as typical
authors of the times. Therefore, only those views of Dekker and
Heywood which are the result of their own experience are taken
into account. There may not be much that is profoundly origi-
nal in their critical reflections; neither of them recommend or
defend literature as Walter Pater did on aesthetic grounds. But,
as the opinions of the typical Elizabethan dramatists, their
views help us, by their very sound basis in practice, to under-
stand the dispensation under which both of them worked. Dekker's
Satiromastix deserves all that is said against it as a play, but
it reveals his views on dramatic art more than anyone of his
other works. In his attempt of 'Vntrussing of the Humorous Poet',
Ben Jonson, the versatile Dekker sought to combine with the pur-
poses of dramatic entertainment those of a literary manifesto.
As much of the theatrical gossip and many factors connected with
the dispute remain unrecorded, it is very difficult to give
the exact cause for the 'stage war'. It has been viewed

9. "These are typical examples of his opinions as an avowed
classicist. But his own work was written according to
different and less exacting theories". A.M. Clark: Thomas

10. The sub-title of Satiromastix. Dramatic works, ed, Bowers,
as a quarrel between two groups of dramatists, as an antagonism between two rival companies, and as a "clash between the older and the newer forms of playwriting". From a study of all the plays involved in this controversy it can be said that the quarrel between Dekker and Jonson was to a large extent a dispute between two artists with different ideologies. Both of them had worked together for Henslowe in 1599 and the collaboration ended in a dispute. By 1600 the quarrel culminated as Jonson's attack in Cynthia's Revels indicates. In 1601 The Fopstaster and Satiromastix were produced and the antagonism assumed almost alarming proportions. Jonson, being a classicist with strong views on dramatic art and its purpose, did not evidently approve of the simpler vein of Dekker whom he considered as a 'fellow of prodigal tongue' and 'a simple honest fellow'.


12. R.B. Sharpe: The Real War of the Theatres, finds the 'real war' in the antagonism between the Chamberlain's Men and Admiral's Men.

13. 'The War of the Theaters' represents the first clash between the older and the newer forms of playwriting. Shakespeare and Dekker stood for the old and Jonson for the new". M.C. Bradbrook, The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy, p. 6.

14. They produced together a play called The Page of Plymouth, a tragedy presenting a contemporary murder in 1599. In the same year they were also engaged to write a play Robert the Second. Both the plays are lost. See Henslowe's ed., Diary ed, Foakes and Rickert. pp. 123-124.
Dekker possessed little more than 'small Latine and lesse Greeke' and his production at this time was 'prodigal' enough to provoke one like Jonson. Jonson in his *Cynthia's Revels* condemned the popular style of playwriting, especially, that of Marston and Dekker. In *The Poetaster* he became too personal and ridiculed them directly. Crites in *Cynthia's Revels* says about Marston and Dekker:

I thynke but what they are, and am not stirr'd,
The one a light voluptuous reueller,
The other a strange arrogating paffe,
Both impudent, and arrogant enough;
That talk (as they are wont) not as I merit:
Traduce by custome, as most dogges doe barke,
Doe nothing out of judgement, but disease,
Speak ill, because they never could speake well

Dekker took these words very seriously and determined to give a reply. His intention in writing *Satiromastix* was not to

15. During the years 1598 and 1602 Dekker was very active in his production. He produced eight plays single handed and nearly twenty plays in collaboration. See D.N.B. Vol. V, p.747.


17. Dekker gives the same words to his Horace (Jonson) in his *Satiromastix*:

"I thynke but what they are, and am not moo u'd.
The one a light voluptuous Reueller,
The other, a strange arrogating paffe,
Both impudent, and arrogant enough".

18. That somehow Jonson came to know of Dekker's plan of writing *Satiromastix* as a reply to him is evident from these words of Demetrius (Dekker) in *The Poetaster*.

"Our muse is in mind for the untrussing of a poet
I slip by they name, for most men do know it".
take 'revenge' not to defend the reputations of popular dramatists and their art. He reminds Jonson that all that is easier to the general, and not, jure factu, be great art. Dekker's answer is very apt and it is free from all personal acerbity.

**In truth we doe, out of our loues we come, and not revenge, but if you strike vs still, We must defend our reputations: Our pens shall like our swords be always sheath'd, Unlesse too much provoquet, Horace if then They draw bloud of you, blame vs not, we are men: Come, let they Muse beare vp a smoother sayle, Tis the easiest and basest Arte to raile.**

Dekker disapproved Jonson's presentation of life as a detached demonstrator and he strongly objected to his satirical portraiture of citizen life. He is always in favour of the popular style of drama in his theory as well as practice.

19. "Demetrius seems to have no bitterness towards Horace but in every speech exhibits a magnanimity that is in sharp contrast with the arrogant and self sufficient tone of Jonson's satirical plays". J.H. Penniman. *The War of the Theatres*, p.134. cf. also. F.T. Bowers words that "Dekker no where takes the obvious course and criticises Jonson ..." T.L.S. *Saturday Sep. 12, 1930*, p.729.


21. Jonson himself was aware of Dekker's opinion about his art. Demetrius remarks about Jonson.

"Alas, sir, Horace! Hee is a meere spunge; nothing but humours and observation; he goes vp and downe sucking from every society, and where hee comes home, squeazes himselfe again". *The Poetaster*, ed, Herford and Simpson, Vol. IV, III, iii, p.269, 104-107.

22. "A Gentleman or an honest citizen shall not Sit in your pennie-bench Theatres, ... but he shall be Satyr'd, and Epigram'd upon, and his humour must run up' the stage; You'll ha, Every Gentleman in's humour, and Every Gentleman out on's humour ..." Satiromastix ed, Bowers, Vol. I, pp.355-356, IV, ii, 52-59.
Heywood in his *An Apology for Actors* justifies drama on the ground that it offers many moral and utilitarian advantages to ordinary people.  

Plays inculcate patriotism, teach obedience to king and law, persuade men to humanity and good life, instruct them in civility and good manners and show in concrete terms "the fruits of honesty, and the end of all villany." Comedies reprove foolish lovers, warn young men against loose women and usurers. Comedies are "pleasantly contrived with merry accidents, and intermixed with apt and witty jests, to present before the Prince at certain times of solemnity, or else merily filled to the stage. And what is then the subject of this harmlesse mirth? either in the shape of a clowne to shew others their slovenly and untausome behaviour, that they may reforme that simplicity in themselves, which others make

23. "First, playing is an ornament to the city, ... Secondly, our English tongue, which hath ben the most harsh, uneven, and broken language ... is now by this secondary meanes of playing continually refined, ... Thirdly, playes have made the ignorant more apprehensive, taught the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories, instructed such as cannot reade in the discovery of all our English chronicles; ... being possest of their true use, for or because playes are writ with this ayme, and carriedy with this methode, to teach their subjects obedience to their king, to shew the people the untimely ends of such as have moved tumults, commotions, and insurrections, to present them with the flourishing estate of such as live in obedience, exhorting them to allegiance, dehorting them from all trayterous and fellowious stratagems."


24. Ibid., p.53.
their sport..."25 Plays provide ideal examples and offer useful practical lessons from which any earnest human being can derive immense benefit. In brief, according to Heywood, there is no form of drama which does not offer immense advantage.26 Inculcation of the ethics of civility and patriotism, propagation of the much desired domestic virtues of constancy, obedience and patience, the proper use of entertainment and the importance of righteous ways of life and the necessity of good manners are the main principles upon which Heywood worked in his plays. The same principles are implied in Dekker's domestic plays.

Dekker and Heywood, in conformity with their principles, not only tried to entertain and instruct the middle-class but also constantly protested against the satirical presentation of the citizen life. These too gentle and unusually tolerant men speak with an unanimous tone of indignation and protest whenever they refer to the satirical drama of that 'learned packe'! Heywood mentions this class of satirical plays as an exception to his defence of drama. "Now, to speake of some abuse lately crept into the quality, as an inveighing against the state, the court, the law, the city, and their governments, with the particularizing of private men's humors (yet alive),

26. "Briefly, there is neither tragedy, history, comedy, morrall, or pastorall, from which an infinite use cannot be gathered". Ibid., p.54.
noble-men, and others: I know it distastes many; neither do I
any way approv: it, nor dare I by any means excuse it".27

Heywood stands supreme among his contemporaries in his
philanthropic efforts to impart classical knowledge to the
London middle-class. "Lyly, Peele, Marlowe and Nashe had all
written myth-plays for boys' companies; Dekker, Chettle, Rowley
and, the greatest of them all, Shakespeare had gone back to
Greek or Roman history and legend for subject-matter for dramas
to be presented by their own companies; but Heywood alone wrote
specifically to gratify and educate the bourgeoisie".28 His
Four Ages is a 'serious labour' meant to

Unlocke the Casket long time shut,
Of which none but the learned keep the key.29

Then it is no wonder if these plays were a roaring success upon
the stage. The resources of his company were exhausted and in
order to meet the public demand two companies were joined together.
Heywood particularly draws our attention to this fact.

"I desire thee to take notice, that these were the playes
often (and not with the least applause) publickly acted by two
companies upon one stage at once, and haue at Sundry times

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28. Nowbrye Velt: The Bourgeois Elements in the Dramas of
Thomas Heywood, p.43.
p.35.
through three severall Theatres, with numerous and mighty Auditories".30 J.Q. Adams convincingly established that the other company was Shakespeare's, the King's Men, and that Shakespeare was associated with the efforts to popularise classical stories among theatre goers and himself took part in the performance of the plays".31

Dekker also wrote mainly for the citizen audience and he never dedicated his works to a highly placed patron. He offered his best play "To all good Fellowes, Professors of Gentle Gaft; of what degree so ever".32 Without being 'vulgar' he tried to make his plays easily intelligible to the ordinary people:

"... We present
Matter aboue the vulgar Argument:
Yet drawne so liuely, that the weakest eye,
(Through those thin vails we hang between your sight,
And this our piece) may reach the mystery:
What in it is most graue, will most delight"33

Apart from these direct declarations it is easy to realise from his celebration of ideal craftsmen, honest apprentices and constant women and the unmistakable tone of didacticism that Dekker's aim in his plays was not solely to please the middle-class


but also to provide instructive examples.

In their unflinching enthusiasm for the stage and their desire to please the audience Dekker and Heywood were complaint with the times. They were very often under-estimated on this account. Dekker himself knows that Jonson 'callist Demetrius Journeyman poet' and many critics have said much to the effect that Heywood "was willing to trim his sails to any wind". But, this kind of adjustment to the changes of taste of the audience was not something peculiar to these two dramatist alone. Every professional dramatist of the age adapted himself to the shifting fashions of the times. Even Jonson who had nothing but contempt for the 'common sort', realised that the art of making plays was 'to content the people' and admitted at least once:

Our wishes, like those make public feasts,
Are not to please the cook's taste but the guests

Theatre was all in all to both of them and they wrote mainly for the stage without much expectation or ambitions to be


35. Ben Jonson prologue to Epicoene (1609). Dr. Klein gives this passage and comments "Nothing could be more direct; therefore it is the more difficult to explain. Perhaps he said it only because he thought it wiser to introduce his play to his audience that way. Later he omitted this prolog substituting another". David Klein Literary Criticism from the Elizabethan Dramatists, p.116.
"voluminously read" by posterity. Hence, they were not anxious to publish their plays until they were compelled to give a genuine text (of their plays) to counteract the inc unrigible pirated editions. In fact, Heywood considered the publication of his plays, mainly intended for the stage, as double dealing. To avoid 'the greater suspicions of honesty' he explains, probably with a sly dig at Ben Jonson:

"... for, though some have used a double sale of their labours, first to the stage, and after to press, for my own part I have proclaim myself ever faithful in the first, and never guilty of the last". 37

As professional dramatists writing for the public theatres they show a keen practical sense of the stage. They realise the occasional necessity of giving some concessions to popular

36. "True it is, that my plays are not exposed unto the world in volumes, to bear the title of works, as others ... it never was any great ambition in me, to be in this kind voluminously read". Heywood, to the Reader, The English Traveller, Mermaid Edition, p.154. Dekker, seems to have derived full "satisfaction upon the stages approbation". See The Noble Spanish Soldier, ed, Bowers, Vol. IV, p.239.

37. Heywood, to the Reader. The Rape of Lucrece. Mermaid Edition, p.329. We have reasons enough to believe that Heywood has Jonson in his mind when he made these remarks. In 1600 Jonson published Everyman out of his Humour, perhaps without the permission of Chamberlains Men. On the 4th of August his Everyman in his Humour was stayed from printing by the same company. "Jonson has thus apparently committed a breach of recognised etiquette, if not of literary honesty by selling to a printer a play which he had previously sold to the players". G.B. Harrison: Elizabethan Plays and Players, p.255.
taste. The following words from *Love's Mistress*, a 'banquet academical' between Art and Ignorance, show that Heywood gave such a concession with full awareness.

Midas: I'll shew thee in a dance

Apuleius: Art some-times must give way to Ignorance. 38

Similarly Dekker in *The Shoemakers' Holiday* promises his audience a sight of the "merriments that passed in Eyres house, ... with two merry three-mens songs". 39 Nevertheless, he is suspicious of the whims of individual tastes and is fully aware of the danger which lies in an attempt to please all. He tells in his *The Roaring Girl*.

If we to every braine (that's humorous)
Should fashion Scenees, we (with the Painter) 40
In striving to please all, please none at all.

Though both of them did not hesitate to grant now and then what the public demanded, Dekker and Heywood were careful enough to see that these concessions did not exceed the limits of decency. About *A Maidenhead well Lost* Heywood assures that "there is nothing herein contained, which doth deviate either from Modesty or good Manners". 41 Similarly Dekker in


his "merrie conceited Comedy" cites the approval of no less a judge than Queen Elizabeth herself.42

We have every reason to believe that Dekker and Heywood thought very carefully about the themes of their plays. Heywood never directly questioned the Renaissance concept that the theme of a tragedy must be lofty and dignified. But, the then current enthusiasm for high subjects did not blind him to the inherent tragic potentialities of the local themes familiar to everybody. He realised that these 'slender arguments', even if they do not rise to the magnitude of the 'tragedia coturnata', are good enough for a different type of tragedy, the domestic tragedy. His originality did not merely consist in discovering and tapping the innate dramatic potentialities of the native themes but in his numerous conscientious attempts to show, in his theory as well as in his practice, that the native themes could be used as proper subject for comedy and tragedy. He regretted that his contemporaries neglected such themes.

Nor blame I their quick fancies, who can fit
These queasie Times, with Humours flash't in wit,
Whose Art I both incourage and commend;
I only wish that they would sometimes bend
To memorise the valours of such men,
Whose very names might dignify the Pen.43

Heywood held a very high opinion of the drama of his age. He went

to the extent of saying that the native drama was far superior
to that of any other nation on the ground that its themes were
more signified than those of the other

They do not build their projects on that ground
Nor have their phrases half the weight and sound
Our labored Scenes have had.44

Dekker also took up native themes with a similar zeal.
He knows that such themes are considered by the 'judicious few'
as unworthy of poetic treatment. About the subject of The
Roaring Girl he says that:

Some perhaps do flaoute
The plot, saying; 'tis too thinne, too weake, too meane
Some for the person will reuile the Scoene.
And wonder, that a creature of her being
Should bee the subject of a Poet, seeing
In the worlds eie, none weightes so light ... 45

Heywood shows a remarkably extensive knowledge of the dramatic
practice of his times. He gives a vivid account of the
tremendous exploration of the dramatists of his age to satisfy
the swift whirlgig of taste. All the plays once acted with

44. Heywood: Prologue to A Challenge for Beauty, Pearson Edi-
tion, Vol. V, p.3.
46. "To give content to this most curious age,
The Gods themselves we have brought downe to the Stage,
And figur'd them in Planets; made even Hell
Deliver up the Furies, by no spell
(Saving the Muses rapture) further, we
Have traffickt by their helpe no History
We have left unrifled; ..... 
... nay, 'tis knowne,
That when our Chronicles have barren grown
Of Story, we have all Invention stretcht,
Dev'd low as to the Center, and then reach'd
Unto the primum mobile above.
Prologue to The Royall King and The Lovall Subject, Pearson
success in the stage, should be preserved for reasons both
'just and pregnant'. He repeatedly argued that a play written
at a particular time need not be despised by the succeeding
generations simply because it does not appeal to their tastes
and on this account it should not be left unpublished. The
same style of writing, as in dress, may come into fashion again.
Keeping these facts in mind, he requests his reader not to be
too fastidious and circumscribed by the current trends in his
judgment:

With rigour therefore judge not, but with reason,
Since what you read was fitted to that season.47

Fully conscious of the limitations of his themes, Heywood
asks his readers not to expect anything more than what could be
raised from such subjects.48 The immediate aim he has in his
mind is not to produce great works of dramatic art, but to
educate the ordinary people through delightful examples. Not
even Shakespeare, when he was writing for the stage thought that
he was producing literary masterpieces. Naturally Heywood is
very modest in his literary claims for his plays. He is satisfied
if people derived:

47. "Prologue to The Royall King and The Loyall Subject, Pearson
Edition, Vol. VI, p.84. cf. also his dedicatory epistle
prefixed to The Four Prentices of London, Pearson Edition,

48. "An Argument so thin, persons so low
Can neither yeeld much matter, nor great show,
Expect no more than can from such be rais'd,
So may the Scene passe pardon'd, though not prais'd.
Some mirth, some matter and perhaps some wit.  

He never promised anything more than this. But he is sure that even if his plays fail to please some people they will not offend them; even if they are not praised they will be pardoned; and, it is very difficult to dislike Heywood even at his worst. This amiable modesty was often misunderstood for lack of judgment. He was confident that his plays are not "so despicable as to be held unworthy of the countenance of great men", and was aware that they were approved by the 'greatest and the best in kingdom'. At least once he plainly spoke of his 'serious labour' and constantly maintained that his plays were worthy of reading. The singular care with

49. He only tries if once bare lines will bear it: Yet may't afforé, so please you silent sit, Some mirth, some matter, and perhaps some wit. 


52. About his Four Ages he says that 'if the grace they had then in Actings, take not away the expected luster, hoped for in the Reading, I shall then hold thee well pleased, and therein, my selfe fully satisfied." Iron Age, Pearson Edition, Vol. III, p.264. cf. also This hath beene frequently, and publickly Acted without exception, and I presume may be freely read without distaste; and of all generall. To the Reader, A Maidenhead Well Lost, Vol. IV, pp.90-100.
which he prepared some of his plays for the press is proof enough for his modesty if not a staunch faith in the value of his works. He believed that his *Iron Age* was far superior to ancient drama.53 These instances are enough to show that he considered his works as literature not as hackwork and his estimate of his own work is fairly correct. Heywood should have considered *A Woman Killed with Kindness* not only as a good play but as 'the best' one. This is evident from the epilogue:

Unto this wind we allude our play;
*   *   *
And bid you welcome to the best we have.54

Dr. Clark’s view that Heywood’s “modesty reassures him and, unlike Ben, he convinces himself that, as his hackwork is not literature, the rules do not apply”55 has therefore no direct support from his works. The sheet a day which Kirkman said, Heywood wrote,56 his 'right happy and copious industry”57 alluded to by Webster, his own claim for 220 plays and self-avowed desire to delight the audience and his modesty have circumstantially

53. X cf. The dedication, *The Iron Age* "... as it exceeds the strict limits of the ancient Comedy (then in use) in forme, so it transcends them many degrees; both in the fulness of the Scene, and gravity of the Subject". Pearson Edition, Vol. III, p.261.


56. See the Introduction to Mermaid Edition, p.IX.

lent themselves to such a view. This is one of the instances when modesty and artistic humility are mistaken for lack of faith in the value of one's work and self-judgment.

For anyone who reads Heywood with sympathy it becomes clear that his writing did not fail to give what he promised. Though his scholarly humility prevented him from making high literary claims for his plays he never considered them as light ephemeral pieces. As we have seen, he apologised in his prologues and introductions mainly because he was fully aware of the novelty of his plays. He took up native and local themes at a time when the audience as well as the judicious wits esteemed lofty themes and classical forms like the Senecan tragedy. This contemporary literary fashion necessitated the apologetic tone with which his plays dealing with 'native' and 'home-born' themes are introduced. In his modest apologies and moderate literary claims for his works there is not even a single instance when Heywood despised anyone of his plays or expressed a very low opinion of his work. On the contrary, from the available evidence we have already gathered, the opposite of the view of Martin seems to be the truth. He was optimistic and published some of his earliest works long after

their production especially a time when the style was no longer in the current fashion. He revised his plays for the press with fastidious care and did not fight shy to acknowledge his prolific production of two hundred and twenty plays and regretted that they were lost in different ways.

There is hardly an instance when our dramatists speak in defence of the three unities advocated by some scholarly theoreticians and dramatists. In their practice all the dramatists, with the few well known exceptions, flouted the three unities. Evidently, they realised from their practical experience that the rigid classical frame is not flexible enough to suit the new themes, times and tastes. Dekker fully realised the poetic necessity of employing new devices "as the storie needs", and in such instances when he has to tread a 'novell path'

59. "... then knowing withall, that it comes short of that accuratenesse both in Plot and Stile, that these more Censorious dayes with greater curiosity acquire, I must thus excuse. That as Playes were then some fifteen or sixteen years ago it was in the Fashion" The Four Prentices of London, Pearson Edition, Vol. II, p.162.

60. "He that expects fiue short Acts can containe Each circumstance of these things we present, Me thinkes should shew more barrennesse than braine:" Homer's words of epilogue to Brazen Age. Pearson Edition, Vol. III, p.255.

61. ".... our muse untreats, Your thoughts to help poor Art, and to allow, That I may serve as chorus to hee seems, She begs your pardon, for shule send me foorsch, Not when the lawes of poetry doe call, But as the storie needes. Prologue to Old Fortunatus ed. Bowers, Vol. I, p.115, 18-23.
he tells us that he is "free from foolish boldness or base dread", 62 He insisted on the freedom of the poet in dealing with historical material. 63 But he is not a carefree writer vamping out plays without artistic considerations. He knows the artistic labour involved in writing a play and is pitifully aware of how a play is cast away without any compunctions once it serves the purpose:

If so many none, and midnights spent
To reap three howres of mirth ...

* * *

Much labour, Art, and wit, make up a Play
As it does a Ship, yet both are cast away,
(When bravely they have past the humorous seas) 64

This frank avowal of artistic compulsion to adopt new devices suitable for the new themes was not singular to Dekker alone. Heywood too realised that the narrow compass of the classical mould was not adequate for his needs and felt that it was no longer valid in many instances. In his opinion the classical plays and the plays of other nations based on classical models are 'farre' different from the plays of his times;

62. "... for tho the Muse
(Thats thus inspire'de) a Novell path does tread,
Shee's free from foolish boldness, or base dread.

63. Ibid, P.497. "And whereas I may, ... be critically taxed, that I fasifie the account of time ... know that I write as a Poet, not as an Historian, and that these two doe not liue under one law".

64. Dekker: in Epilogue to If this Be Not a Good Play, ed, Bowers, Vol. III, p.212, 4-9.
and as compared with his contemporary English drama, the neo-
classical drama of Italy and France look more like "jigs" than plays. Therefore he regarded proper transcending of
classical limitations as a sign of real development and pro-
gress in dramatic art.

Both Dekker and Heywood thought about the function of
poetry in drama. It is from Dekker, of whom Lamb said that he
has 'poetry enough for anything', that we get the most instruc-
tive and authentic account of the effect of dramatic poetry
upon the audience. He extols the dramatist:

Who when the Plague of an Impostumd Braynes,
(B reaking-out) infects a Theater, and hotly raignes,
Killing the Hearers hearks, that the vast rooms
Stand empty, like so many Dead-mens toombes,
Can call the Banished Auditor home, And tye
His Eare (with golden chaines) to his Melody:
Can draw with Adamantine Pen (euen creatures
Forg'de out of th' Hammer), on tip toe, to Reach-vp,
And (from Rare silence) clap their Brawny hands,
T' Applaud, what their charmed soule scarce understands
That man give me; ....

Such was the control a skilful and trained dramatist can
have on the audience. This was Dekker's ideal of the successful

65. "The Roman and Athenian Drammaes faree
Differ from us, And those that frequent are
In Italy and France, even these days,
Compared with ours, are rather jigs than playes;
Like of the Spanish may be said, and Dutch,
None verst in language but confesses them such

66. Thomas Dekker: Prologue to If This be Not a Good Play,
dramatist and it was his wish to be one such:

... to bee such-a-one
Our poet (this day) striues, or to bee None ... 67

Modest as he was, Heywood is very moderate in his conception of the function of poetry in drama. He believed that it was enough if the poetry was adequate for the particular dramatic situation, and suited the nature of the theme. It should be easy, smooth and natural, for, its function was to convey the meaning clearly and directly. This is the ideal he advocated in many of his prefaces, prologues, epilogues and dedications; though he fell short of his ideal many a time in his own practice, in theory he is an apostle of simplicity and conciseness in an age not much bothered in making its literary out put plainly intelligible to the populace.

These scattered critical reflections of Dekker and Heywood may not constitute a coherent dramatic theory; but, their comments tell us much about the natural leanings of the authors, their innate interest, preferences, points of view and where they agree with or differ from their contemporaries. These occasional critical asides are enough of a testimony to the fact that they were serious about their craft, and thought carefully about all that they were doing. The common idea that they have no artistic considerations is surely superficial.

67. Thomas Dekker: Prologue to If This be Not a Good Play, ed, Bowers, Vol. III, p.121, 43-44.
From a study of their critical opinions with reference to their actual dramatic practise it is impossible to believe that either Dekker or Heywood, as many of their critics believe, is completely devoid of artistic conscience and nothing more than a 'facile and felicitious purveyor to popular taste'. Both of them are serious literary artists and conscientious craftsmen; they wrote their plays with definite ideals of method and purpose. As practice always preceded theory, or, in other words, their critical remarks are prompted by their practical experience, their works usually embody their principles, of course, with some unavoidable discrepancies.

Both were steeped in the current \textit{milieu} and \textit{ethos} of the middle-class its ideology, morality and humour - a class to which both of them belonged - and made wholehearted attempts to educate the people through entertainment. They portrayed familiar incidents from the common life around them, the very incidents and situations with which they were thoroughly. They indulged in hackwork and collaboration out of necessity and none among their contemporaries could escape it. It was not an age when one can make a living by writing a single masterpiece. The apparent hurry and carelessness is due, at least in part, to the conditions and the companies in which they worked. They did not write for the citizen audience neither unconsciously nor uncritically, but with a definite ideology and purpose with a thoroughness, spontaneous concern and wholehearted relish which almost amounts to personal involvement.
Their innate nature, ideals, points of view, their equipment and training, their very genius were exactly suited to the Domestic drama and this was largely responsible for their success in this genre. All these factors account for the survival of their domestic plays as works of art and their enduring interest as plays long after the extinction of the particular social context in which they were written.