

**JOHN FLETCHER: A
STUDY IN
DRAMATIC METHOD**

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John Fletcher: A Study in Dramatic Method by Orie Latham Hatcher

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ORIE LATHAM HATCHER

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DRAMATIC METHOD**

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The University of Chicago
FOUNDED BY JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

JOHN FLETCHER

A STUDY IN
DRAMATIC METHOD

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND LITERA-
TURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH)

BY
ORIE LATHAM HATCHER

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PREFACE.

A word is needed as to the topics chosen for discussion and the order of their arrangement.

The study makes no attempt at being exhaustive in its range of topics, but aims to bring into prominence certain of Fletcher's traits as a dramatist which deserve more attention than they have yet received. His poetical gifts, metrical qualities, and diction, have been fully and frequently treated elsewhere, and for this reason are not given a large share of attention here.

The investigation into Fletcher's *Choice and Treatment of Sources* and the discussion of his *Mastery of Stagecraft* are properly both parts of Chapter V on *General Dramatic Method*, but on account of their bulk and significance, each has been given a separate chapter, the one serving as an introduction and the other as a conclusion to the main chapter.

The last chapter, on *Spirit of the Comedies*, may be open to criticism as being beyond the limits laid down by the subject. It is included, however, because an understanding of Fletcher's characteristic mood and attitude has seemed a prime necessity to any full comprehension of his methods of work.

Among those who have helped me in the preparation of this study, Professors A. H. Tolman and R. M. Lovett, of the University of Chicago, and L. T. Damon, of Brown University, have been exceedingly kind and helpful in the way of criticism and suggestion, and Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, formerly of the University of Pennsylvania, has rendered me a valuable service in placing in my hands his study—still unpublished—of the sources of the Beaumont-Fletcher plays. To Prof. A. H. Thorndike, of Northwestern University, also I am very greatly indebted, not only for his cordial courtesy to a stranger in consenting to read the proof sheets, but for very helpful comments, especially in connection with the last chapter. To Prof. F. I. Carpenter, of the University of Chicago, however, my most grateful acknowledgment is due. He suggested the undertaking, placed at my disposal the Beaumont-Fletcher folios and other rare books needed, and at every turn has stimulated and guided my work.

ORIS L. HATCHER.

Bryn Mawr College, May, 1905.

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I.

INTRODUCTION: PROBLEMS OF AUTHORSHIP
IN THE BEAUMONT-FLETCHER PLAYS.

The history of opinion as to the authorship of the Beaumont-Fletcher plays shows the gradual re-emergence of two identities from the close literary partnership with which the names are associated in the popular mind. That some distinction was made between the two dramatists in their own day is to be inferred from the fact that each is known to have written separately during the period of their collaboration,¹ and also from the documentary evidence which indicates that many of the plays commonly attributed to both were not produced until after Beaumont's death.²

It is obvious, however, that the lines of demarcation between the two early became confused; for already in 1618-19 Drummond reports Jonson as saying that "Flesher and Beaumont, ten yeers since, hath written *The Faithfull Shipheardesse*, a tragicomedie well done,"³ whereas both Jonson⁴ and Beaumont⁵ had already addressed lines to Fletcher in commendation of his pastoral; nor is Jonson's other reported comment that "next himself only Fletcher and Chapman could write a masque"⁶ easy to understand in view of the fact that the only independent masque in the Beaumont-Fletcher plays has, from quite early

¹*The Faithful Shepherdess*, by Fletcher, and *The Masque of the Inner Temple* and minor poems by Beaumont.

See also the lines of Jasper Mains:

"For that you could write singly we may guess
By the divided pieces which the press
Hath severally sent forth."

Commendatory Verses, 1647 Folio. See Dyce ed., I, p. 75.

and that of Cartwright referring to Fletcher:

"'Tis known that sometimes he did stand alone." *Ibid.*, p. 76.

Humphrey Moseley also in his *Stationer to the Reader* of the same folio declares: "It was once in my thoughts to have printed Master Fletcher's works by themselves because singly and alone they would make a just volume."

²Records of Sir Henry Herbert as Deputy and Chief Master of the Revels: See Malone's Shakespeare, ed. Boswell, 111. pp. 224-243.

³See *Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden*. Sh. Soc., 1846, p. 17.

⁴Lines prefixed to *The Faithful Shepherdess*.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶See Note 3.

times, been attributed to Beaumont alone. The comment is possibly explicable—if fully accepted as Jonson's—on the supposition that he preferred the shorter incidental efforts of Fletcher, as contained in his plays, to the more elaborate work of Beaumont. Prof. Thorndike's suggestion, however, that Drummond, in his notes, confused Fletcher's name with Beaumont's seems on the whole more probable.¹

Seward is the somewhat dubious authority for the statement that during Beaumont's lifetime, Fletcher was "supposed unable to rise to any height of eminence. Yet no sooner had he lost that aid and demonstrated that it was delight and love, not necessity, which made him soar abreast with his amiable friend, but the still injurious world began to strip the plumes from Beaumont and to dress Fletcher in the whole fame, leaving to the former nothing but the mere pruning of Fletcher's luxurious wit."² This testimony as to Beaumont's being at first esteemed the greater genius of the two, while not borne out by most contemporary evidence, is in keeping with the facts that the earlier plays—as *Philaster*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, &c.—are the ones in which Beaumont's hand is unmistakably present, and that they were the most popular of the entire group.

However that may be, it is evident that by the time of the publication of the first folio in 1647, a strong tide in favor of Fletcher had already set in, until, as Seward declares, some were ready to dress him "in the whole fame." In the commendatory verses included in this folio, we come upon a considerable mass of opinion as to the literary relations of the two dramatists and, while it is held to be of no value in deciding the authorship of separate plays, it is interesting as voicing the theories of the time and as the probable source of traditions that have lasted to our own day. The views expressed are by no means uniform, although in general they take one of three directions:

(1) That Beaumont and Fletcher were equal geniuses fused into one by the force of perfect congeniality and not to be distinguished from each other in their work. Thus Berkenhead writes in his lines to Fletcher:

"But you were both for both, not semi-wits,
Each piece is wholly two, yet never split,
Ye're not two faculties and one soul, still
He the understanding, thou the quick free will,
But as two voices in one long embrace,
Fletcher's keen treble and deep Beaumont's bass,
Two full congenial souls, still both prevail'd,
His Muse and thine were quartered not impar'd."³

¹In a private letter, Apr. 18, 1905.

²1750 Ed. of Beaumont and Fletcher's Works. Preface.

³Commendatory Verses, 1647 Folio. See Dyce ed. I, pp. 80-81.

Jasper Maine has the same idea in his lines:

"Whether one did contrive, the other write,
Or one framed the plots, the other did indite,
Where'er your parts between yourselves lay, we
In all things which you did, but one thread see."¹

George Lisle sums up the theory more briefly in his couplet:

"For still your fancies are so woven and knit,
'Twas Francis Fletcher or John Beaumont writ."²

(2) That the plays were to be accredited to Fletcher alone, since Beaumont was not to be taken into serious account in explaining their production. Waller expresses this view in the lines,

"Fletcher, to thee we do not only owe
All these good plays, but those of others too."³

In this connection it is a significant fact that 26 of the 37 verse tributes found in the folio address themselves to Fletcher alone, and 25 of that number bear the heading "On Master John Fletcher's Works" or one of similar import. On the other hand, only 4 are addressed to Beaumont, and none of these make large claims for him except as to the quality of his work.

(3) That Fletcher was the genius and creator in the work and Beaumont the judicial and regulative force. Cartwright gives the extreme application of this theory:

"His [Fletcher's] thoughts and his thoughts' dress appeared both such,
That 'twas his happy fault to do too much,
Who therefore wisely did submit each birth
To knowing Beaumont, ere it did come forth,
Working again until he said 'twas fit,
And made him the sobriety of his wit."⁴

Howe has much the same thought:

"Perhaps his quill flew stronger when
'Twas weaved with his Beaumont's pen."⁵

This last view is the one which appears to have taken strongest hold on the popular mind, and from this time on, for more than a century, the name of Beaumont seems to sink into obscurity as compared

¹Ibid., p. 75.

²Ibid., p. 62.

³Ibid., p. 68. It is true that none of the plays in which Beaumont's part is sure are included in the folio of 1647, but Waller makes it clear by the later lines of his poem that he has in mind the whole body of the plays and not simply those of this folio.

⁴Ibid., p. 76.

⁵Ibid., p. 84.