THE AUDIENCE AS CHARACTER IN
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER PLAYS

by

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The thesis studies the relationship of playwright, actor and audience in Beaumont and Fletcher plays from the period 1607 - c. 1625. The major concern of the thesis is with the involvement of the audience in the dramatic action or emotional pattern of the plays. In order to discuss this audience participation which is suggested as the primary focus of the dramaturgy of Beaumont and Fletcher, the thesis first attempts to establish the most usual audience of the plays. The private audience of the Second Blackfriars Playhouse is described as typical of the wealthy, often aristocratic audience for whom Beaumont and Fletcher wrote and whose taste both determined many of the characteristics of Fletcherian plays and was itself influenced by those plays.

As a result of this relationship between Beaumont and Fletcher and their spectators, it is suggested that the playwrights had a significant role to play in the evolution of the English drama from the Elizabethan theatre to the Restoration theatre. In fact, the sort of theatre which the Caroline theatregoers of 1625 were demanding of Fletcher was precisely the style of "heroic", romantic theatre which he had taught them to appreciate with Philaster in 1610. Philaster is seen as the play in which the earlier, unsuccessful attempts by each playwright merged, in collaboration, into a formula for popular success and an approach to the theatre which was totally histrionic.

* Throughout the thesis, "histrionic" is used as a synonym for theatrical, rather than in connection with the art of acting.
Assuming this audience and its tastes, fashions and behaviour patterns, the thesis investigates Beaumont and Fletcher's satire of the audience, suggesting that Fletcherian satire was directed not at individuals, but at groups in Jacobean society, most of which they could assume to be present in the playhouse. Beaumont and Fletcher were able, again through a thorough understanding of their audience, to work the various groups, prejudices and affections of their spectators against each other so that the satire was not directed from the stage to the auditorium, but in a total pattern throughout the playhouse.

The emotional patterning of the plays is discussed as the centre of the Fletcherian design. The elaborate series of effects and often inappropriate stimuli by which Beaumont and Fletcher created a striking, involving emotional system is described. \textit{A King and No King} and \textit{Valentinian} are analyzed to demonstrate the emotional patterning.

The participation of the audience within the dramatic action is then discussed. The thesis suggests that the audience performs as a corporate character in the plays and traces the complex, histrionic effects by which they are encouraged to do so. The use of disguise and the aside are specifically studied in this light.

Finally, the larger implications of audience involvement are considered. Within the social milieu in which the plays are situated, Beaumont and Fletcher create a fictional world of the playhouse in which the involvement of the audience and actors become the whole action of a closed, microcosmic universe.
These various, histrionic aspects work together to make the Beaumont and Fletcher plays exciting, if highly artificial creations that were popular in Jacobean England, are important in theatre history, and are of continuing theatrical interest today.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The theatrical craftsmanship of the plays of John Fletcher and Francis Beaumont cannot be ignored. While it is not suggested that Beaumont and Fletcher were uniquely cognizant of the special characteristics of the theatre, or of the demands and possibilities of the stage, it is suggested that they demonstrate a depth of understanding and expertise which is at once unusual and worthy of critical investigation. Furthermore, it is suggested that Beaumont and Fletcher were keenly aware of the audience for whom they wrote and that this awareness is an integral part of their attitude to their craft.

It is as craftsmen, then, that Beaumont and Fletcher are of special interest in this study, which attempts to investigate their histrionic talents, to discuss them as popular writers sensitive to the fashions and idiosyncracies of the Jacobean and Caroline Theatre, and as playwrights whose influence on the Stuart theatregoers was pronounced. In fact, it is argued that by allowing themselves to be persuaded by audience taste and at the same time redirecting that taste, Beaumont and Fletcher were significantly instrumental in the evolution of a new style of romantic drama that bridges the aesthetic gap between the theatre of 1600 and of 1685.

*The problem of collaboration will not be raised. Most of the characteristics discussed are typical of Fletcher, but the influence of Beaumont is clear in the blend of literary and theatrical emphases of the most successful plays.
It will be seen that in *Philaster* (1610), and the plays which follow it, Beaumont and Fletcher achieved a formula for popular success. This mode allowed the various histrionic components of earlier, unsuccessful plays like *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) and *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608) to merge into a style of heroic, romantic drama which embodied many contemporaneous theatrical traditions, but which placed its focus on a system of emotional responses. This emotional pattern was then reinforced and, in fact, its functioning assisted, by the skilful use of asides, disguises, theatre tricks and similar effects.

The major feature of the Fletcherian dramaturgy, and one which grows naturally out of the interest in theatricality and emotion already mentioned, is the preoccupation of Beaumont and Fletcher with audience involvement. This preoccupation is the central concern, also, of this thesis.

It is not suggested that in involving their audiences Beaumont and Fletcher accomplished anything novel in theatrical writing. After all, the participation of the audience is implicit in the dramatic experience. It is a question, rather, of degree and of inventiveness. Because Beaumont and Fletcher so consciously worked on the interests, prejudices and emotions of their audiences, it is suggested that the members of the audience were treated by the playwrights not simply as spectators but also as corporate characters. The thesis, therefore, separates the role of the audience as spectator from that of the audience as character. Although these divisions are admittedly arbitrary, they are not artificial; although most audiences are to some extent a part of the playwright's design, not all are considered as such apart from their role as observers. And not all spectators are catered to as
completely as are the audiences of Beaumont and Fletcher plays.

The theatricality and emphasis on audience participation which characterizes the Beaumont and Fletcher plays is essential to an understanding of the canon. The fact that this aspect had been ignored by critics of the stage accounts for the poor reputation of the plays in the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries. As L. B. Wallis makes clear in his historical survey of Fletcherian scholarship, the plays had, during this period, been "stigmatized as more or less disreputable." As late as 1964, in fact, the plays were still being considered by T. B. Tomlinson, simply as a "kind of musical-comedy extravaganza on a Jacobean theme." Tomlinson cannot be considered as representative of modern criticism, however, for since Arthur Mizener published his radically perceptive article on the dramaturgy of *A King and No King* in 1940, many scholars have reconsidered Beaumont and Fletcher in relation to their position in literary history or as writers with a particular sensitivity to the possibilities of the stage or the demands of an audience. It is with these modern opinions that this thesis agrees.

As has been stated, the demands of the audience contributed to a very significant extent to the development of the theatrical style of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays. It will be useful, therefore, to understand this audience as well as possible. Before examining the two functions of this audience, then, this study first considers the audience itself, its make-up and characteristics. In doing so in Chapter II and the first section of Chapter III, certain assumptions, based upon evidence in the plays themselves, in plays contemporary to
them and in seventeenth century diaries, letters and documents are drawn. It is suggested that while the audience of Beaumont and Fletcher plays was not a closed coterie, the appeal of the plays was largely to a private and courtly audience whose members were drawn from the court or its ancillary agencies or were financially able to pretend to that circle.

It is important to determine who was in attendance at the plays if any generalizations regarding the demands of these theatre-goers are to be made. A play-list is therefore provided in Chapter II to support the suggestion that the plays were rarely performed in the public theatres and to establish the Second Blackfriars Playhouse as their most usual place of commercial performance. (The list indicates the high incidence of court performance, but the fact of a court audience does not alter the significance of the Blackfriars's audience, particularly since, as will be seen, many members of one were members of the other.) The typical audience of the Second Blackfriars Playhouse is suggested in Chapter II as typical also of the usual Beaumont and Fletcher audience. The taste and demands of this audience are then considered in Chapter III, within the discussion of the audience as spectator. Although the final investigation of the audience as character is based squarely on evidence from the Beaumont and Fletcher plays, this early, historical framework is, of necessity, established from a variety of sources. A number of generalizations about private theatre audiences are supported by references in the work of playwrights contemporary to Beaumont and Fletcher, and particularly in plays by Ben Jonson. Such evidence is
admissible if care is taken to establish dates, and to establish
that plays cited were indeed performed in the Second Blackfriars
Playhouse. This theatre again becomes the criterion for comparison.
Despite the dangers endemic in generalization, and especially in
generalizations drawn from socio-historical evidence or from the
works of authors other than those under study, the background of
Chapters II and III remains an important aspect of the study, since
it is only with some familiarity with the Beaumont and Fletcher
audience within its social and cultural milieu that the playwrights' relation to that audience can be understood.

Chapter IV considers the ways in which Beaumont and Fletcher involve their spectators as characters in the plays; usually as figures in the design of the stagecraft and occasionally, even as physical members of the cast. In this regard, Beaumont and Fletcher make excellent use of asides, disguises, and of often elaborate stage tricks. In considering these elements, it is suggested, once again, that although Beaumont and Fletcher worked within the stage convention of their day, they enlivened these traditional devices to invest them with especial appeal and to force in the spectators a more active response than that elicited by a simple viewing of the play. Both the ability of these elements to draw the spectators into the stage action and the intrinsic interest of the devices themselves is of importance in the study of the relationship of Beaumont and Fletcher to their audience.

Although the appeal of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays lies in their compelling dramaturgy, the plays are more than exercises
in stage effect. The ethical and psychological conflicts they explore (if incompletely) are never restricted to the dramatic world, but are consistently extended to involve the audience on a comic or emotional plane. By including the expectations and reactions of the spectators in the design of the plays, Beaumont and Fletcher create a world of the theatre in which the presence of the playwrights, the pretense of the actors and the responses of the audience work together to create that peculiar union which is the essence of drama. The result of this emphasis upon stagecraft and the subsequent movement of focus between the audience and actors is the creation of a micro-cosmic world in which are set interrelated spheres of illusion. These spheres stop, for Beaumont and Fletcher however, at the walls of the playhouse. Chapter V briefly explores the larger significance which both lies behind the playwrights' brilliant use of the stage and explains their preoccupation with the audience. The notion of a closed universe within the playhouse is a fitting conclusion to a study of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays because it is the creation of such a world which blends the various characteristics of Beaumont and Fletcher's dramaturgy, and also because Beaumont and Fletcher's handling of this concept is representative of their attitude to all aspects of drama. By restricting attention to the world inside the Playhouse, Beaumont and Fletcher ensure that they are in control of the dramatic situation, and also, by ignoring the larger intellectual implications which extend outside the Playhouse, demonstrate again the artificiality of the plays in the canon.

Throughout the study, attention is paid to this lack of real depth which characterizes most of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays. Eric
Bentley's opinion that "when the dramatist writes with his audience not his characters in mind, his writing is necessarily all contrivance," seems true of Beaumont and Fletcher, although Bentley's implied censure is unwarranted in their case. It is unwarranted because of the emphasis which Beaumont and Fletcher maintained on emotions appropriate to the dramatic situation rather than to any naturalism in plot or characterization, and because of the audience for whom they wrote, an audience which demanded the lightness that is characteristic of most of the plays, and in which the moments of crisis are set.

Fletcher's own definition of a tragi-comedy that it "wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some near it," is itself a summation of the compromise and shallowness typical of the canon. Yet, as the study attempts to prove, within the limitations of audience taste and within the dramatic terms they chose, Beaumont and Fletcher succeeded in their goal—they created lively and exciting moments of theatre. Indeed, as Coleridge notes, while "Shakespeare is the height, breadth and depth of Genius, Beaumont and Fletcher [are] the excellent mechanism, in juxtaposition and succession, of Talent." Examples of this talented craftsmanship must, however, be sought by the modern reader in a variety of sources, since no thorough, modern edition of the entire canon is available.

Fredson Bowers is the general editor of such a proposed edition, and the first volume, which is now published, has been used for five of the plays considered: The Knight of the Burning Pestle, The Coxcomb, The Woman-Hater, Philaster, and The Captain.
The Variorum edition, under the general editorship of A. H. Bullen\textsuperscript{8} has been consulted for the majority of the other plays considered. It is the source for: The Maid's Tragedy, A King and No King, The Scornful Lady, Custom of the Country (Vol. I); The Elder Brother, The Spanish Curate, Beggar's Bush (Vol. II); The Faithful Shepherdess, The Mad Lover, The Laws of Candy (Vol. III); The False One, The Little-French Lawyer, Valentinian, Monsieur Thomas and The Chances (Vol. IV), all of which are discussed or referred to in the study.

The latest complete edition, that of A. R. Waller and A. Glover\textsuperscript{9} has been consulted for the following plays not included in either of the other two, more modern editions: The Wild-Goose Chase, Wife for a Month, The Maid in the Mill, The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnavelt, and The Knight of Malta.

In addition, the new Revels Plays series edition of Philaster\textsuperscript{10} and the Regents Renaissance Drama Series editions of The Knight of the Burning Pestle\textsuperscript{11} and A King and No King\textsuperscript{12} have been compared. Microfilm copies of manuscript editions have been compared with the Bowers text of Philaster and The Knight of the Burning Pestle, although the nature of the thesis has not demanded detailed textual research. An attempt has been made, however, when dealing with specific lines of dialogue or stage directions, to ensure that the text used is an accurate one.

The individual punctuation and spelling of each editor has been reproduced, although such transcription results in inconsistency in quotation style throughout the thesis. The Bowers edition maintains seventeenth century spelling, the other editions modernize spelling.
All editions normalize type-face. Act and scene divisions have been added by each editor and line numbers have been appended to all but the Glover-Waller texts. In the discussion of The Maid in the Mill and The Wild-Goose Chase, line numbers are my own, and follow the guideline of the Bowers Preface, p. xvi.

The texts of the plays have been read not for their considerable bibliographical interest, however, despite the fact that the original idea for the study arose from a suggestion by Ian Fletcher in his Bibliography of Beaumont and Fletcher that the interplay of actor and audience should be discussed in Beaumont and Fletcher criticism. Rather, the plays are studied for themselves, and in their social milieu, in an effort to understand the careful craftsmanship and dramatic sensibility of those two practical men of the Theatre, Beaumont and Fletcher.
Notes to Chapter I


CHAPTER II

The Audience

In order to discuss the audience as character in any drama, it is necessary first to consider the make-up of that audience. If the relationship between spectator, actor and playwright is to understood with reference not only to the Jacobean drama generally, but, more specifically, to the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, it will be necessary to describe as accurately as is possible, the kinds of audiences which attended productions of these particular plays.

In order to do so with any precision, it becomes necessary to establish rigorous and not entirely arbitrary limitations within which to search.

The premier staging of Fletcherian plays took place between 1607 and the closing of the theatres in 1642. This lengthy period raises difficulties in the establishment of a picture of an audience. *Cupid's Revenge* played to a different audience in 1607 than did *The Scornful Lady* in 1641. The popularity and long stage history of the canon creates a strong temptation to borrow evidence from later revisions. This study will attempt to limit investigation to the original texts and to those Caroline productions by the original company, which maintained the flavour of the original design. In stressing
evidence from the original stagings of the collaboration and particularly from 1607-c.1625, the attempt is made to adduce a description of an audience drawn from one period in an evolving and burgeoning society.

Those clues to the make-up of the audiences which are provided by statements within the plays themselves, in prologues, induction scenes and asides provide seemingly useful documentation. Unfortunately, however, the prejudices and politics of the playwrights very often colour these pronouncements. Where such evidence is employed it must be carefully interpreted; this study attempts to do this.

Socio-historical data is the most abundant kind of evidence about the nature of the theatre-going Jacobean. Legal records, diaries, account books, livery lists, the records of the Revels Office and of Sir Henry Herbert, the theatrical censor, are all reviewed by Irwin Smith, Richard Hosley, J.W. Saunders, C.W. Hodges and others in their various reconstructions of London playhouses, and by Alfred Harbage, G.E. Bentley and, more recently, William A. Armstrong in discussions of the seventeenth century audiences. The current re-assessment of much of this evidence makes generalizations about the period difficult to substantiate. The greatest danger with reconstructions built on sociological observations, however, is their propensity to assume without foundation. J.A. Lavin criticizes G.E. Bentley for his article "Shakespeare and the Blackfriars Theatre," in which Bentley creates apparently well substantiated evidence from a rhetorical question of his own devising. If socio-historical data is reviewed
carefully, however, it can shed much light on a rich, theatrical period.

To discuss the audience which received Beaumont and Fletcher's plays so enthusiastically, it is mandatory to establish the theatres with which Beaumont and Fletcher were associated. The audience of one was not consistently the audience of another, for the fact that there was a number of audiences in Jacobean London seems clear. There is ample evidence of presentations at Court, and in the Universities as well as in the Public theatres and, after 1600, in Private theatres, such as "the private house scituate in the prcinctes of the Blackfriers...." What is much less clearly established is the degree to which their audiences were distinct. This is particularly problematic in regard to the Public and Private theatres, which depended for their livelihood on the patronage of theatre-goers. The recognition of two kinds of commercial theatre after 1600, and especially after 1610 is an important one, but it should not be magnified out of proportion. For if separate streams of theatre existed, so, too, did the movement of audiences between them.

Alfred Harbage suggests as his central thesis in *Shakespeare's Audience* and again in *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*, that there were two distinct theatrical traditions in England, signalized by two distinct kinds of theatre. J.A. Lavin has argued that such a contention "is not substantiated by the facts." He cites the statement by Richard Hosley that:
Satiromastix (presumably a public play) was performed by different companies at the Globe and the theatre of the Paul's boys; The Malcontent (evidently a private play) by different companies at the Blackfriars and the Globe; and several plays, such as Philaster, by the same company at the Blackfriars and the Globe.\(^7\)

Beaumont and Fletcher's A King and No King (1619) and Philaster (1610) were produced at both the Globe and at the Second Blackfriars and were also presented at Court. That is not surprising since the Beaumont and Fletcher repertoire was owned almost exclusively by the King's Men.

The King's Men were the foremost dramatic company after 1610 for various reasons. Theirs was the most influential patron, their playwrights included not only Beaumont and Fletcher's but also Shakespeare and Jonson. They owned the popular Globe and the Second Blackfriars. The company included actor-businessmen of celebrity whose popular attraction and managerial ability made the King's Men prosperous and stable. The company acquired Blackfriars from the Children of the Queen's Revels in 1608-9 and refurbished it, probably as a winter alternate to their public theatre, the original Globe on the South Bank. It is uncertain on what date the company moved to summer quarters, but it appears generally to have been in late May.\(^8\) Financial records of Herbert reveal that the King's Men gave performances at the Globe through June and July\(^9\) and it is probable that they remained out of the city until October.\(^10\)
The movement to the Blackfriars playhouse during the fashionable winter months is an indication of the changing attitude to the theatre, an attitude which led more and more towards a preeminent position for the private playhouses. As Herbert's accounts show, the receipts from Blackfriars were substantially greater; the average one-day revenue at Herbert's bi-annual benefit performance between 1628 and 1633 was £15/15 at Blackfriars and only £6/13/8 at the Globe. By 1628, the private playhouse at Blackfriars had been cited by name on King's Men title pages nearly ten times as often as had been that of the Globe. The various extant title-pages for Philaster (1610) reveal that later publications chose to refer to Blackfriars productions rather than Globe stagings. It is admitted that the Blackfriars tag would provide a better selling feature for the quarto publications, but that itself is evidence for the greater prestige of the private theatre. Nevertheless, both types of theatre were active, as is clear from play-lists.

Even as late as 1619, the 1611 Court play, A King and No King could be produced in the Globe. Later still, it could be staged at Blackfriars (1625), and then returned to Court in 1630/31 and again in 1636/37. The boundaries between audience tastes were evidently less rigid than Harbage had thought. This flexibility should not be taken to suggest, however, that differences in taste did not exist. A listing of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays with their probable or established places of performance creates a significant picture of those audiences responsive to Fletcherian drama. The following list of a collation of G.E. Bentley's
table in *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (III), and that of Irwin Smith in *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse*. The date under which each play is placed is taken from the Schoenbaum revision of Harbage's *Annals of English Drama, 975-1700* and is considered the date of writing. Smith's chapter presents plays known or thought to have been performed at Blackfriars and presumed to have been written for Blackfriars. The list in Bentley includes only five additional plays by Beaumont and/or Fletcher; that Beaumont and Fletcher collaborated on plays destined for and probably designed for the stage at Blackfriars is itself a clue to their most usual audience. Smith's code to the nature of his evidence has been adopted and follows each entry. Although the most immediately useful information is the date of composition, it is also interesting to notice the place of presentation, especially as these indicate a pattern of movement for the Beaumont and Fletcher plays between the court and Blackfriars Playhouse.

A. **Blackfriars plays of the Children of the Revels**.

(1606) The Woman-Hater - A Paul's Play. See 1648.)

1607 The Knight of the Burning Pestle

1607-8 Cupid's Revenge

1608 The Faithful Shepherdess (A,E,X)

B. **Beaumont and Fletcher Plays at Blackfriars Under the King's Men**.

1609 The Coxcomb - B1fr. 1608-10 (E,X)

- Court. 5 March 1621/2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Play Title</th>
<th>Editions/Performances</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1610</td>
<td>Philaster</td>
<td>Blfr. 1610 (E,X)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Globe. 1620 [See Chambers III, p. 222]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Court. 1612/13; 1630; 1636/37.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1611</td>
<td>A King and No King</td>
<td>Blfr. 1625 (2nd. ed.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Court. 1611; 1612; 1630/31; 1636/37.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Globe. 1619 (1st. ed.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1611</td>
<td>The Maid's Tragedy</td>
<td>Blfr. 1611 (A,E,X)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Revels.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Globe. 1619 [See Saunders, p. 237.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1612</td>
<td>The Captain</td>
<td>Blfr. 1609/12 (E,X)</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Court. Christmas 1613.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1613</td>
<td>Bonduca</td>
<td>Blfr. 1613 (X)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1613</td>
<td>The Honest Man's Fortune</td>
<td>Blfr. reproduction of the Childrens' production, 1633?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Court. 1630; 1641/42.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1614</td>
<td>Valentinian</td>
<td>Blfr. 1610/14 (E,X)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Protect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1614</td>
<td>Wit Without Money</td>
<td>Blfr. 1639? [See Armstrong, p. 223]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1615</td>
<td>Monsieur Thomas</td>
<td>Blfr. 1610/16 (A)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Protect. for &quot;Beeston's Boys&quot; in 1639 under title, Fathers Owne Sonne.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1616</td>
<td>Love's Pilgrimmage</td>
<td>Blfr. 1616, 1635. (E,X)</td>
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<td>Court. 1636.</td>
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<td>1617</td>
<td>The Mad Lover</td>
<td>Blfr. 1616/17. (E,X)</td>
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<td>Court 1616/17; 1630.</td>
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<td>Blfr. 1616/17.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1617</td>
<td>The Queen of Corinth</td>
<td>Protect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1617</td>
<td>Thierry and Theodoret</td>
<td>Blfr. 1617? (A,E,X)</td>
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<td>1618</td>
<td>The Knight of Malta</td>
<td>Blfr. 1616/18 (E,X)</td>
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<td>1618</td>
<td>The Loyal Subject</td>
<td>Blfr. 1618, 1633.</td>
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<td>Court. 1633; 1636.</td>
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<td>1619</td>
<td>The Bloody Brother</td>
<td>Blfr. 1619 (E,X)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Rollo, Duke of Normandy)</td>
<td>Court 1630.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Globe, 1633.</td>
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<td>1619</td>
<td>The Humorous Lieutenant</td>
<td>Blfr. 1619 (E,X)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Protect.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1619</td>
<td>The Laws of Candy</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1619 (E,X)</td>
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<td>1619</td>
<td>The Little French Lawyer</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1619/23 (E,X) Protect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1619</td>
<td>Sir John van Olden Barnavelt</td>
<td>-Globe?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1620</td>
<td>The Custom of the Country</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1619/20, 1628 (D,E,X) Court. 1630, 1638.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1620</td>
<td>The Double Marriage</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1620/21? (E,X)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1620</td>
<td>The False One</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1620 (E,X) Revels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td>The Island Princess</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1619/21 (E,X) Court. 1621.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td>The Pilgrim</td>
<td>-Court. 1621; 1622.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td>The Wild-Goose Chase</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1621 (A,E,X) Court. 1621; for Herbert, 1632.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1622</td>
<td>The Beggars Bush</td>
<td>-Blfr. (E,X) Court 1622.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1622</td>
<td>The Prophetess</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1622 (E,X) Court? for Herbert, 1629. Protect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1622</td>
<td>The Sea Voyage</td>
<td>-Globe. 1622.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1622</td>
<td>The Spanish Curate</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1622 (C,E,X) Court, 1622; 1638/39.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>The Lover's Progress</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1623; 1634. (E,X) Court. as The Wandering Lovers, 1623.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>The Maid in the Mill</td>
<td>-Court. 1623; Sept., Nov., Dec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1624</td>
<td>Rule a Wife and Have A Wife</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1634/35 (D,E,X) Court. 1624: Nov., Dec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1624</td>
<td>A Wife for a Month</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1624. (E,X) Court. 1636/37.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1625</td>
<td>The Chances</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1617? 1627? (E,X) Court. 1630; 1638.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1625</td>
<td>The Elder Brother</td>
<td>-Blfr. 1625?; 1634/35?; 1635. (A.D,E,X) Court. 1636/37.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most common movement for the plays is clearly between the Blackfriars Playhouse and the Court. The connection is not an accidental one, for, although we cannot accept a strictly polar view of audience division, it will become apparent that after 1610, and to an ever increasing degree until 1642, the Blackfriars' audience was a more aristocratic, or at least, a more prosperous and leisured audience than was that of the Globe or other public theatres. Clifford Leech has noted that although "the private houses were certainly responsive to court influence, ... they should not be thought of as mere extensions of Whitehall." Leech's cautionary remark is worth noting in an investigation of the Blackfriars' audience, the audience for whom Beaumont and Fletcher wrote not exclusively, but most often.

The Second Blackfriars theatre was situated in the social and commercial hub of London. The Blackfriars district contained numerous aristocratic residences and was close to S. Paul's and the Temple Church where the lawyers met their clients and the gallants gossiped and visited the booksellers. The area was not only a centre for the fashionable, however. Pickpockets and prostitutes also found S. Paul's a worthwhile location. "Alsatia,"
that community of debtors and criminals, was also nearby, in Whitefriars. The majority of those who frequented the section of London from which they could walk to Blackfriars, however, were of the professional or noble classes or those who depended upon these classes for their sycophantic existence. The proximity of S. James' Palace and of the homes of the gentry along the Strand, invested the district with an aristocratic atmosphere.

"The private theatres were thus conveniently close to the dwellings and meeting-places of various classes who had the leisure and the money to attend performances."  

Extant records also point to an audience largely composed of the wealthy and aristocratic, and those who served them, Certaine Observations at Blackfryers, (1617) a seventeenth century description of the private theatre, was written by Henry Fitzgeoffrey, a lawyer who styles himself "Of Lincolnes-Inn Gent." on the title page.  

His own profession was a typical one for a working Blackfriars' patron. In a diary entry for October 1635, John Greene, an articled young lawyer, records that "nine or ten of Lincoln's Inn" entertained themselves at his sister's wedding by attending "a play, some at Cockpit, some at Blackfriars." Greene's diary makes frequent mention of the Blackfriars Playhouse. In fact, the presence of lawyers was so common that it led to satire of the profession in the private plays.

The audience at Blackfriars, in which these lawyers and legal students were to be found, however, was largely composed of the gentlemen of the court, their ladies, the country gentry who visited them, and perhaps most visibly, their younger sons,
those "golden asse[s]" who came to the theatre to "see and to be scene." In 1643, the players of Blackfriars, the Cockpit and Salisbury Court published The Actors Remonstrance, a protest against the closing of the theatres. In this pamphlet, the companies claimed that "the best of the Nobility and Gentry" had been their patrons. They also recalled that "the young gentlemen from their audiences used to feast and frolick with them at Tavernes". The actors' plea may be based on hyperbole and certainly it is not suggested that the young gentlemen avoided public theatres. Such a statement by reputable theatrical companies, however, supports a generalized view of the private theatre audience as a courtly one. This view is substantiated by Caroline letters and diaries. Very often, these accounts concern the disputes which seem to have been frequent among the Blackfriars spectators. In 1631/32, John Pory records:

...The occasion was this. This Captaine
attending and accompanying my lady of Essex
in a boxe in the playhouse at the Blackfryers....

In 1634, Robert Leake wrote:

I make no doubt but you have heard that
actus secundus plaid on Tuesday last at
Blackfriars....

And, in 1635/36:

A little Picque happened betwixt the
Duke of Lenox and the Lord Chamberlain
about a Box at a new play in the Black Fryars...
The "little picques" were sometimes more serious. In 1635:

The Quarrel that lately broke out
betwixt my lord Digby and Will Crofts
in the Black-Fryars at a Play, stands as
it did.... 25

Although these references all postdate the death of the playwrights, they furnish evidence for an audience which, if fast altering from the 1610-1625 make-up, still maintained the tone of that earlier audience. It will later be suggested that the audiences of 1607 and 1616 differed, also, but it seems likely that the over-all character of the private audience was the same from 1610 until the closing in 1642.

G.E. Bentley, in his analysis of the diary and account book of Sir Humphrey Mildmay for the period 1632-1642, notes that Mildmay demonstrated a marked preference for the private theatres and that "though he does not, as a rule, give the name of the theater he visited, Blackfriars is clearly his favourite. He mentions it fourteen times, the Globe four times, and the Cockpit... three times. The plays which he refers to by title indicated that he visited the Blackfriars four times and the Cockpit once when no theatre is named." 26

Armstrong states that "ladies of the upper classes evidently constituted an influential proportion of the private theatre audiences, for their attention and favour are solicited with some frequency in prologues" (p. 220). The phrase which makes Armstrong's opinion acceptable is "an influential proportion," for certainly not all the ladies in Blackfriars were aristocratic.
That ladies were present is easily substantiated both by Beaumont and Fletcher plays and by other plays produced in the house during the same period.

In his 1616 Blackfriars play The Staple of News, Jonson provides a description of a young lady attending a play and seeing "a little of the vanity through her masque." In Rule a Wife and Have a Wife (1624), Fletcher spends almost the entire prologue addressing the ladies, urging them to "hold your fannes close and then smile at ease" when nothing offensive occurs on stage.

In the legal battle waged by the Puritan rector of S. Anne's Blackfriars in 1633, in an effort to close the Theatre, the plea was put forward that "diverse persons of great quality, especially ladies and Gentlewomen" congested the streets in their carriages. The coaches had not always transported only "ladies of quality," however. The "Petition of Precinct Officers to the Lord Mayor" (c.1619) states that "many [of the coaches] are hackney coaches, bringing people of all sorts."

In his description, Fitzgeoffrey mentions "a Cheapside dame" in the audience. The authors of The Actors' Remonstrance admit that they have cause to promise "never to admit into our six-penny rooms those unwholesome inticing harlots that sit there merely to be taking up by Prentizes or Lawyers clearks."

The prostitutes of Whitefriars were no doubt to be found in the Blackfriars Theatre, though perhaps less frequently than in the public theatres situated in poorer districts of London. Middle-class women like Goodwife Nell, will be discussed later, in an investigation of patrons not of the professional or noble classes.
William Armstrong includes the country Gentleman as "an occasional patron of the private theatres, though a somewhat uneasy one, to judge by some references to him." (p. 220). The evidence Armstrong provides from the anonymous (1656) Praeludium to Thomas Goffe’s *The Careless Shepherdess* (1619) in which the country gentleman is one of four representative playgoers is somewhat too late for a description of the Fletcherian audience. Similarly Webster’s *Induction to Marston’s Blackfriars*’ play *The Malcontent* (1604) in which Sly retorts to the Tireman “We may sit upon the stage at the private house: thou dost not take me for a country gentleman, dost? dost think I fear hissing?” is from the early years of the Children’s occupancy. Nevertheless, if the country squire was a figure of fun in the audiences immediately surrounding the years of the Fletcherian productions, it is likely that he was present also during those years. Certainly he is obvious as a figure in Beaumont and Fletcher plays themselves: Valerio in *The Coxcomb* (1608-10) plays a minor role, as does a "Country Gentlewoman" in *The Woman-Hater* (1607). The woodcut on the title page of the earliest edition of *Philaster* (1618), depicts the "Cuntrie Gentellman" of the play. (Fig. 1). The audience, it seems, was not always urban. And, of course, the rural landlord was again a member of the monied classes.

The most obvious members of the Second Blackfriars’ audience were undoubtedly the young gallants who made a habit of the theatre. The Second Blackfriars continued the Revels’ Children’s tradition of seating spectators on stools on the stage. Richard Hosley in his reconstruction of the Playhouse, hypothesizes
stage level galleries at the sides of the platform rather than stools, but numerous references to stools appear to dispute this notion. Hosley stipulates that even in his reconstruction, gallants might stand on the stage, obstructing the view of others. In his article on the habit, T.S. Graves traces the custom and points out that at Blackfriars there were usually at least ten patrons on the platform. The gallants appear to have been most ostentatiously present. Fitzgeoffrey describes a young man wearing a Holland shirt, a French-cut suit, Spanish boots, and Scottish spurs and another whose outfit is so lavish that Fitzgeoffrey's annual income "is not worth to purchase such a suite". In his 1616 Blackfriars' play The Devil is an Ass, Jonson satirizes the theatre gallant who announces that:

Today I goe to the Black Fryers Play-house
Sit I the view, salute all my acquaintance
Rise up betweene the Acts, let fall my cloake
Publish a handsome man, and a rich suite
(As that's a special end, why we goe thither
All that pretent, to stand for 't o' the Stage)
The Ladies aske who's that?

Not all the fashionable young gentlemen were gulls worthy of satire as vicious as that of Dekker in The Guls Horne-booke (1609). Even Ben Jonson admits to a more reasonable gallant in his portrait of Probee in The Magnetic Lady (Blackfriars, 1632). Probee appears in direct contrast to Damplay, who decides to "censure and be witty, and take...Tobacco...." Armstrong (p. 229),
links Probee with "such fashionable playgoers as Thomas Randolph, Thomas Carew, and John Cleveland, all of whom wrote in defense of Jonson after the failure of The New Inn, (Blackfriars, 1628-29).

Feminine gossips, as loquacious as were the gallants, are the victims of an attack by Jonson in The Staple of News. The four satirical characters, Censure, Tattle, Curiosity and Mirth, comment upon the play and in particular on the costumes. Like the gallants, they are anxious to be seen:

Mirth:...Do you heare Gentlemen? What are you?
Gentleman vsher to the Play? pray you helpe vs to some stooles here.
Prologue: Where? o' the Stage, Ladies?
Mirth:Yes, o' the Stage; wee are persons of quality, I assure you and women of Fashion;....

In The City Madam (Blackfriars, 1632) Massinger creates in Anne a similarly satirical figure, who demands along with a private box for her wedding party, "a fresh habit/ Of a fashion never seen before, to draw / The gallants eyes that sit on the stage, upon me." In The Actors Remonstrance, mention is made of "those Buxsome and Bountifull Lasses that usually were enamoured on the persons of the younger sort of Actors for the good cloaths they wore upon the stage, believing them really to be the persons they did represent." Nell in The Knight of the Burning Pestle also mistake fictional for actual identity. Despite their pretence to social position, however, the gossips were city wives, and quite unlike the ladies who hid behind masks and fans in the galleries.
Clifford Leech has suggested that the private theatre audience "was not exclusively drawn from court circles." The observation is unquestionable, and, in fact Leech's assessment of the make-up of the audience appears a most reasonable one. It stresses the likelihood of a number of members from the middle and lower classes, but points out that the audience was nevertheless a restricted one. In remarking that the Fletcherian audience might be criticized for not being sufficiently and sympathetically conscious of people outside the wealthy and aristocratic circles, Leech disagrees with the notion that the audience must, therefore, have been a cliquish one on all occasions. After all, references such as Jonson's to the gossips are more, surely, than elitist jibes at an absent class. Leech also argues, however, that the history of the theatre demonstrates few examples of audiences drawn from all facets of the societies which sponsored them, that most audiences represent a specific social or intellectual class. By balancing the two extreme views, Leech arrives at what is most likely a rather accurate description of the Blackfriars' audience. He recognizes that it was not often the choice of city prentices or their fellows, but quite rightly insists that the assumption that the spectators were all aristocratic, presents an "altogether melodramatic picture of the 'coterie' audience." References indicate that working people were, indeed, present. In his list of the Blackfriars critics of Beaumont and Fletchers' *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608-9) Jonson includes "the shop foreman, or some such brave sparke/". He later refers, in *The Magnetic Lady* to "Mechanicks" who are to be found in the
cheaper seats at Blackfriars.

Perhaps the most significant deterrent for any other than the aristocratic and professional or for those whose livelihood depended sufficiently on them to warrant the investment, was the higher cost of admission at the private Playhouse. The aspiration of women like Goodwife Nell to ape Ladies of fashion was no doubt tempered by the ability of their husbands to afford a ticket.

In *Theatre-Notebook*, Michael Shapiro disputes the generally accepted notion of the six-penny general admission which Harbage suggested in *Shakespeare's Audience*. While admitting that prices rose sharply after the adult companies occupied the private houses, Shapiro submits that there were tickets as cheap as one or two pence even for King's Men plays. If this were the case, a description of the Second Blackfriars' audience as predominately wealthy would lose considerable credence. Shapiro's opinion does not, however, appear to be substantiated by the extant references to admissions after 1603, all of which are to higher charges except for one in Beaumont's *The Woman-Hater* (1606). In this prologue, Beaumont mentions "two-penny Gallerie men". It must be noted, however, that *The Woman-Hater* was originally a Paul's play, and its prices were not necessarily those of Blackfriars. This prologue is certainly not proof of inexpensive seats after 1610.

Seats in the top gallery of the Second Blackfriars' Playhouse cost sixpence. There are numerous references to this basic charge. Jonson as we have seen speaks of "sinfull six-penny Mechanicks" in the Induction to *The Magnetic Lady*, and those "that may judge for his six-pence." Jasper Mayne, in his
Blackfriars' play The City Match (1637) denies that "his name can suffer wrack / From them who six-pence pay."\textsuperscript{50}

Better seats might be had for multiples of this basic charge. "The middle Region," which Fitzgeoffrey describes\textsuperscript{51} cost a shilling. This middle gallery price is mentioned in the diary of Sir Humphrey Mildmay.\textsuperscript{52} In a Prologue address to the audience of The Captain (1960-13) Beaumont and Fletcher declare that for "those who love to laugh ... / Twelve-pence goes farther this way than in drinke."\textsuperscript{53} And in the Prologue to The Mad Lover (1616) Fletcher says "Remember... / How many twelve-pences ye have 'stow'd this day."\textsuperscript{54}

A seat in the private boxes cost half a crown. Fletcher's Wit Without Money (1614) establishes this fact; the old servant reminds the prodical gallant of those "who extol'd you in the halfe crowne boxes, / Where you might sit and muster all the beauties...."\textsuperscript{55} Jasper Mayne mentions those "who possest a Box, and halfe Crowne spent" in his commendatory verses to the Beaumont and Fletcher First Folio.\textsuperscript{56} These boxes were evidently popular. References to them are numerous and many have already been cited in other contexts. The Fletcherian audience was one which could afford to prefer expensive loge seats. As Sir John Davies notes in his description of the Second Blackfriars theatre, "The clamorous frie of Innes of Court / Filles vp the priuate roomes of greater prise."\textsuperscript{57}

Humphrey Mildmay sat on a bench in the pit at Blackfriars on the 21 of January, 1633/4,\textsuperscript{58} for which he paid eighteen pence. With admission to the pit, the spectators could move onto the stage
where a stool was available for an additional six pence. The total price for a stage stool, therefore, becomes two shillings, a price mentioned by Jonson in *The Magnetic Lady*. Harbage, in *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* proposes a shilling entrance and a shilling hire for a stool. As Dekker promises, the gallant may "by sitting on the stage...purchase the deere acquaintance of the boyes: have a good stoole for sixpence...." Ralph Brideook refers to Jonson's detractors as the "fine Plush and Velvets of the age" who "oft for sixpence damme thee from the Stage." Prices in the public theatres rose, too, with the new society of seventeenth century England. Still, as Adams shows, the admission was generally lower than in the private houses. The largest portion of the audience -- Adams quotes 83 per cent -- paid two pence or less to see a public play. As has already been shown, the average daily Globe revenue as late as 1633 was less than half that of the Blackfriars. On the other hand, in *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson quotes the charges I have cited for the private houses to a public audience at The Hope, "it shall bee lawfull for any man to iudge his six pen'orth, his twelve pen'orth, so to his eightene pence, 2. shillings, halfe a crowne, to the value of his place." This anomaly may be hauteur on the part of Jonson, informing the less affluent audience of its unworthiness as critic, or it may be another confusion created by the movement of plays from theatre to theatre and the problem this causes in manuscript attribution. It is not evidence enough, however, to refute the generalization that the public playhouses were less costly to attend. The Beaumont and Fletcher audience at Blackfriars chose
to pay higher charges, and must, therefore, have been a more affluent group.

The different admission charges were based on the location of the seats in the playhouse. There appear to have been five such areas: in the seated pit, on the stage, in the boxes, or bottom gallery, in the middle gallery and in the top gallery, whose "rooms" were the least desirable. Richard Hosley suggests that the top gallery was open, since it would not, as the Globe did, support a roof. Still, it would be crowded, with only 7'6" headroom. Hosley estimates the galleries were 8'6" deep, with two rows of seats. The stage, with which the middle gallery was level, was between three and four and a half feet above the pit. If, as Dekker's pamphlet suggests, stage sitters entered from the tiring house, "there it is time to creepe from behind the Arras, (p. 30)," the connection between the price of the pit and the total price for a stage stool must have been conventional rather than physical.

In his reconstruction of the Second Blackfriars Playhouse, Irwin Smith postulates an auditorium 46 feet (East-West) by 44 feet (North-South) and seating 516 spectators. Richard Hosley begins with a room 46 feet (East-West) by 66 feet (North-South) and then removes a large tiring house (11'3" by 46') and a platform 18'6" deep. His stage level boxes adjoin a clear acting area 29 feet (East-West) by 36 feet (North-South), but with additional boxes and galleries at the sides of the stage. Hosley's reconstruction would seat approximately the same number of patrons as Smith allows if a similar criterion of five square feet per person were assumed.
Harbage had suggested one of the larger figures, 696, 800, or 955, depending on use of galleries. In finding little firm evidence for these top figures, and "inclining toward the lower ones," G.E. Bentley favours C.W. Wallace's 558-608, which approximates Smith's estimate. The relationship between actor and spectator would, of course, be affected by the size of the auditorium and the number of viewers.

The Fletcherian audience at the Second Blackfriars Playhouse was composed of many who had access to the Court. Also, as most of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays were presented at Court by the King's company, or in private performance for the Royal Family, it is necessary to briefly consider the make-up of the audience on these royal occasions.

The courts of James I and his son were extravagant ones, fond of elaborate shows and brilliant costumes. As was typical of the aristocratic class of seventeenth century Europe, the courtly society excluded members of the citizenry, except those with crown appointments. The audience at Whitehall or Somerset House, then, was a further reduction of the Second Blackfriars' audience, and probably resembled the excessively aristocratic audience which Harbage had proposed for the private houses. The connection between the court and the private playhouses was a marked one, however, and each enjoyed the same plays, though often in different productions. The physical equipment at court was less efficient than what is suggested by Hosley's reproduction of the stage machinery at Blackfriars. The design of the entertainments, however, was lavish and surprisingly difficult effects could be
achieved. The plays were performed "with as much variety of scenes and motions as the great wit of Inago Jones...could extend to."⁶⁹

Both James I and Charles I were generous patrons of the King's Men, as a number of protective patents and a free gift of £100 in 1630 testify. Queen Henrietta's particular interest is demonstrated by the record of a production of Fletcher's _The Faithful Shepherdess_ at Somerset House in 1633, which was costumed "in the clothes the Queene had given Taylor [the business manager] the year before of her owne pastorall."⁷⁰ By 1630 the Cockpit had been refurbished specifically for Royal attendance, but the Queen evidently continued to commission the Second Blackfriars Playhouse,⁷¹ and her lively interest in the playhouse no doubt assisted in the building of its reputation.

By 1640, the private playhouses were attracting more playgoers than were the public theatres. Harbage has shown that during the first decade of the seventeenth century, Blackfriars and Paul's were active only once a week.⁷² By 1633, when Mildmay attended Blackfriars on 21 and 22 January, and certainly by 1635 when he attended twice in four days, plays were being presented almost daily, as Armstrong notes (p. 226). The audience became more and more economically and socially exclusive as the Puritan influence became stronger in the City; the unfortunate limitation of the theatre to the pastime of the wealthy and fashionable, firmly entrenched by the Restoration and evident today, was already becoming a reality.

Although Fletcherian plays were to be seen at other theatres from time to time, and although they were acted at Court, the most consistent record of their production was at the Second Blackfriars
Playhouse. It was the patrons of this private theatre, then, that composed the most usual and the most typical audience for Beaumont and Fletcher plays. This audience, drawn from the adjacent districts, and consisting of "courtiers, gentlemen of the Inns of Court, wits and women of fashion, together with such hangers on as gamblers, soldiers, prostitutes and would-be gallants, (p. 234)," and those citizens who could afford its relatively higher cost, accepted the Fletcherian canon enthusiastically. The demarcations between streams of theatre in Jacobean London, however, was not wholly based on geographic, social or economic exclusiveness, and these criteria did not always hold. As Shapiro suggests, the theatre-goers even after 1610 often decided "on the many available forms of theatrical entertainments to attend on the basis of their taste... and self-image."73
Notes to Chapter II


5. 1619 Royal Patent to the King's Men, cited in Bentley, VI, p. 20.


9. Smith, p. 263.

10. Smith, p. 258.


13(A) A statement on the title page of the printed play to the effect that the play was acted at Blackfriars.

(C) Notation in the Office Book of the Master of the Revels showing that the play was licensed for performance, or was performed at Blackfriars.

(D) Mention in contemporary diaries, letters, laudatory poems, etc., of performance at Blackfriars.

(E) Inclusion in the Davenport or Killigrew allotment warrants.

(X) Inclusion in the repertory of the Chapel-Revels Children or of the King's Men during their respective tenancies of the Blackfriars Playhouse. (Usually follows Bentley)

"Revels" indicates Bentley's entry for a play considered for performance at Court. The evidence is from a list of plays found on wastepaper in the Revels Office records, and dated 1619 or 1620. [See Chambers, RES, I (1925), 481, 484.]

"Protect." indicates Bentley's entry for a King's Men play protected by the Lord Chamberlain against pirate printing. These plays were the exclusive property of the King's Men.


Armstrong, p. 217-218. Reference to this article will appear in the text, by page number.

Cited in Armstrong, p. 219.


24. Stafforde's Letters, i, 511; cited in Bentley, I, p. 48 and also in Irwin Smith, p. 294.

25. Stafforde's Letters, i, 426; cited in Bentley, VI, 34 and I, 47.


30. Fascimile reproduction in Malone Society Collections, I, pp. 91-93; cited in Smith, p. 489. The same statement appears in the "Petition of the Precinct Inhabitants...."


32. Hazlitt, p. 265.


34. Fl⁵ - F₂⁵; cited in Armstrong, p. 226.

35. I, vi, 31-7; Herford and Simpson, VI, p. 178.

37 Induction; Herford and Simpson, IV, p. 39.

38 Induction; Herford and Simpson, VI, p. 279.

39 Quoted in Armstrong, p. 229.


41 The John Fletcher Plays, p. 8.

42 The John Fletcher Plays, p. 9.

43 Cf. Armstrong, p. 222.

44 Herford and Simpson, VI, p. 509.

45 "Three Notes on the Theatre at Paul's, c. 1569-1604" (Summer, 1970), 147-154.

46 p. 59ff.


49 Jonson's lines in defense of Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*; cited in Smith, p. 300.

50 From the Epilogue; cited in Smith, p. 301.

51 *E7*; cited in Armstrong, p. 222.

52 See G.E. Bentley, II, pp. 675, 677; also Armstrong, p. 223.

53 Bowers, p. 551.

54 Glover-Waller, III, p. 75.

55 *I, i, 103-4*; Var., II, p. 242.

56 See Smith, p. 300.

58 See Bentley, II, pp. 675-676.

59 p. 45.

60 The Guls Horne-booke, p. 29.

61 Herford and Simpson II, p. 467.


63 Herford and Simpson, VI, p. 15.


65 Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse, p. 296-297.

66 In Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions, p. 43.

67 VI, p. 11.

68 The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, pp. 50-52; also cited by Bentley, VI, p. 11.


70 The records of Sir Henry Herbert; cited in Bentley, I, p. 39.

71 See Bentley, I, p. 39.

72 Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions, p. 44.

CHAPTER III

The Audience as Spectator

"The Spectators"

The private audience of the Second Blackfriars Playhouse has been identified as most representative of the audiences which enjoyed the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. The playwrights could assume the patronage of these wealthy Jacobeans and their assumption results in two complimentary trends in the evolution of their plays. Because Beaumont and Fletcher wished to maintain their popularity with this audience, they catered to it, filling their plays with whatever the taste and fashions of the private audience demanded. But also, and more importantly, as Beaumont and Fletcher cemented their relationship with this audience, they made demands of it and in doing so, urged upon their spectators a taste for a style of romantic, heroic tragi-comedy quite unlike the Elizabethan drama of 1600. Eventually, the sort of drama Fletcher was presenting for the Caroline theatre-goers, in response to their wishes, was exactly the kind of theatre which he could best write and which he had, in fact, conditioned them to desire.

The process was an evolutionary one and one in which many contemporaneous playwrights had a part. But Beaumont and Fletcher, by understanding their audience so well and by manipulating their spectators so totally, played a key part in creating this theatre which aesthetically
fits between the Elizabethan and Restoration theatres.

This chapter attempts to examine those fashions popular with the Blackfriars audience which influenced the Fletcherian plays and then to examine the ways in which the playwrights manipulated responses by means of satire and of emotional design. The interest here is with the audience as spectator, where a spectator is one who participates while watching, rather than one who participates by becoming part of the action.¹

Because Beaumont and Fletcher knew their audience's taste for an interesting, entertaining story, they created plots which are complex and consciously contrived; as Una Ellis-Fermor remarks, their plotting is "superlatively good." That their audience responded to the plots on this level is evidenced by Davenant's poem in the 1677 Beaumont and Fletcher Folio (Glover-Waller I, p. xxci) in which he praises their ability to tell a good tale. The fundamental characteristic of this patterning, however, is emotional rather than narrative. In this emphasis on an emotional structure, Beaumont and Fletcher were entirely theatrical in intent and, quite naturally, concentrated directly on prompting a response in their viewers. Theirs was not an historical recreation or a patriotic expression. Rather, they were able "in each mov'd spectator...[to] beget / A reall passion by a counterfeit."³

As has been mentioned, Beaumont and Fletcher were able to "move" these spectators because they understood who they were, how they behaved, and what they like.
The Blackfriars' plays are full of references to the gallants, and their censorious and narcissistic attitude. Heming and Condell warn of the highly critical stance of these "Magistrates of wit", who "sit on the Stage at Black-Friers... to arraigne Playes dailie...." in the preface to the Shakespeare 1623 Folio. In The Guls Horne-booke, Dekker ironically informs the gallant that "By sitting on the stage, you have signed pattent to engrosse the whole commodity of Censure;..." In a discussion of critical taste, then, the opinions of these gallants must be disregarded, though they are an important consideration in a description of modes of behaviour. Surprisingly, the visual nuisance which stage seating should have caused in a relatively small auditorium is mentioned only in the prologue to Jonson's The Devil in An Ass (1616). There are no comments in the Blackfriars' Beaumont and Fletcher plays and, on the contrary, Goodwife Nell in The Knight of the Burning Pestle uses the presence of the gallants for assistance onto the platform. Still, the noisy and critical gentlemen would create a distraction with which a Jacobean playwright would have to contend. Beaumont and Fletcher demonstrate the paramount theatrical ability with which they overcome this problem not only in their handling of the gallants in The Knight of the Burning Pestle, but in a number of the comedies. The comic aside lends itself to an immediately adjacent audience. The asides, for example in The Coxcomb (1608-10) are normally addressed directly to the audience. Occasionally, however, the comedy is heightened by ribald remarks about Viola which would become more humorous if the actor speaks to the stage-sitting gentlemen. The older and feminine members of the audience are able to vicariously share with the others the bawdy humour of an aside like "she has an
eye would raise a bedrid man"", or "for one use that shall be nameless, 
tis the best wanton hand that ere I lookt on."", when it is more 
appropriately whispered to a young gallant. The speculation that such 
was the authors' intention is supported only by the more obvious stage 
directions of The Knight of the Burning Pestle, but it seems an 
acceptable surmise in the light of Beaumont and Fletcher's theatrical 
skill. The technique will be discussed in more detail later.

Conversations between the actors and the stage-sitters are 
commonly to be found in plays of the period. Ben Jonson's satirical 
Induction scenes for example demonstrate Jonson's consistent feud 
with the spectators on the platform. Marston's Inductions are also 
filled with such conversations, though are less bitter.

The most annoying trait of the stage-sitters must have been 
their movement during the action of the play. If, as Dekker instructs, 
it was possible for a gallant to "draw what troupe... [he could] from 
the stage after...[him]" (p. 31), it is difficult to imagine what 
the playwright could do but "cr[y] a pox go with you..." (p. 327).
As spectators, then, the gallants on the platform afforded splendid 
opportunity for interplay between actor and audience (which will be 
considered later) and for satire, but created a distraction which 
would be notable in the small playhouse.

"The evidence concerning the behaviour of the private 
theatre audiences is limited and biased." As has been seen, 
quarrels were not uncommon among the courtiers. Also, (on occasion) 
the boxes were occupied by groups such as Anne's wedding party in Massinger's 
The City Madam (1632) whose exuberance carried over to the playhouse.
The references to "Little picques" in the boxes also suggests this behaviour in the loges (see Chapter II). The Inns of Court Men who Davies refers to as "Clamorous" were another noisy segment of the spectators. Despite these various outbursts, however, the allusions to the Beaumont and Fletcher audience suggest it was a generally attentive one. In fact, the highly critical response which is mentioned in Prologues such as those in The Coxcomb, The Captain and The Spanish Curate suggests a high degree of interest and attention.

The literary maturity of the audience is difficult to determine. Certainly the middle-class spectators at Blackfriars were prone to confuse the actors with their personae, as an account of the Red Bull audience indicates happened also in that public theatre. The country gentleman in The Careless Shepherdess, however, "would have the Fool in every Act" and appears little more sophisticated than the citizens. The Faithful Shepherdess, (1608) like The Knight of the Burning Pestle, presupposes a cultivated literary sense that the failure of both indicates was lacking before 1610 (Philaster). The success of the earlier Fletcher play and Beaumont's masque, which were in a different, less literary mode bears this suggestion out.

The courtly spectators in Blackfriars after 1610 were undoubtedly more widely exposed to theatrical pretence than were those in the public theatres. Shirley's disappointment that his 1640 play, The Doubtful Heir was to be presented at the Globe rather than at Blackfriars is a valuable illustration of the differences between the two. He states that the private audience could appreciate "language clean"
and a logical plot while the Globe patrons enjoyed only "dances, bawdry, clowns and devils." The King's Men productions at Court could expect an even more worldly audience. The complex plotting and, more importantly, the intense emotions patterning of the Fletcherian tragicomedies demand spectators who are theatrically sophisticated and yet who are susceptible to direct emotional appeal. The evidence concerning the Second Blackfriars' spectators suggests just such a curiously ambivalent audience.

One of the favourite pastimes of theatre-goers in Stuart London was the attempt to identify *dramatis personae* with contemporary figures. The authors of the prologue to Fletcher's *The Chances* (1625) warns that the spectator ought not to expect to find "a rhyme / To gall particular persons". The Stuart authors were not, however, as innocent as they claimed to be. Jonson's satire is often directed at characters representative of London figures, as Herford and Simpson note in their edition of *The Devil is an Ass*. Beaumont and Fletcher also created characters reminiscent of actual persons in plays such as *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (1625) and *Philaster* (1610), including figures no less important than the King.

The political intrigue of the Court was, of course, familiar to the majority of the spectators, a fact which made the game at once more interesting and more dangerous. Plays such as Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt* (1619) were closed because of their political comment. In 1619 a Dutch patriot named van Olden Barnavelt was executed for anti-monarchistic activities. His death created a stir in Stuart England and precipitated the publication
in London of numerous pamphlets branding him both a hero and a traitor. The run of **Sir John** was very short and coincided with this publication; it appears to be a cashing-in on sensation. The fact that this public play was closed, however, indicates that the court was sensitive to public discussion of the rights of the King. The implications for a playwright employing his art as a vehicle for personal comment on political matters are serious. They are particularly serious for playwrights such as Beaumont and Fletcher who might well wish to use controversial subjects as drawing cards for their plays; **Sir John** indicates they were prepared to do so. It is not suggested, however, that plays like *Valentinian* (1610-14), or *The Maid's Tragedy* (1611) did not present legitimate and uncommercial comments of the authors' dislike of James' Divine Right philosophy, despite the obvious fact that they catered to an interest in the subject in their audiences. It is suggested, however, that the nature of Beaumont and Fletcher's dramatic skill allowed them to capitalize on contemporary opinions, and to state their own, while protecting the plays from censure. How their histrionic stance managed to do so, both explains the closing of **Sir John** and the fact that **Philaster**, with its Divine Right King, could be performed before the reigning monarch in 1612 (twice), in 1630 and again in 1636.

**Sir John** is a rather straightforward, narrative play, typical of a public playwright like Heywood or Dekker, but atypical of Beaumont and Fletcher. Its comments upon the King were, therefore, transparent and the king in the play, who has a major role, could easily be seen as a parallel to James. *Valentinian, Philaster* and *The Maid's Tragedy*,
on the other hand, are typically Fletcherian. They are involved, theatrical creations which are as clearly fictitious as they are extravagant. The kings in these plays function so closely in the overall design of the play itself that they are not separately noticed, and they are so totally evil and despotic that they move to the fantastic and away from the satiric. Everything in these plays works to create an artificial world which is so gripping that it becomes larger than the real world and, as a result, no threat in the real world. The kings were prepared to accept the artifice of Beaumont and Fletcher plays, to suspend disbelief despite their perception of the inherent criticism in the monarch figure. This is an important suggestion, for it indicates the depth of artifice which Beaumont and Fletcher were able to create; it will be considered later in the Chapter in relation to the "despotic king" as stock figure in the Fletcherian repertoire and in Chapter V the notion of the Playhouse as artificial universe will be more thoroughly discussed.

Further evidence is available that Beaumont and Fletcher managed to avoid censure for opinions expressed within their plays. A Convention of the Jacobean theatre was to insert into the Prologue a disclaimer for any resemblance to real personalities. This was partly a response to the custom of the audience's carrying table-books to the performance to record gossip and bon-mots, and partly a protection against charges of libel or treason. Beaumont and Fletcher were aware of this custom, as is shown in the Prologues to The Woman-Hater, where there are mentioned those, "lurking amongst you in corners, with Table-bookes, who have some hope to find fit matter to feede...mallace on."

and to The Custom of The Country, where Fletcher asserts
there is nothing for the man, "that brings his table-booke / To write down, what againe he may repeate / At some great Table, to deserve his meate." The Prologues of seventeenth century plays are full of such statements. Significantly, however, there are few such disclaimers in Beaumont and Fletcher Prologues and, there are, in fact, no Prologues to Philaster, Valentinian or The Maid's Tragedy. Wisely, Beaumont and Fletcher had no desire to draw attention to any political overtones in their plays by advance notice of them, and clearly, they were confident that the illusion of the plays themselves would safely transcend whatever comment on reality was implicit in them. It was, of course, their skill as theatrical craftsmen that gave them such confidence.

The influence of the Puritans on theatrical taste became substantially stronger during the years of the Beaumont and Fletcher collaboration. The spectators were amused by bawdry but were not prepared to accept the licentiousness enjoyed by the later Restoration theatre-goers, with whom they can otherwise often be compared. The early Beaumont plays were disappointing to those who came "to heare lascivious scenes", but the later Fletcherian drama was even more carefully edited, in the writing and by censors like Sir Henry Herbert. The taste of the Second Blackfriars spectators, however, was probably less affected by Puritan disapproval than was the public taste; the influence of the court and its protection of the King's Men created an outlet for Beaumont and Fletcher's form which was markedly free of the obscene but exhibited a predilection for sentiment that would be considered effeminate and even decadent in
in Puritan terms. Perhaps the most perceptive analysis of Beaumont and Fletcher's response to the moral attitude of their audience is one which can, surprisingly, be found among the Victorian criticisms of Beaumont and Fletcher as playwrights as dissolute as any in the Restoration. In his *Comedy of the Restoration* (1841), Macaulay, reinforcing similar comments by Weber and Dyce^{19} states that:

"it is impossible to trace in their [Beaumont and Fletcher] plays any systematic attempt to associate vice with those things which men value most and desire most, and virtue with everything ridiculous and degrading. And such a systematic attempt we do find in the whole dramatic literature which followed the return of Charles the Second."^{20}

Ladies of fashion, hiding behind masks or fans, but very obviously present in the Blackfriars audience probably exerted a considerable effect on the general taste of the spectators. Court entertainments were reflected in the playhouse and the influence of the masque was keenly felt in plays not only by Beaumont and Fletcher but by most of the Stuart playwrights including Shakespeare. The movement of plays between the court and playhouse suggests that their design was one compatible with both, decorated for the palace and yet acceptable also within the Blackfriars' setting. The fact that the King's Men moved to the Cockpit-in-court for later command performances may indicate that the Blackfriars' plays were less spectacularly ostentatious than the exclusively royal productions. The patrons at Blackfriars, however, enjoyed costumes, discoveries and displays of jewels and Beaumont and Fletcher very sensibly provided them. Sometimes, as on Evadne's wedding night, a small masque was presented,
or an anti-masque device which the King's Men had already performed at Court might be fitted, costumes and all, into the play."²¹

In II,v, of Valentinian, as "Balbus draws the curtain; [and] caskets with jewels set out in the recess" appeal, the spectators are more effectively dazzled than is Lucina with whom they share the discovery. The whole Act is "made like a paradise" (II, i,43) with "ropes of pearl" (II,i,v,8), perfume (II,v,3) and music (II,v,5-43). The feminine spectators are invited here, as in other Fletcherian tragicomedies, to identify with the chaste dilemma of the heroine who must ignore the tempting opulence of a sinful court. Such is not typical only of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays, but it is characteristic of them. In Valentinian, music provides an auditory correlative of the moral balance which the mixed audience demanded and Beaumont and Fletcher contrived to create. As the virtuous Lucina remarks, "I like the air well; / But for the words, they are lascivious, / And over-light for ladies." (II,v,41-51).

The audience was not prepared to accept the presence of ladies on the stage. A French company which put actresses on the platform at Blackfriars in 1629 was "hissed, booted and pippin-pelted from the stage."²² The sensation which resulted was still noteworthy in 1633 when William Prynne included an account in his Histriomastix. The resultant use of male actors in feminine roles provided for Beaumont and Fletcher as it did for their colleagues, an ideal situation for disguise, revelation and the discussion of illusion, reality and the androgynous. As will later be seen, the insistence by the spectators on female impersonation created a significant means for their theatrical involvement in the life of the plays.
"The Satirized Spectator"

These spectators, who were often boisterous and who were not uniformly sophisticated or theatrically knowledgeable, but who were generally attentive and eager to participate in the drama, provided Beaumont and Fletcher with a rich source for satire. Because the audience was not completely homogeneous and because it was of usually predictable composure, the playwrights could expect to gain humour at the expense of their spectators.

The device was not initially as successful as Beaumont might have hoped. The early failure of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* resulted from the inability of its incisive caricatures to amuse the pre-1610 Beaumont audience which was perhaps less socially exclusive than the later Fletcherian one and was much less secure than the audiences of the plays to follow. "This unfortunate child,...so unlike his brethren"$^{23}$ manifested the important lesson that "where the Bee can sucke no Honey, shee leaves her sting behind."$^{24}$ In its invaluable Prologue, *The Woman-Hater* (1607) evidences the authors' awareness of the skill with which satire of the spectators must be employed if it is to amuse rather than alienate.

...But you shall not find in it the ordinaire and time-warne trade of jeasting at Lordes and Courtiers, and Citizens, without taxation of any particular or new vice by them found out, but at the persons of them: such, he that made this, thinkes vile; and for his owne parte vowes, That hee did never think, but that a Lord borne might bee a wise man, and a Courtier an honest man.$^{25}$
By 1613, however, Beaumont and Fletcher were satirizing all three ranks of spectators mentioned in the 1607 prologue. In I,ii of The Captain, Clora suggests a Gentleman, a Courtier and a wealthy merchant as well as a Soldier for consideration by Franck as possible lovers. Franck's reply in each of the first three cases includes a brilliantly satirical attack on a segment of the audience. Franck's eventual choice of the soldier, Jacamo, provides a final comic insult to each group and provides a clever, inverted jibe at those soldiers present in the audience, while employing a stock comic figure. The portrait of Jacamo is a particularly unattractive one; as Clora says, "this fellow will be made at Mid-summer / Without all doubt." (III,iii,158-9) Franck's excessive infatuation with Jacamo, despite his vulgarity, is embarrassing for Jacamo as it would be for soldier spectators who perceived that they were, in fact, being facetiously mocked by the playwrights. The satire of the other groups is less insidious.

Franck cannot love any Gentleman until he "keepe some land, and fewer whores," (1.39) and her opinion of courtiers is both vicious and lewd:

This somer fruite, that you call Courtier
while you continue cold and frosty to him
Hangs fast, and may be sound: but when you fling
Too full of heate of your affections
Upon his roote and make him ripe too soone
You'll finde him rotten 'ith handling.
His oathes and affections are all one
With his apparell, things to set him off;
...And for my single self, I'd sooner venture
A new conversion of the Indies
Then to make Courtiers able men or honest.

(11.68-75, 79-81)
It is interesting that the final lines echo the *Woman-Hater*’s Prologue so specifically. The satire which was denied in the early play, though it was nevertheless present, had by 1613 become the "truth" which the Prologue to *The Captain* warns would not "flatter" the spectators. (1.5)

Franck could not endure any merchant who, while "in another country / ...chopping for rotten Raysons" (11.47,49) leaves his wife "under the mercy of his fore-man" (1.50) The cuckold humour of the Elizabethan stage has been transmuted from individual to group satire, a form in which it is more acceptable to the Jacobean private audience.

In the homogeneous Elizabethan theatre, satire was directed towards well-known figures or humour characters who would be know to the majority in the audience. As the theatre became more restricted and the Private theatre audience became defined, playwrights could rely on more specific satire. This "privy-irony" was satire of types known to a particular, wealthy, aristocratic audience, though many of the caricatures drawn would also be understood by a public audience. More importantly, the private playwright could assume quite safely that the types at whom he was girding would be represented in the audience at Second Blackfriars. It is characteristic of Fletcherian satire that it attacks categories in the wealthy population, rather than individuals. Beaumont and Fletcher elicit responses in their spectators by an appeal to these groups in their audience and by the reaction of one group to another. The make-up of their audience, therefore, assisted the effectiveness of the satire, and the jealousy, superiority
and comaradary which existed between various groups functioned to enhance the satirical success of their plays.

Not all the satire was directed at stereotypes as broad as those lampooned in *The Captain*. As the Fletcherian style evolved, a number of characters began to reappear in the plays. These types resemble Jonsonian humour characters but do not duplicate them. They are less cynically drawn, but more importantly, while Jonson "seeks to emphasize the individuality of his representation of the type... [Beaumont and Fletcher] dwell almost always upon the class qualities." 26 There arise, therefore, characters such as the "cantankerous old gentleman" or the "scheming favourite" in a number of plays. The "despotic king", appears with all its political significance in *Valentinian*, *Philaster*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *The False One* (1620) and elsewhere, but becomes as has been mentioned, a caricature not of either Stuart monarch but of the notion of Divine Right in an artificial stage world where it is harmless. The direct identification of the King would have been treasonous; the creation of a completely evil King, larger than life and more despotic than James could ever be drew dangerous attention away from the person of the Monarch. Critics of Beaumont and Fletcher have decried their inability to develop character, 27 suggesting that the *personae* are flat and so dominated by a single passion that they become totally unrealistic. It is, of course, the use of characters for the almost iconographic purpose that is seen, for example, in the figure of the "despotic king" that creates this misconception. The character can be considered in a manner approaching the allegorical because he exists as a part
of the larger emotional development of the play. He is, therefore, not an insipid character, but one aspect only of the larger "personality" which includes all constituents of the play and the responses of the audience.

Not all the character types were as politically potent as was that of the autocrat. All, however, were familiar to the monied residents of Jacobean London. Ashley Thorndike considers that five figures, repeated with slight variation comprise most of the principal characters in the canon: the sentimental, love-lorn maiden; the insipid hero; the depraved woman; the knave; the faithful friend.

Orie Lathan Hatcher, in her doctoral dissertation on Fletcher, provides some of the chief variations of the Thorndike list: the clever, carefree hero; the soldier hero; the chaste maiden or matron; the clever servant; the merry old man. Some of these figures appear in plays contemporary with the Beaumont and Fletcher collaboration. Some, like the faithful friend and tricky slave, are seventeenth century adaptations of established stock figures from the Plautine repertory. As will be seen, all operate within the emotional patterns of the plays and all are sources for the playwrights' satire of their spectators. Thorndike and Hatcher tend to over-simplify the characters common to the plays but their observation is nevertheless useful; it throws light on the shallowness of individual characterization in the plays and makes clear the fact that the success of the plays depended on some other technique. This technique was, of course, the theatrical emphasis which Beaumont and Fletcher consistently maintain.
In *The Elder Brother* (1625), the interplay of stock figures from various social groups is elaborate employed. Eustace, the foppish brother admits with characteristic immodesty that his "choice manners have been such / As render [him] loved and remarkable / to th' princes of the blood." (I,ii,226-8) As a representative gallant courtier, Eustace ridicules his elder brother Charles whose studious stance is itself excessive:

Eust. [Aside] What a thing this brother is! Yet I'll vouchsafe him

The new Italian shrug. [bows to Charles] How clownishly

The book-worm does return it!

Charles I'm glad y'are well. [Plucks out a book and reads.]

Charles is unwilling to comprehend the mundane, preferring to "reap [his] harvest / ...receive the gain / ...and find wax and honey" (I,ii,143-5) in Virgil's *Bucolics* rather than in his father's farming expertise. His abrupt change in interest after meeting Angelina does not betray an inconsistency in characterization, but rather shows his earlier response for what the spectators would have known it to be, a pose less conscious than, but as contrived as that of Eustace: "I am a man, and have desires within me, / Affections too, though they were drown'd awhile" (III,v,118-20). The sudden change in feeling also startles the spectators and demands in them an abrupt response to this unexpected show of emotion.

Brisac must have represented a type with whom many in the Fletcherian audience could particularly identify. He is the practical, wealthy gentleman who must cope with the problems of inheritance and of matrimonial alliance. He must deal with sons whose education and
travel have made them difficult to control. He is above all else a businessman who doubts that Charles can find in his studies the happy equivalent of "a well-shaped wealthy bride." (I,ii,152)

He is justifiably concerned about the continuance of his family; in a delightful speech he fears that he "shall have a general collection/
Of all the quiddits from Adam to this time / To be my grandchild." (I,ii,179-81)

Sebastian in Monsieur Thomas is a figure parallel to Brisac. He has "maintain'd" his son for two years of travel and refuses to allow "another penny" to "pass" his "purse" until his son appears ready to accept the responsibilities of an heir. (I,ii, 24-28)

It is interesting that Sebastian, too, is upset by Thomas' feigned docility. The noble gentleman, it seems, wished for a son who was lusty and riotous and yet realistic and obedient. Many of the gentlemen spectators at the Second Blackfriars Playhouse, viewing the antics of these foppish sons on the stage seats, must have felt a singular empathy with the fathers of the plays. For the gallants themselves, the arguments and anger of the stage fathers would have had an amusing authenticity.

Brisac's brother Miramont is a curious figure, but an important one. He is both the country gentleman and a variation of the faithful friend figure and yet his role is so necessary to plot advancement that he ceases to exist as a real character.

Miramont acts as surprise deus ex machina, pretending to be objective and aloof from the schemes of his brother and neighbour, while actually sympathizing with Charles. Because he appears such an insignificant figure, his stepping into the plot at the finale
to assist Charles is a great surprise and resolves the drama in an unexpected manner. His use of Miramont is a significant statement of the theatrical skill with which Fletcher employs character. In a play so noticeably populated by the satirized stereotypes of various social groups, the introduction of a character who at first appears another stock figure but who actually fulfills a totally different role serves to delude the spectators completely, to prepare them for conditioned responses which will become inappropriate and to allow for the surprise denouement which became typical of Beaumont and Fletcher's drama. It is chiefly because the spectators had come to expect representative figures rather than evolving, psychological portraits that the device worked so effectively. F.H. Ristine has said in *English Tragicomedy* that the forms of comic and tragic romance as practised by Beaumont and Fletcher both "sacrificed character delineation and ethical meaning for immediate stage effect." 30 Certainly theatricality was the concern of the playwrights, but surely this emphasis embodied rather than scarificed characterization. Satirical comedy demands a certain objectivity, a distance, for example, unnecessary to slapstick comedy. Since the playwrights could assume their spectators would attempt to remain partially detached in order to observe the thrusts of satirical wit provided, they created characterizations which could be easily and instantly apprehended. They then forced a stronger participation in the denouement than that typical in satiric comedy by the unexpected emergence of a character such as Miramont as more than a stock figure. Such an emergence requires a reappraisal of but does not erase the effect of the satire established earlier.
It is because his role is so completely histrionic, therefore, that Miramont remains undeveloped as a personality. It is because they are stereotypes with whom the spectators can identify, and through whom, in interreaction with each other, the spectators can participate in the denouement, that the other personae of The Elder Brother gain purpose.

"The Demanding Spectator"

The satirical treatment of dramatic figures is effectively employed throughout the Fletcherian canon. At times, however, in their attempt to utilize the technique, Beaumont and Fletcher create contrived situations or endlessly repeat similar portraits. In over-worked caricatures such as that of the lawyer or judge in The Coxcomb (1609), The Spanish Curate (1622) and The Little French Lawyer (1619), Beaumont and Fletcher reduce their craftsmanship to a commercial mediocrity.

Taken as a separate instance, the satire of the Justice in The Coxcomb is masterfully handled. The old judge, who has been called not because he is the wisest (V, i,60) but "the nearest Justice" (V,i,58) is a complete buffoon. He is easily sidetracked by memories of trials he has conducted "of late dayes" (V,i, 89-100), and the trappings of his profession: "I'll but put my Cloake on and my Chaine off, and a clean band, and have my shooes blackt over, and shift my Jerkin, and wee'l to our businesse and you shall see how I can boot these matters." (V,i,116-21) His conception of justice is
scandalously punitive and unrealistic; he threatens to "hang the
Devill" if he can catch him (V,i,102). When the trial is voided
by Antonio's revelation of his true identity the Justice insists
"it was not honestly done of him to discover himselfe before the
parties accus'd were executed that law might have had her cause, for then
the Kingdome flourishes." (V,i,117-19) He vents his frustration by
threatening to hang a Tinker and a Whore, and upon learning that they
have escaped prison replies, "Tis no matter, then the Jaylor shall
be hang'd." (11.241-45). He is furious to learn the jailer has been
acquitted and is only persuaded to stay for dinner when informed
that his host has "a couple of brawling neighbours that...will not agree
and...[he] shall have the hearing of their matter." (11.250-1)
These scenes, however, only focus an attitude to the law, lawyers
and sheriffs seen elsewhere in the play, as when Valerio remarks "this
theife was halfe a Lawyer, [to judge] by his [thoroughly inescapable]
bands." (II,ii,116).

As has been established, lawyers comprised a large segment
of the Blackfriars audience, and satire of the group could function
for the same dramatic purpose as it did for other representative stock
figures. The position of the young "inns-of court" man was an
ambivalent one, however. He found himself in the company of the
nobility though socially their inferior, in a position of professional
superiority to the wealthy merchant but dependent upon mercantile
commerce for much of his livelihood. As a result, he was the butt of
jokes by both.
It is unsurprising, then, that while satire like that in *The Captain* grows out of plot situations designed to justify it, the ridicule of lawyers and judges is often superimposed on the narrative and designed for comic effect alone. It is unnecessary that Antonio's discovery be made during the abortive trial; it could easily have been as dramatically effective in a confrontation scene among the principals, as, for example the final scene in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1599). Because the audience is aware of Antonio's true identity and can, therefore, assume the inevitable outcome of the suit, the trial scene exists only for its own comic purpose, to expose the old judge as a fool, and an unnecessary one. In doing so, it reiterates that derisive attitude to lawyers which marks the comedies and which without redeeming dramatic intent caters to the bias of the spectators, who loved to laugh, especially at lawyers.

The "covetous lawyer" of *The Spanish Curate* is similarly treated solely as comic, despite the possibility afforded for moral argument. Bartolus, the victim of the underplot, is described as a "wrangling advocate," (I,i,274) and "a knave on record" (1.275). The response of the two gentleman friends to Leander's decision to seduce the lawyer's beautiful wife is one of amused agreement: "Take your fortune; / if you come off, we'll praise your wit, if not, / Expect to be the subject of our laughter." (11.303-5) The audience agrees with this ultimatum and the comic sub-plot is launched in these terms. An adulterous affair could have provided a means for the punishment of the corrupt Bartolus of the main action, but it does not. Amaranta remains "strong as fate" (V,iii,130) in her faithfulness
and although Bartolus in error believes himself to have been cuckolded, he has, in fact not been. Unlike Malvolio in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1600), Bartolus is not a broken man at the conclusion of the play. His personality is unaltered, though he is forced to participate in that happy ending the disentanglement of plot creates.

It is significant that Bartolus is not shown as overjoyed at his wife's fidelity, for, if he were, the sub-plot would have functioned to give him a moral victory and would be essentially involved in the moral agon of the play. As Fletcher has conceived it, the underplot has only secondary narrative purpose. It is chiefly contrived as a humorous counter to the main action. Fletcher has again achieved success by an appeal to his spectator's taste for jokes against lawyers, and has ignored the opportunity to demonstrate his ability to amuse while at the same time working out a moral dilemma.

The seduction scene (III,iv) of *The Knight of Malta* (1616) parallels Fletcher's treatment of Bartolus. The assurance of Miranda's chastity has no dramatic function and services no genuine religious purpose. As Wallis states, it "exists partly to titillate the audience and partly to dramatize by contrast the startling and effective rebuke of Miranda by the slave girl." It is the former intention which demonstrates that Beaumont and Fletcher were on occasion prepared to compromise their theatrical integrity to satisfy their spectators.

The characterization of Bartolus in the main plot of *The Spanish Curate* approaches that of the conventional comic villain. In III,i, he is shown as totally unscrupulous and avaricious. By extension, this satirical picture suggests that all lawyers have a
jurisprudent philosophy as unethical as that Bartolus expounds: "Hang the penurious! / Their causes, like their purses, have poor
issues" (1.20-1) Many a gentleman in the Blackfriars' audience could understand that the maintenance of estates required that the
landowner "live full of money, and supply the lawyer." (1.24) Many, who had been defeated in a lawsuit would bitterly recognize Bartolus'
answer to the assertion that witnesses "shall swear truth too". He replies "That's no great matter." (11.30,31) It is not surprising
that a Fletcherian character should be motivated by a single passion. It is noteworthy, however, that all lawyers and Justices in the canon should be incompetent or villainous, or as in the case of La-Writ in The Little French Lawyer, simply ludicrous.

In his Arte Nuevo, Lope de Vega says, "since the crowd pays for the comedies, it is fitting to talk foolishly to it, to satisfy its tastes."³⁴ The spectators at the Second Blackfriars Playhouse certainly did pay for their entertainment and Beaumont and Fletcher, who were their favourite playwrights, did not fail to "satisfy [their] tastes." It was not only in the comedies that they evidence their agreement with Lope de Vega's pragmatic dictum. The romantic tragedies, too are filled with devices intended to startle, intrigue, and gratify the audience.

One of the most appealing of these devices (although one too involved to be considered in depth here) is the use of music, particularly between Acts. It is important to establish, however, that music exists in the plays because the audience wanted it, for staging purposes, and, most importantly, as one of a number of effects
working together for audience response. The King's Men maintained the Act divisions of the Boys' Companies at Blackfriars. At the Globe, however, their plays were continuous. This is, itself, a significant fact. The intervals at the Private theatre allowed for additional music and dancing; The Knight of the Burning Pestle has stage direction which allow for both, and dialogue commentaries on each. These musical pauses are referred to also, in Beaumont's poem "To my Friend Master John Fletcher upon his Faithful Shepherdess": "Nor want there those, who as the Boy doth dance / Between the Acts..."35

Later plays do not furnish evidence of entr'acte entertainment as conclusive as that found in the early works, but critics support the claim for its continuance until the 1642 closing. Smith points out that the re-entry of characters in immediately juxtaposed Acts and the passage of stage time both required pauses in action.36 The Private playhouses with their "wax-lights"37 required an interval during which candles could be relit.

As the failure of The Faithful Shepherdess attests, however, music and dance were not enough to ensure success at Second Blackfriars. The public theatres also employed musical entertainment within the plays, after all, and the private audience was not satisfied as easily. What was needed for the private audience, and what Beaumont and Fletcher provided in plays after Philaster, was an interweaving of entertaining spectacle (music, masque elements, dance) with an over-all design carefully directed to prompt an emotional response. As a result, Beaumont and Fletcher provide startling stage business and exciting detail not only to entertain (though entertain it did) but
to assist a larger purpose.

An example of this detail is locale. The favourite setting for Beaumont and Fletcher plays is the tempestuous and exotic Mediterranean. The use of a mysterious locale was by no means peculiar to these authors, but again, the choice is indicative of their understanding of an audience fascinated by the East and ready to believe Mediterranean characters capable of prodigious emotion and passionate action.

The private audience was becoming interested in the rest of the world, for it had the money to travel. It was not yet, however, very sure of its facts. This poorly informed interest coupled with the presence of the young Jacobean nobleman back from his continental tour resulted in the allusions to foreign customs and the often amusing use of non-English words in plays like Monsieur Thomas and The Coxcomb. The tone of the Fletcherian plays is a worldly one, though as the ignorant misuse of geography and language makes clear, the tone is often only a veneer understood by neither playwrights nor spectators. That worldly allusions are incorrect is, however, less important than the fact that they are used. The Fletcherian drama, as has and will be seen, is less concerned with accuracy than with effect. Beaumont and Fletcher were especially fond of the trick effects so common in the theatre of their day. The seemingly dead character who rises to life is one such effect. Marston had employed the device as early as Antonio and Mellida (c. 1600) and it was still popular in 1611 when Shakespeare employed it in the descent of Herminone.
in Winter's Tale. The Knight of the Burning Pestle proves Beaumont's familiarity with the trick, but it is with Polydor in The Mad Lover (1617) that Fletcher demonstrates his skill with the device. The funeral scene (V,iv) is richly theatrical and by means of the supposed death of Polydor, Fletcher manages to prompt strong emotional reaction on two levels: in the play itself where Memnon "offers to kill himself" (stage direction after 1.306) and in the audience. The audience has seen Polydor taken ill in IV,v and their surprise and relief at his resurrection twists the emotional structure of the scene in a startling and (as will be seen) typically Fletcherian manner. The difference between this revelation and that of Herminione is significant. Shakespeare's trick functions importantly in the philosophical fabric of the play and completes a large regenerative metaphor and an elaborate working out of the healing quality of love in time. No such dramatic purpose is intended in Polydor's rising; the purpose instead is theatrical and the effect is a momentary one. As will be seen in Chapter IV, the bed substitutions in Monsieur Thomas and The Little French Lawyer are similar effects. The operate as does The Mad Lover in a conventional framework, yet are similarly twisted to provide a further complication, to dupe the audience which thought itself informed, by creating a deeper level of trickery revealed only in the final scenes. As with Polydor's rising in The Mad Lover, the result of such revelation is a striking emotional reaction.

It is on the emotional plane that Beaumont and Fletcher most cleverly manipulated spectator response. Even in this aspect
of their dramaturgy, however, they were responsive to the taste of the spectators. The juxtaposition of moods in a tragicomedy such as Monsieur Thomas, in which the pranks of Thomas and Dorothea contrast with the sentimental romance of Frank, Cellide and Valentine reveals in the playwrights, a realization of the variety of their spectators and the subsequent variance of emotion within the audience as a whole. While Beaumont and Fletcher were able to control their audience and, as will be seen, to include them both emotionally and by extension physically in the drama, their great popularity stemmed in large part from their conscious and at times demeaning effort to appeal to audience taste. Their plays, therefore, become a reflection of the spirit of their audience. And, as Marco Mincoff has said, "it is the reflection of a leisurely and aristocratic world that seeks its idealism in decorum, elegance and outward form." 

"The Exploited Spectator"

An appeal to the spectator and particularly to his emotions is characteristic of the majority of seventeenth century plays as, indeed it is to all drama. While it is true that Beaumont and Fletcher excelled in the use of defices that captured attention, many dramatists sought means to exploit the emotions of the audience. Hence, as Arthur Mizener remarks, "plays which sought to generate a cluster of more or less harmonious emotions by sets of scenes loosely bound as narrative were not uncommon to Jacobean drama." Nonetheless, as L.J. Wallis points out, "Most of the plays which preceded Philaster (1610), however sensational in incident and complication, were
organized in terms of such narrative elements as character, intrigue
or event.\textsuperscript{40} Fletcher and Beaumont organized the design of their
drama around the "network of conflicting emotions"\textsuperscript{41} with which
they planned to manipulate the sensibilities of their spectators.

This drama of conflicting emotions which so perfectly suited
the private audience, was foreshadowed in the early and unsuccessful
*The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608). The incredible popularity of the
style in the later years of the Beaumont and Fletcher collaboration
strongly supports the opinion earlier expressed, that in perceiving
their audience's interests and by capitalizing upon them, Beaumont
and Fletcher were representative of a new and enthusiastically
welcomed genre of theatre. What was prefigured in *The Faithful
Shepherdess* was fully developed in *Philaster* and the plays which
followed.

*The Faithful Shepherdess* failed in 1608 because it did not
provide "Whitsun-ales, cream, wassail and morris-dances,"\textsuperscript{42} but
employed the pastoral as fantasy, and in doing so created an unreal
world more reminiscent of Sidney's Arcadia than of Shakespeare's
Bohemia. It is, as Fletcher insisted in his epistle "To the Reader" of
the Second edition, a world in which "a god is as lawful...as in a
tragedy, and mean people as in a comedy."\textsuperscript{43} It is also a setting in
which Clorin's virginal adoration exists beside the ferocious sexuality
of Thenot, the romantic love of Perigot and the evil passion of Amarillis.
This stage world makes no attempt at naturalism and its characters are
motivated by a single, unnaturally powerful emotion. In such an almost
allegorical design, Beaumont and Fletcher presupposed a literary
which we have seen did not exist universally among their spectators. As is obvious in *Philaster*, with its vivid emotional pageant, the early failures taught a lesson to the playwrights. The popular plays of the canon concentrate on manipulating emotions too potent to be ignored.

In such a dramatic conception, the narrative becomes secondary and supportive, despite the superficial complexity it presents. The concern is not so much narrative as psychological and the *psychomachia* exhibits itself not in plot, but in emotion. The conflict, then, is not between characters on the stage—though they portray the roles in the *agon*—but is the spectators' own moral dilemma. "Spectator and actor merge in characteristic baroque confusion. They do not, as in a more classically conceived theatre, have separate identities with the audience invited to share, momentarily in the individuality of the artist's independent creation." Very often, however, the lightness of mood which lies behind the emotional effects and which has offended so many critics, protrudes into the pattern itself and makes any notion of anguished soul struggle hyperbolic. In the Beaumont and Fletcher plays, tragedy very often gives way to tragi-comedy and occasionally even to comedy.

Arthur Mizener chooses *A King and No King* as most representative of the "high design" of Fletcherian drama. It is an interesting choice since it is one of the few plays which was presented on all three stages. Robert K. Turner, Jr. comments that the 1625 edition (Q2) and subsequent productions at Blackfriars and Court suggest that The King's Men "recognized the play as a piece more to the taste...[of the private audience] than to...The Bankside [patrons]."
Such a conclusion supports the opinion that, while movement between the theatres was not uncommon and while the public audience could applaud a Beaumont and Fletcher play, the appeal of the Fletcherian drama was more strongly felt by the fashionable, courtly audience. A study of *A King and No King* demonstrates how thoroughly involved that audience could be induced to become.

Much of the discussion to follow is Mizener's, though comments upon his thesis have been added and the implications for a Blackfriar's audience stressed over those for an indeterminate audience. Mizener's approach to the play is then used to trace the emotional patterns of *Valentinian* and to comment upon the comedies. It seems not only justified but important to reconsider Mizener's argument for three reasons: his article was, as has been mentioned in the Introduction, a turning point in Fletcherian criticism which cannot be ignored; the play Mizener discusses is an important one, as has been mentioned already; and *A King and No King* illustrates the important Fletcherian, emotional design so completely and so well that it best serves any discussion of the technique.

The plot appears in first reading to be complex. An audience would not find the narrative complicated since it is overpowered in production by the strength of the emotional situations it creates. A more careful reading indicates the care with which the narrative is constructed in order to enhance the presentation of conflict. Despite the apparent importance of the plot, and the moral arguments contained in the dialogue, the narrative is clearly not the playwrights' concern. If it were, the glaring errors in its construction would destroy the play. These errors are substantial ones:
the parallel between Arbaces and Bessus which exists in potential is never significantly developed, as it would have been, for example by Shakespeare. In fact, as Mizener notes (p. 140), the whole relationship of the underplot to the main action remains unresolved despite the elaborate interrelation which is established. More importantly, in the main plot itself, the audience's attention is diverted away from the real crux of the moral conflict. Gobrias' scheming, which necessitates the trial of Arbaces and Panthea is left undiscussed and often "the tragic moral implications of that trial...[are] scandalously neglected." (p. 140) In fact, they are stressed only at moments of violent verbal moralizing by various characters, such as Arbaces in V,iv. It is characteristic of many Beaumont and Fletcher plays that great passages of moralizing exist not to make an ethical point of any consequence but because violent protestations are themselves exciting. The same proclivity towards exaggerated bombast marks many of the speeches of Amintor in The Maid's Tragedy such as those at IV,i,200ff and IV,v,180ff, where it is used for precisely the same effect.

The order of the narrative is carefully controlled not for its own value, but as a means to enrich an emotional form. Because the narrative is often superceded by the passion of the scene it has created, it is often the case that upon close examination, the feelings of a character are seen to be out of proportion to the dramatic situation which prompts them. T.S. Eliot has complained that Beaumont and Fletcher rely "upon a clever appeal to emotions and associations they have not themselves grasped." Mizener retorts, quite rightly, that "Beaumont and Fletcher have grasped everything
that is relevant to their purpose." (p. 141n.) It may well be that Beaumont and Fletcher intentionally ignore what T.S. Eliot considers important in the emotions they generate, but it is not true that they lack a formal structure. The strength of Arbaces' intense speech in III,i demonstrates how masterfully that structure is controlled.

My sister— is she dead? If it be so,
Speak boldly to me, for I am a man
And dare not quarrel with divinity,
But do not think to cozen me with this.
I see you all are mute and stand amaz'd
Fearful to answer me; it is too true
A decreed instant cuts off every life,
For which to mourn is to repine: She died
A virgin though, more innocent than sleep,
As clear as her own eyes, and blessedness
Eternal waits upon her where she is.

We must all die,
And she hath taught us how.

(III,i,129-143)

The speech would be extravagant in almost any play. It appears to be the climactic recognition by a hero of the pivotal tragedy of his drama. It has a simple grandeur which makes of the hushed question—"Is she dead?"—an apparently awesome insight. But it is not. Panthea is not dead but kneeling very visibly in front of her brother.
Beaumont and Fletcher have the ability to "display with elegance, with a kind of detached eloquence, the attitudes presented." (p. 141) This ability provides a speech like that of Arbaces with the dignity which could otherwise grow only from rising narrative action. This speech at the opening of Act III exists despite the plot situation; it is powerful because it is so unexpected. Yet there is a clever interweaving of the narrative elements of the play into the body of this removeable set piece of dramatic poetry which deceives the audience into believing the speech an acceptable expression of either the events of the scene or of Arbaces' character. Beaumont and Fletcher are careful to maintain this contrivance, for with it they can lull the audience into a depth of response which taken out of context would be absurd. On occasion, and particularly for a modern reader, the device fails, producing an overblown speech. More often, however, and especially for a private Jacobean audience, the effect produced is profound. Here, in the turning point of A King and No King, it is consummate.

Abraces knows, in fact, that Panthea is alive and kneeling before him. He also realizes his incestuous love for her. Furthermore, he is a man who has made clear his egoistic belief in his own demi-divinity. He describes his victory as "an act / Fit for a god to do upon his foe" (I,i,139-40); he is "propp'd by divinity." (I,i,128) Seen in the light of these narrative and characterizational facts which are known to the audience, the Act III speech is surrounded with irony. It is at once a means by which a proud man can play for time in an impossible situation—a situation with which the spectators could
sympathize—and the anguished cry of a man whose love violates the strongest sexual taboo. It is also the very human perception of mortality through a sense of sin. The moral implication of Arbaces' discovery, "I am a man / And dare not quarrel with divinity" (1.130;31) intrigues an audience who knows he has discovered his manhood through lust. His concern for his sister's virginity operates on the narrative level as an exhibition of Arbaces' revulsion at his incestuous impulses. "Even his closing words may appear to be a necessarily concealed prayer for strength to bear his own crosses." (p. 143)

The speech, however, lacks any bitterness. It is not infused with the ironical tone which it would have were it an honest expression of self-discovery, a voicing of the tremendously ironic narrative situation in which Arbaces finds himself. On the contrary, the tone is pathetic, the speech an elegy for a dead sister. Beaumont and Fletcher, by inserting the speech so carefully in the action and by hinting that it is justified, manage to wring a response without validity from an audience too moved to notice that the sister for whom they mourn is quite obviously still alive.

In demonstrating the ingenuity with which Beaumont and Fletcher handle the emotions of their characters and spectators, the first scene of the third Act of A King and No King is a miniature of the dramatic technique employed in the play as a whole and throughout the canon.

The sequence opens with the important scene in which Arbaces forgives his treacherous mother's plot to murder him. Immediately after, however, the peaceful mood is destroyed by Arbaces' inexplicable
silence towards his sister. His attitude toward the two kneeling women is violently contrasted and the spectators who have seen his generosity towards the evil Arane are shocked by his treatment of the angelic Panthea. The fact that Panthea's speech is hyperbolic in its adoration serves to intensify the surprise at Arbaces' response:

Gobrias. Why does not your majesty speak?

Arbaces. To whom?

Gobrias. To the princess.

Panthea interjects a note of fear, and in a superb theatrical moment, Arbaces replies in a solitary, crushing expression of apparent misunderstanding:

Gobrias. Sir, you should speak to her

Arbaces. Ha?

As Tigranes intercedes for the sister, the emotional struggle of his own growing love for Panthea is introduced to parallel Arbaces' confessional aside. The tension which is established in this unexpected turn of events is intensified through a series of stychomythic speeches each of which appears to be the inevitable end of the confusion: (11. 112-128)

Gobrias. Do you not see her there?

Arbaces. Where?

Gobrias. There.

Arbaces. There? Where?

Gobrias. 'Slight, there: are you blind?
Once an intolerably nervous pitch is achieved, the mood is snapped by Arbaces' violent outburst and his astonishing elegy for a dead sister, "As hell! By Heaven, as false as hell!...." The whole passage has been an exhausting tour de force of emotion, but it has not, in fact, been a logical outgrowth of the narrative.

The remainder of the scene follows a similar pattern. The sequences of speeches are each connected in the same way, as are individual speeches within each sequence. Arbaces' angry and threatening speech which concludes the next sequence is the passionate counter to his pathetic elegy. His third mood is overwhelming sadness and ends with a potent impressa; Arbaces slumps exhausted onto the throne. Tigranes then speaks in consolation, but by betraying his own love incites violent jealousy in Arbaces. The audience which has just watched Arbaces expend himself, is startled by his renewed fury. As the clashing anger of this passage dies away, another abrupt change sees Arbaces kneeling before Panthea in a sequence of extravagant affection. Suddenly Arbaces explodes, ordering Panthea imprisoned, and as she is removed he returns to a towering despair at his impotency before Fate. As he is led off-stage, faint with exhaustion, the emotional fabric of the scene is completed in a moving "dying fall":

Wilt thou hereafter, when they talk of me
As thou shalt hear, nothing but infamy
Remember some of these things?....

(11.344-46)

Although peripetiac from a narrative standpoint, the emotional "form of the scene is firm and clear, for all its richness, [sudden shifts] and variety." (p. 149)
In precisely the same way, the comic and tragic elements of the play are contrasted by Beaumont and Fletcher for striking effect. Bessus' comic scene (III,ii) contributes nothing to the plot development and has caused Muriel Bradbrook to criticize the blurring of tragic and comic.48 But following immediately after the passionate first scene, Bessus' comic cowardice eases the tension and prepares for a more subtle return to the Arbaces/Panthea plot in the third scene.

The third scene of Act III is a more subdued temptation scene in which Mardonius and Bessus operate as morality figures. Beaumont and Fletcher purposely underplay the roles Mardonius and Bessus play and stress rather the response which a temptation to Good or Evil demands. In this way, the scene avoids becoming a passive enactment of temptation; the psychomachia is once again extended to include the spectators who totally identify with Arbaces in his dilemma and who themselves experience an emotional and psychological struggle.

The remainder of the play is identically patterned. The meetings of Arbaces and Panthea constantly reiterate suspense and eventually culminate in Arbaces' final surrender to his desire "It is resolved." (V,iv,1)

Arbaces shocking and cynical determination to embrace sin is maintained through another strained passage and is then suddenly mitigated by Gobrias' revelation. The denouement has been ingeniously devised and concealed for theatrical surprise effect. Now that the emotions of the spectators have been exploited to the full, the play is rapidly drawn to a conclusion.
The structure of *Valentinian* (1610-14) is based on a framework of emotional responses as elaborate as that of *A King and No King*. Although the drama revolves around the revenge theme, the plot elements of the crime and revenge are less important than the passions which attend each. The narrative is coherent but hardly credible. After her arguments with Valentinian's pandars, Lucina is unbelievably trusting when her husband's stolen ring is delivered; Valentinian sees nothing suspicious in Maximus' forged letter though he is aware of Aecius' extreme loyalty to the crown. Maximus' decision to seek the throne is quite out of character. The spectators are able to suspend disbelief, however, because these events gain conviction through emphasis on the characters' dilemmas and passionate vacillations.

In *Valentinian*, Beaumont and Fletcher skillfully create suspense and highlight reaction by off-stage events. The rape of Lucina would necessarily be hidden on the seventeenth century stage, but her suicide might easily have been exhibited. It would, however, have been anti-climactic after the anguished decision scene between the violated Lucina and her dishonoured husband. And, of course, the off-stage suicide makes credible an announcement of her death, a message which interrupts Maximus' unfair jealousy to great tragic effect.

The first two acts are designed for suspense. Act I, though preparatory, raises the expectation that the demonstrably tyrannical Emperor might commit a crime of huge consequence. The debate on Divine Right, which would be particularly exciting to the Fletcherian audience is introduced for later use.
The events of Act II are associated with the attempt at rape. Once Lucina has been lured to the palace, however, events are delayed by a more emotional dialogue parallel to that between Aecius and Maximus in Act I. The jewel scenes tantalize the audience, but as the Act closes it is not yet clear if the rape will be successful.

The first words of Act III are chilling with decisive theatrical understatement. With superb histrionic effect the deed is confessed: "'Tis done, Lucinus!" This central Act exploits every possible emotion the rape could create. The pitch of the response is carefully controlled, with a subdued second scene between passages of climactic reaction. The audience perceives that a tragic conclusion is demanded by the pivotal event of the play, but it is nowhere prepared for the actual surprise ending.

Act IV leads attention away from the principals and fills the stage with heroics: suicides, murders, deceit, extreme loyalty. The spectators are thrilled, although the main action is advanced almost imperceptibly.

Act V appears as an exciting working-out of the revenge. It contains the horror-climax of the play, as the poisoned Valentinian dies in verbalized agony. The ends seems at hand, but, of course, it is not. Maximus' treacherous decision to ascend the throne surprises the spectators as it opens the possibility for additional action. For three scenes the audience is held in suspense until, at last, and in a brilliantly theatrical denouement, the revenge completes itself. The death of Maximus is the ultimate surprise and their sudden realization of it as it pierces through the confusion on stage,
elicits in the spectators a final and overwhelming response.

The comedies are constructed in a similar manner, although the emotions they employ are less vivid. The reaction by his father to Thomas' alterations in personality through Monsieur Thomas and, indeed, the balance between humour and sentiment in the play are designed to capture the spectators no less completely than were the tragedies. And it is the emotional pattern which attends the frenetic pursuit of Mirabel which gives title to The Wild-Goose Chase (1621).

Beaumont and Fletcher were aware of the spectators for whom they wrote, of their behaviour and idiosyncracies, their group consciousness and their various tastes. They were responsive to the demands of the audience and achieved a great popularity by providing the kind of entertainment desired, even if doing so occasionally reduced the artistry of their work. But above all, they were conscious of their ability to entangle the spectators in the reactions within and between characters, and therefore, to involve them in the drama itself.

In doing so, Beaumont and Fletcher assisted the creation of a new style of tragicomedy which was more concerned with sentiment than with narrative. And by assimilating it emotionally, Beaumont and Fletcher also prepared the audience for a physical involvement with the stage, for a role as chorus or as "actor". For once a physical intrusion onto the stage was effected (however symbolically), the emotional rapport Beaumont and Fletcher had so completely established could function with it, to create of the audience a "character" participating totally in the drama.
Notes to Chapter III

1 This latter participation is considered in Chapter IV.


3 Thomas Stanley, verse in the 1647 Folio; Glover-Waller, I, p. xxcii. Stanley appears to have a more perceptive response than does Davenant.


5 II, ii, 147.

6 II, ii, 156.

7 This page is numbered 30 in the facsimile, but follows 31.


9 The Spanish Curate Prologue hints that the interest was, at times, greater than the attention: "only be you but still...."


12 Cf. Armstrong, p. 231. As always, this comment may be biased.

13 Var. IV, p. 445.

15 Prologue; Bowers, p. 157.

16 Var. I, p. 482.

17 Prologue to The Woman-Hater; Bowers, p. 157.

18 Cf. Bentley, III, p. 370. E.g. The Loyal Subject (1619, rev. in 1633).


21 Wallis, p. 109. Bentley makes a similar comment with regard to Queen Henrietta's masque costumes. See n.II:70.

22 Thomas Brande in a letter; cited in Bentley VI, p. 23.

23 Author's preface to the rev. ed.; Bowers, p. 7.


29 University of Chicago (Chicago, 1905).


31 Description in the Dramatis Personae listing; Var., p. 122.
Northrop Frye has pointed out in "The Mythos of Spring: Comedy," *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 169, that the moral triumph of comedy is the perception of reality in an illusionary situation. Hence, if Bartolus had genuinely moved from *pistis* to *gnosis*, he would have emerged a freer man, able to rejoice in the self-knowledge gained. As his veiled threats to Leander demonstrate, he has not.


Commentatory verse to *The Faithful Shepherdess*; Var., p. 11.

p. 230.

Commentatory verse to *The Faithful Shepherdess*; Var., p. 12.


"The High Design of *A King and No King*," *MP*, 38 (November 1940), 135.

Fletcher, Beaumont & Company, p. 204.


Var., p. 18.

W.W. Appleton, p. 117.

"The High Design of *A King and No King*," pp. 133-54. Internal references to this article will be made by page number.


Selected Essays 1917-1932, p. 135; cited in Mizener, p. 141n.

Cited in Mizener, p. 149.
CHAPTER IV
The Audience as Character

Writing as they were for an audience they understood, whose attention they had captured, and whose emotional responses they could control, Beaumont and Fletcher were in an ideal position to bridge the gap between the stage and auditorium, to involve the spectator in the theatrical action on the platform. This they did brilliantly, chiefly through asides, disguises and the use of multiple levels of reality in masques—within—the plays, and, occasionally, as in The Knight of the Burning Pestle (1607), through an actual physical intrusion onto the stage.

The Knight of the Burning Pestle cannot be considered typical of the later plays of the Beaumont and Fletcher collaboration, or of the later Fletcher plays. Its subject matter and technique betray a relationship with the Elizabethan Theatre which is no longer obvious in the plays which follow Philaster (1610), and unfortunately, although Beaumont expected a favourable response to his two-fold design, its style failed to satisfy the evolving, aristocratic taste of the Blackfriars' audience of 1607. The Knight of the Burning Pestle is theatrically clever but lacks much of the refinement of the later plays, and more importantly, it lacks the emotional substructure by which Beaumont and Fletcher were able subsequently to involve playgoers in
the experience of the drama. It largely depends upon audience response to one major dramatic device; the later plays are built upon a framework of reactions to many. The play is, nevertheless, interesting as a study of the spectators' role, since the device of actor-spectators is so obviously employed and, in fact, because the technique is conceived at the surface level of the play. The movement between stage and auditorium effected by the coming on stage of actors posing as members of the audience is forceful, but it is a transparent example of an interchange which in the later plays becomes more fluid and two-dimensional and more exceptionally successful theatre. By encouraging an unusually strong identification with a character in the drama, by involving the spectators to an unusual degree in the disguise motif of the play, by directing asides to spectators at differing levels of awareness of the reality of the play, by creating multiple, inter-related levels of illusion in which the audience is variously situated, Beaumont and Fletcher were able, as will be seen, to make their spectators active members of the stage world. The result of such contrivance is a more multi-dimensional involvement in the drama than that effected through a passive identification with mock observers like George and Goodwife Nell.

The fact that the actors in the original production of The Knight of the Burning Pestle were boys would intensify the difficulty which a spectator might have in accepting the actors as real members of the audience. The 1635 revival of the play may, in fact, have achieved greater success partly because the Citizens' roles were then played by mature members of the Queen's Men Troupe. Nonetheless, the
role of the Citizens as go-betweens was more consciously conceived by Beaumont than it was, for example, by Jonson in *The Staple of News* (1616) or Shakespeare in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594?). While Shakespeare's use of the Induction characters is introductory and non-essential, and Jonson's interest is satirical, Beaumont weaves the interruptions of George and Nell into the total design of the play and attempts to transport the spectators onto the platform by means of them.

The stage-sitting gentlemen are immediately involved. As Nell comes up, George asks that they "make her a little room" (I, 48) and singles out a gallant to involve in the physical action: "I pray you, sir, lend me your hand to help up my wife." (I.48-9). The attention of the audience is directed towards stage business which has no purpose in the narrative of the Boys' "play", but which invests the spectators on the stage with special significance. And the scheme of the play insures that this attention never wanders.

As Jasper threatens Luce, Goodwife Nell breaks into the narrative by admonishing the gallants to "see the King's peace kept!" (III, 94). At the beginning of Act IV, (or possibly, in a Seventeenth century production during an interlude of entr'acte entertainment) Nell toasts the gallants with beer and urges her husband to "fill the Gentlemen some beere George." (3.Interlude; 1.5). After Rafe rescues two lovers from a cavern prison, George assures his wife that he "can tell thee the Gentlemen like Rafe" (III,454) to which she replies "Gentlemen I thanks you all hertily for gracing my man Rafe, and I promise you you shall see him oftener." (III,455-58).
Throughout the play, the Citizens' interruptions alternately address the gallants as extensions of the audience, and the actors on behalf of the spectators. As a result of this continual shift in point-of-view, there emerge in the play two levels of reality. On one level, the Citizens are themselves spectators, and to judge by Nell's assessment of the romantic complications of Jasper's play, rather gullible ones. On the other, they are actors whose identity is known to the spectators and whose presence constantly reminds the audience of the illusionary nature of the theatrical mode. As Nell says in Act II, "we ha' done our parts," (1.205).

The almost annoying frequency of the Wife's interjections serves as a constant restatement of the pretense of the theatre. While this technique draws the audience into the drama intellectually, it also distances it emotionally. The more subtle techniques of the later plays achieved the former without allowing the latter. In a later discussion of the elaborate bed-trick in Fletcher's *The Little French Lawyer*, it will be seen that while viewers intellectually realize that they are witnessing unreality, the confusion of the bed-trick itself and its surprise discovery dupes them into an irrational belief in the illusion to which they thought themselves partners. Hence in this 1619 play, the spectators are deeply involved, firstly because they share the heroes' confidence and participate in the supposed cuckolding of the comic gull, and secondly because they suddenly perceive that with the heroes they have been double-crossed by the playwright(s?). It is only because the spectators are so imaginatively engrossed that they will not only willingly, but happily suspend rational disbelief. The failure of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* evidences that such
involvement was not evoked by the more mono-faceted and technically obvious role of Goodwife Nell.

The design of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is potentially very full, although many of the possibilities it affords are over­looked by Beaumont in his preoccupation with the role of the Citizens. Rafe, for example, is a character of particular interest. Unlike George and Nell, the apprentice actually assumes a role in the play-within-the-play and thereby adds a third level of reality. He is an actor posing as a spectator posing as an actor. Rafe's position at once furnishes the audience with a touchstone in the inner play and adds credibility to the guise adopted by the actors portraying George and Nell.

On occasion, Rafe overtly acts as a link, as he does, for example, in Act II, (ll. 267-83) where he arrives at the decision to revenge Humphrey on the basis of evidence furnished both by Humphrey on the third level (in the playlet) and Nell on the second (in the larger play). As Rafe asks, "Where is the caitife wretch hath done this deed?" (1.278), it is not immediately apparent whether the "deed" in question is the stealing of Humphrey's "lovelie wife... on yonder Greene," (an action reported by Humphrey) or the unmerciful beating which Nell reports in an interruption. It is, in fact, most likely both. It is a further link between the levels that Rafe's decision to revenge the crime is coloured by his Mistress's inter­position into the stage world of the playlet, of a threat of condemnation in the "real" world of the Citizens: "and thou spar'zt him, Rafe, I would thou were hang'd," (1.277). Once again, however, this speech
which threatens censure in a world itself make-believe, points back to
the larger motif of appearance and reality for which Nell's whole role
is a metaphor. It is unfortunate that Beaumont's insistence on
this second level precludes a complete working out of Rafe's position
as link, and denies other potentialities of the character. This
emphasis on the Citizens is consistent, as can be seen by a second
example of Rafe as link.

In Act II, George insists that unless Rafe is capable of
winning a duel with Jasper (a figure of the playlit world) "he should
nerere come in my shop more." (1.325) Once again it is George and not
Rafe who articulates the connection, though Rafe is himself the bridge.
Once again the focus is shifted back to the Grocer's world of the
second level. And once again, Rafe is under-used, rather than misused.
Beaumont's preoccupation with a two-level stage world removes the possi­
bility for experimentation with Rafe in the third level. Had Rafe's
potential not been subordinated to Beaumont's over-all, two-dimensional
design for the play, he might, for example, have slipped totally into
the third level and in actually becoming part of Jasper's playlette
world, have more completely investigated the borders of reality and
illusion with which the play is concerned.

George and Nell serve a final, important role as arbitrators
of taste. As has been suggested, their performance of this role in
1607 failed because Beaumont did not yet understand his audience and,
therefore, created in his Citizens characters ready to transport to the
stage aesthetic dictates not present in the auditorium, or at least not acknowledged as present. By the time of the 1635 production, the satirical nature of the characterization of the Citizens would have replaced their never realized potential as messengers. In the original design, however, it seems certain that directions such as "begin brother, now a capers sweet heart, now a turne a' th'toe, and then tumble: cannot you tumble youth?" (3. Interlude, 9-11), or George's argument with the Prologue's objections to death in a comedy: "Take you no care of that sir boy, is not his part at an end think you, when he's dead? come away Raph" (V, 275-6), were intended to voice preferences on behalf of the audience. Obviously, a figure who articulates the spectators' editorial opinions will be a very easy character with whom to identify and, equally clearly, an audience whose whims are being expressed and then obeyed in a play will respond enthusiastically to that play. For a Second Blackfriars' audience, however, the editorial device necessarily failed. The spectators were fond of spectacle, but few of the successful Beaumont and Fletcher plays provide for any predilection on the spectators' part for the sort of acrobatics or unplotted fights which George and Nell demand. As William A. Armstrong has pointed out, the Second Blackfriars audience included those who were "fastidious critics of gesture and deportment." In his contemporaneous description, Fitzgeoffrey mentions classicists in the audience who condemned the raising of a hat with a flourish as a "hateful Gesture", and a low bow as "Affecting Proud Humility." For those in the audience who genuinely demanded a restrained performance, the ignorant requests of the Citizens would be anathema, and for the more self-conscious critics, the satire would be
too uncomfortable to be funny.

The Citizens in Act V, scene iv of Philaster demand brutal treatment and hanging for Pharamond, but the flippant tone of their suggestions and the bawdy humour which accompanies them, reduces both the horror and the seriousness of their position. No one in the Second Blackfriars Playhouse is expected to empathize with the ghoulish requests of these citizens and if any did, the remainder of the play, which abruptly turns from this scene both in plot and tone and which makes no future reference to it, suggests their error. The scene is a melodramatic insertion typical of Fletcher, and reminiscent of the emotion-inducing scenes discussed earlier. The interesting fact to notice, however, is the playwright's use of the citizenry in this highly successful play.

Unlike the Grocer's party, these citizens are undeveloped and unimportant characters. They are not intended as satirical figures (though they do exemplify an attitude to execution common in Stuart England), nor as individual personalities. If the spectators of The Knight of the Burning Pestle reacted against the play either because they found the citizens tiresome, or because they found them too authentic for comfort, they could respond enthusiastically to Philaster where the citizens are reduced to a theatrically effective but narratively insignificant position.

Importantly, a change in social position for the citizens is also seen between the two plays. The mob in Philaster is not in the social position of the wealthy merchants in the Jasper-Luce play or even of the ordinary folk seen in George and Nell. As a result, the mob
and its ungenteel requests are distanced from the lives of the spectators. An attitude has emerged. For the gentry in the audience of Philaster the citizens have become rude mechanicals of little consequence and for those wealthy citizens present at Blackfriars (and certainly at the production in the Globe), the "citizens" have become rabble clearly their economic inferiors, who demonstrate a lack of sophistication refreshing after the insulting candor of The Knight of the Burning Pestle. The significant aspect of this attitude to citizenry by the playwrights is not its intrinsic implications, but the fact that it has been adopted in order not to offend the audience. It is impossible for any playwright to involve spectators he has alienated, and the success of plays after The Knight of the Burning Pestle in creating participation derives to a large extent from the lesson which that play taught. The world of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays after Philaster is an inoffensive, fictional world. In this world, tricks and effects can lure onto the platform, spectators hesitant to ascend it with George and his garrulous wife.

In filling their plays with stage effects, Beaumont and Fletcher satisfy the same demands in their audience that their fellow playwrights sought to fulfill. It is often the case, however, that their keen understanding of the taste of their audience allows them to alter a convention sufficiently to make it unusually successful. They were able to modify their staging with changing fashions and also, as has been mentioned, to encourage changes in those fashions by their staging. The rituals, for example, of Pan's Priest in The Faithful Shepherdess (1608),
especially in I,ii and V,v, are simpler and closer to the pantomime
than are the ceremonies of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) and may
indicate Fletcher's assumption that his audience wanted those
"scenes of a pantomimic nature which present the moral of the play
in the form of a pageant appealing vividly to the eye," which Dieter
Mehl shows to be part of the early English theatrical sensibility.

The failure of *The Faithful Shepherdess*, however, indicates that the
audience by now wanted more, and the plays after *Philaster* (1610)
demonstrate how prepared Beaumont and Fletcher were to comply. The
masque-like scenes in later plays like *The Maid's Tragedy* (1611) and
*The Mad Lover* (1617) are as elaborate as any Jacobean could desire.

Other effects common to the theatre of the period are
employed by Beaumont and Fletcher and a brief catalogue of them will
serve to indicate how happy Beaumont and Fletcher were to accept the
conventional when it served their theatrical purpose to do so and
yet how subtly they adapted those conventions for stage effect.

The chronicles and history plays made extensive narrative and
visual use of grand entrances. Beaumont and Fletcher are fond of these
stylized entrances, but use them more for stage effect than for narrative
purpose. Characters other than sly villains rarely slip onto the
Fletcherian platform, they enter instead to panoply and notice. In
*Bonduca* (1609-14), for example, Fletcher requires twenty-two of these
formal entrances, including processions, and at least twenty such exits.
The procession of the conquering hero in *A King and No King* (1611) is
a similar spectacle but as has been seen, everything in that play is
g geared to the theatrical moment, not to the satisfaction of plot
demands. Again as in the history plays, monarchs in Fletcherian
plays have formal court scenes in Presence Chambers, as does the
king in Philaster: character groups are brought on stage in a stylized
manner, as are the wedding guests in The Maid's Tragedy; banquets
are popular, such as the one presented in Bonduca or burlesqued in
The Knight of the Burning Pestle; symbolic figures repeatedly cross over
the stage, often bearing emblematic insignia. So they do, of course,
in dozens of other Stuart plays. Yet in plays by Beaumont and
Fletcher, the whole emphasis is upon such devices, upon the spectacular
effects they produce and the emotional response they prompt.

It is impossible to consider here all the devices employed;
Beaumont and Fletcher's use of disguise most clearly indicates the
histrionic focus of their dramaturgy. As well, the use of the aside
illustrates the methods by which the authors entice the spectators into
the on-stage action, and by means of which they make them participating
characters.

Disguises, with their potential for exciting visual effect
and dramatic revelation were a popular device on the Jacobean stage.
Disguises were usually employed (as, for example, Shakespeare used
them in As You Like It [1600]) as a means of plot complication,
advancement and resolution. The foreknowledge of the audience was
a part of the disguise motif, providing suspense and irony and
involving the audience on an intellectual level with the narrative
plane. Beaumont and Fletcher, with typical inventiveness, employ the
disguise for the same effects but also for specifically theatrical
effect. They also treat the motif in a decidedly more sexual
manner and at times, without the knowledge of the spectators.

Bellario, the page in Philaster, is, in fact, the disguised
gentlewoman Euthrasia. In production, this fact is unknown until
the final scene when Euthrasia is forced to expose herself in the
face of torture. The effect of this prolonged disguise on the final
climax and denouement of the play is startling and characteristically
Fletcherian in its totally unexpected reversal of all that has gone
before.

As Andrew Gurr points out in his introduction to the Revels
series edition of Philaster, the disguise allows a complex visual and
verbal pun on the notion of service, an idea which underlies the play.

The sexual ambiguity of the word is omnipresent and provides for the
curious undertone which marks Bellario's unstinting "service" to his
master. The double entendre is brought out in the king's accusation
to Arethusa that Bellario has "done you that good service/ Shames
me to speak of," (III, ii. 27-8). The ambiguity of the word can be
seen throughout the play; Pharamond's visit "to do his service," (I, ii, 142),
is an attempt at seduction, while Cleremont comes "to do his service"
(III, i, 84) to Philaster, as messenger, and without any sexual intent.

It is this ambivalence that creates the final resolution in which Bellario
"is revealed as a metaphor of true service, uniting the two respectable
meanings of the word [faithfulness to love and servitude to master] in her
actions, and denying the third [sexual] implication by the fact of her sex."
Bellario thus becomes the exemplification of the ideal Renaissance model of honest love and duty without self-interest or lust. In her disguise, however, she is also a conventional androgynous figure—a boy acting as a girl dressed as a boy, and one who feels an angelic love for a man. Where the treatment is unusual is in regard to the response of Philaster, who both embraces and passionately wounds Bellario in scenes directly parallel to those between the lover Philaster and his mistress Arethusa. The temptation to reveal Euthrasia's identity to the audience and to thereby elicit an elaborate system of ironies would be strong for any playwright. It is typical of Fletcher's histrionic sense of style that he chooses rather to deceive the audience until the last moment and to untwist the entire design of the play, its plot, emotional framework, moral discussion and homosexual motif, in a single disclosure. Philaster's hysterical repeating of the revelation, "It is a woman!" is silently echoed by the spectators whose surprise and relief is as great as is that of Philaster.

The sexual tone of Fletcherian disguise is also obvious in Monsieur Thomas. This play also demonstrates the multiple levels of illusion typical of Fletcher's use of any stage device and these two facets work together in M. Thomas as in Philaster to produce a motif as strikingly theatrical as it is elaborate.

The complex bed-trick (V,ii), in which Mary tricks Thomas into bed with her negro maid in the mistaken belief that his partner is herself is made doubly humorous and theatrically more effective by Thomas' disguise. The audience is aware of Thomas's identity in
disguise and is aware also of the woman's double-cross. The audience believes itself to be the conventional knowing observer. Therefore, as Thomas lustily vows, "I'll kiss thee ere I come to bed, sweet Mary," (1.23), the spectators realize that the hidden occupant of the bed cannot be Mary who is "laughing" at the edge of the platform and join with her to ridicule his ignorance. The scene is extravagantly theatrical; the humour builds until the frenzied climax when the real identity of the blackamoor is revealed, and in which Thomas yells, "Holy Saints defend me!/ The devil, devil, devil! oh, the devil!", and "Beats the moor." (11. 30-31)  As is typical of surprise in the Fletcherian canon, the moment of discovery is noisy, exciting and a total reversal of expectation for the audience. The negro maid is a superb touch and makes the scene Fletcherian rather than conventional. She is the unexpected extra which spectacularly "over-does" the stage business and which outrageously informs the spectators, who had thought themselves omnipotent associates in the ruse, that they have been even more cleverly fooled by Mary and the playwright.

The spectators' identification with Thomas is at once more complete because they share his surprise. Their comfortable position as observers is destroyed by the trick which has involved them as characters in the drama. The spectators now seek a return to normality, seek the resolution of this disguising, which has clearly (if unexpectedly) not been effected in the bed scene. They wish, in effect, to share Thomas' revenge as they did his humiliation. This is the
peculiar quality of Fletcherian comedy, that before the normal comic resolution is completed, before the comedy can "work its way" with the reason of the audience, it involves the spectators directly in the dramatic action. As will be seen in a discussion of the aside, this emotional participation is easier in tragedy than comedy; it is achieved in Fletcherian comedy by a complete design, which in surprise and revelation creates a series of rhythms and climaxes that is totally compelling. In this way, the comic pattern functions exactly as does the emotional pattern discussed earlier. This bed-trick is sexually conventional, if unusual in illusion. The next scene, which resolves this set of rhythms and climaxes is the reverse—conventional in design but unusually twisted sexually. (The homosexual overtones of Thomas and Hylas' kisses are reminiscent of the motif in Philaster though much more traditional in execution.) As a result, each facet completes itself and the motif is fully exploited.

Immediately after leaving Mary's bedchamber, Thomas encounters the slow-witted Hylas on the street (V.iii). The scene of Hylas' gulling is played for high comedy and Thomas, by fooling the infatuated Hylas, triumphant, completing the disguise motif. The audience is able to share Thomas' "mischief", but Fletcher has again added a further element. Thomas' father Sebastian observes the scene and also mistaking Thomas for his daughter Dorothea decides he will, indeed, marry her to Hylas "if he be a handsome fellow...." (1.66) The implications of this complication are twofold. The fact that the audience is aware that
Thomas has been observed by Sebastian distances the audience from the close identification with Thomas established in the previous climax of discovery. The audience, which has for a time been involved as a "character" in the action, is now allowed to return to its position as omnipotent observer. Also, the audience is aware of a complication in Dorothea's life of which she is herself unaware and is able to anticipate her inevitable surprise. Within the over-all design of the play, then, another rhythm has been initiated, one which will build to a climax in which Dorothea is taken off-guard as surely as was the audience at the discovery of the blackamoor. And, indeed, in scene x, Dorothea's trickery returns to upset her, providing the audience with the resolution it desires. The spectators have, therefore, reacted with the play on two levels. As observers they have been provided with a motif which they then see completed, and as "characters" with Thomas, they have been tricked and then provided with a means to "revenge" themselves. The elaborate system of overlapping rhythms typical of Fletcherian dramaturgy has worked not only to heighten the comedy but to create an emotional response which for a brief period involves the spectators as totally as do the emotional patterns of Beaumont and Fletcher tragedies.

In *The Little French Lawyer*, another complex bed-trick creates delightful comedy and affords an opportunity for two of the principals to meet. The trick is clearly reminiscent of that in *M. Thomas* in its dramaturgy, though the detail is different and, although the emphasis is partially shifted from the disguise motif to the bed-device itself. Much of the humour of Clermont's situation is found in moments like that at the conclusion of Act III, scene iv, where a "Whistle within" threatens to waken his bed partner. The comedy in *M. Thomas*, on the other hand, rises
from Thomas' absurd descriptions of his "pretty, pretty" (1.27) bed-fellow who has actually hidden her real appearance, and from ironic puns like "In what a figure/ The little fool has pull'd itself together," (11.7-8), which again draw attention not to the stage business but to the disguise motif itself.

In the Act III ruse of The Little French Lawyer, Dinant persuades his friend Cleremont to disguise in "bed linen" and lie beside Champernel, the old husband of Dinant's lady, Lamira, in order to facilitate a rendezvous between the lovers. This is conventional enough and humour is achieved at this level by Cleremont's dislike of the suggestion, "With an old man?/ Two beards together? that's preposterous," (III, iv, 35-6), and his final, fearful acceptance. The more Fletcherian sense of comic staging becomes obvious in the second part of the disguise which is surprising, unconventional, and initiates the series of comic rhythms and climaxes which overlap to unite and motivate the remainder of the play.

The other bed partner, in fact, is not Champernel but the lovely Annabell, friend to Lamira. The audience is allowed to see Champernel "enter privately" and observe the action just as Mary does in M. Thomas, but is not told who is actually in the bed or whether, in fact, anyone is. The surprise disclosure of Annabell's identity, while less spectacular than the revelation of the moor in M. Thomas, functions in exactly the same way. It forces a close identification between the spectator and Cleremont and Dinant, all of whom have been fooled by Lamira's disguise trick. The conventional disguising has once again been upset and the necessity arisen for Cleremont to triumph through disguise and for the audience to be
returned to a knowledgeable position as observer rather than participatory character. Indeed, from this point on, the audience is as anxious as is Cleremont to "have a scene of mirth, to drive this [upset in roles] from my heart." (IV, iii, 15) With characteristically histrionic sensibility, Fletcher provides an opportunity for such satisfaction, in the completion of this motif. It occurs in the principal disguising of the play, during the trick in which the heroes' gentlemen friends masquerade as robbers in Acts IV and V.

The patterning of this trick is complex and full of surprises which maintain the dramatic pitch. Cleremont and Dinant arrange for friends to disguise as ruffians and attack Champernel, Lamira, Annabel and their company in the woods. Cleremont and Dinant enter as would-be rescuers but are themselves taken prisoner by pre-arrangement, a turn which is unexpected and prolongs the surprise while creating possibilities for additional surprises. The conventional ending for the trick would have been for Cleremont and Dinant to succeed in their rescue and become heroes to the very ladies who had tricked them and who, overcome by remorse, would at last acknowledge their secret love for the heroes. Fletcher passes over this obvious ending, perceiving instead both the theatrical possibilities of an additional turn of events and the necessity to complete the motif begun in Act III.

The prisoners are then separated and the women bound in a cave. The cave scene is rich in possibilities for staging, and also makes clear the isolation of the women from the men, who are led, bound, offstage. This arrangement makes clear Fletcher's conscious awareness
of the responsibilities this series of tricks has in completing the motif of Act III. It was the women, and especially Lamira, who tricked both Cleremont and the audience and it is the women, and especially Lamira, who must suffer.

Cleremont enters disguised yet again and reveals himself to Annabell, telling her that he has escaped from the robbers. In this way, Annabell, whose role in the gulling was secondary, is partially freed from the illusion. Lamira, however, is totally deceived. In a long, anguished speech she voices her despair and fear, "...My turn is next; I am resolved...." (V, i, 128-9)

The levels of disguise are clearly many, and in perceiving each the audience is aware how 'fully Cleremont and Dinant are deceiving their former tricksters. In a conscious reversal, the spectators are now aware of the reality of identity and the earlier pranksters are trapped in illusion.

The final resolution is, however, distanced by each of these complications and a dramatic tension which is brilliantly theatrical is created as the audience awaits the final climax. It is a testament to Fletcher's stagecraft that at no time does the reality of this multi-level dramatic situation escape him although it may occasionally, in moments of noisy confusion on stage, erroneously appear that control of the situation has.

At last Dinant enters to save Lamira and the elaborate trick is completed. The heroes have revenged themselves, as they make quite clear: "I will be fooled no more; you had your tricks...." (V, i, 223);
"You taught me to be cruel./ And dare you think of mercy?...I can plot, too, good Madam...." (11.250-53) The comic rhythms of the play are almost completed, although the La-Writ plot must still be resolved in scene ii and the bedding of Annabell and Cleremont, initiated in the bed-trick, must still be announced in the third and final scene. The spectators have been released from close identification as fellow sufferers with the heroes and as they hear Dinant sum up the pattern, I must confess you vex'd me/ In fooling me so often, and those fears/ You threw upon me call'd for a requital/ Which now I have return'd," (V, ii, 274-77), sense the completion of their own participation. Once again Fletcher has worked with traditional ideas of comedy but added an additional level of emotional response. Once again, as in M. Thomas, the intricate design of the comedy has functioned to make the spectators into active characters in the drama.

No discussion of Fletcherian disguise could ignore The Wild-Goose Chase, that whirlwind play which completely depends upon the disguise motif. The play is an elaborate sexual joke based upon innuendo and bawdry; indeed, as Mirabel says, it is a world of "nothing but craft and cozenage" (IV, ii, 271). The heroine Oriana's attempts to trap the capricious hero Mirabel by tricks other than disguise fail, as when she feigns illness (IV, iii) or pretends to have other suitors (III, i). The consequence of Mirabell's cunning in perceiving Oriana's various plots dramatically highlights the eventual success of the disguise trick, creating a mood of suspense in which the audience is uncertain whether Mirabel is aware of Oriana's real identity or not. As is so often the case in Fletcher's
plays, the disguise motif is thereby provided with an additional nuance which makes it subtly more effective theatre by luring the audience more deeply into the action.

The English lady, Mariana, who is actually a prostitute named jumping-Joan (sic), is introduced for comic purpose and as part of the machinations of the men in this male-female struggle. Her presence serves a more literary role in the design of the play, however, for her disguising as a great and wealthy lady directly foreshadows the final disguise of Oriana as a grand Italian gentlewoman, and established another comic rhythm which will be climaxed in this final disguising of Oriana.

A detailed discussion of the disguises is unnecessary, for they follow the pattern of those in *M. Thomas* and *The Little French Lawyer*. In the case of Mariana's disguise, for example, the motif set in motion is made Fletcherian by the multiple but parallel levels of awareness which are created. The prankster gentlemen know the real identity of the disguised Mariana but so, it is later revealed, does their intended victim, Lillia-Bianca. In fact, the only character who is ignorant of the full truth and is therefore duped by Mirabel is the collective "character" of the audience. Once again, the playwright has fooled his spectators; reality exists only for the fictional characters and, therefore, only for the author. This tricking of the audience, however, is again resolved in the obverse disguising in the final Act, which, typically, is more conventional. The audience is now aware of Oriana's real identity and watches the trickster Mirabel act in ignorance. Once again,
the cleverest trickster is made the fool. Once again, the audience participates in his gulling and capture. Such is a fitting conclusion to a play which revolves around the chase and capture of the wild Mirabel, but it is also the means by which Fletcher leaves his audience satisfied and, therefore, happy. The traditional role of the spectator as observer is reinstated as the plot is resolved, but it has not been the consistent role of the audience. It is only because (Beaumont and) Fletcher can involve the audience in the drama even of their comedies that they can experiment with boundaries of illusion and reality without destroying the fabric of the play. It is this experimentation with stage illusion in totally theatrical terms that holds The Wild-Goose Chase together. The disguise motif, then, affords the play not only comic and narrative motivation, but becomes, as well, a conceptual foundation for the whole play.

The disguise motif is brilliantly employed by Beaumont and especially by Fletcher for an especially theatrical purpose. Even when a curious interest in the androgynous appears to enliven the use of the device, as in M. Thomas, The Little French Lawyer and especially in Philaster, the sexual undertone is subordinate to the emotional pattern in which it operates. It is this pattern, which both links the comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher to their tragedies and provides the comedies with a histrionic appeal that is unconventional and powerful. The use of disguise is firmly founded in convention, and that is to be expected in any aspect of Fletcherian dramaturgy. The relationship of the audience to that convention, however, is unusual, and that, too, is typical of the exciting craftsmanship of Beaumont and Fletcher.
The aside is an even more highly conventionalized device than is the disguise and is also less compellingly close to the ritual essence of the drama; it is more witty than magical. As a result, it is less easily twisted for unusual or intriguing effect. Even so, Beaumont and Fletcher employ the aside within and beyond tradition as they do many theatrical techniques.

The popular Elizabethan and Jacobean aside functioned in a variety of ways: as a narrative device to provide plot exposition, as a means to provide ironic insight, as a characterizing device, and, to some extent, as a means of intriguing the audience. In Beaumont and Fletcher, each of these conventional uses is found, but the aside is given an additional emphasis that is totally theatrical and which has as its major purpose the involvement of the audience. Shakespeare uses the aside to provide the audience with foreknowledge with which they can perceive, for example, the treachery of Iago in *Othello* (1604), and creates, in this instance, both suspense and an underlying narrative and characterizational irony. So, very often, do Beaumont and Fletcher. Often, however, Beaumont and Fletcher impose responses on the audience by means of dramatic asides such as those of Arbaces in *A King and No King*, which enhance the irony only of the moment or provide the audience with exciting but untrue information. A discussion of *Valentinian* indicates how conventionally the aside can be employed by Beaumont and Fletcher in the tragedies, but as the study of emotional patterning in *Valentinian* in Chapter III pointed out, the whole design of the play, including the conventions it employs, is slanted to an original, emotional effect.
Of course in the emotional framework of tragedy, asides can function more easily than in comedy. The rational basis of comedy demands a special inventiveness if the aside is to become an unusually potent aspect of the dramaturgy. An examination of the aside in *The Coxcomb* (1609) indicates how expertly Beaumont and Fletcher employ the conventional aside when it suits their dramatic purpose to do so. It also indicates, however, their unusually keen understanding of the make-up and taste of their audience to see the levels of trickery and revenge in comedy resolved to an ordered and rational conclusion. *The Elder Brother* (1625) provides evidence of the least conventional use by Fletcher of the aside. In this play, as will be seen, Fletcher twists the device to create a character who is a conscious representative of the audience and whose whole purpose in being is to provide a proxy voice by which the audience can participate in the working out of the comedy.

The asides in Jacobean plays are conventionalized voicings of the thoughts of the character and as such are usually directed either to another, conspiratorial character or to the audience generally. Beaumont and Fletcher sophisticate this process.

In the discussion of the use of bawdry in Chapter III, the possibility of specific direction for asides was introduced. In *The Coxcomb*, where some information is given to the audience as a whole, some through the stage sitting gentlemen and some to the characters in the play, the result is theatrically superb. At the first level the asides are conventional; at another they are carefully directed for effect.

The numerous asides spoken by Mercury in Act I, scene i, provide the audience with advance knowledge of his passion for his
friend's wife, "Hidden from you I am sure,/ My blood boyles like a
furnace, shee's a faire one," (11.90-1), and of his honesty, "O that
I were a knave or durst/ Be one for thy sake, coxcombe; he that
invented honesty, undid me." (11. 82-3) The conventional dramatic irony
which results from these asides provides much of the humour and
suspense of the play and intrigues the audience which is in a position
to anticipate possible outcomes of the love triangle.

Mercury also demonstrates the shallowness of his affection for
Antonie in asides like, "Is there no way to scape this Inundation [of
hospitality]?/ I shall be drowned with folly if I go." (11. 74-5)
Beaumont and Fletcher here prepare at the very outset of the play for
Mercury's later treachery and lay a foundation upon which the gulling
of Antonio is effected. The spectators themselves take part in the
duping of this hapless cuckold, for they are aware of his shortsightedness
when he misinterprets Mercury's actions and remarks (in an aside), "if
ever man had a faithful friend I am that man." (II, i, 124). These
asides are audible thoughts and their employment is, of course, a
theatrical commonplace. The fact that Beaumont and Fletcher use them
with expertise here and in other plays, is a statement only of their
dramatic skill and not of any particular innovativeness. Where
Beaumont and Fletcher display special talent is in those asides which
do not contribute to the basic and underlaying dramatic irony but which
are glosses provided to capture the audience through humour or through
an identification with a character on stage.

The attention of the audience is particularly drawn to the
characters Mercury and Maria throughout the play and one of the chief
ways in which this is accomplished is by their repeated use of asides. Mercury, and to a much lesser extent Maria, function in the drama as vocal representatives of the audience. The spectators would find Antonio's outrageous naivete incredible and, at times, frustrating. So, too, does Mercury, who remarks in an aside, "Hee will be hang'd before he makes this [the gift of his wife's charms] good, hee/cannot be so innocent a coxcombe, he can tell ten sure--" (II, 137-8). The general agreement the spectators feel with this opinion makes Mercury the mouthpiece of their own amazement. There is little narrative purpose in this aside, although it aids characterization to a small extent. Here Mercury does not function only as a character in the drama, and the aside, while appropriate, is unnecessary in the narrative development. Its purpose is to allow the audience to vicariously release their building frustration, to provide a minor climax to the comic tension which has been building throughout the preceeding scene. It is an aside superimposed for audience effect, and in its conception parallels the asides in the tragedies.

Maria serves a similar function, although her asides appeal more directly to the feminine members of the audience. It has been suggested that Beaumont and Fletcher were aware of the presence of these women in the Blackfriars audience and it is characteristic of their working knowledge of the audience that they provide vocal representatives appropriate to the two main groups. It is also appropriate to The Coxcomb which is, after all, a play which centres around the battle between the sexes.
The unconvincing disguise in which the inept husband Antonio approaches his wife is immediately detected by Maria: "Ha, I should know that Jewell, 'tis my husband." (II, iii, 39-40) The spectators cannot sympathize with Antonio's clumsiness; the men are sure they could better fool their own wives and the women are sure they could be as perceptive as their stage representative has just been. Again, their sentiments are expressed by Maria's aside, "Now I know it perfectly; is this your trick Sir/ I'le trick you for it—" (II, iii, 43-4). Her similar aside in IV, vi, expresses the same resolution in a form particularly agreeable to the feminine Jacobean: "He is my husband, and 'tis reasonable he should/ command in all things; since he will be an asse against the haire,/ at his own peril be it." (11.26-7) The position of the wealthy, independent women in the audience, in favour of Maria's trickery and in opposition to the domineering attitude of Antonio, is consistently voiced by Maria in asides which serve first to link the motif throughout the play and, more importantly, to voice the collective opinion of feminine portion of the audience. With the ridicule of Antonio they can be sure the spectators will agree and with fine theatrical insight, Beaumont and Fletcher cause their principals to operate within and to discuss this theme. The device is conventional except in degree and serves to channel responses between stage and auditorium. Between these two groups, however, there existed the omnipresent stage-sitters, and in the aside, Beaumont and Fletcher demonstrate how aware they were of this presence.

When the Drawer remarks in response to Uberto's drunken meteorological speculation, "The Gentlemen is wine wise," (i, v, 37),
his observation has genuinely humorous effect. It serves no other purpose, and is not, therefore, directed to any other character in the play. It is an aside to the audience alone, a breaking of the arbitrary barrier between the two worlds. The comment is funny, in fact, largely because it is intended to be overheard by the spectators, not because of any intrinsic, comic merit. How this aside might have been staged in the Blackfriars Playhouse is, of course, matter for speculation alone. Still, the design of the scene and the histrionic emphasis of all of Fletcherian comedy suggests the aside would be played for as much humour as possible and in as whispered a manner as possible. It could only be whispered to an audience close by; how much funnier it would be if the stage whisper were not simply in the direction of the audience, but over the Drawer's shoulder to one of the gentlemen sitting on the stage. If it were spoken to one of the gallants, the multiple levels of reality in the Playhouse would be fully exploited, and the young spectators, who can plausibly be envisioned as entering into the riposte and bragadoccio of the \textit{dramatis personae} throughout this scene, fully integrated into the action as characters. The remainder of the audience would be involved in a curious two-fold manner, by witnessing their stage extensions and by watching the actors tease the gallants. In such a mixture of reality and pretense, in a situation so reminiscent of Nell's toasting of the gentlemen with beer in \textit{The Knight}, the aside of the Drawer fits perfectly.
How much more subtle the dramatic intent of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* has become.

The delightful scene (II, ii) in which Valerio makes bawdy asides about Viola's "wanton hand" has already been mentioned twice with reference to the stage-sitters. It is worth repeating here, since it parallels the aside of the Drawer and since it, too, demonstrates Beaumont and Fletcher's awareness of the theatrical effectiveness of an aside whispered directly to the spectators. In both these instances, the audience is invited to share with a character in the drama, a joke at the expense of another. In both cases, a conventional device has been directed more specifically to make good use of the exigencies of the Playhouse in which the action is staged and of the audience which occupies that theatre.

In the asides spoken by Andrew in *The Elder Brother*, the audience is encouraged actively to identify with Andrew as spokesman, and his asides, like those we have seen in *The Coxcomb*, are slanted to this purpose.

At times, Andrew's asides are simply comments by the traditional "tricky slave" figure, and serve to provide characterizational insight. Hence, when Brisac makes the seemingly friendly innuendo, "And in Greek you can/ lie with your smug wife Lilly?" (I, ii, 47-8), Andrew exposes the lecherous old man's true nature in the comment, "If I can keep her/ From your French dialect (as I hope I shall, sir,/ Howe'er she is your laundress)..." (11.48-50).

In the majority of his asides, however, Andrew articulates the outrage which an audience sympathetic to Charles would feel at the
dishonesty of Brisac and Eustace. He consistently verbalizes the spectators' thoughts: "I suspect my master/ Has found harsh welcome;" (I, ii, 210-11); "These are court admirers,/ And ever echo him that bears the bag,/ Though I be dull-eyed, I see through his juggling." (I.I.228-30). On their behalf, Andrew expresses a loathing for the ingratiating Eustace, "Which[the honest heir] he is not, and I trust, never shall be." (I, ii, 245). He also enunciates the frustration of the audience at Charles' passive surrender and his excessive scholarship, "Now he [Charles] has/ O'erthrown himself for ever. I will down/ Into the cellar, and be stark drunk for anger." (III, v, 49-51) These asides have little narrative purpose; they are intended to emphasize the plot situation rather than expand it, and the emphases they voice are those of the audience.

In the person of Andrew, then, the audience is able to participate in the dramatic situation and to comment upon it. With Andrew, the spectators can hate Brisac for his unpaternal treachery, and with him they can delight in Brisac's hilariously unsuccessful seduction of Lilly. With him, they can try to urge Charles to take note of the injustice of his position, but like Andrew, the spectators are powerless to actively alter the course of the play. Like the Chorus, the spectators do not affect the course of the drama, but in commenting upon it they are, through their vocal representative, intricately involved. The conception is more baroque than Greek, however, as is everything in Beaumont and Fletcher. The patterns of the plays depend on a web of motifs and devices working together in order to bring to life a total design. The aside is unconventionally employed only when it
can function as a strand in that baroque web and draw the viewer into the action. The cherubs in Raphael's baroque *Madonna di San Sisto* (Fig. 2) capture attention and channel it up to the figure of the Virgin; the asides of the decidedly unangelic Andrew serve a similar purpose in *The Elder Brother* and with equal success.

It has been pointed out that the Fletcherian use of the aside in tragedy is less frequent and largely conventional. This is to be expected in tragedy where the emotional structure exists more openly and involves the audience deeply enough that secondary techniques are unimportant. Where the aside is conventional, however, it can also be highly compelling, especially if expertly handled. The claim that Beaumont and Fletcher were inventive in their enticing of audience response does not disallow those instances where they shared the techniques of their colleagues. In fact, the argument is strengthened by the realization that the playwrights were selective, that they choose the commonplace only when it suited their histrionic emphasis, and that they handled it with talent. This they do, for example, in their use of dramatic suspense.

It is in an aside in *Valentinian* that Beaumont and Fletcher demonstrate again their talent for gripping suspense. After his dishonest reassurance to Lucina that he has repented of his adulterous lust, Valentinian utters the cynical and chilling maxim, "He that endeavours ill may well delay but never quench his hell." (II, vi, 39-40) The effect on the audience is stunning. In a single aside, Beaumont and Fletcher engender suspense that builds through whatever interlude separates the Acts, only to be exploited by the overwhelmingly understated
opening line of Act III: "'Tis done, Lucinus."

In a scene of high tension such as that between Maximus and Aëcius, when the rape of Lucina is exposed, (III, i), the asides function within the emotional pattern, by reiterating the strength of Maximus' passion. They also foreshadow the abrupt change of ethics which allows Maximus to ascend the vacant throne and, in doing so, approximate asides in the comedies by providing the audience with the hint of unexpected action to come. The suspense created by asides like, "I'll bear a wary eye upon your actions" (1.309), and the crucial question, "Does he but seem so/ Or is he mad indeed?" (11.58-9), invoke a response in the spectators, who determine to join Aëcius in a suspicious vigilance. Aëcius does not become for the audience of Valentinian, the symbolic representative that Andrew becomes in The Elder Brother--his own fanatic personality and inevitable suicide preclude that possibility and, besides, the tragic tone makes such a figure unnecessary. He does, however, serve to provide an already emotionally enthralled audience with an entry to the stage during this pivotal scene of high drama, and by voicing the apprehension of the audience at the apparent twist of events in Act III, transports it, however momentarily, into the action.

The audience is not, of course, totally passive in its observation except when cued into the action by an aside. The emotional pattern of a tragedy like Valentinian is itself compelling. The kind of involvement, however, varies. The involvement with plot and character is more intellectual than is the theatrical interaction.
provided by the aside, or working out of disguise, and while it is a more reasonable involvement, it is a less compelling one. The effect of devices such as the disguise and the aside serves to adumbrate the narrative understanding of the viewer and creates an integrated involvement organic to the whole conception of the play. This is the essential difference between a play and a novel; in fact, between reading and watching a play. In Beaumont and Fletcher's dramaturgy, this fact of the theatre is clearly understood, and as a result, the role of the audience as participant is consistently defined.

Because of the consistency of the emphasis upon the audience which enlivens Beaumont and Fletchers' use of the many stage devices and tricks with which they fill their plays, a new style of theatre world is created, one which is comfortable for its creators and appropriate for its audience. It is theatre modelled after the successful Philaster, theatre in which "unexpected turnabouts abound... [and] characters shift with chameleon facility." It is a world in which actor, audience and playwright constantly shift from one guise to another, but in which the elements of theatre amazingly combine to produce a total effect that appears complete and often moving. The audience may be tricked into believing, and the theatrical stance of the drama may result in plays which are extremely artificial, but within the limitations the playwrights choose, the plays are masterfully written.
And while the design of the plays is histrionic, it is never simply gratuitous, for it never loses sight of the essential realization by Deomocritus and so many since him, that "the World's a stage, life a play." As will be seen in the next and last chapter, Beaumont and Fletcher accept their function as playwrights to demonstrate this truth to their spectators.
Notes to Chapter IV

1 The beating is introduced in the playlet dialogue, though clearly emphasized by Nell. The fact that the dialogue would be intelligible without the interruption but is more cogent with it, illustrates the theatrical effectiveness of Beaumont's use of the Citizens.


3 B7; cited in Armstrong, p. 231.


5 And relates it to Sidney's Arcadia, which Gurr suggests (as does Frederick Boas in his edition) is closely and consciously echoed by Philaster. The appeal of both is to an educated, gentle audience.

6 Gurr, p. lxv.

7 Both of which evils are represented in the moral schema by Dion and Megra respectively

As has been seen, the primary interest and emphasis of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays is their theatrical effect. In every aspect of their dramaturgy, Beaumont and Fletcher demonstrate their preoccupation with the fictional world they create and the emotions and responses they elicit within this artificial world. The result of this emphasis is a new style of drama, the evolution of which can be seen in the development of the Beaumont and Fletcher canon from 1607 to c. 1625 and in the changing fashions of contemporaneous plays. The more "heroic" theatre of the Beaumont and Fletcher canon was less concerned with national or philosophical questions than was the Elizabethan theatre and was more concerned with the world of the Playhouse, with entertainment and fantasy. Still, as can be seen in Beaumont and Fletcher's handling of all theatre conventions, the new style never forgot the traditional fashions or attitudes of the theatre from which it grew or of the ordered, Elizabethan system from which Stuart society evolved.

These conventions, however, were focused by Beaumont and Fletcher inside the Playhouse and, as a result of this focus, the traditional view of the theatre as a microcosmic representation of the Universe is at once emphasized and altered. The emotional patterns
and effects of the plays specifically function to make of the Playhouse a miniature universe in which the audience and play exist, but Beaumont and Fletcher's dramaturgy underplays the notion of this world as representative; the Playhouse becomes the whole Universe.

The concentric spheres of action in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* demonstrate the awareness by Beaumont of the traditional view of the theatre as microcosm. In this early play, the realization is obvious: as the canon moves further from the Elizabethan period, the mode becomes less overt, but never disappears. In *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* the layers of reality presented form a highly sophisticated complex; a system which it has been seen, was too involved for the 1607 audience.

The play is, of course, a burlesque exaggeration of the conventions of the Elizabethan theatre. In *Microcosmus*, his scholarly examination of "the shape of the Elizabethan play," Thomas B. Stroup compares *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* to Peele's *The Old Wives Tale* and most of Jonson's plays, in its showing of the author's "playful concern for the audience's relation to the play."¹ Perhaps Beaumont was frivolous in his schema for *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*; certainly it is hyperbolic. But in the later plays with Fletcher, the conception of the Theatre explored in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and softened by the lesson of *Philaster* is employed to great advantage.

The structure of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is elaborate: a play-within-a-play, within-a-play, within an even larger play that operates within the ultimate Play. Hence, Rafe's play within Jasper's play, within the Citizens' play, within the Playhouse, within (if, with Stroup, one accepts the notion) the Universal Play that is Creation.
The idea of extramundane planes of reality is suggested in the play itself, when the Spectre of Rafe delineates the supernatural world to which he "flie[s]" (V. 277-327), but, as has been described in Chapter IV, the apparatus of the play directs the attention of the spectator to the inner three circles. The interest of Beaumont is with the theatre audience and with manipulating its movement into the Citizens' play, Jasper's play and Rafe's play. Movement outward from the position of the audience is possible for the critical reader, but is not urged upon the spectators. It is not surprising that men with vigorous theatrical imaginations such as Beaumont and Fletcher possessed should concentrate attention within the world they can control rather than extending it to a larger realm under the mastery of God. It is also to be expected that the national and international implications in plays, which Stroup shows are so important and are so fully discussed in plays written before 1603, should be eclipsed in Beaumont and Fletcher plays by the immediate world represented on the platform. And as the fictional world of the Playhouse becomes more complete in the later Fletcherian plays, the emphasis becomes more and more strongly upon the Playhouse as microcosmic universe outside of which a larger Universe may be assumed but need not be discussed.

Philaster is in many ways influenced by Shakespeare's Hamlet (1600). Yet in contrast to this ordered, Elizabethan representation of the traditional cosmos, Philaster has no outside, supernal sphere, "no ghostly instigator of action." (p. 81) Furthermore, with the insignificant exception of the Spanish nationality of Philaster's rival, there is none of the international complication of Hamlet. The centre
of the play is not the ethical consideration of Philaster's public responsibility in the usurped kingdom of Sicily, but his love for Arethusa, a personal concern. The personal focus of the play is constantly reiterated by Bellario's love for Philaster, the most obvious dilemma in the drama, and the conflict around which much of the emotional patterning revolves. The outer spheres of action have almost completely disappeared, and those within the Playhouse are preoccupied with Self. By restricting explicit interest to the levels of reality which exist within the walls of the playhouse, however, Beaumont and Fletcher are able to maintain the vigorous and two-directional movement which has been described as characteristic of Fletcherian drama. The whole basis of the plays is their captivating emotional patterns which entrap the spectators in an illusionary world sustained by careful stagecraft. The establishment of such a pattern is facilitated by the restrictive boundaries Beaumont and Fletcher set up; the fantasy world of the playhouse becomes convincing by momentarily becoming the whole world.

This is also obvious in *The Maid's Tragedy* (1611), where the supernatural and societal are underplayed. It is the King's desire to hide an illicit affair, not any concern for the state, which perpetrates the tragedy. The war from which Melantius has returned is vaguely presented, and the quarrel between Melantius and Calianax, tangential to the central amour and to this war, is never thoroughly developed as is that between Hamlet and Laertes.
The same is true (with exceptions) in many Beaumont and Fletcher plays: in *A King and No King*, the supernatural is excluded, although the national and international are important; in *Thierry and Theodoret* (1617) as Stroup points out (p. 219), the only evidence of the spiritual is the false astrologer, although international difficulties arise. By the time of *The Wild-Goose Chase* (1621), an almost Restoration preoccupation with urbane and witty ladies and gentlemen has reduced both the physical world outside the playhouse and the Heavens to seeming unimportance.

The customs, manners, costumes and concerns of this unreal, stage world are, however, still those of seventeenth century England. And at no time is the larger Universe implicit in all Renaissance drama totally forgotten. The audience of *Valentinian* knows, for example, that an act such as the rape of Lucina which violates the moral order of a Divine Universe, demands a tragic conclusion, although as is suggested in Chapter III, there is no preparation for the final climax in the world of the play. Similarly, the unseemly coup of Maximus offends a cosmic order, and for that reason demands the punishment that affords the play world with one of its most potent emotional moments. In the same manner, the crime against morality which motivates *The Maid's Tragedy* is an offense against a world much larger than the microcosm of the playhouse, however cleverly Beaumont and Fletcher exploit the predicating human machinations already mentioned. Even in the frivolous play, *The Wild-Goose Chase*, the final denouement brings with it an escape from a world that is all contrivance into a world that has order, a marital hierarchy and Divine approval: "This *Wild-Goose chase* is done,.../ and
now to Church of all hands;/ Let's lose no time." (V, vi, 150-52)

Beaumont and Fletcher do not attempt, then, to deny the reality beyond the world of their audience and actors. Rather, they assume the influence which their theological and cultural ethos must inevitably exert on the play, actors and spectators, and with that foundation taken for granted, explore the fictional world at its very centre. Their attention travels from the protagonist of a play, through the spectators of that play to the implicit, larger significance of the play and back again. Indeed, "the plays are made up of [the relationship of the drama to its viewers] as well as of the relationship inside the fiction--the forces or spheres or areas or frames set one within another. The action ranges outward one way or the other from the individual soul as microcosmic centre to whatever is beyond the farthest star...." (p. 87) What is especially interesting about Beaumont and Fletcher, and what is pertinent to this study, however, is the skill with which they create the inner spheres of dramatic illusion and make them an integrated part of the larger, cosmic system upon which all Jacobean playwrights could rely.

In order to fabricate a world which possesses a degree of apparent reality sufficient to allow it to supersede the natural universe in which it is set, Beaumont and Fletcher employ every illusionary device available to the playwright. They fill their plays with colour, noise, music and spectacle, and with every conceivable species of stage-business, particularly asides of an original nature and elaborately clever disguises.
In original production, however, their task was further assisted by the presence of the Jacobean private audience, whose patronage Beaumont and Fletcher could expect. In the Second Blackfriars Playhouse, the personalities of the spectators, and of various groups of those spectators, could be manipulated to great advantage. By means of satire, Beaumont and Fletcher not only subtly remind their spectators of the domestic, national and international spheres of experience in which the Playhouse world is located, but urge a complex series of reciprocal responses to the drama.

By enticing the audience onto the platform, howbeit in a symbolic manner as chorus or in the person of a representative actor, Beaumont and Fletcher complete the establishment of a three-dimensional microcosm, of a world temporarily apart, in which playwright, actor and audience are the only, and often equal, participants.

Linking all these techniques, and more important than any of them, is the emotional patterning of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays. It is this framework, often of melodramatic responses, which makes acceptable a bombastic stagecraft that might otherwise be oppressive and unbearably artificial. It is also this approach to the design of the drama that finally sustains the playhouse as microcosm, by riveting attention and by urging the spectators to succumb to a fictional world.

The ability to create such a stage world is the special talent of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. It is this talent which invests the plays of the Beaumont and Fletcher canon with interest in
the critical study of the English stage. For not only did this skill make Beaumont and Fletcher enormously popular playwrights during the Seventeenth century, and promote to a significant extent the evolving of a new style of romantic drama that bridges the Elizabethan and Restoration Theatres, but it makes of many of the plays, excellent pieces of theatrical literature whose excitement and appeal is undiminished today.
Notes to Chapter V

1 (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), p. 79. Subsequent references will appear internally in the text, by page number. Although Stroup uses the period term "Elizabethan", his discussion extends into the Jacobean and Caroline periods.

2 The speech is, of course, a burlesque of that of Andrea's Ghost in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1589), and therefore of uncertain seriousness. There is, however, no doubt about the assured position of the supernatural in Jacobean cosmology.
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PHYLASTER

Or, Loue lyes a Bleeding.

Set at the Globe by his Maiesies Servants.

Written by

Francis Baymont and

John Fletcher.

Printed at London for Thomas Walkley, and are to be sold at
MADONNA DI SAN SISTO
GALL. RAD., DIVISION
Raphael. 1483—1520.

Fig. 2