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This happened first amongst my acquaintances, as Sir George Beaumont will bear witness; and subsequently, long before Schlegel had delivered at Vienna the lectures on Shakespeare, which he afterwards published, I had given on the same subject eighteen lectures substantially the same, proceeding from the very same point of view, and deducing the same conclusions, so far as I either then agreed, or now agree, with him. I gave these lectures at the Royal Institution, before six or seven hundred auditors of rank and eminence, in the spring of the same year, in which Sir Humphrey Davy, a fellow-lecturer, made his great revolutionary discoveries in chemistry. Even in detail the coincidence of Schlegel with my lectures was so extraordinary, that all who at a later period heard the same words, taken by me from my notes of the lectures at the Royal Institution, concluded a borrowing on my part from Schlegel. Hazlitt, whose hatred of me is in such an inverse ratio to my zealous kindness towards him, as to be defended by his warmest admirer, Charles Lamb—who, God bless him! Coleridge, 7th January, The seeming inconsistencies in the conduct and character of Hamlet have long exercised the conjectural ingenuity of critics; and, as we are always loth to suppose that the cause of defective apprehension is in ourselves, the mystery has been too commonly explained by the very easy process of setting it down as in fact inexplicable, and by resolving the phenomenon into a misgrowth or lusus of the capricious and irregular genius of Shakespeare. The shallow and stupid arrogance of these vulgar and indolent decisions I would fain do my best to expose. Indeed, that this character must have some connection with the common fundamental laws of our nature may be assumed from the fact, that Hamlet has been the darling of every country in which the literature of England has been fostered. In order to understand him, it is essential that we should reflect on the constitution of our own minds. Man is distinguished from the brute animals in proportion as thought prevails over sense: In Hamlet he seems to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses, and our meditation on the workings of our minds,—an equilibrium between the real and the imaginary worlds. In Hamlet this balance is disturbed: Hence we see a great, an almost enormous, intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action, consequent upon it, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. This character Shakespeare places in circumstances, under which it is obliged to act on the spur of the moment: Thus it is that this tragedy presents a direct contrast to that of Macbeth; the one proceeds with the utmost slowness, the other with a crowded and breathless rapidity. It is the nature of thought to be indefinite;—definiteness belongs to external imagery alone. Few have seen a celebrated waterfall without feeling something akin to disappointment: Hamlet feels this; his senses are in a state of trance, and he looks upon external things as hieroglyphics. But as of more importance, so more striking, is the judgment displayed by our truly dramatic poet, as well as poet of the drama, in the management of his first scenes. Compare the easy language of common life, in which this drama commences, with the direful music and wild wayward rhythm and abrupt lyrics of the opening of Macbeth. It is precisely the language of sensation among men who feared no charge of effeminacy for feeling what they had no want of resolution to bear. Yet the armour, the dead silence, the watchfulness that first interrupts it, the welcome relief of the guard, the cold, the broken expressions of compelled attention to bodily feelings still under control—all excellently accord with, and prepare for, the after gradual rise into tragedy;—but, above all, into a tragedy, the interest of which is as eminently ad et apud intra, as that of Macbeth is directly ad extra. In all the best attested stories of ghosts and visions, as in that of Brutus, of Archbishop Cranmer, that of Benvenuto Cellini recorded by himself, and the vision of Galileo communicated by him to his favourite pupil Torricelli, the ghost-seers were in a state of cold or chilling damp from without, and of anxiety inwardly. For its commonness in ordinary conversation tends to produce the sense of reality,

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and at once hides the poet, and yet approximates the reader or spectator to that state in which the highest poetry will appear, and in its component parts, though not in the whole composition, really is, the language of nature. The preparation informative of the audience is just as much as was precisely necessary, and no more; it begins with the uncertainty appertaining to a question: In the deep feeling which Bernardo has of the solemn nature of what he is about to relate, he makes an effort to master his own imaginative terrors by an elevation of style, itself a continuation of the effort, and by turning off from the apparition, as from something which would force him too deeply into himself, to the outward objects, the realities of nature, which had accompanied it: Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again! Hume himself could not but have had faith in this Ghost dramatically, let his anti-ghostism have been as strong as Sampson against other ghosts less powerfully raised. How delightfully natural is the transition, to the retrospective narrative! No Addison could be more careful to be poetical in diction than Shakespeare in providing the grounds and sources of its propriety. But how to elevate a thing almost mean by its familiarity, young poets may learn in this treatment of the cock-crow. The audience are now relieved by a change of scene to the royal court, in order that Hamlet may not have to take up the leavings of exhaustion. Indeed was he not a royal brother? A little more than kin, and less than kind. How is it that the clouds still hang on you? Ay, madam, it is common. In such cases, passion combines itself with the indefinite alone. You experience the sensation of a pause without the sense of a stop. A spondee has, I doubt not, dropped out of the text. I do not, however, deny that a good actor might, by employing the last mentioned means—namely, the retardation, or solemn knowing drawl—supply the missing spondee with good effect. In the great ever-recurring dangers and duties of life, where to distinguish the fit objects for the application of the maxims collected by the experience of a long life, requires no fineness of tact, as in the admonitions to his son and daughter, Polonius is uniformly made respectable. But if an actor were even capable of catching these shades in the character, the pit and the gallery would be malcontent at their exhibition. It is a well established fact, that on the brink of any serious enterprise, or event of moment, men almost invariably endeavour to elude the pressure of their own thoughts by turning aside to trivial objects and familiar circumstances: Indeed, no modern writer would have dared, like Shakespeare, to have preceded this last visitation by two distinct appearances, or could have contrived that the third should rise upon the former two in impressiveness and solemnity of interest. The momentum had been given to his mental activity; the full current of the thoughts and words had set in, and the very forgetfulness, in the fervour of his argumentation, of the purpose for which he was there, aided in preventing the appearance from benumbing the mind. Consequently, it acted as a new impulse—a sudden stroke which increased the velocity of the body already in motion, whilst it altered the direction. The co-presence of Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo is most judiciously contrived; for it renders the courage of Hamlet, and his impetuous eloquence, perfectly intelligible. The knowledge—the unthought of consciousness—the sensation of human auditors—of flesh and blood sympathists—acts as a support and a stimulation a tergo, while the front of the mind, the whole consciousness of the speaker, is filled, yea, absorbed, by the apparition. Add too, that the apparition itself has, by its previous appearances, been brought nearer to a thing of this world. This accrescence of objectivity in a Ghost that yet retains all its ghostly attributes and fearful subjectivity, is truly wonderful. And shall I couple hell? Hillo, ho, ho, my lord! Hillo, ho, ho, boy! But the truth is, that after the mind has been stretched beyond its usual pitch and tone, it must either sink into exhaustion and inanity, or seek relief by change. It is thus well known, that persons conversant in deeds of cruelty contrive to escape from conscience by connecting something of the ludicrous with them, and by inventing grotesque terms, and a certain technical phraseology, to disguise the horror of their practices. Indeed, paradoxical as it may appear, the terrible by a law of the human mind always touches on the verge of the ludicrous. Both arise from the perception of something out of the common order of things—something, in fact, out of its place; and if from this we can abstract danger, the uncommonness will alone remain, and the sense of the ridiculous be excited. The close alliance of these opposites—they are not contraries—appears from the circumstance, that laughter is equally the expression of extreme anguish and horror as of joy: These

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complex causes will naturally have produced in Hamlet the disposition to escape from his own feelings of the overwhelming and supernatural by a wild transition to the ludicrous, a sort of cunning bravado, bordering on the flights of delirium. In all things dependent on, or rather made up of, fine address, the manner is no more or otherwise rememberable than the light notions, steps, and gestures of youth and health. But this is almost everything: So in this admirable scene, Polonius, who is throughout the skeleton of his own former skill and statecraft, hunts the trail of policy at a dead scent, supplied by the weak fever-smell in his own nostrils. Donne the wittiest man of that age, and we shall find them full of this vein. The great art of an orator to make whatever he talks of appear of importance this, indeed, Donne has effected with consummate skill. Excellent well; You are a fishmonger. For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, Being a god, kissing carrion. You cannot, Sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal; except my life, except my life, except my life. The fancy, that a burlesque was intended, sinks below criticism: In the thoughts, and even in the separate parts of the diction, this description is highly poetical: But if Shakespeare had made the diction truly dramatic, where would have been the contrast between Hamlet and the play in Hamlet? A mob-cap is still a word in common use for a morning cap, which conceals the whole head of hair, and passes under the chin. For Jaques it would have been too deep, and for Iago too habitual a communion with the heart; which in every man belongs, or ought to belong, to all mankind. If it be necessary to remove the apparent contradiction, if it be not rather a great beauty, surely, it were easy to say, that no traveller returns to this world, as to his home, or abiding-place. Such a discovery in a mood so anxious and irritable accounts for a certain harshness in him; and yet a wild up-working of love, sporting with opposites in a wilful self-tormenting strain of irony, is perceptible throughout. The style of the interlude here is distinguished from the real dialogue by rhyme, as in the first interview with the players by epic verse. My lord, you once did love me. So I do still, by these pickers and stealers. There has been no change in my opinion: Yet observe how perfectly equal to any call of the moment is Hamlet, let it only not be for the future. This speech well marks the difference between crime and guilt of habit. The conscience here is still admitted to audience. Nay, even as an audible soliloquy, it is far less improbable than is supposed by such as have watched men only in the beaten road of their feelings. The solution is in the divine medium of the Christian doctrine of expiation: And so am I revenged? Words, without thoughts, never to heaven go. A bloody deed; almost as bad, good mother, As kill a king, and marry with his brother. As kill a king? Was she, or was she not, conscious of the fratricide? Take you me for a sponge, my lord? O, note the conjunction here of these two thoughts that had never subsisted in disjunction, the love for Hamlet, and her filial love, with the guileless floating on the surface of her pure imagination of the cautions so lately expressed, and the fears not too delicately avowed, by her father and brother, concerning the dangers to which her honour lay exposed. Thought, affliction, passion, murder itself she turns to favour and prettiness. This play of association is instanced in the close: This is almost the only play of Shakespeare, in which mere accidents, independent of all will, form an essential part of the plot; but here how judiciously in keeping with the character of the over-meditative Hamlet, ever at last determined by accident or by a fit of passion! O, the rich contrast between the Clowns and Hamlet, as two extremes! You see in the former the mockery of logic, and a traditional wit valued, like truth, for its antiquity, and treasured up, like a tune, for use.

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Chapter 2 : Beaumont and Fletcher - Wikipedia

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Both men came from the upper class, Beaumont being the son of a chief justice, and Fletcher the son of a clergyman who later became Lord Bishop of London. The former was educated at Oxford, the latter at Cambridge. From about until the marriage of Beaumont in the two friends lived together near the Globe Theater in Southwark, sharing everything in the closest intimacy. They belonged to the Mermaid Tavern group and were friends of Jonson and Shakespeare. Poets have commented on the manliness and "lordly aspect" of these two men. They enjoyed great popularity, and their plays kept the stage until long after the Restoration. In , a few weeks before the death of Shakespeare, Beaumont died and was buried in Westminster Abbey. As Jonson best represents the classic play of this period, so Beaumont and Fletcher best represent the romantic. The plays written together reach a higher point of excellence than anything either one wrote alone. In their combined work there is sureness of touch, humor, pathos, intensity. Students of every generation have wondered at the completeness of the fusion of the two talents. It was said that Fletcher was the more brilliant of the two, with the ability to turn off witty, graceful dialogue; while tragic intensity and genial humor were the special gifts of Beaumont. In their joint plays their talents are so organically combined, so completely merged into one, that the hand of Beaumont cannot be clearly distinguished from that of Fletcher. More than fifty are listed as written either by one or by both, and at least six have been lost. The first piece announced as coming from them was *Philaster* , or *Love Lies a-Bleeding*. The play has the true Elizabethan ring. The sentiment of the pastorals, too often mawkish, is here introduced with happy results. When *Philaster*, the inheritor of the kingdom, tells the shepherd boy that he does not realize what it is to die, the boy answers: It is often full of vehemence, too, as though winged by genuine emotion. The facts of the story may not always be within the realm of reality, yet the passion rings true, and the poetry has the lift which is the mark of genius. The Fletcher and Beaumont plays show how luxuriant and forceful, even outside Shakespeare, was the romantic Elizabethan style, and how brilliant were some of his contemporaries. You feel that such persons never existed, and yet you know the thoughts to be true, and you cannot resist the fascination, the glamour, if you will, of ideals borrowed from the age of chivalry. Some of the plays often attributed to Fletcher have no less than three or four authors; or they were revised so many times, by different hands, that they became as it were a composite of the wit and skill of the times. Nobody tried very hard to be "original" in the sense of inventing the fables; the tales of Boccaccio coming to England probably by way of Chaucer , Cinthio, Tasso , Guarini, Cervantes and Lope de Vega were a constant source of supply for plots. Webster equalled them in powerful expression of passion and tragic despair. Massinger, and perhaps Marston, achieved passages which were comparable in beauty; but for volume, sustained energy, and poetic power the names of Beaumont and Fletcher stand above them all. These two possessed luxuriance of fancy and eagerness for new ideas combined with a scholarly conservatism towards upstart modes; they had, occasionally, the licentiousness and coarseness characteristic of their times. Their command of phrase was unsurpassed; they avoided foolish conceits and violent metaphors, at the same time achieving a sort of gorgeousness of language. Not only for their influence on language, but also for their singular modernity of spirit should they be remembered. They seem already far away from Shakespeare, as if speaking almost in the tongue of today. *The Coxcomb* - A synopsis of the play by Beaumont and Fletcher. *The Custom of the Country* - A brief synopsis of the play by Fletcher. *Elizabethan Playhouses, Actors, and Audiences* - An overview of Elizabethan theatre; covers regulation and licensing of plays, objections to playhouses, companies of actors, and composition and ownership of plays. *Francis Beaumont* - Biography of the English dramatist and poet. *Monologues* - An index of monologues. *John Fletcher* - A biographical sketch of the English dramatist. *Poems* - A collection of poetry

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by John Fletcher.

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Chapter 3 : The Life of Francis Beaumont ().

*The last major redirection of Shakespeare's career took place in *The Children of the Revels*, then occupying the Blackfriars theatre, were in disgrace for staging Chapman's politically.*

Consequently, there must be rules respecting it; and as rules are nothing but means to an end previously ascertainedâ€”inattention to which simple truth has been the occasion of all the pedantry of the French school,â€”we must first determine what the immediate end or object of the drama is. And here, as I have previously remarked, I find two extremes of critical decision;â€”the French, which evidently presupposes that a perfect delusion is to be aimed at,â€”an opinion which needs no fresh confutation; and the exact opposite to it, brought forward by Dr. Johnson, who supposes the auditors throughout in the full reflective knowledge of the contrary. In evincing the impossibility of delusion, he makes no sufficient allowance for an intermediate state, which I have before distinguished by the term illusion, and have attempted to illustrate its quality and character by reference to our mental state when dreaming. In both cases we simply do not judge the imagery to be unreal; there is a negative reality, and no more. Whatever, therefore, tends to prevent the mind from placing itself, or being placed, gradually in that state in which the images have such negative reality for the auditor, destroys this illusion, and is dramatically improbable. Now, the production of this effectâ€”a sense of improbabilityâ€”will depend on the degree of excitement in which the mind is supposed to be. But, although the other excellences of the drama besides this dramatic probability, as unity of interest, with distinctness and subordination of the characters, and appropriateness of style, are all, so far as they tend to increase the inward excitement, means towards accomplishing the chief end, that of producing and supporting this willing illusion,â€”yet they do not on that account cease to be ends themselves; and we must remember that, as such, they carry their own justification with them, as long as they do not contravene or interrupt the total illusion. It is not even always, or of necessity, an objection to them, that they prevent the illusion from rising to as great a height as it might otherwise have attained;â€”it is enough that they are simply compatible with as high a degree of it as is requisite for the purpose. Nay, upon particular occasions, a palpable improbability may be hazarded by a great genius for the express purpose of keeping down the interest of a merely instrumental scene, which would otherwise make too great an impression for the harmony of the entire illusion. Had the panorama been invented in the time of Pope Leo X. *The Tempest* is a specimen of the purely romantic drama, in which the interest is not historical, or dependent upon fidelity of portraiture, or the natural connection of events, but is a birth of the imagination, and rests only upon the coaptation and union of the elements granted to, or assumed by, the poet. It is a species of drama which owes no allegiance to time or space, and in which, therefore, errors of chronology and geographyâ€”no mortal sins in any speciesâ€”are venial faults, and count for nothing. It addresses itself entirely to the imaginative faculty; and although the illusion may be assisted by the effect on the senses of the complicated scenery and decorations of modern times, yet this sort of assistance is dangerous. For the principal and only genuine excitement ought to come from withinâ€”from the moved and sympathetic imagination; whereas, where so much is addressed to the mere external senses of seeing and bearing, the spiritual vision is apt to languish, and the attraction from without will withdraw the mind from the proper and only legitimate interest which is intended to spring from within. The romance opens with a busy scene admirably appropriate to the kind of drama, and giving, as it were, the key-note to the whole harmony. It prepares and initiates the excitement required for the entire piece, and yet does not demand anything from the spectators, which their previous habits had not fitted them to understand. It is the bustle of a tempest, from which the real horrors are abstracted;â€”therefore it is poetical, though not in strictness naturalâ€”the distinction to which I have so often alluded â€”and is purposely restrained from centering the interest on itself, but used merely as an induction or tuning for what is to follow. Observe, too, the perfect probability of the moment chosen by Prospero the very Shakespeare himself, as it were, of the tempest to open out the truth to his daughter, his own romantic bearing, and how completely anything that might have been disagreeable to

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us in the magician, is reconciled and shaded in the humanity and natural feelings of the father. In the very first speech of Miranda, the simplicity and tenderness of her character are at once laid open; "it would have been lost in direct contact with the agitation of the first scene. The opinion once prevailed, but happily is now abandoned, that Fletcher alone wrote for women; "the truth is, that with very few, and those partial exceptions, the female characters in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher are, when of the light kind, not decent; when heroic, complete viragos. But in Shakespeare all the elements of womanhood are holy, and there is the sweet yet dignified feeling of all that continuates society, as sense of ancestry and of sex, with a purity unassailable by sophistry, because it rests not in the analytic processes, but in that sane equipoise of the faculties, during which the feelings are representative of all past experience, "not of the individual only, but of all those by whom she has been educated, and their predecessors, even up to the first mother that lived. He has drawn it, indeed, in all its distinctive energies of faith, patience, constancy, fortitude, "shown in all of them as following the heart, which gives its results by a nice tact and happy intuition, without the intervention of the discursive faculty, sees all things in and by the light of the affections, and errs, if it ever err, in the exaggerations of love alone. In all the Shakespearian women there is essentially the same foundation and principle; the distinct individuality and variety are merely the result of modification of circumstances, whether in Miranda the maiden, in Imogen the wife, or in Katherine the queen. The appearance and characters of the super or ultra natural servants are finely contrasted. Ariel has in everything the airy tint which gives the name; and it is worthy of remark that Miranda is never directly brought into comparison with Ariel, lest the natural and human of the one and the supernatural of the other should tend to neutralise each other; Caliban, on the other hand, is all earth, all condensed and gross in feelings and images; he has the dawnings of understanding without reason or the moral sense, and in him, as in some brute animals, this advance to the intellectual faculties, without the moral sense, is marked by the appearance of vice. In this scene, as it proceeds, is displayed the impression made by Ferdinand and Miranda on each other; it is love at first sight; ". That moment may have been prepared by previous esteem, admiration, or even affection, "yet love seems to require a momentary act of volition, by which a tacit bond of devotion is imposed, "a bond not to be thereafter broken without violating what should be sacred in our nature. Shakespeare may sometimes be gross, but I boldly say that he is always moral and modest. In this play are admirably sketched the vices generally accompanying a low degree of civilisation; and in the first scene of the second act Shakespeare has, as in many other places, shown the tendency in bad men to indulge in scorn and contemptuous expressions as a mode of getting rid of their own uneasy feelings of inferiority to the good, and also, by making the good ridiculous, of rendering the transition of others to wickedness easy. Shakespeare never puts habitual scorn into the mouths of other than bad men, as here in the instances of Antonio and Sebastian. The scene of the intended assassination of Alonzo and Gonzalo is an exact counterpart of the scene between Macbeth and his lady, only pitched in a lower key throughout, as designed to be frustrated and concealed, and exhibiting the same profound management in the manner of familiarising a mind, not immediately recipient, to the suggestion of guilt, by associating the proposed crime with something ludicrous or out of place, "something not habitually matter of reverence. By this kind of sophistry the imagination and fancy are first bribed to contemplate the suggested act, and at length to become acquainted with it. Observe how the effect of this scene is heightened by contrast with another counterpart of it in low life, "that between the conspirators Stephano, Caliban, and Trinculo in the second scene of the third act, in which there are the same essential characteristics. In this play, and in this scene of it, are also shown the springs of the vulgar in politics, "of that kind of politics which is inwoven with human nature. In his treatment of this subject, wherever it occurs, Shakespeare is quite peculiar. In other writers we find the particular opinions of the individual; in Massinger it is rank republicanism; in Beaumont and Fletcher even jure divino principles are carried to excess; "but Shakespeare never promulgates any party tenets. He is always the philosopher and the moralist, but at the same time with a profound veneration for all the established institutions of society, and for those classes which form the permanent elements of the State, "especially never introducing a professional character, as such, otherwise

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than as respectable. If he must have any name, he should be styled a philosophical aristocrat, delighting in those hereditary institutions which have a tendency to bind one age to another, and in that distinction of ranks, of which, although few may be in possession, all enjoy the advantages. Hence, again, you will observe the good nature with which he seems always to make sport with the passions and follies of a mob, as with an irrational animal. He is never angry with it, but hugely content with holding up its absurdities to its face; and sometimes you may trace a tone of almost affectionate superiority, something like that in which a father speaks of the rogueries of a child. See the good-humoured way in which he describes Stephano passing from the most licentious freedom to absolute despotism over Trinculo and Caliban. He had virtually surveyed all the great component powers and impulses of human nature, and had seen that their different combinations and subordinations were in fact the individualisers of men, and showed how their harmony was produced by reciprocal disproportions of excess or deficiency. The language in which these truths are expressed was not drawn from any set fashion, but from the profoundest depths of his moral being, and is therefore for all ages.

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Chapter 4 : The influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare (Book,) [theinnatdunvilla.com]

The Works of William Shakespeare The Text Regulated by the Folio of ; With Readings From Former Editions, a History of the Stage, a Life of the Poet, and an Introduction to Each Play by William Shakespeare.

Beaumont was the son of Sir Richard Beaumont, a justice of the common pleas Bliss 2. He was educated in Oxford but soon became familiar with the various poets and playwrights around London McMullan Beaumont also started writing his own works around the turn of the seventeenth century. When the two worked together to compose the successful tragicomedy *Philaster* , their popularity took off. Their reputation as a team contributed to the popular but likely fictional story from John Aubrey that the two writers lived and worked together in the same space and shared the same clothes. The fruitful partnership ended when Beaumont died in Printers produced over thirty of their works in a folio printed in A second folio in added over a dozen more. In the early s, Ford was writing elegies and pamphlets as well as poems and essays, but by the s he began collaborating with playwrights like Thomas Dekker and William Rowley on such titles as *The Witch of Edmonton*. Eventually, Ford branched out into his own theatre work. Though some of his early compositions and collaborations began during the reign of King James, Ford was a predominantly Carolinian playwright i. Contemporary scholars have noticed his fascination with psychology, symbolism, and melodrama. *Incest, Power, and Chaos* Bliss, Lee. Manchester University Press, *The Selected Plays of John Ford*. Cambridge University Press, University of Massachusetts Press, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama*, Ashgate Publishing Company, Haskell House Publishers Ltd,

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Chapter 5 : Meet the Playwrights: Beaumont, Fletcher, and Ford â€“ Brave Spirits Theatre

The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare by Ashley H Thorndike, , available at Book Depository with free delivery worldwide.

Early life[edit] Fletcher was born in December baptised 20 December in Rye , Sussex, and died of the plague in August buried 29 August in St. He appears to have been partly rehabilitated before his death in but he died substantially in debt. The upbringing of John Fletcher and his seven siblings was entrusted to his paternal uncle Giles Fletcher , a poet and minor official. Fletcher appears to have entered Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University in , at the age of eleven. Little is known about his time at college but he evidently followed the path previously trodden by the University wits before him, from Cambridge to the burgeoning commercial theatre of London. At the beginning of his career, his most important association was with Francis Beaumont. According to an anecdote transmitted or invented by John Aubrey , they also lived together in Bankside , sharing clothes and having "one wench in the house between them". Fletcher wrote only for that company between the death of Shakespeare and his death nine years later. His popularity continued throughout his life; during the winter of , three of his plays were performed at court. He died in , apparently of the plague. He seems to have been buried in what is now Southwark Cathedral , although the precise location is not known; there is a reference by Aston Cockayne to a common grave for Fletcher and Massinger also buried in Southwark. His mastery is most notable in two dramatic types, tragicomedy and comedy of manners. National Portrait Gallery, London. They expected a pastoral tragicomedy to feature dances, comedy and murder, with the shepherds presented in conventional stereotypesâ€”as Fletcher put it, wearing "gray cloaks, with curtailed dogs in strings". A comedy, he went on to say, must be "a representation of familiar people" and the preface is critical of drama that features characters whose action violates nature. Fletcher appears to have been developing a new style faster than audiences could comprehend. By , however, he had found his voice. By that time, he had produced or had been credited with, close to fifty plays. At the re-opening of the theatres in , the plays in the Fletcher canon, in original form or revised, were by far the most common fare on the English stage. The most frequently revived plays suggest the developing taste for comedies of manners. A generation later, Alexander Dyce mentioned only *The Chances*. Since then Fletcher has increasingly become a subject only for occasional revivals and for specialists. Fletcher and his collaborators have been the subject of important bibliographic and critical studies but the plays have been revived only infrequently. Fletcher collaborated most often with Beaumont and Massinger but also with Nathan Field , Shakespeare and others. According to scholars such as Hoy, Fletcher used distinctive mannerisms that Hoy argued identify his presence. He adds a sixth stressed syllable to a standard pentameter verse lineâ€”most often *sir* but also *too* or *still* or *next*. Various other habits and preferences may reveal his hand. The detection of this pattern, a Fletcherian textual profile, has persuaded some researchers that they have penetrated the Fletcher canon with what they consider successâ€”and has in turn encouraged the use of similar techniques in the study of literature. Attempts to determine the exact "shares" of each writer for instance by Cyrus Hoy in particular plays continues, based on patterns of textual and linguistic preferences, style and idiosyncrasies of spelling. Valentinian , tragedy â€”14; Monsieur Thomas , comedy c.

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Together they helped establish and define the dramatic genre of tragicomedy, which became the most popular form of the period. Their partnership began around with the comedy *The Woman Hater* and ended when Beaumont retired from the theater around or Richard Fletcher, an Anglican minister. In the course of his career Dr. The Beaumonts were connected to some of the most prominent families in England, including the royal Plantagenet family. Despite such success, Beaumont left the theater sometime during or when he married the heiress Ursula Isley. Since Beaumont and Fletcher collaborations continued to be produced as late as , he may have continued to write at his country estate. Or, these late works may simply have been composed but not staged before his retirement. Fletcher continued to write for the stage for another nine years, remaining highly productive right up until his death of the plague in . Although not published until , *Philaster* was almost certainly performed at least a decade earlier. The play concerns the actions of Philaster, a prince whose kingdom has been usurped, and his love for Arathusa, the daughter of the tyrant who displaced him. Philaster is attended by Bellario, a young girl who is in love with him and disguises herself as a male page in order to be near him. Hearing rumors that Arathusa and Bellario are having an affair, Philaster attacks the supposed lovers in a jealous rage and wounds them both. At the end of the play, Bellario reveals that she is a woman, Philaster and Arathusa are united, and Philaster regains his kingdom. *A King and No King* centers on King Arbaces, an unstable and excessively proud ruler who, after an absence of many years, falls in love with his sister Panthea, whom he had last seen as a child. Much of the action revolves around his wild vacillations between abhorrence of his incestuous desires and his urge to fulfill them. In the end it is revealed that Arbaces and Panthea are not related after all: Thus, although he is not king, Arbaces is free to consummate his love. In this work, Amintor, despite his betrothal to Aspatia, is commanded by the King to marry another woman, Evadne. The play explores the various effects of this state of affairs: Aspatia, in her desolation, disguises herself as a man and provokes a fight with Amintor, during which she is killed. When he discovers the identity of the person he has slain, Amintor takes his own life. Commentators have often viewed them as evidence of a decline in dramatic art, judging them degraded versions of the great tragedies and comedies of the Elizabethan period. They have been characterized as skillful but highly artificial constructions designed to satisfy the increasingly decadent tastes of Jacobean and Caroline audiences. Today, they are of interest to scholars as transitional plays spanning the gap between the works of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson and the dramas of such Restoration playwrights as John Dryden. Numerous critics have argued that Beaumont and Fletcher exerted a significant influence on Shakespeare, noting that, in his late romances, the elder dramatist was following the lead of his younger contemporaries. Modern critics have also scrutinized the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher for what they tell of Jacobean social conditions and concerns. John Danby, for example, has analyzed them as productions designed for an aristocratic audience and therefore reflective of the views of that class. Mary Grace Muse Adkins, on the other hand, has detected in the sympathetic depiction of common people in *Philaster* a change in the political atmosphere of the period. Woodson has read *A King and No King* as a critique of Protestant beliefs in that time of great religious contention. Other topics addressed by critics include the presentation of ethics and morality in the plays and the influence of the highly popular masque form on the tragicomedies of Beaumont and Fletcher.

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Chapter 7 : Beaumont and Fletcher

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Virtually nothing is known about him until , when he is recorded as one of the group of literary men and wits who gathered at the Mermaid Tavern. This is where he likely met his most famous collaborator, William Shakespeare , along with Ben Jonson and Francis Beaumont , with whom his name is almost inextricably bound when his comedies are discussed. He also wrote plays in conjunction with Massinger , Middleton , Rowley , and Jonson himself. These included the historical tragedy *Bonduca* , the comedies *The Chances* c. In the case of the latter, however, as David Bevington suggests, "the case for Shakespeare as author of essentially the entire play is impressive" Shakespeare, Works, Ed. Fletcher seems to have preferred comedy as his genre, and this is certainly what he is best-known for. They even satirized the audience, especially people who liked to sit on the stage and interfere with the play. After the immense success of this play, Beaumont and Fletcher never looked back. They had struck a close friendship, and a prosperous collaborative creative relationship. The two were so close, in fact, that John Aubrey reported that they even shared clothes sometimes. Their collaboration also produced *Philaster* c. The first collected edition of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher came out in The plays remained popular down to the eighteenth century and are frequently revived today. It is near impossible to talk about the plays in terms of who did what. Some critics argue that Beaumont wrote better plots than Fletcher, or that Fletcher had a greater poetic gift, but in fact such speculation is useless because the collaboration was so close. What can be said, is that the plays are fast-moving, well-constructed, and, in the case of the comedies, still funny. The verse in the tragedies often rises to very grand heights, and Fletcher shows a great gift for songs and lyrical writing. John Aubrey in his *Brief Lives* left the only description of the death of Fletcher: John Fletcher, invited to goe with a Knight into Norfolke or Suffolke in the Plague-time of , stayd but to make himselfe a suite of Cloathes, and while it was making, fell sick of the Plague and dyed. This I had from his Tayler, who is now a very old man, and Clarke of St. Fletcher had an Issue in his arm I thought it had not used so long ago. The Clarke who was wont to bring him Ivy-leaves to dresse it when he came, found the Spotts upon him. Death stopped his Journey and laid him low here. Editions and Criticism Appleton, William W. Allen and Unwin, The Jacobean and Caroline Stage. Oxford University Press,

Chapter 8 : The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare : Ashley H Thorndike :

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER the stylistic influence of the masque on the Shakespeare's Cymbeline and Beaumont and Fletcher's Philaster soon.

Chapter 9 : Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge : Hamlet

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