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978-0-521-06042-4 - The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher
Canon, Volume VI

Edited by Fredson Bowers

Excerpt

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WIT WITHOUT MONEY

edited by

HANS WALTER GABLER

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TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

Wit Without Money (Greg, *Bibliography*, no. 563) was entered in the Stationers' Register on 25 April 1639. Q1 appeared the same year, printed by Thomas Cotes for Andrew Crooke and William Cooke. The commendation subtitle advertises it as having been 'Presented with good Applause at the private house in *Drurie Lane*, by her Majesties Servants.' The theatre is the Cockpit, house of the King and Queen's Young Company and Queen Henrietta's Company. The play is claimed as the Young Company's property in a list of plays drawn up by William Beeston, their manager. The list forms the substance of the Lord Chamberlain's edict of 10 August 1639 against apparent attempts of rival companies to perform their plays.

Wit Without Money is known to have been performed between 1637 and 1639 by both 'Beeston's Boys' and Queen Henrietta's Men. Though Beeston's list claims the play for the boys, it seems yet less than convincing, in view of the long and close links in fortune and management of the two companies, to assume that the Lord Chamberlain's edict was issued to guard against practices of Queen Henrietta's Company.¹ If Queen Henrietta's men had rival claims to the play, rather than perhaps merely complementary ones to those of the boys, these had, by August 1639, already been very effectively put forth. For it can easily be shown that the play as it survives descends from Queen Henrietta's Company. In publication, *Wit Without Money* is conspicuously linked to four other of their plays, among them John Fletcher's *The Night-Walker*, which was revised for the company by James Shirley in 1633. The licensing entry in the Stationer's Register joins the two Fletcher plays to three plays of Shirley's sole authorship. All five, while all claimed by Beeston for the Young Company in August 1639, were printed after 25 April of that year as having been played 'by her Majesties Servants', i.e. Queen Henrietta's Company.

¹ On the issue, cf. G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 1 (Oxford, 1941), 331; and the 'Textual Introduction' to *Monsieur Thomas*, vol. IV of this edition.

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The property rights and claims of 1639 are the best clues available to the origin and descent of *Wit Without Money*. John Fletcher is believed to be the play's original sole author, despite the titlepage statement of collaboration: 'Written by Francis Beaumont and John Flecher'; and revision has not until recently been considered. The obvious descent of the property in plays of the King and Queen's Young Company and Queen Henrietta's Company is from the Queen's Revels Children or the Lady Elizabeth's Men. The traditional assignation of *Wit Without Money* to 'around 1614' would date the composition within the period when John Fletcher – preceding, or overlapping with, the beginnings of his attachment to the King's Men – is assumed to have written other plays (e.g., *Monsieur Thomas* and, indeed, *The Night-Walker*) for the Queen's Revels Children. Chambers suggests that *Wit Without Money* was written for the Lady Elizabeth's Men.¹ But there is too little of substance in the surviving evidence to determine beyond doubt whether it was originally a play for the children or the men.

The date of 1614 has been disputed by Baldwin Maxwell on the grounds mainly of assumed topical allusions.² Although declaring himself unable to retrieve textual indications for revision, Maxwell would advocate at least revision, if not composition, around 1620. Cyrus Hoy, on the basis of the linguistic minutiae that have enabled him to establish the patterns of collaboration in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon, has remarked on the virtual absence of the distinctive Fletcherian *ye* in the extant text. Hoy's linguistic tests are sufficiently strong to affirm that 'the final form of the extant substantive edition... is the work of a non-Fletcherian hand', but not strong enough to identify the reviser beyond doubt. However, from the printed play's whole provenance, and its surprisingly constant association therein specifically with *The Night-Walker*, which in 1639 was published in the version revised by Shirley, Hoy tentatively suggests a Shirleyan revision also for *Wit Without Money*.³

If only from a desire for an economy of hypotheses, one may feel

¹ *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford, 1923), III, 229.

² *Studies in Beaumont, Fletcher and Massinger* (Chapel Hill, 1939), pp. 194–209.

³ Cf. *Studies in Bibliography*, XII (1959), 110–12.

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tempted to combine speculatively Maxwell's and Hoy's findings and suggestions. A lost original, wholly Fletcherian, version of around 1614 would then have been worked over by James Shirley to result in the manuscript behind Q1. If so, Maxwell's suggested revision date of 1620 would seem too early. But a date around 1625 would not be irreconcilable with Shirley's biography. He resigned the position as master of St Albans Grammar School probably in mid-1624. In London, he immediately entered upon a continuous association with the company, or companies, playing at the Cockpit. The manager of the Lady Elizabeth's Men there (subsequently Queen Henrietta's Company) was Christopher Beeston, whose son William was to succeed him in 1638. Shirley's first play on record, *Love Trials*, was licensed on 11 February 1624/5. This rapid establishment of himself as a playwright with a company may imply earlier private or professional connections with the London theatre world. Our speculative hypothesis would at least have to posit that revisions of existing company repertoire were assigned to Shirley from the outset of his association with the Cockpit. The lack of distinctive traces of his hand in *Wit Without Money* would seem explicable on the assumption that specifically Shirleyan characteristics of style and language had not yet become established when he undertook the revision. Beyond, one might merely remark that the repeated reference to St Albans in the play could be more than a coincidence.

Following Hoy, we must assume that the extant substantive text of the play constitutes an undistinctive, but pervasive revision of a lost pure Fletcherian original. Though it was from Queen Henrietta's Company that the play was available for publication in the spring of 1639, the manuscript behind Q1 is unlikely to have been a theatre prompt-book. It appears admittedly to have had some theatrical notation. There is a repeated call for torches in Act V; and, more interestingly, exits are often given before the last words spoken to those leaving, or entries marked in advance of the dialogue and action involving those entering. On the other hand, exits are at times negligently provided, and no attention is given to props.

Q1's most consistent, and disconcerting, feature is its virtually

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complete lack of versification. As the eighteenth-century editors were the first to discover, *Wit Without Money* is a verse play throughout. Yet the Quarto is set entirely in prose and prints verse only on I3^v, the very last page. To a significant degree, no doubt, this is a measure of printing economy. While short lines of dialogue are often printed two to a type-line and every possible white space on the pages is filled, the type-setting sometimes reveals that more of the versification was discernible in the copy than is reproduced. Thus, half a dozen of verse lines or half-lines scattered over the play are set as new lines in type and capitalized; and the editorial re-versification uncovers some incidence of capitalization in mid-line of the Quarto's prose which moves into initial positions in verse.

Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that the printer's copy itself did not lend itself to faulty prose setting. One may consider a format and a lay-out of the manuscript that obscured the distinction of prose and verse. Whereas early extant dramatic manuscripts tend to be inscribed in folio to a width of column that renders verse-lines distinguishable even without initial capitalization (which is a printing but not a manuscript convention), later dramatic manuscripts survive from at least the 1620s onwards inscribed in quarto, where lines of verse often run to the whole width of the page. Such manuscripts tend to have an origin or to have served a purpose outside the professional ambience of the theatre. It would appear not inconceivable that Shirley as the putative reviser of *Wit Without Money*, whose scribal conventions would have been formed at Cambridge and St Albans Grammar School, copied his revision into the lesser format, and that this copy served the printers.

All editors from Seward to McKerrow have verse-lined the play. Only Weber retains prose for two scenic units (II.iii.1-58, and II.iv.80-118) and a few occasional speeches. Reflecting the classicistic concern for prosody, the verse realization for *Wit Without Money* was controversial among the eighteenth-century editors. McKerrow in 1905 was content to retain the versification of Dyce, who refined on Weber. The present edition was relined independently, directly from the prose of Q1, without initial reference to Dyce or McKerrow. A high degree of coincidence with McKerrow's lineation, however, was discovered in the result.

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Following McKerrow's example, this edition refrains from swelling its apparatus by a notation of the differences in lineation between the play's successive previous editions. The considered departures in the present edition from the versification of its predecessors ultimately take their measure from the verse preserved on the last page of Q1. For example, of the group

O I know them, come boy sing the song I taught you,
 And sing it lustily, come forward Gentlemen, you're welcome,
 Welcome, now we are all friends, goe get the Priest ready,
 And let him not be long, we have much businesse:

(V.v.38-42)

every line is considered a legitimate line of dramatic blank verse. The resulting tautness and irregularity of rhythm suggests non-syllabic conventions of prosody that do not essentially rely on latinate elision but on a variation of speech tempo between stresses in the prosodic traditions of the Germanic languages. Such conventions, it is true, if they can be more widely established for early seventeenth-century drama, as yet await systematic recovery by modern scholarship.

Q1 is divided into acts, and the act divisions indicate first scenes, but no subsequent scene divisions are given. Scenes were first marked by Weber, whose divisions, but for those for Act III (where Weber's first scene divides in two), remain valid by the clear-stage criterion. The play's textual problems are few, and the text is not discernibly influenced or affected by the mechanics of printing. Q1 was machined by at least two, but probably three, skeleton formes. To all appearances, Skeleton I prints B(i), D(o), F(i), G(i) and I(i), Skeleton II prints C(i), D(i), F(o), H(i) and I(o), although a constant set of four running-titles per forme cannot safely be identified throughout in either forme. Single recognizable running-titles recur in B(o), E(i) and G(o), others in C(o) and F(o), which suggests a probable third forme at least, and at the same time repeats the pattern of fluidity in individual running-titles found in the identifiable formes. The machining implies a setting by more than one compositor, but no clear patterns of orthography or typography emerge to distinguish compositors or to establish a mode of composition *seriatim* or by formes.

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Q1 is the only substantive edition and thus provides the copy-text for the present edition. The press-variants discovered in copies of Q1 reveal mainly typographical concerns and do not inevitably suggest reference to copy (see Textual Note to I.ii.34–5). Q2 of 1661 is a page-by-page and largely line-by-line reprint of Q1. Thereby clearly of no independent authority, it yet introduces one compelling phrase absent from Q1 (see I.i.96). The text in the Second Folio of 1679 is a modernized, somewhat re-punctuated and mildly sophisticated reprint of Q2.

Wit Without Money was regularly staged in the 1660s and 1670s. Dryden wrote a Prologue for the production at the Duke's old theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, 26 February 1671/2. A Third Quarto of 1718, a reprint of Langbaine's edition of 1711, as well as the adapted version (undated; 1708?) '(With Alterations and Amendments, by some Persons of Quality.) As it is now Acted at the Queen's Theatre in the Hay-Market, By Her Majesty's Company of Comedians', testify to the play's continued popularity in the Restoration period. Thereafter its fortunes on the stage lapsed permanently, though perhaps undeservedly. The entertainment value of its dramatic pacing and comic character reversals yet stands to be rediscovered in the theatre.

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The Actors names.

Vallentine, *a Gallant that will not bee perswaded to keepe his estate.*

Francisco, *his younger brother.*

Master Lovegood *their Uncle.*

A Merchant, *friend to Master Lovegood.*

Fontaine, }
Bellamore, } *companions of Vallentine, and sutors to the Widdow.*
Harebraine, }

Lance *a Faulkoner, and an ancient servant to Vallentines Father.*

Shorthose *the clowne, and servant to the Widdow.*

Roger, Ralph, and Humphrey, *three servants to the Widdow.*

Three Servants.

[Tennants.]

Musitians.

Lady Hartwell *a Widdow.*

Isabell *her Sister.*

Luce *a waiting Gentlewoman to the Widdow.*

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*Enter Uncle and Merchant.**Merchant.* When saw you *Vallentine*? I. i*Uncle.* Not since the Horserace,

He's taken up with those that wooe the Widdow.

Merchant. How can he live by snatches from such people?

He bore a worthy minde.

Uncle. Alas, he's sunke,
His meanes are gone, he wants, and which is worse,
Takes a delight in doing so.*Merchant.* That's strange.*Uncle.* Runs Lunaticke, if you but talk of states,
He cannot be brought now he has spent his owne,
To thinke theres inheritance, or meanes,
But all a common riches, all men bound
To be his Bailiffes. 10*Merchant.* This is something dangerous.*Uncle.* No Gentleman that has estate to use it
In keeping house, or followers, for those wayes
He cries against, for eating sins, dull surfets,
Cramming of serving men, mustering of beggers,
Maintaining hospitals for Kites, and curs,
Grounding their fat faithes upon old Countrey proverbes,
God blesse the founders; these he would have vented
Into more manly uses, Wit and carriage,
And never thinkes of state, or meanes, the ground workes: 20
Holding it monstrous, men should feed their bodies,
And starve their understandings.*Merchant.* Thats more certaine.*Uncle.* Yes, if he could stay there.l.i] *Actus 1. Scena 1. Q 1-2, F 2*

16 Maintaining] F 2; maintaine Q 1-2

12 Gentleman,] F 2; Gent, Q 1-2

*18 vented] *stet* Q 1

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[I. i

Merchant. Why let him marry,
And that way rise againe.

Uncle. Its most impossible,
He will not looke with any hansomnesse
Upon a woman.

Merchant. Is he so strange to women?

Uncle. I know not what it is, a foolish glory
He has got, I know not where, to balke those benefits,
And yet he will converse and flatter um,
Make um, or faire, or foule, rugged, or smooth, 30
As his impression serves, for he affirms,
They are onely lumps, and undigested peeces,
Lickt over to a forme, by our affections,
And then they show. The lovers: let um passe.

Enter Fountaine, Bellamore, Harebraine.

Merchant. He might be one, he carries as much promise;
They are wondrous merry.

Uncle. O their hopes are high sir.

Fountaine. Is *Vallentine* come to Towne?

Bellamore. Last night I heard.

Fountaine. We misse him monstrously in our directions,
For this Widdow is as stately, and as crafty,
And stands I warrant you——

Harebraine. Let her stand sure, 40
She falls before us else, come lets goe seeke *Vallentine*.

[*Exeunt Fountaine, Bellamore, Harebraine.*]

Merchant. This Widdow seemes a gallant.

Uncle. A goodly woman,
And to her hansomnesse she beares her state,
Reserved, a great Fortune has made her Mistresse
Of a full meanes, and well she knowes to use it.

Merchant. I would *Vallentine* had her.

Uncle. Theres no hope of that Sir.

Merchant. A that condition, he had his morgage in againe.

Uncle. I would he had.

44 a] and Q 1-2, F 2