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The Effects of Revision in the
Beaumont and Fletcher Play,
Wit at Several Weapons

James E. Savage

WIT AT SEVERAL WEAPONS is one of the more enjoyable comedies found in the Beaumont and Fletcher Folio of 1647. It has the lightness and deftness of dialogue of Beaumont and Fletcher's best work, without the superficial emotional intensity of the tragicomedies. In conduct of plot, and in characterization, it is perhaps most closely akin to *The Wild Goose Chase* and *Monsieur Thomas*. On these qualities is superimposed much good-natured burlesque similiar to that in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

Yet in reading *Wit at Several Weapons* one is confused by many inconsistencies of dialogue and action, inconsistencies which probably are explainable in terms of revision. References to contemporary affairs abound throughout the play, usually in association with those inconsistencies. A study of the work of the reviser of this play may shed some light on the general processes of revision employed by the dramatists of the Jacobean period.

Since many of the arguments which I shall employ will suppose a fairly detailed knowledge of character and action in *Wit at Several Weapons*, it seems advisable to give a brief summary of the play itself. Wittypate, the son of Sir Perfidious Oldcraft, is about to be disinherited by his father. Sir Perfidious is old and rich. He has "rizzate ungently," as "intelligencer close for wenching," and by means of the "charge of orphans," whom in childhood he "bound forth to felt-

makers." He prides himself extremely on his wit, and Wittypate must prove himself a worthy son, or the father's property will go to Credulous Oldcraft, a cousin, and a Cambridge scholar.

Wittypate demonstrates his wit most effectively. He enlists the aid of Sir Ruinous Gentry, Lady Gentry, and Priscian, and together they impose three major cheats on Sir Perfidious himself, as beggars, as robbers throwing the guilt on the Cambridge scholar Credulous, and as very expensive musicians at a wedding in which Sir Perfidious is forced to accept the wrong husband for his niece.

Meanwhile Sir Perfidious is perpetrating his "last cheat." He is guardian to a wealthy "Neece," and he proposes to wed her to Sir Gregory Fop, "Fop Gregory the First," provided he may retain two thirds of her dowry. Sir Gregory has a witty retainer, Cunningham, or "Cunningame," whom Sir Perfidious, exercising his wit, introduces to the Neece as the proposed husband. Cunningham and the Neece fall in love, and their procedures thereafter, though devious and unnecessary, produce a very entertaining plot. Cunningham pretends to make love to the Neece's "Gardinesse," who avidly accepts his attentions. The Neece in retaliation fawns on Pompey Doodle, servant to Sir Gregory Fop. Pompey takes her very seriously indeed, and forsakes his master's service. The Neece gives tokens, a scarf and a diamond, to Sir Gregory, and tells him that, while he must wear them temporarily, he merely bears them to a worthier man. Cunningham takes the tokens from Sir Gregory, telling him that he will give them to Pompey, the proper owner. Meanwhile he "uses the same fop" to carry his token, a ruby, to the Neece, by the process of saying it is for Mirabel, niece to the Gardinesse, and adjuring Sir Gregory not to show it to the Neece.

Being now in possession of the scarf, Cunningham pretends to give it to Mirabel; the Neece in anger reveals her love, and she and Cunningham plan an exercise of wit to supplant Sir Gregory Fop.

Wittypate and his helpers aid Cunningham in the last act. They convince Sir Perfidious that the Neece has run away to join Pompey Doodle, and that Sir Gregory is about to marry Lady Gentry. These things can be prevented if Sir Perfidious comes upon them unaware, "in the guise of a masque." He agrees to pay for the music. Mean-

while, by a trick, Cunningame has betrothed Sir Gregory Fop to Mirabel. While Sir Perfidious is protesting the hundred pounds he must pay for the music, Cunningame and the Neece are married by the Cambridge scholar, Credulous.

Wittypate, having proved his wit, is acknowledged as heir, Sir Ruinous and Lady Gentry are reinstated in society, Priscian is entertained as Chaplain by Sir Gregory, who has "the gift of twenty benefices," and Pompey Doodle, who is convinced the Neece has thrown herself away, is reinstated as Sir Gregory's servant. Only the Cambridge scholar, Credulous, is left without the rewards of wit.

A second preliminary step is also necessary, for in order to establish revision, it is necessary to show something to be revised. To that end I shall treat the evidence which suggests an early version of *Wit at Several Weapons*, a version falling probably between 1605 and 1608. It is the opinion of E. H. C. Oliphant that there was a version for Paul's Boys, about 1604, and a version about 1613 for the Lady Elizabeth's Men.¹ I suggest that the early version may have been as late as 1608, and that Beaumont, Fletcher, and Middleton all had a hand in it. In general, it resembles the satirical plays written for the boys' companies during the early years of the seventeenth century. In fact it contains so many things which may be interpreted as thrusts at James and his court that I suggest probable suppression by the Master of the Revels. Such a suppression would account for the fact that no records of performances, and no early quartos, exist.

That the play existed in some form early in the century is borne out by internal evidence, as well as by bits of external evidence. In this passage, to which both Oliphant and Thorndike refer, we find a playwright speaking well of the Scots, a thing which few of them were inclined to do after the very early years of the reign:

Since, Sir, I serv'd in *France*, the *Low Countries*, lastly,
at that memorable Skirmish at *Newport*, where the forward
and bold *Scot* there spent his life so freely, that from every
single heart that there fell, came home from his resolution
a double honour to his country.² (6Kr; I, ii)

The passage is a part of the gulling of Sir Perfidious Oldcraft, and Sir Ruinous Gentry, in the character of a begging soldier, is the

speaker. The Battle of Newport occurred in 1600, and there would be little virtue in referring to it, except as flattery of the new king.

In a similar passage in the second act, which can probably be considered a thrust at James himself, there appears the customary attitude of the playwright towards the Scots:

Lady. So, what Saddle have I?

Pris. Mounsiuer Laroon's the *French-mans*.

Lady. That agen,

You know so well it is not for my stride,
How oft have I complain'd on't?

Pris. You may have *Jockey's* then, the little *Scotch* one.

(6Kv; II, i)

Oliphant suggests that the following lines are most likely to have been written in the early part of the reign of James, though the particular person who earned, and failed to receive, his knighthood is not traceable:

Neece. 'Twould ha' kill'd

A sensible man, he would ha' gone to his Chamber
And broke his heart by this time.

Sir Greg. Thank you heartily.

Neece. Or fixt a naked rapier in a wall,
Like him that earn'd his Knighthood e're he had it,
And then refus'd upon't, ran up to'th hilts.

Sir Greg. Yes, let him run for me, I was never brought
up to't,

I never profest running i' my life. (6K4v; III, i)

Jonson, Chapman and Marston are probably the objects of Pompey Doodle's, and Beaumont's, wit in connection with the diamond taken from Sir Gregory Fop. It will be recalled that Drummond relates, in the *Conversations*, that "for writting something against the Scots in a play Eastward Hoe, . . . the report was that they should then have had their ears cutt and noses," though fortunately the threat was not carried out. That Beaumont had knowledge of this incident is strongly suggested by a passage from the Prologue to *The Woman Hater*:

*For he that made this Play, meanes to please Auditors
So, as hee may bee an Auditor himselve hereafter, and not
purchase them with the deare losse of his eares: . . . You*

shall not find in it the ordinarie and over worne trade of ieasting 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 part vowes, That hee did neuer thinke, but that a Lord borne might bee a wise man, and a Courtier an honest man. (Q1, 1607, A2r, A2v)

Pompey Doodle, in a conversation with Cunningame in *Wit at Several Weapons*, denies receipt of the diamond, for

'Twould be seene

Some where about me, you may well think that,
I have an arme for a Scarfe, as others have,
An Ear, to hang a Jewel too, and that's more

Then some men have, my betters a great deale.³ (6L3r; IV, i)

The date of *Eastward Hoe* is 1605 and Pompey Doodle's speech, if it is a thrust at Jonson and the others, should have been written not long after the imprisonment of the playwrights.⁴

In addition to this glance at *Eastward Hoe*, there may be in *Wit at Several Weapons* indebtedness to another play probably written in 1604, *Measure for Measure*. In each play there is a "Clowne," the one named Pompey Doodle, the othey Pompey Bum. The Pompey of *Wit at Several Weapons* was "Kersened" by Goodman Caesar. The Pompey of *Measure for Measure* is assured that Escalus "will proue a shrewd Caesar" to him, and when under arrest, is "at the wheels of Caesar." There is much talk between Pompey and Froth and the Constable Elbow of *Measure for Measure* about dishes. In *Wit at Several Weapons*, Sir Ruinous Gentry, as a "North-Brittaine Constable," will tolerate no "Dishporridgement."

The various bits of evidence, internal and external, which have just been treated should constitute a sufficient basis for assuming a version of *Wit at Several Weapons* as early as 1608. The several references to the New River, which was dedicated for the public use in 1613, should be sufficient to show that there was tampering with the original text.⁵ There are, however, passages which seem to have reference to practically all the years through 1620, as will appear in my discussion of the passages I take to be revisions. I am inclined to think there

may have been two revisions, but such a fact would be hard to establish, and I shall disregard the problem. I hope, rather, to show how the interpolations affect the text of the play, and conversely, how they are to be detected, usually, by some dislocation in the text.

That there was revision about 1620 is implied in the meagre history of *Wit at Several Weapons*, as will appear from a brief summary of the external evidence. The only early texts of the play are in the folios of 1647 and 1679, the latter apparently derived from the former. Aside from the fact of inclusion in the folios, the only contemporary indication of authorship lies in a prologue, written after Fletcher's death, which indicates that Fletcher "writ An Act, or two." The prologue itself is for "the reviving of this Play," and contains a statement that "Twas well receiv'd before." Fletcher is also given partial credit for the authorship in the prologue to Colley Cibber's *The Rival Fools*:

FROM *sprightly* Fletcher's loose *Confed'rate Muse*
Th' unfinished Hints of these light Scenes we chuse,
For with such careless haste his Play was writ,
So unperus'd each thought of started wit;
Each Wepon of his Wit so lamely sought,
That 'twou'd as scanty on our Stage be thought,
*As for a modern Belle my Grannum's *Peticcoat*.⁶*

An additional bit of contemporary evidence about *Wit at Several Weapons* needs to be noted. Frank Marcham, in his *King's Office of the Revels*, reproduces some scraps of paper, presumably to be accounted for as waste matter in the office of Sir George Buc, which contain the names of plays. They are, it is likely, plays proposed for court performance. The presence of *Wit at Several Weapons* on one of these lists suggests an early version, belonging to one of the boys' companies;⁷ presence about 1620 in the repertory of Prince Charles's Men; and probable revision about 1620 with a view to Court performance.

It is not my purpose in this paper to explore these questions of company, authorship, and date, though some incidental comments on them may arise. It is rather my plan to set forth some of the items of internal evidence which confirm the implications of the external evi-

dence that there was revision, and to show some of the consequences of the work of the reviser. The usual evidences of revision are all present: repetitions of material, improper or missing speech-prefixes, inconsistencies in the action. But the work of the reviser is here more far reaching and more obvious than is usual. The process of revision is a simple one normally, the mere insertion of rather obvious references to events almost contemporaneous with the time of revision.

The by-products of these revisions are numerous: irregularities in the meter; shifts from prose to verse, or verse to prose; completely irrelevant speeches; notable inconsistencies in character or action. Some dislocation of the sort indicated almost invariably accompanies any obvious insertion of a contemporary reference, and the reader soon comes to feel that any peculiarity in the text may be the result of revision.

In discussing the workings in *Wit at Several Weapons* of the revisions, it is probably best to start with metrical considerations. Though some of the scenes are clearly intended for prose, the larger part of the play is written in the standard dramatic verse of the period. There are, however, many passages even in the verse which cannot be scanned. Such a passage as the following will illustrate my point, and serve as an introduction to the later discussion:

They put things call'd Executorships upon me
 The charge of Orphans, little sencelesse creatures,
 Whom in their Childe-hoods I bound forth to Feltmakers,
 To make 'em lose and work away their Gentry,
 Disguise their tender natures with hard customs,
 So wrought 'em out in time, there I rizze ungently,
 Nor do I feare to discourse this unto thee,
 I'me arm'd at all points against treachery,
 I hold my humor firme, if I can see thee thrive by
 Thy wits while I live, I shall have the more courage
 To trust thee with my Lands when I dye; if not
 The next best wit I can heare of carries 'em:
 For since in my time and knowledge so many rich Children
 Of the City conclude in beggery, i'de rather
 Make a wise stranger my Executor, then a foolish

Sonne my Heire, and to have my Lands call'd after my
Wit, thou after my name; and that's my nature. (6I3r; I, i)

It is my suggestion that the "Feltmakers" and the "rich Children of the City" are interpolations, though I can propose no specific references. At any rate, after some hundred or so conventional lines, the latter part of this passage comes as something of a surprise. It should be noted that, as the metrical structure degenerates, the individual line is very likely to receive an extra stress.⁸

This long line is the feature of the revisions upon which I wish to dwell next. There are many places in which a line stands out noticeably from its neighbors because of its unusual length. The following are neat samples:

Which Gentlewoman new divorc'st, which Trades-man
breaking (6I3r; I, i)

But 'twill make shift to bury me, by day-light too, (6I3v; I, i)
Perhaps had she been seen, you had never seen her,

There's many a spent-thing call'd an't like your honour,
That lyes in wait for her at first snap, she's a Countesse,
Drawne with sixe Mares through Fleete-streete, and a
Coach-man,

Sitting Bare-headed to their *Flaundes buttocks* (6I3r; I, i)

It is certainly a fact that Fletcher, and many of the other Jacobean playwrights, frequently wrote lines with too many stresses. But they do not normally, as do those just quoted and many others in *Wit at Several Weapons*, mark passages where there is a strong presumption that the text has been revised. Having made the point that this overburdened line is frequently both a product and a sign of revision, I must, obviously, show why I believe revision occurred at certain points, and point out whatever effect it has on the text.

The first of these lines just quoted, "Which Gentlewoman new divorc'st, which Trades-man breaking," is rather obviously designed to call into the minds of the audience fairly recent events. Two divorces stand out in the early Jacobean period, those of the Lady Rich (Sidney's Penelope Devereaux), and Frances, the daughter of Henry Howard, Earl of Suffolk, who divorced the Earl of Essex in order to marry Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset. Because of the juxta-

position with the other phrase, "tradesman breaking," I believe the reference is probably to the Essex divorce, which occurred in 1613. The misfortunes of two tradesmen are prominent enough before 1620 to be noted in such records as the Chamberlain letters and the *CSPD*. John Chamberlain tells us that Arthur Ingram, whom he calls "the great undertaker," has broken for large sums.⁹ This was in 1611. And in 1617, the credit of Alderman Cockayne was seriously threatened by the breaking of two commercial houses in Germany.¹⁰ That one or another of these events is glanced at seems likely, and if so, the peculiar line is the product of revision.

That the second of the passages is an interpolation seems likely in view of the implications of the phrase, "by day-light too." The origin of night burial is probably suggested by this passage from Arthur Wilson:

And now the King casts his thoughts towards *Peterborough*, where his Mother lay, whom he caused to be translated to a Magnificent Tomb, at *Westminster*. And (somewhat suitable to her mind when she was living) she had a translucent passage in the night, through the City of *London*, by multitudes of Torches: The Tapers placed by the Tomb and the Alter, in the *Cathedral*, smoaking with them like an *Offertory*, with all the *Ceremonies*, and *Voices*, their *Quires* and *Copes* could express, attended by many Prelates and Nobles.¹¹

The date given by Wilson is 1612. That the practice became common thereafter is noted by John Chamberlain in his letter to Carleton on 19 December, 1618:

The Lord Hays or Doncaster buried his younge sonne at St. Clements this weeke, by night, yet with some solemnitie. . . .

Yt is growne altogether in fashion to burie now by night, as on Sunday last the Lady Haddington had a solemne convoy of almost an hundred coaches (and torches in abundance), that accompanied her from Westminster to White-chappell on her way to New-Hall in Essex where she is to be buried.¹²

The third of those passages quoted above, in which the irregular line appears, contains material also which, in all probability, is inter-

polated. The specific reference this time is to the phrase "drawne with sixe mares." The historian Arthur Wilson is again my source:

The stout old Earl Northumberland, when he was got loose, hearing that the great Favourite, *Buckingham*, was drawn about with a Coach and six Horses (which was wondred at then as a *novelty*, and imputed to him as a *mastring pride*), thought if *Buckingham* had six, he might very well have eight in his Coach, with which he rode through the City of *London* to the *Bath*, to the vulgar talk and admiration: . . . Nor did this addition of two Horses by *Buckingham* grow higher than a little *murmur*. For in the late Queen's time, there were no Coaches, and the first had but two Horses, the rest crept in by *Degrees*.¹³

Northumberland was released from the Tower in 1621, though *Buckingham* had presumably been using six horses somewhat earlier.¹⁴

The effect of the interpolations on the metrical structure of the play has been taken up first, for it will be in evidence to some extent in connection with passages quoted in order to make entirely different points. One or two of these can be brought out by some discussion of the characterization. Sir Gregory Fop is a most interesting character, the ancestor, I suspect, of the notable fops of the Restoration. Sir Perfidious in a single scene, calls him these names, which are presumably synonyms: coxcomb, Fop, fool, Gregory and dolt. Cunningame calls him "*Fop Gregory the First*." He is a "lad of thousands," "Fop of *Fop-Hall*," the "*antient, st [sic] Fop in England*," one "borne to Lordships." He says of himself that his mistress would have "a little Souldier" and "some Schollar" in him, that he "never profest running" in his life, and that he was "never double-tongu'd."

His physical appearance is to be gleaned largely from the speeches of the other characters. He is a "thinne" gentleman, with "small trapstick leggs;" the Neece, admiring Pompey Doodle's beard, asks, "When will the Knight thy Master have such a Stampe of man-hood on his face;" his fingers are "leane mattrice rubbers."

These items of description are taken from various parts of the play, and represent fairly the Sir Gregory Fop of the original version. One is tempted to see a resemblance to James I. Such a representation

of James could not come on the stage, certainly; but I suspect that the very resemblance is the reason that there is no record of performance of *Wit at Several Weapons*. This portrait should, perhaps, be compared with that of James given by Sir Anthony Weldon:

He was of a middle stature, more corpulent through his cloathes then in his body, yet fat enough, his cloathes ever being made large and easie, the Doublets quilted for steletto proof, his Breeches in plates, and full stuffed: He was naturally of a timorous disposition, which was the reason of his quilted doublets, his eyes large, ever rolling after any stranger came in his presence . . . his Beard was very thin; his tongue too large for his mouth; . . . his skin was as soft as Taffeta Sarsnet, which felt so, because he never washt his hands . . . his legs were very weak, having as was thought some foul play in his youth . . . he naturally loved not the sight of a Soldier, nor of any valiant man.¹⁵

At only one point in the play is this concept of the character and appearance of Sir Gregory abandoned:

Say he be black, hee's of a very good pitch,
Well anckled, two good confident calves, they looke
As if they would not shrink at the ninth childe;
The rednesse ith' face, why that's in fashion,
Most of your high bloods have it, signe of greatnesse marry;
'Tis to be taken downe too with May butter,
Ile send to my *Lady Spendtayle* for her Medicine, (6I4r; I, i)

In this passage Sir Gregory changes character and description: he is more like Robert Carr than like James. "Greatnesse" would be applicable to a favorite; the pun on "pitch" has meaning only if that word is taken as "height" or "degree." Robert Carr, as Earl of Somerset, was convicted in May ("May butter") of complicity in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury; and "my Lady Spend-tayle" may well be Mrs. Turner, who provided the medicine that was supposed to have made Essex impotent, and to have poisoned Overbury.

Many of the elements in this line of argument are speculative; but Sir Gregory does, in the passage quoted, become temporarily quite a different person. Revision of some sort, whether or not it involves James and Somerset, is surely the reason. The character of Sir

Gregory has suffered in clarity and consistency because of the work of the reviser. It could, I think, be shown that the characters of Sir Perfidious and Lady Gentry suffer in the same way. It should be noted that in this passage, as in the earlier ones quoted, the verse becomes rough, and the long line appears—"Most of your high bloods have it, signs of greatnesse, marry."

Still a different effect of the revision is what may be called irrelevant speeches—responses which are obviously not the logical consequences of the speeches just preceding. It is difficult to explain them without fairly elaborate analyses, but I shall point out two which involve Sir Gregory Fop, and one in which Pompey Doodle is concerned.

In the first act, Cunningame, merely for an exercise of "wit," is to be presented to the Neece as the proposed suitor, in place of the real candidate, Sir Gregory. These lines set up the situation:

O. K. Sir Perfidious

You shall not be seene yet, wee'le stale your friend first,
If't please but him to stand for the Anti-maske.

Sir Greg. Puh, he shall stand for any thing, why his supper
Lyes i' my breeches here, ile make him fast else.

O. K. Then come you forth more unexpectedly
The Maske itself, a thousand a yeare joynture,
The cloud your friend will be then drawne away,
And only you the beauty of the play.

Sir Greg. For Red and Black Ile put downe all your Fullers,
Let but your Neece bring White, and we have three Cullours.

(613v; I, i)

Sir Gregory's couplet does not appear to be a sensible response to the statement of the Old Knight. It may possibly be related to the talk about masques and anti-masques; it is more likely, however, to be related to the passage quoted on the previous page, in which the redness and blackness of Sir Gregory's appearance were noted. Even if that is so, the "White" of the Neece is not explained. Whatever the meaning of the speech, its value lies in the immediate effect on the audience, and not in the orderly conduct of the action.

The second of the irrelevant passages which I wish to discuss

involves also a cryptic speech by Sir Gregory. He has prepared a serenade for the Neece, and until the arrival of the music, he and Sir Perfidious talk beneath the Neece's window about the deplorable fact that Sir Gregory came to London with a maidenhead. Then,

Enter Page

Sir Greg. What, are they come?

Page. And plac'd directly, Sir,

Under her window.

Sir Greg. What may I call you Gentleman?

Boy. A poore servant to the Violl, I'me the Voyce, Sir.

Sir Greg. In good time Master *Voyce*.

Boy. Indeed good time doe's get the mastery.

Sir Greg. What Countryman Master *Voyce*?

Boy. Sir, borne at *Ely*, we all set up in *Ely*,

But our house commonly breakes in *Rutland* Shire.

Sir Greg. A shrewd place by my faith, it may well break
your voyce,

It breaks many a mans back; come, set to your businesse.

Song (6K3v, 6K4r; III, i)

The revision here is clearly marked, I believe, by the shift in speech-prefixes from "Page" to "Boy." The discussion from that point to "come, set to your businesse" is in no way connected with the action. The puns, on the breaking of a boy's voice, and on the verb "rut," are obvious (cf. Rutillio, who is employed in the "male stews" in *The Custom of the Country*.) These things are, however, of less significance than the Ely-Rutlandshire thrust. The allusion is probably irrecoverable. The best guess is that it somehow glances at the fact that Buckingham was contemplating marriage with a Roman Catholic, the daughter of the Earl of Rutland, and that at about the same time the Spanish ambassador, Count Gondomar, was being domiciled by James in Ely House, once a Bishop's palace. These are events of about 1620. At any rate, they constitute a deliberate departure from the established pattern in order to introduce a thrust at court matters. And again in these two passages, as in the earlier ones, the awkward verse and the long line appear.

Still a third item, somewhat different in nature, is Pompey Doodle's adventure with the New River. Pompey himself is a char-

acter worth meeting, the work, possibly, of Beaumont. He is capable of the same unintentional satire, and is subject to the same unjustified self-esteem, as the Citizen and his Wife in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. He calls himself Pompey, though his real name is Pumpey, for he was so "kersened" by Goodman Caesar, a pumpmaker. It is not unlikely that he was inspired by Pompey Bum, of *Measure for Measure*, and so belongs in the earliest version of *Wit at Several Weapons*. In the early part of the play he is courted by the Neece, as a parallel section to the courting of the Gardinesse by Cunninggame, and is dismissed with the assurance that he will be "sent for." He gives up his service with Sir Gregory, and engages in "solemne walks, 'twixt Paddington and Pancridge," waiting to be sent for. He endures much of cold and hunger, but he is faithful. Meeting Cunninggame, and disturbed because no messages have come, he takes what precautions are possible:

If you chance to meet a Footman by the way, in orange tawny ribbands, running before an empty Coach, with a Buzzard i'th Poope on't, direct him and his horses toward the new River by Islington, there they shall have me looking upon the Pipes, and whistling. (6L3r; IV, i)

The action implied in the passage just given is relevant enough, but both the New River and the coach are entirely new business for the play, and are introduced presumably for their value as contemporary references. The New River will receive further attention, but the coach will not appear again. It is a fairly good guess that it was the coach of James, Lord Hay, and that events of 1615 are referred to.¹⁶

Pompey Doodle, at this point, apparently gives up his solemn walks between Paddington and Pancridge, and waits by the New River to be sent for. The New River was a canal, designed to bring water to London, undertaken in 1609 by the wealthy Sir Hugh Middleton. After he had bankrupted himself, he received assistance from James I and completed the work in 1613.¹⁷ In a public ceremony, most notable because of a pageant written by Thomas Middleton,¹⁸ the dramatist, it was formally placed in operation.

Pompey Doodle, however, in entertaining but completely irrelevant dialogue, predicts that "twill ne're be a true water." After having

been "seven mile in length" along it, he has "seene a hundred stickle bags"; he suspects that "there's gudgeons too"; and finally, he has "told a thousand Millers thumbs in it." The stickleback is a worthless little fish, also called "miller's thumb." A gudgeon is also a small fish, and the word "gudgeon" has approximately the double meaning of our word "sucker." "Miller's thumb" has of course the traditional one of dishonesty, the one given it by Chaucer in the *Prologue*, "he hadde a thomb of gold, pardee."¹⁹

Still a different effect of the revisions from that which I have just discussed as irrelevancy in the dialogue is the change in detail of the action in the "Broad brim'd hat of the last progresse block, with the young hat-band, Made for a sucking Devil of two yeare old"; and the changes in the action have to do with the adventures of the Neece's scarf.

The broad-brimmed hat needs some notice, since it was, briefly, the object of attention in very high quarters. In her *Costume in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*,²⁰ Miss Linthicum indicates that the broad-brimmed hat came into use in England about 1620, and that it was imported from France. The first notice of it I have found in English writings is, as might be expected, in the *Letters* of John Chamberlain:

Yesterday the Bishop of London called together all his Clergie about this towne, and told them he had expresse Commaundment from the King to will them to inveigh vehemently and bitterly in theyre sermons against the insolencie of our women, and theyre wearing of brode brimd hats, pointed dublets, theyre haire cut short or shorne, and some of them stillettaes or poinards, and such other trinckets of like moment, adding withall that yf pulpit admonitions will not reforme them he wold proceed by another course, the truth is the world is very far out of order, but whether this will mend yt God knowes.²¹

The clergy apparently heeded the King's instructions, and indeed some who were not clergy, for in his next letter, of 12 February, 1620, Chamberlain reports:

Our pulpits ring continually of the insolence and impudence of women: and to helpe the matter forward the players have

likewise taken them to taske, and so the ballades and ballad-singers, so that they can come no where but theyre eares tingle: and yf all this will not serve the King threatens to fall upon theyre husbands, parents or frends that have or shold have power over them and make them pay for yt.

Though those passages are sufficient for my purpose, I offer one more, which indicates that the King and the Bishop were not altogether successful in their crusade:

The Deane of Westminster hath ben very strict in his church against Ladies and gentlewomen about yellow ruffles and wold not suffer them to be admitted into any pew, which beeing yll taken and the King moved in yt, he is come to disadvowe him, and sayes his meaning was not for yellow ruffles but for other man-like and unseemly apparell.²²

The reviser of *Wit at Several Weapons* is not particularly in sympathy with King James and the Bishop of London, but he sees in the hats timely material for his "players." Only two people wear them, Mirabel and Sir Gregory Fop. Of Sir Gregory, wearing one, Cunningame says "I know the Magget by his head," and the Neece, believing she sees Mirabel wearing one, exclaims "Oh that whores hat a' thine, a' the riding block, A shade for lecherous kisses."

At their first introduction the hats produce a slight dislocation: Cunningame says "I am so haunted with this broad brim'd hat . . . I know not where to turne my selfe." Mirabel, wearing it, says merely "Sir?" and Cunningame adds "More Torture?" These two characters have not been together at any previous time in the play, nor has Cunningame been in the presence of anyone wearing the hat. It is possible that in the course of the revision a scene has dropped out. But it is more likely that the discrepancy is introduced as a part of an emphatic initial statement about the hats.

Greater discrepancies, caused by the hats, appear in connection with the Neece's scarf. We first meet the scarf when Sir Gregory says to the Neece, "Lady, your Scarfe's falne downe." In the presence of her Uncle, she tells Sir Gregory "You may weare it, and you please"; with her Uncle gone, however, her true motives appear:

"Would it might rot thy arme off . . . 'tis but cast Upon thee, purposely to serve another . . . sure you carry't to a worthier man." Cunningame, when he hears the story, says the scarf is meant for Pompey Doodle, who "beares a bloody minde." Cunningame, in order to learn whether the scarf was meant for himself, resolves to place it "On some new Mistris, only for a try." The "new Mistris" is of course Mirabel—"Pray weare this scarfe about you." The implication of the lines is clearly that the scarf passes into her possession. The following scene begins with this unusual stage direction:

Enter Cunningame (in discourse with a Mask't Gentlewoman in a broad hat and scarf'd.) Neece at another doore.

The masquerade has the desired effect. The Neece vents her anger principally on the "whore's hat," the "shade for lecherous kisses"; in the process reveals her love for Cunningame, but only after she has discovered that not Mirabel, but a dummy, made of "fine clothes," and a broad-brimmed hat, wears the scarf. That the scarf has been in the possession of Mirabel is in no way accounted for. The addition of the broad-brimmed hats has completely changed the structure of one of the most important scenes.

The reviser of *Wit at Several Weapons* was clearly not striving to improve the play, as a Jonson or a Daniel would have done. He was, rather, making it timely. That he succeeded is evidenced by the fact that there was a production soon after the death of Fletcher. To obtain this timeliness, however, he did violence to verse, to dialogue, and to action. Perhaps the best commentary on his work is that implied in Colley Cibber's revision. Cibber retained much of the original language of *Wit at Several Weapons*; he dropped all of those lines which in this paper have been suggested as references to contemporary events; and he succeeded in clarifying many of the confusions which resulted from the work of the reviser.

In the course of this paper, I have perhaps thrown a little light on the external history of the play: the company was probably Paul's Boys, and later, the Prince's Men; the early version, of about 1608, was perhaps a collaborative effort of Fletcher, Beaumont and Middleton; the revision of about 1620 may have been the work of Rowley.

These things, however, have been incidental; my principal purpose has been to show how the revisions were accomplished, and what effect they had on the text. Two items stand out as having usefulness for other studies of revision, the line of unusual length, and the speech which is completely irrelevant as a response to preceding speeches.

¹*The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), p. 453. The existing scholarship on the play is well summarized by Mr. Oliphant, who sees the work of Beaumont, Fletcher, Middleton and possibly Rowley in it.

²The Folio of 1647 will be used as the source for quotations from *Wit at Several Weapons*. Since there is in the Folio no division by scenes, I shall, for added convenience, give that used in the Dyce edition. The texts used for all citations in this paper are those in the Henry E. Huntington Library. The paper itself was made possible by a grant-in-aid from the Trustees of that library.

³The fourth line of this quotation, "An Ear, to hang a Jewel too," is taken from the second folio, 1679. The reading of the folio of 1647 is "And dare to hang a Jewell too," obviously incorrect in the light of the line which follows.

⁴A similar reference to the cropping of ears occurs in John Day's *Ile of Guls* (*The Children of the Revels*, 1606), E2v.

⁵For further discussion of the New River, cf. pp. 44-46 following.

⁶In this statement Cibber is hardly just to Fletcher, and is certainly not honest about his own achievement. He uses the plot of *Wit at Several Weapons* almost without alteration, and he uses much of the original language. He does, however, clear up several of the things which I shall point out as discrepancies, and he omits many passages which refer to contemporary events.

⁷These are the plays on the list: "Witt at" (taken by E. K. Chambers, *RES*, I (1925), 482 to be *Wit at Several Weapons*), "the Bridegr," "An ould lawe," "Henrye the vna," "A ffaire Quarrell," "All's Lost by Lust," "the Cittye," "the House is Haunte," "Looke to the Ladye," "Titus, and Vespation," "A Turkes to good for hi," "the scilent Woman," "the Dutch Curtizan," "D'Ambois," "A Woeman's A wethercock." Of these, six can not be certainly identified; two, Middleton and Rowley's "A ffaire Quarrell" certainly, and Rowley's "All's Lost for Lust" probably, belonged to the Prince's Company about 1620. The remainder of those traceable were early in the century the property of either Paul's Boys or the Queen's Revels Company.

⁸The careless, unrhythmic verse of this passage is very much like that in the plays of William Rowley. If *Wit at Several Weapons* was, as is implied by its inclusion in the list reported by Marcham (cf. n. 7), proposed for performance at Court about 1620, and was the property of the Prince's Men, Rowley is the man one would expect to be the reviser.

⁹Norman Egbert McClure (ed.), *The Letters of John Chamberlain* (Philadelphia, 1939), I, 316.

¹⁰Public Record Office, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1611-1618*, p. 427.

¹¹*The History of Great Britain* (London, 1653), p. 61.

¹²McClure, II, 195.

¹³Wilson, p. 130.

¹⁴The three items just quoted are perhaps sufficient to establish the fact that *Wit at Several Weapons* was revised about 1620. It might be well, however, to point

out other evidences of such a reworking. Lady Gentry, in disguise as a young gallant, pretends to be robbed of a diamond, "the sparking witnessse of a Contract 'Twixt a great Lawyer's daughter and my selfe." This is probably a reference to the mass of controversy surrounding the marriage between John Villiers, Buckingham's brother, and the daughter of Sir Edward Coke. Another passage not easily explainable is that in which Cunningame says, speaking to the Neece, and about the Gardinesse, "Away fiftene, Here's fifty one exceeds thee." The year 1618 was the fifteenth year of James's reign in England, and the fifty-first of his reign in Scotland. Still another element of contemporary allusion has to do with "broad brim'd hats." They appeared first in England about 1619, and caused notable comment. I shall deal with them in another context.

¹⁵*The Court and Character of King James* (London, 1817), pp. 55, 56.

¹⁶Beaumont has a poem: "To Mr. B:J:" (Ben Jonson), in which he pokes fun at "white and Orrenge tawney." Arthur Wilson (pp. 92, 93), and Chamberlain (II, 13) comment satirically on Hay's finery. E. K. Chambers (*William Shakespeare*, II, 223) dates Beaumont's poem 1615 on the basis of these references. It is largely on the basis of this, and the passage relating to the New River, that the possibility of revision about 1615 arises.

¹⁷For an account of the New River, see George Thornbury, *Old and New London* (London, 1873-85), II, 266, 267.

¹⁸"The Entertainment at the Opening of the New River," *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, ed. A. H. Bullen (London, 1885), VII, 263-266.

¹⁹These definitions come from Nares *Glossary* and from *NED*. In fact, *NED* illustrates the meaning of stickleback by reference to this passage in *Wit at Several Weapons*.

²⁰M. Channing Linthicum, *Costume in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 219-222.

²¹McClure, II, 286, 287. The broad-brimmed hats are also attacked viciously by the writer of the anonymous *Hic Mulier: or the Man-Woman*, 1620.

²²McClure, p. 294.