

Drábek, Pavel

To the reader

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To the Reader

This book was completed in 2002, as my PhD thesis at Charles University, Prague, under the supervision of Martin Hilský. During the viva I received valuable comments from my supervisor as well as my second readers, Lois Potter and Zdeněk Stříbrný. At that moment I made a solemn vow that I would revise my thesis and publish it. Since then, however, personal and professional commitments have prevented me from doing it. In my other work, I continued research and further studies in what the thesis started. By the time the plan for a revision and a publication got a clearer shape, it came to little short of writing an entirely new book—one that would be, in fact, polemic with this one.

It is especially Chapters 1 to 3 that would need to be reworked radically. The envisioned new book would provide much more support in terms of argument and more recent research findings concerning theatre documents—it is especially Tiffany Stern's *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010), Andrew Gurr's *Shakespeare's Opposites: The Admiral's Company 1594-1625* (Cambridge, 2009) as well as the new editions of some of the Fletcherian plays in the Arden Early Modern Drama series, such as Suzanne Gossett's edition of *Philaster* (2009), Brean Hammond's edition of Lewis Theobald's *'pseudo-Cardenio' of 1727, Double Falsehood* (2010), and Clare McManus's forthcoming edition of *The Island Princess*. In the final chapters, the new book would include more historical material concerning the pre-Classical culture of *frivolité* and the nature of the early Baroque arts in England and on the Continent—to which John Fletcher and his most active collaborator Philip Massinger were very sensitive and to which their plays arguably belong as its key representatives. Revising the thesis would also mean exorcizing the inconsolable angry young man who wrote the thesis eight years ago. In proofs, I was trying to play down the uncompromising tone of my earlier self. The result, however, still bears many of the traces.

I would like to thank all my colleagues who have helped and supported me, my supervisor Martin Hilský, my two readers, Lois Potter and Zdeněk Stříbrný and Laurie Maguire, who supervised my work during my OSI/Chevening scholarship at Magdalen College, Oxford in 2000/2001. Thanks go to others who have been important in my career: John Russell Brown, Milada Franková, Petr Osolsobě, Martin Procházka, Eva Stehlíková and Jeff Vanderziel. I am also grateful to friends and colleagues who have encouraged me in resuscitating my thesis, persuading me that there were more than about twelve people in the world interested

in John Fletcher. Without trying to name all who have encouraged me, I would like to thank Pascale Aebischer, Christian Billing, David Drozd, Bridget Escolme, Joachim Frenk and Clare McManus. Special thanks go to my friend, director Ivan Rajmont, who invited me to give a talk on Fletcher during the rehearsals of the first Czech production of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (in Martin Hilský's translation) at the National Theatre in Prague in 2008. Ivan Rajmont and Martin Urban, the dramaturg of the production, made me write a long study of Fletcherian drama for the programme brochure of the production, and are indirectly responsible for my realization that my PhD thesis was not only a volume of old papers. Their interest in my study and in Fletcher as a dramatist rekindled and fuelled my old passion for the topic. I have also received great support from my students at Masaryk University and as a visiting lecturer at Charles University and DAMU (Academy of Performing Arts, Prague). Most importantly, without the support of my wife Hana, this book would never have come into existence—'I cannot heave | My heart into my mouth'.