'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE

Edited by Simon Barker

ROUTLEDGE

ROUTLEDGE ENGLISH TEXTS

ROUTLEDGE · ENGLISH · TEXTS
GENERAL EDITOR · JOHN DRAKAKIS

'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE

John Ford

ROUTLEDGE · ENGLISH · TEXTS

GENERAL EDITOR · JOHN DRAKAKIS

WILLIAM BLAKE: *Selected Poetry and Prose* ed. David Punter
EMILY BRONTË: *Wuthering Heights* ed. Heather Glen
ROBERT BROWNING: *Selected Poetry* ed. Aidan Day
GEOFFREY CHAUCER: *The Tales of the Clerk and the Wife of Bath* ed. Marion Wynne-Davies
JOHN CLARE: *Selected Poetry and Prose* ed. Merryn and Raymond Williams
JOSEPH CONRAD: *Selected Literary Criticism and the Shadow-Line* ed. Allan Ingram
CHARLES DICKENS: *Hard Times* ed. Terry Eagleton
JOHN DONNE: *Selected Poetry and Prose* ed. T. W. and R. J. Craik
GEORGE ELIOT: *The Mill on the Floss* ed. Sally Shuttleworth
HENRY FIELDING: *Joseph Andrews* ed. Stephen Copley
BEN JONSON: *The Alchemist* ed. Peter Bement
D. H. LAWRENCE: *Selected Poetry and Non-fictional Prose* ed. John Lucas
ANDREW MARVELL: *Selected Poetry and Prose* ed. Robert Wilcher
JOHN MILTON: *Selected Poetry and Prose* ed. Tony Davies
WILFRED OWEN: *Selected Poetry and Prose* ed. Jennifer Breen
ALEXANDER POPE: *Selected Poetry and Prose* ed. Robin Sowerby
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY: *Selected Poetry and Prose* ed. Alasdair D. F. Macrae
SPENCER: *Selected Writings* ed. Elizabeth Porges Watson
OSCAR WILDE: *The Importance of Being Earnest* ed. Joseph Bristow
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: *Selected Poetry* ed. Phillip Hobsbaum
BYRON: *Selected Poetry and Prose* ed. Donald A. Low
TENNYSON: *Selected Poetry* ed. Norman Page

'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE

John Ford

Edited by Simon Barker

LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1997
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2001.

© 1997 Simon Barker

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0–415–04947–4 (Print Edition)
ISBN 0-203-13494-X Master e-book ISBN
ISBN 0-203-17569-7 (Glassbook Format)

This edition of a play set in John Ford's imaginary Parma is dedicated to the many friends I have made during frequent visits to the university in the real Italian city of Parma.

Contents

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank the following people for their help with this edition. Lisa Bartlett checked the text of the play for consistency and suggested some of the footnotes. Louise Peck of the library at King Alfred's College dealt cheerfully and methodically with my many requests for inter-library loans. Talia Rodgers and her colleagues at Routledge were encouraging and patient. Most of all, I am grateful to John Drakakis for his support as editor of the series and for introducing me to John Ford's extraordinary dramatic writing.

Simon Barker
Cheltenham 1996

Introduction

THE AUTHOR

Little is known of the life of the author of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* beyond a few dates and some records of his education and career. He was the second son of Thomas Ford, a wealthy Devonshire landowner who had married the niece of the influential Sir John Popham, the Lord Chief Justice of England from 1592 until 1607. There is a record of John Ford's baptism at Ilsington in Devon on 17 April 1586 and of a John Ford, described as a gentleman from Devon, entering Exeter College, Oxford, in March 1601. Ford was admitted to the Middle Temple in November 1602 to continue his education and gain a legal training and although he was never called to the bar, it is generally assumed that he made a career in the law and remained in London until at least 1639, when his last play was published, possibly retiring to Devon just before the period of the Civil War. Evidence that he remained a resident of the Middle Temple whilst embarking upon a secondary career as a pamphleteer, poet and dramatist includes a note of his being reprimanded in 1617 for participating in a dispute with the Temple authorities over their strict dress code. As late as 1638 he is still described as 'Master John Ford of the Middle Temple' in the introductory material attached to his play *The Fancies Chaste and Noble*. An allusion to Ford by William Hemminge in his elegy *On Randolph's Finger* (*c.*1632) is often quoted as an isolated comment on his personality:

Deep In a dumpe Iacke forde alone was gott
With folded Armes and Melancholye hatt.

That we know so little about Ford may be to our advantage as twentieth-century readers since we are less likely to fall into idle biographical speculation, searching for an interpretation of his creative work in a catalogue of anecdote and authorial background. To provide a context for a study of his work it is more rewarding to examine the intellectual circle in which he moved (and with whose members he collaborated on a number of occasions), the theatre for which his dramatic writing was designed, and the general issues and debates which influenced his art. An obvious point, but one worth emphasizing, is that John Ford's life spanned a period dominated by the regimes of three monarchs under whom the London to which he had come to live in the closing years of Elizabeth's reign was the scene of almost unprecedented political turmoil and uncertainty which had a marked effect upon its theatres and upon the intellectual life of those who generated the plays performed in those theatres. Much of the critical writing described in the essay which concludes this volume comments on Ford's pessimism and the morally disturbing nature of his plays, none of which is surprising when the historical circumstances of their production is looked at in any detail. Jacobean and Caroline London was experiencing not only the political tension at Court and in Parliament which was to lead to war and revolution in the middle decades of the seventeenth century, but also an attendant re-examination of a range of social institutions and values to do with religion, sexuality and morality which can be seen as providing subject matter for the drama of the period.

A significant feature of the process by which the theatre of Ford's day was provided with a steady supply of dramatic writing was that most writers chose to collaborate with others at some stage in their careers. The attribution of lines or scenes to a particular hand in plays which were often a joint effort has been a particular preoccupation for some modern scholars, but one which reveals more of their own assumptions about cultural production than anything about the assumptions that governed dramatic writing in the late sixteenth and early

seventeeth centuries. In Ford's time, notions of authorship and individual creativity were rather different from those which came to prevail in subsequent periods. What may be judged by modern scholars as a deficiency in production, particularly in the case of Shakespeare, where the uneven quality of some plays is occasionally blamed on his working with lesser mortals, could well have been seen as a positive virtue at the time. Collaboration resulted in a sharing of interests and influences in a community of ideas, just as the business of enacting the final product was a responsibility shared between actors and, finally, with the plays' audiences.

Certainly the circle in which Ford moved seems to have been a close one, consisting mainly of similarly well-educated and classically minded individuals who had a clear sense of what had preceded them in terms of the dramatic writing of the Elizabethan era, as well as of the philosophical concerns of their own time. Ford was clearly acquainted with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), several scenes from which are echoed in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, but he was also up to date with contemporary works of philosophy and moral commentary, basing his *The Lover's Melancholy* on Robert Burton's extensive and demanding treatise *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) a work of early psychology which clearly excited members of the intellectual circle which he had joined.

Ford's writing career can be said to have had three phases. The first, roughly covering the first two decades of the seventeenth century, was dominated by poetry and prose with the occasional excursion into dramatic writing. In the 1620s, he worked with what have become some of the better-known dramatists of the day in a sequence of collaborations, some of which we know only the titles of, the texts themselves having been lost. A third phase began in the 1630s, when many of his former collaborators were dead; this was the period of his independent works, including *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Throughout his career, Ford was responsible for commendatory verses attached to the published works of such contemporaries as Brome, Massinger, Shirley and Webster. In 1638 he contributed to Ben Jonson's memorial, *Jonsonus Virbius*.

In 1606, Ford wrote *Fame's Memorial*, an elegy on the death of the

Earl of Devonshire, and *Honour Triumphant*, a pamphlet concerning the relationship between beauty and love. *The Golden Mean*, written in 1613, was a work of prose, dedicated to the Earl of Northumberland and intended to help bolster the Earl's spirits as he endured a prison sentence. In the same year came a long poem, *Christ's Bloody Sweat*, and a play, *An Ill Beginning Has a Good End* (1613) which was performed at the Cockpit theatre but was lost to recent generations by the actions of John Warburton's cook in the eighteenth century, who used this (and other invaluable volumes of literature) to keep his master's fire alight.

Another lost play, *Sir Thomas Overbury's Ghost* (1615), and the prose work *A Line of Life* (1620), came as Ford embarked upon the collaborative phase which saw him working with John Fletcher and Philip Massinger on *The Laws of Candy* (*c.*1619), with George Dekker and William Rowley on *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621), with Dekker on *The Sun's Darling* (1624), with Thomas Middleton and Rowley on *The Spanish Gipsy* (1623), with Dekker on *The Welsh Ambassador* (1623) and with Fletcher, Massinger and John Webster on *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (1626). In 1624 he worked with Dekker again on *The Bristol Merchant* and *The Fairy Knight* and with Dekker, Rowley and Webster on *The Late Murder of the Son upon the Mother* and *Keep the Widow Waking*. None of these 1624 collaborations survives.

Ford's period of independent writing produced the following extant plays: *The Lover's Melancholy* (1628); *Love's Sacrifice* (1633); *The Broken Heart* (1633); *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck* (1634); *The Fancies Chaste and Noble* (1638); *The Ladies Trial* (1638) and *The Queen* (published 1653). *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* was written at the height of this independent phase, probably between 1629 and 1633.

FORD'S THEATRE

Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy* had been produced at the Blackfriars Theatre, situated just across the Thames from the site of the Globe and the other public entertainments, the bearpits, brothels and pleasure gardens,

long associated with Bankside. Although much smaller, the private Blackfriars Theatre shared some of the characteristics of the large public theatres of Shakespeare's day, having been taken over in 1599 by Shakespeare's colleague James Burbage and significantly enlarged and modified at the turn of the century. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* was written for performance at a rather different kind of venue, the Phoenix Theatre in Drury Lane. Although both the Blackfriars and the Phoenix catered for a more privileged audience than the public theatres, charging higher admission prices and enjoying regular visits from members of the Court, the Phoenix was purpose-built in 1617 for the kind of play written by John Ford and his contemporaries. Whilst the public theatres enjoyed mixed fortunes during this period due to plague, Puritan opposition and financial insecurity, the private theatres flourished, and the company which performed *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* enjoyed the patronage of the wife of Charles I, Queen Henrietta Maria. Established in 1626, the company was second only to the King's Men in prestige and in the tally of performances it gave at the Court itself.

The intense speculation over the authenticity of the recently 'reconstructed' Globe in Southwark in terms of design and scale, shows how little is known of the public theatres of Shakespeare's day. By contrast, a clearer picture of the private theatres can be established by the drawings and plans which have survived, although many of these are tantalizingly vague as to the exact building they represent. The Phoenix was probably circular, some 15 metres in diameter and furnished with a stage which had doors at the rear, a balcony above and a curtained area, reproducing, on a much smaller scale, the principal features of the stages of the public theatres. The audience was much closer to the action than in the public theatres, and the use of lighting, and other technological effects heralded the more elaborate illusionary theatres of the Restoration period. It is difficult to overestimate the social and atmospheric contrast between the experience of viewing a play in the public theatre, open to the sky and the elements in the company of a wide cross-section of society, and the experience of play-going at an indoor and exclusive private playhouse.

If the public theatres owed something in terms of subject matter to

the morality plays and other religious drama of the late Middle Ages, and their design to the inns and booth theatres of earlier times, then the private theatres derived something of their character from the influence of Court drama. During the reigns of James I and Charles I the Court became preoccupied with the masque, a form of propaganda which reinforced royal prerogative through spectacular allegorical display. Masques often involved members of the nobility as performers and relied upon the elaborate Italianate set and costume designs orignated by Inigo Jones and the writing of eminent dramatists such as Ben Jonson. These Court productions may account for the particular quality of some of the entertainments included in plays such as *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, including Hippolita's lavish display in Act IV. Similarly, the striking uniformity of social background to be found in the cast of most Caroline plays, with the exception of the occasional servant, derives from and reflects the composition of audiences which felt at home in or on the margins of a Court circle. Court masques conjured a fantastic and mythologized 'history' for the monarch, the best example being Ben Jonson's *Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion* (1624) in which James I was characterized as Neptune and his son, Prince Charles, as Albion. This genre replaced the more historically specific form of propaganda which we associate with Shakespeare's histories, although Ford himself was responsible for a rare and rather dislocated late history play in 1634, *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck*. The Court was never far away from the theatre for which Ford wrote, in terms of patronage, style and interest. In reading a play like *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, with its own representation of a kind of Court, albeit set in an imagined Italy, this factor provides a powerful and revealing context.

SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

Specific sources for *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* remain a matter of scholarly speculation. It has been suggested that Ford knew the Sperone Speroni's *Canace e Macareo* (1546), a Spanish play which similarly foregrounds is-