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From source to play: Bonduca

In: Drábek, Pavel. *Fletcherian dramatic achievement : a study in the mature plays of John Fletcher (1579-1625)*. Vyd. 1. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2010, pp. 95-110

ISBN 9788021052819

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/105021>

Access Date: 29. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

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Chapter 5



From Source to Play: *Bonduca*

In reconstructing the hypothetical processes of composing *Bonduca*, I will use the hypothetically authentic compositional stage of Elizabethan play-writing, the Plat (see Chapter 3 'Plats and Plays'). The gradual stages cover generally different types of dramatic work. The composition of the Plat requires the ability to form the crucial dramatic situation that would best convey the import. Realizing the Plat in dialogues needs verbal dexterity in carrying out the potential of the play: creating character, thought, dramatic situation, and a feeling for detail. Although in reality it is doubtful if these stages are kept apart *physically*—or if the historical Fletcher really separated them—it is helpful to keep them apart for the sake of an intrinsic, analytical study of technique.¹

Although Clifford Leech (1962) claims that Fletcher was taking great liberty in dramatizing Briton history, the preceding chapter has shown that there is rather little material that could not be traced down to chronicles. Perhaps, what Leech refers to is Fletcher's characteristic 'onstage presence', a specific 'world' of a mostly ignoble and ludicrous character, petty conflicts against a background of sublime and honourable action. Fletcher does not present the play's protagonists, *Bonduca*, *Caratach* or *Junius*, as heroes. The exuberant *Bonduca* of the very start is slighted by the second speech of the play—*Caratach*'s disdainful retort. *Caratach* is presented in the play as a naive idealist, and *Junius* is a general laughing stock altogether. It may be said without much distortion that Fletcher gives no noble notion of history; his legends are unsettlingly physical, sensual and replete with foolish individuals. However, this ignoble and foolish world has its catastrophes, which are intentionally presented in a tension and in contrast to the stage treatment: the starving Roman soldiers are essentially clowns; *Penyus* commits suicide in a burlesque manner; and the clownish *Judas*, the hungry and bawdy knave, eventually kills the only fully sympathetic character of the play, the boy *Hengo*.

The following paragraphs trace a hypothetical process in which the history could have been turned into the play, proceeding from Story to Argument and Plat. As has been said, the aim is not to uncover the authentic process; similarly this approach omits the various—and I believe numerous—stages which the play

1 As my approach is intrinsic I will not be speculating about the authentic intentions that Fletcher had in writing the plays. I am reconstructing an ideal, hypothetical process in which history is transformed into a play.

went through while the balanced structure of the play was coming into existence. One such obvious instance could be the two parallel love-affairs of Junius and Petillius, both of which are to a certain extent derivable from the sources. Although there is some ground to believe that Fletcher introduced Petillius's love story *ex post* only as a foil to Junius, it may have been based on the chronicle event, the confrontation of Petillius Cerealis and the daughter of Boadicea—if actually Fletcher needed a source at all. Whatever the case was, in the process of reconstruction, these diachronic relations will be disregarded.

From Story to Argument

[*Governour.*] P'le be short with ye,
 For these long arguments I was never good at.
(*The Island Princess* 1.3.102–03)

An analysis of the play reveals six plots or traces of plots. The division is as follows:

The Argument

The Bonduca Line

Bonduca and Caratach defend Britain against Roman invaders. Previously, Bonduca was dishonoured and her daughters raped by the Romans; they want to take vengeance. The British army are victorious at first but are defeated in the end. Bonduca and her daughters take refuge in a fort, where, besieged by the Romans, they kill themselves in defiance.

The Caratach and Hengo Line

Caratach, renowned for his valour, leads the British army with Bonduca. After their defeat, for which Caratach blames Bonduca, he and his nephew Hengo take flight and are treacherously overcome by the Romans; Judas kills Hengo. Caratach surrenders and is sent to Rome to swear allegiance.

The Swetonius Line

Swetonius and his army were conquering the island of Mona when the British army defeated the Romans. Swetonius returns and conquers the Britons; all British leaders are killed except for Caratach, who surrenders.

The Penysus Line

Penysus, another Roman leader, disagrees with Swetonius, and refuses to join in the fight; his troops rebel but are suppressed. When the Romans win, he kills himself for the dishonour of having robbed his soldiers of the glory of victory. Petillius is sent by Swetonius to reconcile Penysus, but Petillius desires Penysus's office and urges him to death. In the end, he is cleared of guilt.

Junius's and Petillius's Love Stories

Junius falls in love with Bonduca's younger daughter; by a ruse he and his compan-

ions are drawn into a trap and taken. They are released by Caratach again. – Petillius falls in love with Bonduca's elder sister during her courageous suicide.

The Judas Line

Roman soldiers, Judas and his companions, foray into the enemy territory for food and are taken by Bonduca's daughters. Caratach releases them. Eventually Judas treacherously kills Hengo, and is killed by Caratach.

Sometimes the plotlines coalesce, as the Bonduca and the Caratach and Hengo lines in the first part of the play and in one part of the battle. At other times, they are explicitly parallel, balancing each other, as the Swetonius and the joint Bonduca and Caratach line in the battle. In this sense the Daughters' line could be separated to create a countepart to the Junius line; but as the Daughters' ruse is undertaken only as a reaction to Junius's love, it may be subsumed in one for brevity's sake.

The last two plotlines, Junius and Judas, are introduced alongside each other and the latter functions as a foil to the former.² Junius is dragged to the Britons by his passion (love ~ lust), and Judas with his companions by their hunger. This connection between erotic desire and hunger has been neglected not only in this play but also in most early modern drama. As M. B. Bryan (1974) has pointed out in the case of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, the traditional medieval, and biologically founded, connection between Gluttony and Lechery plays an important role in the play. This 'pair' reoccurs in early modern drama many times, and Fletcher uses it as an effective foil. There are strong grounds to suppose that—as G. M. Hopkins terms it—'Palate, the hutch of tasty lust' had a conscious connection to the sexual activity.³

In a sense, the lovers' subplot could also be Fletcher's foil to Caratach's infatuation with the Romans and their values. The play works with the half-erotic relation between Caratach and his enemies; the 'military code in *Bonduca* is fuelled through a rhetoric of sexual violence' (Calder 1996: 213). Caratach's exclamation, 'I love an enemy' (1.1.57) could have laid the foundation of the explicitly erotic relation of Junius and his enemy. This dramatic logic would be in keeping with the standard mature Fletcherian dramatic technique (see Chapter 6 on 'Fletcher's Dramatic Extremism').

2 Fletcher was careful in working out the relations between plotlines. See also Chapter 3, Section V, in which the extant Plat of Scene 5.1 is discussed; the observation is that what it presents are not the happenings of the plotline in question (Caratach and Hengo) but the relation to the Penysus plot.

3 See also Bynum 1987; I am grateful for this reference to Laurie Maguire.

From Story to Plat

[*Fernanda.*] ’Tis possible his plots can be discover’d
(*The Laws of Candy* 5.1.3)

[*Thomas.*] come discover,
 Open the scene, and let the work appeare
(*Monsieur Thomas* 3.1.229–30)

Fletcher’s talent in combining plotlines and in presenting them in the exposition has been acknowledged; McLuskie (1981) commends his mastery in *The Chances*, in which each of the first five scenes of the play introduces a separate plotline. In *Bonduca* all six lines of action are launched within the first two scenes:

Scene 1.1 (unit A) establishes the Bonduca line and part of the Caratach and Hengo line, and anticipates the connection to the Roman plotlines. Part B completes the exposition of the Caratach and Hengo line. (Scenes are divided into units thematically. The division is loose and represents individual long sequences of action divided by major entries and/or exits; see table below.)

Scene 1.2 (unit A) starts off with the romantic Junius plot—which may come as surprising in the light of the war and its outcomes. What it shows of the Roman camp subverts any preconceptions of ‘honourable action’. This attitude is upheld by unit B, the introduction of the hungry Judas line. Unit C brings onstage the Roman general Swetonius and other commanders, who finally establish the anticipated connection between them and the Britons. The Penyus line—Penyus’s unwillingness to join in the Roman campaign—is announced and thus brought into contextual connection.

It is of some interest that Scene 1.2 devotes very little space to the Roman-Briton warfare. The comic units A and B of the scene (Junius, Petillius, and Judas *et al.*) stretch over 156 lines, while the serious affairs are worked out on 126 lines; and even these are subverted by Petillius, who mentions Junius, ‘most lamentably loving, | To the tune of Queen *Dido*’ (1.2.166–67). Although I do not wish to push this formal observation too far, it captures the gist of the initial atmosphere of the play.

The division of all six plotlines in individual units of the scenes in the play is shown in Table 1 below. Plotlines that are directly present in the unit are marked in black; those mentioned or referred to only, that is, the indirect treatments, are in grey:

Table 1

Scene Unit No. of Lines	1.1		1.2			2.1			2.2		2.3			2.4		3.1	3.2	
	A	B	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	A	B	C	A	B		A	B
	174	12	71	85	126	68	33	28	72	38	33	58	48	41	53	86	48	42
Bonduca																		
Caratach + H																		
Swetonius																		
Penyus																		
Judas																		
Junius + Petil																		

	3.3	3.4	3.5											4.1		4.2		
	27	14	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	A	B	A	B	C
	27	14	27	62	18	8	10	13	3	5	8	18	10	50	21	30	18	41
Bonduca																		
Caratach + H																		
Swetonius																		
Penyus																		
Judas																		
Junius + Petil																		

	4.3			4.4				5.1	5.2				5.3					
	A	B	C	A	B	C	D		A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	E	F
	35	143	37	47	37	69	6	97	97	38	8	18	18	9	71	69	23	13
Bonduca																		
Caratach + H																		
Swetonius																		
Penyus																		
Judas																		
Junius + Petil																		

As has been observed, Scene 1.1 introduces the Briton plotlines and sets them in the context of the Roman war. Scene 1.2 sets off with the romantic-comical line of Junius and Petillius and then the Judas line, which brings in some of the *décor* of the play, the historical famine in Roman troops and Fletcher's invented ignobility of Roman soldiership. It is only in the last unit of the second scene that all the 'noble' actions of the play are brought together; Swetonius completes the play's exposition in encompassing relations to all the plotlines. Once the exposition is done, the following scenes may treat individual plots more or less alternately.

However, the division of individual plotlines is rather uneven. The eponymous *Bonduca* has received comparatively little dramatic attention in the play; this may have been caused by the fact that *Bonduca* and her Daughters were played by boys, which entailed certain limitations as to role sizes. In terms of the *ad hoc* division into units, the *Bonduca* line gets 8 direct and 16 indirect units in the play, which is little in comparison with *Caratach* and *Hengo*'s 18 direct and 6 indirect. *Swetonius* with his Roman cause functions, in a way, as a pivot of the action in that he has a direct relation to all other plotlines. Thus the *Swetonius* line receives 17 direct and 12 indirect units. *Penyus* has 10 direct and 9 indirect ones; *Judas* 10 direct and 1 indirect unit. As far as dramatic focus goes, alongside *Caratach* and *Hengo*, *Junius* and *Petillius* constitute the dominant plot. They cover 18 direct and 6 indirect units. However, the number of entries does not give the proportion of the plotline's presence in the play.

The following table shows the division of the play's focus according to the number of lines each of the plotlines receives (the total of lines in *Bonduca* is 2334):

Table 2

Plotline	Total of lines
Caratach + Hengo Plot	829
Penyus Plot	804
Junius + Petillius + Daughters Plot	798
Swetonius Plot	502
Bonduca Plot	459
Judas Plot	401

This statistical analysis may help the understanding of the play's nature. However, the formation of a play is conditioned by other factors too, mainly the 'dramatizability' of an event or action. The next section suggests some of the factors.

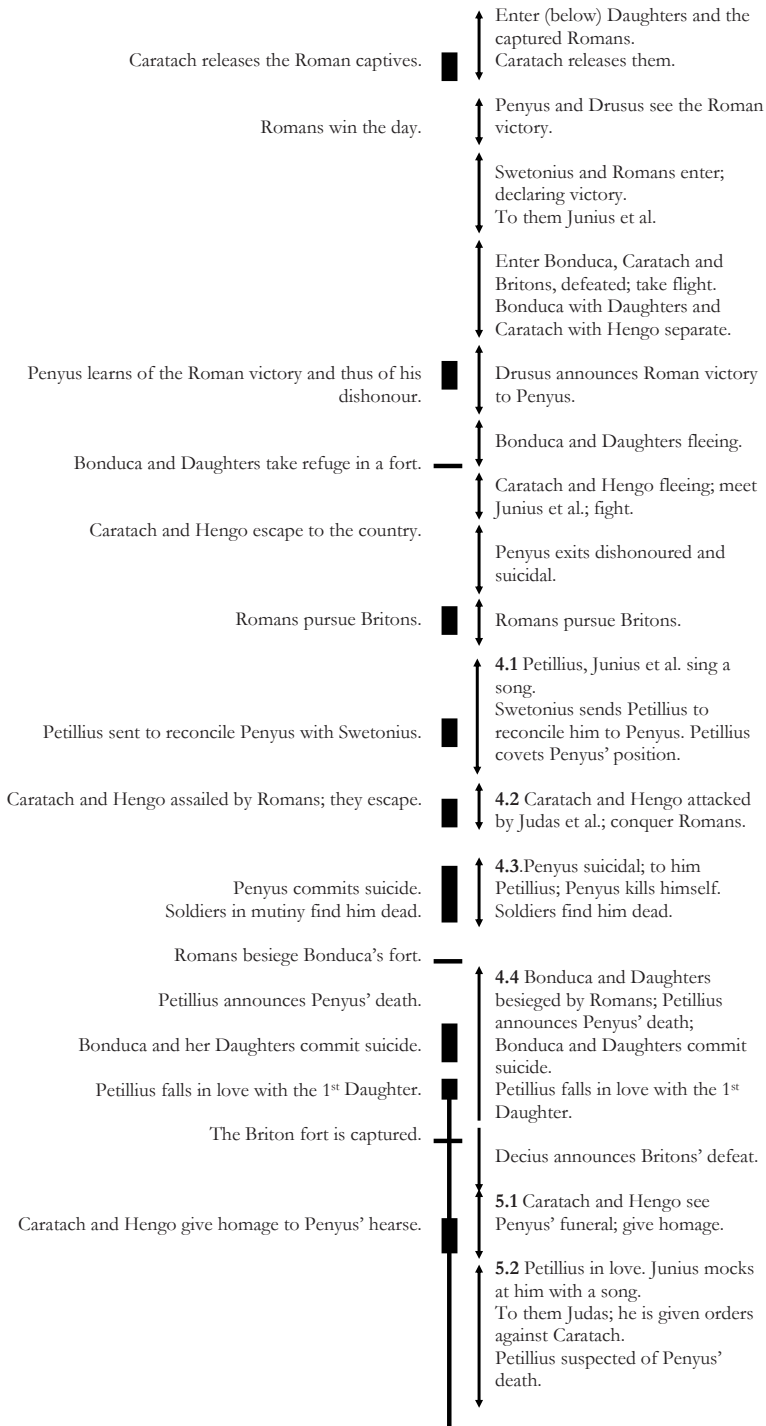
The Plat

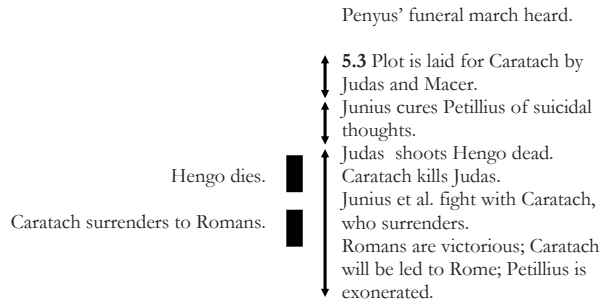
The Plotter's most important work is the decision at which points of the story a scene should start and which parts of the story are to be shown, or can be shown.⁴ (For a graphic correlation of fictional events and the plot see Table 3.) Fletcher obviously avoids presenting the initial defeat of the Romans as well as other preliminary events, such as the invasion of Britain by Romans, the defeat of Britons, the rape and disgrace of *Bonduca* and her Daughters, or *Junius* falling in love with the Second Daughter. As for the first omission, the defeat of the Roman army, it may come as rather striking. To start the play with a battle could have a powerful effect, though perhaps old-fashioned by 1612/13. In several other Fletcherian plays—mostly tragicomedies though—the scene also starts after a battle or martial action (*The Bloody Brother*, *The False One*, *The Island Princess*, *The Knight of Malta*, *The Loyal Subject*, *The Mad Lover*, *The Queen of Corinth*), or a major event (*The Honest Man's Fortune*, *The Beggars Bush*, *The Spanish Curate*, *The Womans Prize*).

4 For a different approach to theme and structure of *Bonduca* see Green 1982.

Table 3

Fictional Events	<i>Play Events (Plat)</i>
Invasion of Britain by Romans; Britons defeated and fled; Caratach saves Hengo; Rape and disgrace of Bonduca and her Daughters; Caratach wins his renown with the Romans; Junius falls in love with 2 nd Daughter. Britons defeat Romans (Subsequent arrival of Suetonius from Mona).	1.1 Bonduca victorious. Caratach rebukes her.
Shortage of food in the Roman camp.	1.2 Junius is in love; Petillius fails at 'curing' his love. Judas & co. hungry, rebuked by Petillius.
Penyus refuses to join in with his regiment.	The Roman commanders plan another battle; attempts to master Penyus.
Penyus' soldiers mildly rebellious against him; Penyus suppresses disobedience.	2.1 Penyus repeats his refusal to join the Romans. Penyus suppresses soldiers' disobedience.
Roman soldiers foraging for food; Roman army getting ready for battle.	2.2 Junius mocked by Petillius Announcement of foraging and preparations for battle. Petillius and Demetrius lay bets on Penyus.
Judas & co. captured by Britons.	2.3 Judas & co. in British captivity. Caratach feeds and releases them. Judas tells about Junius' love and Daughters send letter to him
Caratach feeds and releases Judas & co. Daughters learn about Junius' love and send letter.	2.4 Roman commanders before battle; Penyus refused to join Judas & co. return to Roman camp.
Judas & co. return to Roman troops. Judas has delivered letter to Junius.	3.1 Britons offer sacrifice.
Britons offer sacrifice to Gods.	3.2 Junius reads letter, asks others to join him in the venture. Roman commanders march for battle.
Curius and Decius join Junius in venture of offered kidnapping of 2 nd Daughter.	3.3 Caratach and Nennius observe Roman army within.
[Roman army marching within.]	3.4 Junius et al. approach denoted place.
Battle starts. Junius et al. captured by the Daughters.	3.5 Penyus and Drusus (above) observe battle within.





The first onstage action, that is the direct, unmediated dramatization of an event—a kind of ‘stage performative’, to borrow the term from speech act theory (Austin 1975)—occurs in 2.1 when Penyus suppresses his soldiers’ rebellion after he refused to join in with Swetonius. All the preceding onstage happenings of Act 1 realize the exposition and dramatize the setting, the ‘goings-on’ such as Junius’ love or famine. As for the other direct onstage actions, there is Caratach’s liberation of the foraging Judas and company (2.3); in the same scene, the Younger Daughter invents and launches her plan to capture Junius. In the following scene (2.4), the hungry knaves rejoin the Romans. Interestingly, Fletcher has decided to suppress the continuation of the romantic line; by the time Judas enters he has already delivered the letter to Junius, as we learn from his clownish digression triggered by the bawdy punning on ‘country’:

<i>Decius.</i>	Come Fool,	
	Have ye done your Country service?	
<i>Judas.</i>	I have brought that	75
	To Captain <i>Junius</i> .	
<i>Decius.</i>	How?	
<i>Judas.</i>	I think will doe all:	
	I cannot tell, I think so.	
<i>Decius.</i>	How? to <i>Junius</i> ?	

(*Bonduca* 2.4.74–77)

In Scene 3.1 the spectacular sacrifice to the Britons’ gods takes place, a theatrical feat comparable to the sacrifice in Act 5 of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and in the climax of *The Pilgrim* (see Chapter 7 ‘Subjective Journeys’ for its symbolic reading).⁵

Scene 3.2, in which Junius rereads the Daughter’s letter and persuades his mates to join him in the venture, has an important expositional function in that it projects the further development. In their next scene (3.4), they are already approaching the denoted place. Meanwhile the battle has started, as we have learned from the chorus-type scene of Caratach and Nennius (3.3), in which they observe the preparations and evaluate the enemy. At the beginning of 3.5, the function of the chorus is taken over by Penyus and his companion Drusus. This elaborate

5 The climax of *The Knight of Malta* takes place at an altar too.

scene, divided into ten separate mini-scenes, uses the ‘magnificent possibilities [of the Elizabethan stage] to the full’—as Ellis-Fermor has commented appraisingly (Ellis-Fermor 1958: 214). In terms of ‘stage performatives’, there is actually only one such major event: Caratach scolding the Daughters and releasing Junius *et al* (which mirrors the release of Judas and company in 2.3). There are two minor ones: Penyus learns of the Romans’ victory, which starts his tragic, self-inflicted disgrace, resulting in his suicide, and Romans pursuing the fleeing Britons.

In Scene 4.1 Petillius is sent to reconcile Penyus to Swetonius. After a brief scene, in which Caratach and Hengo are attacked by Judas and Hengo proves his precocious valour (4.2), another popular theatergram takes place: the anticlimactic suicide of Penyus and the subsequent ironic arrival of his indignant soldiers. Penyus’ suicide is paralleled by another magnificent scene (4.4), the death-scene of Bonduca and her Daughters.

In 5.1 Caratach and Hengo give homage to Penyus’ funeral. The remaining stage performatives are Hengo’s and Judas’ deaths and the surrender of Caratach. In all, the play does not show all possible (presentable) onstage actions; Fletcher decides to retell some events through an intermediary. What is of supreme interest as far as focalization of the Plat is concerned, is the absence of Bonduca’s funeral as well as any mention of it in the last act. It is rather striking that Act 5 focuses purely on Roman affairs, starting with the confrontation of Caratach, Hengo, and the dead Penyus, followed by the paltry action of Junius and Petillius, and ending with Caratach’s submission to the Roman power. Moreover, in 5.1 the juxtaposition of Caratach’s curses on behalf of Bonduca (or women in general) and the procession with Penyus’ body and the honour done to him, is far too prominent to be coincidental. This supports Paul D. Green’s reading of Caratach as ‘one of the staunchest advocates of Roman values’ in the play (Green 1982: 308).

By its structure and choices, the Plat sets the dominant attitude towards the play’s characters and anticipates interpretations of the story. In general the tone is one of disparagement of all things noble and heroic. Bonduca’s proud and fierce heroism is constantly subverted not only by the bullying Caratach but also by the dramatic structure; Petillius’ semi-necrophiliac passion for the First Daughter, provoked by her courageous suicide, belittles the effect of Bonduca’s tragedy. Apart from the fact that Bonduca’s funeral is omitted in the play, it is important that she is remembered only by Caratach, who is rather critical, and that only in the context of Petillius’ mock-love. This type of dramatic cynicism has occurred earlier too, namely in 2.2 with Petillius’ mockery of Junius on the background of the preparations for battle, and with the bet that Petillius and Demetrius lay as to whether Penyus will join the battle or not. The dramatic structure is then further upheld by verbal devices.

From Plat to Play

[*Armusia*.] What do you infer by this faire argument Lady?
 (*The Island Princess* 5.2.117)

Fletcher conveys through play on a series of local conflicts and subsidiary antagonisms within individual scenes. Thus the tensions between two characters, or a character and an absent rival, are established; some of these tensions have local significance only while others are identical with the conflicts of the entire play. The play starts with *Bonduca*'s boisterous, triumphant railing at the (absent) conquered Romans:

Enter Bonduca, Daughters, Hengo, Nennius, Soldiers.
Bonduca. The hardy *Romans*? O ye gods of *Britain*,
 The rust of Arms, the blushing shame of soldiers;
 Are these the men that conquer by inheritance?
 The Fortune-makers? [...]

Enter Caratach.
 [...] Dare they send these to seek us, 10
 These *Roman* Girls? Is *Britain* grown so wanton?
 Twice we have beat 'em, *Nennius*, scatter'd 'em,
 And through their big-bon'd *Germans*, on whose Pikes
 The honour of their actions sit in triumph,
 Made Themes for songs to shame 'em, and a woman, 15
 A woman beat 'em, *Nennius*; a weak woman,
 A woman beat these *Romanes*.

(*Bonduca* 1.1.1–17)

The antagonism *Bonduca* engages in coincides with the central conflict of the play. At the same time her jubilation serves to motivate this sequence of the scene, and gives an incentive to *Caratach*, who intervenes with another dramatic tension:

Caratach. So it seems.
 A man would shame to talk so.

(*Bonduca* 1.1.17–18)

Caratach establishes the 'inner' conflict of the Britons, between the admiration for Roman civilization, represented by him, and *Bonduca*'s ardent patriotism, which is consummated in *Bonduca*'s death scene:

Bonduca. If *Rome* be earthly, why should any knee 15
 With bending adoration worship her?
 She's vitious; and your [*Romans*'] partiall selves confesse,
 Aspires the height of all impietie:
 Therefore 'tis fitter I should reverence
 The thatched houses where the Britains dwell 20
 [...] 'Tis not high power that makes a place divine,
 Not that the men from gods derive their line.
 But sacred thoughts in holy bosoms stor'd, 25

Make people noble, and the place ador'd.

(*Bonduca* 4.4.15–26)

It is only later that the conflict between Caratach and Bonduca acquires this clear-cut dimension; in the first scene, the local tension is between the boisterous and down-to-earth Bonduca and the modest and idealistic Caratach. At the same time, the shift from spontaneous joy to disillusionment sets out the recurrent pattern of the play; this situation is the unifying element of the play. Within some 20 lines, Fletcher emblematically establishes the central conflicts and patterns which form the axis of the play; it is rather important that he has done so by purely dramatic—that is, non-narrative—means.

The scene likewise skilfully highlights Caratach. He enters a little later, receiving thus a visually underlined position; standing aside from the main group on the stage, he creates a graphic opposition to Bonduca's exuberant speech. When he speaks, Bonduca is surprised, not expecting contradiction: 'Who's that?' (1.1.18). In doing so, Fletcher is being sensitive to the scenic form and to how the *mise-en-scène* works.

Building the Story

A story is kept together by a series of expositions, summaries and projections—that is, announcements of what would follow. Generally, there are three broad categories of exposition.

(1) The narrative, or choric exposition provided by a special chorus figure, such as the 'Poet with a garland' or 'Poet Prologue' in *Four Plays in One*, or by a character of the play who switches into the epic mode; such is the case of Mountferrat's initial speech in *The Knight of Malta*, or even more that of Richard of Gloucester in *Richard III*.

(2) The second type is situational exposition delivered by auxiliary figures, the 'Enter two or three Gentlemen' type, as in Don Frigozo and Rinaldo's exchange at the beginning of *Four Plays*, or the two Gentlemen in 2.1 and 4.1 of *King Henry VIII*. In *Bonduca*, Fletcher applies this type in Scene 3.3, in which Caratach and Nennius comment on, and describe, the preparations for battle, and in Scene 3.5, which is held together by the choric commentaries of Penyus and Drusus stationed above. This expositional technique is very productive as it may easily coalesce with a 'realistic' discussion of the events.

(3) The third broad category may be called the 'realistic' exposition, in which the expositional information is incorporated into a dramatic situation. Such is Bonduca's initial speech and Caratach's subsequent check. Fletcher uses this type of exposition most, particularly in *Bonduca*. Formally this helps to support the notion of the Briton-Roman wartime as a self-contained world. It avoids a critical, reserved detachment from affairs, and the response to this is, of course, double-edged; while enhancing the specificity of the situation it makes the spectator rather wary of identification.

Summary and projection are the other two techniques of presenting a story; these are related to the exposition and often cannot be clearly distinguished. Ge-

nerically, exposition provides unknown background information, very often that concerning past events; summary reiterates what is known, and projection announces the finality of the characters' future action. In practice, the last two—and very often all three—go hand in hand. A case in point is the following sequence from Scene 3.5 of *Bonduca*, in which the Romans have conquered the Britons:

Enter Swetonius, Demetrius, Souldiers, Drum and Colours.

Swetonius. Draw in, draw in: wel have ye fought, and worthie
 Romes noble recompence; look to your wounds,
 The ground is cold and hurtfull: the proud Queen 175
 Has got a Fort, and there she and her Daughters
 Defie us once again. To morrow morning
 Wee'll seek her out, and make her know, our Fortunes
 Stop at no stubborn walls: Come, sons of honour,
 True vertues heirs; thus hatch'd with Britain blood, 180
 Let's us march to rest, and set in gules like Suns.
 Beat a soft march, and each one ease his neighbours. *Exeunt.*

(*Bonduca* 3.5.173–82)

Swetonius summarizes the outcome of the battle (173–75), gives expositional information about *Bonduca* and her Daughters (175–77), and projects future action (177–82). The coherence of the story is secured once the exposition to the next scene of the relevant plotlines reiterates the information of the projection; in case it is not mentioned, the spectator assumes that all Swetonius projected has really occurred.

Constructing the Scene

As far as scene construction is concerned, Fletcher develops a rather distinctive dramatic style. Although his scenic conflicts (conflicts which carry individual scenes) coalesce thematically with those of the entire play, his scenes are, to a great extent, autonomous units, or, as Richard Brome says in his commendatory verses to the 1647 Folio, Fletcher's 'Scenes were Acts, and every Act a Play.' The stage action within a scene is self-inclusive and often violates the unity of the entire play; the coherence is secured only by the broader reference, that is, by the fiction, not by the stage action. In other words, Fletcher does not represent the fictional events literally on the stage; the relation between the stage and the fiction is consciously and intentionally twisted; there is a tension between the scenic code and the fictional reference.⁶ Fictional figures are 'translated' into the language of the stage as stock characters: the onstage *Bonduca* is a virago and has something of the braggart soldier; *Penyus* is a braggart too; both *Junius* and *Judas* may be approached as certain character stereotypes. Naturally, stock characters offer an attractive and sufficiently rich set of dramatic potential.

In terms of Fletcherian dramatic situations, the relation between the stage and the fiction is often one of exaggeration, as in the scene of *Penyus*' suicide

6 In the following chapter (on 'Fletcher's Dramatic Extremism'), I am using Otakar Zich's and Ivo Osolobě's terminology in dealing with a related issue.

(4.3). The reference is clearly a serious and solemn one; at the same time, the on-stage action plays with the pathos of the situation and stations it on the edge of a burlesque. Petillius comes to reconcile the suicidal Penyus to Swetonius. In doing so, however, he hopes to receive Penyus' position when he is dead, so fuels his despair in order to drive him to commit suicide. The burlesque arises by Petillius overacting his servile willingness to do anything to make Penyus proceed, even humour his overt conceitedness:

[Penyus.] my good *Petillius*,
Tell me no more I may live.

Petillius. 'Twas my Commission;
But now I see ye in a nobler way, 150
A way to make all even.

Penyus. Fare-well, Captain:
Be a good man, and fight well: be obedient:
Command thy self, and then thy men. Why shakest thou?

Petillius. I do not, Sir.

Penyus. I would thou hadst, *Petillius*:
I would finde something to forsake the world with 155
Worthy the man that dies: a kinde of earth-quake
Thorow all stern valours but mine own.

Petillius. I feel now
A kinde of trembling in me.

Penyus. Keep it still,
As thou lov'st vertue, keep it.

Petillius. And brave Captain,
The great and honoured *Penyus*.

Penyus. That again: 160
O how it heightens me! again, *Petillius*.

Petillius. Most excellent Commander.

Penyus. Those were mine,
Mine, onely mine.

Petillius. They are still.

Penyus. Then to keep 'em
For ever falling more, have at ye, heavens, [*Stabs himself.*]
Ye everlasting powers, I am yours: The work's done, 165
That neither fire, nor age, nor melting envie
Shall ever conquer. Carry my last words
To the great General: kisse his hands, and say,
My soul I give to heaven, my fault to justice
Which I have done upon my self: my vertue, 170
If ever there was any in poor *Penyus*,
Made more, and happier, light on him. I faint.
And where there is a foe, I wish him fortune.
I die: lie lightly on my ashes, gentle earth. [*Dies.*]

(*Bonduca* 4.3.148–74)

Two lines later Penyus' indignant soldiers enter, wanting to avenge the fact that they were robbed by Penyus of glory. The entire scene is constructed anticlimactically; Penyus' sudden stabbing in the midst of the burlesque comes as a shock,

adding up to the sarcastic and cynical mood of the play. Similarly, the soldiers' initiative ends up in an anticlimax too.

The onstage farce—Penyus' ignoble death (cf. Antony's inept suicide)—is in harsh and unsettling contrast to the pathos and solemnity of the story. The irony is upheld even further by the fact that it is Penyus' funeral, not Bonduca's, that is presented; Caratach creates a mythic aura around Penyus, praising him to Hengo as an example of a paramount soldier, 'the noblest of all Romanes' (5.1.45).

The scene that immediately follows and mirrors Penyus' death scene is the siege of Bonduca's fortress, and the suicides of Bonduca and her daughters. In this case it is the Second Daughter (Young Bonvica) who secures the anticlimax; at the same time, her temporary refusal to obey her mother serves as a local dramatic conflict that not only carries the scene but also measures the seriousness of the act:

Enter one with swords, and a great cup.

2 *Daughter.* O my fortune! 85

Bonduca. How, how, ye whore?

2 *Daughter.* Good mother, nothing to offend ye.

Bonduca. Here, wench: [*Handing her a sword*]

Behold us, Romanes.

Swetonius. Mercy yet.

Bonduca. No talking:

Puff; there goes all your pitie. Come, short prayers,
And let's dispatch the businesse: you begin, 90
Shrink not; I'll see ye do't.

2 *Daughter.* O gentle mother,
O Romanes, O my heart; I dare not.

Swetonius. Woman, woman,
Unnatural woman.

2 *Daughter.* O perswade her, Romanes:
Alas, I am young, and would live. Noble mother,
Can ye kill that ye gave life? are my years 95
Fit for destruction?

Swetonius. Yeeld, and be a Queen still,
A mother, and a friend.

Bonduca. Ye talk: come, hold it,
And put it home.

1 *Daughter.* Fie, sister, fie,
What would you live to be?

Bonduca. A whore still.

2 *Daughter.* Mercie.

Swetonius. Hear her, thou wretched woman.

2 *Daughter.* Mercie, mother: 100
O whither will you send me? I was once
Your darling, your delight.

Bonduca. O gods,
Fear in my family? do it, and nobly.

2 *Daughter.* O do not frown then.

1 *Daughter.* Do it, worthy sister:
'T is nothing, 't is a pleasure; we'll go with ye. 105

2 *Daughter*. O if I knew but whither.
 1 *Daughter*. To the blessed,
 Where we shall meet our father.
Swetonius. Woman.
Bonduca. Talk not.
 1 *Daughter*. Where nothing but true joy is.
Bonduca. That's a good wench,
 Mine own sweet girl; put it close to thee.
 2 *Daughter*. O comfort me still, for heavens sake.
 1 *Daughter*. Where eternal 110
 Our youths are, and our beauties; where no Wars come,
 Nor lustful slaves to ravish us.
 2 *Daughter*. That steels me:
 A long farewell to this world. [*Stabs herself and dies.*]
(*Bonduca* 4.4.85–113)

Her suicide is as abrupt as that of Penysus. The subsequent determined suicides of the First Daughter and Bonduca are burlesqued by the First Daughter, who subverts Roman myths, by Petillius, who has fallen in love with her vigour, and even by Bonduca, who hurries her Second Daughter into killing herself instead of talking.

The ending itself is anticlimactic, too, in Caratach's surrender. The structure of the play may seem to be preparing for a real, climactic and cathartic *dénouement* in Caratach's noble death. That would have made up for the ignoble murder of Hengo by Judas. However, the leading principle in the play, anticlimax and disillusion, wins, harbouring Caratach in Roman captivity.

Dramatic structure is Fletcher's strong part. As has been shown, the structure itself conveys sufficient potential for the characteristic mood of the play, and—it may be said—the characters need do relatively little to sustain it.

Once the firm 'skeleton' of the Plat has been constructed, securing with sufficient certainty that the play will hold together, free play may be given to acting and clownery. The individual actors (or roles) play not only their part but also self-reflectively play with what they impersonate. As in the case of Penysus' suicide, the actor, with his necessarily limited possibilities of impersonating the myth or archetype of the noble Roman suicide, presents it with a figurative licence; the actor is in a relation of understatement to his theme, while at the same time he exaggerates (hyperbolizes) the pathos of the situation. Fletcher refines this technique in his later plays, as the following chapter analyzes.