

Drábek, Pavel

Plats and plays

In: Drábek, Pavel. *Fletcherian dramatic achievement : a study in the mature plays of John Fletcher (1579-1625)*. Vyd. 1. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2010, pp. 61-80

ISBN 9788021052819

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/105018>

Access Date: 29. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

Chapter 3



Plats and Plays

[S]ince nothing is known of the process by which a scenario was turned into a play there is not sufficient evidence to develop this idea.

(G. K. Hunter 1959: xiv)

[T]here are strong grounds for believing that any production of an Elizabethan play initially involved the making out of a Plot.

(David Bradley 1992: 2)

Insufficient attention has been paid so far to the author-plot (or scenario) in respect of the achievement of Jacobean dramatists. Its role in the process of composition is unappreciated and vastly underrated. Classical and classicist theories suggest that the ‘stories, whether they are traditional or whether you make them up yourself, should be sketched in outline and then expanded by putting in episodes’ (Aristotle, *Poetics*, xvii.5), or that ‘our maker or Poet is [...] first to devise his plat or subject, then to fashion his poeme, thirdly to vse his metricall proportions, and last of all to vtter with pleasure and delight, which restes in his maner of language and stile’ (Puttenham III.xxv, p. 312). However, there is something in the modern, post-Romantic tradition of the divinely inspired literary creation that opposes the notion of a systematic and technical approach to writing.

The writing of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama did not rest on our modern conceptions; the approach to plays was—to the post-Romantic sense almost sacrilegiously—mercantile, like the film script turnout in the 1930s-to-1950s Hollywood film studios.¹ In such business conditions there is rarely any interest for divine inspiration and much more credit is given to *techne*, to the mechanical and structured process of composition. Just like film up till today uses the *treatment* as the fundamental starting point of a script, so arguably did early modern theatre use the *plot*—or Plat, to stick to the early modern usage: in other words, a document, proceeding scene by scene, and giving a brief of what happens in individual entries.

1 So Kathleen McLuskie: ‘Jacobean dramatists collaborated for the same reason as Hollywood scriptwriters: they were the employees of a booming entertainment industry which demanded a steady output of actable material from which a repertory could be built’ (McLuskie 1981: 169). See also my Introduction.

A well-known piece of evidence for the actual existence of the Plat as a written document is the following entry in Henslowe's memoranda book. Ben Jonson was given a payment of 20s for his 'plotte', which was later realized by George Chapman, who was given £3 'on his play book & 2 acts of a tragedy of Benjamin's [Jonson's] plotte'.²

Henslowe's Diary (1961: 73, 85, 100)

It is doubtful if this single explicit occurrence in Henslowe indicates a standard process of composition. Both Jonson and Chapman were classically educated writers and it would be erroneous to assume that their consecutive collaboration on the basis of the Plat should necessarily be a common event. However, I would like to resume W. W. Greg's commentary on the Elizabethan author-plot (in his often-criticized *The First Shakespeare Folio*, 1955) and offer a new perspective of the Plat and its role, and provide possible vestiges of the Plat in plays and manuscripts.³

I quote Greg's note on Plats in full:

We hear of Jonson submitting a 'plotte' for the approval of the Admiral's company and Chapman writing a tragedy on it, and 'The Plott of a scene of mirth to conclude this fourth Acte' survives with the text of the scene in question in *The Faithful Friends*. Drawing up the plot of a play was a serious matter. John Day writes to Henslowe, 'I have occasion to be absent about the plott of the Indyes therfore pray delyver to will haulton sadler'; and Nathan Field, 'Mr. Daborne and I, have spent a great deale of time in conference about this plott, which will make as beneficial a play as hath Come these seauen yeares'. (See Henslowe's Diary, fol. 43b, 3 Dec. 1597, and fol. 51b, 23 Oct. 1598; Henslowe Papers, p. 57, 4 June 1601 (?), and p. 84, June 1613; Greg, *Dram. Docs.*, pp. 12, 21, 326, and *Editorial Problem*, p. 26.) An unfinished plot of the second quarter of the seventeenth century is in the Folger Library and was printed by J. Q. Adams (*The Library*, June 1945, xxvi. 17–27). The fact that the scenes are divided on the neo-classical model suggests that it may have been a closet drama that was in contemplation rather than one for the popular stage.

-
- 2 I have discussed this issue with Professor R. A. Foakes; it is a single explicit occurrence in Henslowe's papers. I speculated on the nature of the standard preliminary payment of 20s, the regular instalment made by Henslowe to playwrights 'in earnest' of a play; my suggestion was that this instalment might have been—in reality—not an advance, but a payment upon the presentation of the 'plotte'. The case of the consecutive Jonson–Chapman collaboration is a single instance. Professor Foakes thought the instalment was made as an advance to the dramatist, perhaps a help in financial need. His response to my speculation was inconclusive as there is no other occurrence such evidence in Henslowe's papers. He remarked that writing practice could have changed over a period of time. He admitted, though, that this interpretation of the instalment could have been the case. Cf. J. Q. Adams' argument discussed below (Adams 1946: 17–27). Jonson, moreover, cannot perhaps be counted for a 'standard' playwright.
- 3 I will use the form Plat to distinguish it from the Plot, that is, from the backstage document that David Bradley writes about (Bradley 1992). The form 'plotte' appears in the quotations from Henslowe's book, in one of the few obvious records of the document. The variant 'Plott' is used, among others, in one of the prime source of this study, the Beaumont and Fletcher apocryphal *The Faithful Friends*. Cf. OED for **plat**, *n.*³ †5. and **plot**, *n.* †4. OED claims that the first recorded occurrence of 'plot' in this sense is from 1649.

The manuscript includes a list of personae and notes on the geography of Thrace and Macedon, apparently for use in supplying local colour.

Lent vnto Bengemen Johnstone the [2]3 ⁽⁴⁾ of deseemb3 1597 vpon a Boocke w th he was to writte for vs befor crysmas next after the date herof w th he showed the plotte vnto the company I saye lente in Redy money vnto him the some of	}	xxs
lent vnto Bengemen Johnson the 3 of deseemb3 1597 vpon a boocke w th he showed the plotte vnto the company w th he promised to dd vnto the company at crysmas next the some of	}	xxs
Lent vnto Robart shawe & Jewbey the 23 of octob3 1598 to lend vnto m ^r Chapmane one his playe boocke & ij ectes of A tragedie of bengemens plotte the some of	}	iij ⁱⁱ

It looks as though a note from the author's plot had found its way into a stage-direction of *All's Well that Ends Well*, at II.iii.190, 'Parolles and Lafew stay behind, commenting of this wedding'. And similarly in *Timon*, I.i.97, 'Enter Lord Timon, addressing himselfe curteously to euery Sutor'; and cf. *Coriolanus*, I.iv.30, 'Enter Martius Cursing', which he proceeds to do. This sort of plot is, of course, quite distinct from the theatrical document so called used in representation [...]

[Comment on the stage directions in *Timon of Athens*:] It is not surprising that some of these [*i.e.* descriptive] directions are reminiscent of what may have been jottings in the author's original plot; where the drama has only half disengaged itself from the matrix of thought, it is natural that the directions should not have been fully adapted to the needs of the stage.

(Greg 1955: 164, Note B; and 410)

The three quoted Shakespearean examples are of prime interest; being by Shakespeare, they are likely to get more criticism than all other Elizabethan drama. However, commentary on this point (since Greg's theorem), and on the importance of the Plat as a phase in the compositional process, has been more-or-less evasive—as I will evidence later.

The importance of the scenario in non-English early modern theatre is beyond doubt. An example is the *Commedia dell'arte*, 'essentially improvised comedy, which followed a plot outline, called a scenario, rather than written dialogue'.⁴ The *Commedia* was connected to the scenario (*soggetto*) to such an extent that a parallel name for the genre was *Commedia a soggetto*. The influence of the genre on English drama of the time has been acknowledged in respect of the stock characters (such as in Jonson's comedies). The wider impact, mainly the thematic one, is yet to be fully approved.⁵ That Italian troupes came to England is well-known:

4 Kenneth McKee's 'Foreword' to the edition of Flaminio Scala's 1611 collection of scenarios, *Il Teatro delle favole rappresentative*. Henry F. Salerno (1967: xiii).

5 Salerno (1967), in the Appendix to the collection, analyzes numerous possible and likely sources for a number of Jacobean plays (such as *The Tempest*) taken from Scala's scenarios. The popular influence of the *Commedia* is clearly illustrated by the use of 'zany' (It. *Zanni*, the category of servant stock characters, such as *Arlecchino*, *Pedrolino* etc.) as a term for a clown or a mimic. (OED quotes *Damon and Pithias* (1566), *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Every*

The earliest record of Italian players in England, probably only musicians, tumblers, and mountebanks, is an entry in the Chamberlain's accounts in Norwich in 1566. Revels accounts for 1573–74 indicate that Italian players performed in Windsor and Reading. Drusiano Martinelli was granted permission to appear in England in 1577. By the end of the century, visits of Italian companies to England were fairly common, and in 1602 Flaminio Curtesse played before Queen Elizabeth. Court records show repeated visits in the next hundred years.

(K. McKee, 'Foreword' in Salerno 1967: xvii)

In the following paragraphs I would like to suggest the importance of the scenario for early modern English theatre, with a view to analyzing the compositional process in Fletcher's plays. It is not so much a full-fledged argument or theory as an exposition or introduction to the approach of the following chapters. The evidence for the existence of the Plat that I have collected should serve as justification of my approach, and support for its legitimacy and adequateness.

I

Complex creations such as symphonies, plays, and trees unfold in stages.

(Hall 1998: p. xiii)

When the dramatist draws out an Argument, that is, a short summary of the play,⁶ the next step is to compose the Plat.⁷ From it the play is composed; presumably it was according to the Plat that synchronous collaborators divided their work. Critics often assume 'some sort of preliminary planning', but hardly ever venture an investigation into the actual practice of composition. The idea, often assumed, that for instance Massinger started the play and Fletcher resumed where Massinger left off, is not only unproductively simplifying but also, from the point of

Man Out, and Every Man In, Twelfth Night, Blurt Master Constable, to which may be added *A Yorkshire Tragedy, Cupid's Revenge* (2.6.27), *Four Playes in One* (Induction 122), *The Lovers Progress* (1.1.169), *The Queen of Corinth* (1.2.199) and three other Massinger plays. Volpone stages a *Commedia*-like mountebankery (2.2).

- 6 OED, Argument, n., †6. *Subject-matter of discussion or discourse in speech or writing; theme, subject.* Obs. or arch. (1570 R. ASCHAM Scholem. Pref. 21 How to write in this kinde of argument. 1596 SHAKES. 1 Hen. IV, II. ii. 100 It would be argument for a Weeke. Ibid. II. iv. 310 And the argument shall be, thy runing away.) and 7. *The summary or abstract of the subject-matter of a book; a syllabus; fig. the contents.* (1535 Goodly Primer (1848) 290 The argument into the xxivth psalm. In this psalm David singeth all things to be the Lord's; etc. 1607 SHAKES. *Timon* II. ii. 187 If I would... try the argument of hearts, by borrowing.) It seems that Shakespeare did not differentiate much between the Argument and the Plat; his practice could have been similar to that of *Commedia dell'arte* which considered both the documents as integral parts of the *soggetto*.
- 7 Greg assumes that 'an experienced dramatist [...] would be working, we may suppose, on a fairly detailed scenario' (1955: 106). R. K. Turner claims that some discrepancies and loose ends in the Beaumont and Fletcher plays may be 'arising from failures of coordination in the collaboration itself, from too casual a scenario or from the simple refusal of a playwright to be tamed by prearrangement' (Turner 1987: 316).

collaboration, extremely difficult to practise. The dramatist would either have to reread several times what his collaborator has done, or would have to extract, or make a brief of, what his partner had written, in order to ensure that they were writing one unified play.

Whether the Plat was the standard author document has to remain a hypothesis. Nevertheless, it seems to be a very probable one, judging from the indices that are extant. Before discussing the evidence, I will assume that what has been referred to as ‘some sort of necessary planning’ was the Plat, and it was included under the collective heading of ‘foul papers’.⁸ Often a play may be suggested by an idea for a character or a situation, be it A. Mizener’s claim that Fletcherian plays are constructed as ‘primarily a series of strong scenes’ (Mizener 1941: 172),⁹ or the Queen’s wish to see Falstaff in love. This initial idea is later developed into the entire play. The causal relations of the composition and their order (which would suggest if this or that came first) are obliterated in the final text. Therefore it is of no particular relevance to this study what the diachronic relations were.

To work out an Argument is one type of dramatic activity; it concerns the selection of appropriate, dramatizable material, that is to say, it is a summary of the obvious as well as the latent dramatic potential. Creating a Plat is another type of work; this develops the Argument into separate stageable scenes, or sequences, that is, into separate mini-dramas. The Plat constitutes the play’s ‘abstract’—in both senses (as a noun and an adjective). Plotting determines vitally the character of the play; it develops the potential of the Argument and of the technical and personal conditions of the theatre company for which it is written (or the ‘ideal’ theatre company for which some plays are written nowadays).

It is by a Plat that one gets best oriented in a play. As Francis Meres shows, in Elizabethan times, dramatists were renowned for great competence in this activity: ‘*Anthony Munday* our best plotter’.¹⁰ J. R. Brown emphasizes the importance of the Plat (which he calls *argument*, in keeping with Shakespeare’s usage) in under-

8 The scribe who produced the manuscript version of *Bonduca* resorted to the ‘fowle papers of the Authors wh were found’ because ‘the booke where by it was first Acted from is lost’ (*Bonduca* MS: TLN 2368–80). What he supplied for the missing one and a half scenes (5.1 and 5.2) were the corresponding parts of the Plat. The problems of the passage in the manuscript are commented on by Laurie Maguire (1996: 211). See below and in Chapter 5.

9 The starting point of the invention of the plot of *The Maid’s Tragedy* is ‘Amintor’s discovery, on his wedding-night, that his bride is the mistress of the King’ (Craik 1988: 9). T. W. Craik, the Revels editor of *MT*, is not the only critic to put forth such a suggestion (see also Leech 1959: 181–82, quoted in Chapter 2). Eugene M. Waith similarly develops the notion of ‘the improbable hypothesis’, around which the Fletcherian plays are built (Waith 1952: 37). McLuskie claims that in Dekker’s plays ‘[c]onsistency of character is always subordinated to the demands of a particular scene’ (McLuskie 1994: 70). Similarly, Philip Edwards claims that ‘[t]he indivisible unit of Fletcher’s verse is the rhetorical organization of a whole scene’ (Edwards 1960: 161).

10 Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (1598), Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, New York 1938: p. 283 (Oo3^v). (I am grateful to Laurie Maguire for pointing out this connection.)

stages of play-writing

{**Story** – the source}

Argument – the story/stories in a dramatic, or dramatisable form; this is purely non-physical, giving the ‘mental’ pictures of the story; if more story-lines are involved, the Argument disregards their chronological relations

Plat (plot or scenario) – structural division of the story-lines into scenes and what happens in them; this is a denotation of the physical expression of the various stages of the story-lines. The sequence of scenes, naturally, sets the chronological relations of the story-lines.

standing the dramatic achievement of plays. In his performance-based study of Shakespeare, he notes:

Even a gripping and resonant story [...] will give less indication of what the play achieves for an audience than its argument, which is how Shakespeare chose to present the story and so shape the substance of the drama. The most efficient way of summing up the effect of a tragedy is to consider which elements of the story Shakespeare has shown on stage and how he has done so. [...] Indeed no moment in a play of Shakespeare’s has been understood adequately until the plotting at that time has been taken into account, as well as the words that are spoken.

(Brown 1996: 155, 126)

The last stage of the dramatic work which the playwright does, is the working out of the scenario into dialogues and epic passages of the play. It is the final realization of the Plat, the ‘Verbalization’, or the ‘Utterance’ of the abstract. For convenience’s sake, though being aware it is a restrictive name, I will call it Dialogue-writing and subsume under it the whole production of the play-text.

Although today ‘authorial intentions’ are not commonly spoken of, the ways in which plays are constructed clearly show the choices that the playwright has made. These choices—‘which elements [are] shown on stage and how [it is] done’—are certain facts. It would be speculative to infer from possibilities; however, the author has to make choices from the very start of the compositional process: from the fictional mode (measure of probability; moralisms; presence of providential powers; measure of ‘intimacy’ of the play—political, social, communal, familial, intimate; mode of motivation—free will, custom, habit, social coercion), the setting (place and time, its concreteness/vagueness), or the focus of the fiction (is *Henry VIII* a drama of Henry or of the people around him?).

In a way the last two phases of the dramatization—plotting and dialogue-writing—may be considered as substantially discrete. Although it is disputable whether they are discrete theoretically only, or whether they were actually kept so in the ‘arcane’ processes of early modern playwriting, I believe it profitable to distinguish the inner structures of the plays in these two phases. The assumed profit coming from this endeavour should be the closer knowledge of:

- (1) the *choices* made in the process of representing (or epitomizing or exemplifying) a reality by synecdochic parts or metonymies on the stage, and the implicit reasons for these choices;

- (2) the notion of the *scene* (or sequence) as the basic structural unit of the play, and its relation to the represented event;
- (3) the means used to *fill* the ‘Three houres of pretious time’ (*The Loyal Subject* Epilogue 2) on the stage, or—to put it less cynically—the ways in which the message of the play (or scene) is turned into the onstage here-and-now;
- (4) the means of achieving (or not achieving) verisimilitude; in other words, the proportion of the dramatic and the epic in the here-and-now.

These four elements are linked with the previous choices which the dramatist makes while compiling the Argument (whether written or unwritten). However, my above brief and theoretical outline of the ontogeny of a play, from the optional source, to the Argument, to the Plat, to the play text, and finally to the optional (and indefinite) stage production, is sufficient for a study that is undertaken in this and the following chapters.

II

we wil plat our purpose throughly
(*Arden of Faversham*, TLN 1208)

As far as possible vestiges of Plats are concerned, the critical consensus is far from unanimous. That Shakespeare thought, and perhaps operated a preliminary written document is very likely as transpires from the following passages:

[*King Henry*.] all my Reigne, hath beene but as a Scene
Acting that argument.
(*2 Henry IV* 4.3.326–27)

[*Rosencrantz*.] There was for a while, no mony bid for argument, | vnlesse the Poet
and the Player went to Cuffes in | the Question.
(*Hamlet* 2.2.354–56)¹¹

Ophelia. Belike this shew imports the Argument of the Play?
(*Hamlet* 3.2.133)

King. Haue you heard the Argument, is there no Offence in't?
(*Hamlet* 3.2.221–22)

Thersites. Here is such patcherie, such iugling, and such knauerie: all the argument
is a Cuckold and a Whore, a good quarrel to draw emulations, factions, and
bleede to death vpon [...]
(*Troilus and Cressida* 2.3.71)

In the case of ‘literary’ or ‘descriptive’ stage directions, or fictional signals in Shakespeare’s plays (*Timon of Athens*, *Coriolanus*, and *All’s Well that Ends Well*)—which were mentioned in the quotation from Greg’s book—a variety of possible explanations have been offered. Fredson Bowers (1980) takes the stage direction

¹¹ Rosencrantz might be referring here to the practice of commissioning plays; see footnote 2 and the discussion of J. Q. Adams’ article below.

in *All's Well* for 'a note made by Shakespeare when writing was interrupted, to remind himself how the scene was to go on' (Bowers 1980: 59).¹² The New Arden Shakespeare editor, G. K. Hunter (1959), assumes that the text is derived from 'comparatively "foul" foul papers [which...] suggest the author reminding himself of his intentions'. He then refers to Greg, further adding other stage directions ('Enter [...] *the Frenchmen, as at first*' (3.6.0), 'Enter [...] *the Maide called Diana*' (4.2.0) and 'Enter a gentle *Astringer*' (5.1.6)), and concludes that if

[Greg's] suggestion were accepted it might tie up with the view that the foul papers for *All's Well* were in a comparatively primitive state, but since nothing is known of the process by which a scenario was turned into a play there is not sufficient evidence to develop this idea.

(Hunter 1959: xiv.)

The commentary on the stage direction in *Timon* by its latest editor, Karl Klein (2001), comes close to the process of composition. The stage direction in Folio, he writes, 'is not practicable, but is (perhaps) an author's note indicating what Lord Timon's role should be generally here, an authorial reminder of how to structure the scene' (Klein 2001: 75–76).¹³ The note to the stage direction at 1.2.0 of *Timon* remarks that '[s]everal features of this stage direction indicate the unfinished state of the manuscript' (Klein 2001: 84). H. J. Oliver (New Arden 1959) sees it as '[e]xcellent examples of the "descriptive" stage directions which show that the author's draft (or transcript of it) was "copy" for the printed text' (Oliver 1959: 20n.; reference is made to Greg 1955: 124–25).

Lee Bliss commenting on the 'over-explicit, "literary" stage directions says that '*Coriolanus*'s often unusually full, narrative stage directions may indicate semi-retirement and an author who knew that he might not be present at rehearsals' (Bliss 2000: 6n).¹⁴

None of the previous commentaries on the Shakespearean stage directions is conclusive about the question of the Plat. However, it still remains a valid hypothesis that Shakespeare might have worked from his foul papers that contained a version of the Plat, which he was working out (dialogue-writing) in creating the play-text. In the following part of this section, I focus on other possible Plat vestiges.

12 This passage is quoted from a footnote in the 1993 Oxford Shakespeare edition, edited by Susan Snyder (1993: 131n.). Snyder adds only Fredson Bowers' observation that it is 'not a comment on the wedding but comic abuse of Paroles' that is dramatized.

13 Karl Klein is referring to Alan C. Dessen's remark that these 'fictional signals' are notes that 'show the dramatist thinking out loud in the process of writing' (A. C. Dessen, *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary*, Cambridge UP 1995: p. 56).

14 Lee Bliss goes on to suggest: 'In March 1613 Shakespeare purchased a house in London near the Blackfriars Theatre, but this may have been simply a real-estate investment; see S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*, 1987, pp. 272–3, ... In contrast, E. A. J. Honigsmann takes the Blackfriars investments as signs that Shakespeare 'intended... to resume his career in London' ("There is a world elsewhere": William Shakespeare, businessman', in *Images of Shakespeare*, ed. Werner Habicht *et al.*, 1988, p. 43).'

J. Q. Adams, in his 1946 article on the Plat of *Philander; King of Thrace*, analyzes several of the notes and records in Henslowe's memoranda book which concern Plats, and suggests that 'one might naturally infer that [...] dramatists in seeking [...] advance payments on unwritten plays, were accustomed to submit their author-plots to the company for examination and formal acceptance.' In assuming so, he follows the 'Articles of Agreement' which were 'drawn up in March 1614 between Henslowe, as the business manager, and Field, as the leader of the company' (Lady Elizabeth's Men).¹⁵ For the purpose of the present study, it is not of prime importance to ascertain or prove that it was a common procedure to have a play formally accepted by a company before delivering it 'fayr written'. It suffices to acknowledge the Plat as a standard halfway stage and retrace the characteristics that an early modern Plat had.

The following quotations are direct meta-theatrical evidence of the Plat as it is referred to in several plays:

Here might be made a rare Scene of folly, if the plat could beare it.
(John Marston, *Antonio and Mellida* 3.2.120–21)

Boy. Sir, you must pardon us, the plot of our Play lies | contrary, and 'twill hazard
the spoiling of our Play.
(*Knight of the Burning Pestle* TLN 284–85)

I promist him a Play of Robin Hoode, [...]
His Maiestie himselfe suruaid the plat,
And bad me boldly write it, it was good.
(Chettle, Munday, *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon* TLN 2080–83)

In the case of the last two quotations, it is obvious that what is spoken of are written documents. These mentions are rather explicit about the nature of the Plat and what it served for. The last extract even mirrors the hypothesis suggested by J. Q. Adams about the offering of the Plat in advance and having it sanctioned by the producer. This might reflect the same practice which the above quotation from *Hamlet* refers to (*no money bid for argument*), and the authority of which the King may be trying to impose on the 'Mousetrap' (*Have you heard the Argument*).

What follows is a table of possible vestiges of Plats. The criteria for selecting these passages are—what A. C. Dessen calls—the 'descriptive' or 'fictional' quality of the directions. Many of them describe the action that follows and thus seem to be redundant as 'directions' in the proper sense. Unless indicated otherwise,

15 The hypothesis that the Company first did 'condiciō or agree for' a Plat and then had it written out by the dramatist could be supported by another instance. In his letter of 1615 to Henslowe, Field claims to have spent 'a great deale of time in conference about this plott'. From his formulation, he seems to be modestly referring to himself as Daborne's co-plotter, or Daborne, who was the single author, was consulting the draft of the play with Field (as a sharer of the company), who then asks Henslowe to disburse £10 for Daborne for what he calls 'as beneficiall a play as hath Cōe these seauen yeares' (quoted from *Henslowe's Diary*).

the quoted staged directions duplicate the action referred to in the dialogue that comes after them:

The Woman Hater

Enter two Intelligencers, discovering treason in the Courtiers words. (3.2.0) This states their purpose in the scene.

A Wife for a Month

Enter divers Monkes, Alphonso going to the Tombe, Rugio and Frier Marco discover the Tombe and a Chaire. (3.1.0)

The Faithful Shepherdess

Enter Clorin a Shepherdess, having buried her Love in an Arbour. (1.1.0)

Enter Clorin, the Shepherdess, sorting of herbs, and telling the natures of them. (2.2.0) This stage direction describes what Clorin is going to do in the following scene.

Enter Amoret, seeking her Love. (4.3.0)

Enter Amoret looking for Perigot. (4.4.12.0)

*The Mad Lover*¹⁶

He kneeles amaz'd, and forgets to speake. (1.1.108.1) Duplicated by other characters' commentary, such as 'How he stares on me.' 'Rise and speake sir.' 'Ye shame your selfe, speake to her.'

Memnon walks aside full of strange gestures. (1.2.36.1) Commentary: 'What faces, and what postures he puts on, | I doe not thinke he is perfect.' 'Look what an Alphabet of faces he runs through.'

Memnon comes to her. | Stays her. | Stays her. (1.2.60, 62)

Enter Memnon alone. (2.1.0)

Polidor is sick ath' sudden. (4.4.49) Followed by Polidor's: 'Sick ath' sudden, | Extremely ill, wondrous ill.'

Enter Siphax, walkes softly over the Stage [...] (5.4.16.1)

The Loyal Subject

Enter Ancient, crying Broomes, and after him severally, foure Souldiers, crying other things.

Boroskie and Gent. over the Stage observing them. (3.5.0) Four songs follow, in which Ancient cries 'Brooms' and the soldiers cry something else.

Enter two Servants preparing a Banquet. (4.5.0)

16 Some of the instances are quoted in Bowers V, in R. K. Turner's Textual Introduction to *The Mad Lover*, and commented upon: 'A number of stage-directions are of an authorial character; they often are supplied when the business cannot be inferred precisely from the text' (Bowers V: 7). However, many of them are duplicated by other characters' commentary, that is, show a considerable measure of redundancy.

Bonduca (MS)	Bonduca (F)
TLN 2–3: Enter Bonduca: (bir Daughter) Hengo: (bir Sonne) Nennius: & Soldiers:	1.1.0: Enter Bonduca, Daughters, Hengo, Nennius, Souldiers.
212: Enter Iunius & petillius: (2 ^o Roman Captaines:)	2.1.0: Enter Junius and Perillius, two Romano Captains.
717: Enter: Iunius: (after him:) petillius: & a Herald:	2.2.0: Enter Junius, Petillius and a Herald.
785, 787: he sittl downe: Songe:	2.2.52: Song, by Junius, and Petillius after him in mockage.
867–69: Enter: Bonduca: & hir Daughters: Indas: (n th his Soldiers: (halters about their Neckes:) Nenius: following:	2.3.0: Enter Judas and his four Companions (halters about their necks) Bonduca, her Daughters, Nennius following.
1046–49: Enter: younger Daughter: & an Attendant: she shewes her selfe but at y ^e Doore)	2.3.125: Enter 2 ^d Daughter and a Servant
1051–52: Enter: Guides:	2.3.128.1: Enter a Guide.
1495–97: Enter the •2 ^o Daughters: Soldiers (bringing in) Iunius: Curius: Drusus: & others:	3.5.27.1–2: Enter the two Daughters, with Junius, Curius, Decius, and Souldiers.
1653–54: Enter: Swetonius: Iunius: & Soldiers: vpon the chase:	3.5.141.1–2: Enter Swetonius, Souldiers, and Captains.
1666: Enter Caratacke: (at their backs:) & Hengo:	3.5.150.1: Enter Caratach and Hengo.
1670–71: Bonduca flyes & hir Daughters.	3.5.154: Ext. Bond. &c.
2108: Enter: Drusus: Regulus: (stopping the Soldiers. at the Doore.)	4.3.178.1: Enter Drusus and Regulus, with souldiers.
2129–31: the Soldiers kneele about & weepe:	4.3.192: omit
2189–92: Enter: petillius: (talkes n th y ^e Generall:	4.4.29.1: Enter Petillius.
2367ff: omit	5.1.0: Enter Caratach vpon a rocke, and Hengo by him, sleeping.
2502–04: Indas steales nere him and shootes him: & startes back:	5.3.125: Judas shoots Hengo.
2508–10: flings and tumbles him ouer: pulls him vp againe:	5.3.127.1: Caratach kils Judas with a stone from the Rock.
2564–68: Enter: petillius: Iunius: (climing the rock: fight:	5.3.167.1: Enter Petillius & Junius on the rock.
2587–88: they come of the rocke	5.3.183: omit
Demetrius and Enanthe (MS)	The Humorous Lieutenant (F)
TLN 186–8: Enter Prince Demetrius from hunting: attended n th yong Gentlemen	1.1.158.1–2: Enter Demetrius with a Javelin, and Gentlemen.
772: Enter Leucippe, & her Maides, writing	2.3.0: Enter Leucippe (reading) and two Maids at a Table, writing.
1363–4: Enter Leinetenant, & Leontius running after him	3.3.0: Enter Lieutenant, & Leontius
1711–2: he drincks. 2. Kans	3.5.74: omit

2120–1: <i>Enter Demetrius: Leontius; Gent: Soldiers: y^e Host (talking nth Demetr^o)</i>	4.2.0: <i>Ent. Demetr. Leon. Lieut. Gent. Sold. & Host.</i>
2315–7: <i>Enter a Magitian nth a Bowle in his band</i>	4.3.4.1: <i>Enter Mag. with a bowle.</i>
2328–32: <i>He seemes to Coniure: sweete Musiq₃ is heard, and an Anticke of little Fayeries enter, & dance about y^e Bowle, and fling in things, & Ex.</i>	4.3.11.1: <i>He Conjures.</i>
2596–8: <i>Enter Celia nth a Booke in ber band</i>	4.3.23.1: <i>The Answer.</i>
	4.5.13.1: <i>Enter Celia with a book</i>

The Honest Man's Fortune (MS)**The Honest Man's Fortune (F)**

1.2.85.1: <i>Exit Amiens</i>	<i>Enter Amiens in amazement, the servants following him.</i>
2.2.155: <i>Within: Clashing of weapons: some crying downe with their weapons:</i>	<i>Within a clamor, down with their weapons.</i>
2.2.155.1–2: <i>then Enter Languile: Dubois: their Swords drawne: 3: or: 4: Drawers betwene em:</i>	<i>Enter Longaile and Dubois, their swords drawn, servants and others between them.</i>
2.2.182.1: <i>Enter Amiens: with Sword</i>	<i>Enter Amience in hast, his sword drawne.</i>
2.4.126.1–4: <i>Dubois runs upon Montagne, and Laverdure and La-poope {retire^{MS}} {in the scuffling retire^F}, Montague chaseth {them about^{MS}} {the Officers off^F} the Stage, himselfe wounded.</i>	<i>strugling yeelds him his Sword; the Officers draw, Montague chaseth {them about^{MS}} {the Officers off^F} the Stage, himselfe wounded.</i>
3.1.0: <i>Ent: Madam Lamira: Ladye Orleance: And Viramour the Page:</i>	<i>Enter Madam Lamire, Madam le Orleans, Veramour.</i>
3.2.0: <i>Ent: Amience: Longaile: hauing A paper in's hand.</i>	<i>Enter Amiens and Longeville with a Paper.</i>
3.3.37.1–2: <i>Ent: Montague: bare: Lamyra: Lady Orleance: Charlot: Viram:</i>	<i>Enter Mountague bare-headed, Lamira, Lady Orleance, Charlo, Veramour, salute.</i>
3.3.97.1: <i>Lamyra shoves hir Selfe at the Arras.</i>	<i>Enter Lamira behinde the Arras.</i>
4.1.0: <i>Enter Montague: in meane habit:</i>	<i>Enter Montague, alone, in meane habit.</i>
4.1.22.1: <i>Enter Veramon {with Counters^F}</i>	
4.1.185.1: <i>Enter Longueville {with a riding-rod^F}</i>	
Scene 5.3 (in which servants set out a banquet) omit MS	
5.4.0: <i>A Banquet: Set out: then Enter:...</i>	<i>Enter...</i>
<i>... Charlott drest as A Bride: Montague: Ve[r]</i> <i>ie braue.</i>	<i>... Charlotte, like a Bride, Montague braue.</i>

The Faithful Friends

Enter Marius a young Lord returnd from Travel, nth him Rufinus & Leontius noblemen. (TLN 3–5)

Enter Learchus a young Lord. (TLN 87)

Enter [...] Armanus freind to Tullius. (TLN 165)

Enter in a[n Aleb]guestowse: Bellario a Totter'd Soldier Black Snout a Smith, Snip snap, a Taylor, Colueskin, a sbomaker: euery one potts in there hand. (TLN 319–21)

Enter Learchus, Leontius, Marcellanus and an other Senator, then Titus. the Kinge talking to Armanus Cornetts short florish

King. Armanus wee haue sent thy freind to danger [...] (TLN 772–75)

Ianus deliueres Tullius a Lre

Tull. A letter Ianus,

Ian. Yes, (TLN 1915–7)

Softe Musicke | Strikes | A Banquett being sett forth, Enter Titus | and Philadelpha who sitt downe at each | end of one Table, Then at an other side | Table sits downe certaine Senators | ould Tullius, and Marcellanus | then Rufinus Learchus, and Leontius | who waite on the Kinge / (TLN 2485–91)

The Valiant Welshman

Fortune descends downe from beauen to the Stage, and then shee cald forth foure Harpers, that by the sound of their Musicke they might awake the ancient Bardb, a kind of Welsh Poet, who long agoe was there intoombed. (1.1.0) Fortune's monologue ensues, in which she says all that is in the stage direction.

The Insatiate Countess

'Enter the Watch, with Claridiana and Rogero taken in one another's houses, in their shirts and night-gowns; they see one another.' (3.1.121.1–3)

The features that these—what I claim to be—remnants of Plats have in common is certain 'un-stage-like' redundancy. Alongside these, there exist many cases of absent stage directions in places with implicit action, sometimes even within a single play. In *The Mad Lover*, there are stage directions that may be considered redundant, such as '*Memnon walks aside full of strange gestures.*' (1.2.36.1). This stage action is made clear later from the commentary of the onlookers. Another such example is the stage direction quoted above: '*Polidor is sick ath' sudden.*' (4.4.49) It is followed by Polidor's tautological: 'Sick ath' sudden, | Extreemly ill, wondrous ill.' At the same time, only a scene later, there is a case of absent description of implicit stage action:

<i>Memnon [to Whore].</i>	O Lady,	30
Your royall hand, your hand my dearest beauty		
Is more then I must purchase: here divine one,		
I dare revenge my wrongs: ha?	[stage action from Memnon]	
1. <i>Captaine.</i>	A dam'd foule one.	
<i>Eumenes.</i> The Lees of baudie prewnes: mourning gloves?		
All spoyld by heaven.		
<i>Memnon.</i>	Hal who art thou?	35

(*The Mad Lover* 4.5.3–35)

Memnon's reaction to the sight of the Whore's hand is not rendered—something like '*Memnon starts*'—although it would seem perhaps even much less redundant than the instances quoted above.

The reason why I have presented both the cases, of redundant and missing stage directions, is to suggest the measure of their redundancy, and offer a hypothetical explanation for this feature, that is, that these descriptions could be

remnants of the Plat. I would not like to push the notion of the Plat too far and create an absolute category out of it; that would be an anachronistic imposing of our modern thoroughness and exhaustiveness onto an activity of a different, perhaps much more casual, sort. Perhaps, in the presence or absence of a particular stage direction, there may be a certain amount of fortuitousness or turbulence; yet, in general it should be possible to infer a possible explanation of the presence of redundant elements.

III

Although the assumption of the Plat's existence may seem rather speculative, it is often used by many critics—if tacitly only, without pronouncing it. Such is the case of *The Insatiate Countess*, a complex problem of authorship. The compositional question is—for instance—avoided in the following expressions: 'The play's authorship is disputed, though there is a consensus that Marston *planned* the whole even if the text was co-authored' (Senapati 2000: 143n.; my italics). Presumably Marston did not finish the play because in 1608 he seems to have been imprisoned, and a year later he took holy orders. Janet Clare states that '*The Insatiate Countess*, Marston's last play, was completed by William Barkstead months later' (Clare 2000: 208).¹⁷ Giorgio Melchiori, the Revels editor of the play, sums up the issue in the following terms:

- (1) First layer: Marston devised the plot and underplot of the play, wrote a first draft of Act I, part of II.i, some speeches and outlines of the rest, particularly II.ii, II.iv and , to a lesser extent, III.iv, IV.ii and Vi.
- (2) Second layer: Barkstead and Machin, and possibly some other person associated with the Children of the King's Revels, revised and added to the parts written by Marston and completed the rest of the play, developing the two plots up to Vi included. Barkstead's hand is more apparent in the tragic scenes, Machin's in the comic. In the process the names of some of the characters got confused and exchanged.
- (3) Third layer: shortly afterwards either a new hack writer or one who had already worked on the play added V.ii, borrowing from the previous scenes, and tried, ineffectually, to clear up the confusion in the character names in the previous acts by restoring them to Marston's initial choice.

(Melchiori 1984: 16)

In explaining the process of playwriting, the first two comments are far from satisfactory. S. B. Senapati's 'consensus that Marston planned the whole' play is resting on the fact that there *was* a plan. Janet Clare avoids the Plat utterly, although it is to be understood that there must have been one; how else would have Barkstead

¹⁷ The most recent editor of *The Insatiate Countess*, Martin Wiggins, in *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies*, writes a similar note: 'The play was begun by John Marston, who wrote relatively full versions of 1.1. and 2.1.1–103, and sketchier outlines of the rest. ... At some later point, the actor William Barksted and his associate Lewis Machin took over the play and began to develop it for the stage, writing up the missing scenes and changing some of the characters' names' (Wiggins 1998: xxv). The expression 'sketchier outlines' is a strategic way of avoiding the uncertain issue.

been able (NB: ‘months later’) to complete the play, if Marston had not recorded his plan? The implicit record—which is my suggestion—was the existing dramatic *Plat*, which G. Melchiori somewhat ambiguously mentions in (1).

A Commonwealth theatre text, *The prince of priggs revels* (1651), a short ‘Tarltonian Mirth’ by J. S., has an argument of each act prefixed to each passage. ‘The Argument of the First Act: Hind’s [i.e. James Hind, the hero] wilie Couzenage of a Merchant at Bristol, leaving him prisoner in a Port-Mantle.’ As each act has on average about eighty lines, these briefs may be taken for Plats of simple-structured scenes. The second (longest) act has the following description:

Hind feigning himself a great Lord, putting some of his Train into rich Liveries, and storing his and their pockets with Gold, growes very intimate with a brave and noble Lady, whom at once he deprives of the inestimable jewell of her honour, together with much treasure.

As the running title declares, this comedy has ‘never heretofore [been] published by any’.¹⁸ It was acted in the same year (between 3 September and 11 November 1651) and due to its thoroughness is very likely to have stemmed from the author’s manuscript. The author himself seems to have been preparing his ‘Excellent Comedy’ for print as he added an address ‘To the Reader’. The running title announces that the play is ‘Repleat with various Conceits, and Tarltonian Mirth, Suitable to the Subject.’ This formulation is itself as if aware of the notion of a subject (or message) that manifests itself in the text of the comedy. The publishing of the Plat of his play can be read both as a help to the reader to get better oriented in the dialogue and its purpose, and as a statement of how successful the playwright is in Dialogue-writing, that is, in working out his Plat.

The manuscript of an incomplete early seventeenth-century Plat of *Philander, King of Thrace* (Folger Shakespeare Library, MS. 1137.5, <1627>), which J. Q. Adams reprints (Adams 1946: 17–27), is of much interest for the present purpose.¹⁹ Apart from the Plat, the manuscript contains an identification of the setting (‘The <f> Scene is Thrace for y^e first act, | Macedon for all y^e Rest.’) and the list of characters with their brief descriptions:

Philander K. of Thrace. S. of Sophronax.
 Suauina his sister
 Euphrastes supposed <freund> father of Aristocles.
 [...]
 Phonops. a begging cauelier.
 Epaphus or } his man. but indeed Aristocles disguised
 Philocles }

The manuscript further contains a description of the setting, of ‘Mountaynes’, ‘Rivers’, ‘Cittyes and Townes and places’, and ‘the old names of Thrace’ (‘Hemus. called

18 Text, dating and all other information are taken from the Chadwyck-Healey electronic database of English Drama.

19 Date and catalogue number are taken from Bentley (1956: 1395). The play is not extant; possibly it remained unrealized (Bentley).

y^e chayne of y^e world. a bounder bet Thrace | and Mysia [...] etc.). The Plat itself provides very brief descriptions of the action. Here is the Plat of the first Act:

Act. i.

Scæn: i.

Philander and his sister Suauina walke and conferre: | she greiues for y^e warre.

Sc. 2.

Philander telleth Euphrastes y^e cause why he will not | marry Suauina to any present K.

Sc: 3.

Aristocles and Suauina discouer their passions and are | discouered by Phonops.

Sc: 4.

Philander doth banish Aristocles.

Sc: 5.

Euphrastes doth counsell Aristocles to go to y^e | warres between y^e Epirot and Achaian.

Sometimes the Plat contains information which is a reminder for the playwright, as in: ‘Salohcin breathing att y^e battle is told of y^e victory | by an vn=known souldier. which was Aristocles’ (2.1). Some descriptions are brief, such as ‘Suauina alone <iea l> iealous and passionate’ (2.7), ‘Svavina mournfull’ (3.1), or almost enigmatic ‘Ascania feeles y^e neglectfull coldnes of Salohcin’ (3.3). The description of a complex scene provides more detail (3.6):

whilst he [i.e. Aristocles] sitts bet y^e two lady’s y^e two K^s. come in: each ieas
≈lous and enuious that Aristocles doth impede their loues.

they court their severall mistresses. svavina breifely de≈

≈ferres him to <y^e sibyll’s> y^e Phœbade Vertumna : where <that>

next night shee’l meete him : so goes out.

Salohcin <bids> asketh Phonops if Ascania be deade : he sayth she

shall that <d>night . Salo< >hcin asketh Philander how he speedes

who sayth but coldly and conditionally. Corintha leaues them

Philander’s vowe will not suffer him to appeare in any sentence

Complaines to

Against Aristocles and therefore <winne’s> Salohcin <to banish

him

> who biddes him feare not he will but think

on itt and take care. he biddeth Phonops dispatch him
att advantage.

From the indices quoted so far, a rough general outline of the characteristics of Plats may be inferred: the Plat present the motivation and a description of the characters' purposes in the scenes, some give summarizes of particular speeches, plotting cross-references and fictional explanations ('an vn=known souldier. which was Aristocles'), and occasionally descriptions of particular stage business. In this respect, it is the two manuscripts, of *Bonduca* and *The Faithful Friends*, that offer a chance of getting a step further in the understanding of the Plat.

IV

The British Library MS 36758 of Fletcher's *Bonduca* (reprinted by The Malone Society in 1951) is an incomplete text of the play. The first two and a half scenes of Act 5 are missing and the scrivener has replaced the dialogue with a description of the scenes:

Actus: Quinti: Scena: pri^a:

[Here should be A Scene of the Solemnitye of
pænius his ffunerall: mournd by *Caracticus*:]

<i>Here should A Scene. be betwene Iunius. & petillius: (Iunius</i>	v.i	2370
<i>mocking petillius for being in loue wth Bonducas Daughter that Killd</i>		
<i>her selfe: to them: Enterd Suetonius: (blameing petillius for the</i>		
<i>Death of pænius:</i>		
<i>The next scene. the solemnitye of pænius his ffunerall mournd</i>	v.ii	
<i>by Caracticus:</i>		2375
<i>The beginning of this following Scene betweene petillius & Iunius</i>	v.iii	
<i>Is wanting. — the occasion. why these are wanting here. the</i>		
<i>booke where [it] by it was first Acted from is lost: and this hath</i>		
<i>beene transcrib'd from the fowle papers of the Authors w^{ch} were</i>		
<i>found:</i>		2380

(*Bonduca* MS, TLN 2367–80)

The explanatory note that the scrivener has included is, however, ambiguous. The indicative '*this*' in line 2378 could either refer to the entire manuscript, or to this passage only—which is perhaps less probable. The descriptive Plats of 5.1 and 5.2 are very likely Fletcher's; the description that they provide is accurate in respect of the action in the Folio version of the play. Where would a Plat of two missing

scenes come from? The case of memorial recollection would be, in my opinion, unsatisfactory.²⁰

If the Plats are Fletcher's indeed, they seem to be suggesting another important feature: apart from the purpose of the scene, this particular Plat appears to pay more attention to inter-plot references, that is, it does not focus so much on the continuity within a certain plot (that comes arguably as default) as on the cross-relations to other plot-lines. Such is the case of Scene 5.2; it does not iterate the situation of Caratack and Hengo (that would be redundant), and mentions the intertwining of the two plots.²¹ However, it is questionable if any *general* feature may be correctly inferred from this occurrence.

The manuscript of *The Faithful Friends*,²² attributed—perhaps erroneously—to Beaumont and Fletcher, is a copy of a work in progress. Act 4 is partly unwritten in the version in which it survives. Scene 4.5 is represented by two variant renderings: by 'The Plott of a Scene of mirth. | to conclude this fourth Acte' (TLN 2815–16), and by a dramatization of the Plat of the scene on a single leaf of quarto format (Fol. 37).²³

Compared to brief Plats (or pseudo-Plats) such as 'Enter two Intelligencers, discovering treason in the Courtiers words' (*The Woman Hater* 3.2.0) or 'Enter Amoret, seeking her Love' (*The Faithful Shepherdess* 4.3.0), this description is rather detailed and even suggestive of stage effects, such as: 'Dindimus the Dwarfe bearing [...] launce and sheild wch are hung vp for trophees' or 'Snout who hangs vp his sword and takes his hammer vowing to God Vulcan neuer to Vse other Weapon'. In fact, the first half of the Plat (up to '[...] trophees, and Sr Perg.') is an elaborate entry and description of the stage. The scene's action—Sir Pergamus 'Vowes [...] neuer to beare Armes agen'—is dramatized in a series of declamations, such as²⁴:

[*Pergamus.*] there hange thou fatal engine of my wroth.
 thou great diuorcer of the soule & bodie
 w^{ch} threescore Princes, Emperors, & Kinges
 beside some 1000 Lords Captaines sanz number
 one lanspresado and ω subtilers wife
 has sent to Erebus & dismal Lake [*etc.*]

5
(TLN 2835.1-6)

hange there yee instruments of blood, & rust
 hence fightinge vaine my flauia must be bust

20 Cf. Laurie Maguire's comment on the passage (1996: 211) in respect of 'memorial uncertainty' about the order of Plats of the two scenes, as copied (presumably) from the 'fowle papers'.

21 For a discussion of the plot-work in *Bonduca* see Chapter 5, 'From Source to Play'.

22 Now in the Dyce collection (MS 10) at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The manuscript is dated most likely in the third decade of the 17th century (Proudfoot and Pinciss 1970: ix, xi).

23 The entire text of the Plat and of the dramatization is reprinted in the Appendix.

24 The dialogue of 4.5 need not have been written by the same author who wrote the rest of the play. So suggest the editors: 'The 'Plott' on fol. 36^b affords a sufficient basis for the composition of dialogue for IV. v and an intention either to publish the play or to perform it could have been the motive for an attempt to fill the gap in the text' (Proudfoot and Pinciss 1970: xii).

yet thus far Mars I will thy souldier bee
 and valiantly in thy great quarrel strike
 when Flauia teaches mee to rayse the Pyke.

25

(TLN 2835.22-26)

Smith. blacksnout the like doeth vow, and in a woorde
 Into a hammer Ile conuert my sworde
 tho venus vulcan horne Ile wiue, our hall
 Increast by vs may growe a Capitall
 I am for vulcan now for mars noe more
 if my wife scould my bouthammer shall rore.

30

(TLN 2835.27-32)

In a similar way, the rest of the scene is written out with a certain amount of fluency (for the full dialogue see Appendix). As it is, the Plat prescribes the order and the purpose of the characters' speeches and actions, thus the dialogue-writer has comparatively (and relatively) little work to do; much of the scene's structure is encoded in the Plat.

The Plat in this form metamorphoses the fiction into externalized actions and statements by means of which the 'abstract' story unfolds and builds up. These externalized actions and statements use the repertory of dramatic techniques available to the Jacobean stage; it becomes the first stage of adapting a fiction to dialogue. The ways in which these choices are made will be the subject of the following chapters.

[Conclusion]

The above-mentioned fluency, or smoothness, in dialogue-writing—that is working out the Plat into the Play—is ensured most importantly by the fact that the Plat consists exclusively of performative statements. The Plotter's work may be described—with a certain amount of abstractness—as a translation of fiction (materialized in the Argument) into actions that are achieved by means of words and a rather narrow range of physical actions. Naturally this translation is done with a view to the physical and dramatic conditions of the theatre: the measure of realism (naturalism), measure of chorus-like (epic) elements, or—in other words—measure and nature of figurativeness.

The beauty of the dialogue-writer's execution of the scene rests on a different type of 'talent'. It is the ability to translate a purpose into a life-like action (here 'life-like' is not meant as a synonym for realistic). As this type of work is the most physical phase of playwriting, it is often identified with playwriting proper. Due to the common focus on the final execution, on the *words* (see Chapter 2), the fact that there always is a plan forerunning is often neglected. It is this plan, the Plat, which prepares the situation, and enables it to become so powerful and effective in its execution.

Most documents of this preliminary planning have been lost. Yet, as I have been trying to show in this chapter, it is justifiable to assume their quondam existence. The few vestiges that are extant are documents illuminating, I believe, the process by which a play was created.

All that has been written in this chapter has a plan behind it. In the following chapters I assume a related working hypothesis for the process of Fletcherian (or generally early modern English) playwriting; I will embrace the assumption that there was preliminary planning (materialized in the Plat). Similarly, I shall assume that the Plat was the means by which synchronous collaborators divided their work. Paul Mulholland, editing *The Roaring Girl*, writes that although

most scenes reveal evidence of both dramatists[; ...] where plotting threads appear to have antecedents, most derive from Middleton's work—a fair indication that he [Middleton] exercised considerable influence over the structure and shape.²⁵

For the purpose of getting closer to the dramatic techniques of the playwrights I will be 'back-forming' hypothetical Plats, observing the ways in which the Plotter's material is turned into the onstage fictional world. Just like when having seen a play or its passage, we do (and can) realize what it is about, so will I retrieve the purpose (represented by the Plat) only after having known the execution.

Lopez: What the Project is——

Isabella.

We shall know when we are there, Sir.

(*Women Pleased* 5.2.112)

The Composition of *Bonduca*

The following two-part essay, constituting Chapters 4 and 5, is a study of dramatic procedures in John Fletcher's *Bonduca*, and reconstructs the hypothetical process of writing the play. Chapter 4 analyzes Fletcher's likely sources. Chapter 5 ('From Source to Play') goes through the gradual process of turning the fictional elements of the sources into the play with a commentary on the dramatic techniques or instruments, such as stock characters or scene types, which Fletcher used in his play.

25 Paul Mulholland (ed.), *The Roaring Girl*, Revels Plays, Manchester UP 1987: 8-12.