

## Stage Directions as Evidence: The Question of Provenance

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The term provenance ("place of origin, derivation") is regularly invoked by theatre historians and editors in their treatments of Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline plays. For scholars such as Andrew Gurr and Roslyn Knutson, to establish a play's provenance is to link it to a specific theatre or dramatic company or both. Here is a straightforward and eminently clear use of the concept. For an editor or bibliographer, however, to establish the provenance of a printed play is to move onto slightly different terrain so as (ideally) to determine what kind of manuscript(s) or printed text(s) were used by the compositor(s) who actually set the type. Such analyses can be crucial for various projects, but the inferences can be tricky and the results murky.

A highly visible example of this second sense of provenance is found in the familiar breakdown of Shakespeare's plays. The so-called "good" quartos (Titus Andronicus, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Q2 *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Richard II*, 1 and 2 *Henry IV*, *The Merchant of Venice*, Q2 *Hamlet*) may stand at one remove from Shakespeare's initial script, the draft he delivered to his fellow players, the beginning of what I conceive of as his conversation with his colleagues that eventually resulted in a production. The short or so-called "bad" quartos (e.g., the first printed editions of 2 *Henry VI*, 3 *Henry VI*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Henry V*, *Hamlet*) may reflect a performance of some version of the play as remembered by one or more actors and, if so, provide valuable evidence about the end of that conversation. Other printed texts (e.g., Folio *Hamlet*, Folio *King Lear*) may correspond to the performance text, an approximation of the words actually included in a performance. Other Folio texts (e.g., *The Tempest*, *Measure for Measure*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*) probably give us the play as transcribed (and perhaps edited or "improved") by scrivener Ralph Crane. Here are at least four different narratives about origins, any one of which may affect how a scholar reads or values a given stage direction. For example, a "good quarto" or "foul papers" play may include signals that demonstrate an author's conception but not what was actually staged; a Ralph Crane transcript may provide an elegant reshaping (for the benefit of a reader) and hence a possible distortion of an author's or bookkeeper's stage direction.

Without doubt, then, provenance is a crucial, bedrock issue for 1) editors of English Renaissance printed plays and 2) those theatre historians who seek to reconstruct specific buildings or stages. To see this provenance issue at work one need only look at editorial treatments of Juliet's "That which we call a rose / By any other \*\*\*\* would smell as sweet" (2.2.43-4)<sup>1</sup> or at such landmark works as G. F. Reynolds's book on the Red Bull and Bernard Beckerman's book on the Globe. When working with either texts or buildings, scholars must be as scrupulous as possible about "placing" the manuscript or printed play so as not to build edifices upon shifting sands.

This scholarly desire for precise distinctions then carries over to other related areas of investigation, for editors or theatre historians readily transfer the same rigor and the same habits of thought to their consideration of the language used or assumed by whoever wrote the stage directions in a given text. Despite the efforts of scholars such as William Long, moreover, some canards persist that smooth over such a transfer--most notably a putatively clear and discernible

distinction between the wording of a stage direction that might appear in authorial copy and the alternative wording that would be appropriate for a playhouse manuscript (the supposed "prompt-book") that would actually serve as the basis for a performance. That no such clear distinction can be sustained from the actual playhouse documents (including the recently rediscovered annotations by two different hands in *The Two Merry Milkmaids*) has apparently not made a significant dent in this formulation or set of expectations.

The varied editorial formulations linked to provenance are too complex to be summed up neatly here. A useful summary of a theatrical version, however, is provided by T. J. King. Given limited information from sources external to the playtexts themselves, theatre historians who seek to reconstruct stages and staging attribute the greatest "authority" to those manuscripts or printed texts that demonstrate not the author's wishes but rather actual playhouse practice. For King, stage directions in printed texts derived from supposed "foul papers" may actually "represent the author's intentions not fully realized on stage." Therefore, the principal evidence for reconstructing Elizabethan stages and stage practice should come from "texts dependent on playhouse copy," while, conversely, "texts evidently not derived from the playhouse have no primary value as evidence for the study of staging" (p. 8). Given the available evidence, King admits 276 plays from the period 1599-1642 into his charmed circle of "primary value" and excludes, as having no "primary value," such authorial texts as *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Coriolanus*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

As a particularly rigorous version of a widely held position, King's formulation warrants scrutiny. In his terms, a never-performed play, a play with no discernible connection to a theatre, or a play authored by an amateur would not seem solid evidence upon which to build inferences about theatrical practice. Similarly, a playtext known to be a scribal copy or for some other reason at several removes from the playhouse might also seem a chancy item to use as evidence. But can such a yardstick be rigorously applied to all situations? As Bernard Beckerman asks in his review of King's book: "is the staging projected by an experienced dramatist less reliable a guide to playhouse practice than actual prompt copy?" King may assume "that demonstration of playhouse origin automatically endows a text with theatrical authority greater than that of all other texts," but Beckerman asks: "is not the text of a mature Shakespearean play, whether or not of playhouse origin, likely to reflect staging practice more accurately than the prompt manuscript of a relatively inexperienced author such as Henry Glapthorne?" (pp. 243, 239-40).

Beckerman's questions become especially pertinent when the focus is upon recovering not the physical features of a given playhouse but rather the shared theatrical language used in stage directions. Scholars seeking to tease out the number of stage doors or the presence of flying machinery at the Rose cannot use as evidence scenes or stage directions from a playtext linked to the Red Bull. Should or should not the same stricture then pertain to the terms or signifiers (what I think of as the theatrical vocabulary) found in stage directions? When isolating and defining such terms, how much does it matter if the stage direction comes from: a play never acted? a play revised by its author(s) before publication? a Red Bull versus a Globe play? a play written for child actors? a masque? a play from 1588 versus one from 1635?

To pursue such questions that link the value or usability of the evidence found in stage directions to provenance, I will explore some case studies.<sup>2</sup>

Adrasta

Consider as an extreme case John Jones's *Adrasta*, a tragicomedy printed in 1635 and, according to its title page, "Never Acted." As G. E. Bentley notes (IV, 603), the dedication provided by this otherwise unknown author conjures up the image of a university man who, "encourag'd by the general good liking and content" that his friends offered "in the hearing of it," offered the play to the players who "upon a slight and half view of it, refused to do it that right" so that "it hath again been under the file since they saw it." Here then is a play by an amateur that not only was never acted but was in fact rejected by some theatrical company ("The reason I well know not, unless perhaps it had not in it so much Witchcraft in Poetry, as, now 'tis known, the Stage will bear").<sup>3</sup>

Jones's dramaturgy is, to put it mildly, clumsy, most notably in two elaborate scenes. In the first, Lucilio helps his beloved Althea escape a death sentence by providing her with a disguise and then taking her place. The sequence of stage directions reads: "Enter Lucilio with a bag, as if apparel were in it"; "He throws a stone up to the window; Althea looks out"; "she lets down a line, to which he fastens the disguise"; "She draws up the bag, and while she is clothing" he speaks: "once more lend your line..."; "Having again let down the Line, she draws up a Ladder of Cords" (he instructs: "Fasten those Hooks to your window, and come down"); "She fastens the Hooks above, he below: And then coming down he receives her"; finally "He goes up into the window" (pp. 19-22).

Once Althea has escaped, Lucilio (somehow) disguises himself as her so as to be executed in her place. He therefore next appears with others "as going to the Rock" along with "the executioner, Frailware and others with Halberds." "The Executioner with one more leads him up to the Rock, where he begins to bind his hands" at which point Lady Julia (Althea's mother) enters "running with her hair disheveled," "sees them on the Rock," "Runs up to them," tries to kiss what she thinks is her daughter, "and putting by his Scarf he is known." The mother "throws off his Scarf," and Lucilio, who has kept up this disguise so as to facilitate Althea's escape, "offers to throw himself off the Rock" (pp. 29-31).

What, if anything, can be made of *Adrasta* as evidence? Even without the title page's "Never Acted" and the author's prefatory remarks, the level of ineptitude here is high, so that no responsible scholar is going to build a case for the staging of window-ascent-descent scenes or rock-execution scenes or disguise conventions solely upon this evidence. However, some of the terms used by Jones do correspond to the theatrical vocabulary found in playtexts linked to experienced professionals and performed by professional companies. For example, of the many execution scenes in this period few if any call for a "rock" as the place of execution, especially one from which a figure can offer "to throw himself," but many of these same scenes do call for distinctive figures such as an executioner and for figures bearing halberds (often presented elliptically as "enter with halberds"). Similarly, to bring on a female figure "running with her hair disheveled" is to invoke a stock stage effect (usually linked to madness, extreme grief, or recent violence such as rape); to use an *as* [if] construction ("as going to the Rock"; "as if apparel were in it") is to invoke another widely used device that, as I have argued elsewhere (*Recovering*, chapter 7--though I do not invoke *Adrasta*), is an essential part of English Renaissance theatrical language. Whether from his reading of plays, his playgoing, or his native wit, even this amateurish author of the 1630s employs some signifiers in a theatrical vocabulary that stretches back to the late 1580s.<sup>4</sup>

The presence of such terms in playtexts not linked to professional companies and playhouses is a phenomenon that extends well beyond Jones and *Adrasta*. For example, the tragedies of Thomas Goffe have unquestioned academic auspices (according to the title pages of the 1631 Quarto of *The Raging Turk*, the 1632 Quarto of *The Courageous Turk*, and the 1633

Quarto of Orestes, all three were acted by the students of Christ-Church in Oxford), but their stage directions often are indistinguishable from those found in comparable professional plays. Similarly, the manuscript play *Tom a Lincoln* appears to be linked to Gray's Inn, not a playhouse, and may indeed be a spoof of the romance form, but the stage directions (in which Heywood may have had a hand or a main finger) are very much in tune with contemporary usage elsewhere. As examples from Goffe's *The Raging Turk* consider: *manet-manent* (205, 340, 870); *solus-alone* (367, 1182, 1732, 2268, 2522); "at several doors" (66, 1503); "pass over the stage" (536, 2777); "drums and trumpets" (563-4, 603); various forms of "offers to" (631, 1416); and "Drum sounds. Enter soldiers severally, dropping in sweating, as from fight" (2435-6).<sup>5</sup> From *Tom a Lincoln* consider: "he offers to stab himself, and she holds his hands" (38-41); two uses of "a far off" (167, 801-3); two uses of "Exeunt at one door: Enter . . . at another" (386, 2031); three uses of *manet* (686, 1912, 2336); "Enter . . . with her hair about her ears" (2252); two uses of "as from" (799, 2406); several uses of *within* (818-19, 829, 2171-2, 2459); and several distinctive unready signals, including "enter . . . in their night habiliments" (2494-5) and "Enter Rusticano with one hose off the other on, without any britches" (2419).

### The Devil's Charter

At an opposite extreme from the unacted *Adrasta*, the Oxford venue for Goffe's tragedies, and the likely Gray's Inn auspices for *Tom a Lincoln* stands Barnabe Barnes's *The Devil's Charter* which is clearly a Globe play and, as such, is regularly mined for useful nuggets by theatre historians. Even though the provenance is clear, however, to trust in this printed text as firm evidence for playhouse practice requires a leap of faith. First, according to the title page the play has been "reviewed, corrected, and augmented" by the author since its performance by the King's Men "for the more pleasure and profit of the Reader." Equally important, the play as printed contains many odd or special features: two or three times as many "study" scenes as any other play of the period; an unusually wide array of spectacular effects involving devils, battles (see I1v), papal pageantry, and violence (as with "He draweth in Rotsi by the heels groaning"--K4v); and a unique set of signals for a vanish. When looking at such scenes or stage directions, the theatre historian cannot disentangle what was actually presented at the Globe from what has been "augmented" by Barnes for the published version.

Consider the vanish effect as set up by Barnes after Pope Alexander calls forth a devil to reveal how two figures had been murdered. For the first, the devil "goeth to one door of the stage, from whence he bringeth the Ghost of Candie ghastly haunted by Caesar pursuing and stabbing it, these vanish in at another door"; for the second: "He bringeth from the same door Gismond Viselli, his wounds gaping and after him Lucrece undressed, holding a dagger fixed in his bleeding bosom: they vanish" (G2r). If only the second of these instant replays had survived, "they vanish" would be as unrevealing as most of many other comparable stage directions I have collected, but, unlike any other evidence I have found, the first set of figures "vanish in at another door" (i.e., at a door other than the "one door of the stage" from which the devil originally brought them). If one can trust Barnes, these two vanishings were therefore effected not by means of a verisimilar trick (e.g., with a trap door, fireworks, or a mist) but by means of a movement across the stage and a "normal" *exeunt* through a stage door.

Some version of this play was performed at the Globe, so that, in at least one sense, provenance is clear. Moreover, Barnes (more often than Jones) invokes terms from a widespread theatrical vocabulary: "in her night gown" (C1r); "offereth to stab herself" (C4r); "upon the walls"

(D2r, D3v, H3r). Unlike the many "study" scenes (and related discoveries) and special effects, Barnes's approach to a vanish situation requires no more than a stage door and, as such, would seem to be an elegant, efficient solution that would in turn shed considerable light upon stage practice in many comparable scenes (including eight in Shakespeare's plays). Despite such tempting evidence in a text with clear provenance, however, today's reader cannot be certain what in this printed text corresponds to the King's Men's staging practices and what has been "augmented" by Barnes "for the more pleasure and profit of the Reader." To build a scholarly edifice primarily upon elements unique to this play therefore seems unwarranted, but to draw upon Barnes's terms to help to gloss other comparable terms elsewhere (as part of a shared vocabulary) would seem reasonable.

## Ben Jonson

Barnes provides only one extant play, albeit, in theatrical terms, a highly provocative one. In contrast, Ben Jonson provides a large number of plays that span over thirty years and were performed by a variety of companies (including three by the child actors). Yet the staging signals in Jonson's printed plays are even less reliable as evidence about current playhouse practice than those of Barnes--not because of variations in provenance but because of Jonson's own distinctive practice of augmenting his texts for a reader. Thus, the 1600 Quarto version of *Every Man Out of His Humour* (according to its title page "As it was first composed by the Author B. J. / Containing more than hath been Publicly spoken or Acted") may have little in common with the version staged by the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1599. The first printed version of *Volpone* (the 1607 Quarto), in turn, contains no stage directions at all, not even an enter; the first printed version of *The Alchemist* (the 1612 Quarto) has only one ("Dol is seen" at 2.3.210). The various signals now familiar to readers (e.g., the entrance of *Volpone* to the trial in Act 4 "as impotent") were added in the 1616 Folio and arguably represent the author's gift to his reader.

Jonson, however, despite some well known disparaging comments, was highly knowledgeable about his contemporary theatre. The stage directions he chose to insert in the 1616 Folio and in some of his Quartos can be bizarre at times ("This Scene is acted at two windows, as out of two contiguous buildings"; "He grows more familiar in his Courtship, plays with her paps, kisseth her hands, etc."--*The Devil is an Ass*, 2.6.37.s.d., 71.s.d.) but nonetheless are regularly couched in a standard vocabulary to be found elsewhere. As with Barnes, to build edifices composed of elements found only in Jonson's signals would seem unwarranted, but to draw upon such materials when they do correspond to comparable terms used by other playwrights (as part of a shared vocabulary) would seem appropriate.

## Ralph Crane and *The Tempest*

The stage directions in *The Tempest* have received considerable attention. Given their distinctive features (e.g., unusually elaborate details, terms not found in other Shakespeare plays) scholars have argued that they are a product not of Shakespeare but of scrivener Ralph Crane. John Jowett in particular has offered a closely reasoned analysis that, building upon both Shakespeare's and Crane's practice elsewhere, singles out fifteen specific phrases which for Jowett do not reflect Shakespeare's characteristic usages but rather seem "mostly effective literary embellishments" that "are inadequate for the theatre" (p. 114). Some of the assumptions here (e.g., about what is "literary" versus what is "theatrical" or about the specificity that the players expect from a

playwright) strike me as suspect, but Jowett does single out a series of distinctive terms (e.g., "A tempestuous noise," "several strange shapes," "with gentle actions of salutations," "with mocks and mows") in order to link them to Crane rather than to Shakespeare.

Let me concentrate upon one such phrase cited by Jowett (and earlier by W. W. Greg, pp. 151-2)--the disappearance of the banquet in 3.3 by means of "a quaint device" as found in "Enter Ariel (like a Harpy) claps his wings upon the Table, and with a quaint device the Banquet vanishes" (TLN 1584, 3.3.52.s.d.). Greg states: "I cannot imagine an author writing notes for the producer, still less a book-keeper, using the phrase 'with a quaint device': it is descriptive of the thing seen, a compliment to the machinist." Jowett adds (p. 112): "'Device', like 'shapes' and 'actions', is of no practical value, and to someone involved in the theatre nothing is gained by the phrase that is not implicit in 'vanishes.'" Assumed here is that the details and phrasing in authorial signals are consistently directed at the players and are couched in practical terms, an assumption that belies the myriad "fictional" or descriptive signals from Munday, Heywood, and others that survive in playhouse documents.

Admittedly, the term "quaint device" is unusual and cannot be found in stage directions elsewhere--in part because such tricks themselves are not that common. The scene closest to the vanishing banquet in *The Tempest* is the denouement of *The Wasp*, a manuscript play from the 1630s, where a sumptuous banquet of "Viands" is suddenly transformed into something horrible to look at ("snakes toads and newts"--2220-1) and then, later in the scene, reverts to its original condition ("these comfortable viands"--2325). The stage direction for the first moment reads: "the table turns and such things appear" (2220-1); and for the second: "Table turns" (2324). In the induction to *Wily Beguiled* (printed 1606), a juggler, who specializes in "tricks of Legerdemain, sleight of hand, cleanly conveyance, or deceptio visus," provides "a trick of cleanly conveyance" for the Prologue by adroitly switching the title of the play to follow; the stage direction reads: "'Spectrum' is conveyed away: and 'Wily Beguiled,' stands in the place of it" (24-5, 41-2, 46-7). The closest to the "quaint device" wording I can offer is to be found in Lupton's *All for Money*, a moral play from the 1570s, where, in an allegorical "birth" scene: "Here Money shall make as though he would vomit, and with some fine conveyance Pleasure shall appear from beneath and lie there apparelled" (B1r).

Of these four roughly comparable examples that range from the 1570s to the 1630s, the signals range from the practical and theatrical ("Table turns") to the very general or "permissive" ("some fine conveyance," "a quaint device"). What is distinctive in *The Tempest* (here and in other comparable moments) is not the wording but the unusual stage effect. Although "fine conveyance" or "cleanly conveyance" would seem to be the terms of choice (though two references do not a pattern make), in such a context "quaint device" does not seem all that unusual. Regardless of who is actually responsible for the term (and, despite Jowett's closely reasoned formulation, I am not prepared to rule out Shakespeare), "quaint device" is not outlandish or even atypical as theatrical vocabulary.

The other terms singled out by Jowett as Crane's contribution also warrant investigation in terms of the larger context of comparable scenes. I can provide no exact equivalent to "with mocks and mows" (TLN 1617, 3.3.82.s.d.), but Fletcher's *Bonduca* has Junius sing a song with Petillius "after him in mockage" (VI, 100) and two Caroline plays provide "Dance an Antic in which they use action of Mockery and derision to the three Gentlemen" (Brome, *The English Moor*, II, 67) and "tread a solemn measure with changes, the whilst Wittworth dances an antic mockway, then retires to his chair and sleeps" (Clavell, *The Soddered Citizen*, 1916-18). For *The Tempest*'s "A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard" (TLN 2, 1.1.0.s.d.), noises of all kinds are very

common in stage directions (roughly 130 examples), and other storm scenes include "Storm and Tempest" (Folio King Lear, TLN 1584, 2.4.284.s.d.), "Sound, thunder, and Tempest" (Heywood, *The Golden Age*, III, 78), and "A Tempest, Thunder and Lightning" (Fletcher and Massinger, *The Sea Voyage*, IX, 2). The manuscript of Heywood's *The Captives* provides "Thunder" in the left margin and then calls for figures to "Enter after a great Tempestuous storm" (456), with the first spoken line: "was ever known such a tempestuous night" (458). Similarly, *The Tempest's* "several strange shapes" (TLN 1536, 3.3.19.s.d.) should be compared to entrances "in a fantastical shape" (Brome, *The Antipodes*, III, 316), "in the shape of a Dragon" (Heywood, *The Brazen Age*, III, 175), "in odd shapes" (Ford, *Love's Sacrifice*, 1847); "four Boys shaped like Frogs" (Fletcher, *The Fair Maid of the Inn*, IX, 201); and devils "in a fearful shape" (Dekker and Massinger, *The Virgin Martyr*, 5.1.122.s.d.), "in a frightful shape" (Dekker, *If This Be Not a Good Play*, 4.4.38.s.d.), "in most ugly shape" (Barnes, *The Devil's Charter*, A2v). Shape is also used regularly as an equivalent for disguise, as in Heywood's *The Silver Age* which provides "Ganymede shaped like Socia," "Jupiter shaped like Amphitrio," and "Juno in the shape of old Beroe" (III, 98, 100, 148) or in Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* where Amaryllis first appears "in the shape of Amoret," then reappears "in her own shape" (II, 406, 408).

Such usages outside *The Tempest* raise several questions. First, are the terms attributed to Crane as unusual as claimed by Jowett? Are perhaps the situations or stage effects (involving supernatural figures and tempests) the distinctive feature rather than the theatrical vocabulary? If the supposedly eccentric terms and phrases linked to Crane can indeed be documented elsewhere, are quaint devices, tempestuous noises, and strange shapes potential signifiers in a shared theatrical vocabulary rather than exotic products of the imagination of a professional scrivener?

## The masque

In contrast to the scattered and often frustratingly limited evidence about staging practices in the professional theatres, plentiful evidence does survive about the presentation of the Jacobean masques. However, information about those no-expense-spared productions with their one-time-only effects tells us little about the exigencies of professional repertory theatre in the same period where any onstage devices or choices within the confines of the wooden O had to be practical and repeatable.

This distinction between repeatability and practicality in repertory theatre and one-shot extravagant effects in the masque is no small matter. For example, in one of his masques Campion calls for nine trees to be "suddenly conveyed away," but a note in the printed text informs the reader: "Either by the simplicity, negligence, or conspiracy of the painter, the passing away of the trees was somewhat hazarded; the pattern of them the same day having been shown with much admiration, and the nine trees being left unset together even to the same night." As the editor notes: "Apparently a stagehand had forgotten to reattach the trees to the engine after displaying them to the nobility during the day" (p. 222).

In contrast, masques designed to be included within plays that were to be performed as part of a professional repertory are particularly valuable evidence in suggesting how far the resources of a playhouse could be stretched for masque-like effects (as with *Tempest*, 4.1, *The Maid's Tragedy*, 1.2, *Women Beware Women*, 5.2). In such items, moreover, provenance could indeed be a significant issue (as with comparable special effects involving the supernatural or the spectacular), for some playhouses may have been better equipped than others. Nonetheless, the language used to signal such effects need not have varied significantly from one venue to another.

## John Marston and the child actors

The provenance of stage directions can have demonstrable importance when the plays in question have been conceived with the child actors in mind. Since Lyly's plays provide very few theatrical signals, as a test case I have looked at the evidence furnished in eight plays linked to John Marston (*Jack Drum's Entertainment*, *What You Will*, *Antonio and Mellida*, *Antonio's Revenge*, *The Malcontent*, *The Dutch Courtesan*, *The Fawn*, *Sophonisba*). Clearly, a few of the terms invoked here are linked to distinctive physical features of Paul's or another private theatre:

"Andrugio's ghost is placed betwixt the music-houses" (*Antonio's Revenge*, 5.3.49.s.d.); "A treble viol and a bass lute play softly within the canopy" and "Syphax hasteneth within the canopy, as to Sophonisba's bed" (*Sophonisba*, 4.1.200.s.d., 218.s.d.). Similarly, given the limited number of boys available to an adult company, some of Marston's calls for personnel also point to a special venue: "Company of Boys within"; "Enter as many Pages with Torches as you can" (*What You Will*, II, 259, 290).

Other features of Marston's stage directions are also distinctive--especially when compared to those linked to the adult companies of the same decade. For example, among the stage directions in the Shakespeare canon can be found only one allusion to "the Act," the often cited signal in Folio A *Midsummer Night's Dream*, "They sleep all the Act" (TLN 1507, [3.2.463.s.d.]), presumably because during the 1590s and early 1600s no such act breaks took place in the public theatres. In contrast, such references to "the Act," usually associated with music, are commonplace in Marston's plays. *Sophonisba* is especially rich in such signals (see 1.2.236.s.d., 2.1.0.s.d., 2.3.113.s.d., 3.2.84.s.d., 4.1.218.s.d.), but links between music and stage business are sprinkled throughout this canon, as in: "While the act is a-playing, . . . enter" (*The Fawn*, 5.0.s.d.); "they clothe Francisco, whilst Bydet creeps in and observes them. Much of this is done whilst the Act is playing" (*What You Will*, 3.1.0.s.d.). Music cues without references to "the act" are also plentiful, even to the extent of "Consort of music" (*The Fawn*, 1.2.102.s.d.).

Other distinctive terms found in these stage directions may be linked either to the child actors or, equally likely, to Marston's idiosyncrasies. For example, twice in *Antonio and Mellida* he uses *scene* in a fashion seldom found elsewhere: "and so the scene begins" (3.2.123.s.d.); "They two stand, using seeming compliments, whilst the scene passeth above" (1.1.115.s.d.). Marston, moreover, like Field and Chapman (but not Middleton), regularly makes use of Latin words or phrases where many of his contemporaries would not: "cantant" (*Antonio and Mellida*, 2.1.61.s.d., 3.1.108.s.d., 3.2.36.s.d., 4.1.149.s.d.; *Antonio's Revenge*, 2.2.136.s.d., 3.2.52.s.d.; *Sophonisba*, 4.1.212.s.d.); "Cantat Gallice" and "Cantat saltatque cum cithera" (*The Dutch Courtesan*, 2.2.69.s.d., 5.1.20.s.d.); "tacite" (*Antonio and Mellida*, 1.1.74.s.d.); "tantum" (*Antonio and Mellida*, 1.1.98.s.d.).<sup>6</sup> Other bits of atypical stage business may be linked to the boy actors or merely to Marston's own special vocabulary. For example, in *Antonio's Revenge* the three revengers vow their revenge, "wreathe their arms," "Exeunt, their arms wreathed," and in a later scene "Exeunt twined together" (4.2.110.s.d., 118.s.d., 5.2.97.s.d.). A truly distinctive locution is provided twice in *The Fawn*: "Enter Zuccone, pursued by Zoya on her knees"; "Enter Don Zuccone, following Donna Zoya on his knees" (4.280.s.d., 5.89.s.d.).

The theatre historian must tread carefully (or proceed "on his knees") when drawing upon such odd or even unique signals, for, especially with terms linked to specific playhouses or theatre companies, provenance can be important. Overall, however, Marston's usages, although sometimes idiosyncratic, are nonetheless usually in the main stream (or at least close). As in *The Tempest*,

some of the oddities can be linked to plot materials or distinctive personae. For example, given a large number of dumb shows (most notably in Antonio's Revenge) Marston makes unusually heavy use of seems; from one stage direction alone comes: "seemeth to send out Strotzo; . . . talks with her with seeming amorousness; she seemeth to reject his suit . . . they go to her, seeming to solicit his suit" (Antonio's Revenge, 3.1.0.s.d.). In a few of the plays (especially the two Antonio plays) more details are spelled out than is the norm elsewhere in the period. Marston, moreover, will sometimes take a stock term and put his own twist on it. Thus, like his fellow dramatists he regularly uses offers to: "offers to go out" (Antonio's Revenge, 3.1.0.s.d.); "She offers to stab herself" (Jack Drum's Entertainment, F1r); "Antonio offers to come near and stab" (Antonio's Revenge, 3.1.139.s.d.); but less typically Marston often completes the action in the same signal: "He draws his rapier, offers to run at Piero, but Maria holds his arm and stays him" (Antonio's Revenge, 1.2.217.s.d.); "Offering to leap into bed, he discovers Vangue" (Sophonisba, 3.1.182.s.d.); "Offers to go out, and suddenly draws back" (The Dutch Courtesan, 2.1.145.s.d.); "They offer to run all at Piero, and on a sudden stop" (Antonio's Revenge, 5.3.105.s.d.).

In general, this learned dramatist who wrote exclusively for the child actors does share a common theatrical vocabulary with his contemporaries to the extent that his usages often cannot be distinguished from those of Shakespeare, Dekker, Fletcher, Heywood, and Middleton. To cite a few examples, Marston's use of far off or afar off for offstage sounds is the same as Shakespeare's. Compare "A march far off is heard"; "Cornets, a march far off"; "The cornets afar off sounding a charge" (Sophonisba, 5.1.71.s.d., 5.2.29.s.d., 5.3.0.s.d.) with "March afar off, and shout within" (Folio Hamlet, TLN 3836, 5.2.349.s.d.) and "A Tucket afar off" (All's Well, TLN 1602, 3.5.0.s.d.). Similarly, Marston's use of at one door, at the other door, and at several doors is typical of the period--although one use of "at several doors opposite" (The Malcontent, 5.1.0.s.d.) is distinctive. Throughout the period dramatists call both for officers carrying halberds and the elliptical halberds where no officers are specified. Marston provides both usages but more commonly invokes the latter: "Enter Aurelia, two Halberds before and two after" (The Malcontent, 4.5.0.s.d.); enter "Malheureux pinioned, . . . and halberds" (The Dutch Courtesan, 5.3.0.s.d.).

Other Marston terms also correspond to usages elsewhere. For example, he regularly signals for male figures to enter unbraced (i.e., with their clothes unfastened), with the term 1) sometimes standing alone (Antonio and Mellida, 3.2.0.s.d.; The Malcontent, 2.1.0.s.d.); 2) sometimes accompanied by further details: "Enter Piero unbraced, his arms bare, smeared in blood" (Antonio's Revenge, 1.1.0.s.d.); "in his night-gown and a nightcap, unbraced" (Antonio's Revenge, 3.1.0.s.d.); and 3) sometimes omitted in favor of alternative details: "in his night-gown and nightcap" (Antonio's Revenge, 3.1.131.s.d.); "in his shirt" (The Malcontent, 2.5.2.s.d.); "half dressed, in his black doublet and round cap" (What You Will, 3.1.0.s.d.). All of these locutions are widely used by other dramatists regardless of venue. The same is true of the many permutations of manet. The term itself can be found twice in these eight plays (Sophonisba, 5.4.59.s.d., Jack Drum's Entertainment, B2v) along with one use of remanet (The Fawn, 1.2.317.s.d.), but also present are a range of comparable locutions: "All go out but" (Antonio's Revenge, 2.1.0.s.d., 3.1.106.s.d.; The Malcontent, 1.6.0.s.d.; The Fawn, 4.423.s.d.; Antonio and Mellida, 4.1.261.s.d.); "Exeunt all saving" (The Malcontent, 3.3.71.s.d., 5.3.1.s.d., 5.4.14.s.d.; Antonio's Revenge, 3.1.145.s.d., 4.1.67.s.d., 5.1.0.s.d.; The Dutch Courtesan, 5.1.163.s.d.); "Exit. Only . . . stay" (The Dutch Courtesan, 4.1.22.s.d.; Sophonisba, Prologue.29.s.d., 2.1.153.s.d.).

To sum up: a few of the terms invoked in the stage directions found in these eight Marston plays may indeed be linked to specific conditions limited to the child actors or their playhouses, but most of the locutions are either standard vocabulary or some variation thereof that reflect not the

provenance behind the plays but rather Marston's idiosyncrasies. Indeed, such authorial idiosyncrasy (rather than theatrical provenance or chronology) emerges as the major variable when confronting the thousands of stage directions available as evidence.

### The significance of chronology

In building upon stage directions as evidence the historian cannot ignore chronology, for some locutions found in the 1580s and early 1590s are superseded or simplified in the playtexts that follow. Earlier signals are often longer, without the many ellipses or shorthand forms that later become commonplace. Representative of the earlier approach is *Lochrine* (printed 1595 though probably to be dated earlier) which provides: "Let him write a little and then read" (341); "Let them fight" (797, 832); "let Strumbo fall down" (833-4); "Then let both of them fall into the water" (963-4); "Let him sit down and pull out his victuals" (1629-30); "Let him make as though he would give him some" (1669-70); "Then let Lochrine and Estrild enter again in a maze" (2064); "Let her offer to kill herself" (2153). Signals for fights, falls, and other actions are commonplace in subsequent plays, but this *let* construction is hard to find after the early 1590s.

To minimize the importance of chronology is not to argue that staging procedures and the terms used to signal those procedures stayed the same in all theatres between the 1580s and the early 1640s. Nonetheless, the fact that a host of playwrights (that includes such seasoned professionals as Shakespeare, Heywood, Dekker, Fletcher, Middleton, Massinger, Shirley, and Brome) in many theatres over many decades appear to be using the same shared language strikes me as significant and revealing. Some account of the changes over time (as with the *let* construction or with *proffer* as opposed to *offer*) can be useful and informative as are any distinctive usages or procedures limited largely to Peele, Greene, and the 1580s, but if (as is often the case) Shakespeare-Heywood and Brome-Shirley are invoking the same theatrical vocabulary, the importance of chronological distinctions is greatly diminished. Rather, what is of greatest significance are those signifiers that remain useful and meaningful over the full stretch of Elizabethan-Jacobean-Caroline drama.

### Conclusion

In assessing stage directions as evidence (or in building mosaics from snippets in italics), the provenance of individual plays cannot be completely dismissed (as shown in Marston's references to the music-house and the canopy), but in practice this yardstick is less of an issue than other variables. Indeed, after looking at thousands of such stage directions I can discern no technical backstage vocabulary that is the exclusive property of theatrical professionals (as opposed to amateurs or academics) or is linked to specific venues, nor can I document telling changes in the terms used between the 1590s and the 1630s. Admittedly, some usages are more likely to turn up in texts annotated for performance (e.g., *ready*, *clear*), but examples of the former are sprinkled throughout printed texts of the period, and examples of the latter, although plentiful in the manuscript of Heywood's *The Captives*, are found in only two other texts.

What needs stressing is that 1) there is indeed a widely shared theatrical vocabulary, especially from the 1590s on, and 2) the major variations in that vocabulary seem to arise not from different venues or different decades but from authorial idiosyncrasy. For example, Chapman is more likely to use Latin terms than any other professional dramatist, but it is Massinger who is particularly fond of *exeunt praeter* (or *preter*) where another dramatist would use *manet* or *exeunt*

all saving. Similarly, Massinger and others regularly use *aside* as we understand the term today, but Shakespeare, for one, prefers other locutions (e.g., "to himself"--Folio Richard III, TLN 792, 1.3.317.s.d.; *The Merchant of Venice*, E4r, 3.2.62.s.d.) and uses *aside* primarily to denote onstage positioning (see Quarto *Love's Labor's Lost*, E2v, 4.3.20.s.d.; E3r, 4.3.42.s.d.; *Coriolanus*, TLN 992, 2.1.96.s.d.).

The provenance of stage directions may therefore be of considerable importance for some scholarly endeavors, but this yardstick is less significant for an investigation of a shared language of the theatre. The language used by a professional dramatist may not be exactly the same as that used by a scrivener, an amateur writer, an academic, or a professional refashioning his play for a reader, nor is there an exact correlation among varying venues or during disparate decades. Nonetheless, by proceeding carefully (and by not building edifices upon one-off or highly idiosyncratic usages) the theatre historian can recover a range of terms that would have made excellent sense to Marlowe, Shakespeare, Dekker, Heywood, Jonson, Marston, Chapman, Middleton, Massinger, Brome, Ford, and Shirley.

## Notes

1. In singling out this particular passage I have in mind the strictures of Fredson Bowers (pp. 120-2) who argues that "for some readings there is no excuse for the choice of the bad over the good text" and that for him the choice between name and word serves "as a touchstone to distinguish a textually untrained editor from a good one."

2. These questions about the links between provenance and theatrical vocabulary have been generated by work on *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1581-1642* compiled by myself and Leslie Thomson forthcoming from Cambridge University Press. Our entries are constructed from evidence derived from roughly 22,000 stage directions in over 500 plays.

3. Here and in subsequent passages I have modernized the original spelling and regularized the use of italics (the procedure followed in our dictionary).

4. Also found in *Adrasta* and widely used elsewhere are a scarf for disguise (see also p. 124) and a bar for courtroom scenes (pp. 23, 124).

5. Academic plays are often neo-classical comedies, declamatory tragedies, or learned allegories that do not invoke the terms or staging of the professional theatre, but Goffe's three plays (written and performed during the second decade of the seventeenth century) are the exceptions that test the rule. Indeed, the onstage effects in Goffe's tragedies often match or top anything found in other Jacobean tragedies: for example, from *The Courageous Turk*: "Here Amurath cuts off Eumorphe's head, shows it to the Nobles"; "Here Schabin calls in his soldiers, and each of them presents to Amurath, the head of a dead Christian"; "The Heavens seem on fire, Comets and blazing Stars appear" (711-12, 779-81, 1603-4); from *Orestes*: "Enter Pylades and Orestes with his arm full of a dead man's bones and a Skull . . . Stamps upon them" (E1r). Before actually killing Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, Orestes ties them to their chairs, stabs Clytemnestra's child, "stabs it again, that the blood spurts in his face. Turns it to her . . . Pulls bones from his pocket . . . Fills two cups with the child's blood: gives it them" (G4v). In short, here is one "academic" dramatist not wedded to neo-classical decorum.

6. The use in stage directions of Latin terms (other than such workhorses as *exit-exeunt*, *manet-manent*, *moritur*, *solus-sola*) is wildly inconsistent. Many usages are one-off: Field's *aspiciens* for "looking at" (*A Woman is a Weathercock*, 1.2.271-2); Massinger's "*Exeunt Cario et Rustici*" (*The Guardian*, 4.2.48.s.d.--though the scene had begun [0.s.d.] with "Enter Cario and

Country men"). Among dramatists writing for professional companies, Chapman out-Latins the field, for his arsenal (mostly of one-time usages) includes: abscondit se; amplectitur eum; ascendit (though elsewhere he uses ascends); aufugiunt; aversus (as an equivalent to aside); bibit Ancilla; Chorus Juvenum cantantes et saltantes; cum aliis (though "with others" appears in the same scene); cum Pedisequis; cum suis (six times); descendit; exiturus (seven times); osculatur; procumbit; prodit; redit (three times in the same scene); Retrahit se (twice in the same scene); surgit.

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